

https://dspace.org/

Negotiating the coming out process within the South African Indian community

Nair, Vickashnee

2020
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/30590

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/



Name: Vickashnee Nair

Student Number: 683887

Supervisor: Professor Malose Langa

Title:

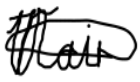
Negotiating the Coming Out Process Within the South African Indian Community

---

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Community Based Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.



Signed: _____

Date: 2020/07/16

Abstract

The coming-out process of South African Indian queer individuals was investigated in this study. The focus was on their identities and how they have to negotiate their coming out. Their experiences were discussed in the context of the theory of intersectionality, and narrative identity. Where intersectionality constitutes the theoretical framework for this study. It is through the implementation of these concepts that the researcher grappled with the complex identities of these individuals.

The research was qualitative in nature and looked at the experiences of five South African Indian queer individuals comprising two females and three males who ranged from 18 to 40 years old, with a diverse sample of sexuality and gender identities. The data was transcribed from interviews and analysed by means of thematic analysis. The themes that emerged in the interviews included coming out to one's self, the knowledge that a part of you is not accepted or tolerated, the various methods of coming out, the outcomes of coming out, culture, family, gender and race at a crossroads and the significance of spaces. These themes allowed for insight into how South African Indian queer individuals have negotiated their coming-out stories and how this in turn has influenced their identities as well as how they relate to their communities.

Key words: Indian, South African, queer, coming out, identity, intersectionality, community, narrative

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank those that have supported and motivated me throughout this research process. To my family, my partner, my friends and colleagues, your unwavering love and support has meant so much.

I would like to thank my research participants, without whom I would have never been able to complete this study. Your compelling and invaluable contributions to my research are much appreciated.

To my research supervisor, Professor Malose Langa, thank you for your great support, guidance and wisdom through this journey. It has truly been a rewarding experience.

To the Psychology Department at the University of Witwatersrand, who have allowed me to conduct this research and grow both as an academic and professional, I thank you.

Contents

Declaration…….....……..2

Abstract…….……3

Acknowledgements…….……...4

Chapter One – Introduction…….……..7

1.1. Introduction……...7

1.2. Research questions……..……....9

Chapter Two – Literature Review…….....10

2.1. Introduction……..……..10

2.2. Literature review……11

2.2.1. The coming-out process…….11

2.2.2. Narrative identity……..……..…….18

Chapter Three – Intersectionality …….……...……...27

Chapter 4 – Methods……..…….40

4.1. Research design……..……..…….40

4.2. Participants……..…..…….41

4.3. Sampling procedure…….……42

4.4. Data collection procedures and instruments…….……...…42

4.5. Procedure…….……..…..43

4.6. Method of data analysis…….…….....…..…44

4.7. Ethical considerations…….…...……..46

4.8. Reflexivity…….....……..47

Chapter Five – Data Analysis…….....……49

5.1. Theme One: Coming out to one's self (the closet era)……...…….……49

5.2. Theme Two: Knowing a part of who you are is not accepted or tolerated…..…….……...53

5.3. Theme Three: Methods of coming out (ways of coming out to others)……..57

5.4. Theme Four: The outcomes of coming out…….…….....…….61

5.5. Theme Five: Culture, family, gender and race at a crossroads…….…….…….65

Chapter Six – Discussion, conclusion and recommendations……..…….……69

6.1. Discussion……...……...…69

6.1.1. Theme One: Coming out to one's self (the closet era)……..…..69

6.1.2. Theme Two: Knowing a part of who you are is not accepted or tolerated……..…72

6.1.3. Theme Three: Methods of coming out (ways of coming out to others)…….....76

6.1.4 Theme Four: The outcomes of coming out…….……..…78

6.1.5. Theme Five: Culture, family, gender and race at a crossroads…….……..…80

6.2. Conclusion…….……...….83

6.3. Recommendations…….……..…84

References…….……...….86

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet…….…….96

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form …….…….…97

Appendix C: Consent Form for Audio Recording……..……98

Appendix D: Interview Schedule…….……..99

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This study aims to investigate how South African Indian queer individuals experience the coming-out process and how it influences their sense of narrative identity. It is investigated through an exploration of individual narratives where coming-out processes are viewed as developmental processes that can feature as a meaningful event within a life span.

The narratives of South African Indian people within the queer community is an under-researched field and this study seeks to fill this gap. A plethora of studies exist on the experiences of Western populations, such as in the United States of America, however studies within the South African context appear to be lacking (Floyd, & Bakeman, 2006; Van Dam, 2014). Often these studies on queer individuals do not acknowledge racial differences, which can play a significant role (Cook, Sandfort, Nel, & Rich, 2013; Naidoo, & Mabaso, 2014).

Studies within the South African setting have often focused on other racial groups, including the experiences of white middle to upper class individuals, or black lesbians, however, the experiences of Indian individuals in the South African context seem to be lacking and are often overlooked and unique cultural differences that characterise their experiences are negated (Khan, 2017; Milani, 2014; Sanger, 2010).

There is a need to exercise caution when overgeneralising the experiences across these varying groups as they are so multifaceted (Naidoo, & Mabaso, 2014). This speaks to the idea that one cannot seek to represent a particular individual without speaking to what may differentiate them from others; therefore, there needs to be a certain level of acknowledgement and forethought with regard to these divisions as it is within the complex differences that a richness of content is to be found and examined (Kwesi, & Webster, 1997; Nash, 2008). This is particularly crucial when considering what a big role factors such as religion and culture play in the lives of queer individuals, which can be true for those within the context of this study (Msibi, 2012).

However, a significant factor to consider here is the apparent finding that Indian and Muslim queer individuals in South African research are particularly difficult to access; therefore, this can account for the lack of studies in this group, but it is also a call for more research in this area (Van Dyk, 2010).

A number of unique factors may play a role in the coming-out process in the Indian community. A central factor that has arisen through the literature is the collectivist nature of these cultures, which seems to emphasise mutual support and community (Hansen, 2000; Hansen, 2005; Miller Das & Chakravarthy, 2011). With this culture, queer individuals can pose a challenge to the patriarchal, heterosexist and conservative facets of their contexts (Chopra, 2014; Radhakrishan, 2005; Wassenaar, Van der Veen, & Pillay, 1998). In particular, the idea of opposing gender roles may also be introduced

here, and some evidence has been found with relation to the experiences of Indian women (Jithoo, 1991; Wassenaar et al., 1998). This community can also be seen as insular and closed, and a need to explore this further arises. Looking at the factors that might characterize the Indian community, it can be suggested that the community can be seen as 'closed' in the sense that it is hard to feel flexibility or freedom to go against any norms, or for any outside influences to permeate the community. However, this may be a complex idea that needs to be explored further. Such factors may additionally contribute towards this population being a difficult one to access in research, as queer individuals may feel discouraged to come forward with their narratives given the circumscribed and conformist nature of their culture. Hence the usage of the term, 'closed community'.

The experiences of queer individuals are becoming an increasingly relevant issue as there is an ever-growing body of literature and information involving sexuality. Such research is becoming more accessible to youth, who can now recognise same gender attractions from a young age (Floyd, & Stein, 2002). This will in turn have a significant impact upon the coming-out processes of these individuals and their developmental processes as well. This adds a facet to why this type of research into identity and sexuality can prove so invaluable. However, this body of work can always be expanded upon, especially in terms of life course narratives and sexual identity development experiences (Floyd, & Bakeman, 2006). This literature is continuously developing and changing and as a result, there is always a need for current and updated research in this field.

The context of community has considerable implications in the coming-out process and in particular with regard to a sense of identity. It has been put forward that queer individuals may grow up in contexts where they do not encounter similar others; therefore, they may not be able to reinforce their identities and gain insight into their sense of self (Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Braun, 2006). The question thus arises of how such individuals negotiate their links to the Indian community, which has been found to value conformity and traditionalism (Chopra, 2014).

A sense of community can be seen as significantly related to a sense of self and individuals have a sense of belonging and identification within a community, which is tied to a sense of positive, shared experiences (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986; Renn, 2007; Riggle, Mohr, Rotosky, Fingerhut, & Balsm, 2014). When considering this, community can be seen as vital to a sense of self and the coming-out process may pose a turning point in the development of an individual's self-concept and identity.

In order to achieve a discussion around these ideas, the theoretical framework of intersectionality will be utilised here and this framework will present the structure whereby the study will investigate identity. The researcher will investigate the coming-out process in detail and through a developmental lens. Lastly, narrative identity will be explored and discussed in terms of how narratives can influence and shape the identity of individuals. It is through such discussion that the relationship between queer individuals, identities and their community contexts can become apparent and highlighted.

1.2. Research questions

1. What are the coming out narratives of self-identified queer Indian individuals living in South Africa?

2. How do self-identified queer Indian individuals negotiate their relationships to their community given their non-normative positioning?

Chapter Two– Literature review

2.1 Introduction

An individual who identifies as queer and is Indian can identify with multiple communities. They navigate various spaces, one of which is the Indian community. This community has various cultural norms that distinguish it from others within the South African context. In literature, Indian culture has traditionally been seen as conservative with regard to traditions and values being foregrounded, which is seen to maintain a form of social peace (Chopra, 2014). The culture has also been seen to be patriarchal and heterosexist, where gender roles play an integral part (Jithoo, 1991; Radhakrishnan, 2005; Wassenaar, Van der Veen, & Pillay, 1998). Another central tenet of the Indian community is the family unit, which seems to hold much of the cultural values, such as responsibility towards family (Hansen, 2000; Singh, 2008). It is these core ideals that frame the experiences of Indian individuals, which the queer person may clash with.

It is within these intersections that one can investigate the lived experiences of such individuals. The theoretical framework that is applied here to better understand such complex identities is the theory of intersectionality. Intersectionality is the understanding of how one's position can be seen through different intersections of existence, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and others (Nash, 2008). This theory aids in the comprehension of how this may all come to play a role in an individual's coming out.

The coming-out process has been theorised as the realisation and acceptance of a queer identity (Manning, 2015). The act of "coming out" entails no longer being silent regarding one's gender identity or sexual orientation (Phelan, 1993). This process seems integral in the development and fostering of a queer identity. Through a discussion of this intricate process one can understand the implications it has with regard to the queer individual's sense of self and development.

Lastly, narrative identity will be further elaborated upon to gain insight into how it manifests within this study. Narrative identity is seen as the formation of one's identity through narrative, which encompasses conversational storytelling (Pasupathi, & Hoyt, 2009; Somers, 1994). This is a cornerstone of this study. This narrative identity is thought through the coming process, to investigate how one may narrate their coming out stories in relation to their sense of self. All while keeping the theoretical framework of intersectionality in mind while drawing such links, as it is the guiding force with which to understand this specific group i.e. South African Indian queer individuals.

It is with this complex understanding, that the coming out narratives of Indian queer individuals can be investigated and brought to the forefront.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.1 The coming-out process

In the writing and study of sexual and gender minorities, it is crucial to establish choice around language (Clawson, 2014). Such language has expanded vastly over the years (Clawson, 2014). It is significant, however, to acknowledge the individual's ability to self-define (Clawson, 2014). This will be kept in mind throughout this study. Although, for the purposes of this study, the term queer is used as a term to define the group of sexual and gender minorities present in this study's sample, which allows for a sense of inclusivity (Clawson, 2014). This term is not intended as an umbrella term to minimalize the differences between such distinct identities, but rather allows for more fluidity and a constant questioning of normativity (Fotopoulou, 2012; Halperin, 2003). A term that can denote a non-heteronormative idea (Davids, & Matebeni, 2017). Although this does not seek to homogenise this group, this term is merely a choice in language to concisely discuss this group of individuals.

Before delving into the coming out process, a series of crucial terms needed to be defined and outlined here to provide context. Such terms include sex and gender, sex refers to biological differences between women and men, whereas gender denotes the practices of femininity or masculinity involved in social relations (Hird, 2000). Gender identity refers to the intricate system of beliefs about the self in relation to gender and culturally prescribed gender roles (Ault, & Brzuzy, 2009). Gender expression is the outward expression of gender relating to masculine and feminine characteristics (Hamilton, Park, Carsey, & Martinez, 2019). Sexual orientation is one's sexual identity in connection with the gender to which they are attracted to (Hamilton et al., 2019). All of these terms feature in literature and theory around queer identities and coming out, and highlight just how diverse these identities can be.

The coming-out process involves a process of the realisation and acceptance of a non-heterosexual identity (Manning, 2015). Coming out, through study over several years, has furthermore come to be known as a sense of affirmation and expression of one's sexual and gender identity (Guittar, 2014). This process has been discussed as a narrative of discovery and a trajectory of becoming and revealing one's self (Phelan, 1993). Coming out is seen as a common and definitive process in the development of queer individuals (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018).

Coming out can be defined as an identity metamorphosis where the queer person explores their sense of self in a heteronormative environment (Smuts, 2011). This process incurs ideas around power and agency through thinking on the length individuals have the freedom to make their identities public. Belonging seems to underlie the battle against the dominant gender conforming norms in an effort to reformulate the confines of what is deemed acceptable (Van Zyl, 2011). This therefore speaks to a tenuous relationship between being queer in a heteronormative world.

Coming out is a continual process of declaring and cultivating an identity that is ingrained within events and the everyday relationships in one's life (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). Therefore, the coming-out process can be a seen as a premeditated one (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). Queer individuals can use various strategies in coming out to others and these can include preparation, rehearsal, directness, third-party revelations, accumulative disclosures, entrapment and indirect methods (Denes, & Afifi, 2014). Therefore, there is great variety in how one comes out and there are multiple acts of it.

The coming-out process has been found to be fluid. In a study, done by Guittar (2014), participants expressed that their current queer identities were not final and spoke of how sexuality and gender are not fixed. In this study, participants preferred not to attach labels to their identities (Guittar, 2014). Therefore, this may suggest that oftentimes language can be limited in terms of defining notions of sexuality and gender (Guittar, 2014). This can therefore lead to new ways of thinking of these concepts and forms of identities, and to discussions of a more dynamic idea of gender and sexuality (Guittar, 2014; Phelan, 1994). Hence, the usage of the term queer which as previously mentioned is fluid and also links to the finding that often queer individuals have freedom to self-define their identities (Clawson, 2014).

It is significant to indicate that outness is not necessarily a binary position and it may not always be accurate to state that a person is either entirely closeted or out as one's identity can differ based on their context (Clawson, 2014). In addition, this is not always attached to issues of safety and risk, which can be linked to visibility of a queer identity (Clawson, 2014). This allows for a more nuanced and complex understanding of what being out may mean for different individuals. In order to align with such an understanding, outness can be thought of in degrees rather than binary categories, where some may be more out in certain spaces or contexts than others (Clawson, 2014). This paints a dimension of nuance between being closeted and being out.

Being queer and to be out means to visibly stand out, which can entail certain appearances that break gender conventions; or there can be those who fit in, can blend in with crowds and in turn avoid potential conflict (Hutson, 2010). There is a usage by those who are out of the closet or what is termed as the "post-closet era" of appearance to construct identities of authenticity (Hutson, 2010, p. 214). The 'closet' is a metaphor that has been commonly used to refer to the experiences of queer individuals who are assumed to be 'heterosexual' until they come 'out' of the closet by disclosing their non-normative sexual identities (McDonald, 2016).

An example of such a manifestation of the usage of appearance and visibility can be found in the butch and femme distinctive identities (Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Warren, 2009). Butch and femme refer to masculine and feminine presentations respectively, and these have been found to impact upon the coming-out process. whereby butch lesbians have been found to have a greater integration of their lesbian identity and have been found to be active in the queer community (Rosario

et al., 2009). Butch and femme identities are example of gender expression, where lesbians may play on gendered clothing and appearance (Hamilton et al., 2019). The coming-out process therefore also includes an element of involvement and positive identification with the broader community, and integration of their identity (Rosario et al., 2009). The butch and femme themes seem to feature prominently in themes of South African queer women, who spoke of adopting a sense of normalcy through an adoption of a femme persona to appear to be more "normal" (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). This highlights how influential appearance and gender expression is in queer identities and coming out.

There can also be an immersion in the queer community, which aids in the synthetisation of one's sexual orientation identity into other aspects of the self (Floyd, & Stein, 2002). Once individuals realize they are queer, they partake in particular historical communities and discourses (Phelan, 1993). There is a process of "fashioning a self" that was not there before (Phelan, 1993, p.774). Which may mean an emergence of the queer self, and a sense of belonging that did not exist before.

The process of coming out is particularly dynamic and has been thought to consist of a series of stages (Naidoo, & Mabaso, 2014). Coming out models generally have a typical timing and sequencing of relevant milestone events, which indicate transitions between stages and which drive the process of identity development (Floyd, & Bakeman, 2006). These models can also be seen through a disruption of the sequence of these events (Floyd, & Stein, 2002).

A coming out model outlined by Cass (1984) spoke of six stages of coming out. Stage one is labelled identity confusion and speaks to how the individual perceives that their behaviours, feelings, and thoughts might be defined as queer (Cass, 1984). Stage two is entitled identity comparison and entails one having accepted the potential of a queer identity, and then being confronted with feelings of difference as the division between the individual and others becomes more apparent (Cass, 1984). Stage three is labelled identity tolerance and encompasses an increased commitment to a more queer self-image and the person starts to pursue the company of other queer individuals, which speaks to their own social and emotional needs (Cass, 1984). Stage 4 is titled identity acceptance, which is one's increased interaction with the subculture of queerness, which brings about a more positive perception of the community and a growing network of queer associates. Stage five, which is accompanied by the title of identity pride, is spoken of in terms of pride towards one's identity as a queer person and sense of belonging and loyalty to the group (Cass, 1984). Stage six is given the label of identity synthesis and is expressed through increased positive associations with the queer community, which provides insight into the rigidity and erroneous nature of dividing the world into good and bad "heterosexuals" (Cass, 1984). This last stage speaks to a more nuanced view of gender and sexuality (Cass, 1984).

Models of sexual orientation development can be a useful heuristic and provide understanding of the unique obstacles to developing a sexual and gender identity (Hill, 2009). However, models of coming out have been criticised as assuming a unidirectional movement through the various stages until one may achieve a level of self-actualisation, although this may not always be the case (Guittar, & Rayburn, 2016). Coming out can rather be seen as a process to be managed rather than one to be completed or an outcome (Guittar, & Rayburn, 2016). A critique of the models of coming out include its assumption of a fixed and understandable individual, however, the coming-out process is seen as something more nuanced than such assumptions (Klein et al., 2015). Coming out is also both an internal undertaking through a self-affirmation of one's identity and a management of a marginalised identity, as well as an external venture, which is the disclosure of one's identity to others (Guittar, & Rayburn, 2016). Although these models have faced critique, there is some validity that can be found in some of the stages and to explain the process one might undergo while coming out. Therefore, instead of completely rejecting it, there is some value to some of its parts.

In addition, coming out models can negate situational variables, often related to social aspects, which contribute towards the negotiation of an identity and suggest a constant state of being "out" as something that is morally superior (Klein, Holtby, Cook, & Travers, 2015). Another potential limitation of coming out models is that there is no apparent discussion of the value of identity markers such as race or gender in the analysis of this process (Smuts, 2011). The idea of a linear model therefore feels limiting and may leave little room for complexities in the different experiences of queer individuals. Consequently, as valuable as coming out models can prove to be in conceptualising the process of coming out, a degree of caution needs to be exercised when discussing them in relation to individuals.

Coming out is an ongoing process that is not limited to one moment in time or in one's early life – it can be a process that stretches across the lifespan. Evidence of this can be found in a study done on the coming out narratives of older gay men in New Zealand by Neville, Kushner, and Adams (2015). Participants in this study still felt uncomfortable about disclosing their sexuality and gender identities to others, even though they felt that there had been positive attitudinal changes around them (Neville, Kushner, & Adams, 2015). The timing of coming out can therefore be significant and can be seen as a developmental milestone and there should rather be a focus on predictors of coming out rather than outcomes of this process at any age (Solomon, McAbee, Åsberg, & McGee, 2015). This also raises the question the impact of coming out upon developing a queer identity, where if one does not come out overtly to others how this might impact upon a queer narrative.

The coming-out process is often affected by social, cultural, and moral conditions that influence the decision to come and subsequently be out, and identity disclosure takes place on various levels, such – as to one's self, family, friends, co-workers, and the public (Sand, 2015). The degrees to which one is

out speaks to a process of internal self-acceptance necessary to being comfortable in being queer (Sand, 2015). Being out involves a relational process, where there is a possibility of mutuality and a connection with significant people in the individual's interpersonal world (Sand, 2015). Real relational losses can stem from a revelation of an unacceptable identity, which can lead to emotions of regret, humiliation, shame and disappointment (Sand, 2015). The process of accepting a form of loss of heterosexual privilege and being seen as different can make individuals feel as if they have become abnormal, which can be a complex process for the queer individual to internalise (Sand, 2015).

Furthermore, the role of family and family interactions are highly crucial during the coming-out process. Individuals' experience of coming out to their families, in particular their parents, for the first time is significant because of the impact that these experiences have on the individual's subsequent disclosures to their family (Denes, & Afifi, 2014). Through this it can be suggested that identity and coming out are not restricted to any one particular event and there can be various communicative processes that may follow the first coming out (Denes, & Afifi, 2014). This reinforces the notion that coming out is not isolated to any one event.

By considering a more social constructionist understanding of meaning making one can see the process of coming out as a manner of constructing a shared reality and experience, where members in the family may define themselves through their interactions with others' perceived understanding of them (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). Studies on the coming-out process and its impact on families often have themes related to how families might react on multiple levels, namely the intrapsychic, interpersonal, familial and social (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). In a study done by Baptist and Allen (2008), family members at the individual level seemed to struggle to embrace an individual's queer identity and overcome their own homonegativity while learning about what queerness entails. At the family level there was a sense of cohesion and bonding as the family transparently shared and were receptive to different views within the family unit (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). It was found that at the social level the family unit thought it valuable to form a social network, which led to a careful coming-out process to others in their community (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). On the political level, the family was introduced to the notion of being categorised as a minority, which supplied them with a cause to rally around (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). This speaks to a narrative of acceptance by one's family after coming out and multi-layered coming out processes can be.

Looking at the constructionist approach, it views the individual as one who is becoming a subject, where they are a source of their own thinking and acting (Prins, 2006). This approach views identity as a matter of narration not naming (Prins, 2006). Where the person is both an actor and co-author of their own life-story, both individual and collective actions can be seen as enacted narratives (Prins, 2006). In here lies another link to the idea of narrative identity and intersectionality, where how one authors their lives and becomes a subject within their own narrative. Now this can be seen through a

collective lens as well which may prove intriguing when looking at Indian queer individuals in relation to their communal narratives. Rather than looking at the 'what' of a person, what is highlighted is the 'who' that someone is (Prins, 2006). Which seems to link with the aims of this study, which is to discern who these particular individuals are in relation to their markers as Indian and queer.

Coming out narratives or stories are seen as a "prompt for personal consolidation and as a bridge to others who have undergone similar transformations" (D'Augelli, 2003, p.343). These stories are told in differing ways in relation to the audience, particularly if the audience is heterosexual or not, and there are various versions that are told throughout the lifespan, which is an indication of the ever-changing nature of the coming out narrative (D'Aguelli, 2003). Such narratives have included themes of shame which can be worsened by public stigmatisation; however, this shame can move towards a more positive self-esteem (D'Aguelli, 2003).

In a study of the narratives of young lesbians and gay men in Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa by Naidoo and Mabaso (2014), it was discovered that the main themes of feeling different, acceptance of self, socio-cultural and religious context, and gender dimensions, youth and its related freedom emerged from the narratives of the participants. With South African university students, it was found by Graziano (2004, p.281) that often they were still "in the closet" and left with feelings of isolation, pain and confusion. Therefore, there needs to be a focus on individual narratives as there cannot be generalisations made across such differing narratives of coming out, which can take on multifarious forms and content and each individual must be viewed in terms of various considerations and intersecting factors (Manning, 2015).

There can be certain factors that impede upon the coming-out process across the lifespan (Hill, 2009). There are certain heterosexist assumptions that may influence's an individual's coming out, such as children being expected to romantically and sexually be interested in the opposite sex (Hill, 2009). Society can be seen as structurally heteronormative and sexual or gender difference can be constructed as the exception (Guittar, 2014). There may be feelings of confusion and deficiency, and often the onus is on the queer individual to comprehend and define their identity (Hill, 2009). This may be indicative of the level of any antigay rhetoric and behaviours within a community, and how resources are harnessed by the queer community to counter this stigmatisation and foster empowerment amongst its members (Rosario, Hunter, Maguen, Gwadz, & Smith, 2001).

When looking at the South African context, themes of stigma are prominent with regard to factors that may stagnate the coming out of queer individuals (Smuts, 2011). In response to the stigma or fear of it, queer individuals often have to form their identities in a specific manner within particular spaces (Smuts, 2011). The experience of discrimination can incur a form of "stigma management", where the

queer individual chooses to be visible in public spaces, and there is an affirmation of their emerging identities as queer despite being in spaces that are hostile (Knous, 2005, p.49).

As there can be factors that hinder the coming-out process, there can be aspects that encourage or strengthen one's ability to come out or self-disclose. With regard to a study done on lesbians in South Africa by Smuts (2011), it was found that one of the significant push factors was if the individual felt comfortable and safe enough within their own spheres to come out. In this study there was a choice by participants to be heterosexually "passing", dependent on the spaces they identify, where passing refers to one's appearance being gender conforming – their identities did not constitute a central part of their social identities, nor did they experience the need to hide their queer identities from others (Smuts, 2011). What was found was that the participants were not in a place where they could be open about their queer identities in all spaces of their lives and this was described as a luxury that they all did not possess (Smuts, 2011). Additionally, this article purports the argument that the final stage in the coming out model, as outlined by Cass (1984), does not entail the end of the coming-out process and what the participants expressed was that they in certain circumstances had to revert to earlier stages in their coming out (Smuts, 2011).

Coming out themes in the South African context have been found to include a sense of social and moral obligation to come out, coming out as a form of confirmation of the self, resistance of the urge of confession and being more "normal" than not (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). Queer individuals, in a study done by Kotze and Bowman (2018), revealed a series of themes and issues that played a role in their coming-out process, namely a sense of responsibility to reveal a truth about themselves, to authenticate their sense of self, sense of vulnerability of isolation, and the elements of gender expression, which was conceived through femme and butch ideas that placed certain individuals at more risk.

Coming out in the South African context has been historically viewed as a means of personal liberation and a political tool to support the gay and lesbian movement (McCormick, 2015). There seems to be a consensus that this country seems to be the only one on the continent where coming out is approved and advocated, however this remains to be seen in relating it to individual experiences and cultures (McCormick, 2015).

It can be improbable to separate identities from social spheres (Smuts, 2011). Even though queer individuals in South Africa are allowed to express their identities, normative prohibitions in society towards queerness can at times contribute towards the individual feeling hesitant to be their authentic queer self in public spaces (Smuts, 2011). When the individual is faced with significant social pressure, the process of coming out may be delayed to a further stage of their life, which can be later adolescence or adulthood (Butler, & Astbury, 2008). One should not underestimate the pressure from society and family that queer individuals may experience that occurs while their gender identities are

developing (Butler, & Astbury, 2008). The individual may need to assess their various public spaces, such as the workplace, and will have to elect which identity they wish to make visible (Smuts, 2011). This speaks to how these identities always remain in flux (Smuts, 2011). This is especially poignant when the literature suggests that the South African context possesses narratives of violence, particularly gender-based, homophobic and transphobic violence (Reygan, & Henderson, 2019). This emphasizes the pressures that queer South Africans may feel in their daily lived experiences.

Coming out in Indian culture and communities may be perplexing on the surface and does not seem as linear and easy as coming out theoretical models and processes may suggest. At times what silence and remaining closeted can mean for Indian individuals is meaning making and the carving out of an identity (Dave, 2011). Therefore, remaining closeted could take on a new dimension for South African Indian queer individuals. This could link to narratives around being closeted being safer whereas coming out poses many risks and potential losses (Dave, 2011; Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). This can be especially significant in the Indian community, as coming out can be seen as a disruption of community solidarity (Mayo, 2007). Therefore, a unique series of challenges faces Indian queer individuals within a South African context.

This leads to the questioning of the ideas around private and public identities, where it is not merely seen as binary or the public being the outcome of a private identity but rather there are shades between these that shows how complex Indian queer coming out experiences can be (Dave, 2011). It is also inaccurate to link private with fear and public with courage, as often this does not fairly represent the Indian queer lived experience (Dave, 2011). There is also a tension with Indian queer identities being political and this being a loaded ideal, sometimes so much so it deters many queer individuals from self-identifying as queer, which is something that speaks to the political ideals present in intersectionality and what belonging to this community means as well for the individual experience.

The coming-out process appears to be an intricate process that is fluid and constantly negotiated over the lifespan. This study has adopted an appreciation of this form of expression of gender. It is something that both follows a sequence of events, but seems to change due to various factors. Such factors are invaluable in understanding the experiences of Indian queer individuals and it is with narrative identity and intersectionality that one can gain a comprehension of this.

2.2.2. Narrative identity

Narrative identity is defined by the formation of one's identity through narrative (Somers, 1994). This looks at the microprocess of conversational storytelling as a critical process whereby narrative identity is developed (Pasupathi, & Hoyt, 2009). A central tenet of narrative is emplotment which involves the

imaginative ordering of diverse elements of human acting and suffering that has a beginning, middle and an end (Atkins, 2004). The construction of narratives regarding past experiences involves creating a sense of continuity over time, which is the past self-represented and as interpreted by the present self (Pasupathi, & Hoyt, 2009). Narrative identity is the reconstruction of an autobiographical past and a future is envisioned in a manner that allows the individual's life with a degree of unity, purpose and significance (McAdams, & McLean, 2013). Where the future can mean what people are to become and speaks to how humans are oriented to the future (Atkins, 2004). In other words, narrative identity is the individual's attempt to make meaning out of their own identity through stories within their life both past, present and future.

The narrative approach is oriented to the need for meaning within the lives of embodied, practical beings that exists within the limits of a temporal world (Atkins, 2004). It is based on the premise that human understanding adopts a narrative form (Atkins, 2004). This form of identity highlights individual uniqueness and makes use of cultural scripts and schemas to organise one's own experiences into a narrative format (Pasuapathi, & Hoyt, 2009). This speaks to the uniqueness of each individual's narrative identity.

Identity is not necessarily a rigid construct, but is rather located in dimensions of time, space and relationality (Somers, 1994). The narrative approach goes beyond a mere retelling of subjective experiences, but it seeks to represent the complex temporal, and conceptual continuity of an individual's life (Atkins, 2004). This highlight one of the foundational cornerstones of narrative identity theory, which addresses the idea of time as shaping our sense of self and how we think on our lives.

Narrative is articulated by Somers (1994, p.614) as an "ontological condition of social life". By this focus and a more ontological lens of narrative identity, there is an attempt to engage with the macro-structural, historical, temporal, institutional and other larger levels that go beyond the individual (Somers, 1994). This method of looking at narratives allows for the study of identity with a more relational and historical approach that avoids the fixedness of categories and accentuates how identity is ingrained in networks of relations that shift over time and space (Somers, 1994). This also highlights the agency of individuals in shaping their identities and how identities and social beings are formed (Somers, 1994).

In an experience- or event-centred approach, there are the assumptions that narratives are sequential and meaningful, definitively human, represent experience, reconstituting as well as expressing it and that it displays transformation and change inherently (Squire, 2013). A narrative may begin with a culminating event, or may attribute long passages to events that may have actually occurred over a short period of time (Atkins, 2004). This might apply to coming out narratives, as often coming out events happen over a short period of time but constitute a meaningful or culminating event. Coming

out narratives can even include more than one significant event as it has been noted previously that coming out can include a series of coming out moments (Denes, & Afifi, 2014).

Narratives are also importantly seen as a means of sense making, where there is a sequential and temporal ordering of experience (Squire, 2013). Stories are also seen as representative and reconstructed, where they can be performed in different contexts, and should be seen as one of many narratable truths (Squire, 2013). There is also a sense of agency and unity in the subject of the experiences, as their experiences are rooted in the individual (Squire, 2013).

Hammack (2008) makes a distinctive and important link between personal narratives and master narratives, which speaks to the relationship between the individual and culture. He views identity as an ideology that has been cognised through a personal engagement with discourse and has manifested in a personal narrative that is constructed and developed over a lifespan, which is informed through social interaction and social practice (Hammack, 2008). This highlights a significant aspect encompassed by narrative identity, which is the interaction of the individual with their surroundings and cultural as well as contextual influences. This seems significant in considering the experiences of the individuals in this study of their Indian culture and narratives they have engaged with in relation to it.

Identity is not merely a sense of timing over the life span, but rather there is a focus on its substance and its place in cultural reproduction (Hammack, 2008). Identity can be seen as a universal process of human development and the content of it is culturally and historically conditional, which allows for the examination of a larger process of social reproduction by recognising the meaning by which people internalise collective narratives (Hammack, 2008). This can relate to the previously discussed notion that when individuals claim a queer identity and come out, they play a role in historical discourses inherent in the queer community (Phelan, 1993). This also means that often social pressures can also play a role in how individuals define themselves; often there can be pressure during the adolescent phase to do this and to resolve who they are (McAdams, & McLean, 2013). This suggests a certain universality in particular experiences, through the internalising of collective narratives. While one acknowledges that are many complexities in identities, there can be some intriguing shared truths through narratives.

An important aspect in relation to narrative identity and culture is the involvement of the community (Hasford, Abbott, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 2017). A study by Hasford and colleagues (2017) found that community stories reflect the differences in the assimilation and importance of personal involvement in a sense of self. The study highlighted a sense of investment in one's community as part of one's identity and this seemed to be linked to identity development and one's life story (Hasford et al., 2017). Additionally, prosocial and community motivations were strong predictors of the way adults incorporate community experiences into their life story and identity (Hasford et al., 2017).

There does appear to be a significance and value in the audience of narratives in the meaning making process and narrative identity (McLean, 2005). This introduces the relational aspect of narrative identity and how telling stories and relaying stories is not only important for confirming and bolstering insight into one's self, but also provides self-explanation in terms of losses and gains in terms of relational concerns (McLean, 2005). Examples given include being mistreated by a friend or being supported by a loved one (McLean, 2005).

Audiences are also seen as developmentally crucial. Our identities are formed socially and through communication, we mould self-understandings in relation to communities of conversationalists (Atkins, 2004). This form of identity highlights individual uniqueness and makes use of cultural scripts and schemas to organise one's own experiences into a narrative format (Pasuapathi, & Hoyt, 2009).

An exemplar of the significance of audiences, is how having parents be audiences for adolescents aids them to form stories in their early lives and these stories in turn are shared with new audiences to develop new kinds of intimacy (McLean, 2005). This is salient in terms of coming out narratives, as often the coming out to family, particularly parents, can impact upon the coming-out process to others (Denes, & Afifi, 2014). This also speaks to differences across the lifespan in how younger and older individuals construct the self (McLean, 2008a).

However, despite its relational aspect narrative is seen as a process of individuation (McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010). This is seen to be situated in Western thought which often focuses on the establishment of the self as unique to others (McLean et al., 2010). This might link to the ideas around coming out and how it seeks to establish the self as non-heterosexual and against heteronormativity, inherently different to others (Smuts, 2011). However, this might come into conflict with the collectivist ideals present in the Indian community, which places emphasis on communitarian values (Hansen, 2000; Singh, 2008). Therefore, the queer Indian individual in trying to establish their queer narrative may come at odds with their Indian narrative that has been longstanding through their cultural scripts and interactions with their community (Dave, 2011; Pasuapathi, & Hoyt, 2009; Rahman, 2010). Although the two need not always be exclusionary and can work together cohesively to form the narrative of the individual, where it can develop into autonomy and connections with others (McLean et al., 2010). Narrative therefore can be seen as something both individualized and of a social form of identity (McNay, 1999). However, it is both this collaboration and potential conflict that may arise in this study.

In a study done by McLean (2008a), it was found that younger people tended to construct the self in terms of stability and older people tended to construct the self in relation to change. This highlights how age and the lifespan is involved in the type of narrative identities that people have. Narrative identity can be said to encapsulate both stasis and change (McNay, 1999). Therefore, there are seems

to be tensions in one narrative identity that seem to change over time, and this might prove telling for the group of individuals in this study.

A potential advantage to narrative identity is the first-person perspective of the narrator (Atkins, 2004). This perspective can be tied to a sense of embodied selfhood (Atkins, 2004). Embodied in this sense can include the bodily functions of perception and sensory-motor capacities which is often involved in memory and a sense of one's self in time and space (Atkins, 2004). Human beings learn about their bodies through the involvement with the bodies of other people, through communication of touch and vocalization, as well as culturally encoding of differently sexed, coloured, aged, or abled bodies (Atkins, 2004). To make this plainer, there is a relationship between the body and self, where there is the person as subject (I) and as the object (body) (Atkins, 2004). What this allows for is an embodied consciousness which provides a reflective structure of self-awareness (Atkins, 2004). This provides a unique marriage of perspectives, where people can view themselves both from the viewpoint of the object through a theoretical understanding (from a third-person perspective) and as the source of action (from the first-person perspective) (Atkins, 2004). The reference of "I" is always an embodied subject and continuity in identity can encompass the processes of self-constancy (Atkins, 2004). There is a practicality to the first-person perspective that seems integral to the identity (Atkins, 2004). This represents special viewpoint present in reflective storytelling, that provides compelling content.

Narrative identity and approaches are not, however, without criticism. Such critiques about this theory in research express that the stories that people disclose about their lives are not always necessarily accurate or honest (Adler et al., 2017). Although one might argue that the aim of narrative identity is its process, and how people form subjective realities, which all forms a convoluted system of recall and meaning making (Adler et al., 2017). It also highlights how tricky memory and recall can be, especially in specific sociocultural contexts, which can have an impact upon what one elects to speak on (Adler et al., 2017). One might argue that it is not the accuracy of what is spoken of but rather how the individual has made of it and now has chosen to speak of it, it is the process and what is said rather than what might not be accurate or said. As before mentioned, narratives are chosen and elected by the individual through their own agency out of a many possibilities and audience also plays a part here (Atkins, 2004; Squire, 2013).

Additionally, the criticism that the comprehensible temporality lying at the centre of stories i.e the link between beginning, middle and end is something that is not inherent to real human events, selves and lives (Crossley, 2000). Now this criticism tries to dispute the link between life and narrative, emphasizing the discrepancies between storytelling and how people make sense of their lives (Crossley, 2000). Now there is some merit to this criticism, as often times there are differences between them, such as the control one may lack over their own narrative as often times the content of

the story is something they have and they cannot always choose what it is (Crossley, 2000). To build upon this critique, it is fair to assert that people when electing what elements and events are meaningful, therefore there is some process and control here at play (Crosslet, 2000). However, taking this into account, it is not entirely accurate to say that one's life is filled with scrambled incoherent events, its how individuals have been able to imbue it with meaning and into an overarching narrative.

In the application of this identity framework to the queer community, it has proved an invaluable tool in providing a holistic and coherent picture of their developing identities, where sexual identity is seen to construct a personal narrative that incorporates desire and behaviour into a meaningful and workable configuration (Hammack, Thompson, & Pilecki, 2009).

In applying it to the experience of queer college students, it was found that each individual understood their identity as a product of both contextual factors and their developmental capacity to make meaning of their surroundings through values that were generated internally (Abes, & Jones, 2004). It was additionally applied to a study of the autobiographies of white gay men in the United States of America over a sixty year period, where certain narratives appeared to emerge such as resistance through either a redemptive model of 'struggle and success' or the confrontational model of 'emancipation', and an example given of the struggle and success storyline is of shifting the 'problem' from within one's self to society itself (Hammack, & Cohler, 2011). What seemed to unite the narratives of both the elderly and youth participants in this study is the need to manage the stigma inherent in deviations from the heteronormative system (Hammack, & Choler, 2011). Although this study is done on a limited and different population, what may ring true here is the idea of how a queer narrative identity develops over the lifespan and through time.

Narrative identity has also been linked to well-being and can be understood in terms of how people may narrate difficult experiences and can assimilate them into their lives (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008). Sexual minorities have been found to experience stress and poor mental health outcomes and in turn this may play a role in which narratives they employ (McAdams-Mahmoud et al., 2014). How narratives of struggle can be expressed may at times be rooted in cultural norms and aspects, however often there can be an emphasis on American and Western stories and norms (Bauer et al., 2008). Coming out narratives exemplify stories of struggle and obstacles, which are all informed by cultural aspects. It is significant how individuals' narration of strife can often begin with the exploration of the negative experience, which can lead to deeper reflection about which emotions it incurs, what led to it, how it came about and what role it will play in their overall life story (McAdams, & McLean, 2013). Next, they may express and commit to a more positive resolution of the experience (McAdams, & McLean, 2013). What is significant when one considers the narration of adverse events, is how the individual may assimilate it into their life narrative.

Narrative and voice are linked to power, where there can be stories of empowerment and the ability to tell such stories (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). What may impact this, is how individuals narrate their stories with certain parameters and within certain groups or spaces, both informal and formal (McAdams, & McLean, 2013). However, one may consider the articulation restraint here, where one may not have minimal self-articulation required (Atkins, 2004). Additionally, self-reflection is also integral to the process of narrative (Atkins, 2004). This may limit narrative identity inquiry and highlights how reliant narrative is on language. With the queer community, where there are often disadvantageous experiences, such narratives of empowerment and self-articulation can be critical.

When considering the South African context, coming out and identity have particular nuances. The act of coming out is linked to an idea of truth, which in turn is connected to an inherent, knowable and singular part of self, which will contest and redefine the boundaries of who queer individuals feel they are allowed to be (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). This is a marker of identity politics (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018).

Therefore, the public discourses play an integral role here, as in South Africa, public narratives provide the context of heterosexist violence and homophobia which are at times condoned (Sanger, 2010). Discourses in South Africa reflect dominant attitudes and are influenced by significant leaders, such as political leaders, and can contribute towards homophobic and heterosexist sentiments (Sanger, 2010). There is a form of racialised citizenship, where intolerance towards queer individuals may feature (Sanger, 2010). It is also often linked to what is shared in mainstream media and how queer individuals are contextualised or decontextualised (Sanger, 2010). By not identifying heterosexuality within its construction as normal, and how it is enforced as the only acceptable expression of sexuality, it camouflages the potentially dangerous and influential heteronormativity (Sanger, 2010). This in turn raises the implication that queerness is seen as “abnormal” and needing of penalty (Sanger, 2010).

In a study done by Breshears and Beer (2016) on same-sex parented families in South Africa it was found that queer individuals had to negotiate social attitudes and employ various strategies that would encourage a positive social and familial identity, which in turn would foster psychological wellbeing. The participants in this study spoke of an awareness of discriminatory beliefs in society towards them, however, managed to maintain a sense of identity and found coping strategies against the stigma (Breshears, & Beer, 2016). This speaks to a resilience of this population in the South African context, and may speak to a narrative of positive identities later in life for queer individuals.

When considering the narrative identity of South African queer individuals, the coming-out process seems to coincide with particular significant life events or stages, such as moving out of home or reaching a certain age (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). It speaks to a transition from something experimental to identity and speaks to a more fixed notion of identity going into adulthood, speaking

to narratives of acceptance and transition (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). There is a willingness to reflect upon the self and discovering of a truth, an "emotional labour" (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018, p.11).

Additionally, one need not disregard the socio-historical context of queer narratives in South Africa, where gender was spoken of post 1994 in the country and sexuality was spoken of through the lens of gender, race and class, particularly through the momentous event of the drawing up and establishment of the Constitution (Sanger, 2010). Certain aspects of identities are particularly marked at particular socio-historical points and at the more explicit pivots within the life of the individual (Sanger, 2010). However, with certain South African discourses, race can be emphasised over other identities, and at times queerness can be sought to be obscured (Sanger, 2010). Gender is understood through the public discourse as biological and immovable, which then leads to a neglect of it as a construction (Sanger, 2010).

South Africa possesses a progressive constitution that protects the rights of queer individuals, and provides a respected legal framework with which to guarantee this (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014). However, in what is termed the "the rights gap", there appears to be a discrepancy between such constitutional and legal rights, and the actual lived experiences of queer individuals in South Africa (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014, p.1401). The Constitution does not always benefit everyone in similar ways, and differs dependent on race and social class (Milani, 2014). There is the idea that queerness is "un-African" and this has been socially accepted within the national context (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014).

One cannot underestimate the power of language and its influence in stereotypes, beliefs and fears around queerness (Butler et al., 2003). There is a narrative of queer individuals as merely going through a phase, which may seek to undermine their experiences and identities (Butler et al., 2003). There are additionally religious undertones to queerness in South Africa, where there can be harmful rhetoric for such individuals, as reinforcing religious norms seems to be encouraged and normalised, which contradicts the rights of queer people (Butler et al., 2003). Such narratives can be found in early education systems and seem to be influential on individuals from a young age (Butler et al., 2003). For adolescents who may be negotiating a sense of difference, when they hear language spoken in schools, it makes their process of identity that much more unclear and healthy forms of expression become unattainable (Butler et al., 2003).

Additionally, culture must not be underestimated in its effect on narrative identity. Narratives that often align with cultural norms can give way to a structure that can facilitate an emerging identity, however when a narrative do fit within the canonical narrative it can pose as an obstacle to identity formation (McLean, 2008b). Those that often subscribe to the canonical narrative are given voice and those that aren't are silenced (McLean, 2008b). This can be also be related to the idea presented by

Hammack (2008), where we can see what may happen when the personal narrative and the master narrative are not in sync with each other.

To situate this within place and power, an individual is situated within a certain 'place' such as a historical or cultural context and in a particular power structure for example one who may have more or less authority in a given place (McLean, 2008b). However, what has shown in the literature is that difficult experiences have allowed for developing of self-understanding and personal growth (McLean, 2008b). A group that have been theorised as often having personal narratives that deviate from the accepted one is the queer community (McLean, 2008b). Where coming out can be seen as the pressure felt by queer individuals to overtly acknowledge their difference from a common narrative (McLean, 2008b). This exemplifies the often distressing position that queer South African Indians find themselves in as they have to navigate conflicting narratives.

When considering narrative identity, and in applying it to the South African queer context, the idea of storytelling and discourses appear to be pivotal in the individual's sense of developing identity. There are multiple narratives that the individual experiences over their lifespan that prove either beneficial or damaging for their coming-out process and queer self. Understanding who an individual is therefore requires continuity, and coherence in the psychological, physical, social, cultural and historical aspects of one's life (Atkins, 2004). It is with all these various intricacies that are present in the coming-out process of Indian queer individuals who reside in South Africa that this study has attempted to engage and dissertate. It is narratives that can incorporate and mediate such heterogeneity (Atkins, 2004). However, it is with an intersectional lens that we can provide needed distinction of this group's coming out narrative.

Chapter Three - Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality

Intersectionality encompasses the assumption that subjectivity is constituted by a series of mutually reinforcing factors, namely race, gender, class and sexuality (Nash, 2008). Intersectionality highlights how dimensions of one's identity interact within an individual and cannot be viewed in isolation, but rather as a function of collaboration in both public and private spaces (Fingerhut et al., 2005; Parent et al., 2013). At its core, intersectionality speaks to the reality of systems of inequality, which moves from the experiential to the structural, which are interdependent (Warner, & Shields, 2013).

Intersectionality arose out of black feminist scholars' attempts to articulate the specificity and universality of their social condition in the 1960s and 1970s (Gopaldas, 2013; Samuels, & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). It was first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw and she used a metaphor of intersecting roads to illustrate how racial and gender discrimination might be linked (Dhamoon, 2011). This theory arose out of Crenshaw's aim to articulate how the experiences of African American women were often left out of the narrative, movements and law (Gouws, 2017). It sought to critique how feminism sought to essentialize identities and how not all women experience discrimination in a uniform way (Gouws, 2017). Through doing this, it wanted to bring about other identity markers into the conversations besides gender (Gouws, 2017). Intersectionality has since then been adopted by feminist scholars such as Patricia Hills Collins in her work on power, domination and politics (Collins, 2017). Where Collins has illuminated how there are macro level and micro level processes that play a role in oppression (Dhamon, 2011). Intersectionality's language has evolved over time by many scholars, and it has all come to speak about the impossibility of segregating aspect of identification and intersectionality (Dhamon, 2011).

This theory speaks to the establishment and cultivation of identities, and mutual constitution refers to the relationships between different categories of identities (Shields, 2008). Intersectionality is an aspect of social organisation that moulds everyone's lives (Weldon, 2008). A significant contribution of intersectionality is the notion that identity is a dynamic, fluid course in which a person is actively involved (Shields, 2008). It exhibits an understanding that an individual's social location is found within their intersecting identities (Shields, 2008).

This theory speaks to various levels of complexity namely: the relationship between interactive processes and systems, the different levels at which these interactions occur and the different degrees of penalty and privilege (Dhamoon, 2011). The latter incurs discussions around power and oppression (Dhamoon, 2011). An intersectional framework is based on the premise that each process of differentiation and system of domination is dependent on each other to function (Dhamoon, 2011). There are intricate relationships between these systems and can be interpreted in a myriad of ways (Dhamoon, 2011).

Intersectionality emerged as a useful analytical tool to investigate difference (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). It repudiates the separateness of identity categories and acknowledges the diversity of various race-group communities (Simien, 2007). It was a contemporary method to communicate a critique of difference and confront the role of race and gender (Jordan-Zachery, 2007) and a means of grappling with a political framework to object to the structures that oppressed and faced black women (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). It was not just a means of articulating their experiences, but also had the goal of potentially liberating these women and their communities (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Therefore, this arose out of a need to speak to experiences that were often excluded and out of necessity to translate it to real action in their lived experiences.

Social divisions occur in the manner of ways people may experience their everyday lives subjectively, in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities (Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, care must be taken when working with such categories, as different social divisions are organized and function differently (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006). For example the category of race cannot be treated in the same way as class (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006). In application to this study, the categories of identity shall be treated as unique and through the lens of their own historical and unique contexts.

There seems to be a distinction between structural and political intersectionality, where structural inequality looks at the direct impact inequalities and their respective intersections that an individual may face within society (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Political intersectionality, however, focuses rather on the applicability of the impact of inequalities and their intersections to political approaches (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). The former is more emphasised here, where lived experiences of queer individuals are focused on and how these might intersect through experiences of inequalities.

This approach initially thought of diverse facets of identity as additive and how various identities intersect and are experienced (Parent et al., 2013). This apparent amalgamation of identities in an almost arithmetic fashion can be seen as a model of "layered oppressions" (Grzanka, 2016; Shields, 2008, p.303). However, these categories are seen as irreducible, meaning that they cannot be accurately interpreted through their sum or through reduction to other categories (Anthias, 2012). Anthias (2012) proposes a holistic framework with which to apply intersectionality, which looks at what is being referred to (social categories), arenas of investigation (organisational, representational, intersubjective, and experiential), and historicity (process and outcomes).

Intersectionality highlights how dimensions of identity that exist within one person interact, and how it is not adequate to view such dimensions in isolation, but rather as a function of collaboration, all forming part of who the individual and what their place is in private and public spaces (Fingerhut et al., 2005; Parent et al., 2013). Identity can be advantageous as a manner of examining the various

oppressions that exist and highlights groups in such a way that can lead to conflict (Chang, & Culp Jr., 2002).

At its core, intersectionality speaks to the reality of systems of inequality, which sees the experiential as interdependent with the structural (Warner, & Shields, 2013). The implication of this is that social identities cannot be studied independently from each other or the processes that seek to perpetuate such systems of inequality (Warner, & Shields, 2013). At the macro level, intersectionality can be seen as the multiplicity and interactions of social identity structures that encompass race, class and gender (Gopaldas, 2013). Intersectionality seeks to comprehend privilege and oppression within structural macro levels while also keeping in mind the experience at the micro-interpersonal levels (Samuels, & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Therefore, it is wholly impossible to separate an individual and their identity, from their context, as put forward by this framework.

There are intra-categorical, anti-categorical and inter-categorical approaches to intersectionality (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012). Intra-categorical refers to the focus on social groups at points of intersection so as to reveal the experiences of those within such groups; anti-categorical is based on the deconstruction of analytical categories and looks to destabilise such labels; and inter-categorical looks at provisionally adopting categories in order to document the relationships between these social groups and the inequalities in these groupings (Walby et al., 2012). What is to be adopted in this study is an inter-categorical approach, where the labels of Indian and queer have been adopted in order to further interrogate how these interact during the narrative of coming out.

However, an anti-categorical approach exposes a debate in intersectionality on the fluidity or stability of concepts and categories (Walby et al., 2012). There is an argument that at any moment in time, relationships between inequalities have a stability to an extent as a result of institutionalisations, but over time there is change (Walby et al., 2012). However, as social institutions develop and change, so do the environments within which certain inequalities are negotiated (Walby et al., 2012). Such changes and fluidity need to be considered in talking about inequalities over the life spans and in the lives of individuals.

However, as valuable as this theory is in theorising the identities of the group in question in this study, this theory does face various critiques. Such criticisms include a lack of methodology, and the ambiguity in defining intersectionality (Nash, 2008). This can therefore make it difficult to implement in research. With such a myriad of theories and language around this theoretical framework it does a pose a challenge to the researcher in trying to succinctly and concisely speak about the various intersections.

However, in response to this, this critique can be seen as a considerable strength. As it is within this diversity in application and theorization that this framework can be highly invaluable in trying to articulate differences in a helpful way as opposed to merely stating such differences in an additive and

separate manner. Where to have a singular methodology and definition may feel limiting in its approach and application. However, in trying to address this critique in this study, Dhamoon's (2011) framework that attempts to mainstream intersectionality might be of help in this study and the analysis. Dhamoon (2011) outlines the different aspects of one's socio-political life namely: the identity of the individual, set of individuals or social group that is marked as different, categories of difference, the processes of differentiation and the systems of domination. To further clarify, when processes are spoken of here, it refers to the manner in which subjectivities and social differences are generated and systems refer to historically comprised structures of domination which can include racism, patriarchy, sexism and so on (Dhamoon, 2011). This form of analysis also considers the relationship between interactive process and systems, the different levels at which interactions occur and the differing degrees and forms of penalty and privilege which can in turn incur discussions around power as well (Dhamoon, 2011). This all in turn implores the researcher to look at the complex interactions and dynamics with the individual and their world (Dhamoon, 2011). It is with this clear model that an analysis can occur with this group of Indian queer individuals, and this framework also allows room for complex ideas to emerge.

Dhamoon (2011) does state that often these four aspects are not always distinct from each other and can merge or combine with each other. In applying this to this study and the group it wishes to investigate, there is the identity of the set of individuals which is Indian, then there are categories of difference, which in this case can include sexual orientation and gender, the process of differentiation which includes gendering and differentiation based upon sexual orientation, and the systems of dominance applicable here would be potential racism, sexism, patriarchy, and heterosexism. How these intermingle and exist together within these individuals will be teased out in the analysis and discussion of their experiences. This feels like a holistic way to view this theory and apply it, one that acknowledges the relational, social, political and macrolevel processes involved in identity as well.

Dhamoon (2011) further outlines various concepts with which to apply in analysis that may prove helpful in this study. First situated comparisons can be used in order to compare how one kind of process interacts with others, for example how racialization and differentiation based upon sexual orientation may interact (Dhamoon, 2011). Second, comparisons can be fashioned between interactions at various levels of social life so as to differentiate between exhibitions and degrees of penalty and privilege which seeks to emphasize dissimilarities between and within groups (Dhamoon, 2011). Third to engage critically with how relative distinctions between those who have different intersections of identity all operate in diverse manners to sustain conventions of systems of dominance and oppression over time and space (Dhamoon, 2011). So, if one has to apply this here in this study, it would be to look at how Indian men and women who all identity differently in terms of gender identity, and sexual orientation may operate to uphold conventions around masculinity and heterosexism over time and space (Dhamoon, 2011).

It is also crucial to utilize a model with which to apply intersectionality. There has been a selection of models that have outlined by theorists, however a matrix of meaning making as proposed by Dhamoon (2011) shall be adopted here. This model is derived from Collins' (2017; Dhamoon, 2011) matrix of domination framework that looks at how political domination on the macro-level of analysis is constituted through intersecting systems of oppression. This matrix of meaning making looks at foregrounding an understanding of power so as to capture the manner in which processes of differentiation and systems of domination interrelate (Dhamoon, 2011). It looks beyond domination but also looks at ways in which processes, structures, privilege, penalty are all reproduced, produced and resisted in various relational ways (Dhamoon, 2011). This model allows for movement of identity particularly through relationships and interactions, and looks at the way in which individuals all occupy differing degrees and forms of privilege and penalty in which they are already and always implicated in the conditions that may provide structure to the matrix (Dhamoon, 2011).

An additional critique of additive intersectionality is that it often gets stuck at the level of the experiential with too much focus on individual differences and does not make distinctions between various levels (Anthias, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, the application of this theory is disadvantaged when there is too much focus on macro-level perspectives on relationships amongst various social structures (Abes, 2012). There is a need for intersectionality and those who implement it to critically engage with the notion of social divisions, which exist at the experiential, organisational, intersubjective and representational levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Caution needs to be practised when there is a danger of conflating diverse identities, but rather there should be an engagement with the nuances of intersecting identities and divisions (Yuval-Davis, 2006). There must be a balance between acknowledging difference while also engaging with divisions between levels to make meaningful, critical instances. Modern thinking on intersectionality can bring such particularities and details of experience that are shaped by marginality to attention (Grzanka, 2016). This study seeks to further build upon this critique, where nuances with the Indian queer community will be investigated, while also interrogating the divisions within these communities and structures. Where even though the intersections of Indian and queer intersect, there are still differences in experiences.

Additionally, the usage of categories themselves can prove dubious as they are seen to have socially constructed meanings, which are determined by dominant members within society (Roberston, & Sgouta, 2012). However, there is an acknowledgement that we do need to engage with social categories so as to study and engage with them, while still maintaining a critical lens towards them; particularly since it has been found that South African queer individuals seem reluctant to ascribe labels to themselves in terms of sexual orientation and gender, opting for more generic labels such as "gay", and seem resistant to labels as this is another act of classification (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018, p.13; McCall, 2005). Which may act as possible validity towards using the term of 'queer' in this

study as well. As there is a call to dismantle categories and to deviate away from the usage of such language, this goes beyond the aims and scope of this study which seeks to look at a specific group of people using such categories to define and identify (Dhamoon, 2011).

Therefore, in looking at the complexities of this group, boundaries in terms of gender and sexuality are quite precarious, and need to be widened in terms of what is thought as "normal" (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018, p.15). This all ultimately speaks to the idea of how identities are constructed (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). This is an idea that is to be kept in cognisance in this study with regard to how the participants construct their own labels and identities.

Intersectionality is additionally seen as US-centric and -dominated, where other experiences that are not normative to the US and West are excluded, particularly those of Indian individuals (Roberston, & Sgouta, 2012; Sadarangani, 2000). This is valid insofar as the origins of this theory being within the context of feminist theory in the United States of America which in itself presents a unique context (Dhamoon, 2011). Where it was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw to illuminate the experience of African American women with the law (Gouws, 2017). Whereas within South Africa there is a drive towards a sense of communitarianism, which is infused into the social and cultural norms of this context (Reygan, & Henderson, 2019). However, one need not discount a theory based upon its origins and how it has come to become popular. This theory has been applied in a variety of contexts which shows its adaptability and modern-day relatability to varying experiences of people (Davids, & Matebeni, 2017; Gouws, 2017; Rahman, 2010). Intersectionality in more modern work has become increasingly universally applicable, as it has come to describe the relationship between oppression, and privilege as well as situating individuals and groups at particular positions along various axes (Rice, Harrison, & Friedman, 2019). Which feels apt for this study, as oppression and privilege may feature as we discuss the axes of Indian and queer.

Much of the salient critique of intersectionality, particularly through the view of sexuality, is derived from queer theory, which may be fitting due to its examination of the fluidity of identity while existing non-normatively in the world (Roberston, & Sgouta, 2012). Queer theory can be seen to reject the notion put forward by identity politics, that sexuality constitutes a stable identity which can then lead to various queer lifestyles, practices and cultural expressions (Fotopoulou, 2012). However, queer theory can be seen as complementary to intersectionality as it too is focused on the uncertainties of identity categories (Rahman, 2010).

In a study performed by Abes (2012) on the narrative inquiry into the story of a lesbian college student, it was found that three themes emerged, lesbian identity as a product of social class, lesbian identity as relationships amongst the privileged and non-privileged identities, and the lesbian identity as a product of the dominant and subordinate norms. The significance of class emerged and the role that it can play in the coming-out process and identity formation as the participant felt marginalised in

her working-class upbringing and therefore felt a level of comfort in her queer self as a result (Abes, 2012). The study also places emphasis on the realities of financial difficulties and economic freedoms, and the role this may play in one's coming out and establishment of a queer identity (Abes, 2012). Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when looking at lived experiences of certain identities (Dhamoon, 2011). This is what this study seeks to address, that although with the intersections of race and sexual orientation may be similar such experiences still possess various intricacies. However, it is acknowledged for the sack of simplification certain identities have been conflated such as the racial category of Indian and queer as terms to theorise this group in the literature in order to capture such complexities in a way that feels comprehensible for research purposes. A balance must be struck in the investigation between the individual and the context in which they reside.

To engage with intersectionality is to engage with the theoretical tensions which speak to stability and instability, which makes this theory so unique and complex (Rice et al., 2019). To tussle with this tension where it deals with the view of identities and subjectivities static, coherent as well as provisional, open-ended and dynamic (Rice et al., 2019). This tension represents how difficult yet valuable identity theorisation can be and how studies like this one can contribute towards this ongoing debate (Rice et al., 2019). Especially in a time, where social ontologies are ever changing and in flux, and can at times be unstable, therefore it is the work of those who choose to engross themselves with this theory acknowledge such a complex process (Rice et al., 2019). Rice et al. (2019, p.414) suggests to view the identities, subjectivities, processes and structures in play as "working truths", to highlight that what comes under discussion under this study is something that is ongoing and need not be restricted by the parameters of this study. As it, as other intersectional research might aim to provide, is a snapshot of these individuals experiences at that point in time and in that context in time (Rice et al., 2019). It can only open up lines for inquiry for others to take forward.

Another important dynamic is the idea of race and sexual orientation; how privilege or lack thereof is linked to one's racial identity; and how agency has a role to play in privilege (Abes, 2012). The intersectionality theory allows for an interrogation of the lived experience of resistance and multiple oppressions (Abes, 2012). What seems to distinguish a queer identity was a sense of resisting the dominant norms imposed by others and allowing one to develop their identity in complex ways (Abes, 2012). Oppression or subordination cannot be explained outside of the context in which it takes place (Chang, & Culp Jr., 2002). This can also be applied to privilege – when talking on race or gender one cannot make sense of privilege or oppression in a homogenous and unidirectional manner (Chang, & Culp Jr., 2002). Life experiences can be subject to disadvantage and privilege, and intersectionality seeks to describe such experiences as accurately as possible (Simien, 2007). Intersectionality achieves this through the acknowledgement of the concepts of marginalization, silencing and stereotyping, especially in relation to race, sexual orientation, religion and class (Simien, 2007).

Moreau (2015) theorises an intersectional citizenship which brings to the fore the experiences of citizenship for women of colour, and a recognition of multiple identities within the construction and understanding of citizenship. Moreau (2015) looks at how the identities of marginalised groups can seek to influence their experience of citizenship, which is itself multi-layered in that it includes discursive constructions of the citizen in relation to both local and supra-national discourses of belonging and sexuality. There is a focus on aspects of belonging at the levels of local, national, regional and transnational spaces (Moreau, 2015). This notion of a sense of belonging provides links from intersectionality to the significance of community (Moreau, 2015), where a sense of belonging is not only influenced through citizenship, but additionally by a sense of community (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986). Therefore, intersectionality can bring to the fore a sense of belonging and relationships that Indian queer people can have with their various communities, particularly being South African.

Despite certain drawbacks to this theory, there are contributions towards understanding the experiences of those who are marginalised by giving such individuals voices and a platform, and recovering them (Nash, 2008). Intersectionality can be seen as ideally suited to the exploration of how categories of race, class and gender are all interlaced and here is where it is a valuable contribution to this study (Davis, 2008). Due to intersectionality being adopted and understood in various ways by theorists, it can be seen as a diverse and flexible lens for reflection and inquiry in research; especially for such a unique group of individuals (Dhamoon, 2011). It looks at the shifting of multiple identities and is critical as it allows the researcher to delve beyond the individually informed perspective (Davis, 2008; Shields, 2008). Ultimately intersectionality has become a useful catchall phrase to make the multiple positioning that forms daily life and the power relations implicit in it (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006).

In the application of this theory to the queer group, it can be seen as a strength as it highlights social inequalities, and uncovers the power structures that can be internalised by individuals (Abes, 2012). There is an understanding that the queer identity is experienced in relation to other social identities, namely race, social class, religion, ability and gender (Abes, 2012). When looking at these individuals in the South African context it has been found that they agree with the idea that their sexual orientation and gender is one part of their identity, and something that needs to be discovered (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). Although this might be a tenuous process – as at times queer individuals' identity may be in flux and their queerness may feel like a fixed aspect of self – they may at times struggle to define themselves (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018). Such a process of confession and realisation of queerness can happen within the context of romantic relationships (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018).

Those who identify as queer can straddle two social worlds, the one of the gender conforming, i.e. the majority heterosexual community, into which they are born and raised, and also the subculture of the queer community with which they gradually develop to connect to varying degrees (Fingerhut, 2005).

Therefore, queer individuals can navigate these two worlds as a part of their everyday lives (Fingerhut, 2005). This has been seen as the idea of duality (Fingerhut, 2005). A core idea of intersectionality is that this perspective allows for an investigation into how one's social identities meaningfully influence one's beliefs about one's experience of one's gender and various social identities (Shields, 2008). In terms of looking at gender and sexuality across social and cultural contexts, as is done in this study, there is a need to be cognisant of how various aspects of social life can inhibit and illuminate how people experience their gender and sexuality identities (Samuels, & Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

Within the South African context, there is a widely mentioned critique that narratives around queerness within the national context focuses predominantly on white homosexual men who possess a certain economic freedom and privilege (Livermon, 2014). As a result, this intersection of identities represents something distinctive and can potentially contribute to a national understanding of what it may mean to belong to the South African queer community.

In contemplation of this community it is important to note the uniqueness of their experiences through their intersectionality. One such facet is the label of Indian, which denotes race and culture here. The umbrella term of Indian, which is steeped in racial and colonial histories, is used to refer to immigrants and descendants of Indians who settled in South Africa (Pillay, 2017). There is an acknowledgement that this category of Indian is a complex one, but it can refer to various subcategories of identities and individuals (Mandivenga, 2000; Pillay, 2017). Race is a vital source of identification in South Africa, and although South African Indians have long generational histories in the country, they are still viewed in terms of the racial label of "Indian" (Pillay, 2015). For the purposes of this study, Muslim individuals are seen to fall under the label of Indian in order to speak about this group of participants together and in a more comprehensible manner.

The label of "Indian" not merely a racial classification, but also possesses a link to a diverse culture (Pillay, 2015). Cultural values for Indians have been linked to conservativism and collectivism (Hansen, 2000; Hansen, 2005; Miller Das & Chakravarthy, 2011). It is also tied to religious values, which can also be linked to a sense of rigidity and orthodox beliefs, which has been articulated as often being imbued through fear and creed and religious ideals and scripture can affect socialisation (Hendricks, 2016).

The family unit is seen as crucial in Indian culture, derived from communal and collectivist ideals (Hansen, 2000; Singh, 2008) and families can extend beyond the nuclear structure and can include multiple generations (Singh, 2008). With the presence of such disparate generations comes a cultural exchange of norms, which are inherited and passed down to younger generations (Singh, 2008). This also entails a sense of responsibility of younger individuals in the family to their older relatives, and it is through such exchanges that the cultural, moral and personality identity of Indian individuals is

moulded (Singh, 2008). The preservation of Indian traditions and norms is enforced through this; however, with increasing Westernisation and the aspect of a national South African identity this notion could change (Hansen, 2000: Hansen, 2005).

A note on a closed community must made here. A closed community has been used in literature to denote conservative, insular, and has been tied often to religiosity (Blanchard, 2007; Porter, 2010; Shoham, 2005). Often what a closed community entails, are distinct physical, cultural and social boundaries (Shoham, 2005). What may be characteristic of a closed community is that it is communal, holds a religious ideology, and has internal supervising systems (Shoham, 2005). However, when there is apparent deviance from normative or cultural aspects of the closed community to which one is committed to, such deviance is attributed to the personal qualities of the individual (Shoham, 2005). This suggesting that anything that does conform to the community norms may be distanced and severed so as to not associate with it. This could apply to queer identities if they are seen as differing from the cultural norms, and may be seen to placed in the individual. This could result in a splitting between one's queerness and their community. Now these attributes of a closed community are reflected in the literature on the Indian community. It suggests that it is difficult for individuals to transgress boundaries and norms, and that there might be penalties attached to this. Such penalties can be a distancing between the individual and the community. There is also a supervisory element in a closed community, which means there is an almost patrolling of boundaries and those who enforce the norms. This can be seen in generational transfer of norms and those that might reinforce them as well (Singh, 2008).

The construction of the Indian racial identity in South Africa is a complex one. It is steeped in colonial history, where those of Indian descent (often referred to as Asiatic and Arabic, historically speaking) were brought as indentured labour to the country, where their descendants made their home on South African soil (Pillay, 2017). The identity of Indians within the national context conjures up ideals of belonging, as often there is a dichotomy of foreigner and citizen, or us and them, as Indians in the country may be viewed as foreign (Pillay, 2017). However, through discourses resulting from apartheid, Indians have been a marginalised community historically, seen as those of colour or non-white, which brought up a set of inequalities based upon their race (Pillay, 2017). The Indian community has been seen to be the "middleman minority" (Ramsamy, 2006, p.478). Indians have occupied tenuous and often disenfranchised positions within South Africa, where often individuals may have had to choose between their Indianness or reject it in order to a ascribe to a non-racial South African sense of belonging (Ramsamy, 2006). This then leads to the significance of class and identity in the Indian community, which is something that is culturally crucial (Ramsamy, 2006). In the new post-apartheid South Africa there is greater class divide between Indians as there is a residential mobility to more affluent areas from those of lower socio-economic status, and a rise in a middle class of Indians (Khan, 2012). South African Indians can be seen to purport a robust South African identity,

but can simultaneously accept the label Indian as a racial classification linking it to culture (Pillay, 2015). This might also link to the idea of intersectional citizenship as before outlined, as their identities within the larger national context might come into play here (Moreau, 2015). Indianness and Indian identity can therefore be in continuous flux with regard to the national context.

Additionally, there are ideals around gender roles, particularly around masculinity and femininity, in what is deemed acceptable and tolerable (Chopra, 2014; Hendricks, 2016; Radhakrishan, 2005). What is poignant here is also the practices around these gendered roles (Hendricks, 2016). This creates different ideas specific to Indian culture which has been found to elicit terms such as "bad", "unacceptable", "deviant", and "worthless", which queer individuals attach to themselves (Hendricks, 2016, p.108). In a study done by Hendricks (2016) it was said that sexuality is based upon socially constructed roles that are influenced by values held by individuals; and society often chooses heterosexuality as normal and those that deviate are provided with negative terminology and ideals.

In a study done by Mohamed and Trangoš (2014) on the attitudes towards queerness, in the sample of Indian respondents it was found that there was largely a negative perception of queerness within the Indian community. In this study, when comparing gender and race, it was found that Indian women felt more strongly that queerness was against the values of their community than their male counterparts (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014). Additionally, it was found to align with a finding of acceptability of violence towards queer people, which the study suggests may imply a homophobic trend in Indian females (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014). This seems to fit in with the heteronormative and conservative nature of the Indian community and provides insight in the experiences of Indian queer people within these spaces.

The position of the queer Indian has been found to be a uniquely tense identity, as they can occupy a position between political and social cultures, namely the 'western' versions of queer identity and equality, and 'eastern' politics of gender and sexuality (Dave, 2011; Rahman, 2010). A tension with Indian queer individuals seems to be that queerness is un-Indian and a western sentiment (Dave, 2011). As often the deviance from heterosexuality is seen as something Western and is not sanctioned by religion or culture in practice (Hendricks, 2016). Queerness is spoken about often as a threat to the Indian community and its way of life which as spoken of includes collectivism, family-oriented and some conservative ideals around sexuality (Dave, 2011; Hansen, 2000; Singh, 2008). Particularly when acts of queerness are explicit, such as claiming one's intersectional identity as queer and Indian, it is especially seen as commentary in the Indian community (Dave, 2011). Which can prove problematic for Indian queer individuals as these two intersections are at odds with each other. Especially for those who may not pass as heterosexual or heteronormative. This conflict can be something of piqued interest in this study.

Queer Indian identities are plural and overlap instead of being gigantic and mutually exclusive (Rahman, 2010). However, agency and differences in lived experiences is paramount when looking at queer Indian identities (Rahman, 2010). The intersectional standpoint of the Indian queer individual is seen a marginalized one however it is with a live experience that challenges established identity categories (Rahman, 2010). Therefore, what feels fitting to propose when it comes to queer Indian identities is that there are not 'true' selves but rather possible selves, as many traverse such complex positionalities and identities (Rahman, 2010). What might distinguish Indian queer experiences is that it's seen as the location of private battles over identity formation as well as the negotiation of queer desire with local moralities (Dave, 2011).

There are disparities in experiences of individuals in South Africa who identity as queer, and it is often found in race, class, patriarchy and globalisation, where heteronormativity is perpetuated by such dialogues – particularly in discourses of violence against queer people, and how that violence is linked to race, gender, gender presentation, socio-economic level and geographical location (Chappell, 2015; Sanger, 2010). There is a call for there to be more connections between race, gender, sex, sexuality and culture within the South African context with regard to the discourses of queer individuals, as it is often such a hidden and neglected intersection of identities (Sanger, 2010).

Looking at the importance of life stories and narratives here, it has been found that individuals can weave together a life-story orchestrating multiple voices, while having the narrator's voice still be dominant (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006). The individual can present identification with a particular facet of identity while also allowing for it to be engraved into another discourse (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006). Where multiple axes of inequality can only be explained in the narration of multi-layered stories (Phoenix, & Pattynama, 2006). This allows for a way for an intersectionality lens to be present in how one narrates their own life-story which in turn contributes towards their understanding of themselves. All of this comes together to paint a multifarious and elaborate picture of individuals, particularly Indian queer people.

In taking all the complexities of this theoretical framework into consideration, in its application to this study in particular certain aims are brought to the fore that will fit in with the purposes of this study. A central purpose and aim here is to look at how the specific intersection of an Indian racial identity, and a queer identity is unique in comparison to other configurations of identity. It is to zoom into these two categories of identities and tease out potential anomalous aspects of these experiences. In addition to relate this to sense of narrative identity and how these might relate to each other in terms of how the participants make meaning out of their own coming out journeys and processes. Intersectionality is the lens through which the researcher will attempt to make meaning out of these varied processes of identity formation and meaning making through the told experiences of the participants. Such tensions that have been mentioned shall arise, such as the theoretical tensions of intersectionality of categories

having to be used for research however the complexities that can come with this; as well as having to use umbrella terms to speak to a wide array of nuances across individuals and at the same time acknowledging the finer details and differences in this study while also drawing inferences on this community in particular. Keeping this all in mind, there is an aim to be critical and mindful while working with such complex theory and identities. Consequently, a mosaic of nuance emerges as there are so many layers of identity and belonging exist within the participants in this study. What it highlights is the importance of their ecology and spaces that they navigate.

Chapter Four – Methods

4.1. Research design

The research design employed in this study was a qualitative one, which aimed at identification, description, and explanation-generation (Crabtree, & Miller, 1999), where identification involved the identifying and naming of what was important within the research (Crabtree, & Miller, 1999). Description looked at the exploration of meanings, variations, and the perceived experiences of the phenomena under investigation (Crabtree, & Miller, 1999). The aspect of explanation-generation explored the related associative patterns, which were based on the experience of the phenomena in question (Crabtree, & Miller, 1999). This all fell within the aims of the study to highlight how the participants made sense of their coming-out process and which correlated to their narratives.

Qualitative research finds meaning in what is socially constructed by people through interaction with their world (Merriam, 2002). The researcher becomes the primary instrument through which the data is collected and analysed, where the researcher expands upon their understanding through multiple means, such as verbal communication or exploring unusual responses (Merriam, 2002). One of the aims of this form of research was to obtain knowledge from the experiences and perspectives of the participants in question (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001). The end product of qualitative research was intended to be rich in description and to aid the researcher in learning and conveying information about the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2002). The highly descriptive nature of the data allowed for rich narrative analysis and fitted in well with the narrative nature of the study.

Qualitative research possesses multiple strengths. One example is that it focused on social processes in significant depth (Griffin, 2004). This was particularly advantageous for the study of narratives as it was in alignment with the aims of this research, as a narrative has been seen as a social process. This form of research design also proved quite flexible, as it assisted in the exploration of quite sensitive topics, and this aided the researcher to establish crucial links between distinct facets of people's existence (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001; Griffin, 2004). It also allowed for ease of conversation and still maintained the gathering of rich quality data. Qualitative research was in line with the aims of this study, which sought to provide a meaningful and non-reductionist view of the focus of the research (Griffin, 2004).

In light of these strengths, there were some meaningful considerations to be discussed in relation to the validity of the qualitative approach. The validity present within qualitative research design took on multiple forms, one such being transactional validity, which entailed the usage of a particular medium which seeks to accurately reflect the constructions of reality by the participants (Cho, & Trent, 2006). This form of validity additionally encompassed trustworthiness, which the researcher intended to consider and attend to, which led to the consideration of research credibility, transferability,

dependability and confirmability (Cho, & Trent, 2006). This seemed to be present in the relationship between researcher and participant, where there was a sense of rapport.

4.2. Participants

The participants comprised five queer Indian individuals between the ages of 18 and 33 years of age, of which two were females and three males. One participant was of Muslim descent and the remaining four were of Indian descent. However, as before mentioned, the term Indian shall be used to refer to all participants. The expressed sexual orientations and gender identities in this sample included gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and gender fluid. At the time of the interviews, two of the participants resided in Gauteng, one resided in the Eastern Cape and the last two in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The number of participants was deemed adequate as there was enough data saturation for a focus on narrative. Rich quality data was gathered through the interviews with the five participants (Fusch, & Ness, 2015). The age range of 18 to 40 was aimed for as this is seen as the age where many queer individuals are out and have come to mature their sexual identities developmentally. This age range has also been used in other studies (Floyd, & Bakeman, 2006; Van Dam, 2014). Data has shown that queer individuals reach a commitment stage in their early 20s, therefore this presents a critical moment in the coming-out process and identity formulation (Floyd, & Stein, 2002). Further evidence for the reasoning of a younger sample is that older participants tend to have a biased recall and tend to remember events as having happened at a later stage than younger participants, therefore skewing the data collected from the interviews (Floyd, & Stein, 2002).

Indian queer individuals were chosen as the participants for this study as it has been found within the South African context that there are gender and cultural differences between the experiences of young men and women in terms of their coming out narratives. Therefore, to highlight such discrepancies, the specific groups such as the one chosen had to be investigated to further illuminate this (Naidoo, & Mabaso, 2014).

4.3. Sampling procedure

The target population for this study was queer individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 40 years old. The sampling technique that was utilised was snowball sampling (Goodman, 2011). This form of sampling employed the sociometric relations of the participant recruited. (Goodman, 2011). This form of sampling proved helpful in gaining access to these hard to reach and marginalised populations (Butler, & Astbur, 2008; Goodman, 2011; Woodley, 2016). The participants were largely recruited through personal contacts who provided assistance with people they knew who met the criteria for this study.

The first participant was found through Facebook (www.facebook.com) and a friend recommended a participant who could partake in the study. The second participant was recruited through a colleague who thought of someone who might be appropriate for this study. The third participant was offered as a potential candidate by a colleague. The fourth participant was a relative of the second participant and was contacted via WhatsApp to participate. The fifth and last participant was referred to the researcher by the fourth participant. These networks allowed for the researcher to recruit participants in what proved to be a highly difficult process to accomplish. This has been found in other research where the Indian queer individual has been challenging to access (Van Dyk, 2010).

Additionally, the issue of being closeted and the fear of being outed posed a significant hurdle when recruiting participants and this was quite an obstacle to overcome with this population. This seems to fit in with literature on sample recruitment with sexual minorities, as they are seen as a particularly vulnerable population that is secretive and concealed in nature (Gray, Jeffrey, Choubak, & Crann, 2015). This might have suggested why recruitment through social media such as Facebook (www.facebook.com) proved helpful but did not recruit the majority of the participants. Social media might have been experienced as exposing, as participants might have felt fearful of being outed. This is suggested as there does seem to be fears around privacy and the sharing of personal information on social media, which makes recruitment tricky to navigate (Gelinas et al., 2017). Although it did provide quite a wide reach and did provide access to one of my participants. However, the intention with using social media for recruitment was that this population has been found difficult to access and social media has been found to be helpful in addressing this dilemma (Gelinas et al., 2017; Gray et al., 2015).

Although issues of representativity, selection bias, diversity of participants and validity have been raised with this form of sampling, with narrative studies this resulted in a significant issue as there is an emphasis on the individual and these issues are beyond the scope of narrative studies (Pasuapathi, & Hoyt, 2009; Woodley, 2016). Snowball sampling can lack some validity due to the fact that the participants are dependent on the choice of the seeds who are the initial recruits (Kendall et al., 2008). This meant that the participants in some instances knew of the other participants through their relationships, due to this form of sampling. This may have impacted upon the data gathered during the interviews.

4.4. Data collection procedures and instruments

The interviews were open-ended in nature (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005). The researcher followed an interview schedule in the undertaking of the open-ended interviews and encouraged the participants to feel freed to lead the interview as well to align with the narrative framework (Appendix D). The interview schedule was designed as a means to probe further into the stories woven by participants

and to allow for more conversational storytelling. The job that the interviewer adopted was one of extracting information from the interviewee, where the researcher allowed the participants to speak for themselves in their own way (Hoffman 2007). Open-ended questioning and gentle probing allowed for deeper reflection (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). It also allowed for better rapport to be established and a sense of ease with the participants, which in turn allowed for earnest conversation (Baptist, & Allen, 2008). The interview schedule was consulted when the topic at hand deviated from the core research questions and aims.

In fitting with the framework of narrative inquiry, the researcher described the storied lives that were portrayed by the participants, and narratives were derived from such stories (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). Additionally, this form of inquiry emphasises the relationship between researcher and participant, where the research has a collaborative nature of (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). This seemed to manifest in the interviews where participants felt they could control the flow of conversation and it was guided by the researcher, leading to a more shared process (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). The idea of the relationship may have also been empowering for the participants, where lending voice to their stories may have echoed something of a caring and connected relationship with the researcher (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). It speaks to the position and role of the researcher within the process and also within the narrative of the participant, speaking to a more active role of the researcher rather than a passive one (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990).

This form of data collection required participants to answer questions in a verbal manner, and their words were captured through audio recordings (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005). These interviews, as highlighted in literature, were quite conversational and active (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005) and participants were encouraged to speak freely and often in a more narrative form of storytelling rather than a question and answer format. Once the interview was concluded, the participants were thanked for their time and the audio recording was stopped.

4.5. Procedure

Each participant was recruited through various means and then contacted. Often this form of contact would occur through telephonic means. Times and dates were agreed upon for the interview. Each participant was shown information sheets (Appendix A) regarding details about the research and what it might entail. They were informed that it would be recorded and an interview that would require them to answer questions as honestly as possible from an interview schedule. Once the participants consented, they were sent consent forms through email if the interviews were to be conducted electronically (Appendix B and C). The forms were completed and returned to the researcher. If the interviews were face to face, the participants were presented with the consent forms in person prior to the interview. Once consent was acquired, the interviews began. The means to conduct the interviews

varied and two were done in person where the researcher met with the participants at a predetermined location that was quiet and private enough to conduct the interviews. Three were done through electronic means, such as Skype and WhatsApp calls. This was done as it was not possible to meet with the participants in person to conduct the interviews.

The interviews over Skype/Whatsapp felt private enough that the participants seemed to be at ease to speak freely. However, as often they were mostly focused on the head and shoulders of the participants, body language was difficult to ascertain which might have provided invaluable information. The interviews conducted over these calls felt adequate as I was able to glean considerable content and meaning from them. Although the distance and a sense of feeling removed from each other might have impacted the relational dynamics between researcher and participant, which may have led to some unease felt by both sides. However, the researcher feels confident that this did not completely derail or hinder the interview process and the outcome was deemed satisfactory.

The interviews were open ended in nature (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005). The researcher followed an interview schedule in the undertaking of the open-ended interview and encouraged the participants to feel freed to lead the interview as well as to align with the narrative framework (Appendix D). The interview schedule was designed as a means to probe further into the stories woven by participants and to allow for more conversational storytelling.

This form of data collection required participants to answer questions in a verbal manner, and their words were captured through audio recordings (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005). These interviews, as highlighted in literature, were quite conversational and active (Potter, & Hepburn, 2005) and participants were encouraged to speak freely and often in a more narrative form of storytelling rather than a question and answer format. The interviews were on average 60 minutes in length. Once the interview was concluded, the participants were thanked for their time and the audio recording was stopped. Additional assistance and counselling services were offered to participants in case of distressing material that may have surfaced during the interviews. This was not taken up by any of the participants. If participants expressed interest in referring someone for the study, these contact details were sent following the conclusion of the interview. The audio files were then taken and transcribed. Once transcribed, they were stored in a secure electronic location. Using these transcripts, the analysis and resulting report was written up.

4.6. Method of data analysis

The analysis method of thematic analysis, as articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), was implemented in this study. This method of qualitative analysis was primarily preoccupied with

identifying, analysing and reporting on the patterns, or "themes", that arose from the data (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). This process was outlined in six steps of analysis, which included familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes from these codes, revision of themes, definition and naming of themes and finally production of the report, which entailed the final analysis and writing up of the final report (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). This method was advantageously flexible and easily comprehensible for qualitative research, making it a method suitable for the nature of the data that was collected (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). Despite the benefits of this method, the diversity of things that were extracted from the data were quite expansive, which proved to be an advantage, however it did prove difficult to succinctly thematise the data (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). However, this methodology helped to make sense of the rich data that was pulled for such diverse participants. Additionally, it also allowed for commonalities to be found across their stories.

Narrative analysis was used in conjunction to determine narratives from such themes. This approach privileged positionality and subjectivity, where the object of investigation was the story itself (Riessman, 2002). Personal narratives usually revolved around characters, setting and a plot (Riessman, 2002) and at times there seemed to be a temporal ordering, however this was not always the case for some participants. It was found that often the participants jumped back and forth between varying influential points in their narratives. These turning points seemed to indicate shifts in the narrator's narrative (Riessman, 2002).

Narrative inquiry allowed for a focus on human experience and how integral narrative is to the lived experiences of individuals (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). It also placed emphasis on the developmental trajectory of one's life and how it connects to a sense of self (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative methods are well suited for meaning-making processes that relate to the self, which fitted in well with the aims of this study (Adler et al., 2017).

This all fit within the assumption of narrative inquiry that stories are both a phenomenon and method of study (Pinnegar, & Daynes, 2007), where words become the data under study, and where there is a focus on the local and specific context, and a widening of understanding of different forms of knowing and epistemologies (Pinnegar, & Daynes, 2007).

The integrated approach presented by Stephens and Breheny (2013) was utilised in this manner. Narrative analysis is not a method, but is rather a theoretical approach with which to interpret the talk of people (Stephens, & Breheny, 2013). This approach looks at the intertwined levels of the personal story (the individual and their experience), the interpersonal (the co-creation that occurs between the narrator and their audience) and the public narrative (which is the publicly available shared narratives about social life, which include moral and social identities) (Stephens, & Breheny, 2013). These levels were applied to emergent themes and the transcripts of the participants.

An eclectic approach was needed and seen as advantageous due to the complex nature of the study and its aims, which looks at intricate identities and narratives. These are used in conjunction as it was seen that alone they do not satisfactorily capture certain aspects of the narrative, such as the usage of only thematic analysis ignoring the narrative structure itself and the usage of narrative alone, which does not lend to psychological understandings of the experiences and identity (Stephens, & Breheny, 2013). Additionally, it sought to fully explore the social, cultural and moral implications present in the narratives presented (Stephens, & Breheny, 2013).

4.7. Ethical considerations

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter that was elicited during the discussion some participants did seem to express certain levels of distress or may have been adversely affected in one way or another. Due to this possibility, debriefing and counselling was made available and offered to the participants that may have required it, where free and accessible options were made available to the participants. However, this was not taken up by any of the participants.

Informed consent was present in the study whereby the participants were made fully aware of the nature and aims of the study as well as its procedure before they provided their consent to be part of the study. This was achieved through the provision of consent forms and an information sheet that outlined the exacting nature of the research and what their participation would entail (Appendix A, Appendix B, & Appendix C). When needed, the forms were sent electronically, completed and returned.

Confidentiality was aimed towards, as the identities and names of the participants were protected. Anonymity could not, however, be guaranteed as the researcher knew the identity of the participant through the process and interaction during the interview. However, anonymity can be guaranteed through the reporting of the findings. The recordings of the data were safely secured where only the researcher and supervisor had access to such data. Once the research report was written, it was securely stored and students as well as academics who are interested in this research for a number of reasons will have access to the findings presented by the researcher. In the report, the identities of the participants were changed to alpha codes, such as Participant A, Participant B, and so forth in order to maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality is highly important as not all participants were out or were still closeted in some aspects or contexts. Additionally, the researcher was made aware of risks and rewards associated with using space to discuss the coming-out process (Manning, 2015). This led to a consideration that participants may have used the space therapeutically, or as a form of providing a voice to them as they have felt disenfranchised in the past, which may have meant that the space allowed for discussions of

social advocacy and power (Stein, & Mankowski, 2004). These issues did surface during the interviews, and such issues proved salient to many of the narratives.

4.8. Reflexivity

The position of the researcher was a significant one, particularly with this group of participants, where participants might have viewed the researcher as the outsider and this could have been linked to a position of power and privilege (Hayfield, & Huxley, 2015). The participants may have felt that the researcher would not be able to understand or accurately represent their experiences, therefore they may have held back certain information or experiences (Hayfield, & Huxley, 2015).

The process of oral storytelling created a relationship between researcher and participant of listener and teller respectively, where there might have been a certain demand upon the teller to elaborate and weave stories (Riessman, 2005). However, as the researcher is an Indian female, there might have been a sense of comfort as the participants might have felt as if they could relate to the researcher in terms of their experiences. This did seem to translate in the relationship as participants seemed to be at ease as interviews progressed. This may have been linked to a sense of comfort with the researcher being an Indian female, someone who could possibly sympathise and understand on the basis of being Indian, which in extension would mean a comprehension of culture, religion and norms attached to this racial identity. This allowed for a sense of shared reflection on this aspect of the Indian community, with a possible advantage of a shared perspective (Milner IV, 2007). However, this is not to negate the differences between the researcher and participants in terms of at times gender, class and gender identities. However, despite these differences, the researcher had to critically engage with such differences in order to grapple with the data the participants presented (Milner IV, 2007).

Although, an additional element could be that because I am Indian and the participants might have had negative experiences regarding the Indian community, it might have caused some unease with me because of this. I could have represented the Indian community that may have been antagonistic in the past, and having asked them to be quite vulnerable with me regarding such experiences might have been difficult. There might have biases present before our interviews even started which could have played a role in the research.

In light of the researcher's own intersectionality, which is Indian, queer, female, middle class, and South African, this study proved impactful upon her own life and coming-out process. There were echoes of the participants within the story of the researcher, and often these resonated with her. There were overlaps in the experience of Indian culture and religion, however not as exact as each participant's experience, and even though the participants were so diverse, there were still experiences and discourses that the researcher could, on a personal level, comprehend and articulate. This did

allow for a deeper and invested engagement with the data and material that the participants provided. The process of this study seemed to almost hold up a mirror for the researcher to reflect upon her own coming out journey as an Indian in her country, and her own identity. The participants and the researcher have allowed for discourses around this under-researched niche to be explored at the level of the experiential and authentic. This may have added a layer of complexity to this study, and allows for a certain amount of reflexivity while engaging with the data. It is through such an engagement with her own identity that the researcher was able to comprehend certain details within the narratives of the participants and allowed for a level of connection during interviews. This level of connection has allowed for possible fervour for future direction in thinking on research in this field and implications for it.

Chapter Five- Data analysis

5.1. *Theme One – Coming out to one's self (the closet era)*

All participants spoke of an era before coming out where they grappled with their identities that were tied to their sexuality and gender. This era was fraught with many obstacles and dilemmas that each participant experienced in varying ways. What linked all participants was an inherent sense that they had always been queer from quite a young age, for example Participant A, a woman who identified as lesbian, expressed the following:

> "So I knew I was gay forever to be honest. I can't remember a point in which I had to like sit myself down and be like you need to come to terms with it. It's something I've always known."

This was echoed by Participant C, who described himself as a gay man:

> "So, from a very young age, I will tell you this, I always knew somehow that I was different. I can't explain this and I suppose as a young child probably five or six you don't have the vocabulary at that point to attach meaning to what you're feeling, but I just knew that I was somewhat different."

There seems to be a sense of being different or having some knowledge of self to know that they were not heterosexual or gender conforming; although these early memories of developing this idea of being "different" seem to be vague and not as fully developed as Participant C, who speaks of not having the vocabulary to truly articulate how he was feeling. However, one should not disregard these initial stages of forming a queer self and identity.

These initial feelings were attached to sexual feelings or attraction as Participant C expressed:

> "Like my attraction to males was different than it was to females, and somehow growing up I kept this inside my mind. I didn't know how to make sense of it and obviously going through your tumultuous teenage years where your hormones start racing …"

Participant D, who self-identified as a gay man, spoke of the early development of his sexuality and attraction:

> "I didn't really have much (of) an idea of much exposure, when I look at guys, I was attracted to them, but I didn't expressly know that it was an attraction."

This sentiment speaks to the idea introduced by Participant C, where there are some innate feelings of attraction and feeling disparate from others, but not quite knowing how to make sense of it. However, when Participant D continued, he spoke of how he went through a series of heterosexual relationships with women, which then highlights an obstacle during this early recognition of such feelings.

Participants did express a sense of struggling with these feelings and they all found ways to respond to these feelings, as before mentioned with regard to Participant D who tried to assimilate and date women. Participant C spoke of the same sort of response to this development of his queer self when he spoke of trying to date women when he was young:

> "I would, you know, ask a girl out on a date and then find a problem with her, you know, oh no, she's fat, she's too ugly … you know will make these excuses to keep up appearances and in that sense I attempted to try and hold on a form of a masculinity that would be acceptable in my context."

These instances speak to gender-conforming ideals of trying to fit in and appear as heterosexual males in their contexts. These behaviours seem to link to what behaviour was accepted for males in their context. However, this posed a dilemma for these participants. Participant E, who self-identified as a gay man, spoke of feeling as if deviating from these masculine norms was something negative and wrong:

> "The thing is like when you force someone into your own psychological role, it's like a psychological violence to them … and it didn't feel as if what I was doing was right or that it wasn't me per se. So, my next solution then was to change, like tone down, and like stay away from the forefront of everything …"

This form of "psychological violence" that Participant E spoke of represents the sort of distress or difficulty a queer individual may experience as a result of attempting to comply with these gender roles, when in reality this is not truly who they are – an inauthentic self.

This was all grappled with as the participants made sense of their real self that was queer and from an early age having knowledge of this self. This exploration of their queer self seems to take the form of building upon the early realisation that they are attracted to the same gender or that they deviated from gender norms. All the participants expressed having this experience.

Participant B, a female who did not particularly identify as a specific gender identity or sexuality but expressed an exploration of asexual and bisexual, spoke of her journey of making sense of her attractions to others:

> "I felt those first blooming prickles of attraction (when) I was about 11."

She also spoke of the early attraction to both men and women:

> "… because I've always sort of been sort of interested in girls as I had been interested in boys, like I had kissed as many in either direction."

As discussed before, one's exploration of one's queer self seems to be inextricably linked to a young, often adolescent, journey of one's attractions and sexual development. This form of discovery also seems to be tied to early relationships or what was spoken of as "first loves".

Participant A spoke of her relationship with a younger woman:

> "I was absolutely mesmerised by this woman, like to be honest she was kind of like my first love."

Participant C also spoke of meeting his partner and how this set his own sexual and gender identity in motion:

> "It really developed, it was kind of beautiful, but we both knew that coming back home from this holiday that we would have to keep up appearance and we would kind of tell the world that we were best of friends … but there was love; it was a love that was developing …"

Participant D spoke of having feelings for another who reciprocated them:

> "I was in Grade 10. I met this guy and it was a very weird situation … we both discovered that we both had feelings for one another … he had a crush on me … I wasn't shocked or anything, it was like I already knew and I knew I had feelings for him as well."

These relationships can be confirmatory, something that can feel affirming for an emerging queer individual.

These relationships could also be linked to one's sexual development, as Participant A described in an early relationship she had with another woman:

> "And I was kind of just coming to terms with sexuality, not my sexuality, but the idea of sex as a human affliction … it wasn't her that led to the realisation because I always knew that was there, but what drew me into that situation was the fact that it was a woman, a girl … I just of kind of knew this about me and for the first time was realising in a physical way."

This speaks to a different coming out to one's self and a story of figuring out one's sexual attraction to others. This can present a different level of coming out: one's physical and sexual attraction.

It is not just romantic relationships that this self can explore, but it can also be friendships, as Participant E spoke of:

> "I met my best friend at the time in high school around mid-Grade 8 … and he was also gay, but the thing with him was that he was very strong will, he was very accepting of who he is and he would fight off anyone that would try to like bother him or bother me in the process."

The relationships can be something protective, as Participant E expressed how this relationship allowed him to convey his gender identity in an open and meaningful way:

> "He was very feisty and I like I just realised this is like the kind of person that I would need to be in order to defend myself, so I guess I'm just drawn to that image and like I became more open about it and I became more extreme in my sexuality. I would like go to school with like red lipstick on …"

The friendship allowed a form of modelling for the participant to provide an example of a gay identity and what he could do in order to protect this examination of his queer self. He went on to explain further:

> "I mean like it helped me accept myself and like slowly things started to change for me."

However, these developing identities are not always tied to adolescence or relationships during this time; it can happen later in life and be an ongoing exploration. Participant B spoke of her evolving identity that has not been fixed or concretised in a period of time:

> "Yeah, cause other people got to do this at 15, like yeah, and like I've always like been into the idea of not needing someone … now I'm considering the idea of coming out … that challenges the ideas of femininity and feminism ..."

With such awakenings that these relationships with other people can present, it can introduce more explorations into the queer self, as Participant B expressed. On this journey there can be questions and hurdles. Participant C spoke of this dilemma of coming to realise one is queer:

> "From a young age I kind of knew something was different; I knew something was going on it was developing; there was a part of me that wanted to almost nurture it, but I didn't know how to make sense of that; how do I speak about this who do I tell?"

He went on to speak of difficulties with substance abuse and how it provided a reprieve from his complex and distressing feelings about his queer self:

> "For a while I actually felt free. I didn't have to think about what are my parents going to say or what's culture going to do or what is God going to do to me …"

Thereafter, when he started with therapy, he began to process these feelings and after experiencing such turmoil he felt that he had no choice but to make sense of his queer self.

The uncovering of this queer self can take other forms. Participant A spoke of the degree of closeted freedom to explore her sexuality:

> "At the time no one suspected anything so I had an amazing sexual discovery because I could get away with whatever I wanted to. Obviously, I was responsible about it, but I could be as free as I wanted to be because of how imprisoned I was, let's put it that way."

She went on to speak about how she never found herself battling with the realisation of being queer like others. Therefore, for some this discovery is not so fraught with difficulties.

This can also introduce narratives of acceptance and comfort with this new self and can therefore lead to stories of trying to affirm this facet of themselves – stories where the participants came to varying degrees and ideas of how they feel about the queer aspect of their identities. Participant B spoke of this in his realisation:

> "It's not like hair colour; you can't just change it; it's who I am."

However, this acceptance of one's self and queer facet of one's life is not always so linear. Participant B came to a variant form of a comfortable space where she could continue to make sense of her identity as a queer person:

> "Knowing your sexuality seems to be tied in a lot with knowing your identity and that is still something I am figuring out as well in a deeply, deeply transitional space."

This suggests a dynamic nature of accepting one's self and the process of coming out.

Participant B also spoke of how there is no fixed timeline of the coming-out process and the closeted self. It may at times take years and is not always exclusively done in one's adolescence:

> "Only the age of 31 did I literally come out, which means I have lived 30 years in the closet even though I had some point eight years prior to that engaged with the fact that I'm gay, right?"

This suggests a non-linear process of accepting one's self as queer and this may progress or need further evaluation. There can be periods where an event or person can trigger an evaluation of this part of their narrative.

5.2. *Theme Two: Knowing a part of who you are is not accepted or tolerated*

An emergent theme through the data collected from the participants was the inherent and learned notion that their queer selves were not accepted or was somehow intrinsically wrong. This notion was born and supported by different experiences and interactions that each participant had with their environments and other people.

Participant C spoke of how he felt a certain amount of guilt and shame around his deviance from the heterosexual norm:

> "I couldn't really understand this, but there was this attached level of shame and guilt from that point to why am I feeling this? And attempting to make sense of it because words like 'moffie' and 'faggot' were those words that the boys all around me would always use … that if you are not a boy, that's liking girls then you are a 'moffie'. If you are a boy taking part in a speech contest or in plays in school, then you are a 'moffie' – that was assigned to me from primary school."

This speaks to how a divergence from heteronormative behaviours or ways of being were seen as negative and is provided with derogatory names. An important factor here is the context of school, and how such negative experiences have shaped the memories of this space. School years are the formative phase in the development of the individual, and through Participant C's discriminatory experiences, this may have impacted negatively upon his coming out and identity at this time and following it.

This also speaks to ideals around performance of masculinity within that cultural context and suggests a gender variance in the performance of gender, which may be culturally pertinent. Participant B touched on the expression of femininity that is expected of Indian women:

> "You know weight issues, Indian parents being like you're too dark, you have scars …"

Body image seems to play a role for Indian females, and such ideals seem reinforced by Indian parents. This is reiterated by Participant A with regard to a particular status and value in light skin, wealth, and status. She expressed this as being something entrenched within Indian culture, and for Indian women in particular who feel the pressure to find a partner who fits all these characteristics:

> "Indians, man. I mean my grandmother to this day still tells me about a guy she met that are like doctors and her top three things are: 'Oh, he's a doctor, he so wealthy, he's so light'… It's kind of worse to be light skinned in my family, because they want the polar opposite male for me."

This reiterates the pressures the Indian women face and the goal of eventual marriage with the ideal partner dictated by cultural norms and what is valued. The institution of marriage itself can be quite gendered through Indian culture and this is questioned by Participant D:

> "I've never been to a gay wedding; never witnessed any sort of proposal or engagement or anything; it's such a confusing area, such a grey area, even though it's legal in South Africa, people still don't embrace it because it's not culturally acceptable. Even the weddings

themselves, the ceremonies they have very gender specific roles, so I don't know. I don't know anyone who's ever given thought to it at all."

This speaks to national and cultural limitations when it comes to same-sex marriage.

This was also provided with religious linkages, where Participant C further elucidated:

> "When you go to the madarasa the malwana will tell you all the gays must be taken on this mountain top and thrown off because they don't have the right to live – you're going to burn in hellfire for all eternity … there were layers that were both cultural and religious that I started internalising from such a young age and in my teenage years I guess I would have you know I tried to be straight."

This highlights the interplay between culture and religion and how it plays a role in how one makes sense of the queer self. However, this led to a negative and painful relationship that Participant C had with his own culture and religion:

> "You know all these existential issues that created this constant framing of again shame and guilt and that anger as to why I'm feeling this way. So, in my 20s I kind of distanced myself completely from God and religion because I was very angry; I was like why am I on this earth, why did you create me only for me to be who I am and yet we persecute them?"

This shows the participant grappling with the conflicting messages that this religion and culture were giving him on a part of himself that he had come to slowly start to make peace with. He further went on to express that he found a more helpful way to practice and experience religion:

> "…I do hold my religion very dear to me it's not something that I want to let go of. I was able to sit on my prayer mat again and I'll never forget the very first conversation I had with God after many many years was, 'I'm so sorry but I'm gay that was the first thing that I said and you're going to kill me and strike me dead now's your time just strike me dead because I've had it I cannot keep this lie going on I need to talk to you I need you'. You know I broke down in tears and from that point on I was like ok that felt good I actually need to do more of these conversations and I started praying more often…"

This relationship was a tenuous one and proved a challenging barrier in Participant C's coming out. However, he was able to revisit prayer in a way that felt cathartic to him and to reconcile his relationship with his religion and community. Sometimes this intrinsic idea of queerness as bad or intolerable can present through interactions with others during one's early years, as Participant A spoke of in her narrative retelling of an event involving a family friend:

> "I obviously knew this was not like a typical person because she dressed very masculinely and I was fixated on that, you know, and my cousin said some nasty things. I mean he was

> like no he wants her to leave and she was very good at her job … and that's why she was hired. But he never liked her, and he always told his father to let her go and fire her. And he would follow it up with completely disgusting things; he would say like you know she's an absolute pig, she lives an immoral life and she needs to go do that somewhere else that's not within our company. He hated her because she was a lesbian, you know … and that hurts from a very young age, I really loved this cousin of mine and my fear then not knowing that I was a lesbian was that what if I was and if he hated me for it … He contributed to why I was closeted for 19 years."

This seems to have created a sense of fear of being in touch with her queer self as a result of witnessing how someone else who also identified as queer was mistreated and how others may have seen her. This seemed formative in how long the participant chose to remained closeted and to keep her "bad" queer self hidden.

The participants often came to learn of ideals of gender and sexuality through a heteronormative lens, which on some level or another seemed to condemn an individual departing from the norms. As Participant E outlines:

> "I came to know about forms of sexuality and heterosexuality and like society's telling me no you're different like this is the kind of role that you need to fulfil in society or these are the kinds of stereotypes …like other kids my age started to understand, okay he's different and things became difficult, like I was constantly ostracised …"

Others began to tell the participant that he was different and therefore that he needed to be forced into a role. If he does not conform to the role, then he will be shunned from others and to some extent society.

Another formative aspect with regard to the developing of this idea of queer as inherently negative or bad is the role played by family. Participant A explains:

> "But what I've always known was that it was not okay in the traditional sense of the word. So, I grew up in Chatsworth, very conservative Indian community. My family, although mildly progressive comparatively to the rest of the people around us, still very traditional, so I decided not to tell them."

This situates fear in being outed to the family, who have indirectly communicated to her an intolerance for a part of herself. This introduces the notion of the idea of traditional and conservatism opposing the queer, putting them at odds with each other. As highlighted by Participant C before, religion, and a conservatism seem to be pitted against queerness and furthermore the individual who may identify as queer.

This applies to many situations that the participants have experienced in trying to question or defy gender norms. Participant B in exploring her identity and sexuality expressed a period where she felt quite distressed about her sense of self and her body:

> "Like it's better, it's more confusing, like I mean for a very long time I thought there was something incredibly wrong with me, like I was a damaged, broken human, because I didn't want anything and then yeah like my family did not help with that at all."

Other people reinforcing the idea that there is something wrong or as the participant said "broken" can become internalised, and not only speaks to the queer self, but can be applied to the entirety of one's sense of being and holistically how one might see themselves, which can also influence concepts such as body image and self-image.

However, this process had evolved to a point where the participant had to resolve these frightening feelings:

> "I'm tired of thinking about my sexuality as being something that's bad or that it's not right …"

This speaks to a sense of agency about how she internalises a sense of self and shows a process of rejecting outside norms and influences. It suggests a sense of growing independence from one's environment and influences.

Although this rejection and battle against outside gender norms can be difficult and can result in conflict, Participant C spoke of this with regard to the religion that he was raised with:

> "Muslim people are ingrained in their belief because the religion itself is so structured; it's a very structured religion that has very structured roles for males and females and the slightest deviation from those roles will raise those eyebrows from people around you and the moment those eyebrows are raised about you, people will forever place you as them as other."

This broadens the lens to include something larger than the individual, an institution of religion and culture. This system of norms is entrenched in a community and way of life, and therefore for an individual to defy this in any way creates conflicts and unwanted attention. The individual becomes set against their religion, community and culture. This becomes something very challenging to oppose or question.

5.3. *Theme Three – Methods of coming out (ways of coming out to others)*

An important facet in the discussion of coming out was how the participants chose or did not choose to come out to other people in their lives. There were varying ways the participants disclosed their sexuality or that their sexuality was exposed to others.

Some methods involved a more verbal form of coming out, which included direct self-disclosure to others. Participant B spoke of how she came out to her mother:

> "Like I brought it up to my mom once that I like chicks and guys, and she was like oh my god, you're just going through a phase. The 'you're going through a phase' quote is a thing that is just going to appear on my skin one day, I've heard it so often."

This represents a way of the participants directly talking to those in their lives and telling them in a clear way that they are queer. However, her mother's response appears dismissive and speaks to a misconception held by her mother about the participant's sexuality.

Participant C had a tumultuous coming out where he, while not sober, came out to his mother over the telephone. Later, while he was more lucid, he sat down and spoke to his parents in person. He said the following:

> "I didn't come out consciously to my family where I sat them down and I said, 'Mom, Dad listen I'm gay … please love me, please accept me' it was more of a case of I contacted a friend who was working at a rehab to say you going to come and pick me up … When I got to the rehab, I said I need to call my mom and they were like why I just need to speak to her and they gave me the phone and my mom answers and I said: 'Ma, I'm at this rehab, I got check in and I'm also gay.'"

Later on, he had to have a conversation with his family about this incident:

> "The only conversation I ever had with my parents about me coming out took place on a Saturday morning about three years ago … it must have been around September, October, it must have been probably the same time as now and we were in Lenasia and my parents sat me down and said oh we want to have a chat."

This seemed as a second coming out event where he had to come out again and reaffirm that he identified as queer. However, the second coming out seemed to be initiated by his parents.

Participant C had a third coming out, which was more public and extended beyond his family. He wrote an article that was published online and was widely spread across the community and outside of it, as he recounted:

> "I wrote this article for Mamba Online: it was my coming out piece so what I was doing during that period is I found a lot of solace in writing. I would just, you know, open up my

> laptop and I would just start writing. I had no idea where it was taking me, but I was just pouring out everything – all experiences from being a child growing up."

This coming out felt more personal and therapeutic for the participant, and more significantly it was initiated and controlled by him as compared to the other instances of his coming out.

Each method of coming out garnered distinctive reactions, which led to Participant C reflecting on his latter more public coming out and how it impacted upon his understanding of those around him and how they might receive his queer self:

> "I think I realised throughout this entire thing of coming out publicly is that okay there's a lot more support than there is hate; that there will be people who don't appreciate or understand the fact that I'm gay or that I'm Muslim, but there are so many others and such a lot of people."

By broadening the audience of his coming out, the participant was able to gain more acceptance and affirmation of his queer self.

Some coming-out stories are not explicit and can be found in subtle interactions, as Participant D spoke of when he came out to his grandmother:

> "I was wearing a necklace that one of my previous … one of my ex-boyfriends had given me and she looked at it and said that's very nice where did you get it and I said that someone gave it to me and she asked me if it was my boyfriend and I stood back and I nodded and that was it."

This highlights what seems like to be a minute interaction, but seems quite impactful and meaningful here. By the mere mentioning of something and an apparent neutral reaction a normal interaction takes place, of something that has not been seen as something quite negative or inherently wrong. This presents an alternate experience as compared to the others.

Participant A expressed various forms of coming out, not all within her control. She spoke of her first love and how she came out to her indirectly:

> "Through sharing our literature with each other we came out to each other and through writing to each other these beautiful poems that sometimes I can't even believe I wrote myself I realised that I was like really falling for her and she kind of said the same to me in her writing."

This seems like a subtle and creative method of coming out to someone, and this feels sincere, but at the same time, some agency and initiative is shown by the participant, which is not reflected in the next story she retold of being outed by an ex-boyfriend to those in her high school:

> "So, what he did was at some point I had given him the password to my email inbox so I knew I had to print something. He logged into my email inbox, printed out all these emails, huge stack of emails, and gave it to the teacher and was like 'She needs psychological help because she is now attracted to women' … he outed me to everyone."

This involuntary coming out took away power from the participant, where personal information was shared by another with what she described as vindictive reasons. This seemed to be mirrored in her coming out to her family as well, as she relayed in her account:

> "What happened was I have a Twitter that's anonymous in the sense that it's not my name and that is like the only space that I have to really tweet about things that are about me and my relationship so that I'm out obviously and the people that know it's me, you know it's me, but if you don't then whatever … So, my aunt came across this profile; somehow realised it was me …and she discovered that I had a girlfriend so she is in Pietermaritzburg. She tells my uncle who calls my uncle in Melbourne, Australia, who calls my cousin in Sydney, who calls my cousin in Isipingo and suddenly calls are flying across the world with people discussing what are they going to do? So, they were planning like an intervention for my mother where they were going to sit down and tell my mother like your child is a lesbian."

This recounting of being forced to come out and by chance having a family member come across a social media page seems to highlight the role that social media plays in providing safe spaces and anonymity. This seemed to allow for her to explore and express something hidden in a safe way, however, it did allow for a certain level of exposure. This form of expression seems to straddle the closeted, hidden self and the self that wishes to be out. This was impactful upon the participant as she further expressed:

> "It was just a very violent outing process. And then it kind of happened again last year with my family where I was kind of forced to tell my mom before they beat me to the punch … and that's something that I have been robbed of because I don't want to have to come out to people, but if I am going to have to do it, if I am going to have to break the news to you at least let me do it in my own time and space and speed, you know don't force it out of me the way the world has consistently done that since I was young."

The word violence has been mentioned here, as Participant E earlier spoke of psychological violence. This idea of violence is not explicit or direct, but is subtle but still impactful in multifarious ways.

Participant D spoke of a form of violence he experienced around masculinity within the Indian community:

> "It's a little easier I think if you can get past what your father thinks; primarily mothers tend to be a bit more understanding in my experience and in the experience of most of the people

> that I've encountered mothers do end to be a little bit more understanding. Fathers tend to take more of a violent stand against it because masculinity is fragile in the Indian community and it comes through a lot, the patriarchy is well and alive."

This seems to highlight a gender difference in the experiences of violence experienced by Indian queer individuals. It also speaks to the varying forms of violence that they have to face through their coming-out process. Where ideas of masculinity or in other words gender conformity are being threatened, this seems to elicit an aggressive response, which Participant D links to patriarchal values and norms.

5.4. *Theme Four: The outcomes of coming out*

Coming out appears to have been a pivotal moment for the participants and different moments of this disclosure of one's queer self seem to be impactful, but also produce various outcomes and reactions from the audiences of these coming out narratives.

How the audience reacts appears to be significant in how the participants subsequently make sense of their out queer identities. These audience reactions varied, however, there was a trend amongst the reactions to coming out. Narratives around coming out to family appeared to be wholly negative and oppositional during the initial act of disclosure of one's sexuality or gender identity.

Participant B spoke of her mother's adverse reaction to her disclosure that she is attracted to women and men:

> "Like I brought it up to my mom once that I like chicks and guys, and she was like oh my god you're just going through a phase. The 'you're going through a phase' quote is a thing that is just going to appear on my skin one day, I've heard it so often."

This reaction by her mother seems to be invalidating and apathetic; that it is something fleeting and not a considerable part of the participant.

Participant C spoke of a quite inimical reaction from his parents after it was made known to them that he identified as "gay":

> "But at that point immediately it was like I don't want to hear about this; they were so closed off and defensive that I thought I'm not even going to say anything at this point, they're probably going to burn me at the stake, so I just kept quiet, you don't ever speak about it, you don't talk about it to me, I don't want to hear it …"

This speaks to a sense of complete denial of the existence of this part of the participant's self and seeks to almost bury it to a point of non-existence.

Participant D spoke of a reaction by his mother that was quite emotional and surprising to him:

> "She was very shocked, she cried, it was shocking to me that like she wouldn't be receptive to it because of her exposure it was a bit confusing to me … so she eventually started to, you know, entertain the idea she couldn't say the word 'gay' for a while after … so it was pretty tolling on our relationship because she felt like she didn't know me, so we had to sort of re-establish everything. Since day one, everything I did became sort of a male or female type of situation like this stereotypically male trait and this is a stereotypically female trait so you shouldn't do that. She tried to get me to be as masculine as possible."

This shows how impactful the coming out is on the relationship of participants with their parents, and how this may change. There is a sense of the participant becoming a new person and having to re-establish their relationship with their parents.

Participant A spoke of her mother confronting her about her sexuality after she had come out to her:

> "She basically said every hurtful thing a parent can possibly say to a queer child, you know like 'How could you think this is normal? What have I done wrong? What would make you do that? It's absolutely disgusting. You're a complete disgrace.' I mean name a box and I'll tick it in that conversation. But I was very level headed in that conversation, I kept telling her that this isn't abnormal. She would be 'This is abnormal. Maybe you need to go to a doctor.' I would be like 'It's not abnormal, you're a doctor, you know I don't need to go to a doctor because what could you do? 'She wanted to send me to a doctor and then it was like 'I'm going to take you to the temple before we go to the airport like someone needs to pray for you.' It was just like, but like I was expecting all of it and so it was very hurtful to hear all those things."

Narratives of abnormality within the individual have arisen during this excerpt, and there was a deep hurt felt by the participant. There was also an idea that the sexuality of the participant could be rectified through methods such as prayer or a doctor, as if the queer self is a problem that needs to be fixed or abolished.

However, there were more positive reactions by other people in the family, such as siblings, as Participant C expressed when speaking of his brother:

> "My brother's just sitting at the table and just shaking his head, he was really upset with the way things were unfolding and he's reached a point where he's relatively accepting, like he doesn't understand it, like he would ask me these questions …but I appreciate the fact that he attempts to try and understand it, you know; he's also told me that he doesn't accept it because religiously of a certain belief he loves and cares for me as his brother and whatever choice and decision I make he will stand and support me."

This represents a compromise that the participant has found with his brother, where there seems to be an understanding and also a curiosity by his brother rather than the previously discussed conflict with Participant C's parents. Participant D also spoke of his sister being one of the first people he had decided to come out to:

> "I think [sister's name] was one of the first people that I told because I knew she just wouldn't care and sometimes seeing us and doesn't care is somehow an indication that you know what, this isn't such a big deal it's not something that I really need to be wary of or afraid of."

Other extended family members also had more supportive roles to play in the participants' coming out. Participant A said the following about her uncle:

> "My uncle has actually been very supportive and has told me that he doubts in his experience that they will ever get over this and that it shouldn't hinder me from actually being comfortable and being open in my relationship because I mean that's me."

Participant A spoke of others having to take time with dealing with her coming out, and spoke of the individual nature of each person in her life and how they might be processing this facet of her identity:

> "So, everyone is like dealing with it in their own pace. My sister and my mom have decided not to address it at all. My aunt only just started speaking to me again, so I'm not sure where she is in that whole process."

When participants decided to come out to other people outside of their families, there were mixed reactions and varying experiences. Friends on the whole represented positive interactions, as Participant A explained in her discussion of being outed at school and how her friends were a protective factor in helping her deal with the difficulties it posed:

> "Then like obviously the three guys kind of banded around me or like you know this is a safe space, you can tell us whatever you want, and they really helped me get through that."

What is also crucial following the coming out events that each participant had faced was how they made sense of their new emerging queer selves thereafter. This differed across the participants, but what seems to link them is a sense of exploration and questioning a series of structures that have been present in their lives. Participant C spoke of the newfound confidence he found in being open about his relationship and to an extent about being his authentic self around others:

> "I was engaged and I was in a relationship and processing it and making sense; it's a lot more difficult and different when you are in hiding than when you are out. It's such a strange dynamic that just starts unfolding because finally now I can socialise my relationship as a

> relationship you know, it's not gay relationship that's you know close the windows, close the doors, no one needs to see you. I mean, I'm in a relationship with another man now and so be it and if you like it or if you don't like it then you don't like it, so that's in a nutshell."

This comes from a security and comfort that is felt within the participant in order to share this. However, there still seems to be stifled freedom when he spoke to his family:

> "I must be honest, my parents still don't know that Z and I are together and they can't lie and say that they don't know because I've been doing the silent protests with them or almost like rebellion on my WhatsApp profile I will put up pictures of [partner's name] and I together and I'll put it on Facebook … I don't even know if they should accept it, I just would like them to respect my decision and to respect my choice."

This seems to be a contrast to the more out, confident participant in public and he seems to be closeted to a certain extent with family. This seems to be in alignment with Participant A's experiences:

> "It's awkward for me because I feel like we're talking about everything else besides the elephant in the room. Um … and I would rather us talk about it and bash it out and fight about it rather than pretending it's not real because that's another form of invalidation. I tell you my truth and you just decide not to talk about it. I know that they're struggling with it. So, I'm just giving them time to be able to talk about it, you know? I'm kind of the one who has done the 'wrong', in inverted commas. I'm having to be the patient one, I'm having to be emotionally mature one, the adult in this situation and wait for them to be able to talk about it … moving forward, there's a lack of effort on their part to really address what I've talked about and told them. So, I'm giving them time, but at some point, I'm going to have to bring it up again and where are you on this? Because I don't want to like go family vacations and everyone's in a couple and there's me … I want to be able to bring [partner] to family events, but it's not going to happen, but I want them to say it before I accept it because at the end of the day, I have myself to protect, I have a partner to protect and it must never be said that I didn't try. Whatever it is, you need to like say it so I know where I stand."

This excerpt surmises this conflict of wanting these different lives to be integrated and merged in harmony with each other, where the queer self can re-assimilate into the family, and this part of the self can be welcomed. However, it still presents a tension for the participants to negotiate with their families, despite being out and quite confident in other spaces, and this seems to change when around family. This presents an interesting dilemma for participants, which may be rooted in processes that go beyond the individual, that may explore family, culture and religious structures present in the Indian community.

5.5. *Theme Five – Culture, family, gender and race at a crossroads – are they so inextricably linked?*

What seemed to come up often was the ideas around family and how it is so entrenched in culture and religion – so much to the point where often the two are almost always spoken of together, where the family and the community's values almost seem to align.

Participant A spoke of her uncle's reaction to her coming out as queer as somewhat conflicting:

> "Well you know I will always love you and we have this image we want for you in our heads and very typical we wanted you to marry a light-skin, wealthy Indian accountant kind of thing."

This represent a common thread amongst participants where there are expectations of them that they seem to defy when they come out as queer and these expectations seem framed by Indian cultural norms. This seemed to be echoed by Participant E, who spoke of his parents' reaction to finding out about his queer self:

> "They didn't accept it, they're just like no, this is not what our religion teaches and this is not the manner that you should be living and we had a lot of hopes and expectations for you and this is what you do and like I mean like they were very bitter."

He goes on to describe Indian culture as one that is quite conservative and yet ambivalently accepting of queerness:

> "The Indian community is very conservative … the South African society thinking that like gay people are on their own and like a different set in our society and like a lot of people would just say well I accept that let them do whatever they want, but within their own families it was an issue like no you can't do this and you can't be like that like it's OK if other people love, but you shouldn't be gay …"

There are conflicting ideas of accepting it to an extent if it is removed enough from one's family, but when it becomes an individual that is within the household, it takes on a different tone. This seems to speak to a distancing of queerness and this aspect of the participants' selves. It is denied or distanced from the family, as if it does not belong, therefore it should not be acknowledged. The severity of this does seem to depend on the context and family as well, as Participant C explained in his experience of being a gay man in his culture:

> "One of the questions I don't think I will ever be able to answer is how do you claim to love your child unconditionally when that love is met with certain conditions of how he or she should be, and that's exactly the space that I find myself in with my parents and I think that many Muslim gay men would find themselves in that position as well. I know a few gay Muslim males who when they shared their stories where my brother found out that I was gay

> and exposed us to the entire family and now my family, I got to live at home and I'm not allowed to move out because I'm in the family business it's like a sense of entrapment."

This shared story speaks of feeling trapped and stifled, and seemed to be present in these narratives around families, particularly around parental figures. He went on to describe his culture and specifically the context and what he believes might impede his coming-out process:

> "So for me that is why I say that Muslim culture, Muslim belief is so stringent and strict that it would even make parents give up on the natural inclination to love their children unconditionally, and then that coupled with the fact that we are Indian and Indian culture just kind of it makes this whole issue a lot more complicated because my mom would get these questions every second week, 'So when is [Participant's name] getting married?' and she will phone me and say: 'Oh, you know this aunty called to find out and she said she's got this nice girl for you and you know she sent me the picture and she's such a pretty girl, don't you want to see the picture?' and I think to myself after everything you would still raise this and I don't blame her, maybe the way she sees it is maybe if she tells it to me long enough I will actually become straight again."

It seems that even though one might be out to one's family, there is still a denial of this facet of one's self. A conflict seems to be present between what he experienced as culture and religious practice were at odds with the roles parents should play in their child's life. It is as if the individual becomes split within the family space as the potential conforming individual within the family, and the queer self outside of the family.

Participant D has tried to make sense of this strife between the individual and cultural family ideals:

> "I know, families are supposed to understand that you're an individual, you are born into their families right, you carry their genetics, but ultimately you are your own person and if you cannot explore the facets of your own individuality in a comfortable and expressive environment, you become stifled and that can lead to all sorts of things; suicide rates of LGBT+ are incredibly high in South Africa; it's still a bit of a taboo."

What also arose from his discussion around the Indian community was the divisions in the rules with genders, and the different performances of it:

> "I think a lot of the hypocrisy in the Indian community as well plays a very big role they're allowed to go out drinking and smoking and swearing and their daughters have to be perfect angels and mothers are allowed to go out gossiping and creating problems for family members and stirring the pot when their sons are supposed to study hard, work, become doctors and lawyers."

This highlights the important aspect of gender as experienced in the Indian context. The participants in their varying experiences all expressed pressure to conform to a performance of gender and how to be in terms of their biologically assigned gender. This expression of gender roles presents the idea of performance of gender and in different spaces, not just the family space.

An intriguing cultural binary with Indian families is the idea of secrecy, which co-exists with an invasion of privacy. This is articulated by Participant A:

> "Big sense of avoidance. Indians don't talk about things. It's swept under the carpet and bubbles up and bites …Very toxic, and as well it's a big thing they have to adjust to, and every other emotional response following that to any emotional issues is inevitably informed by that toxicity of not addressing the problem at hand … So, it's just like, Indian families in general are very invasive and there's no boundaries and I have to accommodate that."

The participant articulates that there is an avoidance of particularly uncomfortable truths or problems, while her family still are invasive in her private life, which has implications for her life economically, and her relationship:

> "But it carries over into other things like where am I going to live next year. Like economically it would make so much more sense for [partner] and I to move in together, we would be together for five years, but I can't do that because my mom is like well you need a place so that we can come up too. And I'm like I'm never going to be free of you people."

Participant B seems to acknowledge this as well in her reflection on Indian families and her own experience:

> "I've never been good at keeping secrets from her because it not something you brought up to do in our household, uh you kind of always tell your parents everything. I don't know if that's true about Indian households cause my friends spend a lot of their time sneaking around and it seems kind of exhausting."

This leads to a sense of some truths being hidden, whilst there are some that are impinged upon by parents. This represents an interesting dilemma for individuals and their coming-out process, as it touches on the hidden and overt.

Participant D puts forward a notion as to why nonconformity to the Indian community and its norms can be so difficult for some individuals:

> "Being alone for a human being is not natural, it's terrifying, it's intimidating … that's why people are afraid, because being different it means that you're no longer expressly part of that community, if you're a gay, you're no longer a part of the Muslim community, no longer part

of the Indian community. You're now standing on your own, you're facing the world alone – that's terrifying. So getting yourself established, that's important."

This speaks to almost an alienation from the Indian community and how impactful this can be for the queer person.

Chapter Six – Discussion and conclusion

6.1. Discussion

6.1.1. *Theme One – Coming out to one's self (the closet era)*

The participants spoke of their closeted eras where they battled with their queer identities, and this had early beginnings in their youth. There were early experiences of inherently knowing "from a young age" that one was queer and different from the norms around them. This seems to fit in with early stages of a coming out model, where stage one speaks to identity confusion and looks at how the queer individual may perceive their behaviour, thoughts and feelings as potentially queer (Cass, 1984). Such experiences of queer individuals recognizing same gender attractions from a young age is echoed in research (Floyd, & Stein, 2002). However, as the participants expressed, this was not always sequestered to a specific age or period of development. Additionally, there is speak of an inherent feeling of difference and queerness that may not have necessarily had the accompanying language. Therefore, the question arises of the individual did not label this difference as queerness, then the stage model cannot be applicable here. Participant B spoke of the fluidity of this stage, where it came later in her life. Further solidifying the limited applicability of the stage model of coming out.

These initial unknown feelings and earliest recognition of an emerging queer self, insinuate that they did know that these feelings were different. What might have informed this might have been cultural scripts around that time around heteronormativity, which detailed that one is only meant to be attracted to the 'opposite sex' (Pasuapathi, & Hoyt, 2009). Even though these feelings arose they were acknowledged, they were not accepted quite yet by the participants.

Therefore, in order to capture these early, unnameable feelings one needs to look elsewhere in the literature. This did manifest in feelings of difference and abnormality, and this might be tied into the idea of a loss of heteronormativity and what this meant in their contexts (Sand, 2015). With this potential loss, there seemed to be a certain distress for the participants as they felt they had to repress this deviation. This also tied to narratives of feeling ostracized and aberrant, where it was described as a "psychological violence" to make the participants try to conform to gender norms. This is an intriguing idea of violence experienced by queer individuals, where often research on violence in queer groups are spoken of in overt terms such as through discriminatory acts particularly in the South African context (Mohamed, & Trangoš, 2014; Sanger, 2010). This highlights a potentially neglected form of "violence" against queer individuals by forcing them to conform and deny their authentic selves.

This type of violence could speak to the misalignment the emerging queer narrative had with the canonical narrative of heteronormativity (McLean, 2008b). Therefore, silencing these individuals which can be seen through a figurative lack of language to describe it or even naming of such feelings

(McLean, 2008b). They grappled with these differing narratives, the accepted one that they thought they ought to follow, versus the one they felt fundamentally to be true. They straddled both worlds, which has been shown in the literature to be true for queer individuals, where their upbringing in a heteronormative world was at odds with the emerging subculture of queerness that they had begun to discover (Fingerhut, 2005). This can be seen as the duality they had to negotiate as they attempted to make sense of what this meant for them at those times in their past (Fingerhut, 2005).

This experience was spoken of as a feeling but not quite being able to articulate it with language quite yet. These early signs of recognition of sexuality were linked to feelings of attraction to another, where often it was a relationship that initiated the coming out of individuals. This presents a nuance in the coming-out process, narratives and stories of sexual attraction ignited identity processes, where often feelings of sexual attraction initiated ideas of being queer, spoken of as 'blooming prickles' of attraction, which happened young in life. There seemed to be an emphasis and significance of first loves or relationships, which helped to expedite the coming-out process. It not just romantic relationships, but friendships that also aided coming out (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018).

These relationships seemed to weave through each participant's narratives. The friendships allowed for supportive environments to affirm their identities as queer, and it also allowed for safe spaces to express such identities, which is integral to the coming-out process (Guittar, 2014; Smuts, 2011). These relationships seemed to bolster the individual's sense of confidence about themselves not just as individuals, but also with regard to starting to accept the queer parts of their selves (D'Aguelli, 2003). Where even the one example of Participant E having a friend who also identified as gay who modelled a queer self that the participant himself aspired to be at the time. This led to Participant E exploring his expression of his queer self and his gender identity stating he would go to school with "red lipstick" on, which shows a stronger association with his queer self as part of his coming out process (Cass, 1984). Where support from family members or friends allowed for albeit cautious exploration, the relationships both romantic and platonic, speak to the sense of belonging that individuals need to feel safe in order to come out (Smuts, 2011; Van Zyl, 2011). This has been found to be the case in South African literature with regard to the necessary conditions for an individual to feel secure to come out. Therefore, these relationships prove essential in the closeted era as they are what may encourage individuals to progress and become more open with their gender identities. Such supportive and significant relationships seemed pivotal in their narrative identities where before it was something seemingly 'bad' to be repressed, to something that could be explored and corporealized.

These relationships also highlighted the varying aspects of coming out, such as sexual, physical attraction, emotional, and mental forms of attraction that formed towards others, and coming to terms with these ideas still formed crucial moments in their coming out processes. Such forms of attraction as told through stories of these relationships helped the participants make sense of their queer

identities as something exciting and genuine. This seems to align with the tenets of narrative identity theory, where stories of influential people have been known to change how one makes sense of something that was quite difficult (Atkins, 2004).

A prominent theme was the experience of stigma, which played a large role in disrupting the coming-out process, which seems to align with the literature within the South African context (Smuts, 2011). Stigma did present in various forms, whether it be direct discrimination through name calling or threats of violence, or experiences of other nonconforming individuals being prejudiced. However, this seemed to be limited if participants could "pass" as heterosexual, as Participant B expressed (Smuts, 2011). This seemed to represent a stressor to the coming-out process where an "anti-gay" rhetoric was experienced within their respective communities, which sought to impede the process and seemed to almost disempower the participants.

An important aspect here, as brought up by Participant C, is the usage of substances as a means of coping with being closeted. However, this seemed to allow for a form of escapism and an opportunity for him to feel free from the pressures of his family and culture to conform. Participant B spoke of a closeted freedom in her ability to "pass" as heterosexual while still exploring her sexuality. This may present a form of incongruence, where an individual can explore feelings of their queer self while still confined by certain limitations of being closeted. This represents a navigation of boundaries and an exploration of the periphery of what it may mean to come out and engaging with their queer selves while still remaining constricted.

Stifling one's sexuality in order to meet societal and cultural norms (Sand, 2015) was seen as fairly characteristic of this context and these communities. In alignment with other studies done in the South African context, the socio-cultural and religious context proved significant here (Naidoo, & Mabaso, 2014). Although each story provided various nuances about how each chose to stifle or slowly accept their queer self, there were early ideas that this part of themselves was something to be hidden and they all attempted to conform to what their cultures dictated as being acceptable. Participant C spoke of trying to date women, and how he had tried to hold onto a form of masculinity for fear of persecution from people in his community, and Participant E chose to downplay his feminine side in order to better integrate into society.

These feelings of conflict and confusion seem to be present in models as outlined by Cass (1984), where the second stage speak of noticing these discrepancies between themselves and others, and identity confusion where there was inner turmoil about one's queer self. This incongruency of two selves can also be seen as the discrepancy between the personal narrative which is the queer self and the master narrative of heteronormative society and culture (Hammack, 2008). This seems to cause a certain amount of distress, suggesting the beginning of a narrative of resistance which is reflected in literature (Hammack, & Cohler, 2011).

What seemed to prove as a compass in navigating the early feelings of difference was speaking of attractions during the adolescent period. This seemed to fit in with the generally accepted phase of coming out and early recognition of queer identities (Floyd, & Stein, 2006). This can also be found in Cass's (1984) first two stages of coming out, where there is a sense of confused feelings around the queer behaviours and an identity comparison whereby individuals start to notice discrepancies between themselves and others. What these models do not highlight are the subjective experiences of how the participants handled these confusing and conflicting feelings.

The participants' experiences seemed to also fit the narratives of isolation, pain and confusion present in Graziano's (2004) study of still being closeted. The emotions that underlie this period seemed to be a struggling with their queer selves. However, this seemed to move towards a gradual sense of comfort with this burgeoning self.

The participants in this study had different catalysts for a sense of acceptance. For Participant C this was a therapeutic encounter following a deeply distressing event, and having to face his new self and for Participant B it was a relationship that allowed her to come to terms with her feelings of attraction towards women. These events allowed the participants to "face" their new sexuality and gender, as there was a sense that they could not repress it anymore. However, this process did not seem to be fully realized and took time over a period of years. For Participant C, this took numerous years. This process of acceptance seemed to start in the pre-closet era and seemed to advance over time. This seemed to fit in with modern thinking on coming out and a more critical understanding of the process, which is seen as fluid and ever-changing (Guittar, 2014; Phelan, 1994).

This form of developing acceptance seemed to fit in with the coming out models as they relate to the stages of applying a self-identified label to who they are, and a certain identity tolerance (Cass, 1984; Floyd, & Stein, 2002)., This shows an increased sense of commitment to the new self-image, which then incurs the next phase of the act of coming out (Cass, 1984; Floyd, & Stein, 2002).

6.1.2. *Theme Two: Knowing a part of who you are is not accepted or tolerated*

What emerged through each narrative of every participant was the notion of their queer selves as something inherently abhorrent and wrong. Some meaningful emotions that were linked to this were feelings of guilt and shame. This was a result of discriminatory experiences, such as Participant C being called derogatory names by others at school or the threat of persecution from his community in the context of religion.

This speaks to a narrative of early strife and struggle, where it is often rooted in cultural norms, and often begin with investigation of a negative experience and can thereafter lead to reflecting on what emotions come about and how this might play a role in their life story (McAdams, & McLean, 2013).

Where Participant C spoke of feelings of guilt and shame led to him asking himself questions around why he was feeling that way. Hurtful, derogatory words like 'moffie' and 'faggot' that galvanized ideas around sexual orientation, and gender roles as exemplified by participation in plays and how this was deemed as something un-masculine and nonheterosexual.

This narrative highlighted the significance of culture and religion in this specific context and how influential the religious narratives around queerness can prove to be in the coming-out process. This may have proven impactful in why Participant C chose to come out many years later and may have hindered his coming-out process. His experience of religion felt persecutory and it led to thought of this part of himself as inherently wrong. This led to him questioning and grappling with not just his sexuality, but also his religion and culture. How the religious and queer identities became intertwined and seemed to inform the other, they mutually reinforce each other (Nash, 2008). It became what he had termed "existential" issues, something that felt ingrained and that played a large role in his identity. It stifled his coming-out process until he had to seek alternative means to deal with his emotions. His life experience seemed to be tied in to ideas of marginalisation and silencing, which were the result of the words of religious figures around him (Simien, 2007). This introduces the idea of inequality of individuals in the context of religion. This all speaks to how Participant C used a form of "stigma management" which allowed him to come out and become visible in particular spaces that he experienced as unaccepting of his homosexuality (Knous, 2005).

Religion has been found to be a particularly compelling aspect of Indian culture, and Participant C's experiences seem to mirror what was found in literature relating to negative terminology of being deviant and different, which was upheld through religious indoctrination (Hendricks, 2016). It was religion that played a large role in his understanding of his queer self, which manifested in the scripture and practices present in his religion and culture tied to his identity as Indian. This seems to speak to the research on Indian queer individuals, where there is often narratives of queerness as something that is not sanctioned by religion or culture (Hendricks, 2016). This seems to suggest that this finding can be possibly indicative of the queer Indian experience. It also highlights an instance where these two intersections come into conflict with each other and from what Participant C expresses it feels potentially violent, and extreme in the sense that those who are queer will be eliminated. The imagery conjured up the participant feels quite provocative and telling of this conflict where there is a sense of almost killing off the queer self.

It is not just the experience of religion that presented obstacles for coming out, what Participant A highlights culturally set expectations for Indian women, which speaks to finding a male partner who is fair skinned, and has a job imbued with high prestige and belongs to the wealthy upper class. These characteristics speak to markers of identity that are praised and promoted in Indian culture namely heterosexuality, material wealth, status, and fair skin. These highlight the pressures what might

characterise the intersection of female and Indian. It also feels relevant that the person who holds and communicates such pressures is her grandmother, who represents the transfer of cultural, and gender norms from older to younger generations (Singh, 2008). This represents an inherited cultural script that the participant eventually rejected through an acceptance of her own queer identity (Dave, 2011). This can also constitute an element of supervising that norms are adhered to (Shoham, 2005).

Family members also presented narratives of queerness being different and immoral. Participant A spoke of hearing a family member's comments about a woman dressed like a man. These comments were derogatory, and set up a narrative for her that queer individuals are immoral and "disgusting". Such negative connotations contributed to her being closeted for 19 years. It contributed to a fear of herself being viewed through such a prejudiced lens. This speaks to the narrative that Participant A internalized which, after a process of making meaning, entailed that those who do not conform their gender through gender expression, sexual orientation, and gender identity are not accepted and are cast out. The language used here to describe this individual is telling of the apparent antagonism against her and painting her as something inhuman using the label of 'pig' and living an immoral life, almost dehumanizing her.

What might also be appropriate to use here is the matrix of domination in this anecdote of the masculinely presenting individual (Dhamoon, 2011). This represents structures at play here that go beyond the individual, and this can be found in the clear power differential that exists here (Dhamoon, 2011). Within this formative experience, the cousin who is identified as male holds the power here where he holds influence over the woman's employment. He decides to reinforce the narratives of heterosexual minority that those who do not conform to gender roles and heteronormativity are inherently nefarious. The cousin as the male seems to hold the privilege here, and the woman in the story as well as the participant here seem to suffer the penalty in different ways (Dhamoon, 2011). Where the participant seemed to remain closeted, due to experiences like this, as it made her question not just herself as a queer woman but also her relationship with someone she was close with and was fond of. This experience disturbed many aspects of herself. This speaks to how intersectionality can be used to interpret an event for deeper meaning, and how impactful a story can be in the trajectory of one's coming out.

What also feels important to note here is an idea of loss, a relational loss with her cousin (Dave, 2011; Kotze, & Bowman, 2018; Sand, 2015). The realization of potentially losing her cousin, as he might reject her queerness too, seemed to arouse feelings of loss. How this loss then gets taken up, is that eventually this loss is seen as necessary so that the queer, authentic self can emerge. However, as the participant speaks about, it takes many years to process and accept this loss, as it instilled a deep fear within her.

These feelings led to the “bad” queer self being hidden out of fear, and fear of stigmatisation, which seems to fit in with literature on the South African queer population (Smuts, 2011). This also related to certain spaces where it did not feel safe to come out: religious spaces, family spaces and others, which seemed to severely obstruct the development of their identities. They began to see the queer facets of themselves as something wrong and it might have felt conflicting for them to think on it and then to make it public to others, to hide it rather than make it visible (Smuts, 2011). This makes this sense of self feel constantly in fluctuation (Smuts, 2011).

The family unit seems pivotal in this formation of the “bad” queer identity, where family members seem to almost reinforce the cultural and societal norms around gender. Within this context, family seemed pivotal to this idea and it often seemed so inextricably linked to societal and communal ideas around gender and which roles the participants felt they had to fulfil. This seems to align with literature with regard to the importance of family in the coming-out process (Denes, & Afifi, 2014). However, there does not seem to be a focus on the closeted era and what this means for individuals who may be coming to terms with their gender identities and how families are poignant during this period. However, the family unit does seem critical in thinking of individual’s narratives and their coming-out experiences (Hansen, 2000).

An important cultural aspect was the idea of tradition and conservatism and the pressure participants felt to conform to these ideals. Participant A spoke of this, and her experience growing up in a conservative Indian community. This seems to fit in with literature that does speak of Indian culture as traditionally conservative (Chopra, 2014). Although her family seemed progressive in some aspects, they seemed conservative with regard to gender and sexuality. This acted as another obstacle to her coming out and choosing to perhaps not come out to certain people in the community she grew up in.

The experiences of their community also influence their concepts of gender and the norms that accompany it. What is also crucial here is the introduction of gender roles and how these fit in with the participant’s ideas of their queer emerging selves. Participant E spoke of having to integrate what society told him and the kind of role he needed to fulfil, which was informed by his peers when he was younger and how different he felt and wanted to behave in conflict with these roles. These early experiences come into conflict with the queer selves, and it is through these heteronormative lenses that individuals may be fearful to be their authentic selves (Smuts, 2011). This is in line with the understanding that society is heteronormative in nature and individuals do have to negotiate their gender identities as something that is seen as the outlier or exception, which can prove arduous (Guittar, 2014).

This all seemed to mark early periods where the participants struggled with their gender identities while navigating their respective contexts. However, as time passed, a sense of empowered ideals

started to surface where participants grew weary of feeling shameful of their emerging queer selves. This speaks to a growing robustness of this new facet of themselves; a process of almost rejecting outside influences that are present in family, religion, and culture. They sought to have a more individualised sense of self that was independent of the contexts they were in. This seems to align with the stage of adopting the developing gender identity, and committing to the accompanying life it may entail, and also encompasses the acceptance of the queerness bringing about a more positive outlook (Cass, 1984; Floyd, & Stein, 2002). This took on varying degrees across participants and there seemed to be subtle ideas of acceptance, which might manifest in the recognition that their environments may never change, that the stigma may be too deep rooted for there to be change; therefore, it is the individual who has to find a sense of acceptance internally, as Participant C explained. Amore direct statement, as Participant B expressed, of feeling tired of having to be made guilty of her sexuality. This for her meant shedding the former guilt and shame, and to come to terms with this developing self.

6.1.3. *Theme Three – Methods of coming out (ways of coming out to others)*

The methods of coming out proved compelling in this study, where the various manners in which the participants chose to come out or were outed by others were diverse. What was also crucial here was that there was no one event of coming out, but a series of events that were considered as coming out in each participant's longitudinal narratives. This seemed to agree with the literature, where coming out is an ongoing process and is not limited to one moment in time (Neville et al., 2015).

Few participants had chosen verbal, direct disclosure, fitting in with the common method of coming out found in literature (Guittar, & Rayburn, 2016). However, the participants had a series of coming out events before verbal disclosure and a process of affirmation of the queer identity they had been fostering over time (Manning, 2015; Phelan, 1993). An alternative coming out method included the article written by Participant C which is a public method of coming out. This seemed to highlight coming out narratives that extend beyond the immediate family, and to the public (Sand, 2015). This form of coming out felt powerful for the participant was the process of narrating his story particularly his childhood felt cathartic for him. This exemplifies how the act of coming out can itself provide an opportunity for meaning making for one's queer identity.

Methods of coming out seemed to differ depending on the audience, where for parental coming out events direct verbal disclosures seem to be preferred. It seemed to differ across participants where there were one-on-one interactions with a parental figure, as Participant B communicated when she came out to her mother. Participant C, however, spoke of having to sit down with his parents and brother, after a tumultuous way of spontaneously coming out to his mother over a phone call. His second coming out was initiated by his father and seemed to be something that clarified the previous

incident. This speaks to the multiple coming out events with families, as seen in literature (Denes, & Afifi, 2014).

Participant C presented an intriguing idea that he did not come out consciously, and while under the influence of a substance, chose to come out to his mother. This seems to provide evidence that the queer self is so innate that it could no longer be hidden and found a way to be expressed. It is almost as if speaking it out loud made this sense of self more conscious and tangible for the participant. This form of speaking something almost into existence, although this is a part of himself that seemed to always be alive, needed an audience to become something real (McLean, 2008a). It is through following this involuntary self-disclosure to his parents that he was forced to come to terms with his repressed gender identity and sexuality and this event provided a catalyst for the subsequent coming out events with his family.

The direct self-disclosure seemed more intimate and private behind closed doors and smaller spaces. This idea of spaces and the different spheres seemed to inform the chosen forms of coming out. It also brings about the discussion of social media and its role in the coming-out process in the modern day. This seemed to be present in Participant A's coming out, where she chose a form of limited disclosure by using a Twitter account, while still having a sense of anonymity. However, this outed her to family and the coming-out process to her family seemed to be beyond control as she felt forced to speak to her mother. For this participant this seemed to be a common narrative, where she was forced to come out when someone released private emails. This idea of being outed by others deserves more exploration.

This speaks to ideas around power, where the participant became powerless in her own coming out and another who at the time had power and privilege chose to expose her queer identity through a malicious act of leaking her private emails with another woman (Dhamoon, 2011). The heterosexual male seemed to hold the power, and the participant had her own privacy violated. Another element to this is the link between power and narrative voice, where the participant was not able to verbalize her own coming out in that space and felt disempowered (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore, the idea of being outed by others and forced to disclose one's queer identity, shifts the power from the queer individual over their own narrative to the person who elects to mishandle the process. This might be due to a belief that coming out narratives do not wholly belong to the queer individual themselves, and often is misunderstood by others such as the example of the aunt outing her. It seeks to take away control over the process from the individual.

The coming-out process is not always meditated and pre-empted, and is at times, as this participant's testimony reveals, unpredictable. One can be forced to disclose one's sexuality or gender identity if others already know about it or it may compel one to come out. This seems to take away the agency from the individual in their own coming-out process, and as Participant A expressed, it felt "violent"

to her. This form of coming out felt as if it had almost robbed her of her power, control and voice in the process, where she had to conform to the whims of others rather than choosing how she wanted to share this part of her self and identity. This was another allusion to violence, which is in alignment with Participant E speaking of psychological violence when being forced into roles that society dictated. This links to an idea that when one feels imposed upon and when there is a certain force employed in the coming-out process, it has a hurtful, negative impact upon the individual. It feels violent and seems to have left an imprint upon the participants.

This participant's experiences of a "violent" coming-out process exemplifies how this process does not always allow the individual agency and freedom in making their identities public (Smuts, 2011; Van Zyl, 2011). It is a premature exposure of someone who may not feel confident or comfortable enough to disclose such a private part of their identities. This may support the idea of a narrative that feels beyond the control of the individual, which can entail the weaving of narratives in the participant's life that may not be controlled by her and takes away the power from the individual in her own narrative, which seems integral for narrative identity (Somers, 1994). This may have derailed her exploration and development of her identity, and through such a negative experience seems to have created a sense of mistrust.

There did appear to be gender differences in the experience of this idea of violence. Participant D spoke of a more aggressive, physical violence or threat of violence when male Indian queer individuals challenged masculine norms. The participant linked this to patriarchy, which seems to fit in with the literature on Indian culture (Radhakrishnan, 2005; Wassenaar, Van der Veen, & Pillay, 1998). This seems to fit into Participant C's experience of deviating from what was deemed acceptable for men to do and how to behave, and if one had to deviate from that, they were verbally assaulted. It seems that there are gender differences in experiences of femininity and masculinity in this group of individuals, as defined through Indian culture.

6.1.4. *Theme Four – The outcomes of coming out*

The reactions and outcomes of the events of coming out were found to be telling in the process of developing one's identity.

As with the methods of coming out, the audience for the coming out proved crucial here. There seemed to be a pattern when the audience was family, particularly parental figures. When participants came out to parents it on the whole seemed to produce negative outcomes. Participant B's mother seemed dismissive of her queer identity, calling it a "phase", framing it as something temporary rather than an anchored aspect of her identity.

Participant C found that his parents reacted adversely to him confirming that he is "gay" and opted to rather not speak of it. In this case it was also invalidated as with Participant B, where it was spoken of something removable and easy to deny or surpass.

Participant D spoke of how his coming out had an impact on his relationship with his mother, and how he felt he had to re-establish their relationship, as if his coming out reformed their relationship. This focuses the significance of the relational aspect of audiences to narrative identity, where relationships can be thought of as changed, however it goes beyond the binary of losses and gains, but rather changed relationships, where there is not necessarily a loss, but there may a loss of the heterosexual child by a parent (McLean, 2005; Sand, 2015).

Participant A spoke of her mother's reaction to her coming out, and how hurtful it was for her. Her mother's response of trying to "fix" her daughter and her sexuality seemed to be echoed in the stories of Participant C as well. Religion and even medicine were used as means of a solution to almost "cure" or abolish the queer aspect of self. This could be linked to the South African study by Msibi (2012) and its finding that there was a fear of queer students being contagious, and therefore queerness being something to be "cured" or expelled. This notion seems to be feared by others and reinforced by families. This also speaks to the tensions between religion and the queer individual, where religion is often pitted against the individual's gender identity (Abes, 2012; Msibi, 2012; Simien, 2007). Participants expressed that it felt injurious to them to hear it from parental figures. However, it seems as if these relationships are in continual development and do not wholly seem lost.

Although, this aspect of disappointment and hurt must be acknowledged here. Where this narrative of those in their family having negative reactions illustrate how the participants might have viewed this as adverse event and might have made sense of the emotions this incurred. Such emotions were acknowledged but in order to manage such difficult feelings, Participant A felt she had to be the 'adult' in the situation and take on the responsibility of holding the discomfort and patience for her parents. This however feels like it is limited and there is a sense of frustration expressed by the participant with the current circumstances, as she does hold firm to the belief that she has to also preserve her queer self. This speaks to a narrative of a confrontational model of emancipation, where she wishes to be free from the restrictions of having to suppress her queer intersectional self (Hammack, & Cohler, 2011). Although this might be removed from practice, as the participant may find implementing this model challenging in reality but there can be an element of hope here.

There also does seem to be an element of victimhood present in the responses of family and the subsequent events as narrated by the individuals. However, as it can be understandable provided the discrimination that these individuals have faced, there is the idea that this response might be as a result of having experienced loss of control and agency in their own coming out narratives. Victimhood might be a way of managing this, and this also highlights how power might feature in

relationships between the queer individuals and those they come out to, where there might be an exchange of it. Where queer individuals might not always feel empowered to take agency in their own narratives, as a result of having negative experiences of feeling disenfranchised (Atkins, 2004).

However, what seemed highly invaluable was the amount of support and positive outcomes that the participants experienced from other people or audiences, as is to be seen in coming-out stories to other family members, such as Participant C's brother, Participant A's uncle or Participant D's sister. This form of durable support could also be located in friendships, as in the case where Participant A expressed that it was friends who formed a part of her support structure navigating her queerness in school. It is with this form of support that she felt she could feel safe enough to continue to explore her emerging identity as queer. This feels protective and conducive to the coming-out process, and also to her sense of security and confidence (Smuts, 2011). This also speaks to the significance of belonging and how this is linked to one's multiple identities and experiences of different communities (Moreau, 2015).

After having to face the reactions of others and the outcomes of their coming out, the participants find themselves in different stages of acceptance and openness. There seems to be a disconnect between different spheres in their lives. Participant A and C spoke of this where they expressed a sense of relief being open and authentic in their public lives, however, when it comes to family and family spaces, there is still a sense of avoidance or denial of the queer self. There seems to be something liberating yet also restricting about this conflict. The "elephant in the room", as Participant A termed it, seems to represent the facets of their identity that do not seem to be accepted, cannot be acknowledged, despite it being something that has been made known. This becomes two different selves, in different spaces, where there is a lack of integration between the different facets of their identity, their private individual lives and in the family and communal spaces.

This seems to correspond with the notion that outness is not binary and is rather a degree of outness (Clawson, 2014). This is exemplified by the varying levels of outness that these participants experience in their different spaces and contexts.

6.1.5. *Theme Five – culture, family, gender and race at a crossroads – are they so inextricably linked?*

Navigating various physical spaces and spheres of belonging seemed to feature prominently in the participant's accounts. The participants spoke of a variety of spaces and they each found particular ones challenging. Participant A spoke of difficulties she faced being a lesbian woman in the workplace and how she had to formulate a performance of herself that fit in with the pressures of her workplace, where she had to be selectively closeted in order to avoid harassment from male

colleagues. This seems to highlight the inequalities and disadvantage she faces through her own intersectionality of being female and lesbian in her workplace (Samuels, & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). This seems to highlight structural inequalities present within workplace spaces for queer women (Jordan-Zachery, 2007).

However, this seemed to present a predicament for Participant A. As she is femme presenting, it has allowed her to "pass" as heterosexual, however when she wishes to disclose her sexuality by presenting her relationship with her partner, her sexuality is invalidated (Rosario et al., 2009; Smuts, 2011). This creates a contradictory dilemma, as she can "pass" as heterosexual, which allows her a certain degree of safety, but when she wants to express her queerness, it is discredited (Kotze, & Bowman, 2018).

Participant E spoke of an unlikely space of discrimination within the queer self. He spoke of an intolerance of femininity expressed by males in the community and various roles prescribed by the community for queer men, where any deviation from what is termed the "cisgender white male middle class" is deemed unacceptable. This presents the various intersections of privilege within the queer community itself and complicates this space for people like Participant E. This may be impactful upon his identification with the community and sense of belonging within it (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986; Sand, 2015; Van Zyl, 2011). It seems to limit his membership to this community and has an impact on whether he feels linked to this community, which he does not. This highlights that some intersectional identities are more accepted than others in queer male spaces, where femininity in queer men is not often welcomed, and illuminates privileged identities within the queer community (Dhamoon, 2011). This speaks to the notion that even within communities that have been stigmatized and marginalized there are levels of privilege and power, that itself reinforces heteronormative norms on gender.

Participant D spoke of how a change in national context allowed him perspective on his South African nationality, where a different Western context felt more affirming of his gender identity and sexuality, in comparison to where he grew up. This speaks to a sense of belonging at the macro level and to the idea of citizenship (Gopaldas, 2013). This is in alignment with Moreau's (2015) idea of intersectional citizenship, which relates to the national context.

Participant D went on to talk about how the various areas within Durban seem to provide boundaries and distinctions between experiences. He also spoke of class, and the values of belonging to each community, which represents a nuance to identity and speaks to the ideas around class – how class seems integral to the experience of the queer individual and seems to mould the coming-out process (Abes, 2012).

Participant A reiterated the disparate experiences in family spaces as compared to spaces where she was around friends. She spoke of an ease when she was around her friends and having to be silent on

these issues when she was at home with her family. There is a manoeuvring around spaces and a selective silence around queerness. It seems as if the environment and the people within it play integral roles in one's sense of self and the idea of being out. There is an inhibition placed upon the out self and even though one has come out, the environment still causes one to be at a different stage of their coming-out process. Therefore, the coming-out process can alternate between the stages of identity pride and synthesis and identity confusion, where there is strife between different facets of self (Cass,1984). This reinforces the idea that the coming-out process is not linear and rather oscillates between different stages, dependent on a number of factors, namely the environment and context (Guittar, & Rayburn, 2016). This fits in with the notion that it is a process that is constantly managed and negotiated.

Participant B also spoke of one's performance of sexuality or gender identity in public spaces and how this can often be scrutinised by others. This links to a performance of one's gender identity in the different systems that they journey through. One's relationship becomes a marker of identity, and who one can choose as a partner is linked to how one defines one's self, and this comes under examination when done in public spaces. When one is public with one's queer self, this can cause fear of stigmatisation (Graziano, 2004; Smuts, 2011).

Participant D expressed an important element of belonging within particular communities, and what might be impactful upon some individuals to come out is the threat of being ostracised by their Indian community, which may incur fear. This touches on the importance of belonging, and when people are unattached or ostracised from particular communities what impact this may have (McMillan, & Chavis, 1986). This seems to fit in with the local literature on how South African queer individuals need a level of security and safety in order to come out (Smuts, 2011; Van Zyl, 2011). If Indian individuals suspect they may no longer belong to the Indian community, they will be discouraged to come out. Especially seeing as how their coming out might have potentially disrupted something in their communities, as been theorised in literature (Mayo, 2007). This might also indicate ties to the Indian community and how this might have had a part to play in their narrative identities. Where if they did not feel tied to it and found ways to identity without it, therefore it would not feature prominently in their narrative identities now (Hasford et al., 2017).

What feels relevant here is the ideas around a closed community. Where a sense of conforming to norms here is felt as an intense pressure to hide one's queerness. If such a deviance from heteronormative norms is sensed there is a worry of being distanced from belonging to the Indian community (Shoham, 2005). The pressure to conform to this closed community presented in the participants trying to adjust to their heteronormative worlds, such as Participant C trying to date women. However, when one starts to recognize their queer identities, there is often shame and guilt

around this, this highlights how belonging to a closed community can produce a certain amount of distress if you go against norms.

Now what is compelling here with these individuals is that even though there does seem to be s rupture between their Indian and queer identities which leads to a series of difficult questions; there is a revisiting of the community in order to make sense of their membership to the Indian community. So this raises the question that despite one feeling ostracized from their community, can they still feel and identify as part of it. This can be seen in Participant C's journey with his religion, where he had to reject the religious teachings he was exposed to growing up around queerness, and he had to have a personal, and intimate experience with it to reconnect with it. Therefore, his relationship to his religion and to an extension community had changed in nature from one that was distressing to one that felt more fulfilling. This shows that even though the nature of the identification and narrative changed, there can still be a sense of belonging to one's community. This can be true even if one has felt distant from their community. This also relates to one's agency in becoming a queer Indian and a sense of becoming, as present in a constructionist lens of intersectionality (Prins, 2006). All this speaks to how individuals are able to redefine their relations to their sense of being Indian and queer over time.

However, what must also be acknowledged here is how remaining closeted might have allowed some time for self-reflection and to carve out their queer emerging selves (Dave, 2011). Especially after having experiencing negative sentiments from those around them. Therefore, remaining closeted or choosing to take time to forge these new queer identities, should be less about feelings of fear but rather the closet can allow for a safer space for contemplation and meaning making (Dave, 2011).

When contemplating the family as a space, it can be deduced that the family has played a key role here for these participants, and this seems to concur with the literature. Family seem to feature prominently in proximal process, particularly in coming out. Family is seen as a significant aspect of Indian culture, where often the family unit is seen as core to the experience of the individual (Hansen, 2000; Singh, 2008).

6.2. Conclusion

When contemplating the themes presented in this study a number of compelling findings were discussed when looking at the coming-out process and how this influenced the narrative identities of Indian queer individuals.

What seemed central to this specific group of participants was the significance of family, spaces and the different intersections at which they found themselves. There were a variety of experiences that served as focal points in their narratives that either proved conducive to or restraining of their coming

out and subsequently their identities as queer. What proved invaluable were support structures, growing confidence in the gender identity, and an acceptance that their environments may not change.

Stressors in their environment represent obstacles in their narratives, and these included discrimination, an inherent sense that their queer selves were wrong, religious persecution, relationships with families undergoing change, and the various spaces they traverse.

All of these fell under the difference in experiences as found in the intersection of the various identities each participant represented, but also the similarities in their narratives due to their positions within Indian and queer communities. There seemed to be an underlying sense of belonging and identification with various communities throughout their coming-out developmental narratives.

The complexities and nuances highlighted how diverse the experience of queer individuals can be and how valuable it is to research such narratives. It is through the analysis of this rich data that contributions can be made towards how academics think of this population group and their identity formation. It is with such discussions of the different levels of identity and its intersections, where privilege and disadvantage, and subtleties present in human experience, that one can continue to delve into what it means to be queer in the present day and going forward.

6.3. Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study, there are a number of implications and recommendations for consideration. The participants' experiences illuminated a series of difficulties that Indian queer individuals face in their coming-out process. Family, religion, spaces, culture, and gender all seemed to feature prominently within the narratives of the participants and impacted upon their coming-out processes. What seemed to underlie much of it was a sense of their queer selves being something different and in a sense abnormal. Within Indian culture and norms, which have been found to be collectivist, traditional and conservative, these queer individuals had to overcome various obstacles to be in the position that this study found them. What this study illuminates is how these individuals have made sense of their intersectional identities through the lens of gender, sexuality, race, religion, and class; how they now navigate spaces within their lives and the difficulties these present, namely spaces such as the workplace, family and the queer community.

In light of such stresses, recommendations for further research to be considered here is to look more specifically at some of the nuances that were present in the coming-out narratives of these individuals, particularly with regard to looking at religion, and gender differences across participants.

Additionally, looking at the school experiences of all individuals and how impactful it was for them at that phase of their development, this area may need further research and possible intervention. The

coming-out process was found to be diverse and unique, but what made this group of participants so unique was the lens through which they experienced this as Indians. The South African Indian culture presents a distinct experience through which these people developed their queer selves, and as such presents an invaluable source of rich information and experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that this group of individuals be allowed to be more present within current and future research as they represent such a marginalised and unique group.

References

Abes, E. S. (2012). Constructivist and intersectional interpretations of a lesbian college student's multiple social identities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 83*, 186-216.

Adler, J. M., Dunlop, W. L., Fivush, R., Lilgendahl, J. P., Lodi-Smith, J., McAdams, D. P., ... & Syed, M. (2017). Research methods for studying narrative identity: A primer. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 8*, 519-527.

Anthias, F. (2013). Intersectional what? Social divisions, intersectionality, and levels of analysis. *Ethnicities, 13*, 3-19.

Atkins, K. (2004). Narrative identity, practical identity and ethical subjectivity. *Continental Philosophy Review, 37*, 341-366.

Ault, A., & Brzuzy, S. (2009). Removing Gender Identity Disorder from the" Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders": A Call for Action. *Social Work, 54*, 187-189.

Babbie, E., & Mouton (2001). *The Practice of Social Research (South African ed.).* Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Baptist, J. A., & Allen, K. R. (2008). A family's coming-out process: Systemic change and multiple realities. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 30*, 92-110.

Bauer, J. J., McAdams, D. P., & Pals, J. L. (2008). Narrative identity and eudaimonic well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 9*, 81-104.

Blanchard, T. C. (2007). Conservative protestant congregations and racial residential segregation: Evaluating the closed community thesis in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties. *American Sociological Review, 72*, 416-433.

Breshears, D., & Beer, C. L. D. (2016). Same-sex parented families' negotiation of minority social identity in South Africa. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 12*, 346-364.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

Butler, A. H., Alpaslan, A. H., Strümpher, J., & Astbury, G. (2003). Gay and lesbian youth experiences of homophobia in South African secondary education. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 1*, 3-28.

Butler, A.H., & Astbury, G.A. (2008). The use of defence mechanisms as precursors to coming out in post-Apartheid South Africa: A gay and lesbian youth perspective. *Journal of Homosexuality, 55*, 223-244.

Call, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *30*, 1771-1800.

Cass, V.C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *20*, 143-167.

Chang, R. S., & Culp Jr, J. M. (2002). After intersectionality. *UMKC L. Rev.*, *71*, 485

Chappell, P. (2015). Queering the social emergence of disabled sexual identities: Linking queer theory with disability studies in the South African context. *Agenda*, *29*, 54-62.

Chopra, N. (2014). Comparing sex-attitude of westerners with respect to the contemporary traditional Indian sex-attitude. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, *5*, 204-208.

Clawson, J. (2014). Coming out of the campus closet: The emerging visibility of queer students at the University of Florida, 1970–1982. *Educational Studies*, *50*, 209-230.

Collins, P.H. (2017). The difference that power makes: Intersectionality and participatory democracy. *Investigaciones Feministas*, *8*, 19-39.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *19*, 2-14.

Cook, S. H., Sandfort, T. G., Nel, J. A., & Rich, E. P. (2013). Exploring the relationship between queerness and mental health among black South African gay and bisexual men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *42*, 327.

Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (Eds.). (1999). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.

Crossley, M. L. (2000). Narrative psychology, trauma and the study of self/identity. *Theory & Psychology*, *10*, 527-546.

D'Augelli, A. R. (2003). Coming out in community psychology: Personal narrative and disciplinary change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *31*, 343-354.

Dave, N. N. (2011). Indian and lesbian and what came next: Affect, commensuration, and queer emergences. *American Ethnologist*, *38*, 650-665.

Davids, N., & Matebeni, Z. (2017). Queer politics and intersectionality in South Africa. *Safundi*, *18*, 161-167.

Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, *9*, 67-85.

Denes, A., & Afifi, T. D. (2014). Coming out again: Exploring GLBQ individuals' communication with their parents after the first coming out. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *10*, 298-325.

Dhamoon, R. K. (2011). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, *64*, 230-243.

Ellard-Gray, A., Jeffrey, N. K., Choubak, M., & Crann, S. E. (2015). Finding the hidden participant: Solutions for recruiting hidden, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*, 1-10.

Fingerhut, A.W., Peplau, A., & Ghavami, N. (2005). A dual-identity framework for understanding lesbian experience. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 29*, 129-139.

Floyd, F. J., & Bakeman, R. (2006). Coming-out across the life course: Implications of age and historical context. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *35*, 287-296.

Floyd, F. J., & Stein, T. S. (2002). Sexual orientation identity formation among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Multiple patterns of milestone experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *12*, 167-191.

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*, 1408.

Gelinas, L., Pierce, R., Winkler, S., Cohen, I. G., Lynch, H. F., & Bierer, B. E. (2017). Using social media as a research recruitment tool: ethical issues and recommendations. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, *17*, 3-14.

Goodman, L. A. (2011). Comment: on respondent-driven sampling and snowball sampling in hard-to-reach populations and snowball sampling not in hard-to-reach populations. *Sociological Methodology*, *41*, 347-353.

Gopaldas, A. (2013). Intersectionality 101. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *32*, 90-94.

Gouws, A. (2017). Feminist intersectionality and the matrix of domination in South Africa. *Agenda*, *31*, 19-27.

Graziano, K. J. (2004). Coming out on a South African university campus: Adaptations of gay men and lesbians. *Society in transition*, *35*, 273-286.

Griffin, C. (2004). The advantages and limitations of qualitative research in psychology and education. *Scientific Annals of the Psychological Society of Northern Greece*, *2*, 3-15.

Grzanka, P. R. (2016). Intersections and Configurations. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *45*, 501-503.

Guittar, N. A. (2014). “At First I Just Said ‘I Like Girls’”: Coming Out with an Affinity, Not an Identity. *Journal of LGBT youth*, *11*, 388-407.

Guittar, N. A., & Rayburn, R. L. (2016). Coming out: The career management of one’s sexuality. *Sexuality & Culture*, *20*, 336-357.

Halperin, D. M. (2003). The normalization of queer theory. *Journal of homosexuality*, *45*, 339-343.

Hamilton, K. M., Park, L. S., Carsey, T. A., & Martinez, L. R. (2019). “Lez be honest”: Gender expression impacts workplace disclosure decisions. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *23*, 144-168.

Hammack, P. L. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *12*, 222-247.

Hammack, P. L., & Cohler, B. J. (2011). Narrative, identity, and the politics of exclusion: Social change and the gay and lesbian life course. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *8*, 162.

Hammack, P. L., Thompson, E. M., & Pilecki, A. (2009). Configurations of identity among sexual minority youth: Context, desire, and narrative. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*(7), 867-883.

Hansen, T.B. (2000). Plays, politics and cultural identity among Indians in Durban. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *26*, 255-269.

Hansen, T.B. (2005). Melancholia of freedom: Humour and nostalgia amongst Indians in South Africa. *Modern Drama*, 48, 297-315.

Hayfield, N., & Huxley, C. (2015). Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with lesbian and bisexual women. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*, 91-106.

Hoffmann, E. A. (2007). Open-ended interviews, power, and emotional labor. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *36*, 318-346.

Hansen, T.B. (2000). Plays, politics and cultural identity among Indians in Durban. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *26*, 255-269.

Hansen, T.B. (2005). Melancholia of freedom: Humour and nostalgia amongst Indians in South Africa. Modern Drama, 48, 297-315.

Hasford, J., Abbott, K., Alisat, S., Pancer, S. M., & Pratt, M. W. (2017). Community involvement and narrative identity in emerging and young adulthood: A longitudinal analysis. *Identity*, *17*, 40-54.

Hendricks, P. (2016). Queer Muslim love: a time for ijtihad. *Theology & Sexuality*, *22*, 102-113.

Hill, N. L. (2009). Affirmative practice and alternative sexual orientations: Helping clients navigate the coming-out process. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *37*, 346-356.

Hird, M. J. (2000). Gender's nature: Intersexuality, transsexualism and the 'sex'/'gender'binary. *Feminist Theory*, *1*, 347-364.

Hutson, D. J. (2010). Standing out/fitting in: Identity, appearance, and authenticity in gay and lesbian communities. *Symbolic Interaction*, *33*, 213-233.

Jordan-Zachery, J. S. (2007). Am I a black woman or a woman who is black? A few thoughts on the meaning of intersectionality. *Politics and Gender*, *3*, 254-263.

Jithoo, S. (1991). Indians in South Africa: Tradition vs. Westernization. *Journal of Comparative Studies*, *22*, 343-357.

Kendall, C., Kerr, L. R., Gondim, R. C., Werneck, G. L., Macena, R. H. M., Pontes, M. K., ... & McFarland, W. (2008). An empirical comparison of respondent-driven sampling, time location sampling, and snowball sampling for behavioral surveillance in men who have sex with men, Fortaleza, Brazil. *AIDS and Behavior*, *12*, 97.

Khan, K. (2017). Intersectionality in students movements: Black queer womxn and nonbinary activists in South Africa's 2015-2016 protests. *Agenda*, *31*, 110-121.

Khan, S. (2012). Changing family forms, patterns and emerging challenges within the South African diaspora. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *43*, 133-150.

Klein, K., Holtby, A., Cook, K., & Travers, R. (2015). Complicating the coming out narrative: Becoming oneself in a heterosexist and cissexist world. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *62*, 297-326.

Knous, H.M. (2005). The coming out experience for bisexuals: Identity formation and stigma management. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *5*, (look up on google scholar).

Kotze, E., & Bowman, B. (2018). Coming-out confessions: Negotiating the burden of lesbian identity politics in South Africa. *Journal of homosexuality*, *65*, 1-18.

Kwesi, B., & Webster, N. (1998). Black, lesbian and speaking out. *Agenda*, *13*, 90-93.

Livermon, X. (2014). Soweto nights: making black queer space in post-apartheid South Africa. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *21*, 508-525.

Mandivenga, E. C. (2000). The Cape Muslims and the Indian Muslims of South Africa: A Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *20*, 347-352.

Manning, J. (2015). Communicating sexual identities: A typology of coming out. *Sexuality & Culture, 19,* 122-138.

Mayo, C. (2007). Intersectionality and queer youth. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, *4*, 67-71.

McAdams, D.P. & McLean, K.C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *22,* 233-238.

McAdams-Mahmoud, A., Stephenson, R., Rentsch, C., Cooper, H., Arriola, K. J., Jobson, G., ... & McIntyre, J. (2014). Minority stress in the lives of men who have sex with men in Cape Town, South Africa. *Journal of homosexuality*, *61*, 847-867

McCormick, T. L. (2015). Queering discourses of coming out in South Africa. *African Studies*, *74*, 327-345.

McDonald, J. (2016). Expanding queer reflexivity: The closet as a guiding metaphor for reflexive practice. *Management Learning*, *47*, 391-406.

McLean, K. C. (2005). Late adolescent identity development: narrative meaning making and memory telling. *Developmental Psychology*, *41*, 683.

McLean, K.C. (2008). Stories of the young and old: Personal continuity and narrative identity. *Developmental Psychology, 44,* 254-264.

McLean, K. C. (2008). The emergence of narrative identity. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *2*, 1685-1702.

McLean, K. C., Breen, A. V., & Fournier, M. A. (2010). Constructing the self in early, middle, and late adolescent boys: Narrative identity, individuation, and well-being. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 20*, 166-187.

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *14*, 6-23.

McNay, L. (1999). Gender and narrative identity. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 4,* 315-336.

Mahomed, F., & Trangoš, G. (2016). An Exploration of Public Attitudes Toward LGBTI Rights in the Gauteng City-Region of South Africa. *Journal of homosexuality, 63*, 1400-1421.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis, 1*, 1-17.

Milani, T.M. (2014). Querying the queer from Africa: Precarious bodies – precarious gender. *Agenda, 28,* 75-85.

Miller, J.G., Das, R., & Chakravarthy, S. (2011). Culture and the role of choice in agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101, 46-61.

Milner IV, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, *36*, 388-400.

Moreau, J. (2015). Intersectional citizenship, violence, and lesbian resistance in South Africa. *New Political Science*, *37*, 494-508.

Msibi, T. (2012). 'I'm used to it now': experiences of homophobia among queer youth in South African township schools. *Gender and Education*, *24*, 515-533.

Naidoo, D., & Mabaso, M. (2014). Sexual orientation and disclosure: Coming out narratives by young men and women in urban setting in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Gender and Behaviour*, *12*, 6189-6194.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, *89*, 1-15.

Neville, S., Kushner, B., & Adams, J. (2015). Coming out narratives of older gay men living in New Zealand. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, *34*, 29-33.

Parent, M.C., DeBlaere, C., & Moradi, B. (2013). Approaches to research on intersectionality: Perspectives on gender, LGBT, and racial/ethnic identities. *Sex Roles*, *68*, 639-645.

Pasupathi, M., & Hoyt, T. (2009). The development of narrative identity in late adolescence and emergent adulthood: The continued importance of listeners. *Developmental Psychology*, *45*, 558.

Phelan, S. (1993). (Be) Coming out: Lesbian identity and politics. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *18*, 765-790.

Phoenix, A., & Pattynama, P. (2006). Special issue on intersectionality. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *13*, 187-192.

Pillay, K. (2015). South African families of Indian descent: Transmission of racial identity. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *46*, 121-135.

Pillay, K. (2017). " The Coolies Here": Exploring the Construction of an Indian" Race" in South Africa. *Journal of Global South Studies*, *34*, 22-49.

Pinnegar, S., & Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, 3-34.

Porter, J. R. (2010). Diversity, macrosociology, and religious belonging: Using mixed-level models in examining spatial variation and the closed community thesis. *Sociological Focus*, *43*, 128-149.

Potter, J., & Hepburn, A. (2005). Qualitative interviews in psychology: Problems and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *2*, 281-307.

Prins, B. (2006). Narrative accounts of origins: A blind spot in the intersectional approach?. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *13*, 277-290.

Radhakrishnan, S. (2005). "Time to show our true colours": The gendered politics of "Indianness" in post-Apartheid South Africa. *Gender and Society*, *19*, 262-281.

Rahman, M. (2010). Queer as intersectionality: Theorizing gay Muslim identities. *Sociology*, *44*, 944-961.

Ramsamy, E. (2007). Between non-racialism and multiculturalism: Indian identity and nation building in South Africa. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, *98*, 468-481.

Renn, K. A. (2007). LGBT student leaders and queer activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified college student leaders and activists. *Journal of College Student Development*, *48*, 311-330.

Reygan, F., & Henderson, N. (2019). All Bad? Experiences of Aging Among LGBT Elders in South Africa. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *88*, 405-421.

Rice, C., Harrison, E., & Friedman, M. (2019). Doing justice to intersectionality in research. *Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies*, *19*, 409-420.

Riessman, C.K. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Eds.). *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (pp. 695-710). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Riggle, E. D., Mohr, J. J., Rostosky, S. S., Fingerhut, A. W., & Balsam, K. F. (2014). A multifactor Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Positive Identity Measure (LGB-PIM). *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, *1*, 398.

Robertson, M. A., & Sgoutas, A. (2012). Thinking beyond the category of sexual identity: At the intersection of sexuality and human-trafficking policy. *Politics & Gender*, *8*(3), 421-429.

Rosario, M., Hunter, J., Maguen, S., Gwadz, M., & Smith, R. (2001). The coming-out process and its adaptational and health-related associations among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Stipulation and exploration of a model. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *29*, 133-160.

Rosario, M., Schrimshaw, E.W., Hunter, J., & Braun, L. (2006). Sexual identity development among lesbian, gay and bisexual youths: Consistency and change over time. *The Journal of Sex Research, 43,* 46-58.

Sadarangani, U. (2000). Nowhere woman? A reflection on being Indian, lesbian, and academic in the United States. *American Studies International, 38,* 79-88.

Samuels, G. M., & Ross-Sheriff, F. (2008). Identity, oppression, and power: Feminism and intersectionality theory. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, 23,* 5-9.

Sand, S. (2015). Coming out, being out: Reconciling loss and hatred in becoming whole. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society, 20,* 250-266.

Sanger, N. (2010). 'The real problems need to be fixed first': Public discourses on sexuality and gender in South Africa. *Agenda, 24,* 114-125.

Shields, S. A. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles, 59,* 301-311.

Shoham, E. (2005). Gender, traditionalism, and attitudes toward domestic violence within a closed community. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology, 49,* 427-449.

Simien, E. M. (2007). Doing intersectionality research: From conceptual issues to practical examples. *Politics and Gender, 3,* 264-271.

Singh, A. (2008). A critical evaluation of attitudes towards nuclear, joint and extended family structures among people of Indian origin in Durban, South Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 39,* 453-470.

Smuts, L. (2011). Coming out as a lesbian in Johannesburg, South Africa: Considering intersecting identities and social spaces. *South African Review of Sociology, 42,* 23-40.

Solomon, D., McAbee, J., Åsberg, K., & McGee, A. (2015). Coming out and the potential for growth in sexual minorities: The role of social reactions and internalized homonegativity. *Journal of Homosexuality, 62,* 1512-1538.

Stein, C. H., & Mankowski, E. S. (2004). Asking, witnessing, interpreting, knowing: Conducting qualitative research in community psychology. *American Journal of Community psychology, 33,* 21-35.

Stephens, C., & Breheny, M. (2013). Narrative analysis in psychological research: An integrated approach to interpreting stories. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 10,* 14-27.

Van Dam, M. A. (2014). Lesbian Disclosure, Social Support, and Depression: A Geopolitical Perspective. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *11*, 233-244.

van Dyk, D. (2010). Lesbian Lives Unlimited. *A REPORT FROM THE STUDY "THE PSYCHO" SOCIAL" SEXUAL EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN WOMEN IN TSHWANE (PRETORIA): A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS*.

Van Zyl, M. (2011). Are same-sex marriages unAfrican? Same-sex relationships and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Social Issues*, *67*, 335-357.

Walby, S., Armstrong, J., & Strid, S. (2012). Intersectionality: Multiple inequalities in social theory. *Sociology*, *46*, 224-240.

Warner, L. R., & Shields, S. A. (2013). The intersections of sexuality, gender, and race: Identity research at the crossroads. *Sex Roles*, *68*, 803-810.

Wassenaar, D.R., Van der Veen, M.B.W., & Pillay, A.L. (1998). Women in cultural transition: Suicidal behaviour in South African Indian women. *Suicide & Life – Threatening Behavior, 28*, 82-9

Weldon, S. L. (2008). Intersectionality. In Goetz, G., & Mazur, A. (Eds.), *Politics, gender and concepts: Theory and methodology* (pp. 193-218). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Woodley, X. M., & Lockard, M. (2016). Womanism and snowball sampling: Engaging marginalized populations in holistic research. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*, 321.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *13*, 193-209.

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Dear Participant,

My name is Vickashnee Nair. I am currently a Masters in Community Based Counselling Psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research for the purpose of the completion of my degree. The aim of my research is to explore how the coming out process, which entails the disclosure of one's sexual orientation, of Indian lesbians informs and influences how you make sense of your identity in terms of your stories and personal stories.

Thus, I am looking for South African Indian females who identify as lesbian to participate in my study to share their invaluable experiences and thoughts on the proposed topic. Participation in this study shall involve you responding to questions as honestly as possible from an interview schedule. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes to complete. As your personal information is not required for this study, confidentiality will be ensured and participants' identities will be protected. Participation is voluntary and should you wish to be part of my study a consent form will be provided which will outline your voluntary participation. Thereafter, an appointment time and venue will be scheduled that shall be convenient to you and this will be made knowledgeable to you prior to the interview.

There are no risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the stage of the interview; you are free to withdraw at any time.

I would greatly appreciate your possible participation and interest in my research. If you are willing to be a part of the study, please find my contact details below as well as those of my supervisor below and contact me informing me of your interest towards participating in this study. After participation if you would like to access the findings, you can contact myself or my supervisor using the details provided at the end of this letter. Please note that the data I collect for this study will be kept in a safe place where only myself and my supervisor will have access to it. Once your responses have been analysed and interpreted for this, data will be kept for a period of five years and thereafter destroyed. If participating in this study leaves you distressed or traumatized in any way, you can contact me and I will arrange appropriate counselling services for you which will be available to you at your convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Vickashnee Nair

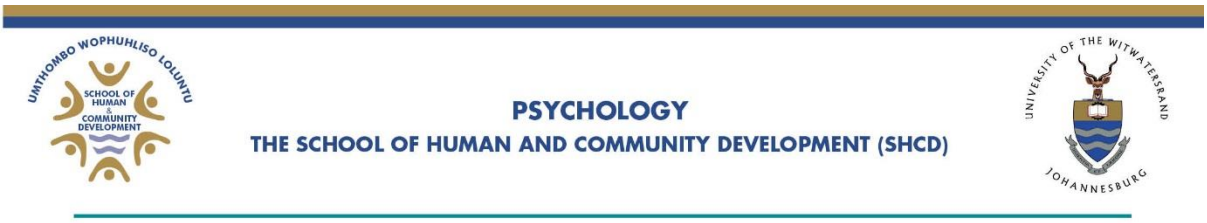
vickashnee@gmail.com

084 532 7200

Supervisor: Malose Langa

Malose.Langa@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

By completing this form, participants thereby consent to participate in this study.

I, _____ (full name and surname), consent to partaking in Vickashnee Nair's study South African, Indian individuals' coming out process and how this relates to their sense of self with regards to their narratives and life stories. In addition, I consent to be interviewed by Vickashnee Nair.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- I have the right to refrain from answering any questions during the interview process
- I have the right to withdraw from the study and my responses at any given time during the study, without penalty.
- There are no risks or benefits associated with this study
- All the information I provide will remain confidential. I may however be quoted in the research report. If I am quoted, a pseudonym (i.e. Participant A, Participant B, etc. will be used and none of my identifiable information will be included in the research report.
- I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of Vickashnee Nair's degree, Masters in Community Based Counselling Psychology.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Consent Form for Audio Recording

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 · Tel: 011 717 4541 · Fax: 011 717 4559 · E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Consent Form for Audio Recording

By completing his form, participants thereby consent to the interview to be audio recorded.

I, _____ (full name and surname), give my consent for the audio recording of the interview with Vickashnee Nair for her study.

I understand that:

- The tapes will not be head by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor.
- The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked cupboard at the university to safeguard from unauthorised access.
- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by an alpha code (i.e. Participant A, Participant B, etc.) and that no identifiable information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Open-ended interview schedule for participants

Observations and background information

- Age
- Race
- Religion

Interview:

1. Are you out or disclosed your sexual orientation? In what aspects and contexts are you out currently?
2. Are you still in the closet or have not disclosed your sexual orientation in certain contexts currently?
3. Can you tell me about your coming out? At what age? How did you do it?
4. When did you know you were lesbian?
5. When did you come out to yourself?
6. What was the reaction to your first experience of coming out?
7. How did a community, that is important to you, react to you coming out?
8. What is your reaction to such a reaction from this community? How did you make sense of it?
9. If not out, then how do you think a community, that is important to you, will react to you coming out? How do you feel about this? How would you make sense of this?
10. Can you tell me about another important community and how they have reacted or will react to you coming out? How would or do you feel about this? How did you make sense of this?
11. How has the coming out process or the act of disclosing your sexual orientation impacted upon how you see yourself?
12. How has the coming out process affected how your make sense of your life? And yourself?
13. How has being closet, or not disclosing your sexual orientation, impacted upon how you see yourself? And how you make sense of your life? And yourself?
14. How has the coming out process impacted upon you positively? And negatively?
15. How has the coming out process affected the way your see yourself?
16. How do you view the coming out process? Or the act of disclosing?
17. In what area of yourself has coming out been the most significant or telling?
18. Where do you see yourself in the future?

Thank participant for time.