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The gayle I know: A story about language, friendship and subjectivity

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2018
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/26535

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Abstract

This research takes the form of a short film (16 minutes), tackling the complexity of gayle in its circulation and the role of performance in constructing and maintaining identity amongst LGBTQ+ coloured users in Cape Town. The existing literature on gayle focuses on exclusively English-speaking white male participants, exposing a gap in the current literature on this subject that ignores the lived experiences of coloured users. I accessed friends, family and acquaintances in my fieldwork to explore the socio-political currency of the code and the relationship between language, identity and performance within a particular fraternity. Furthermore, this research explores the movement of the code from subculture to its appropriation by popular culture by referencing the work of Dick Hebdige.

The delivery outcomes include a report exploring the subjectivity of the research that exposes the relationship between the participants, the researcher and the research. Using these ethnographic strategies, the film moves between observational, non-observational and participatory modes.