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Understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology.

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Declaration

This work is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Community-based Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities – University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

I, Daniela Maria Prado-Castro, do solemnly declare that this research report is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other degree at any other university.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Daniela Maria Prado-Castro

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To Ivanya, you showed me love, kindness, supported me and pushed me from the start until the end. For that I am eternally grateful. I love you.

Dedication

This is dedicated to all the fearless Queer leaders around the world who fight for equality and for the protection of the human rights of the LGBTI community.

List of Abbreviations

Aids	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ACTIVATE	Activate University of the Witwatersrand LGBTI society
GALA	Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action
GDI	Gross Domestic Income
GEI	Gender Equity Index
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MSM	Men Who Have Sex with Men
SES	Socio Economic Status
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WSW	Women Who Have Sex with Women

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments iii
Dedication iv
List of Abbreviations v
Chapter 1: Introduction 1
Reflexive Preface 1
Focus of the Study 2
Aims of the Study 4
Rationale 4
Conceptual Definitions 8
Structure of the Report 9
Conclusion 10
Chapter 2: Literature Review 12
Introduction 12
Conceptualising Gender 12
Intimacy and Romantic Love 21
Homosexuality 26
Intersectionalities 32
Conceptual Framework 34
Conclusion 38
Chapter 3: Method 40
Introduction 40
Methodological Approach 40
Research Questions 41
Target Population Sampling Method 41
Method of Data Collection 45
Method of Data Analysis 46
Self-Reflexivity 49
Research Ethics 51
Conclusion 52
Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion of Results 54
Introduction 54
An Intimate Connection 56
The Space and Intimacy 63
Other Intersections 73
The Gay Image 82
Conclusion 85

Chapter 5: Conclusion....86
Introduction....86
Overview of the Findings....86
Strengths and Limitations of the Study....92
Directions for Future Research....94
Final Reflection....95
References....97
Appendices....106
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet....106
Appendix B: Consent form for focus group interview....108
Appendix C: Audio Recording Consent Forms....109
Appendix D: Confidentiality agreement for the group interview....110
Appendix E: Interview Schedule....111
Appendix F: Letter to the Organisation....112
Appendix G: Ethics Clearance....113

Chapter 1: Introduction

Reflexive Preface

This research was influenced by my own experiences as a young woman living in South Africa. Growing up in a feminist and lesbian household informed my interest in gender theory and the gender angle that I have utilised throughout this study. I cannot deny that my experiences are unique and that my social position is defined by my experiences growing up in a family that breaks the gender binaries and hegemony. This, in some way, provided me with an understanding of the participants' experiences of being part of the LGBTI community and of breaking societal norms. At the same time, I am not placed inside the experiences of the participants in this research by the mere fact of being a woman. I was not aiming to understand exactly what it would be like to be a man, but rather to understand their experiences and find the similarities experienced by people who through their identities break boundaries. Being interested in masculinities and interviewing the participants provided me with a new understanding of the experiences of men and the construction of masculinities in contemporary society.

Despite reading extensively on masculinity theory and interacting with the participants, I could not separate my own identity as a woman from my understanding of masculinity theory or the representations of masculinity. I struggled to find clarity in the topic, often feeling a level of disconnect from the theory and the participants' narratives. I perceived myself as an outsider looking into masculinities. I was aware that my experiences employed in previous research were starkly different from the position I had chosen to take in this research. From the point of conceptualising this research, I acknowledged that the intersection of my own experiences, for example, of being born in South America and only living in South Africa post-apartheid, being a woman and a member of the LGBTI community would give me an interesting lens from

which I could find clarity in the narratives. Furthermore, I believed that it was the intersections in the participants' narratives that would foreshadow their understandings of love and intimacy. However, in trying to explain how masculinity was interwoven I would unconsciously shift away from an intersectional approach.

Previous research has identified constructions of love and intimacy within the gender binaries. This research clearly discusses heterosexual, heteronormative intimacy as the only type of intimacy that can be experienced. I am aware that there are various constructions of love and intimacy and that love is not uniquely a heterosexual experience as indicated by some previous research. This, together with my own position, fuelled my interest in understanding constructions of intimacy in a group who was directly positioned outside of the binary and outside of social norms. Of particular interest were the understandings of love and intimacy amongst gay men, the exploration of the locations that facilitated the development of intimacy, and how these men negotiated the environment and expressions of intimacy as individuals and as a community. By focusing on their understanding and construction rather than their own experiences I was able to gain more knowledge on the ways in which heteronormativity and homosexuality interplay. Furthermore, it offered an array of intersections that allowed me to work through my own disconnect with the research topic, towards a greater understanding that intersectionality creates for a connection of various segments that provide both discordance and similarities with my own experiences. Completing this study has allowed me to understand that masculinity theory is not simply about being a man but rather it can be understood as having a dynamic relationship with power. And, it is in these intersections that masculinity theory can be critically applied to various social analyses.

Focus of the Study

The concept of intimacy can be understood in many different ways. In contemporary research 'intimacy' can be understood as either the sexual practices, or the relational closeness between

people (Dion & Dion, 1996). The focus of this research lies within an understanding of constructions of intimacy and romantic love rather than the sexual behaviours of intimacy. The conceptualisation of intimacy in this study includes an analysis of the levels of closeness, trust, romance, vulnerability and sharing that exist between people (Moss & Schwebel, 1993). The nature of relationships and the place where these relationships evolve gives a particular world lens through which intimacy is understood and expressed (Edwards, 1994).

There are specific gendered identities attached to sexuality these guide the performance and practices around behaviour (Maines, 1996).Within homosexuality studies, the area of identity has been continuously researched. This is the idea that particular ways of behaving are attached to labels, and that these in turn categorise the individual within dynamics of behaviour. For example, the idea of 'bears', 'tops and bottoms' as identity categories offer a set of experiences that may not only be sexualised but which also characterise what gender behaviours are performed by different people in homosexual relationships (Edwards, 1994). This study is intended to enhance an understanding of the perspectives of a group of young gay men, about the experiences of intimacy and romantic love within homosexual relationships. The study also intended to shed light on how these concepts relate to other social constructs including gender and masculinities.

The notion of intersectionalities also plays an important role in the understanding of social actions in an individual's relation to their context (Hill Collins, 1998). In this research the possibilities of various intersectionalities beyond sexual orientation and gender are taken into account in the study, as it provides a particular way of understanding the participants' opinions. The specific intersections of interest are class and race and the array of possibilities for identities within the gay community. The ways in which maleness is expressed within the gay community varies according to the ways in which individuals identify, thus particular

group labels and cues will give individuals a different perspective (Edwards, 1990; Edwards, 1994).

Aims of the Study

This research examines the opinions and constructions about romantic intimacy and love in homosexual relationships. By focusing on a small cohort of young gay men living in Johannesburg, this research aims to provide in depth insights into the ways in which heteronormativity can affect homosexual intimate relationships.

By exploring the ways in which young gay men construct notions of intimacy, a connection between gendered roles and sexual identity can be investigated. In addition, this research aims to give some insight into the complexities of this particular social identity, that is, of being a gay men in South Africa. Overall, analysing the concept of intimacy against other social constructs allows for a more enriching understanding of the experiences of young gay men.

Rationale

Homosexuality is an area that has been under-researched in psychology and in South Africa. The paucity of research on homosexuality is largely influenced by South Africa's socio-political history of Apartheid. Apartheid laws actively influenced the kinds of research that was conducted (e.g. Sexual Offenses Act, No. 23 of 1957) and this left much unanswered in relation to homosexual identities in the South African context. The censoring of certain identities through policies of discrimination directed the forms in which research on homosexuality took place, and therefore homosexuality was perceived as pathological and problematic (Morin, 1977; Reddy, 2006). Research on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) identities has steadily increased in the post-Apartheid era (e.g., Craven, 2011; Msibi, 2011; Reid, 2013). Prior to this, homosexuality as an act between men was considered illegal (Reddy, 2006).

It has become increasingly apparent that research on homosexuality is not only valuable but necessary, as it will encourage the transformation of constitutional legislative statutes and support a political agenda of equality and non-discrimination into everyday practice (Harris, 2004). This will assist in decreasing hate crimes through the proper implementation of laws on non-discrimination throughout society. The reality of the impacts of hate crimes are being brought to the fore and much more emphasis is being given to recording the extent of these crimes and on creating laws that protect people more adequately (Christiansen, 2000). Similarly to the way in which the Constitution has provided a particular way in which gender needs to be viewed in South Africa, there is also a particular understanding of homosexuality (Christiansen, 2000). According to the Constitution, it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation (Republic of South Africa, 1996). However, the actual experiences of homosexual individuals often paint a different picture (Morrell, 2002; Msibi, 2011). Within South Africa, the rates of violence towards people because of their sexual orientation are increasing (Msibi, 2011). Data on instances of hate crime violence are collected by independent human rights institutions and there are no official statistics. The general belief is that hate crime violence is notoriously under-reported, and often does not reflect the true extent of people's experiences (South African Hate Crime Working Group, 2012). Thus, existing statistics may only represent the tip of the iceberg in highlighting the extent of the homophobic violence in the country. This is not unusual for marginalised groups, especially when there is social stigma attached to particular identities. Research demonstrates that it is more difficult to attain statistics for marginalised groups, because people do not report crimes for fear of further marginalisation, that is: fear that the perpetrators might discover, and violence or police brutality when they report a crime (Guasp, Gammon, & Ellison, 2013; Marzullo & Libman, 2009). Hate crimes are used as tools to change the patterns of social interaction by sending messages of dislike for a particular group through violence, perceived threat of violence and

creating fear amongst groups. These violence messages affect the expression of identities; people may choose not to express a particular identity for fear of being targeted (Perry & Bell, 2016).

The importance of paying particular attention to the intersectionalities in studies of LGBTI identities has been often neglected. The intersectionalities of identities are important for understanding the unique experiences of particular groups and understanding this within a broader socio-historical context. Hence, exploring aspects of these intersectionalities can be viewed as the specific social map in which a person is located (Hill Collins, 1998). A possible reason for deliberately ignoring these intersectionalities is that although they provide more insight into particular experiences, they can also highlight the differences, and this is problematic when trying to build cohesion, or explaining the common experiences of a group of people (Boucher, 2006). Men are often seen at the apex of the social hierarchy. However these privileges decrease as maleness is intersected with other categories that stratify social difference. For example, a black man is not seen in the same way as a white man (Msibi, 2011). Most importantly, a gay man, black or white will not have the same experiences of gender as a heterosexual man. A vast body of literature exists with the aim of explaining and understanding the creation, development, and the performativity of masculinities (e.g., Connell, 1995; Connell & Meserschmidt, 2005). Masculinity studies encompass a wide range of topics, including and not limited to an understanding of the behaviour of men, masculinities in relation to violence and crime, as well as critiquing the general conceptual understandings and links that are commonly made between masculinities and other problematic constructs (Messerschmidt, 1993).

However, there is a gap in the study of masculinities in relation to gay men and the perspectives of this group with regard to intimate relationships and romantic love (Edwards, 1994). Studying intimacy can aid researchers to better understand relationships. Intimacy can

act as a protective factor against discrimination of minorities as it creates a sense of commonality, cohesion and support. There are pre-inscribed ways of performing masculinities in relation to gender stereotypes, or what has been ascribed to the masculine and the feminine (Edwards, 1990; Fisher & Narus, 1981). If the premise that masculinities and gender is a performance is adopted, then the experiences of young men can be analysed along a continuum of possibilities of expression of gender and sexuality. Social expressions can and are linked to other social aspects. By understanding the gender dynamics at play in gay relationships, the discourses of young men in relation to intimacy in their relationships can either confirm or disprove previously stipulated theoretical beliefs regarding gender and the performance of masculinities.

Exploring the experiences and understandings of young gay men regarding love and intimacy in homosexual relationships in South Africa will shed light on the importance of defining the identities of marginalised groups of people.

Conceptual Definitions

The terms below are used throughout this study. This section provides a brief definition of each of the terms in relation to their application in the current research.

Homosexual

For the purpose of this research, *homosexual* refers to the person who has physical, emotional or sexual attraction towards a member of the same sex. The homosexual person needs to have a level of awareness of their belonging to this particular category.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is used as a political constructs that allow for a more nuanced and multidimensional understanding of the individuals' experiences. This is achieved through an analysis of different social constructs that could contribute to these experiences. Some examples of intersectionality include: intersections of social positions related to gender, race and class.

Intimacy

For the purpose of this study, *intimacy* refers to the closeness a person feels towards another at an emotional level. Although in some instances this might include sexual relations or an erotic component, this construct will be used to encompass the various aspects that inform a meaningful emotional connection.

LGBTI

For the purpose of this research *LGBTI* is an acronym used to describe the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex community. At times it is also used to describe an individual belonging to that community or fitting one of the categories.

Romantic Love

Romantic love is characterised by a strong emotional connection, commonly known as love. It encompasses the initial attraction felt by a person, as well as the attachment a person feels towards another. In this instance, romantic love is seen as the 'love' component within a same sex relationship between men.

Structure of the Report

Chapter one provides the introduction to the concept of intimacy and its relation to sexuality, as well as a broad understanding of the research and the rationale for the research conducted. It also provides the aims underlying the research conducted and definitions of some of the terminology utilised in the research. In this manner, *Chapter One* provides an understanding of the foundational aspects upon which the research was built. Thus, locating the research in the appropriate context and the reasons for the relevance of such research in the South African context.

Chapter Two consists of the literature review, which considers the nature of intimacy and romantic love in relation to gender and sexuality, and the possible intersectionalities that affect the understanding of romantic love and intimacy. This chapter emphasises the role of homosexuality in the understanding of intimacy and romantic love, and discusses the importance of understanding the development of different types of homosexualities. It also considers other factors that may affect a person's experience of romantic love and intimacy such as gender, class, race and culture. Moreover, it provides an understanding of the interaction between these factors in relation to an understanding of the masculinities, or lack thereof, evident in some types of homosexuality. Lastly, the chapter presents the theoretical framework that was used to guide the research process as well as the rationale for using this specific framework.

Chapter three consists of the method section which takes into consideration the research questions that guided the study. Furthermore, it presents an overview of the manner in which both the analysis and the interpretation of the research data were conducted. In this chapter, a rationale for the data collection and interpretation techniques are provided. The chapter begins with an exploration of a qualitative approach to research and a mention of some of the commonly used techniques within this approach. This is followed by a description of the approach used within this research. Lastly, a discussion of the sample and sampling method is provided. The researcher's self-reflexivity, as well as the ethics pertaining to the study, are considered. This is an important component of qualitative research, as it provides an explanation and a way to safeguard against the possible problems encountered, and it provides a starting point on which to analyse the results and understand the subjective nature of this process.

Chapter four provides a summary of the results and findings of the study. The main emergent themes and subthemes are presented and discussed. There were four themes that were identified. These were: 1) the meaning of the word 'intimacy' in gay relationships, 2) the role that the physical space plays in relation to intimacy, 3) the importance of intersectionality, and 4) the portrayal of homosexuality and the homosexual throughout history in the media and public spaces. These themes were described and discussed against relevant theory on these topics as well against the overarching framework of the study.

Chapter five provides a synopsis of the study, as well as the overall conclusions reached in this study. The strengths and limitations of the present research are offered and recommendations for future research are presented based on the findings and limitations.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction into the overall study by accounting for the importance of this research. It also highlighted the aims of the study and of understanding love and intimacy

through the constructions of young gay men. It provided a set of definitions of terminology that are present throughout the study. Finally, it provided a brief synopsis of the chapters that follow, including the content and importance of each chapter in the overall study. The following chapter contains a review of relevant literature as well as the guiding theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review explores the various constructions of gender and the relationship to masculinities. It considers possible contextual influences in relation to the understanding of the individual's identity development and their relationship to intimacy and romantic love. The predominant focus is upon the constructions of intimacy romantic love by gay men in South Africa. The literature review also provides an overview of the literature and the gaps within the literature relating to masculinity and homosexuality. Finally, it provides a brief outline of current research in these areas.

This literature review provides a snapshot of the available literature related to the research questions. This chapter thus provides a framework in which to understand the questions proposed within this research. Existing literature that is located closely to gay expressions of intimacy is presented. A critical discussion is provided of some of the key assumptions regarding the concepts of gender, intimacy and romantic love, homosexuality, as well as intersectionalities.

Conceptualising Gender

The Development of Gender Theory

The development of gender theories can be seen from either a social perspective or a cognitive perspective. Historical perspectives on the conceptualisation of gender have a long tradition. The idea of incorporating cognitions into understandings of gender started in the 1980s where Huston (1985) called for a more integrative approach to understanding gender (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002). There are three key theoretical precursors in cognitive understandings of gender. Firstly, Mischel (1966) proposed observing the environmental determinants in gender development that took on a behavioural approach. He suggested that when children perform in

a gendered way, they are subsequently rewarded for this behaviour they begin to understand that they are that particular gender. On the other hand, Kohlberg (1966) developed his understanding based on the premise that children understand their sex and therefore believe they will follow the gender norms attached to a particular sex.

A more contemporary theory proposed by Bussey and Bandura (1999), suggested that "children's cognitive structures, namely gender identity and stereotype knowledge, play a minor role relative to social forces" (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002, pp. 903). These authors termed this the Social Cognitive Theory of gender development. The basis of the Social Cognitive Theory lies within Social Learning Theory. What is referred to as the Social Learning Theory encompasses an understanding of the person's psyche as being influenced by a continuous interaction between behaviour and contextual forces (Bandura, 1971). The Social Cognitive Theory of gender development more specifically focuses on the interaction between environmental effects, personal factors and behaviour patterns. This allowed for children to observe behaviour, model through imitations and, most importantly, create new behaviours based on their observations (Martin et al., 2002).

Two other main theories of the cognitive development of gender include cognitive developmental theory and gender schema theory. Cognitive developmental theory is based on the premise of gender constancy that is gender remains unchanged. Constancy can usually be understood in three stages: a) the premise of gender identity – where children become aware that they are either a boy or a girl; b) gender is stable – it does not change over time; and c) gender is constant - "the recognition that this identity is not affected by changes in gender typed appearances, activities and traits" (Martin et al., 2002). The gender schema theory on the other hand follows the premise that there needs to be a cognition about gender for gender to develop. Within this theory the child is seen as playing an active role in gender development (Martin et al., 2002). Furthermore gender schema theory explains that the use of schemas leads to the

belief that there is a predisposed ability to select and code particular aspects of information that to which the child is exposed. This schematic representation becomes a guide and it provides a basis on which children can evaluate themselves and their own behaviours, perceptions and abilities (Bem, 1981).

In stark contrast to these cognitive theories, there are various presentations of gender theory from a social psychology perspective. The main premise of social psychology is that people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours can be influenced by their interactions with others (Ratele & Duncan, 2003). Gender in social psychological theory has often focused on the relationships of people, recognising that the social has a strong influence on the development of gender (Eckes & Trautner, 2000). The development of this understanding of gender can be cited to prior to the 1970s where sexuality studies particularly focused on understanding men, the notion of gender appeared as the counter-position to the norm, and thus was situated in the minority. What is now seen as gender roles was considered the norm and therefore was not questioned or analysed (Jackson, Stevi & Scott, 2002). More recently, studies of sexuality and power have all been considered in relation to gender. Feminism influenced studies of men and women by highlighting the un-natural nature of gender roles. Feminist theories also questioned the biological basis of gender (Butler, 1988), and shed light on the constructions and performance of masculinities and femininities (Jackson et al., 2002).

The concept of gender is often used in various ways. According to Connell (2005, pp. 6), "common sense knowledge of gender is by no means fixed. It is, rather, the rationale of the changing practices through which gender is "done" or accomplished in everyday life". This fluid nature of gender understandings can be seen in the writings of various authors. For example, for Jackson et al. (2002), gender is a social construct that explains the "hierarchical division" of roles between men and women. These are present in social structures, as well as in

practices. Gender is acquired through norms, and these norms are entrenched though power (Boucher, 2006).

In psychological thinking neoanalysist Nancy Chodorow viewed gender as being something influenced by the child's upbringing as a function of object relations. Object relations theory emphasises the attachment that children have to their primary caregiver. For most theorists this primary caregiver was the mother. According to this theory, girls identify strongly with the mother and can maintain that attachment whereas boys are to break that attachment to establish their masculinity (Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Chodorow, critically discussed the role of the mother in the upbringing of the child. Previous theorists placed emphasis on the responsibility of the mother for child rearing. For Chodorow, placing the responsibility for childcare on the mother reproduced patriarchy and inequality (Chodorow, 1978). Some critiques alert us to a lack of explanation of the attachment process in single parent households, child reared households or households with two parents of the same sex (Wingfield, 2007). Chodorow (1978) challenges the gendered assumptions within psychology that perpetuate gender binaries. Until now, psychology has, for the most part, reflected patriarchal views and further entrenched gendered divides (Burr, 2002).

Gender Performativity

An alternative way of understanding gender is in seeing it as a form of social performance. In an analysis of literature it is evident that various authors use the term 'gender' as something that is acted by the person. This is not a conscious 'putting-on' but rather something that is learnt through the interactions which people have with each other. It is the repetition of gender which constructs gender. This is done through a bodily performance which creates a discourse (Butler, 1990). When children are born they are confronted with gender norms, and they experience the gendering of their body. This is both physical and verbal through cues such as different colours for different genders, for example, boys wear blue and girls wear pink. These

cues are also detected through verbal communication where boys are referred to as being tough and girls as being delicate. This gender learning precedes the ability of the children to label themselves as being ‘a boy’ or ‘a girl’. However, children are able to make connections about their gender from the information they receive from the adults around them. These gender roles are automatically present in society and children begin to understand that everyone has a gender, and these genders make the difference between girls and boys (Giddens, 1989; Thapan, 2001).

Butler’s (1988) focus in gender analysis has been on the performance of gender and more importantly on the ways in which these performances can be altered. Butler’s (1988) work starts from the premise that if gender can be performed in a particular way, then this performance can be changed to be enacted in a different way. Her analysis of gender performativity takes place from different angles: firstly, understanding the role of the body to “embody” such performances; secondly, understanding heterosexuality and its relationship to reproduction including the power dynamics in play; lastly, examining the different ways gender is conceptualised through feminist studies and questioning the existence of “women” (Butler, 1988). Butler (1990) theorises identity as performative by stating that “gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance” gender in Butler’s understadning involves performance through the body (Butler, 1990, pp.140).

Gender can thus be seen as either an acquired identity, developed through repetitions, but that essentially assumes that the person exists in connection to a gender (Butler, 1993). There is no illusion that, like a performance in the theatre, gender is something that can be seen by an audience, because it is something that is performed by everyone (Butler, 1993). The performativity of gender also includes a cultural component, as culture helps entrench stereotypes, roles, and behaviours (Boucher, 2006). Individuals learn about gender through the

ways in which they are raised. Thus, gender differences are experienced in different ways in different cultures. Popular media assists in enforcing gender norms, and its accessibility ensures that individuals integrate these messages in the creation of their identities (Creedon, 1994; Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1989). Performativity speaks to the normalisation of a set of norms (standards of behaviour, feelings, aptitudes) and expectations for both women and men, and the power relations between them as well as the normalisation of a set of norms and expectations of beliefs around desire and sexuality and who should be the object of desire (Butler, 1990). Connell's (1993) concept of hegemonic masculinities speaks to similiar processes and outcomes of repeated socialisation around particular sets of behaviour, attitudes and feelings that men and women are supposed to have in order to be seen to be real men or real women. Within this is the assumption that men need to be heterosexual, and that real men's sexuality is normatively expressed through lust and desire (the notion of ever ready sex) rather than a search for intimacy and love (the ambit of femininities).

Gender is a social category that in some way impacts all individuals. In essence, then, gender is the lived reality and experience of human beings (Butler, 1988). Butler (1988) offers an analysis of gender through a particular lens. However, this can also offer problems as it discourages an understanding of the subjective meanings that people create, and an individual's own agency in understanding gender (Boucher, 2006). If we take the premise that gender is a performance then the notion of gender is a fictitious one (Boucher, 2006). It also does not provide an explanation for why some people adopt specific ways of performing that are not ascribed to them, and why power denies the agency of individuals (Boucher, 2006). According to Butler (1993), the element of agency is negotiated within the matrix of power. This perspective takes on Foucault's conceptualisation of power, where the individual is never located outside of relations of power, and power can be shifted but it is never absent (Foucault, 1998).

Gender Politics

Connell (1995) underlines the importance of working towards gender justice and a transformation of gendered roles, questioning the binary in which gender operates and engaging with issues of equality. This sheds light on important changes in society and the link between heteronormativity and other social problems such as gender-based violence, prevalence rates of HIV and Aids and, possibly, violence and crime (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre, & Harlow, 2004; Jewkes, Duckle, Nduna, & Shai, 2010). Working towards gender justice involves the recognition that a system where women advocate for women's issues needs to shift, and that an agenda that serves gender equality requires men and women advocating together against oppression.

A study by Morrell (2002) highlights how these changes are taking place in South Africa. This research analyses the work of various groups of men in working towards a new understanding of gender (Morrell, 2002). Importantly, three assumptions can be drawn from this research. Firstly, although the concept of masculinities is global, the ways in which masculinities develop are context specific. Masculinities develop based on social constructions that are entrenched through the beliefs and practices of individuals and the messages of institutions (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). The cultural context influences the creation of different masculinities (Morrell, 2002).

The second assumption is that gender transformation is an ongoing process (Morrell, 2002). According to Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala, and Buikema (2007), in drawing understandings of gender dynamics in South Africa, research has focused on the experiences of women and girls. He proposes that there needs to be a shift towards understanding men and boys and re-framing the understandings of masculinity and femininity. Currently these understandings reflect the problematic discourses of gender binaries and heterosexuality (Shefer, et al., 2007). It is only with a shift towards understanding men that true gender

transformation can take place. Critical masculinity studies are not prevalent in South Africa this has impacted the manner in which constructions of masculinity have taken place (Ratele, 2008).

The last assumption is that there is an understanding that not only women can follow feminist politics, but that working towards gender justice it is not always feminist, and in some instances can run contrary to feminist politics (Morrell, 2002). The transformation of gender in South Africa cannot be separated from the divisive history and the current legislation present in South Africa. An intersectional approach would say that the social context plays a major role in the ways in which people engage with issues of gender and identity politics. For example, the intersection of race and class will affect the ways in which individuals relate to gender (Hill Collins, 1998).

In South Africa, one cannot ignore the history of division enforced by the Apartheid government and the effect that this division had on gender studies. In the post-Apartheid period, the constitution has provided a particular legislative baseline on which understandings of gender rest (Morrell, 2002). However, while social changes are present, the gender divide remains extremely wide in terms of gender inequality. There are some statistical indices used to determine gender (in) equality, these include: The UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII), the Gender Equity Index (GEI) and the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). The GDI measures inequality based on reproductive health, work and education. According to this tool, South Africa's inequality level is of Medium Human Development and ranks at number 116 out of 188 countries (United Nations Human Development Programme, 2015). This highlights that changes to the culture of inequality need to be addressed in South Africa. This in turn indicates that there is a strong discrepancy between the Constitution or forms of legislation and the lived reality of South Africans.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

In the 1940s, Alfred Kinsey proposed that sexual orientation takes place along a continuum, rather than being located within the dichotomy of heterosexual and homosexual (Storms, 1980). Sexual orientation refers to one's self-definition in relation to one's own sexual identity. Sexual orientation is oftentimes linked to the gender that is allocated to a person because of their sex (Beauchamp, 2004). Sex, in this instance, is the biological system with which the person is born, whereas gender is the set of rules imposed on that particular sex by society (Giddens & Sutton, 2013).

Some research has been conducted in order to understand the link between gender or gendered categories of behaviour and sexual orientation. For example, studies have investigated the link between gender and romance (e.g. Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004). This research aimed to investigate the development of romantic relationships amongst boys and girls. An assumption was proposed which indicated that boys and girls are socialized into having different perceptions of romantic relationships. According to this research gender differences in the sequencing of romantic relationships emerges in later adolescence. This research did not take into account same sex relationships (Connolly et al., 2004).

There is a strong link between gender roles and prejudice against homosexuality. This can be attributed to the set of rules placed by society on the different sexes and that which is attributed to the feminine and masculine. It is believed that lesbians and gays violate these pre-inscribed cultural gender belief systems in that they do not follow or fit into the gender roles as expected by the discourse (Whitley, 2001).

This prejudice can include violence against people who do not conform to the gender stereotypes. Research has demonstrated that this can include assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Herek, 2000). There is an association between sexual orientation, victimisation and the possibility of health risk behaviours. In these

instances there where higher levels of suicidality, substance abuse and sexual risk behaviours found amongst gay men people as compared to heterosexual people. Behaviours that present a risk to health are used as coping mechanisms to shield against the victimisation that homosexual people face (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002).

Intimacy and Romantic Love

Intimacy and romantic love are linked to a series of other constructs, including gender, culture and sexuality. The way the concept of intimacy is defined is highly dependent on the framework that different writers adopt, thus the description can include a focus on sexual expression or a focus on closeness and relation to other person. Intimacy is important as it highlights the ways in which closeness and relational bonds are built. Essentially, intimacy is "any intense attraction that involves the idealisation of the other, within an erotic context, with the expectation of enduring for some time into the future" (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992, pp. 150). Although the above description makes particular reference to an erotic context, in other instances it was mentioned that intimacy is present in romantic relationships. Intimacy has also been found to have a link with love and friendships (Fisher & Narus, 1981).

Intimacy has an effect on the development of healthy relationships and connections with others, as well as impacting the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals. Levels of intimacy have also been used as indicators for understanding the success of relationships. This is achieved by the measurement of romantic relationships in terms of the levels of intimacy (Moss & Schwebel, 1993). The concept of intimacy has also been highlighted in psychology in the work of Erikson, where he described the importance of intimacy in the developmental process (Fisher & Narus, 1981). There is no singular way to describe intimacy. In most cases, it is defined depending on an author's interests and theoretical affiliations. However there are some common elements that cohere into a general description of intimacy. These include: having openness, being vulnerable and sharing, amongst others (Moss & Schwebel, 1993). Intimacy

is therefore, one's ability and willingness to freely express aspects of oneself within a close bond where a sense of coherence exists. This also includes elements of commitment and mutual understanding.

The definition of intimacy is commonly comprised of concepts that are linked to the traditionally feminine such as feelings of longing, openness and romantic connection with another person. However, intimacy includes traditional masculine qualities as well (Fisher & Narus, 1981). For instance, Fisher and Narus (1981) found that greater intimacy was found in lesbian relationships than in gay relationships, with women as a whole displaying higher levels of intimacy than men. These authors believe was due to traditional masculinities not allowing for intimacy. Intimacy is essentially linked to sex roles, and thus also linked to masculinities. With the re-masculination of gay men post-1970, there was a strong shift towards adopting behaviours that were traditionally highly masculine. According to Edwards (1990, pp.115), these included "the western cowboy…the construction worker…the military…athletes…police" amongst others. This meant that intimacy and emotional commitment were set aside in lieu of an identification with a sexual aspect of connection. Being gay does not automatically mean losing one's masculinity or being free from oppressive forms of dominance. In fact, the gay community perpetuates some of the worst forms of masculine behavior that objectifies the other (Edwards, 1994). Masculinities have thus had a negative relationship with intimacy, especially in the gay community, where commitment and love are distanced from pleasure and sex. Some studies have attempted to investigate the narratives that men and women create in relation to intimacy, and it contrasts this against gender constructs. 'Boys want love girls want sex' is an example of such a study (e.g. Allen, 2003). This essentially questions the pre-inscribed expectations attached to each sex and whether men and women identify according to these.

Intimacy and Culture

Dion and Dion (1993) attempt to break down the assumption that love is a universal concept; the expression of romantic love will differ based on cultural practices and socially acceptable behaviours. Love is not something that happens independently of social factors. Rather, it is constructed and developed by the social norms of a particular context. Various forms of media such as radio, television and newspapers have played a crucial role in the development of the construction of love (Edwards, 1994). Within psychology, the notion of romantic love has been analysed using concepts of attachment. This provides an explanation for the history of different kinds of love, and how these manifest in different people. These included the idea that childhood attachment continues into adulthood, the hypothesis that people will experience different kinds of love based on 3 attachment styles (secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent) (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They also found a direct link to the theory of working models proposed by Bowlby. Bowlby (1969) stated that the child develops a working model of themselves based on the attachment they have with their primary caregiver. According to the study by Hazan and Shaver (1987), stated in a similar manner that the attachment style and the working models of the self and the relationship are related.

Dion and Dion (1993) attempted to show the ways in which romantic love and intimacy are important for the success of marriage relationships. They do so through an explanation of the differences present in different cultures and the values that these cultures deem important. The overall inquiry centres on an analysis of individualistic and collectivistic perspectives in relation to intimacy and romantic love. The research was premised on three assumptions that included a hypothesis that romantic love will have a higher importance in individualistic rather than collectivistic societies. Furthermore, although individualistic societies may express the need for intimacy and romantic love, the very function of these societies could hinder the ability to create intimate relationships (Dion & Dion, 1993).

Intimacy and same sex relationships

When discussing intimacy and romantic love, there is often a link made with sexuality and desire, or to that which is sexual in nature. Another assumption is that romantic love and the concept of attraction are linked to a biological influence, following the principle of natural selection proposed by Darwin, where an individual will find a 'mate' based on biological characteristics that will guarantee the survival of a particular species (Dion & Dion, 1996). Some authors have attempted to move away from a purely biological description of romantic love to a more social understanding. Romantic love can be seen in other practices, or in the presence of certain aspects within relationships. These meanings are interchangeable and individuals construct their own meanings. According to Dion and Dion (1996), a research study conducted by Jankowiak and Fisher in 1992 attempted to look at the presence of certain features to establish the nature of romantic relationships. These features included the presence of feelings related to wanting to be with another person, and feelings of longing.

There is limited research that examines gender, sexuality and intimacy in relationships. According to the majority of descriptions, intimacy is the characteristic attached to a kind of interpersonal relationship in which people feel a strong attachment. Research conducted by Fisher and Narus (1981) identified the connection between sex roles and intimacy, particularly focusing on androgynous sex roles, or those people who did not rigidly stick to the sex roles that had been attributed to them by society. This was done in such a way so as to show the personal and situational factors that may influence the levels of intimacy. This research showed that people with androgynous behaviours would be likely to achieve greater levels of intimacy that people who were strictly defining themselves according to particular sex roles. Additionally, this research found that societal pressures can influence the levels of intimacy, and intimacy can conform to societal definitions (Fisher & Narus, 1981).

Hegemonic atitudes, behaviours and practices in relation to masculinities and femininities support the display of intimacy by women rather than men. It is normative for women to be intimate and men not be emotionally available. Furthremore, social expectations support, promote and reinforce this idea. Anybody who is seen to transgress or subvert these expectations could potentially face ridicule, discrimination or violence. With this in mind Fisher and Narus (1981) hypothesized that relationships between two women would display the highest levels of intimacy as compared to a relationship between two men which would display the lowest levels of intimacy, and the results corroborated this hypothesis but further extended that self-esteem level could mediate the masculine aspects in relation to intimacy (Fisher & Narus, 1981). This difference between levels of intimacy amongst men and women can be attributed to gender roles (Giles Williams, 1985).

Romantic love and Romance

The term romantic love is often associated with sexual desire. However, romantic love is more than sex as is sexual orientation. Romantic love incorporates the connection and affectional component as well as an aspect related to erotic connection as it is commonly described. The concept of romantic love in same sex couples refutes the original ways in which people were categorised because of sexual preferences, and it states that people may fall in love with same sex partners as well. Diamond (2003) suggests that there needs to be an understanding of the link between desire and affectional bonding in same-gender couples. Diamond (2003, pp. 174) operationalises the term romantic love in the following way "feelings of infatuation and emotional attachment that are commonly associated with romantic relationships". This definition highlights the link between intimacy and romantic love.

There are some important features which can be used to differentiate between romantic relationships and other forms of close relationships. A feature of romance is the presence of a relationship, that is, an ongoing pattern of mutual connection between two individuals. This

relationship (at least in Western society) is assumed to be voluntary and thus of personal choice. Attraction also plays an important role in the development of a relationship. This attraction can be of a sexual nature but it can also include feelings of love (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999).

Love as Attachment

The concept of attachment is often linked to research on romantic love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth are influential developmental theorists in the area of attachment experiences. Attachment is described by Bowlby and Ainsworth as the connection between two people that transcends time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). It is further described as the child having a strong love connection with the loved object. The presence of the loved object provides the child with a sense of security. On the other hand the absence creates anxiety and a need to mourn the absent object (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby & Robertson, 1952). The link between attachment and love is made in order to demonstrate that love is multilayered and that, although it has been explained in different ways, attachment theory can create a common ground on which to understand the experience of love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Furthermore, romantic relationships and love can be seen as attachment bonds during adulthood. These bonds are seen to be distinctly different than those in childhood attachment. In adult attachment, the attachment relationship with the love object is seen to be reciprocal and the presence of a sexual bond is noted (Mikulincer & Goodman, 2006).

Homosexuality

Using the term homosexuality reflects something about the persons' identity. Often homosexuality has been conceptualised as being on one end of the dichotomy of homosexual heterosexual. However this "either/or" notion of sexuality has been extensively questioned by different theorists. This questioning followed its own development, from Benkert's coining of the term homosexuality, to Ulrich's proposition of a third form of sexuality (that of a woman

trapped in a man's body). There was a parallel development taking place during that time which observed homosexuality from a biological perspective and it included the belief that homosexuality was genetically determined. "Sexual expression and interaction have often been described according to the premises of biological determinism" (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

These different notions of homosexuality as well as common definitions equate this sexual orientation with sexual experiences, and therefore as Isaacs and McKendrik (1992) state, homosexuals are seen as individuals, of sex. The debates on homosexuality need to move away from a focus on sex in order to appropriately encompass the range of social experiences that the homosexual person and queer culture has. Isaacs and Miller (1985) provide a definition of homosexuality that demonstrated the recognition that a homosexual relationship was between two people of the same gender. Furthermore, it integrates a psychological connection, an emotional connection and the sexualised aspect recognised previously. This definition encompasses various elements that include the need to see homosexuality beyond the sexual. It also adds that homosexuality has different levels, thus encompassing the experiences of people who choose not to identify as homosexual and those that fall within current studies on Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) and Women who have Sex with Women (WSW). This definition allowed for a more integrative understanding of homosexuality and one that is more in line with contemporary definitions.

There is a theoretical difference between homosexuality and gay identity. Homosexuality delineates all that which is not heterosexual thus, fitting into a heteronormative assumption. Using the term "homosexual" alludes to a homogeneity of experiences by those to whom the term is ascribed; but the experience is contrary to this. Sexual orientation cannot be measured under an umbrella term which describes the experiences of men and women. Furthermore, the term homosexual has often been used to refer implicitly to male sexuality (Herek, 2010; DeBlaere, Moradi, & Parent, 2013). The term homosexual has also been

implicitly a medical term used to indicate pathology. For these reasons, it has accumulated much critique and there was been a shift toward the more inclusionary use of LGBTI (DeBlaere, et al., 2013).

Previous research on gay men have highlighted the sexual nature of their relationships or sexual practices and alleged promiscuity. This has been buttressed by a large body of epidemiological studies as well behavioural studies on MSM in South Africa in the context of the HIV and Aids pandemic (Lane, Raymond, Dladla, Rasethe, Struthers, McFarland, & McIntyre, 2011). Gay men and MSM's sexual practices and networks have been placed under the microscope due to the high prevalence of HIV within MSM population, a designated as a key population within UNAIDS (UNAIDS, 2011) and within the South African National HIV and Aids strategic plan (South African National AIDS Council, 2014). Yet, there has been limited or a scarcity of reasearch on how intimacy and romantic love influence or feature in gay men's sexual choices and relationships. In previous research the focus on gay men's sexual practices has highlighted public sex, cruising, dark room culture of hook ups and anonymous sex. Thus there has been a stronger focus on sex and homosexuality as "deviance" than on romance, love and relationships.

Homosexuality in South Africa

Much of the contemporary research on homosexuality in South Africa has focused on three areas. Firstly, current research demonstrates the disparity between the predicted changes post 1994 versus the current lived reality of gay men (Munro, 2012). The turn from Apartheid to a democratic government represented changes for all South Africans. With the development of the new constitution gay relationships and relationships of men who have sex with men were no longer classified as illegal acts and they were not punishable by law. On the contrary, homosexuality was decriminalised and laws were written to protect the rights of gay and lesbian people in South Africa (Reddy, 2006). The constitution proposed in 1996 was the first

in the world to include the rights of homosexual people (Munro, 2012). The bill of rights included the following section "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, *sexual orientation*, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Although this was intended as a representation of the democratic changes taking place in South Africa, this ideal was a radical departure from the heteronormative structure of the nation (Munro, 2012).

Another area of focus of research in South Africa has been the increasing rates of HIV amongst men who have sex with men (MSM). These studies have found that MSM are at high risk for HIV infection (Lane, et al., 2011). Research has also demonstrated that there is a high level of stigma associated with HIV and men in South Africa. This stigma stems from the assumption that HIV only affects gay men or MSM, and that gay men are associated with promiscuity and risky behaviour (Simbayi, Strebel, Cloete, Henda & Mqeketo, 2007). The last trend emerging in contemporary research on homosexuality is a discussion of the increasing rates of violence against men because of their homosexuality. (Nel & Judge, 2008).

The Masculinity of Homosexuality

Homosexuality was largely unrecognised prior to the work of Kinsey. His studies highlighted the ways in which homosexuality could be present, including aspects of sexuality, as well as affection (Isaacs & McKendrik, 1992). In contemporary research there are contradictory meanings regarding the conceptualisation of homosexuality that have been presented. These are based on the 'born this way versus socialised this way' debate. From an essentialist standpoint, homosexuality is seen as the biological factors that have created the conditions for an attraction towards a member of the same sex (Isaacs & McKendrik, 1992). On the other hand, a constructionist perspective adopts the belief that homosexuality is influenced by society

and also acknowledges the individual's agency in adopting a particular identity (Potgieter, 2003).

Orthodox masculinities do not provide a space for homosexuality as it is perceived to contradict masculinity (Anderson, 2002). Being gay contradicts orthodox masculine scripts through same sex desire (Bourdieu, 2001). Edwards agrees as he calls mainstream masculinity "heterosexual masculinity" (Edwards, 1990, pp. 110). Homosexuality was separate from masculinities in that they belong to different categories; homosexuality is related to sexuality whereas 'masculinities' is a gendered identity. The aversion of orthodox masculinities towards homosexuality was entrenched through negative stereotypes of men homosexuality. The preconceived notion of homosexuality in men is that this group behaves 'like females' in that they are weaker, effeminate and incapable of being 'real men' (Edwards, 1990). The performance of effeminate behaviours amongst gay men was far more prevalent prior to the 1970s where it was a reaction to the dominant discourses of masculinity. However, post-1970, a shift towards demonstrating that gay men were 'real men' took place, in what has been termed the "machoisation" of men (Edwards, 1990, pp. 114).

The Space in relation to Homosexuality

Social settings have often played a role in the ways in which sexualities are expressed. The social context has a level of power in determining the ways people act, especially with regard to marginalised sexualities. The public and private spheres allow for different ways in which sexuality is expressed. Sexuality is generally placed within the private, and it is surrounded by debates regarding decency and acceptability (Edwards, 1994). There are limitations placed on what aspects of sexuality are may be displayed in the public sphere. Some of these limitations are in direct response to political limitations given through legislation. In South Africa during Apartheid, laws regarding sexuality were clearly stipulated. These laws clearly demarcated the lines between what could be made public and who could be open about their sexuality in public

versus what was punishable by law. Post-1994, there was a shift at policy level in what was regarded as socially sanctioned that was granted by the freedoms of the new Constitution (Reddy, 2006).

Edwards (1994) shares that in response to the heteronormative social norms, various social cues were adopted by gay men in order to navigate the public space and its restrictions, thus allowing the performance of sexuality in the public. Gay men negotiate gay desire and embodiments in relation to the space in which they are located (Browne, 2007). This often entails the restriction of gay affect and non-gender normative behaviour. However, these cues were expressed and they were based on shared meanings and understandings that create a collective sense of community (Edwards, 1994).

The debate between love and sex together with its intersection with physical and social space as a determinant for where sexuality can be expressed is a relevant one when studying homosexuality and intimacy. The area of private love has largely been under-researched in relation to homosexuality (Edwards, 1994). This could be because "there have always been two elements within homosexuality: the erotic and the romantic, the public and the private, lust and love. Nevertheless, the latter has increasingly been overshadowed by the former" (Edwards, 1994, pp.111).

Homosexual relationships are often met with an element of external power that implicitly or explicitly prohibits the expression and development of intimate connections both through institutional oppression, as well as moral oppression. Many social institutions are heterosexual by nature. The space reinforces heteronormativity and, through its messages, silences the ability to express the gay identity. The 'coming out' event can be seen as an act of breaking with the rules of the heteronormative space. Coming out provides individuals with a sense of freedom after moving out of the closet space (Abes & Jones, 2004).

One example of the messages that are enforced in the heteronormative space is that marriage has traditionally been between a man and a woman and some countries have laws that do not allow for gay marriage. The expression of intimacy and love in public is shunned by morals that make it difficult to be intimate in same sex relationships for example sending flowers, holding hands in public, or booking romantic holidays (Edwards, 1994). This provides an explanation for why same sex relationships between men remain sexualised, as promiscuity and risk behaviour is often linked to masculine behaviour, and masculinity affords a certain level of power. Thus, the expression of intimacy is compromised for the maintenance of a masculine identity. However, this does not account for why contrary to social expectations gay men maintain long lasting friendships with other men. Edwards (1994) explains this by saying that intimacy amongst men exists, but perhaps it takes on a different form that is not as expressive or as obvious as feminine forms of intimacy. For example, one which may be displayed as lacking physicality in public spaces in the form of hugging or hand holding.

Intersectionalities

Recently, it has become more apparent that when studying a socially constructed pattern of behaviour, for example gender or sexuality, a series of other interwoven constructs also need to be analysed. The social world does not function in an independent capsule of meaning, but rather as a series of networks that create particular understandings and meanings. It is in the analysis of the intersection of various constructs that a particular individual's story can be understood **(**Hill Collins, 1998). The focus of intersectionalities is to gain a particular level of understanding and analysis based on a set of unique intersecting social experiences. Different authors have examined the intersections of different social constructs. Hill Collins (1998) speaks of the family in relation to race, gender, class and the nation as she discusses the "naturalised hierarchy" or prevailing hegemonic order (Hill Collins, 1998, pp. 64).

Focusing on intersectionalities also allows individuals to understand experiences more broadly (McCall, 2005). It is such that adaptations in meaning are understood within a contextual shift. Different researchers will understand intersectionalities differently based on the particular categories that they are interested in studying. Hill Collins (1998) is widely recognised as one of the main researchers interested in the study of intersectionalities; and her interests mainly lie in understanding the experiences of black women. In particular then, she is interested in the intersection of race and gender (Hill Collins, 1998). The particular politics surrounding different constructs affect the way in which things are known about particular situations and experiences. Intersectionality is also about understanding different forms of oppression and how these interplay. Thus, there is an aspect that relates to power dynamics (Hill Collins, 1998).

This study is focusing on the intersection of gender and sexuality. However, there are other identities that impact the way in which results of the study will be understood, this is due to the location of the study. Other important intersections include race, class, and the rural-urban divide. These intersections are relevant in South Africa due to the history of inequality.

There has been a history of intense discrimination and prejudice within South Africa; however, this has not affected all groups living in that society in the same way. There are certain groups that experience more complex forms of societal pressure and who continue to experience discrimination in various ways. The further an individual is located from the ideal hegemonic the more he or she is exposed to negative forms of power and marginalisation. Gay men and lesbians in South Africa are targeted in violent forms or hate crimes because of their sexual orientation (Nel & Judge, 2008). Racially homosexual people are divided as they experience discrimination differently across racial categories the experiences of white gay men and lesbians are very different to those of black gay men and lesbians. Hate crimes are thus more likely to be committed against black lesbians than white gay men (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Intimacy will be expressed differently according to intersectionalities. This is due to the limits or advantages that are afforded to a person based on his or her particular identities.

Critiques of intersectionality in its summative approach have emerged. These critiques stipulate that intersectionality cannot be seen as a single axial feature. This means that people cannot be studied by one construct at a time, for example, by choosing race, then gender, or class to understand their social position. Rather it is the complexity of all the (unseparated) constructs that allows for a social wholistic understanding of the individual (Crenshaw, 1989).

Conceptual Framework

This section will include a description of the theory that will be used to understand and analyse the findings as well as framing the direction and nature of the questions in the research. Much of the work described in the literature review related to gender, sexuality and intersectionality will be used as a conceptual background to the study. However, theory located in the area of critical masculinity studies will be used as the main theoretical basis of the study. There is a distinction made between the study of masculinities as an academic field and the "men's movement". The aim of the men's movement is to portray these masculinities and assert them, whereas masculinity studies are concerned with the critical understanding of masculinities (Beasley, 2005). This research is concerned with the latter. Exploring the theory of masculinities can bring to the fore other constructs and social phenomena, for example, sexuality, gender, gender based violence, HIV and Aids. For the purpose of this study, Beasley's (2005) definition will be adopted:

> Masculinity is seen as socially, historically and culturally variable and as constituted in relation to (…) that which is deemed non-masculine (Beasley, 2005, pp.178).

In the traditional understanding of masculine development, the term "masculinities" is used to describe the social construction of the roles, performances and ways in which men behave (Richter & Morrell, 2006). It is a descriptive category for the ways in which men are to conduct

themselves, or exhibit their ‘maleness’. It takes on the premise that ‘masculinity’ is something given to boys because they possess “male bodies” (Butler, 1990; Ratele, 2011). But this “given” is not done outside of time and space, but rather in the interaction of men with other men, and with women. Masculinity is thus a systematic pattern of learning that includes the individual and various institutions (Ratele, 2013). But in more contemporary critiques the term “masculinities” also moves away from an exclusive focus on the category of men, as it assumes that not only men perform masculinities (Beasley, 2005; Connell, 2000). In various masculinity studies, it is assumed that masculine relates to the performance of heterosexuality, as it is a way of maintaining heteronormativity in society (Beasley, 2005). Therefore masculinities are also linked to patriarchy (Msibi, 2011), and forms of maintaining the status quo. Some authors specifically focus on the implications of masculinities within homosexual relationships. According to Msibi (2011), a critical understanding of masculinity theory can also be used to understand homophobic violence.

Traditional notions of masculinities are constructed from various starting points. According to Connell (1995), there are different areas within the study of masculinity. These areas include and are not exclusive to education, health, violence, fathering and counselling. Different fields of study have also taken different approaches towards the study of masculinities. There is a clinical understanding of masculinities, situated within the field of psychology, which takes on the work of Freud and later also developed by Carl Jung. According to Freud nature did not determine sexuality and gender; rather these were constructed through a conflictual process (Connell, 1995). Jung discussed how the ‘anima’ and the ‘persona’ essentially held those aspects of the person that were masculine and feminine, and explained how people would repress one of these aspects in some instances. The aim of some of his therapeutic work would be to encourage men to address their ‘anima’, that was their repressed feminine side (Connell, 1995). Although this notion is not where the focus of

this research lies, it is the understanding that masculinities can be seen from different perspectives that becomes crucial.

With this in mind there are also other influences in the construction of masculinities that lie beyond the psyche. From a social perspective various constructions of masculinities take into account the dominant cultural influences. In light of this, there is said to be a dominant African masculinity. This masculinity is highly concerned with sexuality and the forms in which sexual practices take place (Bhana, Morrell, Hearn, & Moletsane, 2007; Ratele, 2011). Within South Africa there is an array of masculinities present that have been created through the interaction of different cultures, traditions and the transformation from Apartheid to post-Apartheid politics (Ratele, 2013). A critique of naming the various forms of masculinities is that it denies the actions of masculinity, thus it is better to discuss it in the general term of masculinities. However, Ratele (2013) argues that it is important to understand the shifting possibilities of masculinities in order to predict the possible changes and adaptations.

Masculinities are often located in the position of an outsider from politics. This position is granted through the assumption of power linked to that which is viewed as masculine. Power is granted to "masculinities" through its link to men, and power is taken from masculinities when it is linked to queer politics, as it is linked to marginalisation (Beasley, 2005). In distancing from an understanding of masculinities that is linked directly to men, new explorations for performance and gender can take place (Beasley, 2005). This also allows for an understanding of masculinities within contexts. Masculinities are specific to ethnicity and social classes (Connell, 1995).

There is a strong link between masculinity and feminism (Beasley, 2005). This is an area that researchers and activists have begun to explore more deeply. This shift is important as it has implications because "changes in men's subjectivities and practices can contribute to the transformation of gender relations" (Pease, 2000, pp.19). Pease (2000) attributes resistance

in making the link between masculinities and feminism to an embedded patriarchy. The power of patriarchy is maintained through people's buy-in into the ideology that maintains the system (Ratele, 2011). According to Ratele (2011, pp.407) "at a minimum the system of gender domination needs men and women not to mobilise against its structures, to remain acquiescent and not rock the patriarchal boat". But Ratele (2011) further argues is that there is no one form of masculinity; as described above, masculinity is not only performed by men; and even in instances where it is performed by men, there is more than one kind of manhood. However, the reality is that the kind of manhood that is highlighted is that which considers the heterosexual precedent. This prevalent heterosexual masculinity is preserved through the functions of society and the categories of power that enforce rules of behaviour onto people in their day-to-day experiences (Ratele, 2011). Moreover, although masculinities can be seen in different contexts, denying its influence on people is problematic because masculinities are constantly changing. Therefore, what is understood to be "masculinity" in a particular context at a particular point in time will not be the same at a later time (Ratele, 2013). However, as Ratele (2013) states, "Masculinity is, in other words, an incomplete configuration of gender and sexual practices boys and men get to learn, habituate to over time and employ to navigate their given worlds and identify themselves as boys and men to themselves and others" (Shefer, et al., 2007 as cited in Ratele, 2013, pp.145).

Hegemonic masculinities is the term used to describe the framework within which particular masculinities have the most power fit in. The notion of hegemonic masculinity draws from the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci makes use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in order to explain how a dominant group holds a dominant position. Thus, hegemonic order refers to how one social class has power over another (Anderson, 2002). The understanding of hegemony as dominant is applied to other contexts including masculinity studies. Hegemonic masculinities are better understood against an explanation of what they are

not. The “hierarchy of masculinities” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 831) is essentially the analysis of the intersection between masculinities and other social concepts such as race, class and sexual orientation. At the top of the hierarchy rests all those who perform in a particular masculine way: white, western, higher class, heterosexual. Hegemonic masculinities are sustained through social interactions and, more importantly, institutions. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) identify various areas in which hegemonic masculinities have been used to understand social situations these include education, criminology, media representations of men, workplace dynamics, men’s health, as well as in various academic fields.

In relation to the overall aim of this research the link between hegemonic masculinity and homosexuality is drawn upon. According to Bourdieu (2001), the homosexual man is able to undermine hegemonic masculinity through being granted masculine power unless they disclose their sexuality. In some ways, gay men who retain their masculine features are able to both be positioned within feminist terrain in that they defy traditional maleness and similarly retain their masculinity through their physicality (Anderson, 2002; Bourdieu, 2001).

Using this conceptualisation of masculinities in the present study provides a useful angle with which to understand the constructions of young gay men with regard to intimacy. Masculinities can be used across the different categories such as class, race and culture. It allows for a demonstration of the issues that are relevant within the intersectionalities. Furthermore, it provides an explanation why certain roles get expressed in particular ways by homosexual men.

Conclusion

The literature review explored various concepts including gender and homosexuality and, more importantly, intersectionalities, as well as aspects identified in existing research that contribute to the way in which young men understand love and intimacy. It also provided an understanding of masculinities in relation to homosexualities and masculinities in the context

in which the study is located. Furthermore, it explored various understandings of masculinities and a more positive view of men and the expression of masculinity in general. Moreover, an analysis of the gaps in literature was undertaken through demonstrating the types of similar research that has been undertaken and the lack of focus on LGBTI issues in research in South Africa. The next chapter examines the methodology adopted in this research study.

Chapter 3: Method

Introduction

The research conducted aimed to explore the understandings of intimacy and romantic love of young gay men. The Methods chapter includes the research questions, as well as a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings that guided the interpretation of data and the manner in which the analysis was conducted. In this section some of the practical components of the research are highlighted this includs participant profiles and the procedures utilised for data collection and the method of data analysis. This section also includes the researcher's self reflexivity and ethical considerations, both which influence the overall analysis of this research.

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach in research is used to guide the overall framing of the research process. The approach that is selected is based on the best fit with the research questions (O'Leary, 2004). This research explored the opinions and constructions of a group of young gay men of intimacy and romantic love in relationships. Thus, the emphasis was on exploring their understandings in their social contexts and the implications of different ways of understanding. An objectivist way of understanding the world is adopted in this research, thus giving value to the experiences as creators of factual knowledge (O'Leary, 2004). Because of the relative gap in research in relation to this topic, an in-depth exploration was ideal for addressing the research questions. A qualitative approach was adopted. This provided some insight into the gaps in research, as well as the possible directions for the future. Qualitative research is ideal for investigating a smaller group in depth as well as understanding particular experiences and created meanings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this research, understanding young men's subjective opinions about intimacy was important.

Qualitative research extends beyond an enquiry of events to incorporate an understanding of the ways in which equity and social justice can be addressed. Therefore, although in the past the debate has related to the ability of qualitative research to be valid and scientific, its validity is confirmed by its contribution in the process of social transformation (Denzin, 2009). Furthermore, some qualitative methods such as focus groups are said to be valid because they mirror the kinds of conversations that participants may have in their daily lives (Hollander, 2004). Because of this, various authors have attempted to create specific standards of quality that do not follow the pattern set by quantitative research but that rather highlight the uniqueness of an interpretive framework in qualitative research (Denzin, 2009).

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do gender roles get expressed in intimate relationships amongst gay men?
    i. How does this differ in different types of relationships (i.e. friendship, romantic relationships)?
    ii. How does this differ in different social contexts?
    iii. How does this differ for men from different social backgrounds?
2. In what ways are young gay men reproducing or contesting hetero-normative ways of being intimate?

Target Population Sampling Method

The researcher employed a method of purposive sampling to ensure that the characteristics required were met. Purposive sampling is utilised when the researcher wishes to gather in-depth information (Tongco, 2007) from groups or individuals to "provide the greatest insight into the research question" (Devers & Frankel, 2000, pp.264) Firstly, the researcher made contact with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) organisations based

on the main campus of the University of the Witwatersrand and contacted telephonically some of its members to participate in the research. These organisations included ACTIVATE and The Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA). The research questions required that participants met certain criteria. For this research, these criteria consisted of a cohort of young adult gay men, over the age of 18, who self-identify as such. In order to easily meet ethical considerations the participants were from a specific university. The researcher aimed to have a group of between 12 and 15 young men who were divided into three different focus groups. No other characteristics needed to be met.

During the initial sampling round a sufficient number of participants had not been gathered therefore, the researcher requested the participants to make contact with others whom they thought would be interested in participating. Thus, the researcher accessed further participants who meet the study criteria through a method of snowball sampling (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Snowball sampling is a method used to gather participants in qualitative research. The method follows the principle that a small group of people is obtained and this group is then asked to identify other members who meet the same criteria from their networks, thus reaching a larger number of participants (Goodman, 1961). Sampling was anticipated to be difficult due to the nature of the participants' characteristics as a minority and potentially sensitive group. This was evident throughout the process with participants declining to participate once they were informed that it was to be a focus group discussion. Participants shared that they did not feel comfortable meeting with others who could potentially disclose their sexuality in spaces where they were not open. This research strictly adhered to ethics and thus participants had an opportunity to be informed about the research prior to commencement of the research, as well as what was expected of them and they would not be compelled to participate. Phone numbers and email addresses of the researcher and researcher's supervisor

were provided in case there are further questions or concerns that arose amongst the participants from their participation.

The interviews were conducted in English and thus the participants were expected to have a certain command of the language that would allow them to participate in the interaction. For this research, each focus group discussion consisted of a conversation lasting between 1 and 2 hours, which was guided by the open ended questions detailed in Appendix E. These open ended questions provided a platform on which participants could discuss and express their experiences of intimacy and romantic love in the gay community.

Each focus group was made up of between 2 and 5 young gay men. The total number of participants was 9. These men were from different cultural and racial backgrounds. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 years of age. The final pool of participants were all self-identified gay men, their profiles are briefly described in the table below.

Table 1:

Participants Profiles[1]

Pseudonym	**Brief Participant Profile**
Aakil	Indian, Muslim, working in the banking sector. He made it clear that his sexual orientation was not something he disclosed in all spaces.
Elijah	Indian, Muslim, working in the retail sector. He chooses to identify as open and he is currently in a relationship with another man. He is only open about his relationship with a close circle of friends.
Aatish	Indian, Muslim, currently completing his degree in the health professions. Although he self identifies as gay he did not state whether this is in all areas of his life or only with a limited group of friends.
Rajit	Indian, Muslim, gay man working in the banking sector. He self-identified as gay, and is only open to his circle of friends.
Dale	White man currently a university student.

[1] These pseudonyms were provided in order to protect the identity of participants.

Danvir	Indian (Hindu), currently working in the banking sector. He expressed that he has recently come out of the closet (in some spaces) after many years of being completely in the closet.
Caleb	White, Christian currently working in the banking sector. He expressed that he was open about his sexuality in most space except his work environment.
Fikile	Black gay man currently a university student completing his degree in Social Sciences. He expressed that he is open in most spaces and works towards creating more LGBTI friendly spaces in society.
Tamai	Black man, currently a student at university. He champions LGBTI rights but stated that he is not always expressive of his homosexuality out of respect for his parents.

Focus groups also assisted in uncovering the experiences encountered within this cohort this was done through an analysis of the interactions between participants such as jokes, agreements, disagreements, and narratives shared by the group. Cultural data emerges because "the nature of the talk generated in focus groups is a mixture of personal beliefs and available collective narratives that are flavored by the local circumstances of participants' lives" (Warr, 2005, pp. 200). It is important to note that although the individuals within the cohort were sometimes familiar to one another they were not always from the same social circles, but they were brought together by the research for the purpose of conducting the groups. Thus, the conversations are not exactly naturally occurring but they hold the purpose intended by the researcher (Hollander, 2004; Krueger & Casey, 2000).

A potential downfall of this method is that the group agreement can silence the individual opinion (Kitzinger, 1995). Hollander (2004) makes use of the terms *problematic silences* and *problematic speech* to describe two instances in which some difficulties may present when trying to extract participants' contributions. Problematic silences can occur when people fear disclosure this may be as a result of lack of trust in the group. Problematic speech occurs when the group provides socially desirable answers as a way of conforming to the status

quo or the shared beliefs of the group (Hollander, 2004). However, the opposite can also be true, when discussing taboo topics the extraverted nature of some participants may assist others in speaking up about their experiences. Although the men were from different backgrounds, they were all current students over the age of 18 years. This commonality assisted in maintaining a level of homogeneity that facilitated the process of "capitalising on people's shared experiences" (Kitzinger, 1995, pp. 300). Furthermore, research evidence demonstrates that this type of method has been useful when examining issues of gender as well as of romantic relationships (e.g. Warr, 2005).

The researcher also played the role of the moderator, guiding the discussion and probing when necessary (Hollander, 2004). The interviews were voice recorded, the recordings were used for the purpose of analysing the data, and all ethical considerations regarding the recording process were adhered to.

Method of Data Collection

Focus groups are a method of interviewing people in a group this method is commonly used in qualitative research. A focus group makes use of the interaction between participants in order to generate data. This is a method that is used for convenience or because of the kind of information that it generates. When it is used for convenience it capitalises on being able to collect data from larger numbers of people in a shorter space of time. However, in many instances the interaction that takes place in the groups is in itself part of the method. In this qualitative research the interactions, stories, anecdotes and questions that were exchanged between participants were highly important (Kitzinger, 1995).

The method used within this research was a focus group this was done in order to answer the research questions in the best possible manner. This provided the space where relational and social information about a group in interaction with others could be gathered. A focus group method is particularly useful for exploring people's experiences about their ways

of thinking (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus of the study was that of gathering information about the experiences of a group of young gay men with regard to intimacy and romantic love this allowed for discussion and social engagement around the topic of intimacy. Focus groups assisted in yielding information about the individuals, of this particular group (Kelly, 2006; Morgan, 1997). They assist in highlighting the social processes of social interaction present within groups that are evident in the manner in which participants share their beliefs about a particular topic (Warr, 2005). Thus, this was the method for collecting primary data.

Some guiding questions were used in order to guide the information and the kind of data relevant to answering the research questions (Kelly, 2006). However, this served only as a guide and participants had the freedom to explore aspects of the topic they find important. The focus group provided the space for discussing the public aspects of intimacy, as well as understanding common views that the cohort share regarding this topic. According to Kitzinger (1995), open ended questions assist the group process because they encourage participants to explore issues that are relevant to the researcher and participants, but which allowed them to explore different meanings in a comfortable manner. An observation of non-verbal cues and silent meanings will also take place (Greenstein, Roberts, & Sitas, 2003). Therefore, it can be said that focus groups allow researchers to tap into deeper layers of meaning than other qualitative methods (Kitzinger, 1995).

Method of Data Analysis

Data was gathered through the focus group discussions and this data was in the form of audio recordings. This was then transcribed verbatim and used for analysis. This data was then analysed using thematic content analysis. A thematic analysis aims to unearth the themes embedded within a text at different levels. This type of analysis has its roots in hermeneutic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic content analysis is useful for developing themes from the data that respond to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes that

emerged could be categorised into basic themes, organising themes, or global themes. A basic theme is derived from a statement that backs up a particular notion, this is gained from looking at the text on a basic level. An organising theme is composed of basic themes and it organises these into a cluster based on its commonalty and level of significance. Global themes hold the overall arguments present within the text, as well as within the particular context (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The steps of thematic content analysis can be classified as being either text-specific or based on the process. The overall steps that were used included firstly, the researchers' immersion and familiarisation with the data, where the researcher began to critically understand the data based on the information in the transcripts and self-reflexive journal as well as other field notes. Secondly, the researcher identified themes and subthemes based on the information available, through the use of coding (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The results of the analysis were contrasted against the conceptual framework and literature available. These results were used to answer the research questions.

Attride-Stirling (2001) proposes some steps that are specific to the process of thematic analysis and that are much more in-depth and specific to the unpacking of the text than the steps described above. Attride-Stirling's (2001) method provides a step-by-step dissection and reconstruction of the data from its raw form into a manner that highlights patterns of integration. The method consists of three phases, namely, the phase of reduction or breakdown of the text, the exploration phase, and the integration phase. The first phase consists of coding the material, through the development of a coding framework that is guided by the theoretical framework and research questions. Once the framework is devised the text is divided into segments. These segments are then used to identify themes and themes can be arranged in various ways. This research made use of a thematic network to arrange its themes. After this the second stage begins and it consists of carefully describing the network that has been crated,

and making a comprehensive summary. The final stage consists of describing the patterns emerging in the thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Certain aspects were taken into consideration during the process of analysis for the purpose of ensuring rigour in the research. Guba (1981) suggests four criteria that should be adhered to by all researchers in order to ensure that their research is trustworthy. These constructs are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Kelly, 2006; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Credibility is the process of ensuring that research findings are aligned with reality. Credibility is achieved through making use of tools that have been proven successful in similar research, through providing accurate operational definitions of constructs, a prolonged level of engagement with participants or participating organisations, ensuring that participants volunteer out of their own will so that those who participate willingly provide information, getting feedback from peers and others who have conducted similar research, by employing reflexive commentary, an examination of previous research, and finally a through "description of the phenomenon under scrutiny" (Shenton, 2004, pp. 69).

In order to ensure transferability, all aspects of the research were carefully documented in a journal. Particular emphasis was placed on the process of the research and on the choices made within the study including methods and literature used to analyse the results. Finally, the contextual considerations of the research were taken into account (Kelly, 2006). Some of the issues discussed included the number of people taking part, restrictions and criteria for participants, the methods of data collection, length of focus group sessions, and the time period in which data was collected (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability is the equivalent of reliability in positivist research. Reliability takes on the assumption that if the same research were to be done elsewhere the same results would be achieved. However, in qualitative research this is problematic because results are extremely dependent on the context in which the research took place. Therefore, the manner in which

dependability is ensured is through providing a detailed description of the process that the study undertook, thus allowing other researchers to repeat the research in the same manner even if the results they gather differ. The description should include the research design and implementation, an operational definition of constructs related to data gathering, and a reflective approach to how the process was conducted (Shenton, 2004).

Self-Reflexivity

The researcher's context is highly influential in qualitative research and can have a direct impact on the results and the participants' perceptions. Furthermore, it influences the choice of research, the manner in which it is approached and the analysis itself and therefore the results (Malterud, 2001). Due to the nature of the research, the researcher is expected to have an understanding of the participants' stories (Guba & Lincoln, 1983). Many of the researcher's beliefs are influential and it is important to recognise these factors are present throughout the research process. These factors may become more or less prominent at certain points of the study or change throughout the process, therefore in this research notes were kept and discussed during supervision in order to keep track of all these aspects. A degree of bias is expected in this type of research and, therefore, complete objectivity in this kind of research is not always possible and thus the researcher's background also provides an analytic point of view.

Due to the fact that the researcher's context influences the research process and results, it is important to employ a critical understanding of the researchers' personal values, interests, contextual influences. It is expected that the researcher's position as a woman interviewing men may have an impact on the kind of information that is gathered, and on the way the analysis is conducted.

The researcher also notes that in interviewing members of the LGBTI population there are certain experiences that are unique, and that the manner in which research topics are approached can serve as a tool for transformation but also if unconsciously used it can

potentially be detrimental to social development. Intimacy in LGBTI populations has often been linked to sexual practices and this research could potentially serve to objectify these populations further. With this in mind the researcher has attempted to demonstrate intimacy as a function of love rather than sex, in seeing it this way it delineates a boundary that could allow for new ways of understanding this population.

The research process in not unidimensional, but it is rather an interactive process between participants and researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The participant's experience also influences the results and thus understanding the ways in which they understood intimacy and romantic love were crucial in guiding the direction of the data that was available. Furthermore, understanding the South African context and the interaction between legislation and lived experiences, where homosexuality is legally acceptable but where there are extremely high rates of violence against LGBTI people provides a specific platform in which intimacy can be explored in different manners. This research provides a unique understanding in that it highlights a South African experience where most research on intimacy and romantic love has been conducted in other countries. Furthermore, this research takes a qualitative approach where the majority of previous research has been of a quantitative nature. This previous research utilised scales to measure intimacy rather than experiences of intimacy.

The position of the researcher as a woman, and someone born in Latin America also provides a different understanding of the theory and the experiences of participants. The researcher's positionality provides a point of similarity and difference from the data and analysis. As a point of difference, the interpretation of the data cannot be separated from the researcher's personal experiences that lie outside of masculinity. This is strongly influenced by the researcher being a woman, and by the researcher's previous interest in gender from a feminist perspective. On the other hand, the understanding and interpretation of intimacy that

is demonstrated in this study highlights that there is a level of familiarity of the researcher with experiencing heteronormativity, gender binaries and the construction of LGBTI identities.

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations are important throughout the research process. They inform the nature of the data collection process, as well as assist in holding the researchers accountable in the entire process. This research adhered to the guidelines stipulated in the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) and was granted ethics clearance on this basis (Appendix G). While socially marginalised, this group of participants was not a vulnerable group in terms of research. The "marginal" status of the participants due to their sexuality was noted and thus special measures were adopted guarding against possible sensitivity. The principles and values of research ethics were considered for deciding whether the participants were a vulnerable group and how to guard against sensitive issues that could emerge in the research. These principles and values indicate that the researcher needs to respond appropriately to what participants are sharing (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). For this research, the central consideration included being aware of the participants position as gay men. In view of the context of South Africa and increasing hate crimes, it was important to be mindful of how this could affect participants, their possible fears and their own protective mechanisms against the threat of violence or any experienced violence.

All aspects of the research were explained to the participants prior to commencement of the research, in a verbal as well as written manner as per the participant information sheet (see Appendix A). A consent form was given to participants; the purpose of the consent form was to provide participants with an outline of the study. Furthermore, disclosing all relevant information stating that they are not forced to participate and they could withdraw from the study at any point. A consent form is utilised to assist researchers in explaining to participants what is expected of them and exposing the possible risks to the research so that participants

can make an informed decision on participation (Pedroni & Pimple, 2001). Participants were then asked to sign the participant consent form (see Appendix B). A consent form for audio recording was provided. Participants were told that the interviews would be recorded, the purpose of the recordings as well as how long recordings would be kept after the interview were stated to participants (see Appendix C). Finally, a group form asking participants to respect the confidentiality of the information they heard in the group was given to participants at the commencement of the focus group discussion (Appendix D).

Consideration was placed on the value of confidentiality, as it was important to keep the identities of the participants secure. As with all research that employs focus groups as the method of data collection, it is not always possible to guarantee confidentiality (Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Emphasis was placed on discussing with participants the risk of being in the focus group where they would disclose their sexual identity. It was important that participants agreed and understood the implications of this method of data collection and that they had a choice on whether they wanted to be in the group or not. This was discussed with them individually before the sessions. Using snow-ball sampling with this group was also a way of securing the safety of the participants. By virtue of contacting participants who knew each other, they were able to feel safer and there was a sense that their sexual identity would not be discussed outside of the environment without the consent of participants.

Conclusion

The methodological considerations were discussed in this chapter, this included a presentation of the research questions. These questions were formulated to frame the study and areas of interest. Furthermore, the methodological underpinnings of this research were explained in relation to qualitative research and why it was the chosen for this particular study. Aspect of methodological theory relevant to this study were presented for the sampling procedures, participants details, method of data collection and methods of data analysis that were discussed

in this chapter. In line with qualitative research, self-reflexivity and ethical considerations were discussed.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion of Results

Introduction

Contemporary research on love and intimacy has focused on the experiences of heterosexual individuals and it provides quantitative data that describes the different factors that are present in a romantic relationship (de Munck & Kronenfeld, 2016). Previous research does not take into account the possible similarities or differences in the experiences of intimacy by homosexual couples (e.g. Fisher & Narus, 1981). The experiences of gay men in South Africa are framed by the contrast between the history of Apartheid and segregation (Reddy, 2006), increasing homophobia and hate crimes (Msibi, 2011) whilst on the other hand living in a country that has inclusive legislation aimed at protecting the rights of all citizens including gays and lesbians (Croucher, 2002; Scott & Macklem, 1992). These societal contradictions inflicted by the social context are reflected in the experiences of the participants in this research. This research therefore aimed to describe the qualitative experiences of a small cohort of gay men, rather than a checklist for intimacy and romantic love. The qualitative approach provided a way in which to analyse their experiences against the back drop of social factors. The analysis of the data was done by using masculinity theory as a framework for reference, as it helps explain the gaps in previous research on intimacy and romantic love with regards to homosexual relationships.

Furthermore, there was an identified link between gender and romantic love, culture and romantic love, socio-economic status and romantic love and other intersectionalities. In this chapter the results of this study are presented. The information was drawn from performing a thematic content analysis on the data that was gathered in focus group discussions. This chapter unpacks the different themes and subthemes that emerged from the coding process. The main themes presented speak to: 1) the meaning of the word ‘intimacy’ in gay relationships; 2) the role that the physical space plays in relation to intimacy; 3) the importance

of intersectionality in social studies, and 4) the portrayal of homosexuality and the homosexual throughout history.

The themes are presented in the table below (Table 2), this is to assist the reader in understanding the connection between the themes, subthemes, the framework and the overall research question. Nine participants were interviewed they were: Aakil, Elijah, Aatish, Rajit, Dale, Danvir, Caleb, Fikile and Tamai[2]. The participants differed in religion, race, relationship status and socio-economic status. These differences provided a wider cross section of experiences that enriched the data gathered.

Table 2:

Themes and subthemes

Theme	**Sub-theme**
An intimate connection	romantic intimacy and love in gay relationships
Intimacy and the space	The 'closet'
	Heteronormative physical spaces
	Gay-safe spaces
Intersectionalities	Socio-economic status
	Race and Culture
	Gender
The gay image	Who are gay people?

[2] These pseudonyms were provided in order to keep the identity of participants confidential.

An Intimate Connection

The participants in the three focus groups were eager to find out what the word 'intimacy' meant and although it was not intended, this became the ice breaker. The participants were asked what the word 'intimacy' meant to them and they were willing and open to sharing. As such one of the overarching themes relates to the meaning of the word 'intimacy' and the representations of 'intimacy' in gay relationships. There are discursive links between the word 'intimacy' and a feeling of closeness to another person. Intimacy was seen as a transactional negotiation between two or more people. According to literature, at least two people needed to be present for the connection to be classified as romantic (Brown, 1999).

> Intimacy is love. It does not know colour, or race, or religion...it is just there...it's that connection (Caleb)

> I was in a situation where I had to talk to this person that I had never met before, but we had to ask each other these questions. After the time was finished we just carried on, not friends or anything, but in that moment it was very intimate (Dale)

In the discussions on the meaning of romantic love and intimacy it was aparent that there was not a clear distinction between the two. Intimacy, was perceived to be a synonym for love. At the same time, intimacy could be used to discribe a deep connection with someone, whether this was a long lasting connection or a short term connection. The above extracts reflect the emphasis that participant's placed on understanding intimacy as an emotional connection, such as love, care, affection and attachment.

> It is a game of give and take, I feel you both have to show both sides, I feel like both people should be initmate (Tamai)

In the absence of intimacy, participants believed a romantic relationship could not be built. Participants shared that the intimate connection always needed to be mutual in their relationships. The level of mutuality and compromise was seen to directly affect the success of the relationship. In a study by Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell and Rogge (2007), they

concluded that mindfulness is essential to satisfaction in a relationship. Mindfulness refers to an internal and external awareness of the events that are taking place in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Some authors have suggested that there is a link between mindfulness, attunement and level of connection in a romantic relationship (e.g. Kabat-Zinn, 1993). The need for a mindful connection highlights the participant's view that a connection needs to be mutual, where both partners are fully involved in the present.

> Obviously that is where you fuel one another, I don't see that one partner can be the dominant intimate one the whole time and the other one lacks because that is where trouble comes in a relationship (Caleb)

Furthermore, there was a sense that there needed to be attunement with one another for intimacy to be present. Three out of the nine participants shared that they expected their partners to have a level of perception of their current emotions and needs. This level of perception or attunement let them know that they had a successful connection and therefore intimacy. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), romantic love and intimacy in adulthood are expressions of initmacy in childhood. It was evident that "the mother" was an important person in these participants' representations of initmacy. Mikulincer and Goodman (2006) posit that this attachment is significantly different in that there is an expectation for reciprocity. In the experiences of these young men where a romantic connection or relationship was present, the intimate connection needs to be a mutual experience. The participants felt it was important to give and receive in a relationship. The connection was a synonym for emotional sharing. If one partner shared more than the other one then this was not seen to be a true relationship with intimacy. Participants felt it was crucial for them to experience their partner sharing and being vulnerable with them as an indicator of intimacy.

It was evident that other factors were important for intimacy to develop. These factors included the degree or type of relationship, the length of time given to establish the connection and the level of investment also affected how mutual that connection needed to be. Mainly the

level of mutual attachment appeared to differ based on whom it is shared with. A once off sexual encounter was not considered to be as intimate as a long term relationship.

There was also a sense of the need for other factors such as openness and vulnerability. It appeared to be a common trend that trust needed to be present in order for the connection to take place. The aspect of vulnerability was seen by participants as a positive risk one could take in a relationship. This was highlighted by Rajit when he shared his experience in a gay relationship. He had been dating one partner for a number of years and they were in a stable committed relationship. However, Rajit had experienced a level of fear at the start of the relationship because he was uncertain about his willingness to open up to his partner. This uncertainty was hightened by the possiblity that his partner would not recirocate his feelings and respects Rajit's vulnerability.

Throughout the discussion on the meaning they began to reveal their own experiences of being gay, being in intimate relationships and the impact that family had on the way in which they are intimate in their own relationships. The initial sense was that the intimate connection could be experienced with various people. According to the participants, intimacy is also not limited to romantic relationships and they appeared open to share their experiences and observations from the position of being gay men. This section describes the experiences of romantic intimacy and love in gay relationships.

There has been limited reasearch on how intimacy and romantic love influence or feature in gay men's sexual choices and relationships, with most research focusing on heterosexual relationships (e.g. Scharf & Mayseless, 2001). Most of the research has focused on sexual practices and the use of sex in public spaces by gay men. For these participants in their relationships there was a belief that men didnt need to fulfil traditional masculine roles in relation to intimacy. Previous research leaned towards the assumption that intimacy was the same as sexual behaviour (Fisher & Narus, 1981). Gay men in particular have been associated

with sex and promiscuity. What the paticipants in this research shared is that intimacy expands beyond a sexual connection or sexual behaviour. Moreover, there was a general belief among participants that the presence or lack of an intimate connection was dependent on a number of factors, such as, the nature of the relationship, the person's upbringing, their own understanding of intimacy and the person's openess about their sexual identity.

The participants presented a picture that contradicts the heternormative patterns by expressing that both men in a gay relationship needed to be intimate. Disproving the heteronormative, hegemonic narrative that men are not intimate. Earlier literature on masculinities discusses what it means to be masculine (Hearn & Morrell, 2012), creating the link between what is socially learnt or constructed and individual's behaviour. According to Butler (1993) men and women learn gender roles and replicate them. The participants demonstrated the use of masculinity, in casual relationships this representation of masculinity translated to not being intimate.

According to Potgieter (2003) all individuals have a level of agency in choosing their identity. To this, Butler (1993) adds that a gendered identity is acquired through socialisation but developed through repetitions. Thus, the negotiation of intimacy appears to be a way for these young men to express their homosexuality in a manner which is not pre-determined by society, but rather by their agency. Furtheremore, when these participants share that both men need to be intimate, it demonstrates a contradiction with previous research on romantic love and initmacy that indicated men tended to be less intimate, and that relationships between two men were the least intimate in a comparison scale (Fisher & Narus, 1981).

The influence of the social sphere on their view of intimacy appeared to play a crucial role. They had learnt from their mothers and fathers the roles that society expected that men and women would adhere to. As a feature of hegemonic masculinity men are expected to perform within the margins of masculine behaviour (Connell, 2002). It appears that commonly

men would associate multiple sexual relationships as a symbol of their masculine power. In this understanding intimacy should be performed as sexual attraction or sexual behaviour.

Hegemonic masculinity promotes the dominant social position of men. This is done through the cultural dynamics and norms that social groups employ in order to maintain their leading positions in society (Connell, 2005). The transition from learning to be boys to learning to be men (Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala & Buikema, 2005) seemed to be constructed by these participants as the manners in which men display emotion. This includes what emotions are shown and to whom. All participants framed these patterns in relation to gendered socialisation. For example, Caleb describes this socialisation process in the extract below:

> 'You will not play with your sister's dolls' that is how I was brought up with a very Afrikaans mentality. 'You are not allowed to play with dolls, because dolls are for girls and you will be a moffie'. I had three female influences in my life because unfortunately that is how my family reproduced (laughter). I was the first grandson and we were consantly with my grandmother, my two cousins and my sister; so I always picked up on things that they said like girlish things or whatever and I would be scolded for it if I repeated it in the presense of my father like 'no boy! That is not right, you don't say that! It is a shirt not a blouse'. And they would freak out because a guy wears a shirt and not a blouse (laughter). And then I'd speak about a purse and he would lose his shirt and say 'wallet! A boy has a wallet!'. There was this whole contradiction the whole time and a struggle and most probably if it was not made such a big hype of, it wouldn't have even come to my mind. But I can definitely say that those are some things that I can think back on and that had an influence on my upbringing (Caleb)

Masculinities are constructed by boys and men, with young boys feeling the pressure to emulate older male role models (Shefer, et al., 2005). There is an expectation for men to sustain their manhood and assert their masculinity (Morrell, 1998). According to Shefer, et al. (2005, pp.iii) "two key elements of the dominant mode of masculinity are heterosexuality and fearlessness or risk-taking". The participants in this research did not fit the typical descriptions of masculinity. Butler (1990) adds that men and women are socialised to behave as men and women based on their sex. As Caleb describeed in his experience of growing up, his father

socialised him to be a boy in the hegemonic sense; he has since had to negotiate what being a man means in the context of being gay and someone who wanted to show emotion.

> As a child you learn by imitating everything and (...) you come there and this is how you are supposed to act and you probably get punished if you acted incorrectly from what they wanted you to do (Dale)

> You can do what you're comfortable with and be more masculine or femenine or both. I think there is a shift even in the heteronormative roles where men have become house husbands and the women are the breadwinners (...) the historical roles are being challenged (Aakil)

Most importantly in the process of describing how they experienced intimacy in the gay community there was a re-negotiation of their homosexual identity through affirming that they could be intimate in different ways. Thus, questioning previous assumptions of what it meant to be male and manhood, and therefore interrrogating the gender norms that are attributed to the men (Friedman & Downey, 1999). For the purpose of this research the focus was on romatic relationships, where it appeared that the participants experiences demonstrated a new meaning to being gay and in a relationship.

The experiences that these participants had encountered growing up, had shaped their understandings of what it meant to be a man and a woman. Literature on gender and socialisation has leaned towards the belief that parents play a key role in the socialisation process (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). These participants spoke of the ways in which they had learnt to be men from their parents. These stories appeared to reaffirm the patterns of hegemonic masculinity, for example, some of them had made the conscious decision not to be openly feminine. In some instances, it was also evident that they replicated heteronormative patterns in their relationships. At other times, the participants chose to defy the gender binaries either though re-affirming their homosexual identity or through choosing to express emotions, this is something that went against the scripts of manhood. These men appeared to be navigating their own definition of masculinity.

The participants also shared that for gay men in contemporary society it was easier to negotiate intimacy, to go beyond the gender binaries and subscribing to the roles imposed by heteronormativity, where one needed to display more feminine and the other more masculine traits. There were no expectations that one partner would be more affectionate or intimate than the other. But this was dependent on race and class. For instance, for a mixed race couple, a White couple or an Indian couple they could both be intimate, and negotiate the roles (if any) in their relationship, whilst for Black men this was not the case. According to Morrell (2001), there are different types of masculinities that are dependent on class, race and culture.

The black participants in this study felt the pressure to conform to the binaries was very strong. This often placed constraints as they negotiated living and studying in cosmopolitan environments whilst at the same time conforming to the cultural norms that Black gay men subscribed to. Fikile and Tamai shared the difficulty in finding partners, especially on social applications like Tinder and Grindr, because gay men and in particular Black gay men would seek partners who fit the binary, for example, a 'butch' man would request specifically a 'fem' man and vice versa. For Black men not conforming to this, it became difficult to seek intimacy or to build mutual connections. This understanding is shared by Ratele (2008) who maintained that "there are a number of intricacies that riddle the lives of African males".

There is a racial and gender identity embedded in this reproduction of masculinity. There are messages that these men have received of masculinity as something that reproduces the African family and the ideal masculinity that essentially ascribes that men should dominate women (Mutua, 2006). These men continued to replicate these roles in being the dominating or the dominated.

For the most part, the difference between these findings and those in other studies on romantic love is the sexuality of the participants. The experiences related here and those quantified in other studies highlight the same markers in relation to relationships, namely

connectivity, attunement, and a presence. However, the aspect that most studies fail to mention is that they focus on heterosexual love, and that they ascribe to certain gender binaries in exploring openness and attachment factors of intimacy. Although this could be seen as a detrimental the findings demonstrate that in spite of sexuality, love is in fact love, intimacy cuts across sexuality and relationships.

The Space and Intimacy

The Closet

Over the years there has been an inherent regulation of bodies based on sexuality and gender . Through cultural expressions there is a shaming of people based on their deviation from gender binaries. These cultural facets hold power and assist in entrenching knowledge and normalising patterns of discourse. For those who were shamed there was an internalisation of this shame; and thus the creation of 'the closet' (Eskeridge, 2009). The closet can be representative of the concealment of LGBTI practices and existence, but on the other hand it forms part of discourse and practice that create spaces of danger and marginalisation for LGBTI people (Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2007). This space is not physical, but it is a metaphorical representation that serves to hide that which transgresses the norm. The closet was something these young gay men experienced.

> I am planning on coming out because it makes me depressed when they talk about me marrying a girl, and it's a big part of my life so I need to tell them. And I feel like my own parents don't even know who I am (Danvir)

The quote by Danvir, highlights the need that these participants felt to fully embrace their gay identity. Their sense of self appears to be hindered by the fact that they cannot be open in all their spaces. They are constricted and they have to conceal major aspects of themselves in the home, at work and with family. This is in line with findings from previous research that describe the need for LGBTI people to hide aspects of themselves in different areas of their life

in order to fit in with societies standards and hegemony (Seidman, 2004). Many of the participants remained in 'the closet' for fear of that shame, both for themselves and to their families. These young men could deal with the backlash of homophobia but they feared putting their parents through that as it was not something they had chosen. Some of the participants expressed that the implications of coming out for families was often severe. This was especially prominent in spaces where cultural and religious norms dominated discourse of their immediate context.

> I say I'd be much more open, because basically we are living in fear. The extent to which you say what you want to say or act. How you want to act affects the way you walk, talk, when you laugh, when you cry, when you allow yourself to feel. All that I think it is a learned thing. It's somewhat innate but very much learned (Dale)

The participants described 'coming out' as being able to be open about their relationship in public and with their loved ones. According to the participants this 'coming out' experience, could facilitate their intimacy. The general sense was that if they could be open about their sexuality then they would be able to share intimate moments in public. The participants felt that for heterosexual couples holding hands, shaing meals together, kissing in public and exchanging loving looks were all key factors for building their intimacy. However, because there was a perceived threat and feeling of being policed, the participants felt that they were unable to express their intimacy. This was evident in Tamai's words where he expressed that being openly intimate could increase their social visibility and could put at risk the safety of the person and their partner. For Tamai, the need to reserve his intimacy and the threat of danger were justified fears in the face of homophobic violence against LGBTI people in the South African context. There was also a sense that coming out was not a once-off process but rather a continuous opening up in the different spaces that they occupied, for example, an individual could be out of the closet with friends and close family but in the closet with their work colleagues or extended family.

> Well, because you can't for obvious reasons, say you're not out to the world, you can't be intimate in public because maybe you are afraid of outing yourself or outing your significant other (Tamai)

By being in the closet, the participants could only express their intimacy in certain public spaces, through utilising codes and restricted intimacy. These codes were described by the participants as small gestures such as hand holding under the table, a glance, paying for the person's taxi fare, or even sitting facing the person (even if from a distance) and these cues could lead the couple to feel intimacy. Several of the participants had learnt these codes through being exposed to homophobic language and acts in the streets and at home. In their own families they may have been exposed to homophobic remarks, and had been shunned when they did not participate in this heteronormative play. Furthermore, there was a sense that displays of affection were reserved for the private sphere. Whilst some theorists distinguish the private and the public as the home versus the street; in the case of these young men then home is also a public place and the private is thus only reached once they are able to create their own homes, or in their bedrooms. Home for many is seen as a safe space that permits for the free expression of intimacy. However, for LGBTI people the home can be the very place where heteronormativity and gender binaries are enforced. This is represented in structures within the home. LGBTI people are forced to remain in the closet for fear of the hostility that the "safe spaces" can provide (Browne et al., 2007). The extract by Danvir explained how this underlying sense of fear affected the expression of intimacy for him:

> If I couldn't, because my family was around, because they dont know. If family was around I probably wouldn't show affection, maybe some eye contact, maybe a quick glance, slight body language, maybe blow a kiss. But I doubt that we would have any physical contact especially if people who don't know. I wouldn't want them to know what was going on, because of fear (Danvir)

Many theorists have written on the ways in which the home is a sexualised space (Browne et al., 2007). Essentially, there needs to be some thinking around deconstructing the binaries of public-private or home-work, that have been created and that are used to force gay people to

perform differently to their desired identity. Overall, what the home and work spaces represent is the systemic function of policing people's bodies and dictating what they have to do. The policing of LGBTI people is no different to the gender performativity that heterosexual people are subjected to. The closet is therefore a structural cageing of the participants' expression of their sexuality. In the participants' the degree to which they were open about their sexuality was linked to intimacy.

Finally, another trend that emerged was that 'the closet' could not be seen as a uniform space where every gay man had the same experiences. The experience of the closet was influenced by the intersection with other constructs, for example, religion, race, gender and class.

> I've been open with him from the beggining as well and as I said to him that not everybody's experience is the same. Some people have had to move town or continents away because they are kicked out (Caleb)

Everyone's experiences of coming out are different and they affect their ability to be intimate. For Elijah and Rajit, this intersection has had some effect in their relationship. Elijah shared that he was more in the closet than Rajit because his family was more conservative. This meant that he was less able to be openly affectionate in all spheres of his life. Rajit was more comfortable frequenting gay clubs, gay pride events and gay safe spaces and he had challenged the normalisation of gay versus non-gay spaces to a much greater extent than Elijah. However, being Muslim placed its own 'closeting' on their gay identity. They had navigated intimacy as something that was shared only in private and it was restricted to specific instances where they were alone. Their religion had forced them to create such a tight 'closet' that intimacy was not something that they shared on a regular basis.

More than the religion itself, it appeared to be their affiliation to religious practices and a belief that what they were doing was wrong. This was marked by an 'internalised closet'. For other participants, although they had come from traditional and religious families, they had

negotiated away from those practices. They had separated from their religion by choice because of the infringiments on their sexuality or because they did not agree with the heternormative practices.

Heteronormative Spaces

Heteronormativity forms part of the cyclical pattern in which hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated. In current literature, there is a strong push to look at sexuality in terms of context (Browne, Bown & Lim, 2007). The heteronormative space as an area of study holds an important dynamic where praxis and politics need to play a role in destabilising the norm. These spaces hold in them norms that "(regulate) acceptable sexual behaviour in public or shared spaces" (Browne, et.al., 2007, pp. 2). Thus, it can be considered that these spaces are sexualised. To this, Edwards (1994) adds that sexuality is confined to the private sphere. The quote below shows how heteronormativity becomes the 'judging third eye' that these gay men have to be constantly aware of before being intimate.

> We wouldn't hold hands at a table and a straight couple probably would (Dale)
>
> There is a restraint on the amount of intimacy that gay people are allowed to express (Aatish)

For the participants in this study, the public space is a space where social norms limit their ability to be intimate. All the participants mentioned the difference between gay and "straight" couples in the public space, for example, Dale shared how straight couples would hold hands at a table and he would not be able to do so. Caleb shared that a straight couple could walk and hold hands and no one would notice but if it was a gay couple there would be "staring eyes". The staring eyes were real experiences that they were faced with everyday. The participants shared how the social judgement began the moment someone perceived them to be gay and continued or was agravated if there was any intimacy shared. According to the participants, this intimacy did not only need to be between romantic partners. As long as it was in relation

to two gay men, even in friendship, they were perceived to be sexually atrracted to each other and the "staring eyes" would be present.

> You become more aware of your surroundings, you are more vigilant of what is going on and people's reactions, how people are. So you are not just blissfully unaware of what is going on around you. Your senses are heightened, you are hyper-reactive and that's why I say you get into that fight or flight mode as if someone is going to offend you or you are going to offend someone else and how you are going to react in that occasion if something should happen (Caleb)

Although the judgement from people was present and perceived by the participants, there was also an element that they discussed of the internalised staring eye. This internalised eye would alert them to danger or unsafe spaces and would also help to monitor public displays of intimacy. For example, in instances where they would be in public shopping malls, the participants would not share intimate moments even if the mall was empty. In their narrative, even an empty mall was not the correct space to be intimate by holding hands or sharing a kiss. Thus, for some of the participants, affection was restricted to the private sphere. This was in contrast to what some shared that they would not be offended by a heterosexual couple holding hands. However, public displays of affection beyond that were frowned upon. Highlighting that in some form the public space was for heterosexuals and claimed by heterosexuals; and in another sense that the space was subjected to surveillance.

These narratives from the participants speak to gender roles, sexuality, and most importantly surveillance politics. Surveillance politics describe how, historically, sexuality has been a factual part of humanity. Secondly, the enquiry of sexuality and the power of assigning sexuality falls outside of the individual, and thirdly, the punishment or judgement of the self has been internalised in the form of rules and regulations (Foucault, 1977; McWhorter, 1999). In this instance, surveillance politics are unspoken rules that are enforced by police, other citizens and internalised oppression that came to be through words, force or looks. In a sense, then, the contemporary politics against gay sexuality make use of the idea of the panopticon

(Foucault, 1977) or internalised/normed punishment, as well as more old-fashioned forms of punishment as a spectacle and public punishment of the body (Foucault, 1977) through hate crimes, police brutality and verbal assaults.

This highlights that there is a strong link between sexuality and regulatory norms that exist in the space and it dictates the specific practices that can take place in different spaces. According to Demitriou (2001), external hegemony is seen in relation to men's dominance in society through the institutions that entrench social norms. Therefore, when Rajit shares that "the space also depends on who frequents the space" he highlights what has been previously found in theory about the experience of gay men. There is a contestation of "power to define who belongs and to define what bodies are allowed to do, when and where".

> Like if it was here in this mall you would be worried that your dad's friend or whoever could be sitting around the corner (Aatish)

All Muslim participants shared how they would be more concerned in some public spaces, or what they termed 'muslim-hubs' because they would be more likely to be judged by others and of being outed to their families by family friends who frequent these spaces.

> I'm still very reserved infront of my family, the type of person I was prior to coming out and the type of person I am now is 100% still the same. I might be a little bit playful with my partner in front of my parents, like a rub on the back, or touch their hands. I would feel comfortable with that but I would never go into a full on grasp and kiss on the lips (Caleb)

> In my culture I'd say intimacy in terms of like you know PDA [Public Displays of Affection] are a definite no. You can't be intimate in public whether straight or gay (Tamai)

The surveillance of spaces goes beyond being a member of the LGBTI community they are internalisations created to control bodies and determine what they are allowed to do. For example, Aakil, Aatish, Danvir and Caleb said they would not display affection or intimacy in public even if they were straight, because they had learnt from their families that it was not considered appropriate to do so. These patterns of behaviour spanned accross many

generations. According to Browne, Lim and Brown (2007) learned serve the role of maintaining the spatial divisions and they place limitations on the body and expression of sexuality.

Overall, this highlights that for these participants, the streets are not neutral spaces but they contained messages of gender norms and heteronormativity. These messages were visible in the streets on billboards of straight couples, the nuclear family, and the gender binaries of the ideal man and woman. In these spaces, heterosexual couples have the freedom to perform certain acts, whilst this was not allowed for homosexual couples. The messages are that gay men should limit their intimacy to private spaces, designated gay spaces, or to the home. These reproductions of social norms reinforce hegemonic gender identity and heterosexuality.

Gay Spaces and Gay Sites

The term gay spaces was adopted as a way to describe what participants believed to be gay-friendly spaces, or places that are frequented by gay people. Two common trends emerged with regard to the participants' perceptions of gay spaces. For the purpose of creating the distiction they are referred to as gay spaces and gay sites. Firstly the participants described that there were designated gay spaces such as gay bars, queer parties, gay pride parades or online dating sites like Grinder. Secondly, gay sites were described as larger areas such as cities and neighbourhoods. It is important to note that how these spaces were understood or interpreted was dependent on other social markers such as class and race.

> I think it depends on the public space, I feel more comfortable in some public spaces. In a gay club I would feel more comfortable, I wouldn't think about it (Aakil)

Gay bars are seen as places for privacy for gay customers within the public sphere (Browne, et al., 2007). The quote above describes the sentiment that gay spaces provide a sense of safety. Gay spaces were important in relation to intimacy because these places where seen as zones in

which intimacy could be expressed without the policing of other people. The "it" that Aakil expressed in this quote is his own homosexuality. He seemed to be saying that he would not be consciously hiding his homosexuality in these spaces. What was interesting is that some of the participants chose not to frequent designated gay spaces. For these participants, frequenting gay spaces meant that their social lives were solely defined by their sexuality and this was not something that they wished to do. In their view, the experiences were twofold. Firstly, they wished they had the freedom that heterosexuals have in all spaces. Thus, this was an act of reclaiming the city and breaking the boundary of the heternormative. Secondly, they wished to be seen for the complexity of their identities and not their homosexuality. This view highlighted the need to understand people's experiences through intersectionality. Some participants believed that by being "all gay", they were feeding into the mechanisms of discrimination. Furthermore, being seen in certain gay spaces did not correspond with the identity they had formulated for themsleves and it disrupted how they wanted to identify. This was not to say that they were ashamed of their homosexuality, but that their homosexuality was not their primary or exclusive identity. This can be representative of two things; On the one hand it can depict the homonormativity, that is the action of some gay men to not challenge gender binaries and white hegemonic masculinities even if they were gay.

> Like I am out to my brother and he is okay with it, so I did tell my mother but she is not okay with it. So I can't even, I wont bring it up. It's something we dont speak about, but so I am living with my brother and like I don't know maybe when my partner comes over we will sit together and maybe holds hands or something but we wouldn't really kiss or get too wild with the touching in front of him. It's a respectful thing (Danvir)

> Yeah because we are in the city and people don't make such a big deal but it is definitely out of the norm. Socially, it just is what it is. Not even in how much of a comfort zone you find yourself in, but maybe in a gay bar you would feel more relaxed. But here you still get the odd eyes and the looks and the stares (Caleb)

Although these men were breaking boundaries, their queer identity takes place within the same patriarchal, homogenous, heteronormative structures in society. Therefore, for seven of the nine participants it was important to keep their performance as neutral as possible, and to not be flamboyant in expressing their sexuality. For the other two participants breaking the idea that gay men need to behave like heterosexual as an important political stance, they would do so by having a fluid performance. For example, Fikile would behave and dress more masculine on some days and be more effeminate on other days regardless of the space where he was. On the other hand, not defining their identity by their homosexuality meant that they were more aware of the intersections that created their identity. Thus, for these participants, gay spaces were not essential for their expression of intimacy and they did not play a role in their social interactions.

The second trend that emerged was the discussion of gay sites. Gay sites was the term used to speak about larger areas that were queer friendly. The larger city of Cape Town was often mentioned as a gay site, but also specific neighbourhoods in other areas such as Sandton, Melville and Braamfontein in Johannesburg. It is important to note that these participants' subjective experiences of these cities informed what they viewed as a being a 'gay site'. Take for example the quotes below:

> I think also the cities make a difference, like in Cape Town you can be more free, and in Durban there are very few spaces where gay people can be open like clubs. There is only the lounge in Durban so it forces everyone to go there (Aatish)

> Probably in the cities, in the more cosmopolitan places where there are different ideas coming together. For example Jo'burg counts as a melting pot, it will be okay (because) you get to experience different things. But if you stay deeper in the rural areas, like Ekasi (in the townships) for example, it will be a totally different story (Tamai)

For Aatish, and other participants, one of the main gay sites is the city of Cape Town. According to research, this is an "internationally promoted gay site" (Tucker, 2009, pp. 187).

Cape Town has come to symbolise some freedom for gay people since the late 1990s in the phase of a divided Apartheid regime. The image of the Cape Town gay village has come under scrutiny for being racially discriminatory to many people (Tucker, 2009). It is thus in line with that research that the participants of this study perceived Cape Town as being a 'gay site'. There was a shared belief among participants that Cape Town was more "gay friendly", hosting more gay clubs, and gay spaces, and integrating homosexuality into mainstream culture.

Other Intersections

Intersectionality studies allow for a greater understanding of an individual's story by unpacking their social position and particular experiences in relation to social constructs (Hill Collins, 1998). In the present study, participants often shared how they could not separate intimacy from other factors such as race, class and gender. Three main intersections were found to be present with intimacy when the data were analysed. The three intersections were with socio-economic status, race, culture and gender. These intersectionalities highlighted that homosexuality and intimacy cannot be understood as independent constructs that are not interrelated, because they do not take place in a vacuum. When analysisng these intersections according to the participants expressions it was evident that society at large plays a role in how we view and experience our individual contexts.

Socio-economic Status

The participants in all the focus group discussions asserted that socio-economics had great impact on their relationships and therefore intimacy. Patterns of economic inequality are prevalent in South Africa. For the participants in this study, socio-economic status and initmacy were two factors that were closely aligned. What was interesting in their reflections was that the way they viewed their intimacy was not based on socio-economic status, but rather the intimacy was a reflection of the interwoven generational patterns of socio-economics. Three

trends emerged here that highlighted how initmacy takes place at three different levels, namely 'working class' (these participants were registered at university and from working class families), 'middle class from family' (these participants were completing university and from middle class families), and 'middle class from self' (young working professionals who were enrolled at university for part-time diplomas to supplement their degrees and current work). asserts that socio-economic status impacts the life of South African's differently.

> I dated those types and I don't have a problem with it but the problem is 1) there is no understanding about what we have to go through; 2) If there is someone who hasn't gone through a higher degree. You mature a lot in that process and they won't understand that, like how you relate, what you talk about becomes monotonous; 3) and also money which is a very big problem (Aakil)

The quote above describes the link between socio-economic status and the perceived differences due to social class. Previous literature on socio-economic status has discussed the impact of SES on a wide range of topics including development, education, obesity and other health issues amongst others (e.g. Hanson & Chen, 2007; McLaren, 2007). It appeared that the link between intimacy and socio-economic status was reflected by some of the topics mentioned above, specifically education, living conditions and the expectations on the different social classes.

For the 'middle class from self' participants the analysis of socio-economic status was from the perspective of how being in different statuses equates to different levels of knowledge. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (2007) found, there is a disparity between education levels based on SES. Furthermore, there is a lower rate of tertiary education attendance amongst people from lower SES. Participants made reference to their personal choices when discussing if they would date people from other levels of SES. Elijah and Aakil shared how they would not date someone from a different socio-economic status because they wouldn't have the same level of "sophistication". This stemmed from the belief that their time at university had provided an opportunity to mature through acquiring academic knowledge and life experiences. They

believed that someone from a lower social class would not have that level of maturity and thus it would limit the possibility of being intimate. The ‘middle class from self’ experience of the link between socio-economic status and intimacy was on the level of the differences between the classes and the need to date within the limits of those classes, as reflected in the excerpt below:

> I believe if you are in a high powered job, there is a high level of sophistication which a person in a lower position may not have and it could affect you because you want someone who has the same level of sophistication (Elijah)

> It’s your interests, its not about intelligence. But there are problems if you are a professional there are long hours and you can’t just come home and that brings problems (Aakil)

On the other hand, the ‘middle class from family’ group, were those participants born in middle class families and who were completing university degrees and living in residences or student accomodation paid by their families, or those who had recently completed their degrees and were earning salaries that afforded them the opportunity to move out of their homes. For this group, the analysis was about the freedoms associated with being middle class and being able to move out of their homes. The move out of their homes had been the necessary platform for these participants to ‘come out’. The freedom of not having to conform to the rules in their families and no longer having to be secretive had allowed them to explore their identities further.

> It is different for people of different socio-economic backgrounds. It goes back to that thing of like if you are from say, if you are not from a priviledged working family that has very little means, it is generally assumed that you need to do as much as you can to survive, it becomes a game of survival. Intimacy there is usually isn’t viewed in a positive light if you are not from privilege, if you are not well off (Tamai)

Some of the participants, had begun dating whilst others joined LGBTI organisations and created friendship circles from within the LGBTI community. Having their own accomodation meant that they could take their partners home without fear of their parents or extended

communities finding out about their sexuality. In a sense, it allowed them to live a dual life, one where they could be free in their new environments and remain in the closet with their families. Therefore, their analysis of socio-economic status was directly linked to breaking away with some of the oppressions they faced and therefore money or a higher socio-economic status meant more freedom to be intimate. For the last group, those who identified as being from working class, their analysis centred around two aspects, firstly there are particular social cues assosicated with being intimate in a working class environment. For example, as mentioned in the quote above, for Fikile having his partner pay for his taxi fare is a very intimate moment.

> In the township it's like the smallest thing counts, so walking in the street is an intimate moment, buying a bunny chow is like 'oh he loves me', going to the mall is like 'oh he loves me', going to the park. Because you don't have much the simplest of things that people living in the city take for granted so even sweets are a big thing. In the other socio-economic groups making a grand gesture to support your family is another way of showing intimacy. In the city life it's a thing of take me to Michelangelo, take me to Sandton, buy me shoes, buy me clothes, buy me a phone. I for example don't mind a first date at burger king (laughter) (Fikile)

Secondly, this group believed that with being in a higher socio-economic status there would be more pressures and intimacy becomes more "plastic". For them this "plastic" or fake effect meant that more expectations were placed on them based on their socio-economic status. Men that moved up the class ladder were expected to have a number of amenities and assets like having their own apartment, their own car, owning fashionable expensive clothing and were expected to frequent spaces that would affirm their new found social status. According to Fikile, men who had reached that level would typically seek partners who were more submissive but who would have the right appearance, be it typically masculine or feminine. It was apparent that the socio-economic status of the participants allowed them to understand and unpack the intricacies of intersections of socio-economic status and identity from different angles.

Race and Culture

One of the salient themes was the intersection between intimacy and race/culture. There is a long standing history in South Africa of racial division and exclusion. It was therefore opportune and expected that it was important for the participants to understand how race intersects with intimacy and romantic love. It was evident in the interactions with the participants that race was often interlinked with the use of the word "culture". Of these two constructs, three trends emerged and they are described by the quotes below.

> There is this thing that happens, I dont know if it is a class or something, or maybe because of racial differences, but everyone tends to behave differently. Every race goes to different clubs and spaces (Aakil)

As described by the quote above, race and culture were seen to bring about segregation. This showed that in some way the rules established during Apartheid continue to influence how people socialise in different spaces. According to the participants, the city of Johannesburg is divided based on race. With different racial groups frequenting social spaces that are targeted at their race. Thus, according to the participants, white gay men will frequent spaces to the north of the city and around the major economic hubs, black gay men will frequent spaces in the inner city, townships and gentrified parts of the city. These are spaces that were formerly in unused parts of the city or low income residential areas. These spaces have been upgraded in order to attract a more middle class audience.

According to some of the participants, their cultural and religious practices did not allow them to frequent clubs and therefore they had chosen shopping malls around the city and the university space as the spaces where they would socialise. These participants were mostly Indian with the exception of one who did not wish to share his religion but shared that it was because of religious reasons that he could not be seen at typically gay spaces or clubs.

The university space provided the necessary grounds where these men did not need to disclose their sexuality. These participants were able to make straight or gay friends and to

decide when they would be open about their sexuality. They also did not have to choose based on race because the university was seen as being more cosmopolitan and accepting of interracial integration. For the participants, this meant that in the university location they could find friends who belonged to different cultures, races and countries. Furthermore, they didn't feel limited to having friends from their own racial or cultural group. The racial segregation therefore could be as a default of familiarity and socialisation. According to the participants people chose particular friends in university based on a feeling of shared history. Furtheremore, they would choose to frequent specific spaces within the university for the same reason. For example, there was a belief that an Indian person would have more in common with another Indian person. Only a few of the participants identified this as segregation and a micro-depiction of larger societal difficulties. It was evident that some participants attributed the "familiarity" as a result of learning from their parents.

> Well growing up there was affection but as you get older there is less kissing and hugging, especially of male family, maybe a hug now and again, but mostly hand shakes. Yeah, as you get older it gets even more distant as Indian's are that way (Danvir)

> Indian's are so close minded that they would try to convert you to being straight, they will arrange you a marriage. To me that is sickening (Danvir)

The other trend that emerged was that cultural cues and racial cues were learnt from observing parental interactions. The way parents acted affected what they had learnt about expressing intimacy. According to the participants, this in turn affected how different races/cultures displayed their intimacy. For example, the quotes above summarise two conversations in which participants related how in seeing their parents intimacy they had learnt to be more intimate. For some of the participants, they had never witnessed their parents being intimate through kissing or touching and therefore believed that intimacy should not be displayed in that manner. For these participants, intimacy was shown through daily activities of taking care of the family, cooking and praying together rather than through physical contact.

Gender

There was a general belief among participants that gender was influential in the develpment of intimate relationships for gay couples. Participants mentioned how heteronormativity had affected the way in which they were (un)able to be intimate. This was because they were restricted by society in how they should behave and who they could be intimate with. In a study by Allen (2003), the author attempted to investigate and describe the narratives that men and women create in relation to intimacy. This study, is an example of the stream of thinking with regards to masculinity that theorises that men adopting masculine roles do not tend to identify with ideas of love and intimacy but rather of sex. This hegemonic masculinity provides a "normative structure, to which all or almost all men aspire or from which all or almost all men gain, as in the patriarchal dividend" (Hearn & Morrell, 2012, pp.4).

When speaking of gender, the participants in the present study would mention the norms they had observed and the cues they had been taught as children. There appeared to be very common messages of the roles that boys and girls were supposed to play in society (Giddens, 1989; Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Breaking this roles by being gay was what often mentioned as the cause for why their parents would not accept them. Their homosexuality was breaking the rules of what boys and girls were supposed to do that were shared through the different generations.

> The way I grew up I felt that there were very strict rules that I had to follow, you couldn't ... If you're a girl you had to do this, you had to learn to cook and clean, you musn't go play outside with the boys, those typical things were really heavily enforced and influence people's lives and the way they grow up (Danvir)

For Danvir and many of the other participants in this study, the norms they had learnt through parents and other community members were things that they still battled with. It was entrenched in them that they needed to behave "like boys" meaning they were not expected to cook, clean, show emotions. As men, they were expected to be the providers and display

intimacy through financially supporting their loved ones. Kane (2012) proposes that boys and girls learn gender messages from their parents in subtle ways and most of these messages are unconscious. Although they had learnt these messages of gender binaries from their parents, being homosexual meant that they were constantly renegotionating these roles. The renegotiation happened because they began to question why they could not be intimate by sharing emotionally, some enjoyed cooking or cleaning and other things that were typically "girls work" according to what they had been taught. The participants shared that because they were constantly questioned about their sexual orientation they have begun to challenge the binaries within the context of same sex relationships. They appeared to have started questioning the boundaries that are placed on people and this had lead them to begin questioning these gendered roles.

When they were able to question their own roles, they were also able to see the gender disparities and norms that heterosexuals where constantly faced with. In doing so they were breaking the gendered stereotypes that they had paced on others. The participants shared that although they felt it was unfair that they were judged for being homosexual and breaking the boundaries, they felt uncomfortable when others would break the gender binaries. Gender norms are used to dictate how men and women should behave (Buttler, 1993). Men and women receive gendered messages from the time they are born. Some theorists may argue that these norms are present before the child is born (Giddens, 1989; Giddens & Sutton, 2013). An example of how these messages are communicated is through the colours assigned to newborns, such as blue for boys and pink for girls, and the toys that each group are given to play with. With these messages children are taught how they need to behave and how they express themselves, for example, the message that "boys dont cry" (Kane, 2012). These messages were learnt from parents, the manner in which they conduct themselves and the way in which they relate to the child.

> Before, I didnt think that straight girls would hook up with guys as easily as gay guys do...but now that I've been around straight people I was surprised, it's actually the same! (Dale)

> I think before I was so judgemental of straight girls doing that, and I didnt believe that happened (Aakil)

The quote above showed that heteronormativity was very much a part of the participants lives, and that although they were breaking the rules and in some respects they did not question gendered dynamics. It was once they began to recognise the discrepancy between their homosexuality and the norms that they entered a liminal space. It was only in this space that they began to seek new meaning and definitions for their own gender performance and the gender performance of others. Interestingly, after a new meaning was sought there appeared to be a shift from expression that was within the gender binaries to one that transgressed these categories. There was an increased sense of fluidity in being able to juggle the different roles. This fluidity did not mean that these men were not subjected to heternormative norms and boundaries, but that they were attempting to recreate a social narrative that clasified them based on their interests.

There was a shared sense among the participants that change in society was taking place and that this was allowing them a greater sense of freedom. Dress style appeared to be a key factor for the participants in how they respresented their gender. They described how growing up they were restricted to gender confirming clothes that they did not always feel comfortable in. As they have became older and in present society they are able to engage with less structured forms of dressing. This included being able to wear a scarf around the neck, which was a symbolic shift for them. They could make these shifts without fear of being identified as gay. Furthermore, there was a belief that with time society would be more open to homosexuality and different expressions of identity.

> I am sure as the years and generations go by it will be much more open. There wont be any specific gender roles, you could be what ever you want, and do what ever you want (Danvir)

> Nowadays you get little boys going to pre-school with dresses on ... it doesnt pre-empt anything of what he is going to be like when he grows up (Caleb)

The participants believed that society was beggining to question the use of items to create gender binaries. For example, a dress becomes just an item of clothing rather than a women's item of clothing. The power ascribed to the dress is being questioned, thus breaking down the norms associated with it. For the participants, as items began to lose the power to divide, they viewed this as representing a shift in society.

Gender and heteronormativity appeared to continue to play a role in the expression of identity for these participants. There is a strong link between an individual's identity and the ability to express intimacy. Although the link between gender and intimacy was not too clear, it was evident that heteronormativity does play a role. Heteronormative rules dictate how these men could express their intimacy as 'boys', and continued to create boundaries within which they needed to perform. What was clear was that there was a desire and a perception that society was shifting. This shift allowed the participants to believe that one day homosexuality would not be frowned upon, that they would be able to be men but under new rules and not the current gender binaries, and that one day they would be able to express their sexuality and intimacy in a manner that honoured their autonomous identity.

The Gay Image

This theme addresses the preconceived views of gay men by society. It takes the lense of the participants, therefore, the description is of how the participants perceived that they were being viewed or portrayed. What this theme reflects is the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated through the media and the ways in which the ways in which the media perpetuates the stereotypes of gay men. There were two ideas expressed about the gay image. Firstly,

participants believed that there is a lack of representation in the media of gay men. Secondly, in instances where gays are portrayed the participants believed that these portrayals were of highly sexualised gay men, and that love and intimacy were seen as only belonging to heterosexual couples.

> I think there is a perception that gay people hook up and things but I think straight people do it as well. I am sure there are more people on tinder than on grinder (Aatish)

According to the participants in this study, the media portayed gay men as promiscuous. This was accompanied by a belief that gay men could not and do not love. Thus, creating an image of gay men as lacking the capacity for intimacy. On the contrary, heterosexual couples were portrayed having intimacy, either with friends or a romantic partner. According to the participants, there were few reperesentations of gay people on television. In instances where there were gay people, the participants believed it was a very northern hegemonic representation of gay men. This hegemonic representation according to Hearn and Morrell (2012) is about maintaining normativity and male domination. Furtheremore, they believed there were no relatable gay couples on television. According to the participants, single gay men were portrayed as being flamboyant and seeking sexual relations. Participants believed that gay people historically tended to be more flamboyant and polygamous but that this expression of gay identity had shifted.

The findings on the gay image both contradict and support the scripts of historical understandings of masculinity and the belief that men do not tend to fall in love. Firstly, the theory on orthodox masculinities negates homosexuality, as something that is outside the masculine (Anderson, 2002). The act of men falling in love with men takes away from the essential structure of orthodox masculinities (Bourdieu, 2001 in Anderson, 2002). What the participants shared here is that they had internalised these perceptions, they "feel" the heteronormative messages that tell them they are breaking the script. Theorists speak of how

the aversion of orthodox masculinities towards homosexuality was entrenched through negative stereotypes of male homosexuality. Again, participants shared how they perceive society through the media to be sharing this message. The media and generational narratives are used to maintain the negative stereotypes, which include stereotypes that gay men are promiscuous and unable to have intimacy. Secondly, participants shared that historically gay men tended to be more effeminate and promiscuous, but that this had recently shifted. Edwards (1990) share that the performance of effeminate behaviours amongst gay men was far more prevalent prior to the 1970s where it was a reaction to the dominant discourses of masculinity. He also comments on a shift that took place after 1970 where gay men began to adopt more masculine or macho identities.

The participants believed that there was an unfair representation of gay people in general. They sensed that society still treats gay people unfairly by holding them to heteronormative standards. What Aatish shares in the quote above highlights how the standards to which gay men are held differ from those of heterosexual men. He uses the example of Tinder and Grindr, two social media applications utilised to find partners, by matching people based on interest and in a radius close to the person's location. However, society continued to make assumptions based on beliefs shared through generations and not current facts. According to the participants, the media was utilised to perpetuate these views.

> Some heterosexuals have painted homosexuals to have a sexual desire for the same gender. It was not seen as love or having a connection or a life partner. It was just a thing of sex (Elijah)

The participants believed that this was the case because gay men were not allowed to be monogamous in the past. Because of the history of South Africa, participants believed that gay people were restricted in their ability to fall in love. They attributed this as the reason for why gay men would opt for casual sex. In their experiences and immediate surroundings they encountered more monogamous couples and individuals seeking to start 'nuclear' families.

These nuclear families did not fit the traditional sense of the nuclear family with a man and a woman. But they held the structure of two parents and children in a married relationship. There was a sense from participants that gay people wanted love and intimacy and the possiblity of being able to form real intimate bonds. In their desires there was a sense that they wished to re-define gender binaries by breaking heteronormativity through their homosexuality; but they wished to maintain gender roles and the gendering present within the construction of the family as this is what they had learnt and been exposed to as normative.

Conclusion

The themes that emerged highlight the relationship between intimacy in gay relationships and other key factors in society. Firstly, the way the themes were described attempted to give an understanding of these participants' perceptions of intimacy. This included how they viewed intimacy, what they understood by the word intimacy, and instances in which they themselves had felt an intimate conection. This gave way to an understanding that intimacy is encountered not only with romantic partners, but also in other relationships such as with friends, family and the self. Furthermore, within the themes there was a clear connection between intimacy and other factors such as location and the need to consider intersectionality. Intersectionality highlights that the individual cannot be understood as an entity with separate factors, and factors cannot be divided and analysed in exclusion. This also speaks to the need for a deeper more reflectional understanding in qualitative research. Lastly, within the themes that emerged, it was highlighted that these participants found it important to give meaning to their own homosexuality. This was done through exloring how others' perceived them and the messages they had internalised. The media, social applications and generational narratives were used as the avenue for analysis of other's perceptions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter an overview of the findings is provided, as well as concluding remarks about the significance of the research. The main arguments discussed throughout the study are presented. The ideas shared in this study are focussed on the understanding of the experiences of gay men and my understanding from my own positioning. This is with the aim of highlighting the understandings and experiences of gay men in relation to love and intimacy. Furthermore, it takes into account the gender dynamics and other intersections that are used to explain intimacy. The intersection of race and culture, socio-economic status, presented an interesting dynamic that locates the research specifically in a South African context. The intersections highlight that the construction of identity and intimacy is not separate from socio-political-cultural factors in society. This chapter then makes some recommendations for future research on gay identity, masculinity and intimacy in South Africa. Finally, an examination of some of the limitations of the study is conducted and these thoughts are shared in this chapter.

Overview of the Findings

An analysis of the results against theories of gender, intersectionality and intimacy illustrated that intimacy amongst gay men is complex and highly dependent on the social context in which the individual is located. The complexity of the themes revealed that the process of being intimate is enmeshed with a number of other factors including gender, class, race, socio-economic status and culture. Although the themes were divided in order to give a better and clearer understanding of the data as a whole; it was often found that there were a number of links between themes. Thus, describing them as separate from one another was not always possible. This confirmed the intricacies and importance of understanding the experiences intersectionally. Intimacy therefore was not seen as something that could be explained by an

additive approach, but rather one that was built upon many layers that included the person's identity.

Framing intimacy amongst gay men within a critical masculinities framework allowed for an understanding of these men's experiences. This understanding was important for a comparison between intimacy amongst gay men and intimacy amongst heterosexual men in heterosexual relationships. What this comparison sheds light on, is the ways in which gay men are reproducing or contesting heteronormative ways of being intimate. The young gay men embodied a masculinity that reflected this conflict.

The end of Apartheid promised a lot of changes for the LGBTI community, with the introduction of the bill of rights. The purpose of this bill was to ensure equal rights for all however, the reality has fallen short of the expectation. This impacts on their ability to express their gay identity. Something that featured within the themes was the negotiation of the identity of the person against social norms and rules. All of this was analysed using the concept of gender performativity, thus gender theory supported the interpretation and it shed light on the ways in which performativity is at times challenged and at other times perpetuated.

The narratives had a macro-level of analysis as well as a micro-level of analysis in terms of their understandings of intimacy. At a macro-level, the participants discussed the influence of society on their current behaviours, on their view of intimacy, and on how they related in terms of their gender and homosexual identity. According to them, they had learnt how to be "men" and how to be intimate from society represented by their parents, friends and teachers. They were learning specific messages of masculinity from men around them.

What all participants shared is that they had learned how to be intimate from their parents and they had adopted this at a subconscious level as the key message that shaped their own intimate experiences. There were conflicting messages about what the acceptable way to be intimate was based on their own experiences. What was eveident is that these experiences

were marked by other factors such as culture and race. Contextual factors as described in chapter 4 created stark division of beliefs of how and who should be intimate, the use of the private and the public space and the understanding of what constituted an intimate relationship.

Gender binaries are a part of contemporary culture, but investigations on gay men experiences of gender are few. The findings were not in line with traditional psychological gender theories that stated that boys need to break bonds with their mothers in order to establish their masculinity. From these participants' positioning they demonstrated an awareness of the problematics of upholding the binaries. However, although there was an awareness they were also not able to break the binary and often referred to gendered stereotypes and perpetuated gender norms. They were not aware of the influence of society on body politics, they tended to perform their intimacy within heteronormative boundaries and did not question that their own relationships resembled the heteronormative relationships of man and woman. They were afforded some invisibility by following the norms. Two of the participants had been actively involved in social/political groups where they could question identity politics that created the difference between having gender politics and simply seeing gender binaries. What the findings describe is that there is a shift in thinking from previous research in terms of gender and homosexual relationships. However, this change does not appear to be a conscious one, but rather a factor of an already changing society.

The participants were able to share about their own experiences of intimacy, as well as what they perceived the gay community to do in relation to intimacy and romantic love. It cannot be discredited that being open about their sexuality in some spaces meant that they were able to share more about their experiences. Despite this, it was evident that they shared on two different levels, one that was from the personal and another that was more distant and spoke to what they observed. When the participants discussed the meaning of intimacy, they would relate it to personal encounters with partners, family, friends, strangers and themselves.

Similarly, when they discussed factors that affected intimacy they spoke of their own experience with race and culture, gender and socio-economic status. They were able to share how these intersections had affected their own relationships. On the other hand, when discussing the space or perceptions of others about their intimacy, this took on a second level narrative. It was more distant an un-relatable, as if the physical space and portrayals of gay men in society did not belong to them. This suggested that these men felt a level of disconnect from the larger society in which they were located because it was constructed on the foundation of heteronormativity. They were constantly negotiating between following the heteronormative rules and breaking the boundaries as it was discussed in the second theme.

The participants shared their experiences of being intimate with family, friends, romantic partners and strangers. With intimacy there was a belief that they needed to be vulnerable. There was a sense in their sharing that intimacy was linked to something positive. The vulnerability allowed them to connect with others and have a true sense of intimacy. However, once they were comfortable they also shared the negative experiences of intimacy. Intimacy made them vulnerable; it opened them up to be wounded by partners, family, friends, and society. There was a sense that the closet was not only a space created to keep homosexuals outside of the heterosexual space. The closet was beginning to be used as a way to protect themselves from society. It is the wall that protects them from hate crime. The closet allowed them to create a safe space in a society that is unsafe for them and that treats them as breaking the boundary. The homosexual prejudice is something that is experienced by these participants. In this research it was referred to as the 'judging third eye'. Much like the closet, this third eye is the societal prejudice that is addressed towards homosexual individuals, but it is also a form of the internalised prejudice.

There was an awareness amongst participants about the meaning of having a gay identity. Drawing on their own experiences, they spoke of how the media played a role in

shaping the gay identity. These portrayals were influenced by historical views on homosexuality, limitations on gay people, and the use of space and surveillance politics left these men in a position of having to negotiate their own identity against the identity that was being presented by society. Discussions on the need to navigate societal demands highlight the presence of a society that utilises surveillance in order to control individuals. When these men are surveilled by others and they have internalised these messages it leaves them with two options either, rebel against the system by actively questioning and breaking down the barriers; or, conform to the system and reproduce heteronormative patterns. It was evident that the participants felt differently and the extent to which they navigated societal norm was based on their level of investment in the gay identity as the primary identity they adopted. However, regardless of the level of investment in the identity there was a strong call for society to recognise that the gay image had shifted and that the homosexual was not equal to lust and sex and that new representations of homosexuality needed to be displayed in the media and popular culture.

According to Hill Collins (1998) the study of intersectionalities was described as the need to understand social constructs and people as encompassing many different constructs. The meaning of a person's social position is drawn from the complex understanding. These factors created the understanding of gay intimacy. It was noted that although intersectionality theorists describe the need to have a holistic picture of factors, these individuals identified specific factors that for them influenced their intimacy. They highlighted the influence of gender, socio-economic status, race and culture as the main factors. What was unveiled beneath these factors were the importance of power dynamics and the historical context in which they operated. Intersectionality was understood as 'examining what most affects me'. In the context of South Africa, history is crucial because it has paved the way for a particular construction of society. These men did not experience the transition from oppression to a post-Apartheid 'free'

South Africa. They began their explorations of their sexual identity in a society that was already free; however, they were very critical of the 'freedoms' and the discord between the laws and policies and the lived reality of gay people in South Africa. The reality of violence is something that in some instances they have directly experienced, or something that threatens their ability to freely express themselves and their intimacy. These young men were having to place the protection of their bodies above their ability to explore intimacy and romantic love. These ideas reflected the powerful influence that homosexual prejudice, hegemonic masculinity and surveillance has in the development of homosexual relationships for these young men.

The findings highlight the influence that individual frameworks of thinking have on the definition of intimacy that is used by these individuals. The descriptions in previous theory reflect an either/or approach to intimacy; that is, it is either about sexual pleasure or about closeness and connectivity. An analysis of the participant's narratives shows that there is a new definition emerging that merges both the sexual and the intimate connection. This definition creates a divide on a different plane that is through exposing the different types of intimacies that can be found. In this way, the focus of intimacy in gay relationships is removed from the sexualised towards a view that homosexual relationships encompass more than a need for sexual encounters. Overall, this finding speaks to a shift in society from one that is conservative and prescriptive about masculinities, to one where masculinities are constantly shifting. Masculinities therefore take into account the dominant cultural practices.

The experiences of these participants suggest that masculinities factor into their understandings of intimacy. One of the findings of this study is that these men were re-defining the historical constructions of masculinities. Although these new constructions do not align with a critical embodiment of masculinity as they are not conscious changes; their experiences and changes in society have made them question traditional masculinities. These new constructions were being built by a fluid interaction following hegemonic masculinity in the

manner in which they acted. At the same time they were disrupting the hegemonic by their choices of partner. These men have the aspiration that these fluid interactions will be easier as society continues to shift towards more liberal values.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that there are changes in understandings of homosexuality, masculinity and ultimately intimacy. However, it is also apparent that other social constructs interplay with how intimacy is displayed. Thus, the results of this research indicate that there are shifts in the expression of gender roles in society, however gay relationships appear to mimic the shifts that are prescribed by society, rather than developing its own shifts. The social context therefore appears to be the main factor in determining whether gay men reproduce or contest heteronormative ways of being intimate in South Africa.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The study explored an area that has been under-researched in South Africa, thus bridging a gap in literature. This information can contribute to an understanding of contemporary South African society and the changes that have taken place post-Apartheid. The focus of the research also gives attention to the experiences of a cohort of young men in that society and the negotiation of their gay identities in a changing environment. Previous research has focused on the impact of homophobic prejudice on the LGBTI population, with some specific attention to hate crimes. This research went further, to give a picture of the internal negotiations. Furthermore, this research attempted to merge the influence of the societal rules and to demonstrate the internal experiences of a group of gay men. The research generalized some information based on the exploration of the lives of a particular group of men and their experiences regarding intimacy. The research remains relevant in South Africa.

The methodology utilised in this research could be considered a limitation of the study. The generalisability to the South African gay population is not guaranteed. This research focussed on a group of nine young gay men, all who had attended university thus placing them

in a particular social platform. It is possible that other intersections and factors such as group size, age of the participants, academic background and location could provide different results. It was indicated throughout the research that location was an important factor in determining how intimacy was understood it is therefore possible that in other parts of South Africa or outside of South Africa these understandings could be different. Gay men residing in Cape Town or rural areas of South Africa may have a different understanding of intimacy amongst gay men. The results of the study should be seen as a contribution based on the understandings of a particular group of gay men. The time allowed for conducting this research could be considered another limitation to the methodology. The method of data collection and the method of data analysis were carefully chosen in order to make better use of the time, as well as yield a greater and richer amount of information within this time period. A focus group discussion allows for a bigger sample and more discussion within a shorter time period. The focus group could also potentially act as a censoring tool allowing the discussion to flow in the direction of understanding masculinities and performance as well as the social norms surrounding intimacy rather than the sexual practices of the particular group.

The social position of the researcher is identified as a strength and limitation of the study. As it is with qualitative research, the researcher has an influence in the manner in which the data are gathered, the analysis of the results and the description of the results. The researcher's own reflexivity as it was discussed in the reflexive note gives a particular way of understanding the overall study and places it within a framework of masculinity. On the other hand, the position of the researcher and the researcher's subjectivity can also mean that some aspects may be alienated in favour of the researcher's position. As a woman, I recognise the influence that this played in my understanding of the participant's position prior to the commencement of the interview, in how much and how directly they were able to share their views with me, and in how I interpreted their narratives.

The level of oobjectivity was be important, however, this cannot be achieved completely. The researcher took the necessary steps through the use of audio recording, a reflexive journal and discussions with a supervisor to note important aspects, and the researcher's position provided a particular understanding of the research data.

Directions for Future Research

Based on the results and discussion in above, the following recommendations are given for future research. Firstly, the study explored an area that is often under-researched and that can shed light on the experiences of gay men in post-Apartheid South Africa. There should be further research on gay men and LGBTI identities in order to expand this knowledge base and support the expression and understanding of marginalised social identities. In addition it would be interesting to explore the ways in which intersecting identities are negotiated by individuals in different contexts. This includes, and is not exclusive to, gay men living in different locations and gay men of different ages. Participants indicated throughout the study that culture and race played a significant role in understanding intimacy. Therefore, including men from different racial and cultural backgrounds could also provide for a rich source of information about the ways in which social contexts promote the negotiation and expression of social identities.

Secondly, in-depth interviews could help in yielding more narrative information that could enrich the understanding of homosexual identities. The data gathered in this study through focus groups gave a particular set of understandings that were negotiated in the interplay, between different participants in focus groups. In one-on-one interviews the individuals experience could be the core element rather than the experience of the group. If focus groups are conducted, a larger sample size could also yield more information about particular details of how other groups understand intimacy in the gay community.

Finally, this research highlighted the links between gender and intimacy and confirmed that gender binaries as a tool for surveillance affects how intimacy is conducted amongst gay

men. This study highlighted that intimacy amongst gay men cannot be understood outside of an evaluation of society as one that uses surveillance politics to impede bodily autonomy. Thus, a greater understanding of how participants experienced bodily autonomy is useful in expanding the understanding of love and intimacy amongst gay men. In future research, it would be useful to start from an exploration the impact of surveillance on gay men rather than drawing on one factor such as intimacy.

Final Reflection

My own position as a woman was taken into account as a factor that contributed to the manner in which the results of the study were analysed. My understanding of post-Apartheid South Africa as someone who immigrated into the country post-1994 allowed me to position myself as both an outsider of the history and an insider of the current socio-political-economic situation.

Initially, it was difficult for me to disrupt the gender binary just as it was for some of the participants this showed me how powerful these binaries are even for people who do not conform in terms of their sexuality. Therefore, this needs to be contested in terms of intersectionalities. Thus, I think my positioning and sense of disconnection were advantageous and useful as a source of theoretical information. Heteronormativity is the belief that men and women have specific roles based on their sex, and it assumes that heterosexuality is the norm (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Although I have an awareness of the presence of heteronormativity and the manner that it affects groups of people, breaking from the internalisation of heteronormativity was not as simple as I had thought. The participants felt a sense of disconnect with the world because of their homosexuality, and I too was disconnected from them. What I realised is that I too, was performing surveillance on their practices and the manner in which they interpreted intimacy.

This research explored the understandings of love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men. These understandings were gathered through focus group discussions with young gay men. These narratives were interpreted through a thematic content analysis. What the results revealed was that intimacy is understood and interpreted differently by different people. Social constructs such as race, gender, culture and socio economic status, as well as the social context affect how intimate relationships are understood and expressed by gay men.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

School of human and community development
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050,
Johannesburg, South Africa,
Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax:
(011) 717-4559

Good day

My name is Daniela Prado-Castro I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I invite you to participate in my research titled "understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men". Your participation will help me gain some insight into an area that has been under-researched in South Africa.

Involvement in this research requires your participation in 1 focus group discussion of approximately 2 hours. This will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to you and the other people in your group; and it will take place at a venue on the campus. With your permission the interview will be digitally recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary you will not be rewarded or penalised in any way. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any point. You may also refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. All data collected in the focus group discussion (including digital recordings, notes, or transcripts) will be kept strictly confidential, all material will only be seen, heard, and processed by myself and my supervisor. All the data collected will be kept in a safe location with restricted access. The data will be destroyed after two years should publications arise or after 6 years should no publications arise. No information that can identify a participant will be used in the interview transcripts. The results of this study will be written up in the form of a research report. They may also be written up as a research article or

presented at a conference. A summary of these results will be made available to participants on request.

It is my understanding that the study will not pose any risks or result in any benefits to you. However, if you feel you have any concerns regarding the study, or if you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me telephonically on 082 501 1594 or via email: daniela1master@gmail.com, or my supervisor Tanya Graham via email: Tanya.graham@wits.ac.za.

Kind Regards,

_____

Daniela Prado-Castro

Appendix B: Consent form for focus group interview

I,_____have read the information sheet and I am aware of the nature of this study. I hereby voluntarily consent to taking part in a focus group discussion moderated by Daniela Prado-Castro for her study on understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young men. I understand that:

- Participation in this focus group is voluntary
- I may refuse to answer any question I would not prefer to
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- Direct quotes from the interview may be used in the final report, but my identity will not be revealed.
- Interview data will be kept securely with restricted access.
- I will receive a summary of the final research findings should I request it.
- The researcher will assist me in contacting relevant counseling services should I feel that I require such services as a result of my participation in this study.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Audio Recording Consent Forms

I, _____hereby voluntarily consent to my focus group participation with Daniela Prado-Castro for her study, on understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men.

- The digital recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person at any time, except the researcher and the researcher's supervisor
- All digital recordings will be destroyed after the research has been examined.
- No identifying information will be included in the interview transcripts or the research report or subsequent research publications or conference presentations.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Confidentiality agreement for the group interview

I _____understand that the topic requires some sensitivity from my part, and that as a member of the group interview I will hear some details of other people's lives that need to be confined to the safe spaces of the group interview. I will not share any of the information I hear with anyone else, and I will not disclose the identity of the other participants.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

1. What is your understanding of the word “intimacy”?
2. What is the difference between a relationships that is intimate and one that is not?
3. Who needs to be intimate in a relationship?
4. Where can you find intimacy?
5. Does the place where the person is have an impact on intimacy?
6. Is intimacy in gay relationships different to intimacy in heterosexual relationships?
7. Is intimacy different between people of different races?
8. Is intimacy different between people of different socio economic status?
9. Are there any other factors which affect the way intimacy is expressed?

Appendix F: Letter to the Organisation

Good day

My name is Daniela Prado-Castro I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to request your permission to make use of your organisation to approach possible participants. My research is titled "understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men".

No one will be forced to participate and no details that could potentially harm anyone will be disclosed. Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any point. The results of this study will be written up in the form of a research report. They may also be written up as a research article or presented at a conference. A summary of these results will be made available to participants on request.

Please note that the organisation will not be held responsible for any aspect of the research, it will merely provide me with an access point to recruit my participants. It is my understanding that the study will not pose any risks or result in any benefits to you. However, if you feel you have any concerns regarding the study, or if you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me telephonically on 082 501 1594 or via email: daniela1master@gmail.com, or my supervisor Tanya Graham via email: Tanya.graham@wits.ac.za.

Kind Regards,

_____

Daniela Prado-Castro

Appendix G: Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/14/003 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Understanding love and intimacy through the constructions of young gay men.
INVESTIGATORS	Prado-Castro Daniela
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	20/03/14
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 17 April 2014

CHAIRPERSON _____
(Prof. Mzi Nduna)

cc Supervisor: Dr. T Graham
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2016

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES