A Retrospective Narrative Exploration of Sexually Diverse People's Identities and Experiences in High School

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March 2020

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social and Psychological Research in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Declaration

I declare that this research report, titled *A Retrospective Narrative Exploration of Sexually Diverse People's Identities and Experiences in High School*, is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university. All sources cited have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____ 28 May 2020

Richard van Rensburg Date

Acknowledgements

This project may have my name on it, but without the love, support, constant encouragement, and thoughtful conversations from a whole range of people this project would not have been completed. Thank you to everyone in my Masters class, especially to Shawni, Sasha, Christina, Vuyo, and Maham. I am grateful to the NEST 2019 conference delegates and presenters who helped me think about my data in different ways, particularly when it came to issues of embodiment. Thank you as well to the attendees of the 2019 Critical Thinking Colloquium where I presented a small piece from this project. A special thanks to Koki Kapa for her suggestions and encouragement. Prof. Hugo Canham and Prof. Molly Andrews also helped provide me with thoughtful feedback in the beginning stages of the project. Thank you to Jenny de Wet for assisting with proofreading my work. Gaga, thank you for inspiring me to help create a kinder, braver world.

To all my friends: thank you for letting me talk to you about my project and vent my frustrations over the last two years. Dylan, thank you for your constant support and for always checking up on my progress! Tiana, thank you for all the Spur dates that kept me sane. Cassy, thank you for taking an interest in the project and supporting me. Leigh-Anne, thank you for making me laugh when I needed it. To my colleague Dr van Wyk and friend Karl, thank you so much for all your encouragement (and for getting as excited as me about the heat-maps).

To my boyfriend, Kyle: thank you for walking alongside me throughout this. I know there were many times when the stress spilled over but thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me to carry on through it all. Philip, thank you for being there when I needed an escape! A huge thank you to my Mom and Dad who are my solid foundation in life and biggest supporters: thank you for all the love and for putting up with me during the stressful parts of this research. Jamie, I miss you but thank you for staying around as long as you did. I love you all.

And finally, to my supervisor, Prof. Jill Bradbury. There aren't enough words to express my gratitude for all the help and guidance you have provided me over the course of this project. I know at times it was frustrating, but thank you for believing in the project from beginning to end, and for believing in my work. I will value all the lessons that this project, along with your thoughtful guidance, has gifted me. Thank you.

Dedication

For every young sexually diverse person who was made to feel like they did not belong: you are the rainbow of hope amongst the clouds.

I'd love to go back
    to that night at the Ribbon of Scarlet
not because I scorn the past
    but because my backward-looking hope
for what could have been fills me up
    with a kind of grey melancholy
I'd love to go back
    and tell my friends, my classmates, my teachers,
I am gay!
    and let them accept or not accept or reject or embrace
who I am, who they always knew
    that boy
I'd love to go back
    with everything I know now
and argue for the right of our people to be heard
    for the right of our Constitution to be lived
and not for it to remain as words on a page
    I want to go back and tell the principal
who stood up with a smirk in assembly
    when I was in grade 8
saying no boys as partners to the Dance
    and all the boys laughed in their cages of masculinity
while the millstones on our closeted necks
    tightened
I'd love to go back
    so that I can make sure all the tear-stained nights
weren't for nothing, our queer pain not in vain
    and so that we could march forward in Love
instead of backwards in twisted scriptures and tradition
    that boys are only men if they conquer women
I'd love to go back
    to that night at the Ribbon of Scarlet
holding his hand and feeling like the words are true:
    "Accept each is different, each plays his own game"

Richard van Rensburg, 2020

Abstract

The Constitution of South Africa provides protections to people based on their sexual orientation. Despite this there is a definite gap between this progressive rhetoric and the lived experiences of sexually diverse people. Designed within an experienced-centred view of narratives, the focus of this study is on the retrospective narratives of sexually diverse people's high schooling experiences. The aim of the study was to understand how sexually diverse people retrospectively narrate their experiences of high school life in relation to their sexual identities, and particularly to gain insight into the ways such people understand their identities in relation to space and place and how these issues may impact on their sense of belonging. Eight qualitative, in-depth, narrative interviews were conducted with self-identifying sexually diverse people who attended high schools in Johannesburg. Two inter-related analyses have been conducted on the data to create narrative portraits. The first analysis is an in-depth vertical analysis of each participant's narrative across time and the second analysis, embedded within each case-by-case analysis, is a consideration of the physical contexts of each participant's narrative aided by spatial heat-maps of safety and belonging. The findings show the centrality of coming out narratives to the development of sexual identity. However, coming out was not an all-or-nothing affair. The retrospective perspective of this study was advantageous as it revealed ways in which participants were able to create meaning out of their pasts in relation to their current understandings of themselves. Participants expressed a variety of different experiences regarding their families in relation to their sexualities. All participants had positive and negative experiences embedded within their overall narratives of their schooling experiences. Some schools were more accepting of sexual diversity while others were less so, and even within the same school different participants had vastly different experiences. Participants reported that there was no formal representation of sexual diversity in the curriculum but some were able to bring up

these issues in class. The importance of supportive teachers, peers, and friends to participants' sense of safety and belonging was found alongside an understanding that the intersection of race and sexuality mediated these feelings. The collective achievement of communities of belonging and the right to choose when to be open about one's sexuality was noted with the assistance of the heat-maps. These heat-maps helped demonstrate communities of belonging were collective achievements within particular contexts that made these spaces safer for participants, as well as demonstrating the bidirectional relationship between people and space. Taken as a whole, the findings of this study point towards the importance of the agency that sexually diverse learners had and how this culminated in an overall ability for these participants to resist the status quo, when they could, in order to work towards making the spaces and places that they occupied safer. However, it is clear that schools still have much work to do in order to foster inclusivity of sexual diversity. Several recommendations for future research have been provided as well as recommendations for schools in order to improve their inclusivity of sexual diversity.

Keywords: *belonging; identity in schools; queer geography; narrative identity; schooling experience; sexual diversity; sexual identity*

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1.1. Introduction and Rationale

The Constitution of South Africa is hailed as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world including protections against discrimination based 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" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Despite this, there seems to be a gap between the Constitution and lived reality. A quantitative study on sexually diverse[1] people, one of few of its kind, was conducted by the NGO, OUT LGBT Well-Being (2016), measuring the level of discrimination among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in South Africa. They surveyed 2130 participants to measure the levels of discrimination in high schools, the health care system, and within society more generally. They found that 55% of the participants expressed fear that they would be victims of discrimination due to their sexual orientation. 41% of respondents knew someone who had been murdered due to their sexual orientation, with murders seemingly more common in lower income communities as well as black communities with 49% of black respondents saying they knew of someone who was murdered based on their sexual orientation – significantly higher than any other racial group.

More specifically within a schooling context, targeted discrimination against sexually diverse learners in South Africa remains high (Francis, 2017a; Francis & Reygan, 2016a; McArthur, 2015; Reygan & Steyn, 2017). Current published research on these young people often focuses on the ways they are subject to discrimination (Butler, Alpaslan, Allen, & Astbury,

[1] The term 'sexually diverse' has been used throughout this project to refer to people who identify outside of a heterosexual identity. I have chosen this term instead of the acronym LGBT+ (or variations thereof) in line with arguments made by Rahman (2015) and Francis and Reygan (2016b) in favour of language that opens up different sexual identities rather than constricting them to several letters. However, at various points within this report I use identity labels such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'bisexual', 'homosexual' and 'queer' either when referring to literature that frames its participants in this way, or most notably in the analysis chapters where participants used these terms to refer to themselves and others.

2003; Francis & Reygan, 2016b), victimisation (Bhana, 2012a; Wells & Polders, 2006), homophobic-related violence (McArthur, 2015; OUT LGBT Well-Being, 2016), and underrepresentation in the curriculum (Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). These issues are part of the experiences of being a sexually diverse learner making such issues important to understand, however, they are not the *entire* experience for these young people.

This study shares the same understanding as Pattman (2013), who argues that young people are sexual beings who are actively engaged in their everyday worlds. Pattman (2013, p. 122) contends that researchers need to pay attention "to the narrative accounts of young people in interviews treating these not simply as windows on a real world 'out there' but as important resources through which they construct themselves and others." The ways in which young sexually diverse people utilise their agency specifically within a schooling context, and as expressed in their narratives, can provide insight into how they resist or counter hetero-normativity. Understanding this agency, or the relation between these young people as subjects and the discursive practices available to them (Hall, 1996), can show how they manage to actively carve out niches for themselves (and others like them) to feel a sense of belonging. Schools, therefore, are necessary places to understand as they "are important sites for the production and regulation of sexual identities" (Epstein & Johnson, 1998, p. 108).

Theorising about sexually diverse people's lives using narrative theories of identity can help facilitate increased possibilities of rethinking about their lives in more positive terms (Bradbury & Miller, 2010). Narrative theories of identity, exploring experiences from a retrospective stand-point, is a powerful and insightful method that provides participants the chance to reflect on their pasts and contribute towards an increased self-understanding (Squire, 2005), while simultaneously providing insights into the current positioning of schools when it comes to sexually diverse individuals. An important aspect tied to narrative

theories of identity is belonging which is an emotional connection and sense of safety made possible by certain collectivities (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Studying how sexually diverse people experience belonging, and how different spaces and places make this possible, provides further understanding of their experiences.

The initial aim of this project was to access openly sexually diverse school learners directly within their schooling contexts. However, after making contact with over ten schools over a period of eight months I was unable to get the permission of principals to access their sexually diverse learners to be part of the study. In January 2019 I changed the project to its current version using university students looking back on their schooling experiences.

1.2. Schooling Context in South Africa

The importance of understanding the context of South African schools in relation to this study needs to be foregrounded. The end of apartheid brought about huge changes within education in the country including the deracialisation of schools, changes to education administration, and the restructuring of curricula (McKay, Mafanya, & Horn, 2018; Mncude et al., 2013). The post-apartheid schooling system, however, inherited the racial, class, and gender inequalities of the past, most notably in the vast expenditure difference during apartheid between racial groups (Mncude & Madikizela-Madiya, 2013). Soudien (2004) argues that there has been a movement of children out of former black schools towards the English-speaker former white schools that indicates that the social nature of the schooling system in the country has shifted substantially. These changes are complex but it has allowed for an expanded middle class "to consolidate its position of privilege" (Soudien, 2004, p. 89). However, the critical outcome of this process has been that of assimilation "in which subordinate groups or elements of subordinate groups have been recruited or have promoted themselves into the hegemonic social, cultural and economic regimes at the cost of subordinate ways of being, speaking, and conducting their everyday lives" (Soudien, 2004, p.

112). As can be seen from these observations, the inequalities that remain within education in South Africa are largely to do with class and race and how these are experienced within particular spaces. However, the ways in which sexual identity interact with class and race in schooling contexts is important to consider as previous research has shown how one's sense of safety as someone who is sexually diverse is influenced by one's particular race and class within particular spaces (Canham, 2017; Held, 2017).

Since the end of apartheid, the South African government has introduced various policies and institutional reforms in terms of funding in order to make access to schooling more equitable in the country (Motala, 2013). However, in reality, township and rural schools are still plagued by the legacies of apartheid with huge resource inequalities such as high teacher-learner ratios, no libraries or computers, and few sports fields (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2019a; McKay et al., 2018). In the late 1990s and early 2000s School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were mandated to provide the communities in which schools operate more power over the management of schools. SGBs consist of democratically elected teachers, non-teaching staff, but mostly of parents (Mncude & Madikizela-Madiya, 2013). SGBs at public schools are afforded the power to contribute in part towards admission policies, adjust language policies, determine school fees in negotiation with the parents, and help raise additional funds (Motala, 2013). Some SGBs have wielded this power in order to restrict access to schools via higher fees, partly in order to retain staff and better resources. This is a double-edged sword because on the one hand better resources and more staff means better educational experiences for learners, but higher fees lead to a 'quasi-privatisation' of schools whereby families who are part of the working class are left unable to access schools with a higher quality of education (Motala, 2013). Furthermore, more than 50% of learners who enter the schooling system leave before they matriculate, which is an issue affecting primarily working-class black South African families (Department of Education, 2016).

Although most working-class families cannot pick and choose where their children are schooled, some families, as a consequence of the issues mentioned above, opt to send their children to independent, or privately run, schools (McKay et al., 2018). The South African Schools Act of 1996 established a national schooling system where broadly two types of schools could exist: state-funded, or public, schools and independent schools (ISASA, 2019). Most independent schools in South African are registered with the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) and are privately run (ISASA, 2019). These "institutions may not discriminate on the basis of race, must be registered with the state, and must maintain standards not inferior to those of comparable public institutions." (ISASA, 2019, para. 5). Independent schools are far better resourced compared to public schools which is a consequence of much higher school fees, which, consequently reserves them for wealthier families (McKay et al., 2018). It is also not uncommon for independent schools to have a predominately white learner-body.

According to statistics released by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2019a), based on a 2018 survey, there were 23 289 mainstream[2] public schools in South Africa serving 12 230 194 learners. These schools make up 92.6% of mainstream schools in the country. There were 398 786 educators, meaning the teacher to learner ratio was approximately 1:31 (DBE, 2019a). On the other hand, there were 1 865 independent schools in the country in 2018, making up 7.4% of schools. These schools have a total of 38 660 educators catering for 589 348 learners making the teacher to learner ratio approximately 1:15 (DBE, 2019a). It is clear that there is a stark difference between public schools and independent schools especially when it comes to the critical issue of teacher to learner ratio. This is a critical issue in South Africa as education is supposed to be a public good where all learners receive

[2] 'Mainstream' here means schools that cater for learners who do not have special educational needs.

quality education making schools key sites where progressive agendas such as remedying past inequalities can take place.

1.3. Aims and Research Questions

The primary aim of this study was to explore the ways in which sexually diverse people retrospectively understood their schooling experiences in relation to their sexual identities. Within the frame of narrative theories of identity, I aimed to explore the ways in which the participants narrated their identities in relation to their coming out narratives as well as their schooling experiences, and how this may provide further empirical evidence about the nature of the schooling experience for sexually diverse learners in South Africa. A further aim was to assess the ways in which space and place featured in their narratives and how their identities may have shaped these spaces and how these spaces may have shaped their identities. Lastly, I wanted to see in what ways young sexually diverse people were able to resist heteronormative discourses and practices, particularly in schools and families, and in what ways they were able to assert their agency despite such constraints.

With these aims in mind the main research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How did sexually diverse people experience their high school careers in relation to their sexual identities?
    a. What were the experiences of sexually diverse people of their sexual identities in relation to their families, friends, peers and teachers?
    b. How do sexually diverse people retrospectively narrate the story of their sexual identity during high school?
    c. What are some of the educational, social, and/or personal issues that sexually diverse people experienced in their high schools?

d. In what ways do sexually diverse people include ways they resisted heteronormativity or found ways to live fulfilling lives in their narratives of their high schooling experiences?

2. In what ways do sexually diverse people understand their sexual identities during high school in relation to space and place?
   a. What kinds of spaces or places do sexually diverse people narrate as being affirming for their sexual identities during high school?
   b. What kinds of spaces or places do sexually diverse people narrate as being constraining for their sexual identities during high school?
   c. How did space and place contribute to a sense of belonging for sexually diverse people during high school?

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter presents a discussion of the theoretical frameworks used in this study. The sense-making capabilities of narrative theories of identity are first discussed. I link the concept of belonging as theorised by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006; 2010) into the discussion of narrative identity, and discuss the coming out narrative as a specific kind of narrative based on Ken Plummer's work (1995). This is followed by a brief discussion of adolescence as a key period of development in young people's lives as conceptualised by Erik Erikson (1970; 1994). I include a discussion of embodiment with an understanding that embodied experience depends on intersections of one's identity. I then locate these embodied experiences within space and place through a discussion of queer geographies.

2.1. Narrative Theories of Identity

Defining identity is a difficult task as the term has become so pervasive and broad that usage of it is often unclear (Yuval-Davis, 2010). One possible reason for this is because the term can be defined from several standpoints such as the individual, relational and collective, and it can be personal or social, stable or more fluid (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2012). The different aspects of one's identity may jostle uncomfortable against each other, such as in the case of being gay and Christian where sometimes the latter institution decries the former identifier (Vignoles et al., 2012). Narrative theories of identity are particularly attuned to making sense of these differences and reconciling them into a coherent sense of self (McAdams, 2012; Vignoles et al., 2012). Narrative conceptions of identity allow us to reinterpret our lives and experiences in such a way as to accommodate both the changes in our identities throughout time and across relational contexts, as well as those aspects which remain more stable (Crites, 1986; Martin, 1995).

Narrative theories of identity are productive and provide creative and hopeful spaces for people to (re)conceptualise themselves through the imaginative possibilities that narrative

provides that help us develop meaningful conceptions of our lives (Bradbury & Miller, 2010; McAdams, 2012; Squire, 2013). However, these narratives are always relational and the self "is fundamentally a name for a conversation rather than a monologue." (Crites, 1986, p. 156). The narratives that we produce about our lives provide insight into these conversations, the broader power relations we are immersed in, such as those of sexuality, gender and race (McAdams, 2001). The stories we tell can only be told through forms that are available within our cultural moment (Bruner, 1987; Plummer, 1995). Telling our story often does not produce radical transformation but it does contain the potential to allow us to become active agents who are able to work against oppressive grand narratives. This is due to narrative's generative possibilities to craft new, and perhaps more hopeful, stories out of our lived experiences that can *become* transformative (Crites, 1986; Freeman, 1993). This is because narrative understandings of identity believe that thinking about selfhood in narrative terms enables renewed interpretations and change (Bradbury & Miller, 2010).

2.1.1. Belonging.

In his discussion of identity, Hall (1996) theorises that identification is a key process underpinning how identities are constructed within representations. He theorises that identifications rely on the converse process of marking difference. Hall (1996, p. 4) states that identities "emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity." Belonging (and the converse process of alienation) is a key aspect involved in these processes of identification and is an important aspect of narrative theories of identity. Yuval-Davis (2006; 2010) discusses belonging alongside the politics of belonging which she makes clear are different matters. Whereas belonging is about an emotional connection and a feeling of safety, the politics of belonging is a political project that aims to construct belonging in particular ways to groups of people who are

simultaneously constructed by such projects (Yuval-Davis, 2006). It is when belonging becomes threatened that it becomes politicised. This makes belonging and the politics thereof essential when discussing sexually diverse people who are often marginalised.

Yuval-Davis (2006) outlines three different levels of belonging: (i) social location, (ii) individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to different collectivities, and (iii) ethical and political value systems people use to judge their own (and others') belonging(s). Social locations are the various identity categories that someone can identify with and at each particular historical moment these categories have varying positions on an axis of power on which other categories sit. These positions are fluid and contested, but crucial here is that any given category is never located on one power axis of difference alone which is why intersectional understandings are necessary (Crenshaw, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Identifications and emotional attachments to different collectivities relates to narrative identities as they encompass the stories we tell about who we are and the perceptions we hold of what it means to be a member of such groupings. These identifications are both cognitive and emotional. The more threatened the identity is, the more pronounced the emotional element associated with that identity becomes (Crenshaw, 1989; Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Ethical and political value systems relate these social locations and identifications relationally to broader ideologies regarding how these are valued and judged, where boundaries of identification should be, and how (im)permeable these are (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The contestation of such boundaries passes over into the politics of belonging where hegemonic political powers that maintain and reproduce boundaries are found along with agents who challenge such notions. It is through a struggle to promote their own projects that collectivities get constructed (Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Yuval-Davis (2010) ties her understanding of belonging and the politics of belonging into identity and identity politics. Belonging is related closely to identity as identity is the analytic

dimension through which belonging is to be understood. Likewise, identity politics is a project where the politics of belonging becomes salient. Importantly, identities are never just personal: collective identity narratives help provide a collective sense of coherence (Yuval-Davis, 2010). A problem with identity politics is reductionism when social categories are equated with social groupings which assumes someone who belongs to a particular social category also belongs to that social grouping and so it is assumed that they have the understanding of that social category and the same degree of attachment to it (Yuval-Davis, 2010). Rahman (2015) holds a similar view when it comes to sexual diversity. He advocates for a move away from essentialist notions of sexuality that construct sexual and gender identities as a 'natural minority' that promotes the belief that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are 'born that way', rather than embracing a full gender and sexual diversity that shifts away from limiting categories of gender and sexuality.

2.1.2. The 'coming out' narrative.

Ken Plummer (1995) in his book *Telling Sexual Stories* outlines the rise in the telling of sexual stories in the latter part of the 20th century. One of his focus areas includes the 'coming out' narrative. Plummer links the ability for an individual to tell a story to the wider socio-political powers at work because "for narratives to flourish there must be a community to hear; that for communities to hear, there must be stories which weave together their histories, their identity, their politics" (Plummer, 1995, p. 87). This is related to the deep interconnection between the production and consumption of stories that Plummer (1995) proposes.

In some sense, we rely upon finding narratives similar to our own so that we can feel a sense of sameness and community with others. Without a supportive interpretative community, a particular story cannot flourish (Plummer, 1995). Considering the current pervasiveness of the 'coming out' story within society points towards a society which, in part, is supportive of

such people. This particular genre seems to hold great significance for sexually diverse people as 'coming out' is a kind of (re)birth of the self where there is a shift from an assumed identity to a more authentic one (Plummer, 1995). "Ultimately, the coming out story is a tale concerned with establishing an identity that ideally exists not just for oneself alone, but which is also at home in the wider world." (Plummer, 1995, p. 86).

However, the coming out narrative is not immune to critique. Much research into coming out tends to create a relationship between inclusivity and coming out which in turn frames the closet as a space of shame and exclusion (Rasmussen, 2004). Although not against coming out, Rasmussen (2004) puts forward arguments that problematise the discourse around coming out and what this means for people who *choose* not to disclose their sexuality. The problem is not someone's desire to identify with a particular sexual orientation, but rather the dominant discourses that frame coming out as the only moral option for such people (Rasmussen, 2004). Coming out also fails, at times, to consider intersections of an individual's identity and how coming out may not be a viable option considering their other facets of identity (Rasmussen, 2004). McCormick (2015), arguing in a South African context from a linguistics perspective, would agree with Rasmussen's (2004) claims. For McCormick (2015), the act of coming out validates a homosexual identity, but in so doing it forces the person into an established identity category that is complicit with the binary of homo-sexual/heterosexual which has a counter-queer effect by working against fluidity. Thus, coming out stabilises the term 'homosexual' and undermines the assumption that sexuality is fluid (McCormick, 2015). Further, McCormick's (2015) understanding of identity is most useful in thinking about black and working class experiences of sexuality because oftentimes 'coming out' is not seminal or compulsory for such people. This way of understanding sexuality is also not at odds with self-acceptance.

2.2. Adolescence

Adolescence is a very important developmental time during someone's life. By focussing largely on the high school experiences of my participants, adolescence becomes a key period in which to understand as schools are not solely places of learning but also places where a lot of identity development takes place and sexual development in particular peaks (Francis, 2017a). Erik Erikson's (1994) fifth stage of his eight-stage psychosocial theory centres on this period of adolescence. This stage is marked by a primary concern of console-dating one's social roles in the world. During this time there is a preoccupation that people have with how they are viewed by others (Erikson, 1994).

The resolution of this stage requires an individual to develop a sense of unification of the given aspects of their identity, such as their physical bodies and temperament, and the choices they make, such as social roles and occupational possibilities (Erikson, 1970). If an individual feels that their environment is depriving them too much of the types of expression that allow them to develop a sense of their place in the world then they put up resistance. Likewise, if a particular role is forced on them it affects them negatively leading to rebellion (Erikson, 1994). This may lead to an identity crisis. Peer support is essential as young people "help one another temporarily through such discomfort by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies." (Erikson, 1994, p. 98). McAdams (2001) extends Erikson's theory to include how identity is narratively configured through two further dimensions. The first is synchronically across varying role expectations and relationships with others, and the second is diachronically across time when an individual's preoccupations and goals change.

2.3. Embodiment

The body is an important aspect of an individual's sense of self. Embodiment studies are not about the body per se but rather about how experience can be understood from the point of view of the "bodily being-in-the-world" (Csordas, 1999, p. 143). Within sexuality studies in the 21st century, Moore and Rodriquez (2011) note that embodiment and bodies have been overshadowed by identity and power as analytic foci. They ask if identity is privileged over embodied experience then "who will confront the messy, complicated consequences of living within bodies that are inevitably corporeally gendered?" (p. 112). Linked to embodiment is Butler's (1990) theory of performativity where gender is constituted through *doing*, rather than being a pre-existing state. Heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary where the masculine and feminine are differentiated from each other but only through the practice of heterosexual desire (Butler, 1990).

Emotions are part of the subjective experience of embodiment and can be understood as ways of relating (Simonsen, 2007). Emotions are often public and paired with their relational element – they are experienced, recognised and validated through our interactions (Simonsen, 2007). Just as Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that social categories are never located on a single axis of power, so too can the body be viewed in this way. An inclusion of the way in which race influences the experiences of an embodied sexual identity is paramount. Manganyi (1973) argues, within an apartheid context, the experiential differences between being-white-in-the-world and being-black-in-the-world are vast. In the same vein as Csordas (1999), he argues that "we make our approach to the world through our bodies: the body is movement inwards and outwards." (Manganyi, 1973, p. 5).

He draws a distinction between the individual schema, consisting of the personal awareness or mental image an individual has of their body, and the sociological schema which is the awareness that the body represents something in society (Manganyi, 1973). These two

schemas may be in harmony or at odds with each other. In the case of black people, Manganyi (1973) argues that the sociological schema of the black body is that of being unwholesome, inferior, and 'bad' compared to the white body which is seen as wholesome, the norm for beauty, and the 'good'. Ideally, the individual schema should dominate over, or at least be on equally positive terms with the sociological schema, however for black people this is not the case. The negative sociological schema leads to a negative individual schema that results in a pathological relationship with and objectification of the body (Manganyi, 1973). These ideas can be extended to include other facets of identity such as gender and sexual orientation where cis-gendered, heteronormative bodies are privileged in society and any type of body that deviates from this is cast as abnormal. The existence of sexual reparative therapies that aim to 'convert' people who have same-sex attraction, as well as people who willingly attend such forms of therapy, attests to a pathological relationship that can exist between a person and their sexual and/or gender identity (Van Zyl, Nel & Govender, 2017). Theories of abjection engage with this very idea of wanting to 'cast out' that which is threatening to one's sense of self (Phillips, 2014; Simonsen, 2007). It is the "vague sense of horror that permeates the boundary between the self and the other" (Phillips, 2014, p. 19). Although abjection has traditionally had negative connotations encapsulated by a sense of the ambiguous, the horrifying and the polluted, some groups have reclaimed their difference by embracing the term arguing that the liminal space in which subjects experience a crisis of meaning is the very place in which transformation is possible (Phillips, 2014).

Embodiment is also linked to space. The body, like space, is a physical entity through which we experience the world (Simonsen, 2007). We do not merely perceive physical bodies in space, but we are also affected by the meanings these bodies hold and these bodies communicate with each other (Simonsen, 2007). This form of intersubjectivity that is

maintained through living bodies occupying physical space together is referred to as 'intercorporeality' (Simonsen, 2007).

2.4. Queer Geographies: Space and Place

Narrative conceptions of selfhood can work fruitfully alongside studies of space and place as they both align in their concern with the multiple meanings and potentialities of lived experience (Canham, 2017). Canham (2017, p. 84) defines queer geographies as "a confusing, non-conforming, elusive, strange, and boundless geography that emerges and ebbs in unexpected ways." Space can open up possibilities for a productive life while simultaneously constraining that life (Canham, 2017). This makes space useful to analyse in terms of sexual identity within schools. Once again though, it needs to be considered within a nexus of intersecting facets of identity such as race, class and sexuality that inform and influence one's experience of space and place (Canham, 2017).

At this point a differentiation between space and place is necessary. Space is general while place is more particular (Agnew, 2005). In a simplistic sense, "space refers to location somewhere and place to the occupation of that location. Space is about having an address and place is about living at that address" (Agnew, 2005, p 82). If the two terms are to be seen as internally related to one another then space is about the broad narrative that we hold in our heads about what particular places are, and place is the specific sites through which we interact with others as well as objects occupying this space (Agnew, 2005). In this way, space is more top-down where control and power are exercised on others by more powerful actors, whereas place is bottom-up consisting of the everyday views of ordinary people (Agnew, 2005).

Places encapsulate certain cultural values that are tied to power and so are never neutral (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Hegemony becomes important to be aware of in such

instances as “powerful agents within society construct space in a way which reflects the structures of power in society, and this is as true for gender as for the differences between rich and poor, black and white, young and old, homed and homeless (and so on)” (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, p. 190). Here, the intersections between social identity, and the embodiment thereof, and space can be seen. Safety, or the idea of ‘safe spaces’ is particularly important as well. Safety, space and class are elements that are closely connected, and they co-constitute each other (Canham, 2017). Safe spaces are not fixed but depend on the complex relations of power that flow through them (Canham, 2017). Studies of space in relation to sexual identity have shown “how spaces (and the socio-cultural relations that shape them) also affect our sexual identities and the way we experience and negotiate these spaces – whether it be our own bodies, or the spaces of home, work, leisure sites and so-called ‘public spaces’.” (Panelli, 2004, p. 11). Linked to this is Massey’s (2004) arguments that space is a product of interactions and so space, like identity, is relational. She discusses these ideas in relation to the imagined boundaries of belonging that we construct in physical spaces. This relates to the importance of viewing space in non-essentialist ways, rather opting for a consideration of how space, as Canham (2017) also argues, is not immutable (Massey, 2004).

2.4.1. The schooling space.

A key space that this study focuses on is schooling spaces. Schools are, along Foucauldian lines, places of constant surveillance where ‘good’ behaviour is rewarded with privileges, high marks and praise, and ‘bad’ behaviour is punished through punitive measures such as detention and the removal of privileges (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Schools are fundamentally spaces of compulsory heterosexuality and they are maintained as such through repeated heterosexual performances (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Held, 2015). Clear examples from schools includes the strict gendering of school uniforms and matric dance customs

where couples are expected to be heterosexual. Allen (2013) argues that "the spatial and material arrangements of schooling serve to discourage students' positive sexual embodiment and regulate their sexuality in ways that are heteronormative." (p. 57). Furthermore, schools are constructed as places of the 'mind' part of the mind/body split, relegating other aspects of learners' identities, such as sexuality or familial relationships, to contexts outside of school so as to not interfere with one's educational progress (O'Flynn & Epstein, 2005). However, if space is constantly being constructed through action then it is not immutable, but rather this allows for the possibility of change, and thus the potentiality to disrupt hegemonic power relations (Allen, 2013).

Chapter Three: Literature Review

A review of literature on sexually diverse young people with a focus on a schooling context is the concern of this chapter. The majority of the literature reviewed is from a South African context, but international studies have also been included so as to compare local findings with global trends. The literature is grouped into thematic categories, namely: learners' experiences of sexuality in schools; school managers' and teachers' perceptions of sexual diversity; parental perceptions of sexuality in schools; as well as studies that address sexuality with a specific focus on the spatial geographies of schools.

3.1. Learners' Experiences of Sexuality in Schools

Research on sexual and gender diversity in schools in post-apartheid South Africa has increased in recent years (Francis, 2017a), however, there are major barriers to accessing schools in order to conduct such studies (Richardson, 2006). Francis (2017a) conducted a review of literature based on 27 publications on the topic of sexually diverse young people's experiences of schooling and how schools respond to gender and sexual diversity, noting that overall schools seem to function from the assumption that all staff and learners are heterosexual. This supports Epstein and Johnson's (1998) arguments that compulsory heterosexuality is the organising matrix for sexually diverse teachers and learners in schools. Schools are meant to be supportive of all kinds of learners, as stated in the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2018) professional teaching guidelines, but ironically through heterosexism schools are contributing towards the vulnerability of sexually diverse learners (Francis, 2017a). This situation is not helped by the fact that on a broader governmental level,

> there are no government departmental structures or policies regulating schools and teacher institutions, nor have the institutions been given guidance in terms of what they need to do to ensure that LGBT leaners and educators who do not conform to gender/sexuality norms feel safe and welcome (Francis, 2017a, p. 371).

This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. It is not surprising then that the survey on sexually diverse people in South Africa conducted by an NGO, OUT LGBT Well-being (2016), found that 56% of participants aged 16-24 said they had experienced discrimination in school based on their sexuality. Of this group who had experienced discrimination, 55% said this took the form of verbal abuse, 35% said it was threats of violence, 21% had objects thrown at them, 20% had personal property damaged or destroyed, 18% had been physically hit, and 11% had been sexually abused or raped (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2016).

A study of 18 sexually diverse learners in various provinces in South Africa reported that all participants had experienced feeling isolated and discriminated against (Butler et al., 2003). Similarly, a study in the Northern Cape on gay male learners found homophobic violence to be common (McArthur, 2015). Research within a historically black township school conducted by Langa (2015) reported that boys in high school who identified as straight held negativity attitudes towards homosexuality, believing it to be abnormal. They used religious and ethnic discourses in their justifications, and gayness was constructed as a threat to their masculinity (Langa, 2015). Furthermore, homophobic violence seems to occur more often in contexts where heterosexual masculinities are supposedly threatened (McArthur, 2015).

Findings from an intervention project based on sexually marginalised black learners from high schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal which explored participants' schooling experiences found four main categories of negative experiences including being called names, being subject to ostracism based on fear of being contagious, tensions between other intersecting aspects of identity such as religion, as well as not being understood (Msibi, 2012). A strength of this research is that Msibi (2012) accessed sexually diverse learners attending township schools who are often underrepresented in published research. Unlike most research on sexually diverse learners in schools that frames these young people's lives through vulnerable and at-risk discourses, Msibi (2012) argues that literature that frames sexually diverse leaners as

powerless victims of relentless homophobia reinforces such stereotypes. This in turn denies such learners agency over their lives and how they may resist heteronormativity and live out their lives in fulfilling ways. To this end, he notes that the learners in his study "expressed great pride in themselves and their abilities. This pride largely had to do with self-acceptance" (Msibi, 2012, p. 529). A photo-voice study by Zway and Boonzaier (2015) conducted in the Western Cape on 14 lesbian and bisexual black girls aged 13-17 years old found that they wore grey school pants, instead of skirts, in order to assert their identities. This shows how, despite being discriminated against in school, they were still able to find ways to resist heteronormative expectations of them (Zway and Boonzaier, 2015).

Francis and Reygan (2016b) found an interesting nuanced understanding of sexuality among their participants as well as indicators of change within schools. Their in-depth qualitative study of nine sexually diverse leaners from the Free State in grades 10 to 12 in several different types of schools examined the ways in which they spoke about and understood relationships, intimacy and desire, and what this revealed about sexuality and gender in South Africa (Francis & Reygan, 2016b). Participants complicated the in/out binary of the closet by speaking about sexuality in dynamic ways that were non-binary. They were able to overcome discrimination they had experienced and find ways to assert themselves (Francis & Reygan, 2016b). The findings showed that for the participants "belonging supersedes autonomy and foregrounded the importance that relationships, togetherness, intimacy and desire play in their lives" (Francis & Reygan, 2016b, p. 76). Francis and Reygan (2016b) argue that the metaphor of the closet does have utility but, as their participants showed, it is not universal or uniform in its lived experience. They go on to discuss the ways in which heteronormative power may in fact create the closet, advocating for the position that Rasmussen (2004) and McCormick (2015) argue. These findings indicate a shift within schools that reflects the possibilities of dialogue among learners, and shows a much more nuanced understanding of

sexuality that would have been met with social as well as institutional sanctions in the past (Francis & Reygan, 2016b). Francis (2017c) does, however, note a lack of bisexual representation in studies on sexual diversity in schools claiming that at the time of publication he was unable to find a study done in South Africa on school learners that focussed exclusively on bisexuality.

Studies internationally on sexually diverse learners in schools are much more plentiful compared to South Africa (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013). These learners experience similar struggles where school therapists, schooling staff and some parents avoid issues that these learners have as they do not want to bring further attention to them (Hall, 2006). Research also tends to have a focus on more negative aspects of their experiences such as victimisation and the consequences thereof for their mental health (Kosciw et al., 2013), as well as risk-factors such as the abuse of substances, poor academic performance and even homelessness (Hall, 2006).

Despite schools in countries such as the United States having anti-discrimination policies, having these policies does not necessarily lead to a difference in attitudes towards sexually diverse learners (Hall, 2006). However, gay-straight alliance (GSA) clubs in schools, that provide supportive spaces and encourage acceptance of diversity, have been found to help improve learners' self-esteem and provide learners with a sense of belonging (Hall, 2006). A quantitative study consisting of 5730 learners reported that hostile schooling environments towards sexually diverse learners had negative outcomes for them (Kosciw et al., 2013). But this study also found that school support structures like GSAs are important in helping lower victimisation and improving academic performance amongst sexually diverse learners (Kosciw et al., 2013). Other research has also demonstrated how supportive and accepting adults contribute towards sexually diverse learners feeling safer in schools (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Barkiewicz, 2010).

3.2. Teachers' and School Managements' Contributions Towards Homophobia

Sexually diverse learners are not only subject to discrimination and misunderstanding from their own peers, but from their teachers as well. One study reported that teachers are silent about homophobia due to their views that the topic is inappropriate to discuss in class (Bhana, 2012a). Teachers spoke about homosexuality as being excessively performative and framed it as bad behaviour that needed to be stopped (Bhana, 2012a). Religion came up as a primary aspect that was used to justify homophobia claiming homosexuality is sinful while also using religion to instil fear, in line with findings from other studies (Francis & Reygan, 2016a; Msibi, 2012). Religion was linked to parental pressure as a means to justify why diverse sexualities could not be discussed in class. However, some participants indicate some shifts in their religious thought, saying that their faiths have become more accepting and inclusive of homosexuality (Bhana, 2012a).

Other studies have found similar instances of homophobia perpetuated by teachers. In a study conducted in rural and urban schools in the Free State consisting of 25 Life Orientation (LO) teachers, it was reported that they displayed several microaggressions towards sexually diverse learners (Francis & Reygan, 2016a). These included using similes of contagion when talking about homosexuality, displaying discomfort and disapproval of homosexuality and, once again, religion was used to justify silencing homosexuality from being spoken about (Francis & Reygan, 2016a). Participants in this study were unwilling to be critical of their own views and did not believe they had to change to make their classrooms more inclusive spaces (Francis & Reygan, 2016a). In his study focussing on bisexuality in South African schools, Francis (2017c) found that teachers spoke of bisexual learners as being hypersexual and thus more at risk. Furthermore, bisexuality seemed stigmatised as teacher participants believed it sits uncomfortably between heterosexuality and homosexuality leading them to

believe that leaners identifying as bisexual were going through a ‘phase of confusion’ (Francis, 2017c).

The curriculum is also an important contributing factor that perpetuates heteronormativity and remains silent about sexual diversity (Potgieter & Reygan, 2012). Wilmot and Naidoo (2014) performed a content analysis on Grade 10 Life Orientation textbooks reporting that when sexuality was mentioned, sexually diverse identities were not included and concepts on sexuality were overly simple and approached from a moral standpoint. Teaching about sexuality, but within an exclusive heteronormative frame, is in the curriculum according to the teachers in Bhana’s (2012a) study, but they stated that homosexuality is not explicitly in the curriculum therefore it cannot be taught. This acknowledgement normalises and upholds heterosexuality, degrading homosexuality to being deviant (Bhana, 2012a). Furthermore, some teachers felt they were unprepared to deal with teaching about homosexuality and the questions that learners may ask (Bhana, 2012a). An interesting tension between recognising that learners need to be prepared for the world outside school while at the same time keeping different sexualities silent was also present (Bhana, 2012a). One study has indicated that learners are curious to learn about sexual diversity, but teachers often shut down these conversations if they come up in class (Francis, 2017c).

This silencing of sexually diverse learners stems not only from teachers, but from school management personnel as well. Bhana’s (2014) research examined the way school management, namely principals and department heads, negotiated and resisted the rights of sexually diverse people in schools. 22 school managers from five different high schools in two provinces, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng, participated in the study’s focus group interviews. Silence was used as a strategy to manage the rights of sexually diverse learners by using the mind-body split as a justification to desexualise learners by claiming schools as spaces of learning thus relegating matters of the body to contexts outside of school (Bhana,

2014). This produces sexuality as shameful within a schooling context (Bhana, 2014). Heterosexuality was spoken about in naturalising terms while homosexuality was associated with excess, sexual desire, and deviance (Bhana, 2014). Participant responses were located "within existing patterns of dominant Christian principles often combined with African traditions, [and] are complexly connected to culture and inequalities of race and gender and involve the language of power, inequality and exclusion" (Bhana, 2014, p. 73). However, Bhana (2014) does explain the complex context that school managers work in as they are often constrained by their contexts of historical and structural inequalities inherited from apartheid including racial and class differences, poverty and lack of access to resources (Bhana, 2014). On the other hand, schools are responsible to protect the rights of all learners (Bhana, 2014; SACE, 2018). One way that Bhana (2014, p. 76) suggests that school management can become important allies and agents of transformation is through upholding Constitutional protections:

> While it is important to acknowledge the limits inherent in the rights of gays and lesbians at school, an effective rights-based Constitution in South Africa has provided a platform for change and potential for the further development of equality and agency.

Similarly to Bhana's (2014) study, a study done in the United Kingdom on sexuality and academic discourse in schools found that schools emphasise the mind part of the mind-body split that was tied to national agendas of global competitiveness (O'Flynn & Epstein, 2005). This view essentially denies other aspects of learners' identities such as their sexual or familial relationships as these are seen as potential distractions from their educational progression (O'Flynn & Epstein, 2005).

3.3. Parental Views of Non-conforming Sexualities

Much like the views of school managers and teachers discussed above, parents hold similar views and roles of influence when it comes to issues of sexuality in schools. Research on parental views on sexuality within schools found that Christianity was used as a means to justify upholding exclusive heterosexuality whereby homosexuality is viewed a sinful and to be prayed away demonstrating how sexual rights, particularly those of sexually diverse people, are at odds with religious values according to the participants in Bhana's (2012b) study. Homosexuality was framed as being almost infectious, marked in one's "bloodline" (Bhana, 2012b), utilising the language of embodiment and disease within the body with the potential to physically infect others. Gender roles were reproduced through talk around cultural traditions that naturalise heterosexuality and female subordination, serving simultaneously to relegate homosexuality to a state of unnatural deviance that upsets these traditional roles (Bhana, 2012b). Despite these largely homophobic views, some parents indicated their openness to the inclusion of sexual diversity in school curricula on the basis of upholding rights, being respectful and making learners aware of difference within society (Bhana, 2012b). This was accompanied by political awareness of issues facing sexually diverse people in society (Bhana, 2012b).

However, pairing children and sexuality remains a moral taboo despite efforts to change this to the detriment of learners' knowledge about sexual issues that effectively frames these young people as asexual and thus not in need of knowledge regarding sexuality (Bhana, 2012b). It is important, though, to acknowledge how parents are key stakeholders who can help create a more just society through their stake in schools. Thus, "schools' efforts to build alliances with parents must include emphasis on the moral foundation of sexual equality, that might have positive effects in addressing homophobia and building a culture of respect for all learners at schools" (Bhana, 2012b, p. 116).

3.4. Sexualities in Space

Studies of space in relation to sexual identities have emerged as part of a sub-discipline within geographical studies, and they show how sexuality and space are interconnected in complex ways (Held, 2015). In one ethnographic study of night-time leisure spaces in Manchester in the United Kingdom, comfort and safety were argued as being constitutive of sexual orientation, gender identity and racial subjectivity and spaces (Held, 2015). Many participants described 'gay' spaces as being more comfortable and safer than 'straight' spaces. Importantly the study found that space is racialised and race is spatialised for participants. White participants reported an awareness of racial difference that hinged on *not* seeing race when white people were around but being aware of race when black people were in the space that led to discomfort and othering (Held, 2015). On the other hand, black participants reported being aware of 'the look' that white people give them, a look that makes them feel uncomfortable in that space (Held, 2015).

Canham's (2017) study, within the area of queer geography, aimed to explore the social lives of lesbians in Johannesburg and how these people structure their lives beyond the narrative of being 'at-risk'. The study consisted of five young lesbian-identifying black women in their 20s and three older black-identifying lesbian women in their mid-40s. The study mapped these marginalised identities in Johannesburg to show how lesbians occupy social space in Johannesburg, how these experiences intersect with prejudice and violence, and how they were able to resist heteronormativity. Canham (2017) concludes that these lesbian women are conscious of the way in which space informs their agency that both frames them as victims as well as victors.

3.4.1. Schooling space and sexual identity.

Empirical studies that focus on the schooling space specifically in relation to sexual identity have emerged within queer geography studies. Freitag's (2013) narrative study of one

particular public school in the Midwest of the United States yielded particularly interesting findings. The school seemed thoughtful in their approach and willing to be supportive of all their learners, so it was a very affirming space for all learners. Although the outside community viewed the school as “alternative” or the “gay school”, it is in fact a school of acceptance (Freitag, 2013). Despite this school being an outlier, Freitag (2013) argues that an average classroom reproduces heteronormativity, but they can also be sites of resistance to gender and sexual norms as repeated resistance could lead to dominant scripts of a particular space changing much like the school in the study (Freitag, 2013).

Another study along similar lines was done in New Zealand with 22 learner participants from two different schools (Allen, 2013). Photo-diaries were used by participants to document their schooling space. The photographs showed a lack of same-gender attraction that supports that schools are predominantly heteronormative spaces, however there was one photograph of a female couple but the participant explained this couple had previously been assaulted for their relationship (Allen, 2013). Some participants took photos of their school desks with various drawings of male genitalia, showing how attempts by schools to keep them as desexualised spaces are resisted and reconfigured by subversive acts such as drawing penises on desks to assert one’s agency and sexuality (Allen, 2103). The findings clearly show how despite “the spatial and material arrangements of schooling [that] serve to discourage students’ positive sexual embodiment and regulate their sexuality in ways that are heteronormative” learners were able to disrupt these constraints and utilise their schooling space in creative ways in order to assert their agency (Allen, 2013, p. 57).

Chapter Four: Methods

This chapter outlines the methods utilised in this study. It begins with a discussion of the primary methodological framework of the study, namely narrative research and I outline why I use Paul Ricoeur's understandings of narrative in relation to human life to frame this study. This is followed by a description of the participants and an outline of the data collection process that consisted of narrative interviews. I then move on to discuss the analysis of the in-depth portraits of each participant as well as spatial heat-maps of safety and belonging that accompany each participant's analysis. I reflect on my position as the researcher in the reflexivity section and consider the ways in which my identity and my investment in the project influenced it. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations of the research.

4.1. Methodological Framework

This study has been designed within a narrative methodological framework. Narrative is a field of study that is difficult to define largely because it is so interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from different fields such as literary theory, linguistics, cultural theory, sociology, psychology and anthropology (Squire, 2005). Narrative studies are advantageous as they allow for multiple levels of analysis to take place, such as a focus on the structure of language, the content of text, as well as the context in which narratives are produced (Squire, 2005). Narratives carry the "traces of human lives that we want to understand" (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2013, p.2). Narrative research encompasses a particular politics, as it is often used to represent less-represented voices that are excluded from dominant structures (Squire, 2005) making it an appropriate method to use to study the experiences of sexually diverse people. Underpinning narrative research is the assumption that narratives can be "strategic, functional, and purposeful" because the stories that people tell about their lives connect them to broader communities (Riessman, 2008, p. 8), while at the same time allowing for self-understanding and reflection (Squire, 2005). Plummer (1995) understands

the social role of narratives through firstly being symbolic interaction through which meaning is made in the world in conversation with others, and secondly that stories are part of a broader political process that gives people the power to tell, or not tell, a particular story.

This study was designed within an experienced-centred view of narratives that understands narratives as human constructions that express lived experience in reconstituted ways that are meaningful (Squire, 2013). These narratives have the potential to change over time, as people's sense of the significance of their experiences change (Crites, 1968; Squire, 2013). This orientation "is distinguished by its attention to the sequencing and progress of themes within interviews, their transformation and resolution" (Squire, 2013, p. 57).

A particularly useful understanding of narrative from a methodological standpoint comes from the work of Paul Ricoeur. This study draws largely on his understanding of how narrative functions as means to understand human life. Ricoeur's (1982) theory of narrative identity is built on his theory of hermeneutics and how human life, as an extension, can be considered as a text. He outlines four primary premises in order to come to this conclusion. The first is that human life can be fixed, or recorded, in the same way that writing records a story. The meaning of an experience or event can be detached from the experience or event itself which is a productive function of distanciation, a distance between text and what the text is about or what its author's intentions were, that allows one to interpret and understand a text (Ricoeur, 1982). Next is the autonomisation of human life where our actions have their own consequences, or unintended effects. The intention of someone's actions is separated from the meanings that can be gleaned from that action (Ricoeur, 1991a). The third premise is that human life goes beyond its relevance in the initial situation and becomes interpretable beyond that moment thus "the meaning of an important event exceeds, overcomes, transcends, the social conditions of its production and may be re-enacted in new social contexts." (Ricoeur, 1982, p. 208). The final premise is that human life is an 'open work'

meaning it can be interpreted and reinterpreted by others, and the self, thus the meaning of a life is never fixed (Ricoeur, 1982).

Narrative is the vehicle through which Ricoeur (1991b) theorises that we go about interpreting our lives as text. Ricoeur (1991b) states that self-interpretation uses narrative as a means of expression that draws on fiction and history in order to create the story of one's own life. Central to this theory is the conception of narrative time that he differentiates from linear time. Whereas linear time can be viewed as sequential 'clock time', narrative time differs in that stories are expected to have some kind of plausible conclusion (Ricoeur, 1980). When looking back from the end-point of a story at the events that led up to that end, we can trace the events that led up to that conclusion. This looking back "is made possible by the teleological movement directed by our expectations when we follow the story" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 174). Narrative identity is thus a plot-like conception of how we became who we are.

Ricoeur (1991a) refers to this notion of one's life story having a plot as 'emplotment'. Life is a series of events and experiences and we impose order and coherence on those events and stories through providing them with a plot, or a weaving together of the different events and experiences into a structural whole with causal connections and linkages that provide them with meaning and significance (Ricoeur, 1991a). The causal structures that we give to our stories is what gives our life stories a sense of plot, and the linkages that we create can be both forward or backward looking. In addition, narratives of the self are inescapably connected to others and it is only through the language of others that we come to understand ourselves (Ricoeur, 1991a). This is why Ricoeur refers to narrative time as a 'public time' because the ways in which we construct our narratives are relational (Ricoeur, 1980).

Furthermore, in line with Josselson's (2004) theorising, built on the work of Ricoeur, this study takes the approach of a hermeneutics of faith, rather than a hermeneutics of suspicion.

The assumption is that the participants have told me about their experiences and their thought-processes as best they can. The reason behind this choice is to "re-present, explore and/or understand the subjective world the participant and/or the social and historical world they feel themselves to be living in" (Josselson, 2004, p.5), rather than viewing experience as untransparent and thus in need of demystification.

4.2. Participants

The requirements to participate in this study were that participants had to have attended a high school in South Africa, identified as sexually diverse when they were in high school, and have matriculated within the last 5-7 years. I chose to limit this to 5-7 years so as to have participants that had matriculated in more recent times in order to gain as close an understanding of the *current* landscape of schools in South Africa as possible. To this end, I contacted the secretary of the relevant society group at Wits University and I explained my project. I was kindly added to the WhatsApp group of this society where I put out my call for participants. Interested parties were told to contact me via private message so I could obtain their email addresses and send them the participant information sheet. Three participants contacted me from this source. I put out the same call on my Facebook page and obtained a further four participants. The final participant was recommended to the study by one of the participants sourced via my social networks on Facebook.

Table 1 summarises the profile of the participants along with descriptions of their high school(s) attended. All racial, sexual orientation and gender identity labels are those chosen by the participants themselves on their demographic questionnaire. I did this, rather than providing a tick-box approach to demographics, to challenge the binary categories of gendered and sexual identities and because the narrative framing of the project provides the participants the chance to identify in their own words. Only one participant attended a public school, whereas all the other participants attended independent schools. All participants

attended high schools in Johannesburg and subsequently attended the University of the Witwatersrand.

Participant* (shorthand for quotes)	**Age**	**Race**	**Sexual orientation**	**Gender identity**	**School description**
Amahle (A)	20	African	Lesbian	Female	State all-girls' township
Claire (C)	20	Coloured	Lesbian	Cis woman	Independent co-ed
Amy (Am)	20	White	Lesbian	Female	School A: Independent all-girls' School B: Independent co-ed alternative School C: Independent co-ed alternative
Mark (Mk)	21	White	Gay	Cis male	Independent co-ed
Matthew (Mw)	22	White	Gay	Cis male	Independent co-ed
James (J)	22	Coloured	Gay	Queer	Independent co-ed
Ken (K)	23	White	Bisexual	Male	Independent co-ed
Diego (D)	20	White	Gay	Cis male	School A: Independent co-ed School B: Independent co-ed alternative

* These are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

4.2.1. Limitations.

This particular participant distribution cannot go undiscussed. It is clear that the participant profile is skewed on several accounts. Although this project is not quantitative and does not strive to have a generalisable sample by any means, there still needs to be an acknowledgement of the potential limitations that the data produced may hold as a

consequence of who the participants are and what schools they attended. Three main considerations are necessary.

Firstly, in terms of race the participants are largely white-identifying and middle-class. This is perhaps a function of the sampling technique used as well as my own identity as I am both white and middle-class. Race is an important factor to consider as the experience of one's sexual orientation has to be seen intersectionally alongside other aspects such as race and gender (Canham, 2017; Crenshaw, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 2006). As the analysis will show, race was a salient factor that played into one's experience of their schooling environment. Secondly, tied to race, are the types of schools the participants attended, and thus their class position. Only one participant attended a public school. This is significant because of the vast differences that exist between public versus independent high schools within the country and legacies that these carry with them as a result of apartheid. Independent schools in South Africa are mainly attended by white learners which is an important contextual factor tied to class. Given the country's racial inequalities in relation to education, and the fact that all but one of my participants came from independent schools, it is unsurprising that my participants are mainly white identifying. The two 'coloured' participants in the study who attended independent schools had interesting experiences in light of their race at school. Finally, all of the participants have attended tertiary education at the University of the Witwatersrand. This is significant in light of the project being retrospective as tertiary institutions are liberal spaces that encourage and often embody a particular liberal view of the world. Through one's experience of these liberal spaces and ideals, the way in which one looks at and thinks about one's own past may change as a result. It is important to keep these limitations in mind. However, the data gathered are nonetheless valuable and insightful.

4.3. Data Collection

The initial step in the data collection process was to obtain ethical clearance from the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) (see Appendix A for the clearance certificate). Once this was done, I put out a call for participants via social media. When participants agreed to be part of the study an appropriate date and time was arranged with them. The data collection took the form of one semi-structured one-on-one interview. These interviews were conducted at Wits University in a quiet office space and they were between 45 and 75 minutes long. Before starting each interview, participants had to complete a brief open-ended demographic questionnaire that included age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and preferred pronoun (see Appendix B). Each participant was able to choose their own pseudonym on this questionnaire. If they opted not to choose, I chose for them. Each interview was divided into three broad phases: coming out story; schooling experience in relation to being sexually diverse; and a reflection on an imagined future in light of their past experiences. The semi-structured interview schedule that I used reflects this three-part structure and it can be found in Appendix C.

4.4. Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected, I transcribed each interview retaining the oral discourses as far as possible including pauses, hesitations, significant signs of emotion, laughter, as well as utterances such as “um” and “hmm”. These non-verbal elements of conversation were important to preserve because talk contains more than the direct words spoken (Bucholtz, 2000). These elements of talk also enable intersubjectivity to be maintained. At several points in the analysis, these elements of talk are analysed alongside the talk proper. A guide to the conventions used for the transcriptions can be found in Appendix D. Once the interview audios had been transcribed I read and re-read each transcript in order to re-familiarise myself with the data. During this process I noted down key aspects that stood out to me and I wrote

down initial codes that arose from these readings. I uploaded the transcripts into a freeware version of the qualitative software analysis application ATLAS.ti. Using this software was useful in that I was able to store the codes on the application and use these pre-stored codes in order to code textual extracts and generate a report for each participant's transcript which contained each code and the corresponding quotes. This helped me in each of the two analyses as I was able to group similar topics of talk together.

The following sections outline the process I followed in the analysis. Two different analyses have been performed on the data to create an in-depth narrative portrait of each participant, attending to both temporal narrative lines and the spatial context of identity development. This focus on the spatial contexts utilises heat-maps to help illuminate visually how each participant experienced space and place in relation to their identities. Each participant is discussed in-depth case-by-case utilising both analytic methods to create a composite view. This choice was been made in order to create rich in-depth portraits of each participant's experience although these experiences are clearly linked to the political landscape rather than being entirely personal or individualised. In order to highlight these links between the personal and political, I included various linkages between the cases in order to generate insightful comparisons.

4.4.1. In-depth narrative portraits.

The first analysis is an in-depth vertical analysis of each participant's narrative on its own terms. The primary analytical mode in which this analysis takes place is heavily influenced by Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005; 2016) 'portraiture' methodology as well as Squire's (2013) experience-centred approach to narrative research (2013). Emerging from a context of research within high schools (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016), portraiture is a textual representation that comes as close to painting as possible, a painting with words (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). It emerged as a response to the increasingly pathology-focused research

within the social sciences, and instead focusses more on the 'goodness' within data (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016). 'Goodness' here does not mean ignoring negative aspects of participants' experiences, but is rather an examination of incidences of resistance and negotiation that lead to successful outcomes while acknowledging life's complexities (Dixon, Chapman, & Hill, 2005). Thus, "portraiture very purposefully says we're going to try and understand what's worthy and strong; always recognising of course that goodness is inevitably laced imperfection." (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016, p. 20). This culminates in the primary aim to achieve an analysis that would make the participants feel "fully attended to, recognised, appreciated, respected, and scrutinised" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6). Squire's (2013) experience-centred conceptualisation of narratives understands narratives in much the same way: as personal stories that involve the movement and progression of one's life alongside the development of meaning. This understanding of narrative also contains a transformational element as experience-centred narrative research is attuned to "look for improvement in stories" much like portraiture wants to highlight goodness (Squire, 2013, p. 52).

Some have criticised the portraiture method arguing that these portraits are always presented as the only possible narrative that could be formed from the data (English, 2000). This seems to be a misunderstanding of the method. Despite there being a process of selection at play, portraiture acknowledges the portraitist's role and understands that the final 'portrait' will always be partial. This makes it necessary for the portraitist to make it clear why they chose a particular aspect to focus on and to account for possible biases that slip in (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Squire, 2013). Both Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) and Squire (2013) argue how narrative understandings of selfhood are able to embrace contradictions in order to articulate the good and the bad alongside each other showing the complexity of human life. This ability to hold within its grasp contradictions makes it useful within a narrative-based

study that takes narrative identity to contain multiplicity while still striving for a sense of unity and coherence even if these cannot be achieved as is the case in some trauma narratives (Andrews, 2010; McAdams, 2012). The data are still rigorously analysed, however, "there is never a single story; many could be told" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 10). This dovetails well with Ricoeur's (1982) hermeneutics that argues that no interpretation is ever final.

In several places, particular incident narratives (PINs) have been analysed. Wengraf (2013) defines PINs as particular accounts of an experience that a person has lived through. PINs are often extended pieces of narration that the participants tell about a particular incident that happened to them (Wengraf, 2013). Particularly useful PINs are those in which the person seems to narrate that experience in a way that at least partly indicates they are reliving the experience as they are talking about it. PINs are useful as they provide insight into the participants' attitudes and orientation to the world, as well as provide evidence of experiences that they remember as significant. This makes PINs particularly useful in retrospective research because they can "access vanished and mutated times, places, nuanced states of feeling and ways of doing and living" (Wengraf, 2013, p. 53).

Each of the eight portraits for the participants has followed the same basic structure. First, there is a section on the participant's sexual identity development narrative, or their process of coming out, or in some cases not coming out. This is discussed in relation to both their families as well as their friends and peers. The second section is that of their schooling experiences in relation to their identities, with a focus on sexual identity, but not exclusively. This section includes discussion of how their peers, teachers, and school management staff viewed or treated them, as well as discussions around sexually diverse issues within the classroom space either from a curricula or class discussion standpoint or both. These two broad sections often have a degree of analytical overlap as participants' coming out narratives naturally intersect with their schooling experiences.

4.4.2. Spatial heat-maps of safety and belonging.

In order to balance the focus of the first analysis that centred mainly around the participants' identity development across time, coming out narratives and schooling experiences, the second analysis, embedded within each case-by-case analysis, is a consideration of the outer world that each participant found themselves in. This focus on space and place in relation to identities and consequently the feelings of safety and belonging, or lack thereof, associated with these spaces and places are the main concern of this analysis. This links the experiences in the first analysis to the mental maps that participants have where these experiences are located, which allows me as a researcher to formulate a geography of their identities. This shift of focus in comparison to the first analysis allows for a more considered understanding of how identities are either constrained or enabled by one's physical context. Inspired by Bradbury's (2017) work with students who employed visual methodologies in their own narrative research, I wanted to include a visual element within this study. Although visual methods are more typically utilised in the data collection phase, I have used a visual mode of analysis to represent each participant's sense of space and place and their associated feelings of safety within these spaces. This takes the form of heat-maps.

Heat-mapping has been used in various fields in order to transform quantitative data into a visual form making an understanding of the data more easily graspable and condensed (Wilkinson & Friendly, 2009). Examples of heat-map applications include to show gene variations (Wilkinson & Friendly, 2009), represent social statistics (Wilkinson & Friendly, 2009), to show website clicking habits of users (Șaovă & Raduteanu, 2013), and to represent geographical data such as fire incidences (Liu, Xu, Zhou, & Fan, 2019). Examples of these can be found in Appendix E. Heat-maps all work off a heat metaphor using colour to show different 'temperatures', or degrees of a particular variable. Usually this ranges between red

and blue, where red represents more of a particular variable, and blue represents less. Yellow and green would sit in-between the two poles.

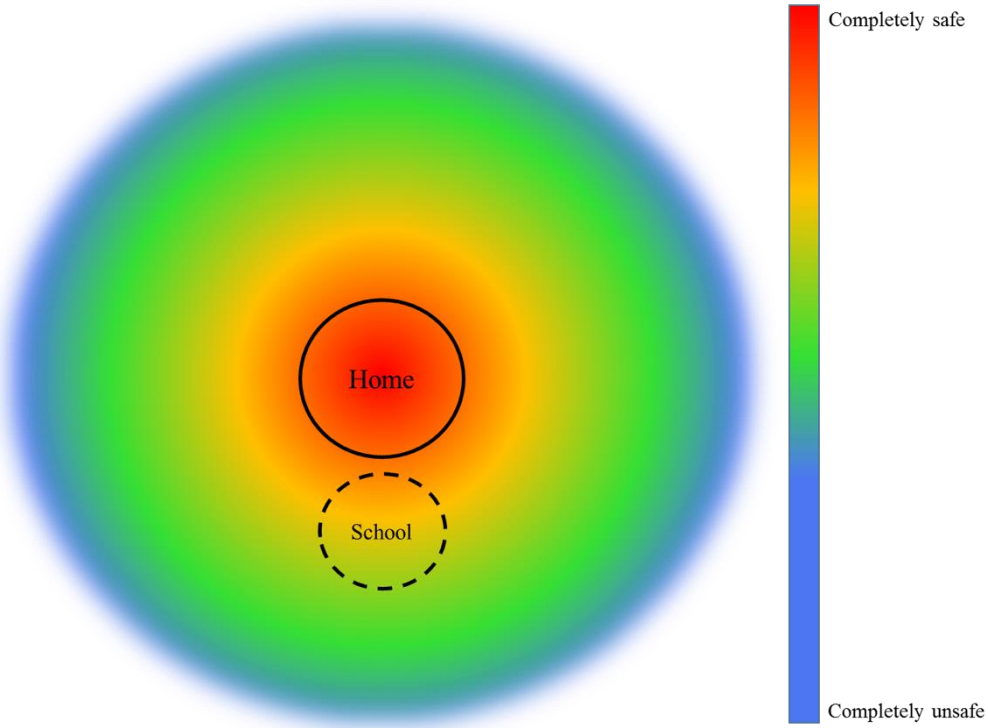

Figure 1: Example of a basic spatial heat-map for a fictitious person

The heat-maps that I have created use traditional heat-maps as a springboard to represent my participants' sense of safety and belonging in relation to space and place based on their narratives (see *Figure 1*). I have overlaid circles with a label inside of a specific place or space over the specific area of the heat-map that best represents participants' feelings of safety and their ability to be themselves, or where their identities felt constrained, in relation to the colours. Specifically, these heat-maps consist of a large circle with a red centre. Red is a colour associated with warmth and is quintessentially used as the colour of love. Thus, the red centre of the maps represented the central spaces and places that my participants felt completely safe in. These represent the core physical contexts where they could be authentically themselves. As the heat-map radiates outwards the colours fade into less warm range of colours of such as orange and yellow as the physical context shifts away from the

safe centre. These orange and yellow areas still provided participants with a sense of safety and belonging but there is less certainty of this compared to the warm centre. Finally, the colours fade into green and blue, blue being a cold colour that is quite the opposite of the warm, loving centre. These blue outskirts of the map represent spaces and places where participants felt completely unsafe and unable to be themselves. In some sense, these were spaces and places where participants felt on the margins or where they felt completely alienated.

Overlapping circles on a heat-map do not indicate any physical space overlap in reality, but rather a similar *sense* of safety and belonging associated with the space or place. Circles on the heat-maps that contain solid lines are indicative of spaces or places where participants were open regarding their sexual identities meaning they would not change their behaviour or deny their sexuality in these contexts. On the other hand, dotted circles indicate spaces or places where they chose not to be, or could not be, open about their sexuality. However, a solid line does not necessarily indicate the space or place was safe for the participant. As can be seen from *Figure 1*, home for this fictitious person was a place of complete safety and belonging (and they were open about their sexuality at home as shown with the solid line). However, at school they did not quite feel the same level of safety and belonging, but they did still to some degree (but they were not open, or not completely open about their sexuality at school as shown by a dotted line). These heat-maps work alongside quotations from participants that exemplify why the spaces or places are located where they are on the heat-map. These visual representations aid in the analysis of the interrelatedness of sexual identity in relation to feelings of safety and belonging regarding particular spaces and places.

4.5. Reflexivity

Essential in any research endeavour is how one's own positionality and identity affect the designing of the project, its execution, and its analysis. As a gay-identifying, white cis-

gendered man I had a particular investment in this research due to it implicating people within the same community as myself. While analysing the data for this project I began to contemplate why I chose to focus on schooling experiences in particular. While I was in high school, I was not yet 'out', but I was aware in my final three years of high school that I was not straight. I attended an independent all-boys' Catholic school for 10 years. There were no fellow learners who were openly gay or bisexual, although I had a couple of friends who told me privately that they were. I recall clearly the word 'gay' being thrown around quite freely as a slur by my classmates that was used to connote something negative. I think that this project in some way came from a desire for me to address that past. I was certainly aware of the potential hostility that would have arisen had I come out in school, and particularly the kind of affront it would have been in an *all-boys' Catholic* school where a particular muscles-and-brawn view of masculinity was valued. I wrote the poem in the dedication of this research report during the transcription phase of the project as a way of releasing my own frustrations looking back on my experience in high school alongside those of my participants. Clearly, this project was very personal.

Other aspects of my own identity may have also influenced the data collected by either enabling or muting certain aspects of my participants' identities. In particular my race may have influenced the kind of racial talk that black and coloured participants engaged in. While issues of race did come up with the two coloured participants, race was only mentioned once by the black participant which is in contradiction with previous research on black lesbians who narrated race as integral to their experiences (Canham, 2017). Perhaps in this instance the participant did not feel comfortable talking about her experience in a raced way due to my own race.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the initial version of the project aimed to access school learners directly within their school contexts. My aim was to access co-ed public

schools in (sub)urban areas in Gauteng. The difficulty came in with principals. I initially tried to get permission from eight different public school and all these schools declined the project, often without reason. I then tried to access independent schools but all five that I made contact with also declined the project. I was left with no option but to change the study and so I decided to use university students looking back on their schooling experiences instead.

This is an important context in which to consider this study and it describes how school management perhaps seems to view issues of sexual diversity as threatening or as issues that are to be avoided or ignored. This makes this kind of study all the more necessary. I felt immense frustration throughout this process. I have thought deeply about why so many principals turned down the study and while I cannot know for certain why this was the case, I do think principals are in a precarious position as they have to manage the interests of the parents and the school governing bodies, as well as look out for the well-being of their learners. However, these justifications can also be used as a disguise for homophobia. In conversation with principals I met with, it is clear that they acknowledge the existence of such learners in their schools, but they seem hesitant to engage meaningfully beyond this.

These difficulties encountered in the initial version of this project had a major impact on me as I was left feeling angry and deeply disappointed in schools, especially in schools headed by gay or lesbian principals. Being aware of these feelings in the write-up of this report has been valuable. It would be impossible for them not to have influenced my analysis in ways that I am perhaps unaware. This project is nonetheless political in its aims. I did feel initially while writing up the proposal of the project that a lot of the published literature in the area is very negative and I could not help but wonder what a sexually diverse learner who may by chance come across such studies thinks and feels about their futures in light of this. Would they feel hopeful? I fully acknowledge that sexually diverse learners are more at-risk than their straight counterparts, but I also feel strongly that this is not the *whole* picture. There are

studies that show how these learners are able to resist heteronormativity and craft out their own niches in school living with hope despite, or perhaps in spite of, the opposition they face (Francis & Reygan, 2016b; Msibi, 2012; Zway & Boonzaier, 2015).

Finally, the co-construction of the narratives produced needs to be acknowledged. In most of the interviews there was a shared understanding, to some degree, of me being gay. Narrative theories of personhood acknowledge how narratives are co-constructions and often the narrative changes based on the audience (Fay, 1996). Being a gay researcher, this shared understanding in the interviews perhaps enabled the participants to speak more freely of their experiences. Linked to this aspect of my reflection is that going into the interviews I had a particular view of how non-normative sexual identity develops and specifically assuming it entails a 'coming out' story. Only during the write-up of the project did I realise the potential problem of this assumption. In most of the interviews I explicitly asked for a coming out story. McCormick's (2015) paper has been particularly helpful in challenging my view as it outlines how coming out validates a homosexual identity, but in so doing it pigeonholes the person into an established identity category that is complicit with the binary of homosexual/ heterosexual. The paper critiques coming out in a South African context as coming out stabilises the term 'homosexual' and undermines the assumption that sexuality is fluid. The debates around 'coming out' are varied but I do acknowledge that my own assumptions led to particular co-constructions of this 'coming out' narrative, rather than allowing my participants to produce, or not produce, this particular framing of identity narrative. My thoughts on the acronym 'LGBT+' have also shifted, and only in the write up of the project did I change this to 'sexually diverse' people rather than using the stock-standard acronym. I address this choice in a footnote on page 1.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

Standard ethical principles have been adhered to throughout this research project. Ethical clearance was first applied for during the proposal stage of the project from the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). This was a rigorous process that ensured that all ethical considerations were mapped out well beforehand. Once approval had been obtained from the Committee, I had to apply for permission from the University Registrar in order to conduct the research using Wits University students.

I created a participant information sheet (see Appendix F) that outlined the project's aims, requirements of participants, ethical rights, as well as contact details for participants should they have felt that they needed to contact a professional for psychological assistance due to the research bringing up anything that would warrant such help. This letter outlined the various ethical standards that would be adhered to and interested parties were sent this document prior to arranging any interviews for them to read through. Potential participants were informed that participating in the project was completely voluntary and participation would benefit knowledge production within the topic of study, as well as provide them with a chance to reflect on their pasts. Potential participants were made aware that the interview may bring up negative emotions and past experiences, thus a comprehensive list of contact details was provided that included Wits' free in-house counselling services, the CCDU, as well as sexually diverse-friendly psychological services such as the Triangle Project and OUT LGBT Pretoria, amongst others. It was explained in this document that participants' identities would be kept confidential by using pseudonyms for them and anyone they mentioned including names of schools. Identifying information would also be altered or removed in the reporting of the results. Potential participants were told that the interviews would be voice recorded for transcription purposes and the full transcripts would only be accessible to me and my supervisor. I ensured that these transcripts had all identifying

information removed/altered. However, they were informed that quotes would be used in the reporting of the project. Further, potential participants were informed in this document that they only had to answer questions they were comfortable with and any information they releveled that they did not want to be recorded would not be recorded without consequence. They were also informed that the data were being used in the production of my Masters research project with the potential to also be used for conference presentations or formal publications.

Potential participants were sent a participant consent form (see Appendix G) as well as a participant permission form for voice recording (see Appendix H) both of which they received and were asked to read through before agreeing to be part of the study. The participant consent form consisted of a detailed listing of the abovementioned ethical rights of participants. The participant permission form for voice recording was a separate document specifically outlining why the interviews were being recorded, that the audio files and transcripts would be stored on a password protected computer, and that the audio files would be deleted once the project was completed. Both of these forms were printed out and given to the participants before each interview session started. I asked each participant if they had any questions regarding the ethics of the study and any clarification needed was provided and both forms then had to be signed and dated. Only once this was done did each interview begin.

Chapter Five: In-depth Narrative Portraits

This chapter consists of eight in-depth narrative portraits of each participant analysing their coming out narratives, schooling experiences, and relation to space and place in an integrated way. Although there is a focus on the individual narratives, there is an acknowledgement that these are not severed from the important context of school and social discourse, created in and through language, time and relationality. The inclusion of heat-maps and a discussion of place and space helps relate these individual narratives to this broader context. Each narrative, like individual paintings, has its own unique experiences. Amy's narrative displays a range of different schooling experiences; Diego's story tracks his search for finding a community of support; and Mark's story is about how he forged his way through high school working against heterosexuality. Matthew's and James's narratives sit next to each other as both participants attended the same school but had vastly different experiences and differing degrees of acceptance largely due to raced differences. Amahle's narrative provides an interesting case of being accepted and celebrated in school, while Claire's narrative attests to the struggles of having to teach her peers and teachers about issues of sexual diversity. Finally, Ken's story centres around how he chose to limit who knew about his bisexuality.

5.1. A Range of Schooling Experiences: Amy's Journey Through Different Spaces

Amy, a 20-year-old self-identifying lesbian, white woman, had several different schooling experiences as she attended three different high schools. These experiences will be the focus of this analysis. In contrast to the rest of the participants in this study, Amy found acceptance first within her home before she was able to express herself more freely in school. This analysis will first begin by contextualising Amy's narrative by discussing the development of her sexual identity and how her home environment facilitated this.

5.1.1. Amy's song of innocence: A childhood of freedom.

When I asked Amy how she came to identify as lesbian, she said that she did not see her coming out as a process, or even a particular moment of realisation, but rather that she 'always knew' even telling her parents when she was three that she liked girls. She narrated her parents as always having been accepting of how she chose to identify. She attributes her parents' openness to their own political activism and friendships during apartheid:

> Am: And they have a lot of gay friends. **Okay.**[3] So and they were- I mean they were involved as allies in GLOW [Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand] **Okay** in the 80s and 90s. **Ja.** And like helped, um, a lot with their friends, like taking care of their friends who had AIDS **Hmm** and that kind of stuff so they've always been **Ja** very supportive and very open about it. Um, I think (pause) Ja so I mean it was never even- I never had to come out. It was just like **Hmm**, I really like this girl **Ja** and they'd be like, 'Oh, that's fine.' The same way that they would if I had liked a boy.
>
> **R: Yes.**

The freedom that her parents gave her growing up allowed her to express herself as she wished without feeling judged or shamed hence her home being in the warm centre of her heat-map as shown in *Figure 2*.

[3] Bolded text indicates my own talk as the researcher within the extracts responding to the participants' talk. See Appendix D for the full list of transcription conventions used.

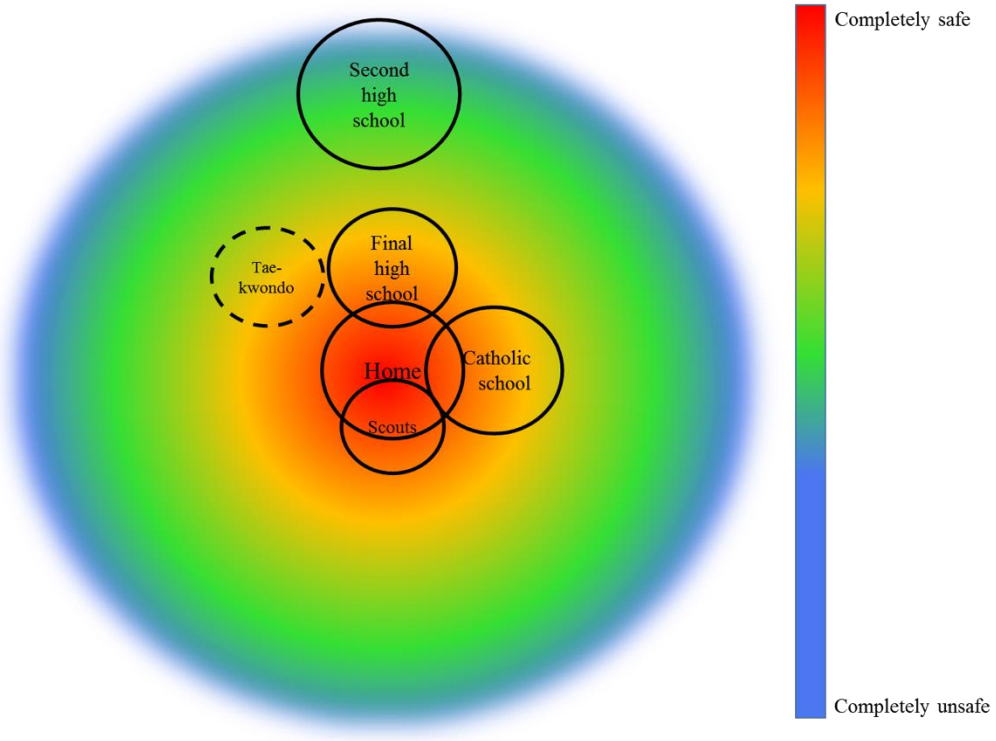

Figure 2: Amy's spatial heat-map

She ties this love and acceptance to her parents' activism with GLOW, showing how her parents had an anti-establishment mentality already, having worked against apartheid structures. When Amy was nine, at her first primary school, she told some of her friends at school that she liked girls and was shocked when they reacted with disgust. This led her to the realisation that the freedom she experienced at home was not necessarily a freedom that the outside world would always afford her. Despite this early awareness of homophobia in the world, once Amy had moved to a new school, an independent co-ed Catholic school for the remainder of her primary schooling as well as most of her grade 8 year, she started opening up to her friends in grade 6 about liking girls. By grade 7 she was open about her sexuality to everyone at school:

> Am: Um, but then (pause) I came out in grade 6, I don't remember (pause) so I never- again, when I came out I never said I was gay **Hm** I just said that I liked girls **Okay** or had a crush on a girl. **Ja.** And so- and <u>then</u> people were like oh she's lesbian. **Hmm.** Um, and then some

> people thought that I was bisexual but I never felt like it was necessary to define myself **Ja** again because I was young and also because it wasn't relevant what my sexuality was, it was relevant that I had a crush on this one person, you know? **Okay** […] So that's more- it was more- for me more important about kind of like the substance rather than the label, **Ja** if that makes sense? **Ja.**

Her narration generally, but here specifically, was keenly attuned to an understanding that identity labels and categories, such as gender and sexual orientation, can be constraining. They also carry layers of meaning and often identity is conflated with sexuality leading to one feeling constrained or inhibited by such categories (O'Connell, 1999). Amy exemplifies this, by explicitly saying that she does not fully remember the details of her coming out at school, perhaps because it was long ago, but it seems more likely that she does not fully remember because she always knew she liked women so the labels that others imposed on her were of little interest. Her lack of remembering specific factual detail is eclipsed by her value system that the substance of her relationships with someone was more important than the various facets of their identity, exemplifying reasons that McCormick (2015) outlines that coming out can be a way of submitting one's self to already established power structures that govern the expectations of particular identities. Although Amy resisted being defined by a label, she does frame this portion of talk as a coming out narrative and she did this without me framing a question in such terms. This seems evidence of the power and pervasiveness of the coming out narrative that Plummer (1995) argues in favour of.

5.1.2. Degrees of acceptance in different schools.

After coming out at the Catholic school she notes the following:

> Am: So I never actually got problems from students. **Okay.** And a lot of them actually looked up to me because I was the only openly gay person in our entire school. **Hmm.** Um, I actually got more problems from the teachers. **Ja.** Um, because <u>all</u> of my friends were still friends with me. All of them have now come out **(laughter)** (seeing the irony) you know? Like six years later but, um, it was more from the teachers and that's kind of what made my school life difficult **Ja** because school teachers obviously have a lot of power.

R: Yes, yes, they do.

Not only was Amy accepted by her friends and peers but they even admired her for being open about her sexuality at school. Despite this, her teachers were more problematic for her, similar to findings that show learners in schools, compared to teachers, are more advanced in their views of sexual diversity (Francis & Reygan, 2016b). Some of her teachers would lose her workbooks or claim she had not handed in work when she did, which she attributes to their disapproval of her sexuality. One teacher even started calling her *seuntjie* (Afrikaans for 'little boy') because she had short hair. Initially, her parents were worried about how her peers would react to her sexuality but as it turned out Amy's unhappiness stemmed from the teachers instead. This prompted her parents to move her to a less mainstream school during the final term of grade 8 but ironically this ostensibly more open school was where she was bullied most. Despite feelings of unhappiness, Amy "never felt unsafe" at the Catholic school despite having some teachers target her. This school sits between the orange and yellow space on her heat-map because of the incidences of homophobia she experienced, however, she did still feel a sense of belonging there and retrospectively wishes she completed her high schooling there.

Her second high school was non-traditional in the sense that she describes it as a home-school type environment: they did not have to wear uniforms and each grade had less than two dozen learners:

> Am: So, um, and they started- the bullying got really bad **Hmm** um and it did include like homophobia but it included a lot of other stuff. **Ja.** And I think it started because the one girl didn't like me because I was gay. And then she's like- she was- she was like a high school leader- it sounds like a movie **(laughter)** it sounds like bloody Mean Girls and she's Regina George but it's true. **Hmm.** Whereas if I stayed at the Catholic school I already had a group of friends. I'm still friends with the girls I was friends with at the Catholic school. **Ja.** So, um, so that's why I think like in retrospect I should have stayed but there was no way of knowing **Hmm** especially because the school told me they have a no homophobia policy and a no

> bullying policy **Okay** and they had art which the other school didn't **Okay** so I was like oh I want to take art to Matric and they had um, you know it was smaller classes, more flexible schedules. **Hmm.** So then it did suit me because um in terms of that. **Hmm.** So I moved for that reason.

Amy narrated this second high school in a nightmarish way. The girl she refers to in the above extract had a crush on a boy in their grade who was trying to convince Amy that she was attracted to him, prompting this girl to become jealous. Amy said this boy had particular psychological problems because he had been expelled from two schools previously, and this school was prone to accepting learners who had been expelled elsewhere. The logical assumption would be that alternative schools such as this would be more accommodating of difference, but Amy's narrative seems to counter this.

This extract is an example demonstrating a primary aspect of McAdams' (2012) understanding of narrative identity. Through her narration, her life story is seen as a work-in-progress that aims to provide a sense of unity while making room for multiplicity. Her narrative is the attempt at creating this sense of coherence both synchronically, the negotiations of different roles and relationships, as well as diachronically, where the self changes through time (McAdams, 2001). She acknowledges retrospectively that the move to this school was to her detriment, while simultaneously acknowledging the aspects that were good about the move such as the school having Art as a subject and having smaller classes. However, the smallness of the classes became a problem as upsetting one person led to half the grade being upset with her. There is still the obvious contradiction that the school positioned itself as anti-bullying and anti-homophobia, yet she experienced the opposite. She places the blame on the principal:

> Am: Two of my teachers **Hmm** went to the principal and was like, 'Amy is being bullied by these students and I think that you need to intervene' **Hmm** and so they called me in and told me that when I chose this 'lifestyle' **Oh wow** that I should have known that there were things

that came along with it. **Sho**. And that when I'm smart and when I answer questions and get awards for being clever how do- how do you think you make other students feel?
R: **Oh wow.**
Am: So I was like, 'Thank you?'
R: Putting all the blame on you.

Despite teachers asking the principal to help Amy, she chose to protect the other learners and instead deflect blame towards Amy for how her academic achievements may make other learners feel. In the same interaction with the principal, she told Amy her son is gay but he waited until after school to come which she implied was the correct way to manage one's sexual identity, a strategy of silencing supported by other studies (Bhana, 2012a; Bhana, 2014; Francis & Reygan, 2016a). A learner in her class also once put his hand up her skirt and was sent to the principal by the teacher for this, but no disciplinary action besides this was taken. These various incidents, among others, led Amy's parents to remove her from the school at the end of grade 11.

Her third and final high school where she completed matric was an independent co-ed school which is also a less traditional school, having no uniform and no school bell, but a larger learner-body than her previous school. Amy was happy at this school and felt safe, calling it "lovely" and a "really good school" for her. Her one Life Orientation (LO) teacher here also adjusted the content of their sexual education lessons to include discussing safe sex practice for sexually diverse people. Thus, contrast between her feelings of safety at all three schools is shown clearly on her heat-map.

Amy also participated in Scouts and taekwondo outside of school. She described her fellow scouts as "weirdos", a term she used affectionately. She felt that being amongst a group of people who were all different helped her to feel accepted due to this shared feeling between them. In contrast, at taekwondo she was never open about her sexuality because her coach was a conservative Korean man who she got the sense was not accepting of sexually diverse

people so she chose not to be openly lesbian in that space, hence the dotted line on the heat-map in contrast to the various other solid lines, places where she was open about her identity. Amy's heat-map demonstrates how being open about one's sexuality does not necessarily mean they feel a sense of safety and belonging within that context, seen most strongly with her second high school.

5.2. Finding His Community of Difference: Diego's Story

Like Amy, Diego attended more than one high school. The first school he attended was an independent co-ed Catholic school that he went to up until grade 9, and his second school was an independent, non-traditional co-ed school. Diego's narrative of how he came to identity as a gay cis-gendered male centres around him feeling like he was always different. This analysis focusses on Diego's online interactions that led to his coming out as well as him finding a home in a school where he was "normal". His heat-map, as shown in *Figure 3*, depicts these various places and spaces.

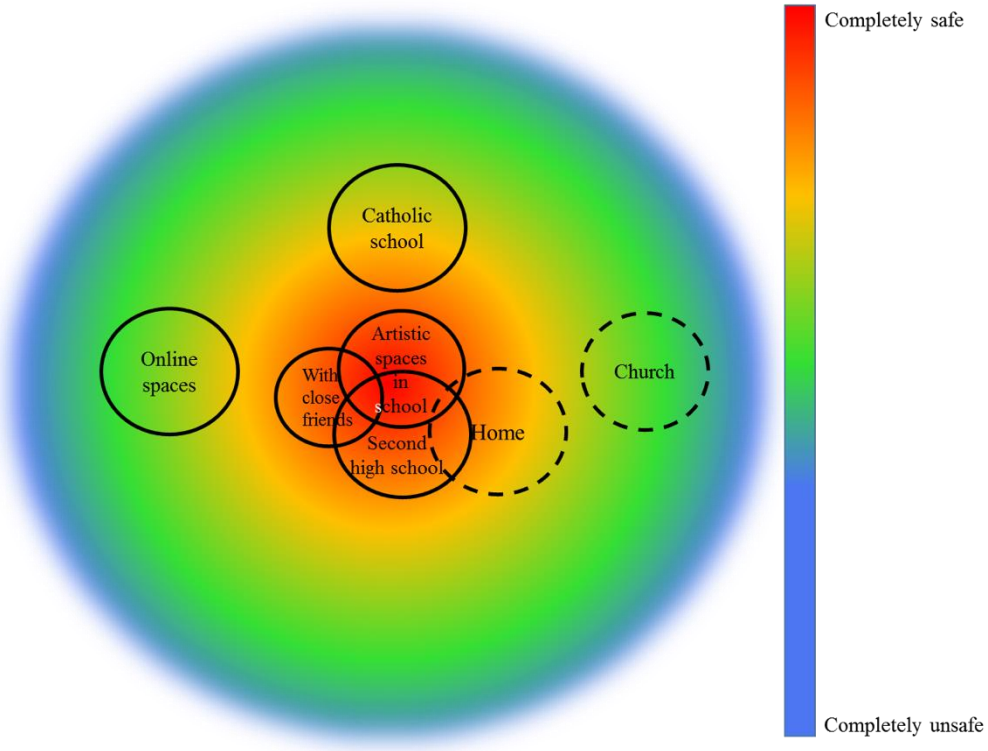

Figure 3: Diego's spatial heat-map

5.2.1. "It was always there": Coming out at home.

Diego framed the narrative of his sexuality within retrospective-laden terms, acknowledging that only looking back on his life has he been able to see signs that he was gay.

> **R: So tell me about how you came to identify yourself as gay. What's your story?**
> D: Hm. Um, like (audible exhale) I'm one of the people that believe it's- and I think it's a lot- it's not like (jokingly) okay I woke up one day and ah cool I'm gay **Ja** but it was kind of always there. **Hmm.** But when you're a really little child you just don't notice it **Yeah** until someone starts telling you you're different **Hmm** you know. I was- so when High School Musical came out in grade 2 I was singing Gabriela's parts **(laugh)** I wasn't singing- I wasn't singing Troy's parts and it- in part it was because Gabriela was fierce **yeah** but in other parts like I wanted to be with Troy. **Yeah.**

Diego narrates that when he was young, he did not notice that he was doing things that could be perceived as indicators that he was not straight. However, it is only through his retrospection that he has been able to "notice it", despite it being something that he believes has always been part of him. This sense of coherence that Diego is able to craft about his sexuality is enabled through his emplotment of his past, through looking back on his past experiences with an understanding of where he is presently creating casual links between disparate occurrences of the past (Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1984). Diego references the Disney musical movie *High School Musical* in which the male lead, Troy, falls in love with the female lead, Gabriela. He complicates gender expectations here, showing how his behaviour during that time inverted gender expectations that, for him, is evidence of his gayness. His father also questioned why he was singing Gabriela's parts, something that retrospectively Diego narrates as being a disguised way of his father questioning his sexuality.

About a year after this, Diego described how he came across Boy George in the music video for Karma Chameleon, a video filled with androgyny and according to Diego it was clear that Boy George was not straight. Diego's grandmother saw him watching this and reprimanded

him for watching it because the kinds of people in the video, according to her, were 'bad'. This caused conflicting feelings within Diego as he saw something of himself in Boy George. This eventually led to Diego wanting to find out more about gay people and when he was in grade 5, he Googled "gay young men Johannesburg". Only pornography came up and this marked the point when he started watching gay pornography. Not long after this, his mother caught him watching this which was the first time she asked him if he was gay, which he immediately denied. During the first year of high school, Diego got caught again and this is when he told his mother he was gay. His mother initially reacted with worry about his safety but eventually came to accept him. He never spoke about it to his father but presumably his father found out via his mother. Diego narrated his father accepting it sooner than his mother because his father's brother was gay.

5.2.2. Diego's search for belonging: Catholic school versus online interactions.

Growing up in a religious family, Diego was sent to a Catholic school for primary school and grade 8 and 9 of high school. He initially came out in grade 8 to one of his friends with whom he was working on a school theatre production. She accepted him immediately which he narrated as being quite liberating and surprising that he could be accepted for being gay. He then came out to a few other friends, but this soon spread around the school "like wildfire":

> D: Um, and ja from then everything kind of just- it was very loud for a long while and then it kinda started dying down and then people started finding out that I had a crush on someone and it go loud again **Yeah.** But I was never popular, no-one ever really like- I was popular in the drama department **Hmm** but no-one was really like, 'Oh, Diego you're our friend.' It was like everyone just wanted to talk about me. **Hmm.**

Despite not being explicitly targeted for his sexuality, Diego did feel a sense of being part of a spectacle and he often felt like people who were friends with him were using him as a token rather than being genuine friends with him. He mainly had friends who were girls throughout high school, and only felt one of these friends was genuinely his friend. He lacked a sense of

belonging, an emotional attachment to others like himself in high school (Yuval-Davis, 2006), which was perhaps exacerbated by being one of only three openly sexually diverse learners in the Catholic school, the other two being in matric when he was in grade 8.

In the same year that he came out at school, Diego sought out connection with other people like himself online on BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), a socialising application much like WhatsApp, where he started sending nude pictures of himself to strangers at the age of 13. He spoke about this period with regret, retrospectively acknowledging this online space as being "a very scary place for a young gay kid who doesn't know what he's getting into." He called it a "nasty time" in his life that he is still trying to understand now. This shows both an orientation towards seeking sense-making of his past in his early adult years (McAdams, 2012), and also a kind of 'identity crisis' during this time (Erikson, 1994). As a result of his school and home environment limiting how he could express himself authentically, he was affected negatively. I wondered if this was why he sought out a sense of connection online:

> **R: Do you think you maybe sought out, um, that- those kinds of people, um, online because you didn't have, ah, means of finding those kinds of people like in real life?**
> D: Oh ja.
> **R: Because it was a space where-**
> D: Definitely, and not only that I didn't have means in real life where I felt safe, at least online it was like that person was just a block away **Hmm** just block them and then they're gone. **Hmm.** Um, and they'll never really- 'cause most of them were overseas, most- well, at least they say **Ja** um, most of them were like overseas and stuff like that so it- it was that like I can do this without it affecting me or without getting in like trouble.

Diego did find people who he could talk to online, however these interactions were not healthy by any account. It seems that the primary reason Diego sought out these interactions was because he did not have anywhere else he could seek out similar people who he could talk to. His school was a conservative Catholic school, his home environment was not a place where he could be himself, and church was an alienating place for sexually diverse people, as

shown in his heat-map. Both his home and church have dotted lines because within these two places he had to constrain his identity due to the unwelcome judgement he would receive if he did not do this.

5.2.3. Finding his community of difference: Diego's second high school.

Despite describing the Catholic school as a "prison-like system", Diego still found artistic spaces within this school such as the hall stage and around the theatre where he felt he could express himself more freely. Diego moved schools at the end of grade 9 for reasons that he says were not about his sexuality. At this new school, Diego felt liberated:

> D: Um, then for other reasons at the end of grade 9 I moved to a new school for senior high school for grade 10, 11 and 12. It was a non-mainstream school, very artsy, very academic orientated, **Okay** and um, that was amazing. **Okay.** It was fantastic. I was not the only out kid anymore **Hmm**, I was not the only gay kid. And I wasn't the only queer kid either. There were people that weren't just gay. I was getting to experience other sides of the queer community. **Hmm.** And it was like so there's more than just gay, and lesbian and bisexual. **Hmm.** So it- it- it was fantastic.

An important aspect of Diego's narration as to why this non-mainstream school was much better was because he was no longer the only openly gay person in school. In this sense, he had found a sense of belonging beyond his online interactions. This extract shows how being around other sexually diverse people was also an educational experience for Diego as it enabled him to learn more about other people who are part of the same community as him. In this way he had found a community that were willing to validate and share in his sexual identity (Plummer, 1995). I asked him why it was so much easier to be himself at this second high school compared to his Catholic school:

> D: There was a lot of emphasis on your individual growth, um, as artists, as academics so it was a space where people were allowed to be freely themselves within the realm of learning **Hmm** and that's what I really took to about it. Um, and it felt like a family. **Hm.**

Diego expresses feelings of belonging and through the use of the idea of a family it is clear he had an emotional attachment to the people in this school because he felt comfortable and safe enough to express his sexuality (Yuval-Davis, 2006). He narrated that the status quo at his second school as 'nobody was normal'. This sense of difference also shows how he is imagining how he is imagined by others in the space, connecting his understanding of himself to how others view him (Andrews, 2014). Diego found a community of difference, so to speak, at his second school where the aspect of himself that marked him as abnormal previously, is what gave him a feeling of belonging, of being part of a family (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Interestingly, this second school was the same school that Amy went to for her matric year. Amy and Diego both describe their experience at this school in positive terms, and both narrated how this school was for learners who did not fit into more mainstream schools. This seems to be as a result of teachers and school managers who set-up a status quo that resists typical silencing and religious resistance to sexual diversity (Bhana, 2012a; Bhana, 2014).

5.3. Working Against Heterosexuality: Mark's Story of Forging His Way through High School

Mark is a confident 21-year-old cis-gendered male who identities as gay. He attended an independent co-ed school where his father worked as part of the school management staff, a fact that influenced the degree to which Mark could be himself in school. The idea of school image is important within this analysis, and Mark's narrative provides an interesting insight into how his identity worked against heterosexual expectations of him, while at the same time limiting him, although his supportive friends and love of theatre and pop-cultural figures enabled Mark to navigate his way through high school.

5.3.1. Finding communities of support through friends and pop-culture.

Despite narrating his story with clarity and confidence, Mark was not always as confident as he is now. The first question I asked him was how he came to identify as gay:

> Mk: So, it actually happened in prep school and it was because- well it was actually- it was a multitude of things. So initially people started calling me gay, **Hm** like as a slur and then Adam Lambert came on American Idol and he openly identified as gay and I was like, 'Oh' you know? **Ja. '**Like that makes sense' because the way he described it I kind of related to that in a weird way. And then there was just this like kind of like lightbulb moment where I was like 12 I think or 10, between 10 and 12 where I was just like, 'Okay, **Ja** like this makes- this makes sense.' Ja.

The implication here, before his lightbulb moment, is that his identity did not quite 'seem right', and along with being slurred at positioned being gay as negative. Adam Lambert provided Mark with an alternative way of being-in-the-world that he related to, living as an openly gay man and talking about his identity on a very popular and widely watched television series. The narrative that Lambert was claiming was a story in which Mark saw himself. Plummer (1995) explains how telling sexual stories makes a difference not only for the teller but for the audience, and, clearly for Mark, seeing Lambert's story made a difference in his life. This shows the interrelation between the production and consumption of narratives and how finding stories similar to our own can provide us with a sense of community (Plummer, 1995). Diego experienced this same feeling in his second high school. Mark came out to his sister first around 13 or 14 years old, then to his mom when he was 14. At the time, his mom thought he was "too young to know", blaming the therapist he was seeing at the time for "promoting" this identity, although for Mark the therapist was helping him work *through* this identity. However, this led to Mark saying he was not gay to his parents. This process caused him a lot of stress, anxiety and anger for not being accepted by his mother initially.

However, between the ages of 14 and 16 Mark came out to some of his friends at school. At 16 he started living openly at school, not declaring he was gay but rather not denying it if anyone asked. The lead up to him coming out to his parents was facilitated by his group of

female friends at school who supported him, his involvement in theatre which he enjoyed, as well as the release of Lady Gaga's album *Born This Way*:

> Mk: […] I started getting involved in theatre, I'm also a huge Lady Gaga fan **(chuckle)** so like Born This Way was this huge coming-of-age moment for me like it was for so many other people. **Hmm.** Um, and like through little things like that I kind of like just found my own strength and my own comfort in being gay and in school **Hmm** and then by the time I told my parents, obviously it was stressful like I was shaking and all of that stuff when I went to them and just said you know like, 'This is who I am.' But it wasn't a case of like, 'Oh no they're not going to accept me,' it was a case of like this is who I am and if you don't like it then **Hmm, hmm** shame.

It is important contextual information that Mark and I have known about each other through our social media circles, and he knows that I am also an avid Lady Gaga fan. This moment in the interview in light of this context demonstrates the co-construction of his narrative signified by the 'also' in the first line that alludes to this shared understanding between us, and it is produced strategically for me as his audience (Fay, 1996; Squire, 2013). This Lady Gaga album was very significant for Mark, as it was for me. The album is centred on the theme of love and self-acceptance, with the lead single of the same title being hailed by many as a gay anthem. Again, this links to Plummer's (1995) arguments that the production and consumption of stories can build communities of support increased through the 'mediasation' of society where mass production and mass consumption are commonplace. These different support mechanisms Mark mentioned gave him the strength to come out to his parents unapologetically, as seen most powerfully in the last sentence of this extract. His parents accepted him after this, but it took some time and adjustment. Thus, Mark narrated his home as being a place where he had to negotiate how much of himself he could express which links to his parents' gradual acceptance of him after he came out and why his home is in the orange and yellow space on his heat-map (see *Figure 4*).

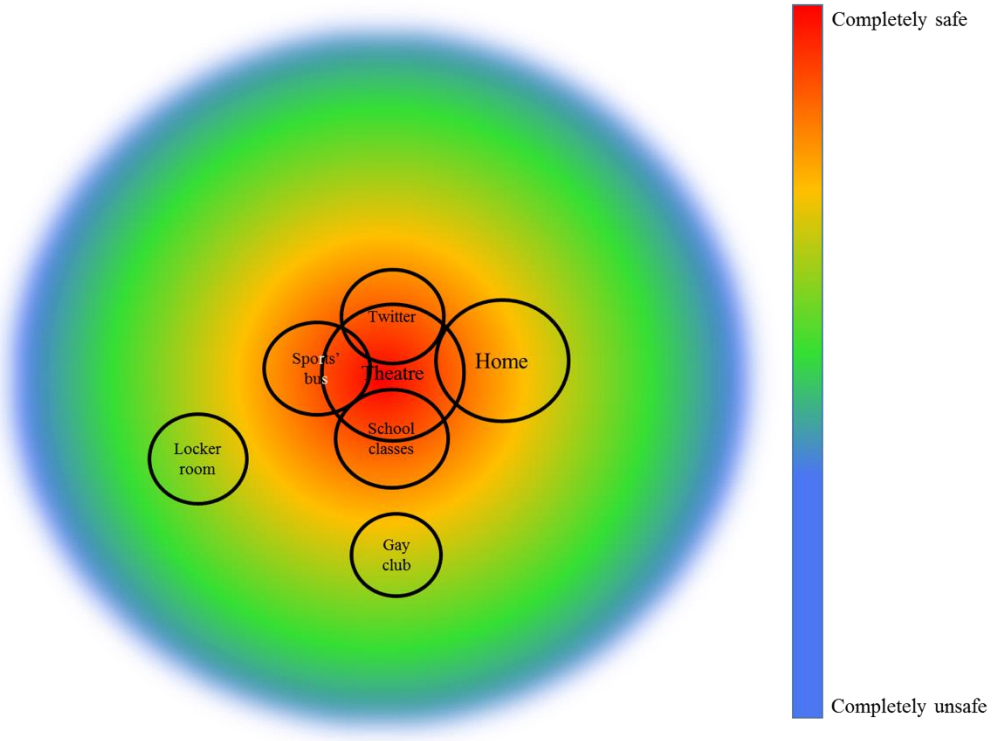

Figure 4: Mark's spatial heat-map

Much like Diego, Mark narrated his school's theatre space as being a place where he could express himself. Similarly to Diego, he describes the people who he interacted with in this space as family:

> **R: Did you feel there were any particular spaces that felt more safer, where you could be more yourself, um, at school?**
> Mk: Ja, definitely the theatre obviously **Hmm** like you know especially when you do shows and things like that, those people become your family for **Hmm** six months, seven months, however long you're in the show and I always remember like knowing that I would have that safe space **Hmm** and that space to go to to be expressive if I was going through something but also to have people who would see that I was going through something and help me in that space that wasn't my family, that wasn't my friends **Hm**, it was a whole other type of social group, ja.

It is not only the physical place of the theatre that is significant for Mark's sense of safety and comfort but also the relational element of interactions *within* this space that contributed towards these feelings. The support provided by his fellow theatre-makers is described in

relational terms that goes beyond being just friends but rather more like family to him. The importance of being a physical being in the world is also marked in this extract as Mark relied on this social group to be able to *see* that he was experiencing hardship as "one does not just perceive another body as a material object; rather one is affected by the meaning of its appearance. The other body is animated and its animation communicates and calls for a response" (Simonsen, 2007, p. 172). This demonstrates 'intercorporeality' at work (Simonsen, 2007). This relation between people and space is bidirectional: the theatre space *provided* Mark a sense of freedom to express himself and be seen by others; while those others *enabled* that space to be one of freedom and expression.

Interestingly, Mark felt a similar sense of safety on the school sports bus. He was part of the swimming team and found that the sports bus was a place where he was accepted, particularly by male learners who were interested in Mark's identity that enabled them to have conversations around this. He described the swimming team in a similar way to his theatre group, foregrounding a sense of togetherness and community mediated through a shared physical space that, once again, demonstrates that reciprocal relationship between space and people. However, Mark found other sporting spaces uncomfortable, particularly those he narrated as being "hyper-masculine" such as the locker room where he felt others were uncomfortable by his presence which in turn made him feel unwelcome.

On the other hand, Mark said that his identity was an advantage in academic and cultural spaces of the school. He felt confident enough in his identity to bring up sexual diversity in his classes, also choosing to do an LO project on sexual diversity and his Art practicals on issues of identity. This shows he was able to navigate his school space in such a way that enabled him to be successful within this space, as seen through, for example, him becoming head of the matric committee. As Mark's heat-map demonstrates, there is a nexus of belonging shared by several places that are near the warm centre. He was able to express

himself freely in these places due to the warmth and connection the people in these places provided him.

A particular place, besides the locker room at school, where he felt uncomfortable was at a gay club he went to, although he makes it clear that he was young and naïve at the time:

> Mk: I think it was very overwhelming to go there and **Hmm** be exposed to all the negative sort of stereotypes **Hmm** about gay people, like the hypersexualised side of things and like drugs and things like that. **Hmm.** Like being exposed to that when you're 16 or 17 it's not- it's not a great **Hmm** a great time.

However, Twitter was an online space where he found connection but unlike Diego's experience, he was able to find genuine, healthy connections:

> **R: Did you build connections with other people like yourself on Twitter?**
>
> Mk: Ja, I made- I actually made one of my best friends of like jeez, I think almost 7 years now, um, we met on Twitter but he lived in Durban and then he moved here a couple of years ago and we've been friends for like 7-ish years now. **Hmm.** Ja, from Twitter through Lady Gaga.

5.3.2. The issue of image at school and at home.

Mark narrated his schooling experience as unique in light of the fact that his experience improved *after* he came out and started living openly at school, however his relation to his schooling experience was complicated by the fact that his father was part of the school management staff. When I asked Mark about whether or not he felt he could be himself within the classroom space, the fact of his father being at the school with him was important:

> Mk: But in school I was definitely much more like reserved and much more concerned **Hm** with preserving like a- not a masculine image but like a more masculine image that wasn't so you know **Hmm** whatever.
> **R: Do you attribute that mainly to because your dad was at the school or more to because of your identity?**
> Mk: I- hm. That's a good question. I think, um, I think a lot of it had to do with my dad because with him being there the authoritarian like structure of the school was very- like strongly placed on me **Hmm** so a lot of the standards other kids had were lower than the

> standard I had because I had to act a certain way as my father's son **Hmm** you know there's certain things you have to live up **Hmm** to you know. Um, and there was always a lot of conflict with me and my dad you know about image **Hmm** um in terms of how you present yourself and how you look and, um, I think that that always being a thing for me and my sister and my mom and my dad, you know, as a family like a culture there's this whole thing about **Hmm** presenting yourself well. Um, I think that because of the way that I had been socialised to perceive being overly feminine and um, like not masculine as bad I thought that if I did behave like that then my dad and the school would see it as a bad self-image **hmm** so I compensated by not behaving like that **Ja** so that I would preserve that relationship sort of.

The "whatever" in the third line refers to a hetero-masculine image that is devoid of any markers that could be read as gay, so as to save face and maintain a 'respectable' image in contrast to being perceived as "overly feminine" at school in light of the fact that his father was there with him. The performative element of gender always being an act is highlighted here as this performance of masculinity, of being a man, is constituted through the act of Mark acting in ways that accord with compulsory heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). In line with Csordas (1999), there is a parallel here between embodiment, a sense of being-in-the-world, and textuality, a representation of something. For Mark, his body is a text that can be read by others, the image of him, where he needed to embody a particular kind of masculinity and edit out any so-called feminine aspects that could be read off his body. Another way of theorising this is through the concepts of subjectivity and agency that have an inherently spatial dimension to them (Knopp & Brown, 2003). Mark's subjectivity, or his self-conception, that has a performative element to it is contingent upon his social location, and it is through his agency that he enacts that subjectivity (Knopp & Brown, 2003). I propose that the particular way in which his subjectivity, agency and embodiment are interrelated is mediated through this spatial context along with the expectations that this space holds, namely, to uphold a heterosexual image. The concept of 'image' encapsulates these elements: in this particular spatial context Mark curtails his subjectivity of being naturally less

masculine through his agency in order to alter his embodiment of a particular kind of identity performance, namely hetero-masculinity.

It cannot be ignored that Mark narrates this concern with image as stretching beyond himself to his immediate family as well: there is an almost unspoken code that they have to align themselves to as a family so as to maintain this image set up by his father. The school is what holds, and maintains, the institution of compulsory heterosexuality through its authoritarian structure (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). In some way, the father and consequently the family, become extensions of the school and thus carriers of its image. Mark's dissonance is a result of this differential power dynamic of the external heterosexual and authoritarian image being at odds with his internal image of himself as a gay person. Mark's narrative also highlights the porous nature of spaces as it shows quite explicitly how schools are part of a wider society and young people's families do not disappear when learners are in their school spaces. Likewise, at home the school can, to some degree, still be present as shown with Mark's discussion of how he was conscious of the image he had to maintain.

This idea of the image can be taken a step further in light of a further contextual consideration: this was one of the schools I tried to gain access to for participants and, as explained, was denied. I met with Mark's father to discuss the original project aimed at school learners. Although at the time his father saw the value of the project and told me about the various ways in which the school was liberal, such as allowing same-sex partners to the matric dance and having several openly gay and lesbian teachers at the school, he had to defer the final decision about the project to the headmaster. Mark told me in the interview that this headmaster, who ultimately turned down the project, is married to a man and openly identifies as gay. I asked Mark about this contradictory duality:

> Mk: I just think from like an <u>image</u> point of view **Hmm** I think that they might be worried about what the broader society might think **Hmm** about their school being so inclusive but I also

> disagree with that because a school in the heart of [area name] **(chuckle)** really doesn't have anything to worry about.

The contradiction at the heart of the matter is that the school, which serves its community, is supposedly inclusive yet there is perhaps, as Mark suggests, a fear of that very same community. Perhaps the headmaster was overcompensating by turning down the study, not wanting to seem like he was pushing an agenda. But from a critical stance there seems to be an underlying power structure at play, and I propose it is the same one that the Mark's father and the headmaster promoted: the institutional maintenance of heterosexuality. Bhana's (2014) study on school managers supports this notion as she found that homosexuality in schools was viewed by them as a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. Although there was definitely evidence that Mark's school was, to some degree, open about issues of sexual diversity, the contradiction of denying a study on sexually diverse learners is telling, especially if Mark's sense that a concern with the school's broader image is the reasoning behind this.

5.4. "Trojan Horse of gayness": Matthew's Strategy of Acceptance

Matthew, a 22-year-old white gay cis-gendered male, is a confident, contemplative and humorous person. He attended an independent co-ed Catholic school for some of his primary schooling as well as for his high school career. Matthew utilised his stereotypically masculine attributes to gain trust and respect from those around him before coming out to them. He describes this as his "Trojan Horse of gayness". This analysis focusses on this, along with him coming to terms with his identity, his negotiation of a religious household, and the contributions of his drama teacher towards his identity development.

5.4.1. Shame and anxiety: Religion and coming out at home.

Matthew grew up in a religious household narrating the influence of religion as having had a negative impact on how he negotiated his feelings of being gay. He was bullied for being

effeminate and emotional while he was in his first primary school and this was part of the reason why his parents enrolled him in another school. He provided a brief PIN that he narrated as the beginning of him coming to terms with his sexuality:

> Mw: And the most defining moment for me in terms of me accepting and knowing I was gay was probably I would say aged 9, 10 **Hmm** when I looked at myself in the mirror and I said it out loud for the first time. **Okay.** Ja, that was to me like **Ja** I've always known but that to me was like not necessarily like claiming it but like putting- materialising it for the first time. **Ja.** And that was probably 9, 10. But there's always been that knowing.

Matthew's narration that he "always" had a sense that he was not like his peers in terms of his sexuality is the same as Diego and Amy's sense of them always having been different. These understandings emerge in the present looking back on their childhoods. It is the piecing together of the past in light of where he is now that Matthew is able to produce a narrative that retrospectively can make sense of his current sexual identity as having 'always' been a part of him (Ricoeur, 1980).

While Matthew was in high school his home was not a place where he felt he could fully be himself because he was not yet open about his sexuality to his family. His parents were very Christian, with his paternal grandfather being a pastor. He gave the example that if two men kissed on television his parents would cringe. He brought home his first boyfriend under the guise of him being a 'friend'. In this way he was able to use the gender stereotype that people are generally friends with people of the same sex to his advantage in order to explore his sexuality in spite of his circumstance at home. His home is shown with a dotted line on his heat-map (*Figure 5*) because of him not being open about his sexuality at home, however it still sits in the warmer portion of the map due to him being able to find ways to creatively utilise his home space in order to still express his sexuality, albeit behind closed doors.

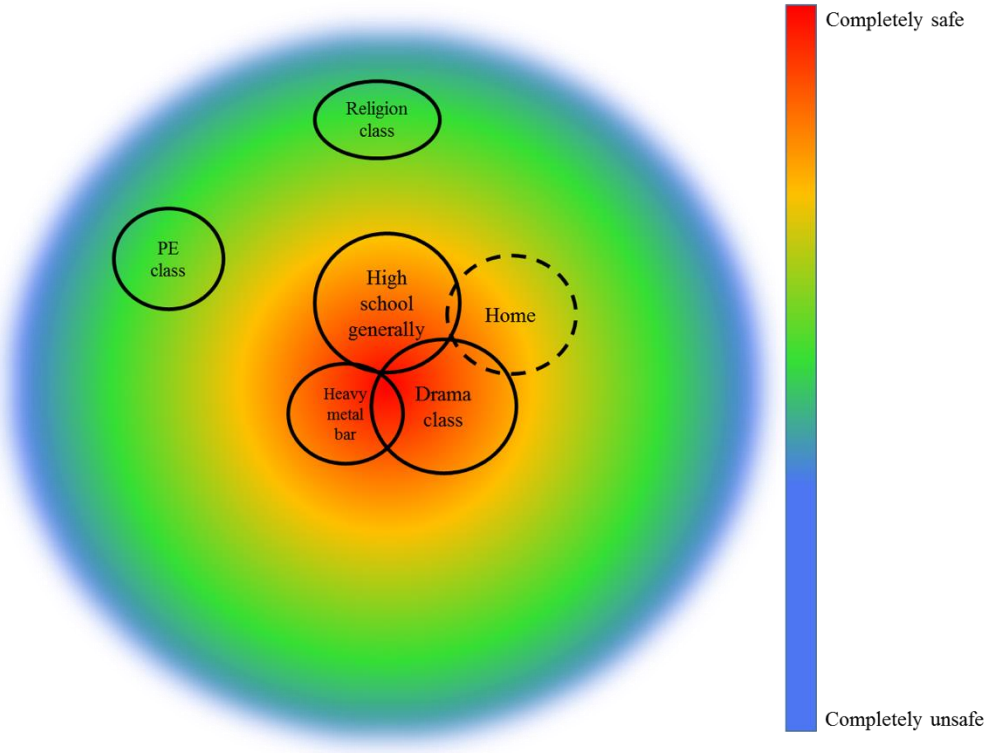

Figure 5: Matthew's spatial heat-map

However, doing this with his first boyfriend was a stressful situation particularly because of the weight of Christianity in his household:

> Mw: It was very, very difficult. It made me feel like- it made- it made being gay feel like more of a sin even though at that point I had let go of my religion, it made it feel filthy. **Hmm** Because in my mind I associated with- the fact that I had to hide it with the fact that it was probably something bad **Hmm** and filthy and shameful. **Hmm** So that was difficult. I mean I had a lot of anxiety about that **Ja** constantly worrying if my mom is going to walk in and we're sitting too close to each other and blah blah blah blah. It feels like a different time hey **Hmm** when I was in the closet.

This extract contains very specific and charged emotional states: shame and anxiety. These are intimately tied to Matthew's physical body as well as his understanding of himself. In line with theories of abjection (Phillips, 2014; Simonsen, 2007), Matthew experienced himself as something that was contaminated. He repeats the word 'filthy' twice alongside words such as 'bad' and 'shameful' and ties these to his existence as being sinful. His parents' views, as the

'other', were internalised as seen through Matthew's use of the language of his parents' religion. These ascriptions of homosexuality as a sinful contamination ascribed a sense of Matthew wanting to distance himself from his homosexuality (Phillips, 2014; Simonsen, 2007). This sense of abjection is found in other studies in the context of others describing homosexuality in abject ways (Bhana, 2012a; Bhana, 2012b).

He came out to his family after matric, first to his sister, then to his mother. His sister was accepting but concerned about their parents, telling him not to tell them. But one day during an argument Matthew told his mother and her response was aggressive. She then told his father. To Matthew's surprise, his father was much more accepting than his mother initially, telling him he still loves his son. Matthew's narrative is marked with progression at the end of this extract, explicitly acknowledging how his situation then "feels like a different time". This 'time travelling' is central to Matthew's narrative identity as it allows him to revisit his painful past, in light of his present, and in this way he is able to reimagine his future (Andrews, 2014; McAdams, 2001). He narrated his future as being about helping change the minds of homophobic people, an endeavour he holds due to his past experiences.

5.4.2. One by one: Matthew's calculated coming out to his friends.

Matthew's coming out at home was similar to his coming out at school in that he told people one by one in order to contain each person's reaction. Despite the situation that Matthew faced at home before coming out, his high school was a place where he could forge and explore his sexual identity. When he was 14, during grade 9, Matthew came out to his friends at school. He emphasised during his narrative that coming out to his friends was planned, to the point of him describing it jokingly as "sociopathic". Intricately wound up in this process was Matthew's self-assessment of what was at stake by coming out. He was concerned that by coming out he would be viewed as less masculine and consequently less strong with a major concern being that he would be judged due to being gay before people got to know him

on a personal level. Such concerns about how others view us are commonplace in the formation of one's identity development during adolescence (Erikson, 1970; Erikson, 1994), and perhaps this fear also echoes that coming out can result in having to fall prey to the expectations and associations of a particular identity (McCormick, 2015).

At the time, Matthew started observing what kinds of people were most popular in matric who, to him, were the "popular jocks" who were in his mind sporty and attractive. He then explained how if someone were in this friend group they would be seen as "cool" within the school so he began to identify who in his grade were the popular jocks and he befriended these people. This strategy was part of his plan in order to gain acceptance. He came out to each friend separately so as to keep them isolated from feeding off the reactions of each other. Matthew provides a PIN to explain how he did this with each friend:

> Mw: I said, 'One of three things are going to happen: either you're going to- I'm going to tell you this and you're going to act like you're okay with it but over a time you're not going to be and things are going to get awkward and we're going to stop talking.' **Hmm** 'Number two, you're going to completely freak out and not going to talk to me at all and you're going to lose me as a friend. And part of me telling you this now I know that I could lose you **Hm** and I'm risking that. Or number three you're going to accept me no matter what and I fuckin' hope it's that one.' And then I would tell them I'm gay. […] And they all reacted so, so well. **Hmm.** And it was empowering, yoh! Really, really empowering.

This strategic coming out displays not only Matthew's keen observant character, but also displays a great deal of courage as he knew that his friends could have rejected him. What is striking about his plan is how he invoked three possible narrative arcs for his friends in a dramatic build-up to him telling them he is gay showing how he anticipated the consequences of these coming outs. He provided his friends with possibilities, allowing them, through imagination, to see how their future as friends may unfold, thus showing the interrelation between possibility and temporality (Andrews, 2014). This is a very narrative approach to the articulation of himself in relation to others, shifting temporal positions, imagining

consequences and telling multiple versions of the story in advance of action. Matthew explained how empowering it felt for him to be accepted by his friends. Being the popular learners in his grade secured him acceptance, and protection in some sense, to be himself without too much worry.

5.4.3. Matthew's drama teacher and her safe classroom.

Besides his friend group where Matthew found acceptance, I asked him about his teachers:

> **R: And then in terms of- were there any teachers who were accepting?**
> Mw: Mmmm! Our Drama teacher, of course. Very, very accepting. But she helped me with a- with a lot of stuff. I mean in high school I definitely- I had a bad drug problem, my school sent me to, ah, rehab when I was 15 **Hmm** I don't think it was linked to being gay but **Ja** then again I'm not a clinical psychologist so I wouldn't know **(chuckle)** um, so she was a- a very big parental figure. I mean like just to show how the- the what do you call the- not the student body, the teachers- the teacher body **Ja** I don't know **(laughter)** they- just to show ho-how their views were very different, she um nearly got kicked out and I think she eventually did get, um fired from the school […] for a whole bunch of different reasons from her wanting to talk about like issues of like rape and feminism to accepting kids' um autonomy and being atheist, like identifying as atheist in that school was like frowned upon. Like what the fuck people? Um, she- she nearly lost her job and she eventually did lose her job for having those very um left-wing views. **Hmm.**

His drama teacher, Mrs Murray[4], is narrated by him in contrast to the rest of the teacher body of the school. She was an important figure for Matthew, acting as a parental figure that perhaps he did not fully have at home at the time while he was going through difficulties such as his drug problem. Her liberal views and outspokenness about social issues both within society generally and the school itself, led to her losing her job, making clear how the school power structures were able to wield power against resistance that questioned the status quo (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Previous studies show that religious discourse is utilised within schools as a control mechanism (Bhana, 2012a; Francis & Reygan, 2016a). Being

[4] All names used in this research report referred to by participants are pseudonyms.

atheist, Mrs Murray perhaps threatened the status quo within this Catholic school. Furthermore, as Matthew mentioned, she advocated for learners' autonomy which was seen as problematic. It is interesting to consider this in light of the prevailing mentality that young people are viewed as non-sexual beings despite research to the contrary (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Pattman, 2013), as well as how schools are constructed as spaces of intellectualism exclusively where other matters of the body such as sexuality have no place within them (Allen, 2013; O'Flynn & Epstein, 2005).

Consequentially, Mrs Murray's drama class was an important place for Matthew in school. She made her class a place where important social issues could be discussed and in turn the class felt like a place where the learners could be open about their beliefs and identities. Matthew's spatial heat-map shows his drama class close to the centre as it was a key place where he could be authentically himself. Matthew also participated in extracurricular drama in school productions where straight learners would also participate. Through these productions he was able to feel that same sense of self-expression and acceptance from others as in the drama class. In this sense, Mrs Murray was able to create an alternative place within the school that resisted the hegemonic structure of the school that seemed to centre around religious conservatism.

Holloway and Hubbard (2001, p. 190) argue that "powerful agents within society construct space in a way that reflects the structures of power in society." In this case, Matthew's school was this constructing agent of a broader religious control, and Mrs Murray's classroom, along with her practices, was a counter to and questioning of that power that her learners seemed to value. Matthew also went to a heavy metal bar during high school where he found a "bit of comfort in the alternative community" where he could freely be himself without being judged or shamed. This may seem like it forms part of his masculine 'disguise', but he narrated how some people at the bar were gay or bisexual which complicates possible assumptions about

the types of people who listen to heavy metal music. This 'alternative' space held similar feelings of belonging for Matthew as did Mrs Murray's drama class. These communities of belonging enabled him to explore, and grow into, his sexual identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Interestingly, Matthew felt comfortable around the school's principal, Mr Jones. Matthew described him in positive terms as "dope" or someone who is a good person. Mrs Murray and Mr Jones were the only two teachers who Matthew mentioned as accepting teachers. It seems strange then that Mrs Murray was dismissed from the school, which perhaps alludes to how school management structures are much more complex than they initially may seem, and a push-back from a conservative parent body, or even some teachers, may have more influence over decision-making than the power afforded to principals alone.

5.4.4. Matthew's Trojan Horse: Using masculinity against itself.

Matthew narrated himself as quite conscious of his physical appearance and mannerisms, perhaps because of his decision to befriend 'the jocks' in his grade. He presents as quite masculine, describing his external appearance as "metal and *Game of Thrones*" on the outside, but on the inside "it's suede and pink and it's lovely." He describes this duality as the "Trojan Horse of gayness" as it allows him to present as masculine and straight, something that he has used to his advantage to have conversations with homophobic people, gaining their trust, then revealing he is gay to break down stereotypical assumptions of gayness. Matthew's body becomes a text of which he is author (Csordas, 1999) and it is through this 'Trojan Horse' duality that he is able to embody a "butch" masculinity that he uses to afford him a particular privileged social status. This is seen most clearly with how he came to be part of his popular friendship group.

Generally, Matthew never felt threatened in his high school so his high school in general is near the centre of his heat-map. However, two places where Matthew did not feel he could be himself were his religion class as well as his physical education (PE) class:

> Mw: places that were difficult for me to express my gayness were like in the religion classroom and PE **Hmm** I don't know, I just struck such a gay fear. **Hmm** I don't know what it is just- even though I have like my masculine 'oakey' friends in my PE class but as soon as I stepped into PE class I felt like I was wearing high heels and a skirt **Oh really?** when I walked on that field.

I found this quite surprising because Matthew has the physical build of someone who is sporty. Despite embodying a typical kind of masculinity, a physical class like PE became a fearful experience for Matthew. Perhaps this was because he had to physically perform his masculinity, such as running faster than everyone else, rather than just embodying it through a deep voice and a puffed-out chest. Religion class was also constraining to Matthew which links to his constrained religious home environment where he could not be open about his sexuality during high school hence the perforated 'home' circle on his heat-map.

He even took a boy to his matric dance, although it was a straight friend of his from school who had failed to reach matric, but Matthew wanted his friend to still experience the matric dance. He used this as a way in which to justify to his parents why he was taking a boy, as this was before he came out to them. There was resistance from the religious teachers to take his friend to the dance, but his grade rallied together and Matthew was allowed to bring his male friend. This shows how the learners in his grade were to some degree open-minded about sexual diversity (Francis & Reygan, 2016b).

He was able to negotiate adversity to reach a point where he was able to be himself in school. The power of narrative identity is exemplified in Matthew's narrative: it enables a sense of integration, sense-making, and purpose in a way that he fashioned meaningfulness out of the fabric of adverse past experiences such as homophobic teachers as well as his conservative

and constricting home environment (Andrews, 2014; McAdams, 2012; O'Connell, 1999). Matthew did, however, make sure to provide a caveat to his narrative. He spoke of how his own privilege as a *white* gay learner in school may have impacted his acceptance and thus his enjoyment of school. This showed his awareness that one's coming out experience cannot be assessed without examining the other facets of one's identity that may influence this experience such as race or class (Crenshaw, 1989; Rasmussen, 2004).

5.5. "It's not about the space, it's about the people": James's Journey Towards Understanding

James's narrative stands in contrast to the rest of the participants in this study where there is, at least retrospectively, a sense that they are able to trace the narrative lines towards acceptance and the overcoming of hardship and homophobic othering. James's narrative of his schooling experience remains conflictual and unresolved in some aspects. Despite attending the same school as Matthew, his schooling experience was very different. This analysis starts by first looking at the parallels between him being outed at school at a young age and his unexpected coming out at home. Some of the traumatic experiences he had at school are explored, specifically in relation to the ways in which race and sexuality intersected to re-inscribe his outsider status at school. Despite these struggles James still found some refuge in his passion for drama and performance.

5.5.1. James's coming out: A lack of control over his narrative.

To provide context to his story, James's coming out narrative is important. When he was in primary school, around grade 5, he confided in his one friend that he was gay. Unfortunately, his friend betrayed his trust and told other learners, however, James denied being gay until he was in grade 6. James said that recently he has been thinking about him being outed in this way which shows its significance to his life narrative:

R: And how was it for you to have that person like-

J: It was shit.

R: Because it was your- your story to tell.

J: Ja, you know? So it was really shit. Um, but at the same time it was also like (pause) you know like, there's a- there's a kind of like (pause) it's nice to have the band-aid ripped off kind of. **Hmm.** Sort of. Like even though I wouldn't have wanted that like, um, it was kind of like okay, just let everybody know, like. **Ja.** 'Cause also I was tired of not telling people. **Ja.** And having to hide **Ja** like you know. Ja. So it was like- it was really upsetting because like this friend who I was supposed to trust but at the same time like I guess there's a good side to everything.

R: Hmm. Do- do you see that- did that seeing that good side only come sort of now Ja **looking back?**

J: Ja, in that like time I was like I hate her, like, **Ja** I hate everything. But now I'm like whatever, you know? **Hmm.** Ja.

This is clearly a painful part of James's past however his narrative shows an active attempt to make sense of this event through retrospection (McAdams, 2012). His metaphor of the band-aid is effective in portraying his attempt at making meaning out of this betrayal, whereas at the time he hated his friend for this betrayal. Despite this, he uses the incident as a way to show acceptance of this event, crafting a positive narrative out of it where it catalysed his coming out process. There were difficult consequences of this though: he only had two friends after this, losing the rest because he was gay. Despite this, he narrated that the beginning of high school brought an influx of new people who he made friends with who accepted him, and he felt that these new friends helped create an increased acceptance amongst his other classmates.

Just as James was not fully in control of his coming out at school, so too was the case at home. He was caught watching pornography by his mother when he was in grade 7, prompting him to come out to her. James was very scared to tell his father, but to his surprise his father took it better than his mother, despite being unsure what to say or do, but still saying he loves him. Like Matthew, his father accepted him quicker than his mother despite him being more fearful of his father's reaction. James's mother on the other hand started

reading him Bible verses. Soon after this James told his siblings. His older brother had no problem with it (coming out himself several years later) and his younger sister was unsurprised and not fazed by the news.

James narrated how during primary school, church was a place he enjoyed going to, even resisting Sunday school because he wanted to be in church hearing sermons instead. However, this changed during late high school:

> J: […] but then towards the end of- towards the end of high school, um, this was now after coming out to my mother and her now using the Bible to like **Hmm** um, like tell me why it's wrong **Hmm** or like whatever, um, that's when I had a falling out with like religion and everything.

Initially religion was very important to James but coming across scriptures that supposedly condemned his sexuality, along with his mother's religious conservatism that was used against his sexuality, created a dissonance between him and religion that made him stop going to church. On his heat-map (*Figure 6*) church has been placed in the green area, showing these mixed feelings regarding this place where he could not authentically be himself. I got the sense that James's home was a place where he had to limit his self-expression due to the dynamic between him and his mom when he came out. In contrast, friends' houses were places where he felt he could be more himself.

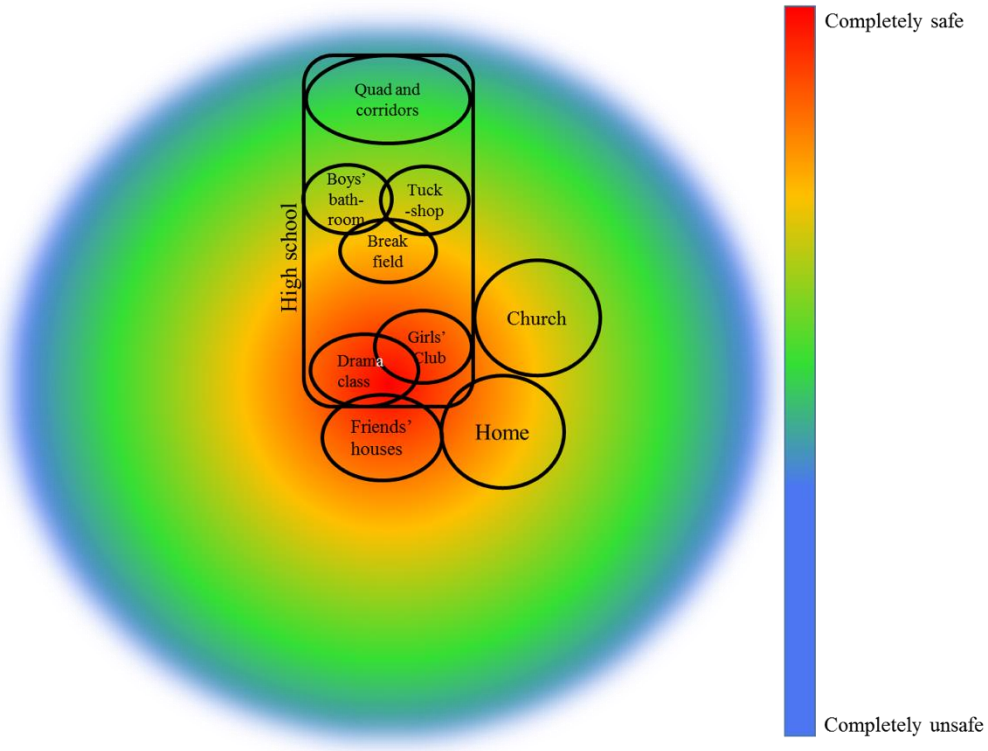

Figure 6: James's spatial heat-map

5.5.2. James's schooling spaces of ridicule and refuge.

R: And then in terms of when you were at school, um how was your experience generally at school because of the gay identity that you have?

J: […] My school like being super Catholic and everything (chuckle) it was hectic **Hmm** like even the teachers were a bit like offish. Um, so it was really- so I was the only openly gay kid in that school. **Hmm.** For the time- for the time that I was there. So it was really- it was like (pause) it kind- it felt like I was super on like- like I was just this red like **Hmm** alarm like walking through school because everybody like knows **Ja** um, so it was just like- it like really made me feel like out, you know? **Hmm.** Um, and like not being able to like find really close friendships with guys and not like trusting people **Hm** and like, um, so like it- I felt very like tense a lot of the time **Hmm** in like high school and primary school 'cause I was like I don't know where I am safe and when I am like not safe. I don't know who is looking out for me, um, (pause) ja, so it was a very like- high school was not fun **Hmm** which I felt like it should have been. **Hmm** Um, (pause) but obviously there were people who were looking out for me, there were teachers who were also like really kind and really like you know like open **Hmm** and like understanding **Hm** and like not like bigots (chuckle) you know. **Yeah.** Um, but yeah.

This is how James described his high school experience in relation to being gay near the beginning of the interview after we had discussed his coming out. There is a tension between whether or not people were looking out for James in this extract and through the rest of his narrative it became clear why he felt ambivalent about this. He narrated his difference as being based on sexuality, but what James mentions later on in the interview is very important here: the fact that the school was predominately white and racism was not uncommon, which may be significant in why some of the teachers and learners were "offish" towards him. Thus, in this particular place James was a double minority of gay and 'coloured'. It is essential, then, to examine James's experience with an understanding of the intersection between him being gay and 'coloured' (Crenshaw, 1989). Compared to Matthew's narrative of being accepted by his classmates, James's narrative attests to the asymmetries present in coming out experiences and how moralistic discourses that claim coming out is the 'right' thing to do fail to acknowledge the ways in which other aspects of one's identity may constrain and limit the possibilities of coming out and still being safe (Rasmussen, 2004).

James's description of himself as a 'red alarm' is a powerful simile that he used to capture his sense of feeling like an 'other' at school who everyone knew about and this made him feel unsafe and alienated. This 'red alarm' is the abjection that he clearly experienced where others in his school viewed him with a sense of disgust (Phillips, 2014). Part of why Matthew described his masculine embodiment as the 'Trojan Horse of gayness' was because he was, in terms of race and physicality, able to occupy a dominant identity position in 'disguise' without sounding an alarm so to speak, whereas for James his difference was embodied inescapably through firstly being 'coloured', and secondly because he had a more effeminate manner thus he posed more of a 'threat' to the heteronormativity maintained by his hostile peers.

Manganyi's (1973) theorisation around being-black-in-the-world is highly appropriate for James's experience. Our bodies are central to our existence and it is through the body that we engage with the world (Csordas, 1999; Currah & Casper, 2011; Manganyi, 1973). Manganyi's (1973) distinction between the individual schema, one's mental image of their body, and the sociological schema, or the awareness of what one's body represents in society, helps explain James's description of feeling like a 'red alarm'. "A negative sociological schema and by the same token a negative individual schema, inevitably lead to the unhealthy objectification of the body. This means that the individual begins to experience his body as an object" (Manganyi, 1973, pp. 29-30). If it is true that the experience of being-black-in-the-world is fundamentally different from that of being-white-in-the-world, then the sociological schema of the black body in South Africa, due to a long history of colonial domination and apartheid, is one of inferiority and unwholesomeness in contrast to the white body that is seen as the norm (Manganyi, 1973). It makes sense then that James uses this 'red alarm' simile, a wailing object of warning and danger, to describe his feeling of being out of place. It is no surprise then that James's school sits on the outskirts of his heat-map, predominantly within the green and blue areas. I posit that Manganyi's (1973) theorising can be extended to sexuality as well, to a particular kind of being-*gay*-in-the-world, or even more specifically being-*black-and-gay*-in-the-world, especially where one's manner is not in line with gender expectations as in the case of James. Furthermore, this sense of distrust that James described, inseparable from this being-black-and-gay-in-the-world, is literally felt in his body as tenseness. This was not a transient state of affairs, it was deeply existential.

James's high school has been divided into several separated places on his heat-map, ranging from safe to unsafe, although predominately on the more unsafe side, whereas for Matthew, only a couple of places were deemed uncomfortable at the same school. James would avoid going to the tuck-shop alone and would make sure to go to the boys' bathroom during class

time when it was empty and he only used a cubicle to retain his privacy. Likewise, at break James would make sure to stick to the outskirts of the field with his friend so as not to attract attention to himself. James disliked the quad area, hence it is in the unsafe zone of the heat-map, where some hostile learners would usually be, and he strategically planned his route from class to class to avoid passing any potential threatening learners in the corridors between classes.

5.5.3. A PIN of pain: James's lowest low.

James narrated two incidences that have stuck with him, the only two times he cried at school, which he said he does not think he will ever fully understand, despite thinking about them regularly. The first was in primary school where, after leaving a class, a group of guys lined up and started laughing and pointing at him, making him feel humiliated. The second incident was in high school when James decided not to follow his usual route to get to class as narrated in this PIN:

> J: So ja, I was telling you about that route that I take right, **Ja** so the one day I was like, nah it's fine, like I'm late for class, let me just go around like on the balcony area, which I- I don't do because like at one of the classes is um the grade- I think they were 12 or 11 at the time, I don't know, um, but they have like accounting or something. So I don't normally take that path because they are there and I know **Hmm** there's a bunch of guys specifically who are bullies who I don't go past. So that day I don't know why, I was just like let me go this way, maybe they won't be there or maybe because it's late like they'll be in class already. **Hmm.** So I went, I saw them like fuck, it's too late to turn around now because I'm going to be late, let me just, um, grin and bear it. And I went and they saw me, they already started laughing whatever, but- but as I started walking through them they started like grabbing me, **Hmm** my ass, my penis, my- like grabbing me. And so ja, I kept walking, running whatever, um. […] So ja I think those- and like- for me just like- ja like, um. (pause) How can I say this now? (long pause). Ja, just like- something that- ja doesn't make sense for me in my own like tracing of like **Ja.** Ja.

This was a difficult story to listen to in the interview because of how much pain I could feel sitting behind the narrative. This is a clear instance for me of how emotions are relational

flows between people that create affective spaces (Simonsen, 2007), and how PINs are instances of re-experiencing the past (Wengraf, 2013). This incident relates to being-black-and-gay-in-the-world as this sexual assault targeted James's physical body. His final lines of this extract with its stops, starts and pregnant pauses amount to almost a linguistically empty few utterances, indicating a surplus of meaning that he cannot put into words as there are no words that can capture what he felt, and still clearly feels, to make sense of these events. His narrative attests to an active process of attempting to capture a sense of coherence and sense-making of these important events in his past (McAdams, 2012).

After this incident, James told his friend about it and she offered for him to come to their club after school, Girls' Club, to talk about it. Girls' Club was a religious group for women to build connections and it was mainly attended by black, coloured, and Indian women at the school. Race, again, is salient here. It was the first place that James spoke about when I asked him about safe spaces within his school. He described it in a warm way:

> J: And I went there and I was like the only guy there and everybody was just like so like loving and warm **Hmm** and like listening and everybody was crying and like hugging so- that was like a really cool space **Ja** because it was like- like now for the first time I feel like okay religion and people and everything like- everything is just like okay. **Hmmm.** Like we accept you. So that was definitely a safe space for me, um.

This space made James feel okay again after the assault. Being a place occupied by women only and black learners is significant for the place and this seems to be a reason why James narrated it as being so warm. Perhaps there was a shared understanding of being-black-in-the-world where they could actively work against the pathological experience of the black (and female) body in a predominantly white and patriarchal school (Manganyi, 1973). James attended a few more of these meetings, but despite it being safe for him, he still felt like somewhat of an outsider not being a woman.

5.5.4. Drama: James's emotional tool to reflect on his experiences.

Mrs Murray's drama class was another place where James (like Matthew) felt safe. He described Mrs Murray as the kind of teacher who he could go to if he had any kind of problem. Mrs Murray was definitely a teacher who supported her learners beyond the everyday duties of her subject as both James and Matthew attest to. Mrs Murray is the kind of teacher that Bhana (2012a) calls for, the type of teacher who engenders and upholds both the Constitution of the country as well as professional teaching standards to respect "different aspects of learners' identities" (SACE, 2018, p. 9). For James, Drama seemed to be an important part of his narrative beyond just Mrs Murray's classroom, so I asked him more about it:

> **R: I'm interested in that, ah, aspect of Drama in your life. Like what was Drama- what has it meant to you in your life?**
> J: Um, I think in the beginning when I- like 'cause I started like acting in grade like 3 (both chuckle) um, like so in the beginning it was definitely about like an escape **Hmm** like being able to just move outside of this like real world and become a prince or like a tree or a queen or whatever **(laugh)** be that thing, you know, and I don't have to worry. Um, and then towards I think, um, high school like I- I became a lot more emotionally invested in it and I realised I can use this as like an emotional tool to firstly like purge- investigate and purge emotions in myself but then as well as emotionally connect with other people so that they can understand **Hmm** like, um, other peoples' points of views around certain things.

It will not come as a surprise that James has pursued a career in the performing arts. The transformative power of being able to become someone (or something) else as well as the reflexive component to characterisation as a performer is important for James. What is key here seems to be Drama's empathic power as a way to reflect on the self and society, making it a valuable tool in his life that helped him, and continues to help him, to deal with life in all its complexity. Ricoeur (1982, p. 187) provides a possible reason for this: the element of playfulness within fiction (in this case a theatrical production) allows for truth to be revealed: "The player is metamorphosed 'in the true'; in playful representation, 'what is emerges.'" It

is here that subjectivity forgets itself and this appropriation "*gives* the subject new capacities for knowing himself" (Ricouer, 1982, p. 192). Productions also allow for one's 'everyday imagination' to work and as a result it enables the processing of information about the world, others, and the self (Andrews, 2014). All of this considered together seems to propound the transformative nature of narrative-based activates in activating the potentialities of narrative identity (Andrews, 2014; Fay, 1996; McAdams, 2012).

5.6. "My school made it easy to be confident enough": Amahle's Schooling Experience

Amahle is a 20-year-old self-identifying lesbian African woman who speaks with confidence and is quite self-assured. She attended an all-girls public school and had a narrative that showed a schooling experience that was very affirming to her sense of self. This analysis focuses on how Amahle navigated which spaces she was openly lesbian in, and how, despite religious constraints, she found ways to live authentically, resist heteronormativity, and embody an identity that felt most authentic to her.

5.6.1. Tensions in coming out at home: Religious constraints.

When I asked Amahle how she came to identify as lesbian she said the process started in primary school when, due to peer pressure she started dating a boy. This shows that Amahle narrates the start of her self-understanding of her sexuality as an awareness gained through experience that heterosexual relationships were not what *felt right* for her. She provided an important PIN relating to her coming out story:

> A: I- (hesitation) low-key haven't come out to my family. **Okay** However, I did rise when I was like- 2014 it came about after I told, um, (pause) my aunt who is in Lesotho **Okay** that my stepdad is sexually molesting me **Hm** and my aunt told my gran and my gran told my aunt (slight laugh) you know? **Hm** And it eventually got to my mom, and my mom was like literally the last one to know **Oh, okay** because it was just like a circle of everyone just trying to protect me. **Ja.** And that is mainly why I also didn't tell her. And then- so the step-dad didn't want to move out **Hm** and stuff like that and started mentioning that I said I'm gay. **Okay.** And then after he had left, my aunt, 'Oh sooo, **(chuckle)** I was told by him that…' and

> I didn't deny nor did I agree to it, I was just like mmh **Hm.** So yeah I haven't really come out to my family.

Amahle's hesitations when talking about this topic suggests that this story is difficult to tell and may be painful for her to reflect on. She traces the trail of how her revealing this sexual assault by her stepfather to her aunt eventually got back to her mother. It is likely that this 'betrayal' of her confidence was done so as to protect her, presumably, from future sexual assaults of this kind. However, Amahle links this experience to her decision *not* to come out. This seems primarily due to the stepdad outing her by telling her aunt that she is gay. I did not pursue this incident further in the interview and, reflecting on my misplaced chuckle, suggests a kind of discomfort I was experiencing at being unsure of how to handle talking about sexual assault.

Later in the interview, when I asked Amahle whether or not she felt she could be herself at home, she explained that she does not feel ready coming out to her mother yet, mainly due to her mother's Christianity. On her heat-map show in *Figure 7,* home has a dotted line to reflect this, while also being in the green area showing she cannot fully be herself at home due to her context.

Race only came up once in the interview. This was in relation to Amahle narrating her understanding of how black people in her community experience someone who identifies as lesbian or gay. She said that "they'll first say you're a tomboy, then you're like, no I'm lesbian and they're like, 'Oh, so you wanna be a guy?'" However, Amahle still found acceptance in her community for being lesbian despite this conflation of sexual orientation and gender. Considering Canham's (2017) findings that black lesbians narrate their race as central to their experiences, it is strange that Amahle did not mention race elsewhere in her narrative. Perhaps because I am white this aspect of my own identity muted this aspect of her identity in her talk which highlights the co-constructed nature of interview data.

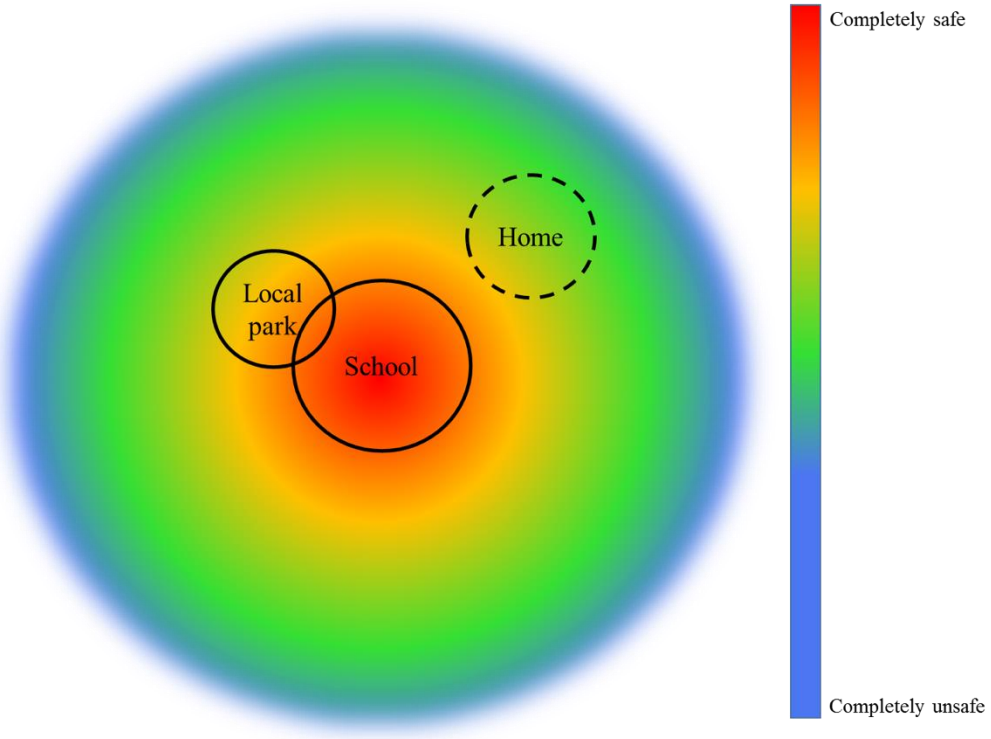

Figure 7: Amahle's spatial heat-map

Religion came up as an important aspect in Amahle's narrative. Although she did not mention whether or not her stepdad was religious, there was a potential tension within her story between religious discourse and sexual violence vis-à-vis her mother's religion and her relationship with her abusive husband. Although Amahle was not able to express her sexuality openly at home, she brought home her girlfriends without her mother getting suspicious as her mother believed they were just friends, much like Matthew did with his boyfriend. Thus, she manipulated the constraints of her home, queering her home space, albeit in a clandestine manner. She also went to the local park where she would have dates, so this was a place where she felt comfortable enough to express her sexuality. However, she did say that she negotiated specific times that the park was safe to be in, namely the daytime.

5.6.2. Amahle's niche at school: Finding acceptance beyond religious constraints.

Despite not coming out to her family, Amahle was openly lesbian within her school. For most of the participants, and from my personal experience of sexually diverse learners, it is

common to more fully express one's sexuality first at school and then, if at all, at home at a later stage. She narrated her experience during high school as being remarkably positive, in contrast to her constraining home environment where she could not express herself freely:

> **R: So you felt <u>generally</u> you were confident enough to- to be yourself?**
> A: Ja, maybe because my school made it easy **Okay** to be confident enough. Like, it was a <u>glorified</u> and yet criticised thing to be gay **Hmm** in my school. It was glorified by the girls in other schools and slightly criticised by the teacher who were <u>very</u> religious **Okay** (decrease in volume) **'**it's not in the Bible, you're not supposed to be doing this and stuff,' ja.

Amahle's schooling experience seemed to stand out the most out of all the participants in terms of the degree she could express herself in school hence her school sits in the centre of her heat-map. This exceptionalism in terms of being accepted as an openly lesbian learner by her peers both within her school and other schools in her community is surprising. She frames being lesbian as 'trendy', something that she does in other parts of her story too, claiming "everyone in that school was gay from 8:00 to 15:00, then after that everyone was back to their normal lives."

This is contrasted with and complicated by the stigma and othering from older people, which she still faced at school and in other areas of her life such as at home. This interesting duality between school and home points towards how individuals are able to negotiate the spaces and places they occupy in order to protect their own well-being. If safety and space co-constitute each other as Canham (2017) asserts, then it makes sense why Amahle is not openly lesbian at home. The primary point that Rasmussen (2004) makes is that coming out is not a process that should be seen as the gold standard, and creating a moralistic imperative to come out denies intersections of identity with sexuality, such as religion in Amahle's case, that limit her possibilities to come out. Religion was also used by teachers to justify their stance against homosexuality. This points towards a tension between the constitutional rights discourses in

South Africa and some people's everyday 'beliefs' couched in religious discourse that in fact are homophobic (Bhana, 2014).

A further aspect that Amahle raises in her narrative is the fluidity of sexual identity development during adolescence as well as the influence that people within a particular space can have on each other as they grapple with the changes they are experiencing both physically and socially as they reflect upon their roles within their social environment (Erikson, 1970). Erikson's (1994) fifth stage of psychosocial development revolves around the key developmental milestone of consolidating one's role in society. The development of successful ways of mastering one's experiences in a way that other individuals can recognise as mastery is pivotal here. For Amahle, the role modelling of an older also out gay learner, Tina, who was in grade 11 when she was in grade 8, was important for her journey:

> A: I guess I- I might say that she's the starting point of me wanting to come out, me wanting to lead. She's just like the starting point of most of the things that led to me being known in school, ja.

Amahle displays this relational importance of having others on which to model one's self as well as gaining recognition from them that Erikson (1994) points out. Having an openly gay learner for Amahle to look up to provided her with a sense of agency in her own identity development on two accounts: firstly, Tina made her want to come out; and secondly Tina inspired her to want to lead. Amahle did become the president of the school learners' counsel in grade 11. Considering Amahle's sexual minority identity, along with the exceptionalism in her school regarding this identity, I propose that what Amahle means by leading is that she wanted to claim her schooling space with confidence by occupying conventional roles with the system, such as the head of the learners' counsel. In this way she could *belong* in the school's system, queering it from within as Tina before her seemed to do. Without Tina's role modelling of possible ways of being-in-the-world, Amahle may not have felt that being openly lesbian in her school would have been adequately recognised and supported. Tina and

Amahle's openness within school was a way for them to establish their sexual identities as having a legitimacy within the school as a whole. Furthermore, as Massey (2004) argues, space is a product of relational interactions. Perhaps it was through Tina and Amahle's willingness to be open about their sexualities in school, paired with their occupying leadership positions, which helped shape their school into a place of acceptance for sexual diversity.

5.6.3. Embodiment as identity expression and the power of narrative.

A key aspect that repeatedly came up during the interview was the importance of clothing to Amahle's sense of identity. Clothing, to her, formed an important part of her self-expression. Within school she felt constrained by the school's dress code of having to wear skirts in summer months and trousers in winter months:

> A: The constricting thing about it was having the skirt and the trousers thing. **Okay.** […] I'm just there like, **(slight chuckle)** what if I don't want to be wearing a skirt on this particular day so I have…? But I made it work. **Okay.** It still looked gay as hell **How did you made it work? (chuckle)** when I was wearing a skirt (laughter). I don't know, I didn't make it short and it- I left a trend. Now everyone is wearing long skirts because of me.

Despite the constraints on clothing, Amahle was able to adapt her clothing to suit her. Lesbian learners in Zway and Boonzaier's (2015) study did a similar thing by wearing pants in order to assert themselves and resist heteronormativity. In some sense this extract shows how Amahle was able to queer the dress code to suit her identity, and when there were school events where casual clothing could be worn she wore clothes to explicitly show she was gay to the point of confusing others about her sex. In this way her body was more than just body, but also a marker of a particular queer social identity and thus a marking of difference (Hall, 1996; Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). This exemplifies a way in which thinking about abjection in positive terms may function productively: Amahle's clothing was able to disrupt a binary way of thinking about sex and as a result through this liminal embodiment was able to reveal

herself as a queer subject (Phillips, 2014). Furthermore, in terms of the school uniform, as president of the school counsel, she helped contribute towards getting the school management to change their dress code, allowing for other students to wear pants instead of skirts if they wanted. Thus, she was able to display positive resistance towards a heteronormative dress code, not only for herself but for others too.

Csordas's (1999) understanding of embodiment as the importance of looking at experiences from the point of view of "bodily-being-in-the-world" (p. 143) is important to examine. Amahle provides a PIN regarding her clothing and her body in relation to Valentine's Day one year:

> A: So I make things interesting on say Valentines- if the Valentines was on a weekend **Hmm** the following day I'd come back- 'cause I remember there was this one instance where we were doing, ah, orals, **Hm** and it was on the weekend of Valentine and the LO teacher made me start first. **(chuckle).** (excited to tell) So I came with hickeys on purpose.
> **R: Oh wow! (laughter)**
> A: And I didn't wear a shirt that day, I wore a tunic so then it like really showed and when I was doing my speech this entire time they were just like, 'Mmmmmm! Valentine's weekend. She was getting action this one!' **(laughter)** So it- it brought about conversation and it made it easy for teachers and students to actually understand how being in a gay relationship, or being part of the LGBTI feels like, so I made it a point that they know.

Here, Amahle ties her sense of identity to her clothing and her body as well as her ability to *tell* the story of her sexuality (Plummer, 1995). She does this with what Moore and Rodriquez (2010) note as marrying one's practices to one's self enabling identity to become "the symbolic marker for both who we are and what (and who) we do." (p. 113). Amahle displayed her hickeys as badges of pride foregrounding, rather than allowing the body to recede behind constructivist notions of identity (Currah & Casper, 2011; Moore & Rodriquez, 2010), an embodied expression, or signifier, of homosexual sexual activity for her teacher and classmates to see. This in turn catalysed a conversation within this schooling space about gay relationships or what it is like being part of a sexually diverse community. Despite

teachers who were critical of her being lesbian, her LO teacher in this story, as well as an English teacher, were interested in her life and asked her questions about her identity, attesting to the power that the telling of one's story can open up ways of being-in-the-world for others that ultimately helps catalyse acceptance, a point Plummer (1995) raises as being central to the influence of storytelling. Interestingly, race was completely invisible in Amahle's narrative, which is in stark contrast to James's experience, for example. The context of Amahle being in a township school where her peers would have been mostly, if not all, black and/or 'coloured' is salient. This meant that at least in terms of race she was the same as her peers, whereas James was in the minority in terms of both his race *and* sexuality. This points towards the importance of how the people occupying particular spaces construct those spaces in some way due to their identity categories, opening up possible ways of being for some, and closing them down for others.

5.7. "The trouble-makers": Claire's Story of Queer Responsibility

Claire is a soft-spoken self-identifying coloured lesbian woman who seems to be very socially aware about issues of sexual diversity. In school she felt a responsibility to raise such issues, particularly because her school was a predominantly white independent school. She attributes her identity development to her "queer" friendship group and her narrative was filled with stories of her resisting the compulsory heterosexuality in her school. She raised issues of sexual diversity and the intersection of race with sexuality because she felt responsible to raise such issues that she felt were being silenced by the school management and teachers.

5.7.1. The queer trouble-makers.

Claire framed her journey towards realising she was lesbian as being facilitated and supported by her close friendship group. She referred to this friend group fondly as "the queer group" that everyone knew about in school. She mainly spent time with this group in the

school cafeteria, hence its closeness to the warm centre of the map as she felt a definite sense of belonging in this group. This is depicted in *Figure 8.*

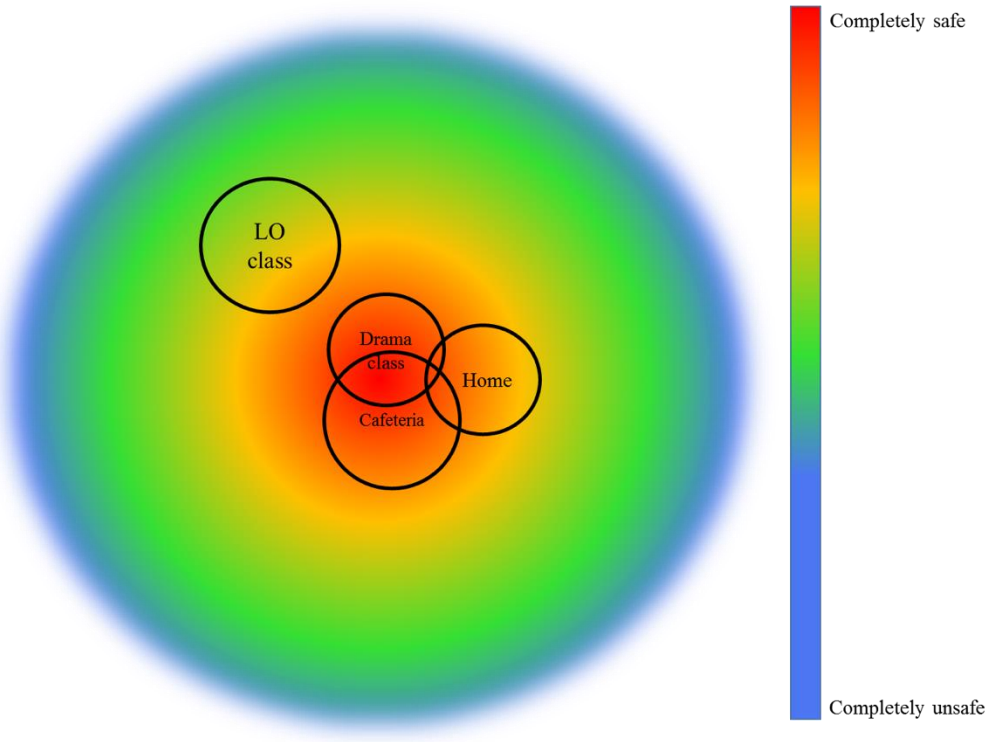

Figure 8: Claire's spatial heat-map

This group of friends facilitated her coming out and made her feel safe with this decision:

> C: Um, I think I owe a lot of it to the friends I had in high school. **Okay.** So pretty much in our high school there was like one queer group of people **Okay** who I was sort of acquainted with **Hmm** and like as soon as I started realised oh wait, it's okay to be attracted to women **Ja** like the more friendlier I became with them and then more fully I realised that you know I'm not bi which I once thought I was **Ja** I'm a lesbian.
>
> **R: Okay. And did you have like a particular like, you know like some people call it their coming out story. Um, can you tell me about that?**
>
> C: Um, I first came to my friends on the group chats or whatever **Okay** I was like, 'Oo, guys I'm pretty sure I'm gay.' **Ja.** They were all pretty (hesitantly) supportive **Hmm** except for one but she later came out as bi.
>
> **R: Oh, that's interesting.**
>
> C: Ja, I think she was just dealing with some stuff. But, ja.

She fondly described the group as being a place of solace within school, and a group that helped her voice her opinions in class. She initially came out to these friends via an online group chat around grade 9 or 10. This queer group gives prominence to Erikson's (1994, p. 98) observation that "[a]dolescents help one another temporarily through such discomfort [of identity formation] by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies." It must be emphasised that in Claire's case this is a productive function of finding belonging in her friendship group. She emphasises her friends were supportive of her, however, she does hesitate before saying this. This hesitation seems to be because she remembered that her one friend was not supportive at the time. This initially unsupportive friend seems to be an important disrupting aspect of this story Claire tells. Although it would have been threatening to her identity at the time, she accounts for her friend's non-acceptance retrospectively through by saying she was going through her own identity struggles. This underscores Erikson's (1994) notion that adolescence is a time when the way others view us is salient. This also demonstrates how through reflecting on the past Claire was able to make sense of this incident through retrospection (Andrews, 2014; Bruner, 1987; McAdams, 2012). Interestingly, this friend later came out as bisexual, a point that Claire recognises, through her own coming out process, as a period that was not easy and could have thus resulted in the psychological stress that contributed to her friend not accepting her initially.

She described this group in a similar way that Mark and Diego described their sense of belonging with their respective 'families' at school. This group of friends served as a challenge to the status quo of the school:

> C: They were very- they were kind of like the trouble makers of the school, **Okay** which I think kind of went hand-in-hand with being <u>queer</u>. **Okay.** So it's not so much that they were like breaking school rules, just that they were very <u>outspoken</u>, you know?

5.7.2. The queer speech: A PIN showing microaggressions.

A key moment in her story was when she came out within her school to the whole school after she came out to her friends, but this done in an interesting way:

> C: My friend (chuckle) had this queer speech for school, **Okay** and he was like, 'Oh, can I mention your name?' And I was like, 'This is quite a way to come out to the whole school.' **Ja.** So I was like, 'Sure.'
>
> **R: Wow, and how did the- like your peers react?**
>
> C: They were fine with it but we got in trouble with the school**. Okay, ja.** Ja (chuckle), 'cause you know they thought it was like, um, bringing up too much trouble, **Okay** you know making a deal out of nothing.

Claire returns to this same PIN later in the interview:

> R: **So you mention about your principal- you gave a laugh so do you feel he is against the issue of like having LGBT visibility?**
>
> C: Um, yes, just because um in that like speech my friend had **Hmm** where we both sort of came out he was- like we had to go in for like talks with him and be like why we did it.
>
> **R: Oh really?**
>
> C: Ja. My friend had to apologise to me for including me in it even though I consented clearly **Ja** to it but yeah he- he just gave off the vibe that, you know, you weren't supposed to say anything about it, like it's fine if you were but-
>
> **R: Keep quiet about it.** Mmm. **Shame, how did it make you feel that silencing?**
>
> C: It- (sigh, clearly disappointed/hurt) it just make me feel very disappointed **Hmm** especially because I always thought my school was a liberal **Hmm** kind of free-thinking school and then only to realise they just shut you down.

Her chuckle while telling this story in the first extract shows that she looks on the memory fondly and without regret. Giving her friend permission to use her name also shows that she felt secure enough, and safe enough, within her school environment to be openly lesbian. I was surprised by this kind of more public coming out and curiously asked if her peers were accepting of it and they were. She then emphasises the school, particularly the school principal, had an issue with it not very different from previous research findings on how school managers view sexually diverse issues (Bhana, 2014; O'Flynn & Epstein, 2005). The

principal seemed dismissive of the content of the speech, clearly overlooking the relevance of such a topic, rather approaching it a problem or "trouble" in need of intervention to the extent of calling them both into his office to account for their actions. This accords with Francis and Reygan's (2016a) study on school LO teachers that found that they were heterosexist in their teaching, pathologising non-normative sexualities through displays of discomfort, disapproval, and dismissal. Claire expressed how her principal seemed "fine" with sexually diverse learners as long as they kept it hush, which displays a similar kind of dismissal and silencing around such issues. Despite her thinking her school was liberal and free-thinking, this silencing was disappointing for her. What seems telling is that Claire's peers were ahead in terms of acceptance of difference as compared to the school management, a common finding across most of my participants, but a hopeful finding that Francis and Reygan (2016b) also discovered which shows that real change is happening within schools to some degree.

This aspect of teachers and school management pushing back in some ways on the issue of sexual diversity, while still trying to not be overtly homophobic, came up several times in the interview and seems to accord with Mark's discussion of schools wanting to maintain a particular image. The head of student affairs promised they would bring in someone "to talk about queer issues" in an assembly after the speech incident, however this was an empty promise. This lack of willingness to engage with sexual diversity within the school is disappointing albeit telling in light of my original project that aimed to access schools to assess such learners' schooling experiences. Perhaps my difficulties were partly as a result of an underlying lack of willingness to engage with social issues such as these at management levels of schools, a disappointing reality that possibly links to fear of push-back from conservative parents who hold moralistic views of what schools should, or should not, allow (Bhana, 2012b).

5.7.3. Identity politics in the classroom.

Her narrative about her experiences within the classroom space reveals similar asymmetries in terms of representation of sexual diversity, specifically within the LO class which is found mainly in the green area of her heat-map. I asked her if there was any formal sexually diverse representations within the curriculum, but she told me that the only time these issues came up in class was through class discussions when *she* brought these issues into the conversation. This, however, made her feel like "the preachy one" who was bringing up issues about sexually diverse people. This outspokenness gave me the sense that she felt it was her responsibility to raise these issues:

> **R: Did you feel like you had a- a responsibility almost** Hmm **to bring up LGBT issues when you were having those discussions?**
> C: Ja, it did and especially because like of the- like our queer friendship group were the only people then who were out and I was the only like coloured non-white **Hmm** queer person so it felt to me like an extra responsibility that I have to be right about queer things and about like race things **Hmm** and it was just very- it was a big struggle.
> **R: Ja, why do you say it was a struggle? Did it feel like a lot?**
> C: It just felt like a lot of responsibility **Okay** especially because, um, the school didn't like to talk about race either, **Ja,** it was again like let's not- let's pretend it doesn't exist **Ja** sort of thing. Ja.

Claire displays her awareness of the intersections of her race and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989). In a similar way to James's experience, Claire foregrounds the difference of being-black-in-the-world, and as for James, being-black-and-gay-in-the-world (Manganyi, 1973), and what this means for her different experience of her schooling space which she narrated as being a "big struggle". Claire's identity both in terms of race and sexuality is politicised here as she takes on the responsibility to educate her peers about such identities rather than her teachers (whose responsibility this *should* be). However, this lack of teachers dealing with issues of sexual diversity is not uncommon (Bhana, 2012a; Francis, 2017c; Francis & Reygan, 2016a).

The school has a majority white student body which is unsurprising considering that she says race was an issue that, like queer issues, was avoided being discussed. This ostrich burying its head in the sand approach is what appeared to motivate her to foreground these issues in class. This signifies an identity politics at play where, because Claire's identity is under threat and marginalised, it became politicised and articulated in her push-back in class discussions (Hall, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Claire's positioning within her predominantly white school that tends to ignore issues of race and sexual diversity makes it clearer why she felt responsible for raising these issues in class, which were inseparable from her personal identity. Her one LO teacher tended to "change the subject" when she raised issues of sexual diversity in class, an indicator of possible ignorance the teacher shared with some of the learners, a finding that is supported by other studies (Bhana, 2012a; Francis & Reygan, 2016; Msibi, 2012).

Although Claire inserted issues of sexual diversity and race into classroom discussions, her friendship group would have freer discussions outside of the classroom:

> C: I think like when we were sitting in the like cafeteria area that was kind of when our (slight chuckle, remembering) rowdiest discussions would happen just because we knew there weren't any like teachers nearby really **Okay** or like people would just sit outside normally **Ja** so the cafeteria was really like nice to just sit there and being able to talk about queer things **Ja** without having to be like side-eyed by people.

There is a contrast between her levels of comfortability between talking about sexual diversity in class and talking about it with her friends in the cafeteria when no teachers were present and she was not subject to being judged. Her heat-map shows this, comparing the position of her LO class and the cafeteria as shown in her heat-map. In her friendship group she felt like she belonged, whereas in class the politics of belonging, and identity politics as a consequence, came to the fore showing how different places occupied by different people altered the freedom with which she could be herself (Yuval-Davis, 2010). Claire also found

artistic spaces in the school such as the drama class as a place where she could be herself, much like participants in Allen's (2013) study who were able to find ways to express their sexualities in schools despite school structures trying to desexualise learners. The artistic teachers "would actually acknowledge [sexually diverse learners'] existence." Some of her English teachers were more open to discussing issues of sexual diversity in relation to literary characters that came up in their work. Like Mrs Murray's drama class and James's Girls' Club, these classes were where progressive change seemed to be happening for sexually diverse learners. This stands in contrast to a lack of structural change or policy development schools specifically for sexual diversity.

5.8. Putting the 'Bi' in Ambiguous: Ken's Story of His Sexuality

Ken attended the same high school as Claire, albeit a few years ahead of her, and he raised similar issues in terms of the school's attitude towards sexually diverse learners and issues. To this end, this analysis will focus on Ken, a white 23-year-old, being bisexual and how his sexuality played into his experience of his school. The ambivalent positioning of bisexuality is explored in this analysis and linked with his choice to not tell many people about his sexuality, a strategy he employed in order to get through school without being discriminated against. Ken's heat-map as show in *Figure 9* only has dotted line circles and the majority of the spaces and places sit on the orange and yellow areas due to his ambivalent positioning in relation to his sexuality while in high school.

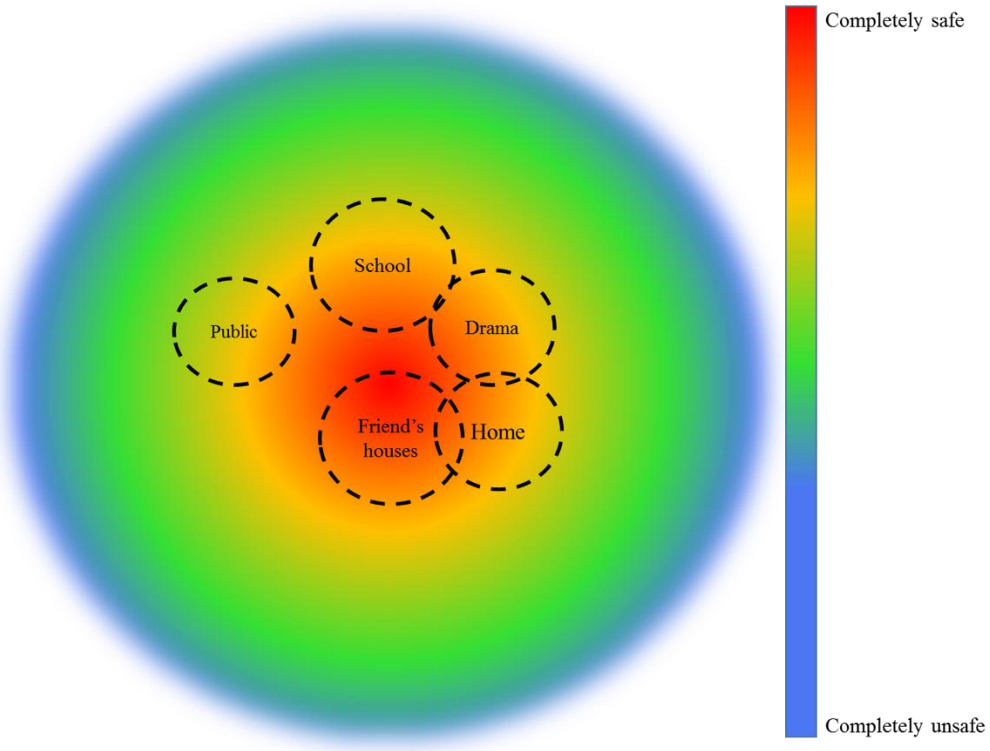

Figure 9: Ken's spatial heat-map

5.8.1. Ken's retrospective interrogation of bisexuality.

My first question I asked Ken was how he came to identify himself as bisexual. He began his response by framing it in two different temporal categories, lived time and narrative time:

> **R: So tell me about how you came to identify yourself as bisexual.**
> K: Woo, so, ah, there-there's kind of two aspects to it. **Hm.** There's the real time one and then there's the like retrospective thought **Okay** about it. So real time (taps on desk with fingers), I think was- what I think I was in grade 11. I think u-up until that point like I'd identified as straight, but I'd never thought- I'd never thought about sexuality **Hmm** in all honesty. Like **Hmm** I knew that you had people that were gay, people that- I didn't know about- I don't think I knew about bisexuality too much, but I knew there was gay there was lesbian- back at that point **Yeah** that was like a very narrow view. But I never thought of myself as that, but I never thought of myself as straight either **Hmm**. I never had like a firm identity. […] Retrospectively like looking back at it, like if I think from like grade 7, 6 talk **Hmm** if you think about- once you start like Googling things and whatever, a lot of it was very male dominant **Hmm** as opposed to female dominant **Yeah.** So, looking back and I'm like okay, in my head my body knew what it liked and what it preferred but I had no kind of structure in

> order to say, ‘Okay I’m bisexual’ or I didn’t even classify myself as gay didn’t classify myself as- **Hmm** I didn’t classify myself as anything. **Yeah**.

In a similar way to Amy, Ken’s sexual identity narrative showed signs of not having a label but, in contrast to Amy, Ken’s sense of not having to be labelled stemmed more from not having the knowledge, or even the language, in order to define his sexuality, supporting the idea that identity is unsettled especially during adolescence. The ‘real time’ narrative Ken produces reveals an ambiguous position he had in relation to his sexuality. Firstly, he narrated this as being partly about him not having thought about his sexuality too much, and secondly because he never thought of himself as straight or gay. The ambivalence in this narrative relates to studies of bisexuality that interrogate how as a sexual identity it disrupts the homosexual/heterosexual binary that denies sexuality its fluidity (Francis, 2017c). Ken’s sense of not having a “firm identity” relates to this point. Likewise, Ken’s ‘retrospective’ narrative reaches the same conclusion that he did not define his sexuality (Fay, 1996).

Unlike most participants in this study whose understandings of their sexuality came around late primary school or early high school, Ken’s understanding of, or at the least the questioning of, his sexuality came a bit later, in grade 11. The temporal categories that Ken framed his narrative through is interesting in that they both are in fact the same category of narrative time (Ricoeur, 1980). He produced the narrative from the perspective of the present looking back in order to answer my question about how he came to identify as bisexual. The teleological movement of his narrative was towards the understanding of his bisexual identity, and he emplots his experiences into a coherent, unified whole while also allowing for the ambiguity of bisexuality to still make sense (Fay, 1996; McAdams, 2012). It is impossible to narrate the past as if it were the present (‘real time’) as it is only through the end-point, or at least a point of sufficient progression, that a retrospective narrative is able to cohere (Andrews, 2014; McAdams, 2012; Ricoeur, 1980).

5.8.2. Resisting being stereotyped: The choice to not come out in school.

Ken's narrative of his schooling experience seemed to be characterised by wanting to lay low on the radar. He did not have any major incidents happen against him during high school because his sexuality was not defined. Ken narrated how he would disguise his 'real' voice by unconsciously lowering his voice and puffing out his chest when he was talking to male classmates as a way of not causing suspicion. This is the same type of 'disguise' strategy that Matthew used. Ken's narrative provided evidence that there was some strategy behind this as well as more conscious choices to not disclose his sexuality to any teachers. This is complicated by the fact that he was still coming to terms with his sexuality alongside the ambiguous position that bisexuality opens up. In terms of his friends, one of the first people he told that he was bisexual was his one friend who was also bisexual:

> K: My one friend, he told me he was bi in grade 9 I think and even then, when he mentioned it **Hmm** I never thought about anything. And then matric, we got much closer and then (pause) x, y, z happened **Hmm** and that's when, came out to him, because it was much- I don't know, easier because **Ja** he was already bi, so for me to say, 'Oh I'm bi, there's no reason for him to get upset **Hmm** or outraged **Hmm** or anything. And then from that slowly person by person, within at least my close friend group **Ja** was there. I never felt the need to (sigh) tell everyone **Hmm** cause yea- if you need to know, cool **Yea**. If you don't need to know **Yeah** it's not going to affect your life, not gonna affect my life, we're **Ja** fine.

Having someone who already defined as bisexual made it easier for Ken to come out to him because of their shared understanding, once again pointing towards the stigma that bisexuality has (Francis, 2017c). Ken's choice to tell only people close to him enabled him to avoid being bullied in a school as he narrated that anyone who came across as more flamboyant was more prone to being subject to bullying, perhaps a reason for embodying a more traditionally masculine voice and posture when talking to male classmates.

When I asked Ken if there were any topics around sexual diversity in the curriculum, he said he cannot remember anything explicitly. This accords with previous research findings

(Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). The only times homosexuality was spoken about was in English if it came up while discussing set works, or in Advanced Programme English when discussing different texts but these were never in the curriculum itself. Furthermore, Ken did not want to draw any attention to himself from his teachers regarding his sexuality because he did not want it to jeopardise his marks:

> K: Again, it was more just a thing of or- t-the reason why I never felt with- even with the other teacher I'm like I know you'd be cool with this but I'm not going to do it **Hmm**. It's to- I don't want this to bias whatever- especially because she was the one that I would have done it to was the English teacher. I don't want to have to bias anything. **Ja.** I don't want to typecast or stereotype what or how I should whatever slash I don't want to do anything to a teacher and then that affect my marks **Hmm** negatively.

This shows how he viewed his teachers as potentially homophobic. Claire's narrative of the same school does provide an interesting link here as she described the teachers in a way that also showed they were not entirely accepting of sexually diverse issues, although Claire's approach was to start a dialogue in class rather than remain quiet. The right to choose is important here and it is what McCormick (2015) discusses at length. Often, discourses around sexual diversity encourage people to come out, and those who do not are often seen as being a moral failure in some sense (Rasmussen, 2004). For Ken, the choice to live out his schooling without everyone knowing his sexual identity was so that he was not discriminated against.

The reason that his heat-map consists entirely of dotted lines is because of the fact that he was never fully out in school. He did not know whether or not his identity made him safe or unsafe in those spaces as he only had a *sense* of whether or not it would or would not be safe. Ken's sense was that in public spaces he had to act more masculine whereas at his one friend's house he felt safe enough to experiment with his sexuality. School generally, the drama spaces in the school, and his home sit ambiguously on the map. Ken's narrative also

provides a sense in which stating his sexuality would have been limiting, or "typecast" him into a role he did not want, because sexual orientations carry with them expectations and what it means to be that orientation (McCormick, 2015; O'Connell, 1999; Rasmussen, 2004).

5.9. Conclusion

In order to draw this chapter to a close several similarities and differences across the individual narratives need to be outlined. Firstly, the power of narrative identity came across strongly in all narratives. The meaning-making processes of each participant was clear as they reflected on their pasts and for most participants there was a sense of a coherent past they were able to craft. Secondly, the coming out narratives of the participants seemed to largely show how they first came out to their close friends then only came out to their families, with key exceptions such as Amy where this was the reverse. Linked to this were the asymmetries of coming out where participants may have only been out, often confidently, in some spaces while remaining closeted in others. Thirdly, the schooling experiences of participants contained a mixture of homophobia as well as positive experiences. There was no formal representation of sexual diversity within the curriculum and often teachers were ignorant to such issues if they came up organically. School friends of participants often helped facilitate feelings of belonging and safety in schools, providing participants with a base of support from which to strengthen their sexual identities.

In terms of space and place, an understanding of how the different aspects of one's identity interacted, such as race and sexual identity, was important in order to fully understand the participants' sense of safety and belonging. Identity categories such as race seem to function largely as mediators that either limit or open up possibilities for participants in particular physical contexts as seen most clearly comparing Matthew's and James's experiences of the same school. On the other hand, non-physical online spaces provided an alternative space where some participants found connection albeit this came with the risk of being exposed to

predatory users. Communities of belonging were found to be important to the participants. These were facilitated by particular places such as drama classrooms, school theatres, as well as more surprising places such as a school sports bus. Importantly this sense of community, or being part of a family, was a collective achievement enabled by an open-mindedness of the people occupying such places. This shows the bidirectionality between people and space. Finally, the closet space was also important in some of the narratives and consequently the right to be able to choose when to be open about one's sexuality was foregrounded as a strategy to maintain safety. This ability to not be committed to categories of sexual belonging, in line with McCormick's (2015) understanding of sexual identity, seemed to be an assertion of one's agency rather than being *only* as a consequence of unsafe physical spaces.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This project set out to explore the ways in which sexually diverse people experienced their high schools in relation to their sexual identities, as well as to gain insight into the ways such people understand their identities in relation to space and place and how these issues may impact on their sense of belonging. The study has yielded interesting findings that will be the focus of this concluding chapter. Both common findings as well as exceptions will be discussed. Recommendations of future studies and recommendations for how schools can become more inclusive spaces for sexually diverse learners are also provided.

6.1. Identity Development and Coming Out Stories

The development of each participant's identity was central to their narratives and their experiences. Several participants narrated how they 'always' had a sense that they were different. Although they stated that they had this sense of being different 'all along', it seems that this may be a function of narrative identity at work. Through examining their own lives in light of their current situation where all participants are open about their sexualities (with the exception of some places such as Amahle's home), participants were able to track retrospectively the 'signs' that they were sexually diverse in their childhood (Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1991a). It does seem unlikely that a young child below a certain age has any full sense of what it means to be sexually diverse. However, the function of this sense of always having known shows how narrative identity makes sense of the past in light of the present and is perhaps an affirmation of one's sexuality, making sense of the possible tumultuous experiences during school that may have made one feel strange, 'abnormal', or alienated.

Most narratives had a definite sense of coherence and it was clear that participants had made sense of their experiences, crafting meaning out of them and at times artfully reshaping what has been (Crites, 1986; McAdams, 2012). There were a few exceptions, seen most clearly

with James still trying to understand parts of the trauma he experienced by being assaulted in high school. It is an established claim in narrative research that trauma shatters coherence (Andrews, 2010). Religion featured in several of the narratives, most notably as a factor that contributed to confused feelings about being sexually diverse. James loved going to church but stopped because the scriptures were represented as condemning his identity, Matthew felt a sense of abjection due to feeling like his identity was sinful, Amahle still has to limit her degree of openness at home due to her mother's faith, and Diego had to work through the religious conservatism at his first school and in church in order to come to accept himself. Thus, like previous research makes clear, religion often constraints sexually diverse people, limiting their sense of selfhood and condemning their identities as sinful. Much work still needs to be done in transforming dangerous and discriminatory religious thought (Bhana, 2012a; Bhana, 2014; Francis & Reygan, 2016a; Van Zyl et al., 2017).

Central to identity development in most participants' narratives was their coming out narratives. Although, in some cases, I prompted a coming out narrative, most participants, in some form, provided a narrative of coming out. Amy and Ken were exceptions. Although Amy did discuss her coming out, she made it clear that she did not see it as much of a process but rather just a focus on having authentic relationships free of labels; and Ken chose only to disclose his sexuality to very few people during high school. However, Amy's ability to do this was facilitated by her parents' open-mindedness, whereas for Ken this seemed to be more about ensuring he was not discriminated against unfairly in school. For the other participants, coming out was usually a staggered process. Some participants, such as Mark and Matthew, had more control over this process, whereas others like James and Diego had less control. For those who were 'outed' either by others, as in James's case, or like Diego, caught watching gay pornography, there was a negative effect of not being in control of their identities. It is important then that people are afforded the opportunity to control when and where they

express their sexualities, as well as whether or not they actually want to label their sexual orientations (McCormick, 2015; Rasmussen, 2004).

Taken together, these coming out narratives validate Plummer's arguments (1995, p. 168) regarding coming out stories: "Whatever else a story is, it is not simply the lived life. It speaks all around the life: it provides routes into a life, lays down maps for lives to follow, suggest links between a life and a culture." The pervasiveness of such coming out stories shows that South Africa is at least part of a broader culture where such stories have a community that can *listen* and *respond* to the stories, a reality that some countries around the world unfortunately do not yet have. By participating in this study, the participants have also shown, to some extent, their willingness to, in Plummer's (1995) words, come out 'politically' enabling their narratives to be used for social change, an ambitious hope of this research.

Interestingly, there were several asymmetries with coming out. This means that it was not an all-or-nothing affair for these participants. The spatial heat-maps display these asymmetries through either solid lines or dotted lines and how they are linked to safety and belonging. Amahle, despite having a very positive schooling experience and being unapologetic and proud about being a lesbian in school, still remains closeted at home. Ken's narrative attests to the way not disclosing one's sexuality can be a way of negotiating particular spaces for particular ends, such as ensuring one is not perceived in a biased way. Most participants came out to their close friends first and then came out to their parents. This perhaps alludes to how important friendship groups are for all adolescents (Erikson, 1970), and perhaps also to the view that the younger generation is seen as more progressive than older generations. This idea of generational progress is supported by research where young people in South Africa seem to view sexuality in much more dynamic ways compared to previous generations (Francis & Reygan, 2016b). An interesting finding that came up in the male participants'

narratives was that despite them being more scared to tell their fathers about their sexualities, mothers seemed to have a stronger negative reactions to their coming out. For these participants fathers accepted the disclosure of their sexualities more readily. Perhaps this is because of social constructions of motherhood where mothers are believed to be more protective of their children, and so more likely to act with concern over their children being sexually diverse and thus more prone to discrimination in the world, whereas fathers tend to let their children have more freedom. However, it is unclear whether this is a gendered pattern because Amy always had accepting parents, Amahle did not mention her father, and Claire only spoke about her closeness with her mother.

6.2. Schooling Experiences of Sexually Diverse Learners

All participants had positive narratives embedded within their overall narratives of their schooling experiences. A participant such as James, despite having endured sexual harassment at school, found his Drama class as well as the Girls' Club as alternative places where he could be himself and let his guard down. All the participants expressed how their networks of friendships provided much-needed support and acceptance that helped facilitate the strengthening of their identities. Crucial to friendship networks, as well as peer networks, was the sense of belonging that most participants expressed. Feeling as if they had a *place* where they could be themselves was affirming, such as Claire's queer friendship group as well as Mark and Diego's sense of family with their respective peers. Amahle's peers seemed curious about her identity and allowed her to tell them about her romantic interests and events such as Pride. However, for some participants peers were less accepting as in the case of James, Amy and at times, Mark.

All participants said that there was no formal representation of sexual diversity in the curriculum. Often if these issues came up in class teachers were not sure how to answer such questions or guide discussions resulting in missed opportunities to discuss sexual diversity.

Claire's narrative attests to how she was the one to bring up sexual diversity in class and Mark said he did the same. However, not all teachers were ignorant. For example, Mrs Murray's class was a kind of 'counter-space' for her learners and she made sure to allow discussions about difficult societal issues to take place, affording her learners a sense of agency to engage with difficult topics. Amy mentioned how her one teacher also discussed safe-sex for homosexual couples while discussing safe-sex practices. Some teachers still displayed personal biases against sexually diverse learners, often using their religion as a way of justifying their homophobia, as in the case of Matthew's religion teacher and some of Amahle's more conservative teachers (Bhana, 2012a; Bhana, 2014; Francis & Reygan, 2016a). As Bhana (2012a) argues, teachers have the potential to utilise their professions to work towards sexual equality. By discriminating against sexually diverse people, they are betraying South Africa's democracy. However, at a higher level, teachers need to be given appropriate support in order to effectively discuss issues of sexual diversity and this includes having a curriculum that incorporates these issues explicitly.

On a managerial level, some principals that participants discussed were homophobic. In the case of Amy, her second high school is a prime example of trying to ignore issues of sexual diversity. Likewise, the school managers at Ken and Claire's school preferred to keep issues of sexual diversity quiet rather than discuss them openly. The issue of a school's image and reputation seemed to be what was at stake for these principals. Having a father that was part of school management structures, Mark seemed to experience the direct effects of what it is like to have to maintain a heteronormative image that a school is supposedly trying to uphold. Despite these findings being in line with other studies (Bhana, 2014), there is a need for school principals to become allies of transformation and pay increased and meaningful attention to issues of sexual diversity within their four walls.

6.3. Intersections of Race, Religion and Sexuality on Feelings of Safety

As several of the participants' narratives attest, experiences within the same school shows how one's physical context structures the possibilities for particular identities because space both contains and opens up possibilities (Canham, 2017). However, identities are intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989), and sexual identity is mediated by other dimensions of identity, and critically in the South African context, race. White participants generally did not mention their race as being an important part of their experience, which accords with previous research that shows how whiteness is naturalised or unmarked (Held, 2015). On the other hand, black and 'coloured' participants explicitly mentioned their racial categories as being important to their experiences. Space, and consequently feelings of safety, are thus asymmetrically accessible to sexually diverse people of colour. Safe spaces are not fixed as they are dependent upon complex relations of power that flow through them (Canham, 2017). There is still a resistance individuals can assert back on these flows of power. 'Counter-spaces' can be found within places of hegemonic power within schools. These spaces carve out niches of safety and acceptance in interesting ways. However, not having such spaces at all within school can lead to sexually diverse people seeking out other spaces, such as online communities or adult spaces like clubs or bars, which may be more dangerous for young people.

Online spaces open up the possibilities for different identities to connect and communicate with each other, in a similar way that physical space allows. However, while online spaces are much less constrained by material conditions, they may also open up a world of harmful possibilities as well such as predatory users. Diego experienced this side of online spaces unfortunately, and he makes it clear that he did this because physically accessible spaces for him where he could interact with people like himself just did not exist. This is a crucial point because it points towards how schools have some kind of responsibility to create affirming

spaces for all their learners. Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) in the United States, for example, meet this need, to some degree, and sexually diverse learners at least have some alternative to potentially dangerous spaces where they could try to seek out connection and community (Freitag, 2013; Hall, 2006).

6.4. The Collective Achievement of Communities of Belonging

Our interactions shape our identities rather than our identities already existing outside of these interactions. This is likened to how space is a relational construction, a product of interactions (Massey, 2004). Viewing identity and space in this non-essentialist way opens up opportunities to see identity and space as malleable and so unequal spaces can become transformed through collective action. For Mark, the sports bus became a place where dialogue was opened up about his identity in a non-judgemental way between straight male peers. Mark's theatre friends and Claire's queer friendship group provided them with a sense of belonging through the interactions as collectives they had within the theatre space and the cafeteria respectively. Mark's Twitter interactions with people like himself, as with Claire's interactions with her queer friends, helped them develop their respective identities and empowered them to take up issues of sexual diversity within their classrooms in some attempt to transform these places. It is through the stories about sexual diversity that they felt able to talk about in their classes that holds the transformative power of making a difference (Plummer, 1995). Claire and Mark, although aware of ignorance within their classes from both peers and teachers, nevertheless brought up issues of sexual diversity. Learners such as these are active agents within schools pushing to make schooling spaces more diverse and accepting. These findings demonstrate the bidirectionality between people and space because particular places *enabled* the participants to express themselves authentically, while the people in these places helped *create* a sense of safety for them.

6.5. The Closet Space: The Right to Choose When to be 'Out'

The personal choices regarding how sexually diverse people express their identities can enable or limit their possibilities. However, the ability to choose demonstrates how these people are not simply victims of circumstance, but rather active agents who are able to protect their own well-being by assessing when they feel safe enough to be open about their sexuality. Coming out has become a naturalised discourse within the lives of sexually diverse people and what is at stake is a person's right to choose, without being judged, how they live out their sexuality. Several participants in this study complicated the in/out binary of the closet through their narratives in line with previous research (Francis & Reygan, 2016b), demonstrating how their sense of 'openness' was largely fluid but depended on the spaces they were in, the kinds of people within those spaces, as well as the expectations those spaces held. As has been discussed, coming out tends to reinforce the heterosexual/homosexual binary, denying sexuality its spectrum of possibilities (McCormick, 2015). Sexually diverse learners should have the right to live out their sexuality without having to label it as much as others should feel able to sit ambiguously somewhere in the middle of the spectrum of sexuality. As Francis and Reygan (2016b) argue, advocating for the use of the term 'sexual and gender diversity' rather than thinking about sexuality in discrete categories allows for greater engagement with issues around sexuality in Southern Africa. This openness to diversity instead of pigeon-holing of sexual identities possibly provides a key to how sexual education in schools should be approached in order to resist dominant discourses that reinforce constricting power relations.

6.6. Resistance to the Status Quo

Taken as a whole, the findings of this study point towards the importance of the agency that sexually diverse learners have. Despite schools' attempts to desexualise young people, the reality is that sexuality is an important part of their lives (Allen, 2013; Epstein & Johnson,

1998; Pattman, 2013). The participants in this study have narrated how they utilised their agency within their schooling contexts, as well as in contexts outside of their schools, in order to resist hegemonic discourses in creative ways and how they sought out, and in some cases collectively created, spaces that would affirm their identities. Despite the homophobic experiences that some of the participants went through, they were still able to use their agency in order to craft alternative spaces along with their friends and supportive peers and teachers, form networks of belonging that affirmed their sense of selfhood, and in some cases find ways in order to make issues of sexual diversity explicit in their classroom spaces. Some participants were also strategically able to navigate when and where they felt comfortable being open about their sexualities. This culminated in an overall ability for these participants to resist the status quo, *when they could*, in order to work towards making the spaces and places that they occupied safer for themselves and others.

6.7. Directions for Future Research

There are many ways in which future research can take the scholarship of sexual diversity in schools. However, I will limit my discussion here to three core areas that I believe hold potential. Firstly, future research needs to endeavour to access sexually diverse learners who are still in school. This was my initial aim of this project before much resistance on the part of principals was encountered. However, there needs to be a continued effort by researchers to find ways in order to directly access the experiences of these learners while they are still in school. The difficulty of this task cannot be denied, however, through strategic negotiation and perhaps through more inventive ways of gaining the trust of school principals, or building on existing trust that may exist, a possible entry-point for such studies may materialise. Secondly, as Msibi (2012) notes, more research needs to be done with sexually diverse learners in township schools. These voices are largely absent from this study but their contributions towards the current literature are needed. There needs to be a more concerted

effort by researchers within this area to access as broad a range of experiences as possible of sexual diversity in all types of schools in the country in order to assess how race, class and sexuality intersect to inform one's experience of school.

Finally, international studies provide evidence of how support groups within schools specifically for sexually diverse people have shown to have positive outcomes (Freitag, 2013; Kosciw et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2013). Research needs to be done into whether or not such support groups in South African schools would have similar positive outcomes for sexually diverse learners. Although this is an ambitious suggestion, there are some schools to my knowledge in the country that already have some form of support group for their sexually diverse learners. Although the politics of trying to gain access to such schools in order to track the progress of such initiatives will no doubt be complex, such a project is necessary. In a country where the rhetoric of the Constitution is a step ahead of the lived experience of sexually diverse people, and considering the current mental health crisis in the country, there needs to be a willingness to finally embrace the constitutional protections afforded to all peoples including those who identify as sexually diverse.

6.8. Recommendations for Schools

The findings in this study align with the findings of Francis and Reygan's research (2016b) as they note how there is evidence of real change in schools that shows that conversations around issues of sexual diversity that would have been sanctioned in recent years are now happening. However, despite there being a shift of some sorts towards acceptance of sexually diverse learners, schools still have much to do. Based on the findings of this study along with existing studies, I propose several recommendations specifically to schools.

There is a desperate need for curricula to include issues of sexual diversity in its own right and not just as footnotes to heterosexuality. Although there has recently been conversation around improved teaching of sexuality education in LO, specifically with the piloting of

scripted lesson plans on sexual topics that some teachers may find difficult discussing, there is still not a formal representation of sexual diversity (DBE, 2019b). More needs to be done. LO teachers seem to be inadequately trained to deal with issues of sexual diversity that may come up in class. This leads to the stunting or complete silencing of bringing issues of sexual diversity into discussion with learners. This results in a perpetuation of ignorance and othering (Francis & Reyagn, 2016a). As Msibi (2012, p. 530) argues, "the improvement of queer learners' experience in schools can only be achieved through teacher-focused and context-specific interventions." Schools also need to acknowledge that learners are not asexual beings. Issues of sexuality are important to the lives of young people and teachers trying to deny this fact is a disservice to them (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Pattman, 2013).

On a broader managerial level, school managers, as well as the Department of Basic Education, need to utilise their position in order to promote increased transformation in schools for sexually diverse learners. Bhana (2012a) argues convincingly that schools need to negotiate with parents and the broader community to address issues of homophobia and challenge parental views that are discriminatory. Bhana (2014, p. 76) argues that "an effective rights-based Constitution in South Africa has provided the platform for change and potential for further development of equality and agency." Thus, the gap between the rhetoric of the Constitution and the lived experience of sexually diverse learners needs to be addressed, and *can* be addressed, by those in charge of educational institutions in the country. Finally, one way that I suggest will be effective in bridging this gap is that learners in schools, with the assistance of supportive school managers and teachers, should be encouraged to set up support groups or alliances specifically for sexually diverse learners and allies of such learners. These groups will provide young sexually diverse learners with easily accessible communities of people like themselves allowing them to foster a sense of self-acceptance and belonging. By sharing their personal stories and experiences with each other,

such groups have the ability to share what Andrews (2010, p. 165) calls the “potential gift of narrative: the knowledge that we are not alone.”

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Van Rensberg

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/05/18**
PROJECT TITLE	A narrative exploration of LGBT+ identity and experience in school
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr R Van Rensberg
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	18 May 2018
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved
EXPIRY DATE	20 June 2021
DATE 21 June 2018	**CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor J Bradbury

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

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 to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

18/10/2018
Date

Appendix B: Demographic Information Form

Age: _____

Race: _____

Gender identity: _____

Preferred pronoun (circle preference): He/Him/His She/Her/Hers They/Their/Theirs

Sexual orientation: _____

What pseudonym would you like to be referred to by in the study? _____

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

- Allow participant to fill in demographic information form.
- Rapport building:
  - What are you studying?
  - Where do you stay?

Section 1: Development of Identity

- Tell me about how you came to identify yourself as [insert their identifier here].

Section 2: Ways and Spaces Identity is Expressed/Constrained

- Tell me about your schooling experience in relation to being LGBT:

  Private, public?

  Safe spaces

  Express self / self-constrained

  Curricula

  Teachers

  Peers

  Any specific incidents or stories you can remember?
- Other than school, when and where did you feel like you could most be yourself? And what about now?
- Tell me about particular places where you felt you were not able to be yourself fully. And what about now?

  How did this make you feel?

Section 3: Perceived Future

- What would you want to change in the future for people like yourself in schools/life?
- If you could give advice to someone else who has gone through similar experiences in life/school as you have what would it be? Why?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me a story about regarding your identity that we haven't spoken about yet?

Closing

Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D: Transcription system

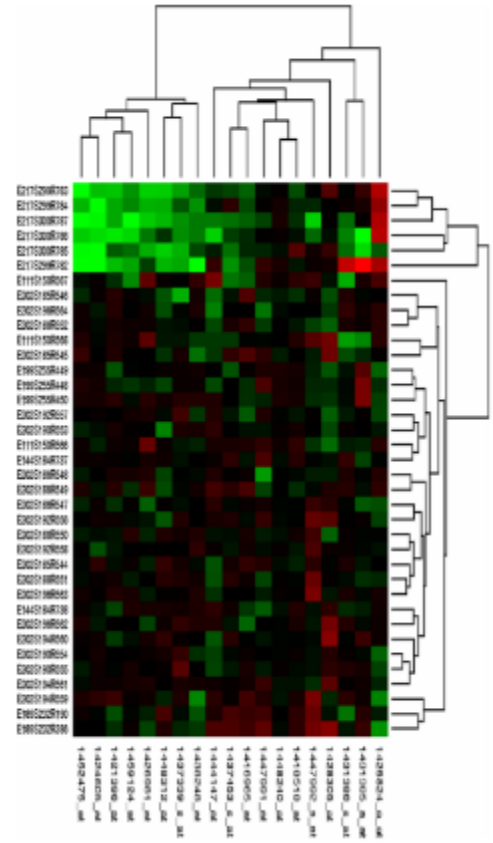
(laughter)	words in single brackets indicate things that can't be transcribed such as laughter or gesturing.
wor-	hyphen at the end of a word indicates cutting off of talk or stuttering.
<u>word</u>	underlined word indicates distinct emphasis of word via pitch or amplitude.
( )	spaces in brackets indicates untranscribable talk (talk which cannot be made out).
Word	italicised words indicate a language other than English has been used.

Additional notes:

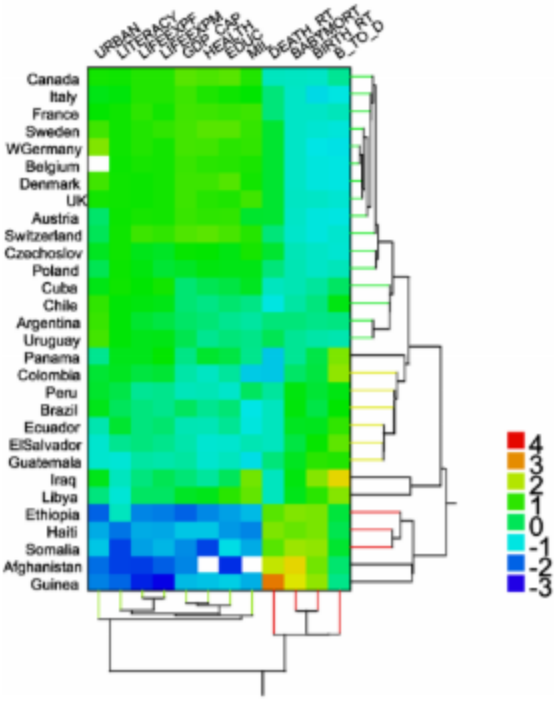
- Interviewee talk is unbolded, while **interviewer talk is bolded**.
- Acknowledgement tokens from both interviewer and interviewees (Hmm, Mmmm, Ja, Yeah etc), as well tokens of speech such as 'umm' 'ahh' etc are transcribed.
- Stuttering or changes of words are transcribed (E.g.: I was-was-was walking with- I was carrying my bag.)

Appendix E: Heat-map examples

Example 1: Gene variation heat-map (Wilkinson & Friendly, 2009):

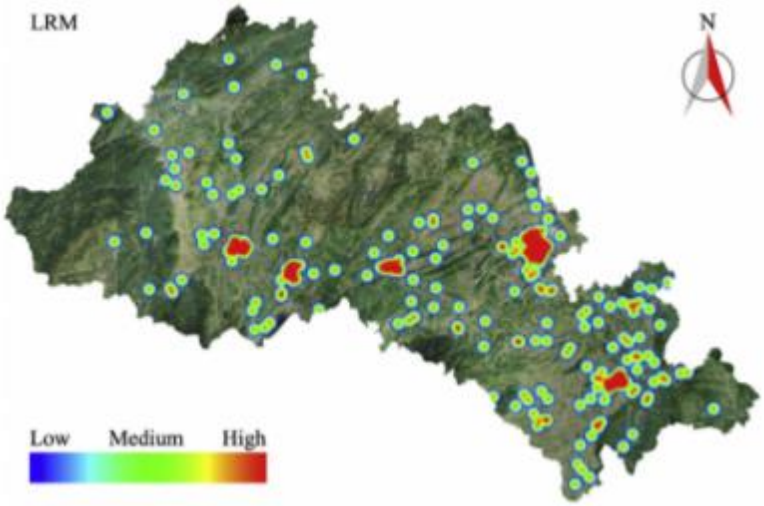


Example 2: Social science data heat-map (Wilkinson & Friendly, 2009):



Example 3: Google search page user use heat map (Șaovă & Raduteanu, 2013):

Example 4: Heat map of fire incidences in Loudi City, South China (Liu, Xu, Zhou, & Fan, 2019):



Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Good day,

My name is Richard van Rensburg and I am studying at the University of the Witwatersrand within the Psychology Department. As part of my studies I am doing a research project to find out more about the high schooling experiences of people who define as LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or other non-straight identity). The title of my study is "A Retrospective Narrative Exploration of LGBT+ People's Identities and Experiences in School." I would like to invite you to be part of my study. The only requirements are that you identified with an LGBT+ identity while you were in high school, attended a high school in South Africa, and have matriculated within the last 5-7 years. This is a voluntary study so you can choose to participate or you can choose not to participate without any consequences.

The project will involve one face-to-face interview with me. This interview will take between 60-80 minutes long. We will talk about your identity and your experiences around your identity in life with a focus on the experiences of your identity during high school. The interview will happen at a suitable time arranged with you on Wits University campus.

If you participate in the study important information that might reveal who you are will not be used in the study or spoken about to anyone else but myself. Only I will know who you are and your name will be changed in the write-up of the study. I will voice record the interviews with your permission so I can transcribe the interviews only but these will be kept safe from anyone else listening to them so nobody else will know who you are. The recordings from the interviews and the transcripts of the interviews will be kept safe on a password protected computer only accessible by me. Only my supervisor and I will be able to look at the full transcripts, but my supervisor will not know who you are.

During the interview, you are free to answer only the questions you feel comfortable with. You can tell me to not record any information you do not want me to without any consequences. You may also leave the study if you want without any consequences. A potential benefit of participation is that it gives you a chance to talk about your identity and experiences as well as to think about your future and the futures of people such as yourself. You will also be contributing to helping researchers understand more about young LGBT+ people in South Africa. There is a potential that you might feel upset by some of the experiences you discuss but you can stop the interview if you feel you are too upset without any consequences.

If you feel the interviews upset you or you want to talk to someone about your feelings here are some details of organisations you can also contact if you feel you need to talk about something upsetting that the interviews made you feel:

Organisation	Purpose	Contact Details / Address
Triangle Project	Provide physical and mental health services for LGBT+ people	Telephonic helpline: (021) 712 6699 *Call between 13h00-21h00*
OUT	Pretoria-based organisation dedicated to the building of healthy empowered LGBT+ communities in South Africa	Telephonic counselling: 0860 688 688 *Call between Mon-Fri 08h30 - 16h30*
	Youth group meetings: safe and affirming space for youth to share experiences and to provide support.	Youth group meetings: Contact Jay Matlou on 012 430 3272. *You have to be at least 18.* 1081 Pretorius Street, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0083, South Africa
LGBTI Christian Community	An LGBTI church-based group which aims to provide a safe haven for the LGBTI Christian Community from all walks of life.	Contact via email: lgbti@trinityjhb.co.za Holy Trinity Catholic Church 16 Stiemens Street, Braamfontein Johannesburg, South Africa
SADAG	Telephonic counselling service for general feelings of upset, anxiety, or sadness.	011 234 4837 or 0800 20 50 26
CCDU at Wits	Walk-in counselling services on Wits Main Campus. Free for Wits students.	011 717 9140 / 32 Email: info.ccdu@wits.ac.za Crisis helpline (24 hours): 0800 111 331

The results from this study will be used to write up a report for my degree but identifying information will be removed. The results may be used in publications and as part of conference presentations, but your identifying information will not be used in these. A summary of the study results will be made available by December 2019 upon request. My contact details, and those of my supervisor are below should you have any concerns or questions. Please **keep** this information sheet but please **return** the **permission form** I will provide to me if you want to participate. Thank you for your consideration!

Yours sincerely,

Richard van Rensburg
813932@students.wits.ac.za
072 821 2151

Jill Bradbury (Supervisor)
Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za
011 717 4515

Appendix G: Participant Consent Form

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Title of project: A Retrospective Narrative Exploration of LGBT+ People's Identities and Experiences in School.

Name of researcher: Richard van Rensburg

I, _____(full name) give my permission to participate in this study and be **interviewed** by Richard van Rensburg for his study. Richard has explained the study to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I understand that:

- Participation is strictly voluntary.
- I do not have to answer all the questions should I choose not to.
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Any identifying information such as my name will changed in the reporting of the study.
- Only Richard will know who I am, but to anyone else I will be anonymous.
- Interviews will be voice recorded so that Richard can write down later what was said.
- Voice recordings will be stored on a password protected computer and will only be heard by Richard.
- The results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for Richard's degree.
- The use of direct quotations from the interview may be used in the research report but it will not be possible to identify me from the quotes.
- The research may be presented at a conference and may be published as well.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H: Participant Consent Form for Voice Recording

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Title of project: A Retrospective Narrative Exploration of LGBT+ People's Identities and Experiences in School.

Name of researcher: Richard van Rensburg

I, _____(full name) give my permission to have my interviews **voice recorded** by Richard van Rensburg for his study.

I understand that:

- Nobody will be able to hear the voice recordings except Richard.
- Voice recordings will be stored on a password protected computer and will only be accessible to Richard.
- If I do not want something I have said to be reported in the study I am allowed to say which parts and it will not be reported.
- The recordings are only being used so that what I have said can be transcribed.
- Direct quotes will be used in the report but any identifying information will be removed so that they cannot be linked to me.
- The recordings will be deleted when the research project has been completed.

Signature: _____

Date: _____