Being a queer womxn within the context of tertiary education
institutions in South Africa: Identity and queerphobia

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Abstract

In a cisheteronormative society, queer people are often silenced and othered by cisheterosexual researchers. This study was to be different in that a queer womxn researcher was to highlight and amplify the voices of queer womxn. The purpose of the study was to explore the way that queer South African womxn in tertiary education make sense of as well as negotiate queerness and queerphobia in their daily lives. These experiences were explored in a process consisting of three steps: Firstly, an in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted. Secondly, the womxn participated in a two week long process in which they made use of journaling. Lastly, a short debriefing interview took place in order to ensure that the researcher completely understood the journals. Ten participants were recruited using purposive sampling, and thereafter the data was examined through the lens of queer theory. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used in order to organise the data into meaningful themes. Five main themes arose from the data: identity, experiences of queerness, gendered queerphobia, systematic and institutionalised queerphobia, and being a queer womxn at university. Throughout the results it became evident that the intersectionality of the womxn's varying identities and the uniqueness of each queer individual impacted heavily on the way that they experienced being queer, on how they experienced queerphobia, as well as the way that they interpreted queerphobia. Queer students did not feel that the university was an inclusive space for queer people, and continued to feel marginalised and othered within tertiary education institutions.

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Opsomming

In 'n cisheteronormatiewe samelewing, word queer individue dikwels stilgemaak en vervreem deur cisheteroseksuele navorsers. Hierdie studie is anders as vorige studies omdat die navorser 'n queer *womxn* is wat die stemme van queer vroue op die voorgrond plaas. Die doel van die studie is om ondersoek in te stel na die manier waarop Suid-Afrikaanse *womxn* in tersiêre onderwys sin maak van queerheid en queerfobie in hul daaglikse lewe. 'n Proses wat uit drie stappe bestaan is gebruik om hierdie ervaring te verken: Eerstens, is 'n in-diepte, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud gevoer. Die *womxn* het tweedens 'n joernaal gehou oor 'n tydperk van twee weke. Laastens, het 'n kort onderhoud plaasgevind ten einde te verseker dat die navorser die joernale heeltemal verstaan het. Tien deelnemers is gewerf deur middel van doelgerigte steekproefneming en daarna is die data ondersoek deur die lens van queerteorie. Interpretatiewe Fenomenologiese Analise is gebruik ten einde die data in betekenisvolle temas te verdeel. Vyf temas het uit die data na vore gekom: identiteit, ervaringe van queerheid; geslagtelike queerfobie, sistematiese en geïnstitusionaliseerde queerfobie, en om 'n queer womxn op universiteit te wees. Deur die resultate het dit duidelik geword dat die interseksionaliteit van die *womxn* se verskillende identiteite en die uniekheid van elke queer individu baie beïnvloed is deur hoe hulle dit ervaar het om queer te wees, hoe hulle queerfobie ervaar het, en deur hoe hulle queerfobie geïnterpreteer het. Queer studente het nie gevoel dat die universiteit 'n inklusiewe spasie vir queer individue is nie, en het voortgegaan om gemarginaliseerd en vervreemd te voel binne tersiêre onderwysinstellings.

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This paper would not have been possible if it were not for all the queer humxns who fought tirelessly for the rights of queer individuals in South Africa. Many queer humxns have been murdered or faced queerphobia and violence simply for existing, and with this paper I would like to honour each one of them.

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Chapter 1: Queerness: Identity and queerphobia

1.1. Conceptualising queerness

I just think that it's really important for people to understand that queerness is so many things and it's so multifaceted and it's so not straightness and cisgenderedness. Like it's.. and it's beautiful. (Zoe)

Sexuality within the context of a post-apartheid South Africa is profoundly political, and it is also impacted heavily by various intersecting historical factors, as well as being subjected to the scrutiny of moral oppositions (Steyn & van Zyl, 2009). Our sexuality cannot be seen as existing in isolation, but rather intersects with other aspects of our identity, specifically our social environments, our cultural practices and the various components that make up our identities (Manalansan, 2006). A working definition of sexuality given by the World Health Organization (2002) in a report regarding sexual health is as follows,

> Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and "spiritual" factors (p. 5).

Queerness, similarly, encompasses much more than being a sexual orientation, and can be thought of as a form of sexuality, or at times, in the case of asexuality, a lack of sexuality. Queer is a term which is often associated with those who are a part of the LGBTQIPA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Pansexual, Asexual and other sexual orientations and gender identities) community. The word queer has historically been used to demean LGBTQIPA+ people and has therefore had an extremely negative connotation to it (Drechsler, 2003). However, even though the term queer was once used as a slur against the LGBTQIPA+ community, it has since been reclaimed by many as an umbrella term to include all sexual orientations and gender identities which do not fit into the societal idea of normative. The term queer is thus useful in the identity politics which

might construct how one lives one's life, and in challenging the heteronormative assumptions which presume that all people are heterosexual and cisgender (Callis, 2013; Levy & Johnson, 2011; Hunt & Holmes, 2015; Rodrıguez-Rust, 2000). When a person opts for queer as an identity they often do so due to the fact that it allows their sexuality and gender identity to be deconstructed, ambiguous and to be personalised to their unique identity and to make it therefore impossible to draw accurate and definite conclusions about the person's sexual behaviours or to whom they may be attracted (Callis, 2016). Thus, the reclamation of the word queer has been seen as a way to not only take back the power from those who use the word as a slur, but also as a means to break the taboos around sexuality and gender, to transgress and repose that which is considered to be normative and acceptable, and to critique and resist the very nature of cisheteronormativity (Freccero, 2007; Watson, 2005).

Peters (2001) found that participants who adopted queer as an identity label did so due to the fact that they felt that sexuality was fluid and they were reluctant to take on a fixed identity or they identified with non-normative gender or sexual orientation identities. They might also have still been in the process of questioning their sexuality or might have been making use of the label queer in order to oppose cisheterosexism, whether it might have been politically or by living in opposition to the norms set in place by society. Alternatively, they might have been opposed to labels and stereotypes associated with direct naming of each sexuality and gender identity, or they did not feel like they fitted in with conventional lesbian and gay standards.

This study focused on exploring the ways that queer womxn in the context of tertiary education institutions made sense of, as well as the way that they negotiated, both their queer identities as well as the experience of queerphobia in their daily lives. The study made use of semi-structured interviews, as well as reflective journals as a means of collecting the data.

The study made use of queer theory as a framework. The purpose of queer theory is to create a space in which we could explore the way that the queer community thinks about themselves and the ways that others treat them. It creates a space to unravel our presumptions about people being cisgender, as well as being heteronormative (Richardson & Seidman, 2002). Furthermore, it allows for the collection of data from the queer community without othering and thus further marginalising queer people (Butler, 1990).

The strength of this research study is that it combined two important components: That of research done by a queer activist who used the current socio-political climate on

campus, as well as academic, theoretical knowledge. This added a certain richness to the study, and added depth to the data which was gathered.

1.2. Terminology

In this study it was important to make use of specific vocabulary which is relevant to queer research. This section serves to contextualise and create an understanding of terminology which will appear throughout this thesis. The motivation for this is that it combines the words which are used within the political and social justice sphere with an academic context, and thus creates a robust understanding of the implications of the use of semantics.

The concepts of womyn and womxn have arisen as feminist alternatives for the word woman/women. The term womxn is the preferred term due to the fact that womyn is trans-exclusionary, and has often been used to marginalise and exclude those who do not identify with the gender binary and who are not comfortable in "womyn-only" spaces (Browne, 2009). The term 'womyn' is thus grounded in what is called Transgender Exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF) and involves the exclusion of womxn who are transgender. It is thus rooted in transphobia, and ignores the importance of intersectionality within feminism (Wu, 2016). Flavia Dzodan (2011) is well-known for her commentary on intersectionality, saying in her seminal piece "My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit!"

According to Trigilio (2016), it has been well established by queer theorists that identity politics can continue to further marginalise and oppress groups of people. They continue to expand that even when working in the music industry, the concept of when to include and when to exclude groups of people can become a strenuous and often messy coalition of political rivalry between sexuality, gender and politics. The creation of new semantics to understand gender has also included the term humxn, which is a more inclusive term which includes all genders, and does not denote the essentialism of 'man' as the stem of existence. Bell Hooks (1994) states,

> To recognize that we touch one another in language seems particularly difficult in a society that would have us believe that there is no dignity in the experience of passion, that to feel deeply is to be inferior, for within the dualism of Western metaphysical thought, ideas are always more important than language. To heal the splitting of mind and body, we marginalized and oppressed people attempt to recover

ourselves and our experiences in language… There, in that location, we make English do what we want it to do. We take the oppressor's language and turn it against itself. We make our words a counter-hegemonic speech, liberating ourselves in language (p.175)

One's gender can only be contextualised within the confines of the various interactions and relationships which we form, and the social confines which form our identities, and thus is a fluid and symbolic relationship with ourselves and the world around us (Wood, 2006). Throughout our foundational years our sexual identities are moulded and formed by the way we perceive the world, and the concepts that are normalised by societies in the form of rules, regulations, expectations and moralities. This can often define the cis-gendered, heteronormative societal standard that is put on our sexualities and genders to perform a standardized role of what is "natural" and "normal" (Træen & Martinussen, 2008). The term 'cis-gender' can be defined as born with genitalia which matches one's gender identity, for example, having a vagina and feeling like you are a womxn (Tate, Youssef, & Bettergarcia, 2014).

According to Msibi (2013) it may be a challenge linguistically to use terms which have become associated with the LGBTQIPA+ rhetoric within the South African perspective, due to the fact that many participants may make use of different terms to describe and understand their sexual orientation and gender identity. This understanding may at times differ significantly from the Western colloquial terms.

1.3. Research question

How do queer South African womxn in tertiary education make sense of as well as negotiate queerness and queerphobia in their daily life?

1.3.1. Aims and Objectives.

1. To explore the way that queer womxn within the context of tertiary education make sense of their identity.
   a. What are the various constructs that make up the queer identity?
   b. What does being a queer womxn mean to the participant?

2. To explore the experiences of queerphobia directed towards queer womxn within the context of tertiary education in South Africa.
   a. What are the experiences of queerphobia towards queer womxn in the tertiary education context?
   b. How do queer womxn contextualise the experiences of queerphobia?

1.4. Rationale for study

Queer Nation (cited in Peñaloza and Ubach, 2015) states that the word queer as well as queer theory is '…a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world' (p. 339). Queer studies create a niche in which we can explore the way the queer community thinks about themselves and the world around them, as well as slowly dissecting the way we understand love and the heteronormative, cis-normative mindsets which we are brought up to believe to be the usual way to understand the world (Richardson & Seidman, 2002). In this, the research seeks to expand on the knowledge on queer womxn from the perspective of a queer womxn, without othering queer humxns as being non-normative.

Furthermore, there has been a large amount of research done on men who have sex with men (MSM) in South Africa and across the world, due to the fact that there is a high risk factor of HIV transmission (Arnold, Struthers, McIntyre, & Lane, 2013; Crosby, Mena, Geter, & Hickson, 2015; Jobson, de Swardt, Rebe, Struthers, & McIntyre, 2012). This further centres men in the field of research, and thus enhances the idea of patriarchy even within the confines of research spaces. Due to this, within queer studies, concepts such as the queer patriarchy become important components to address, because there are not as many studies done on womxn due to studies on womxn not receiving HIV funding.

This becomes further problematic with the lack of representation of queer researchers, with research spaces being dominated by cisheterosexual, male voices. This creates a need for queer womxn to begin creating niches in the research world for queer womxn about queer womxn to explore different themes of queerness in South Africa and begin deconstructing the spaces within which we live.

1.5. Outline of thesis

Chapter one serves as an introduction to the research study giving a basic overview of the topic as well as the terminology used throughout the thesis. Within this chapter, I also placed the research question, the aims and objectives of the study as well as the rationale for the study.

Chapter two provides a general overview of the literature, and also of the research topic. It combines the literature review and the theoretical framework, as the literature forms the major theoretical concepts which are used throughout the study. Within this chapter I discuss queer theory, intersectional issues within the queer community, queer identity, queerphobia, queerness and tertiary education, and lastly psychology and queerness.

Chapter three outlines my methodology which was utilised throughout the research process. Within the chapter, I discuss the research design which was made use of throughout the study, the participants who took part in the study, the data collection for my research study, the data analysis procedures which I followed, the way in which I ensured that the study was as trustworthy and credible as possible, a section on my own reflexivity, as well as the ethics which are associated with my study.

Chapter four is launched by a brief introduction to each of the participants whose voices were captured in my research study. It is followed by the combination of my results and discussion, which consists of the presentation of the themes which were drawn from my data making use of IPA. They are then in turn discussed by means of existing literature.

Chapter five concludes the study with a main argument and conclusion. Within this chapter I also highlight the limitations of the study, recommendations which can be drawn for future research, as well as the implications for universities.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature, as well as provide a general outline of the topic. I will begin by discussing queer theory, which is the general theoretical framework upon which my thesis is based, and then discuss intersectional issues within the queer community, queer identity, queerphobia, queerness and tertiary education and lastly psychology and queerness. This discussion forms the literature review, and the theoretical concepts through which my data will be analysed.

Epprecht (2013) points out that although Africa might have issues which are unique to the continent, it is important to look at the literature from the vantage of Western frameworks, as this approach might provide a certain means of structuring questions, as well as giving suggestions as to where we might begin looking for solutions. It may also give a more critical lens through which we can engage, point out where to take on strategic silences, as well as highlighting the various areas which might be problematic and then also those which might already have solutions. Lastly, it might also provide a way of beginning to understand the emotive reasoning behind the existing conflicts surrounding queerness. Thus, I have combined literature from both Western frameworks as well as literature from South Africa.

2.1. Queer theory

Queer theory is the study of LGBTQIPA+ humxns which does not subject them to being othered, objectified and separated into being different and therefore strange by the heteronormative eye. It therefore deconstructs the very terminology and semantic conceptualisation which has become associated with queer humxns and their respective sexualities and genders (Richardson & Seidman, 2002). When making use of queer theory it is essential to hold in mind that the goal of queer theory is not to make legitimate the experiences of queer sexualities, for that is to assume that they were not legitimate to begin with. However, it is to begin highlighting the conceptualisation that the lines between hetero/homosexuality might not be as rigid as previously imagined (Butler, 1990). Queer theory seeks to critique the beliefs, principles and perspectives of those who do not identify as cisheterosexual, instead of merely analysing their lives or their positionalities (Dilley, 1999; Watson, 2005). The aim of queer theory is to challenge the binaries which we as a society have normalised such as that of man and womxn, masculine and feminine, researcher and participant, queer and heterosexual and instead explode them (Meyer, 2007).

Michel Foucault (1978, 1989), from the school of poststructuralism, is often cited as laying a foundation for queer theory. Foucault was able to demonstrate through his genealogical methodology that there was instability within the theories postulating that identity could nonchalantly be divided into demarcated categories. He believed instead that identity was produced through discourse. When we look at various disciplines such as that of psychiatry, medicine, the penal system, sexology and so on, they exert power and institutional knowledge over certain identities. An example of this would be the way that the homosexual identity was classified as a mental illness and thus fell under the field of psychiatry (Watson, 2005).

Foucault's main goal was to discuss that despite sexuality seemingly being a prohibited area of discussion it had instead become the resonating core of thought in Western society. Thus, Foucault (1978) felt he needed to,

account for the fact that [sexuality] is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said (p.11).

One of the claims which Foucault made was that of the medicalization of sexual acts and behaviours. Western society viewed sex as a science and not as a pleasure to be experienced, thus the only acceptable sex was that for procreation, which could be governed by the authority of the biological, psychological and medical disciplines. Foucault was able to demonstrate that some identities, such as that of the queer identity, were seen as an aberration, tied to the person's actions and their behaviours, and that these individuals were then subjected to scrutiny and therefore made objects of knowledge. Their sexual part of their being became who they were. Thus, the 'species' of homosexual deviant was created, who needed to confess their perverse ways to medical professionals, in order to gain diagnoses. Herewith homosexuality was maintained through discourse. However, this also provided a mechanism for queer bodies to self-identify in reverse discourse, and thus form communities (Callis, 2009).

Following on from Foucault, Minton (1997) defined queer as,

Resisting the discourse of homophobia, by assuming a de-essentialized identity that is purely positional, constitutes a queer rather than a gay identity. Unlike a gay identity,

which is grounded in an affirmative choice of homosexuality, a queer identity has meaning only in terms of its oppositional relation to what is normative and dominant (p. 338).

Queer theory utilises analytical tools to critique and revolt against mainstream and traditionally acceptable thinking about what is 'normative' and 'acceptable' in a wide array of contexts, often focused on mainstream thinking within academia (Abes, 2007; Alexander, 2003; Cobb, 2007; Dilley, 1999; Jeppesen, 2010; Solis, 2007). Thus, queer theory seeks to oppose the very concept that there is any truth in a universal identity such as a list of sexualities and gender identities. To expand on this, we would reason that the identities which we believe to exist and the boxes we have formed do not hold true for all the ways in which humxns may exist, and that knowledge may be produced (Riggs & Treharne, 2017). Queer theory brings about the challenge to oppose the notion of neatly organised binaries of the LGBTQIPA+ rainbow flag, and that we should completely restructure our ideas around the queer identity as flux and fluid (Kopelson, 2002; Valocchi, 2007). Furthermore, queer theory brings forth the challenge to resist and upheave hierarchical power systems which privilege and normalise bodies which are white, cisheteronormative, middle-classed, able-bodied, young and conform to the patriarchy (Green, 2007; Riggs & Treharne, 2017). Queerness is the ability to critique the very notion that gender and sexuality is a set, stable binary and it has the capacity to resist the normalisation of cisheteronormativity, and queer theory thus seeks to challenge the cisheterosexist underpinnings and conventions which are considered theoretical understandings within academia (Abes, 2007; Halperin, 2003; Riggs, 2010). Queer theory encourages researchers to instead embrace the concept that humxns may repeatedly negotiate their sex and their gender, and thus concurs that these classifications are not fixed but rather fluid and flux (Ruffolo, 2006).

Cisheteronormativity is extremely limiting, and thus in disrupting and interrupting its foundations one is able to broaden and complexify subject matter in novel ways (Sumara & Davis, 1999). Manning (2009) speaks about how important it is when addressing queer methodologies, to avoid thinking which might be dichotomous and therefore allow one's thoughts to become incredibly limited, specifically with regards to the queer lived experience. Queering one's methodology contrasts vastly with thinking in stark binaries, or black and white thinking, instead deconstructing the patriarchal cisgendered heteronormative world and bringing forward into the light identities which previously were seen as deviant or simply

erased. To queer something as a verb can be defined as actively seeking trouble with a concept, and working to undo or unfix categories (Peters, 2001).

Even within queer theory, it has become important to address intersectional issues, such as the way race, gender, disability, class and other issues affect the way people express their queerness, or the way others treat queer people because of these intersections of systematic marginalisation (Valocchi, 2005). Thus, I will borrow from the framework of intersectional feminism within queer theory, which positions that one must frame any topic from a reference point which takes into account multiple layers of collective and social categories and how these different categories may intersect with the person's singular experience of the world, specifically with regards to understanding the way that a person can be both privileged and oppressed at the same time in different ways (Bowleg, 2012).

The essential component of intersectionality is that marginalised identity is not created by a singular component, but is rather a complex, multifaceted build-up of various inequalities or disparate outcomes which intersect with one's identity in a web-like creation of lived reality, and thus one cannot isolate separate components of these identities without creating a false outlook (Bowleg, 2012). According to Valocchi (2005) it is essential to delve into how intersectional issues such as race, class, ethnicity and gender may interplay to form power structures and hierarchies in an individual's construction of their identity as it may deepen the discursive potential of queer theory. Thus, the study will focus on an intersectional model of Queer Theory.

2.2. Intersectional issues within the queer community

Intersectionality is an analytic tool which was introduced in the 1980's. Intersectionality is a heuristic term which can be used in order to bring attention to contentious and oftentimes challenging dynamics of both that which is different between humxns, as well as where they might stand together against a common foe in solidarity, specifically in the context of social justice and oppression (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

When we speak about identity, it is important to remember that many womxn have multiple identities. Identity is multifaceted and is not a closed off structure, in that it might include a person's race, a person's ethnicity, a person's sexuality, a person's social and economic class, a person's gender as well as other facets of identity (Adib & Guerrier, 2003; Lykke, 2011).

Most of the life events that womxn of colour may experience cannot be summarised by established paradigms of racial and gendered discrimination and the way that they are currently understood. They also cannot be looked at separately, but they constantly and profoundly intersect in the lives of womxn of colour and thus the entire situation needs to be studied before clarity is perceived (Crenshaw, 1991). In June, 1981, Audre Lorde (1984) presented the keynote speech at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Storrs, Connecticut. She said the following,

> Racism. The belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied.

> *Women respond to racism.* My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

> Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; Anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation.

> My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, not guilt. Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures (pp. 124).

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) states that by disregarding the differences within a collection of people, one might contribute towards creating more conflict amongst the group, which might be used to further politicise violence against womxn.

In a lecture accepting her Sydney Peace Prize, Arundhati Roy (2004, November 4) makes an interesting observation. Roy points out that people often refer to those who are 'voiceless', which is a common idea when referring to marginalised groups, which Roy says

is incorrect. The reason she gives for this is that marginalised groups are not voiceless, but that they are rather purposefully put on mute by those with power, and blatantly ignored.

Theron (2011) discusses how the greatest challenge which marginalised groups, such as queer people, need to focus on is that of a lack of education and information within the group. This can lead to erasure of certain people within the group, internalised queerphobia and sometimes even the outright shunning of those who might perpetuate stereotypes or not being the more acceptable kinds of queer such as a cis-gay white man. She elaborates further in discussing her own challenges which she faced where it often felt like one needed to be a member of a "lesbian club" in which certain expectations are required. This might become challenging when a partner comes out as trans, or if one is not monosexual and begins dating a cisgendered man.

Makinwa-Adebusoye and Tiemoko (2007) state that two major factors which influence sexuality are religious beliefs and traditions, as well as the institution of marriage. However, these two major influential factors are further compounded by urbanisation. Urbanisation affects sexuality in that in the growing financial variation of people, there are multifarious approaches to expressing one's religion, and thus also then one's sexuality. Furthermore, in increasing the population density, one increases the person's ability to remain anonymous about their sexuality and gender identity. Thus, there is more space for sexual practices which might not be normative or acceptable under the scrutiny of religious or traditional standards, and thus space is provided for the formation of social movements, such as the queer community, as well as sex workers, and the group dynamics that occur within them.

Tucker (2009) explores how queerness in South Africa is often constructed within a framework of various intersectional factors, with each intersection being related to various political, historical and contemporary factors. These factors may lead to exclusionary and exploitative practices, even within the queer community. The gay white male may in some aspects replace the heterosexual man in queer communities, due to cis-normativity, patriarchy and white privilege. This may lead to the erasure or silencing of those who are not white, cis-gender or male and who do not have the same position in society (Nast, 2002; Sonnekus, 2007).

This becomes apparent in the South African context, especially in queer spaces such as gay bars, as well as at Pride, which is an annual event. In these contexts, separatism may

become even more overt and suffocating, which may be further compounded with capitalist notions of financial gain, which focus on privileged groups being centred, combined with emphasis on materialism and fashion (de Waal & Manion, 2006).

Mkhize, Bennet, Reddy and Moletsane (2010) state that we live in a society which still upholds patriarchal views which enforce sexism by means of traditional views, culture, religious views and other forms of 'reasoning' which are deemed socially acceptable so as to place womxn in a position of less power, thus leaving womxn more vulnerable. They continue by saying that even when South Africa's people finally won the struggle for a democratic South Africa in 1994, womxn still continued being seen as secondary citizens, as is still the case today. They state that until the day that equity is reached, and womxn are treated as equals, queer womxn will continue to struggle and suffer under harassment, discrimination and hate crimes.

Gloria Anzaldúa (cited in Peñaloza and Ubach, 1991) stated regarding the intersectionality of queerness, "Queer is used as a false unifying umbrella which all 'queers' of all races, ethnicities and classes are shoved under. At times we need this umbrella to solidify our ranks against outsiders [but] we must not forget that it homogenizes, erases our differences. Yes, we may all love members of the same sex, but we are not the same" (p. 340).

Particularly in South Africa, we are reminded daily of the remnants of the apartheid state, in which South Africans were separated according to their skin colour, and people who were not classified as white were stripped of their basic humxn rights and dignity. The issue with being a post-apartheid country is that those problems were never truly resolved, and South Africans, particularly white South Africans, failed to address issues of severe inequality such as spatial apartheid (Ramphele, 2012). Mkhize, Bennet, Reddy and Moletsane (2010) write that race is a crucial component in queer identity. White queer womxn are much more likely to feel safe in their sexual orientation and identity, despite still experiencing queerphobia and gender-based violence which is a reality across race.

2.3. Queer identity

Queer identity can be defined as the refusal by an individual to accept the legitimacy of the narratives of conventional or normative sexual orientation and gender identity (Portwood-Stacer, 2010). According to Sullivan (2003), "One's being in the world is always marked, molded, formed, and transformed in and through encounters with others and with a

world. Identity is never simply a question of self-authorship. Identity categories are continuously fracturing, multiplying, and metamorphosing. Identity, one could argue, is already always haunted by the other, by that which is not "I"" (p. 149). Being queer has different meanings to different queer people, and can be anything from something that you are, a label that you use to call yourself, something that you do or an action, whether it be sexual or political, as well as a more theoretical conceptualisation or way of thinking about the world (Peters, 2005). Identity is complex and can be influenced by a multitude of factors, instead of a singular narrative of all queer people being the same and equally marginalised. Factors such as class, race, gender, age and other intersectional factors may have a huge impact on how a person identifies and understands both their oppression, as well as their privilege (Ma'ayan, 2011).

Van Rooyen (2011) discusses how the singling out of a queer identity oversimplifies the various aspects that define and create who a person is. This might make a person feel boxed into an identity which can rather be described as fluid instead of homogeneous.

Many queer people are forced to live a double identity, in which they are open to some about being queer, and have to put on heterosexual airs for others that might judge them or harm them (van Rooyen, 2011).

The word queer was often used as a term to mock and diminish queer people. Crenshaw (1991) speaks about how categorisation can be a tool of power for both the oppressor and for the oppressed, and that it may be a lot more of a complex idea than originally thought. This is due to the fact that although it might be used as a tool to box marginalised people, such as queer people, black people, and other groups of people, subordinated people can and do partake in taking back their power by labelling themselves. Identity can thus be a stronghold for people who have been marginalised to resist and to take back their power.

South Africa is well-known for having a progressive and advanced Constitution which was formed in 1996, which explicitly declares that neither the state nor a singular person may be queerphobic (Diesel, 2011). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) declares, "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (p. 6). The enactment of the constitution has led to great strides for South

African queer rights. Some of the rights which queer people have gained are being able to receive pensions as well as medical support, as well as queer couples being able to get married or being able to be in a civil union, and also being able to adopt children into their families (Diesel, 2011). However, it is important to recognise that even though the Constitution is supposed to protect queer people, this is often not put into practice (Triangle Project, 2006).

> According to many anti-colonial feminists, all patriarchies, whether operating in colonialist or neoliberal capitalist periods, function on "sameness" and on the persistence of fixed identity – heterosexual/homosexual, women/men, femininity/masculinity, black/white, coloured/Indian. They argue that patriarchies must function in this way in order to consolidate masculine dominance within colonial and capitalist processes" (Muholi, 2011, pp. 197).

2.4. Queerphobia

Many people who identify as LGBTQIPA+ still face queerphobia in their daily lives on account of institutionalised queerphobia in the form of policies, regulations, cultures and traditions which might discriminate. Other forms of queerphobia are social practices which are exclusionary, as well as various types of violence, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse and violent behaviours (Marnell & Khan, 2016). Queerphobia is any form of discrimination, victimisation or negative treatment based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. In the queer community, transgender individuals face an even higher amount of discrimination and victimisation than cis-gendered queer individuals, which is called transphobia (Langenderfer-Magruder, Whitfield, Walls, Kattari, & Ramos, 2016).

Reddy (2002) describes queerphobia as a form of speech which is bigoted and serves to intimidate as well as harass queer people. Another form of queerphobia can be physical violence. Two particular words which are used in conjunction with describing queer people and thus pathologise, terrorise and forbid the expression of queerness is that of queer people being perverts, as well as sodomites. The word pervert refers to a person who is unhinged, distorted and a danger to society, whereas sodomite refers to the Biblical concept of Sodom and Gomorrah, which demonises anal sex, particularly between two men (Reddy, 2002).

An in-depth study using 958 participants was completed by the Triangle project and UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology which looked at levels of empowerment of queer people, specifically those in the Western Cape, South Africa (Rich, 2006). Part of the study

was to measure the levels of anxiety experienced by those being victimised in the form of queerphobia. These levels were found to be extremely high for those who participated in the study, with 59% of the participants reporting that they feared that they would be abused physically, 55% stating that they feared hate speech and abuse which was verbal, and 33% fearing that they would suffer domestic violence and abuse. In the study, men showed higher levels of anxiety overall, however, womxn were afraid that they would be raped and/or sexually assaulted. Furthermore, the unemployment rate of queer respondents from the Western Cape statistically stood at 11%, which was lower than the overall unemployment rate of South Africa's queer population (Rich, 2006). However, this percentage is likely affected by the fact that the large majority of respondents in the study were white and from a middle-class, more affluent background. We can make a deduction that the identities of those who partook in the study affected this outcome, and that it is likely that there are an even larger number of unemployed queer people in the Western Cape.

According to Epprecht (2013) a public opinion poll revealed that 90% of people in Africa do not approve of queerness, and thus one could make an assumption from that opinion poll that the majority of people would not believe that queer people should have the same rights as cisgendered heterosexual people.

Simon Nkoli (cited in de Waal & Manion, 2006), recorded during the first Pride March on 13 October, 1990 in Johannesburg, is quoted as saying,

> This is what I say to my comrades in the struggle when they ask me why I waste time fighting for moffies… In South Africa I am oppressed because I am a black man, and I am oppressed because I am gay. So when I fight for my freedom I must fight against both oppressions. All those who believe in a democratic South Africa must fight against all oppressions, all intolerances, all injustice. With this march gays and lesbians are entering the struggle for a democratic South Africa where everybody has equal rights and everyone is protected by the law: black and white, men and women, gay and straight (p.37).

In South Africa particularly, some examples of common slurs used against queer people are that of "moffie", "isitabane", "nongayindoda" and "dyke", which are commonly used to mock those who might identify as trans, queer or are even used at times for those not rigidly following conventional gender roles and norms (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010).

However, queerphobia is also often internalised, convincing the person that they are not worthy of love, and that their sexual orientation or gender identity is disgusting and deserves to be chastised (Triangle Project, 2006).

Shifra Jacobson (2011) speaks about her own experiences with internalised queerphobia, where she speaks about how when the first time she was approached by another queer womxn she was taken aback due to the fact that she always believed that lesbians looked and acted like men. Her mother then explained to her that people can be queer no matter how they expressed their gender, and that a womxn did not have to look a certain way to be queer. This was an absolute revelation to her.

A womxn's sexuality is further policed by heterosexual standards, which are often forcedly phallocentric and guarded by neo-traditionalism and a strict moral code. This is despite many womxn choosing to construct their own decisions about their sexuality, contraceptive devices and medication, their relationships, as well as seeing their life as more of a personalised adventure, instead of a predestined, boxed up destiny (Connell & Pearse, 2015). In Africa specifically, it is important to take a rights based tactical approach towards combatting age old traditions, cultural norms and behaviours which preserve practices which are toxic specifically towards womxn, as they put the womxn at risk physically, as well as harming her mental health and well-being (Makinwa-Adebusoye & Tiemoko, 2007).

However, despite the emancipation of womxn via feminism, a womxn's sexuality is not yet entirely free. According to Judith Butler (1990), "This utopian notion of a sexuality freed from heterosexual constructs, a sexuality beyond "sex", failed to acknowledge the ways in which power relations continue to construct sexuality for women even within the terms of a "liberated" heterosexuality or lesbianism" (pp. 40-41).

Transgender womxn face oppression in everyday tasks, and can often experience oppression in something as simple as a trip to the doctor for general treatment. This can result in a huge amount of anxiety. Tomson (2016) describes how sitting in a waiting room can create anxiety as one might be afraid that the person who attends to you might misgender you, which is calling you the incorrect gender pronoun, because of ID documents still having your dead-gender or dead-name, or that you will find yourself in the wrong ward if you are admitted to hospital, or that you will be asked inappropriate and personal questions which have nothing to do with why you are at the doctor or hospital. She gives an example of questions a doctor asked her, which include "Have you ever tried to cut off your genitalia?

and "Can you walk in heels?" These kinds of questions are problematic because it assumes gender roles are realistic expectations of a gender, and that conforming to these norms are prerequisites to meet the criterion of being transgender.

According to a press release on the transgender day of remembrance on November, 2015, 65% of transgender people in a study of 120 people in South Africa were harassed either physically, verbally or sexually. Of those harassed, the majority did not report to the police, in fear that they would be further traumatised, mocked or that they themselves would be arrested (Nkoane, 2015, November 20). According to Mkhize, Bennet, Reddy and Moletsane (2010), there is an exponential increase in the number of womxn who are black and queer being murdered in South Africa.

Although it may not be possible to measure the amount of times a queer womxn experiences queerphobia or sexism, it is not even fractionally possible to compare the way that different queer womxn might adapt to the culture of cisheteronormativity and patriarchy in order to survive in the world (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010).

The consequences of being subjected to queerphobia can have a severely detrimental influence on a person's wellbeing, with a higher risk of suicidal ideation, suicidal attempts as well as using alcohol as a means to survive and cope with the consequential negative emotions and life circumstances (Wells & Polders, n.d.).

Some of the important ways that queer people can protect themselves from queerphobia and the negative impact on their lives is by spending more time with other queer people, as well as becoming more educated and thus empowered, which has been tied with decreased levels of hate crimes and assault whether verbal, physical or sexual (Wells & Polders, n.d.). Thus, a sense of community as well as a sense of empowerment amongst queer people is essential to self-preservation and well-being (Wells & Polders, n.d.).

When we talk about queerphobia, we have to be mindful that it is not always in the form of covert or direct action or lack of action. It can often present itself as institutionalised queerphobia, which would present itself in an organisational setting, such as that of a hospital. An example of this is in a study on the health care that queer people receive in Gauteng, which was conducted by OUT LGBT well-being (Wells & Polders, n.d.). This study's results showed that queer people who require medical services might have an extremely difficult time receiving the help they need, which can at times even lead to fatal

consequences. This may be the result of the health practitioner basing their questions on a cisheterosexual framework of what constitutes 'normal', a medical practitioner refusing to treat a queer patient, the patient delaying going to a healthcare provider to avoid queerphobia or an overall feeling of not being satisfied with the quality of medical care (Wells & Polders, n.d.).

A quote from a speech during National Women's Day accurately describes the way that having a layered identity may impact various forms of violence. Wendy Isaak (2007) states in her speech,

> Multiple identity-based discrimination and violence which result in severe vulnerability, exclusion and invisibility must be a critical consideration in post-apartheid South Africa; particularly in considering the duty of the State to protect women from violence and to further respect and promote rights entrenched in our Constitution.

Maharaj (2011) elaborates that even though the constitution forbids discrimination towards queer people and queer couples, and that it is legal for queer couples to get married, it is still incredibly taboo in a traditional context for a person to have a religious or traditional wedding.

Stereotyping within the queer community can be extremely limiting and problematic, as it may result in the idea that womxn who identify as queer should conform to the "butch" stereotype, which is usually seen as a more masculine womxn. Conversely, we must concede that a person's sexuality has very little to do with their gender expression, and that one can be anywhere along the continuum of gender and/or sexuality and still be queer, or be a masculine womxn, and identify as heterosexual (Halberstam, 1998). It is important not to exclude sexual minorities from research as queer womxn might not specifically identify with the term lesbian, bisexual or pansexual. Many womxn might have had sexual relations with womxn, and thus fall under the category of queer, or womxn who have sex with womxn, but might not specifically identify as lesbian, bisexual or pansexual (Bauer & Jairam, 2009). Even within the LGBTQIPA+ acronym, certain groups might be more erased. It is therefore essential to realise that those who are monosexual, or attracted to one gender, might be privileged, as well as the way that being cis-gendered also serves as a privilege. According to Lapointe (2017) students who identified as being queer, but not monosexual, often felt that they were not understood or that their identities were questioned. They also felt like they

were invisible or that they faced marked prejudice from both queer and heterosexual people. Humxns who might be genderqueer, agender, demi-gendered or other gender groups might be erased due to their gender identity (Galupo, Davis, Grynkiewicz, & Mitchell, 2014). They might also be more likely to suffer from violence, particularly interpersonal violence, which is further compounded by the fact that they may be isolated from support networks which are made available to cisgender queer people. They may also struggle with internalised transphobia (dislike or disdain for themselves because of not being cisgender), as well as the invisibility of trans humxns in the LGBTQIPA+ community, and lastly because others may threaten to out or expose them as transgender (Greenberg, 2012).

Thelandersson (2014) highlights the fact that through the use of social media handles such as twitter, conversations between feminists have begun centring on the lack of inclusivity which has been a problem in the movement. This allows for the calling out of feminists who are not being inclusive of others, as well as awareness of a constant process of learning and unlearning of concepts and ideas which have been declared as the norm.

In Western society, it is recognised that prejudice, discrimination and queerphobia against queer individuals is seen as deviant behaviour, instead of a person's sexual orientation or gender identity being seen as being aberrant (Toynton, 2006). Thus, queerphobia is increasingly seen as not being acceptable as either a belief or action.

2.5. Queerness and tertiary education

Queer students in tertiary education experience marginalisation on campuses, and many face multiple oppressions at the same time, with their race, gender, class, having a disability and other factors all playing a role in their identity and their daily lived experiences (Linley & Nguyen, 2015). It is important to note that once a person enters a tertiary education or organisational setting, the dynamics that play a role in marginalisation and oppression of the student will not be separated (Hill, 2006). The onus is on the university to create a positive learning environment for queer students and create spaces for them where they may find support and feel safe within their identities; the universities should also adapt the curriculum in order to accommodate queer students (Linley & Nguyen, 2015). According to Francis and Msibi (2011) there is a huge need for addressing the issues of heterosexism as well as queerphobia within tertiary education institutions in South Africa. They also state that at the time of their writing not much was being done to address these issues.

Heidi October (2006) completed a research study making use of fourteen participants at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Their research focused on the experiences of the queer participants, especially with regards to their social interactions. The results of their study showed that student residences were not safe spaces for queer students, and were often queerphobic. Their study also showed that students might not only rely on official structures for support, but might rely on social support such as friends or family. Another finding was that students found it important that the stereotypes which society had of queer people be addressed, even though not many of the participants were openly queer nor able to speak out about queer issues.

Another research study was also completed by Lesch, Brits and Naidoo (2017) at a South African tertiary institution in which six queer couples were interviewed. The data revealed that acceptance of the couples' queerness differed according to the faculty at which they were studying. The Arts and Social Sciences faculties were reported as being the most accepting of queerness. What also came to the fore was that the students reported university residences as not being accepting of queerness. Thirdly, the students reported that groups and societies on campuses that had religious affiliations were not accepting of queerness. Lastly, the students reported that queer societies, such as LesBiGay, in their positivity of queer identity, created uplifting, safe spaces for queer bodies to exist in.

Gedro (2006) speaks about how the invisibility of queer womxn in the organisational setting may contribute to the lack of coverage in adult education of the topic of queerness and gender identity. This serves only to further compact the stigma that queer womxn face due to the general person not hearing about the identity and queerphobia that these individuals encounter in their daily lives.

A study in which womxn academics at Stellenbosch University participated, showed that being a womxn was analogous to stunted development and progress in your career. This was found to be deeply ingrained in the cultural and institutional factors that place limitations on womxn (Williams, 2017). Thus, we can conclude that being both queer and womxn might have even more far-reaching implications for one's academic career.

Epprecht (2013) makes the point that by increasing a population's knowledge about queerness, especially emphasising that queer people are just like everybody else, you automatically decrease the levels of ostracism, shaming of, extortion and violence towards queer people and increase the levels of employment opportunities for those who are queer. In

educating the person and the community, you automatically increase the amount of queer people who choose to live a transparent queer life and thus vastly improve their emotional wellbeing. Education is vital in creating a group of humxns that feels comfortable in its skin, not having to conform to both societal and familial pressures.

A study in a Canadian high school explored the gay-straight alliance, which is a social club for queer students and their cisgender, heterosexual allies. The purpose of the alliance is to form various types of support for students who might be at risk, due to the antagonistic environment of being a young queer humxn. The study revealed that educational spaces may often lead the queer student to feel a high level of perceived risk, as well as a feeling that others might be hostile towards them due to their queer identity. Safe spaces may reduce the stress which queer students experience, may lower the amount of bullying, as well as be seen as positive for the mental health and well-being of queer students, decreasing suicide rates as well as decreasing the chances of dropping out of school (Fetner, Elafros, Bortolin, & Drechsler, 2012). Toynton (2006) suggests that representation of queer lecturers and teachers in learning environments might aid in creating safe spaces for queer students in educational spaces, by giving visibility to queerness.

DePalma and Francis (2014) reveal that there is a cisheteronormative bias which occurs in the education system. In the study, South African teachers were interviewed regarding their teaching practices in Life Orientation about sexual diversity. The study showed that the teachers who were interviewed applied rigid thinking in their teaching methods, which were affected by their religious beliefs, the lack of guidelines in educational policy and curriculum outlines, science and the belief of pathological understandings of queerness, as well as some who drew on the sacredness of the constitution and humxn rights. The majority of educators expressed great difficulty in discussing sexual diversity and queer issues, and often confused sex, gender and sexual orientation. Francis (2013) argues that the way that educators impose their own personal worldviews, morality and belief systems onto the way that they teach sex education undermines the effectiveness of teaching. They argue that this might be influenced by the draconian policing of sexuality and the cisheteronormative values which were heavily enforced during apartheid in South Africa.

Renn (2010) argues that institutions of higher learning are paradoxical in that even though they serve as the primary source for most of the research about the queer community as well as queer theory, these institutions continue to lack adequate transformation. They

argue further that even though these institutions might be more tolerant of queer individuals and queer theories, there are not many higher education institutions which have allowed queer theory to directly influence their teaching methods, their teaching outcomes and the way they communicate with students, catering rather for the cisgender, heterosexual student. Tertiary education systems end up continuing the cycle of erasing and silencing queer womxn, instead of aiming to disrupt the pervasive cisheteronormativity and thus empower queer womxn (Gedro, 2006).

Furthermore, queer students face specific risk factors which might dramatically impact and even compromise their ability to reach their full potential in their academics, specifically in challenging academic disciplines (Gattfried, Estrada, & Sublett, 2015; Watson, Wheldon, & Russel, 2015).

2.6. Psychology and Queerness

Melanie Judge and Juan Nel (2017) discuss psychology's tentative relation with the concept of hatred, specifically with regards to that of gender identity and sexual orientation. Psychology has historically made use of authoritative onto-epistemological theories and structures in order to understand humxn identity and the ways that humxns behave, and has often categorised certain people as either 'deviant' or 'abnormal'. In doing so, psychology has made use of science to justify the oppression of queer people. Furthermore, by reducing institutionalised queerphobia to being the problem of the queer person, or rather, saying that the person who is queer has the problem, psychology has upheld and reproduced the existing social affairs of racism, sexism, transphobia and queerphobia. There is much hope for restorative justice within psychology, but this would have to take place by means of the careful critique of mainstream psychology, leading to transformation in a concrete and tangible manner.

In a study by Victor and Nel (2016) fifteen queer participants were interviewed regarding their experiences of seeing either a clinical or counselling psychological professional in South Africa. The participants reported both positive and negative findings, with the positives being that they felt that the therapist accepted them, gave them unconditional positive regard and did not judge them. However, some participants also reported negative experiences, which were entirely attributed to the therapists alone. The main negative report was that of not affirming the queer person's sexual orientation. Thus, it can be assumed that affirmative practices by a psychological professional are helpful for

queer people, although more research would need to be done on a larger population to confirm this finding.

This research study contributes to psychology by being based on the ideology that the queer experience is normal and natural. It has a unique way of exploring the lived experiences of queer womxn and how they grapple with queerphobia as a reality in their lives. The researcher herself is a queer womxn, which reveals nuances which might have been missed by a cisheterosexual researcher. The hope is that the findings of the study might be used along with other studies to affect policy changes and institutional change within tertiary education institutions to lessen queerphobia incidents and to impact restorative justice.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methodology which was utilised throughout the research process. I will discuss the research design which was made use of throughout the study, the participants who took part in the study, the data collection for my research study, the data analysis procedures which I followed, the way which I ensured that the study was as trustworthy and credible as possible, a section on my own reflexivity, as well as the ethics which are associated with my study.

3.1. Research design

According to Fox and Bayat (2013), qualitative research methodologies are designed with the specific purpose of explaining and expanding on the way that various factors interact, specifically with regards to events, humxn beings and the various experiences associated with existence, without the use of specific numerical data. This research study utilised this method in order to expand on the experiences of queer womxn within the context of tertiary education.

Data for this study was collected in three steps. The first step was to conduct semi-structured interviews with the participants which were then carefully transcribed. The second step of the data collection process was that participants kept a two week reflective journal, in which the participant could make use of a variety of means of bringing across meaning, including the use of lyrics, poetry, journaling, or photography in order to highlight their experiences of queer identity and queerphobia. Journaling is defined by Hayman, Wilkes and Jackson (2012) as referring to the process in which research participants make use of a collection of their thoughts, their emotions and affect, as well as their lived experiences by writing and making use of other forms of media such as pictures, poems and other creative means. Lastly, a brief interview was conducted in order to ensure that the journal was clearly understood and in order to debrief. This interview was carefully transcribed. The data was then analysed by means of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

3.2. Research participants

The research participants were recruited by means of purposive sampling, specifically making use of criterion sampling. Criterion sampling allows one as a researcher to choose participants who meet specific criteria which are important to the study. Purposive sampling

allows the researcher to make deliberate decisions about who will be in the study, where the study will take place and how the research would best be carried out (Palys, 2008).

The benefit of using purposive sampling is that I am also a queer womxn in tertiary education, and thus share many of the circles and societies in which other queer womxn engage. I have also been involved in queer activism on campus, and thus have the respect of many queer womxn in the area. This was helpful in that people were more likely to trust me with their life experiences, and the fact that I shared a common identity with the participants allowed them to not feel othered for their experiences.

The participants were all comfortable being interviewed in English. The ages of the participants varied between the ages of 19 and 24, with a mean age of 21,7. Five of the participants were white, three were black, and two were coloured. Five participants identified as queer, two identified as lesbian, two as bisexual, and one as pansexual. One of the participants identified as genderqueer, however she also identified with the experiences of being a womxn. The other nine participants all identified as cisgender womxn. More information about each participant is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant information in ascending age order

Pseudonym	Undergrad/Postgrad	Age	Race	Sexual Orientation
Cloud	Undergrad	19	White	Bisexual
Keets	Undergrad	20	White	Lesbian
Mikaso	Undergrad	20	Coloured	Queer
Ella	Undergrad	20	White	Queer
Meli	Postgrad	21	Black	Bisexual
Cinnamon	Undergrad	22	Black	Pansexual
Callie	Undergrad	23	Black	Queer
Jen	Postgrad	24	White	Lesbian
Zoe	Undergrad	24	White	Queer
Ace	Undergrad	24	Coloured	Queer

The study made use of participants who were recruited from a queer community of a tertiary institution in the Western Cape, and the person had to identify as both queer and as a womxn. Participants were recruited by means of social media in which a post was shared on the university's queer society's social media page as well as my personal social media page, which others then shared. Participants then contacted me directly, and I sent them an information sheet which invited them to take part in the study (See Appendix 1).

I approximated that data saturation would be reached at ten participants. Data saturation can be defined as the point in which no original thematic content comes forward in the data, and Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2005) estimate that data saturation usually happens in between 6 and 12 interviews.

3.3. Data collection

Data collection took place in the form of semi-structured interviews (See Appendix 2) which I personally conducted in order to ensure that I was satisfied with the quality of the data and the depth of the questions. The first interview took place on 14 February, 2018 and the last interview took place on 19 April, 2018. This allowed space for all the participants to take part in the first interview, complete two weeks of journal entries, and then participate in the debriefing interview.

The first interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 70 minutes. The second interview ranged from 6 minutes to 19 minutes. Each interview was recorded with permission from the participant. The participants then received instructions for their journals (See Appendix 3). They chose to use multiple methods of media to journal, including voice notes, videos, drawings, photos, diary entries and lyrics to a song. The interviews and journal sections that were videos or voice clips were carefully transcribed.

Before the first interview commenced, each participant was asked to fill in a biographical form in which basic biographical questions were asked (Appendix 4). The participants were then given both oral and written information about the study so that they could give informed consent prior to the interview in order to ensure that they were fully aware of everything that was required of them, and also to gain permission from them to make use of the data collected. This also served as a means to inform them of their rights as a participant as well as the purpose of the research study (See Appendix 5. All information was provided in English. The reason for this is the lack of accessibility of various languages to queer-linguistics, for example there is no Afrikaans word for "Queer", "Heterosexual", and so on. Leap and Boellstorff (2004) discuss how language plays an important role in shaping the way queer humxns communicate and the messages which are relayed by the choice of language to associate with queer topics.

3.4. Data analysis procedure

Both the interviews as well as the journals were analysed by means of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is a method of analysis which requires the researcher to gather data which is thick, detailed, reflective interpretations of a person's lived experiences from their own perspective. The data is then analysed by the researcher trying to understand the deeper meanings of the person's understanding of their experience, as well as giving the person a voice to express their own lived experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

Callary, Rathwell and Young (2015) suggest analysing data using a chronological order, in which the data is first analysed on an individual level, and thus each participant is viewed as a separate part of a whole, and then on a group level in which the data is analysed as a whole instead of the sum of its parts. This means careful transcription of the data, and then careful coding of each participant separately into themes which are inductive (Callary et al., 2015). Coding takes place by cautiously observing where patterns in the transcript might show up (Patton, 2002). The data then needs to be analysed using a group level analysis, in which the codes which are common across all the participants are noted and separated into approximately five higher level themes, with each higher level theme having approximately four or five sub-level themes (Callary et al., 2015).

In practice, this followed the process described by Smith and Eatough (2011) which is that first I carefully read and reread the data until I was intimately familiar with it. Whilst reading the data, I kept notes of various anecdotes and thoughts which came to me regarding what I was reading which I thought might be significant to the study. I then used the margins of my data to make notes of anything which I felt might be important. This stage is known as the free textual analysis phase.

The next stage involved using the right hand margins of my data and transforming my notes as well as my left hand margins into more concise themes which were used at a later stage. Smith and Eatough (2011) caution researchers as it is at this particular stage that it is possible to lose the connection between what the participant is saying and what the researcher understands.

Next, I further 'reduced' the data by making connections between certain themes which might interconnect and therefore grouping them appropriately. In this stage, some of the themes were dropped altogether if they were not appropriate to the emerging results or if there was not enough evidence to base these themes on.

The last stage was producing a table with the final themes and the themes from which they were comprised. Quotes were used from the participants to remind the researcher of how they came about.

3.5. Trustworthiness and credibility

When doing a qualitative research study, one should always aim to conduct and report one that is of as high a quality as possible, which can pose certain challenges to a researcher

due to the fact that all studies have limitations. It is important to address these limitations; however, not forgetting the strengths of a study, the quality the study might have, as well as its scientific merit. This can be done before the study commences by ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of a research design (Cope, 2014). Reflexivity is an essential component of any qualitative research design; it is that deep reflection on what is being researched; carefully ensuring that the researcher's own personal belief systems, world views and behaviours do not create any disturbance with regard to the data (Watt, 2007).

I made use of the suggestions made by Guba (1981), who proposed four keystones of ensuring one's research is as reliable as possible, namely by focusing on the credibility of the study, the transferability of the study, the dependability of the study and lastly the confirmability of the study.

Credibility can be defined as how well the research study that is conducted matches up with the reality of the lived experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Shenton (2004) describes some ways of making a study more credible which I have applied throughout the study: The methodology which I chose to adopt for the research study and the theoretical framework which I applied to the study have been used successfully in queer studies. I am also familiar with queer culture as I myself am a queer womxn and thus was able to easily understand various nuances and terms which a cisheterosexual person might not necessarily understand. Thirdly, I made use of triangulation by making use of two interviews, as well as journals in order to ensure that the data which was produced was of a high quality. I was also able to ensure that my participants were as honest as possible by allowing participants to volunteer to join via social media, and thus only people who were really interested joined, as well as by allowing participants to withdraw at any time. I also made sure that they were well aware that pseudonyms would be used throughout the study and that their confidentiality would be maintained at all times. This allowed the participants to trust me and to speak truthfully about their experiences. I made use of iterative questioning and probing in order to draw out as much information as possible, and to draw out any contradictions. Next, I ensured that I relied on my supervisor as a pillar of support. He guided me and debriefed me throughout the research process, giving an outside opinion and expert advice on where I might be straying. Lastly, I carefully examined previous queer studies which had been done at tertiary institutions and compared the results to see the contrasts and the similarities.

Transferability refers to the way that a researcher should ensure that the reader of a research study should be able to see the connections between certain aspects of the study which has been conducted with their own lived reality, experiences or their own research (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This was achieved through collecting detailed biographical information about the participants and providing thick descriptions of the data, as well as by making use of purposeful sampling.

When one conducts a study on the same population making use of the same research design and the same population, it would be expected that one would get the same results repeatedly, independent of maturation and historical effects. This is referred to as dependability (Shenton, 2004). The way that this was achieved in the study was by meticulously describing and explaining my methodology.

Lastly, confirmability can be defined as the various steps which one needs to put into place in order to make sure that the final results of the research study are not influenced by the preconceptions and views that the researcher holds, and that they are those of the research participants (Shenton, 2004). When making use of IPA as a tool of analysis it is particularly important to engage with reflexivity at all times and to constantly be in a state of curiosity, specifically due to the fact that IPA is based on the double hermeneutic in that it is not only the way that the participant makes sense of their experiences but also the way that the researcher makes sense of the data (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). This can be counteracted by maintaining an active, keen awareness of the factors which might possibly have an influential effect on the way that one would understand and analyse the data (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). In order to analyse data with a sense of curiosity, it is important to make use of what is known as bracketing, which is often seen as crucial in IPA. According to Fischer (2009), bracketing refers to when the person who is doing the research is able to put aside their own personal belief systems, their own culture, their own values and other factors which might impact the way that they view the data which has been collected, and this is thus put aside in a "bracket" or "shelf" for the duration of the study. Fischer (2009) elaborates that often bracketing can be a performative action, where it should be something which is constantly reflected on throughout the research paper. The researcher should describe their own personal context and outlooks so that the person reading the paper may constantly reflect on how the researcher's interpretation might have influenced the data and come up with their own alternative understandings of the data. In understanding that this is important in IPA research, I have included reflections on my own beliefs, opinions and ideologies allowing the

reader an understanding of how my interpretations of the data were possibly influenced and allowing them to draw their own conclusions. Lastly, I have also included a section in which I discuss any limitations of the study.

3.6. Reflection on own experiences: Reflexivity

I am a 28 year old white queer womxn who has been actively involved in campus politics, specifically relating to queer rights on campus. I have been a leader in student societies on the campus, and have been a chairperson of a queer rights society on campus. This has given me easy access to queer spaces and therefore the ability to easily gather participants. However, it also was important for me to be cautious of my positionality within these spaces and to be able to ensure that my participants were aware that I would maintain their confidentiality at all times. As a researcher one can never remain an impartial, detached onlooker of humxn behaviour, but rather one is profoundly implicated in the way that any narrative, both big and small, is constructed and told, which provides a deeper insight into the social contexts that one is a part of (Mumby, 1993).

Throughout the research process I was very aware of my own positionality as a white queer womxn who at times was interpreting the stories shared with me by womxn of colour, and the political nature of that in and of itself. Many of these womxn shared intimate stories of racism interplaying with their queerness, and I had to make decisions on how I would analyse that data as a white womxn who does not personally understand racism. However, by erasing the data I would be doing my participants an injustice. Thus, I made the informed decision to include race and to instead be cautious in my interpretations.

I had to pay close attention to my own emotional needs throughout the research process due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. I had to make sure that I did not put my own personal interpretations of the research over what the participants were saying, and had to make use of careful iterative questioning to make sure that I understood the participants.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Before I commenced with this study, I applied for ethical approval from the Psychology Department of Stellenbosch University as well as the Research Ethics Committee. I also applied for Institutional permission from Stellenbosch University. Throughout the study I provided protection for each of the participants in the study by means of a pseudonym during the transcription process in order that when the data was analysed

none of the participant's real names were used at all in order to protect the identities of the participants. In order to ensure confidentiality, all of the collected interviews and personal data are being kept on a password protected laptop, and the journals which are hard copies are kept in a fire proof filing cabinet which is locked at all times. Any important information that might reveal the participants' identity such as their name or location has been completely changed in the transcription process, or completely withheld, according to the researcher's discretion.

Collecting data from queer people should not be done carelessly, and should always be done with empathy and care, instead of haphazardly collecting experiences and othering those from the queer community, or making assumptions without careful consideration of how one's biases may influence the collection and interpretation of data (Halberstam, 2003). Queer communities have often been scrutinised through the microscope by third parties as oddities and then speculated about, which has led to an othering and further marginalisation within the community. Butler (1990) states,

That the epistemological point of departure is in no sense inevitable is naively and pervasively confirmed by the mundane operations of ordinary language – widely documented within anthropology – that regard the subject/object dichotomy as a strange and contingent, if not violent, philosophical imposition. The language of appropriation, instrumentality, and distanciation germane to the epistemological mode also belong to a strategy of domination that pits the "I" against an "Other" and, once that separation is effected, creates an artificial set of questions about the knowability and recoverability of that Other. (p.197)

Othering can be a very problematic phenomenon when speaking about queerness, and the fact that I myself am a queer womxn, in the context of a South African tertiary institution, and have an understanding of queer culture, of the contextual factors surrounding othering, as well as the culturally significant language often used within the community, has been a helpful tool in conducting the research. It is easier to speak of queerness when you yourself are queer, and can create an echo chamber for queerness.

However, it is also important to remember that despite being a member of the queer community or having knowledge that only an 'insider' would have leading to the collection of rich, thick data, it also put the onus on me to exert extra effort into making sure that my research was ethical. When one is an 'insider' one needs to put even more effort into making

sure that reflexivity is used throughout the research collection and analysis process (Birch & Miller, 2014). Furthermore, within the understanding of intersectionality, not every experience mirrored my own due to other factors of identity influencing experience, and that there were many womxn who had very different understandings of what it is like to be queer and a womxn. Thus, it was important to be reflexive and careful throughout the data collection and the analysis of the data to ensure that I was not reflecting my own experiences, but that of the participants.

All of the research participants were given a copy of the informed consent forms, which they all signed. This ascertained that they were at all times aware of their rights throughout the research process. The research participants were also informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the study whenever they wanted to without any consequences. They were also made aware that their confidentiality would be protected at all times. I did not offer any remuneration for participating in the study.

I did not foresee any harm from the intended study for the participants. However, due to the possible risk that somebody could have possibly felt emotionally distressed or felt discomfort due to the personal nature of the interviews, I put in place precautions to refer any student experiencing discomfort to the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at: 021-808-4994. Other support services were also provided in a handout (See Appendix 6).

However, this was carefully monitored by my supervisor, Prof Desmond Painter, throughout the process. Prof Painter's contact details are as follows: Telephone number: 021-808 3458 or email address: dpainter@sun.ac.za .

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

4.1. Overview of study

The aim of the study was to explore the question of how queer South African womxn in tertiary education make sense of as well as negotiate queerness and queerphobia in their daily life. This was to be explored through two main parts:

- Exploring how queer womxn make sense of their identity
- Exploring the experiences of queerphobia directed towards queer womxn within the context of tertiary education institutions.

This chapter is dedicated to exploring these experiences. The raw data was made sense of by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis through the lens of Queer Theory. Thus, I carefully examined the transcribed interviews and journals, and then built up careful interpretations of the data, building up themes and sub-themes which best suited the data.

In order to capture the voices of the participants in the study I have decided to make use of verbatim quotes from the interviews and journals. At times these may be quite lengthy. I also made use of journal entries as they appeared in the journals and did not change spelling mistakes or grammatical errors due to the fact that I did not want to interfere with the voice of the participants. I did not include [sic] to indicate errors as this would interrupt the flow of the paper.

Some of the experiences highlighted were not directly experienced at university, but were still directly the experiences of the university students. For example, a university student who might be living at home might still experience the threat of violence when returning to their home after class. As Meli points out, "It's not just in the university space, where.. and university is a microcosm of society." I decided that these experiences were still relevant to the study as they still directly impact the experiences of being a queer womxn at university.

Each of the participants chose their own pseudonym at the beginning of the study, which I felt gave them more of a sense of ownership and voice in the study. This pseudonym was used throughout the research process. It also gave a sense of confidentiality and protection to the participants.

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The findings of the study presented themselves in five main themes and twenty one sub-themes which will be presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Outline of Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Identity	Intersectionality
	Race
	Class
	Religion
	Sexuality
	Gender
	Health
Theme 2: Experiences of queerness	Erasure
	Stereotypes
	Sexualisation and fetishisation
Theme 3: Gendered queerphobia	Microaggressions
	The threat of violence
	Discrimination
Theme 4: Systematic and institutionalised queerphobia	Cishet ignorance
	The university
	Culture
Theme 5: Being a queer womxn at university	Sense of community and social support
	Safe space
	Sexism and queer patriarchy
	Queer relationships
	University: A time to explore

4.2. Queer womxn participants

By making use of queer theory, one implicitly agrees that queerness is not a form of difference or something to be studied as unusual or strange, but rather as something normalised. Due to this, I have decided to dedicate a section of the results to introducing each of the participants in order to highlight their voices and their contexts, and to highlight their lived reality. However, after careful reflection, I came to the realisation that it would not be ethical to reveal too much information about each participant due to the fact that the queer community at the tertiary institution which my study was conducted at is small. Because of this, revealing detailed information could identify participants and infringe upon their confidentiality. Thus, I have decided to limit the introduction to specific details that would not infringe upon my participants' identities and have made careful considerations of what information was already provided by the biographical information, allowing intimacy without revealing identities. Thus, in this section of the thesis I will introduce each of the participants, making the reader more familiar with each person as they are reading through the results and discussion session. The participants will be introduced in ascending age order, from youngest to oldest.

4.2.1. Cloud. Cloud is currently an undergraduate student who is studying chemical engineering. She is 19 years old, and identifies as a cisgendered female who is bisexual. She does not like the term queer, and prefers to identify as gay or bisexual. She is a white womxn. She struggles with social anxiety disorder. Cloud is not out to her family as her family is incredibly queerphobic, however she is out to some of her friends at university. She is from a family that is upper middle class, bordering on wealthy and therefore does not struggle financially. Cloud first realised she was gay when she was in Grade 7 when she realised that she liked both boys as well as girls. She found comfort in the internet where she was able to find out that bisexuality was normal, and that she was not alone.

4.2.2. Keets. Keets is studying to be a teacher, and is currently an undergraduate. She also coaches hockey at the schools in the area around the university. As part of the education degree one must complete practical teaching, which she has done in the schools around the university. She is a 20 year old white womxn. She identifies as a cisgendered lesbian female. However, she does not like being called a lesbian, as she feels the word has been sexualised and has lost its original meaning. She would rather identify as gay. Keets also identifies with the term queer, however she states that she doesn't have all that much experience with the word and sees it merely as an umbrella term for the LGBTQIPA+ community. Keets feels

that her friends are very supportive of her being queer, and is out at university. However, this was not the case when she was living in residence, as she did not feel comfortable disclosing her identity in res. She now lives in private accommodation and feels much more at ease. She first realised that she was queer in Grade 7, however when she came out to her friends, they immediately rejected her and told her that she was looking for attention. She first came out as bisexual because of this, and tried to date a man for a while. However, after a while, she realised she was not at all attracted to him. Upon asking a friend for advice, she was told to just be herself. This is when she came out as lesbian, and decided to be true to herself.

4.2.3. Mikaso. Mikaso is an undergraduate student who is studying electronic engineering. She is a 20 year old coloured womxn. She identifies as a queer cisgendered female. Mikaso was recently in a serious relationship with a man. However, she now feels that she is primarily attracted to womxn both romantically and sexually. She remarks how this makes it challenging for her friends to accept her sexual identity, despite her no longer feeling attracted to men. She states that sexuality is fluid, which is why queer is a label that she feels most comfortable with. However, she also identifies as a lesbian. For her, queerness allows for fluidity as well as for the ability to avoid labels and stereotypes which she feels might not capture essentially who she is. She sees queerness as being a comfortable blanket term for the LGBTQIPA+ community. Mikaso is out to her friends at university, but doesn't always see the need to come out to people. She wonders why heterosexual people do not need to come out but queer people do. Mikaso is not out to her parents, however she is out to her sister who she says forms part of her social support. When Mikaso was in Grade 7 she started to have a relationship with her best friend, who was a girl. They would hold hands at break, and she recalls other innocent childhood relationship memories. However, because she was at a Christian school, the school found this to be unacceptable and called her parents to come to the school to discuss the matter. Because of the shocked looks on her parents' faces after the teachers shared the rumours with them, Mikaso chose to deny everything. Her parents accepted her denial and they never spoke about it again. This experience still remains with her as one of the main reasons why she has not come out to her parents.

4.2.4. Ella. Ella is a 20 year old white womxn. She is an undergraduate student who is studying a BA in social dynamics. She identifies as a queer cisgendered female. She also identifies as pansexual. She explains that she prefers the term queer because she does not need to explain what pansexual means each time, as often people do not understand the term. She also believes that sexuality is fluid and she does not want to be tied down and boxed in by a label. She sees queer as being an umbrella term which easily captures all aspects of

sexuality and gender identity, and thus removes the assumptions and expectations of labels. Ella is out at university, as well as to her family. However, she is having difficulty with her mother as she originally was dating a friend and did not tell her mother about it as she was not yet ready to come out. Her mother still holds this against her. Something that she finds challenging is the fact that her father is a pastor and her mother is a teacher, and both her parents have received a lot of resistance and opposition since she has come out as queer, especially her father.

4.2.5. Meli. Meli is studying her honours in history, and is therefore a postgraduate student. Meli is a black womxn. She is 21 years old and identifies as a genderqueer bisexual womxn. She also identifies as queer: for her the word queer is heavily associated with reclaiming her power and is also very much political in nature. She is from a working class family. She is HIV positive, and also diagnosed with depression and anxiety. She is out to her friends at university, yet never had the opportunity to come out to her family as queer, due to the fact that she was discovered as being queer and describes how her family then made it their mission to turn her heterosexual.

4.2.6. Cinnamon. Cinnamon is studying her BCom in Management Accounting and is an undergraduate student. She is 22 years old. She is a black cisgendered womxn. She identifies as a pansexual, demisexual, poly-ace womxn. She also strongly identifies with the word queer because she believes sexuality is a spectrum, and she does not like being boxed in by labels and assumptions. She also sees queer as being an umbrella term which encapsulates many sexualities which gives her an amount of freedom in expression. Cinnamon is only out to some of her university friends, but she carefully chooses who she discloses her queerness to. She does not discuss whether or not she is out to her family, but she speaks about how she feels that it is essential for her as a queer person to be successful in case something goes wrong and she is ousted from the family. This implies that she is not out to her family, and that she believes that her family would not accept her being queer. She is diagnosed with bipolar mood disorder as well as depression. She is from a middle class family and she discusses how she has a medical aid fund which has been beneficial in the treatment of her mental illness.

4.2.7. Callie. Callie is a 23 year old black womxn from Zimbabwe who is studying and living in South Africa. She is an undergraduate student who is studying Economic Sciences. Callie identifies as a cisgendered womxn. Even though she is only attracted to womxn, she does not identify with the word lesbian because she feels the word has been oversexualised. She therefore identifies only with the word queer. She views queerness as not

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conforming to heterosexual standards and breaking free of the boxes of heteronormativity which society might assign one. She also views queerness as being heavily political. Callie is the chairperson of a queer society on the campus of the university. She is open about her queerness on campus. She does not speak about whether she is out to her family or not.

4.2.8. Jen. Jen is doing her Masters in Linguistics, and is therefore a postgraduate student. She is 24 years old and is a white cisgendered womxn. She identifies as lesbian, but prefers the term queer or gay as she feels that the word lesbian has been overly sexualised. Jen is open about her identity on campus. Jen realised she was queer about a month after she matriculated. She doesn't discuss whether or not she is open about her identity with her family.

4.2.9. Zoe. Zoe is a 24 year old white womxn. She is an undergraduate student who is studying visual arts. She identifies as a queer or gay cisgendered womxn, and her reason for identifying with the word queer is that she feels it allows for fluidity in sexuality; she also sees it as being a convenient umbrella term. Zoe also views queerness as being highly political. Zoe is out about being queer at university, and is also out to her family. Her family is accepting, however she speaks about how her mom often perpetuates microaggressions by the way that she speaks about queerness to her. She yearns for complete acceptance from her mother, but states that in some sense she is grateful for her mother because some people don't have that experience and have complete rejection.

4.2.10. Ace. Ace is 24 years old. She is an undergraduate student who is studying her BA in humanities. She is a coloured womxn who identifies as a queer cisgendered womxn. She is currently playing around with the label of bisexual, but she is not certain about how she feels about it. Thus, queerness serves as a term which she feels more comfortable with as it is an umbrella term for any minority within gender and sexuality. She feels that it is a more inclusive term that does not give away who exactly she is interested in, just that she is not heterosexual. Ace was afraid to come out when she was in her first year as she was living in a very Christian res, and was afraid she would be kicked out. However, she started coming out to friends slowly at the end of her first year of res. She has also come out to her parents. She explains that when she came out to her parents, her father called her a dyke and likened her queerness to a disease. She explains that her parents have since then become much more accepting of her queerness.

4.3. Theme 1: Identity

When speaking to the womxn who participated in the study, it became very clear that it was not possible to discuss their queer identity, whilst separating other aspects of their identity, which they felt were also important to them. It then became very clear that these identity markers were not able to stand alone, but that they were intersectional in nature. Throughout the study, this had an effect on how the womxn experienced the world and how they understood the world, as well as the types of queerphobia that they might experience. Participants identified that aspects most important to their identity were that of their race, their class, their religion, their sexuality, their gender as well as their health.

A common critique of identity politics, which is often related to why queer theorists avoid identity politics, is the fact that often a group that is oppressed might organise in a way to show a misleadingly unified front. This creates a false sense of similarity instead of showing the differences which exist amongst any group of people and which might erase the experiences of people within the group (Kopelson, 2002; Mesli, 2015). However, it became clear that the participants were trying to highlight their differences by mentioning other aspects of their identities and thus highlighting how important intersectionality was. Mesli (2015) further argues that although the original queer theorists found it important to avoid identity politics, the political landscape is changing where the conceptualisation of homogeneity leads to a lack of transformation, specifically related to social justice and affirmative action where privileged groups might erase the experiences of those with less power. Mesli (2015) thus calls for a more radical approach to queer theory which includes identity and intersectionality. This is especially important in a South African context, where the queer rights movement was shaped dramatically by apartheid, and the legacy of apartheid is particularly relevant for queer people of colour (Cock, 2003). Davids and Matabeni (2017) further contextualise this in a South African context, where they discuss the recent student protests at UCT of #FeesmustFall and #Rhodesmustfall. Matabeni states that during the protests she stayed with the students and one of the main topics of discussion was that of identity – topics of race, colourism, gender and sexuality were high on the agenda. She emphasises how important identity is for queer people in South Africa, specifically amongst university students.

4.3.1. Intersectionality. Participants found it important to highlight that no aspect of identity is able to stand alone, but rather that identity is multi-layered. This was particularly

true for queer womxn of colour, and every single womxn of colour discussed in depth how they were aware of the various factors impacting their identity.

Meli, an HIV+, black, genderqueer womxn who identifies as bisexual stated that these aspects of her identity all compounded and intersected, with her HIV status being the most difficult part of her identity to bear.

Meli (journal entry): I suppose here I can be a living testimony and define that we do not live single issue lives. Multi-burdened, was the initial thought I had when I first started writing in this diary. Still grappling with exactly how I can define myself. So many labels and concepts around various sexual identities.

Meli describes her lived reality as not only multi-layered but also as multi-burdened. She speaks to the power relations and hierarchies that exist where certain humxns hold more privilege than others, marginalising others. Meli feels like she faces multiple oppressions, which make it challenging to define who she is as a person.

Ace, a queer coloured womxn spoke about how the challenge with intersectionality might not be in having the identity in and of itself, but rather in the way that the identity comes with various forms of discrimination.

Ace: Oh, because you have so many things coming at you from different sides. You have like sexism coming at you because you're a womxn. You have queerphobia coming at you because you're queer. And then I have some racism because I'm coloured. So it's like all of these different microaggressions coming at you from all sides. So it does make it difficult.

Thus, the womxn agreed that intersectionality may not only be how a person defines themselves, but also the way that they experience certain oppressive experiences because of their identities. These experiences are not chosen, but rather a reaction of the world to their intersectional identities.

Hindman (2011) discusses how even though queerness is a marginalised identity, it is important to interrogate the hierarchies and systems of power which exist within this

community. A study by Peters (2001) on queer identity also found that participants spoke about how the queer community experiences a wide variety of oppressions, from both within the community and from outside the community, including that of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression. Khuzwayo and Morison (2017) discuss how bisexual womxn in South Africa may have a variety of factors which influence them, with the person's racial identity, their class, the space that they occupy and their gender intersecting in various ways which might either further oppress the person, or create ways for the person to resist a patriarchal heteronormative society.

4.3.2. Race. Race was an extremely important factor when discussing identity, and interplayed with being queer. This was again particularly salient for queer womxn of colour. Womxn of colour spoke about how their race often interplayed with their queerness, and how queer spaces could at times be 'deracialised rainbow nation bullshit' (Meli) which erased queer womxn of colour's experiences. Callie, a black queer womxn who is the chairperson of a queer society spoke of how her role as a leader was often undermined due to her identity.

> *Callie: So I think more importantly than me being a queer woman, I think it's the fact that I am a queer black woman. Um, my race is a big factor to my identity because regardless of me being just a queer woman, I'm still going to be treated differently in society to a queer, white woman. So a lot of the things that associate that are associated with my identity come down to my race. Um, it's like, "Okay yes you're a woman, yes you're queer. But essentially, it's like you're black." And that's something that keeps resonating like, you know, being queer might not come up all the time. But in the setting that we live in right now. And the people that we associate with it's something that I'm being consciously made aware of, you know, when I need to find sponsorships for events I have to sometimes watch like, okay, what's this person I don't speak to them I have to find someone that relates to them so they can actually listen. So yeah, I think that might be a very crucial part of my identity that I don't want it to be a factor but it is.*
>
> *Interviewer: Yeah. Would you like to talk about something where you're queerness and blackness intersected? You don't have to but I'm putting it out there that it's available to talk about.*
>
> *Callie: Um, when my queerness and my blackness intersected. So we, we were asking, Um, we were asking a sponsor for wine actually just wanted a quote and everything but he said, but like an issue came in where he was like, "Oh I'm not comfortable*

speaking to her." and it was now he was.. he actually wasn't a gay man. But he was like, "Oh, no, like, I don't think I would relate, like speaking to her, I don't think we'll understand each other." And I'm like, "I'm asking for a wine quote. Like, I don't know- What there is to understand?" and I had to send like a white man to speak to him. And things went very smoothly. But he was very hesitant to speak to me. And he said, "No, it's not it's not that you're a woman". And I was like, "It's because I'm black or I'm queer one of those two." He's like, "You're just, you know, just for smoothness purposes." I was like, okay.

Callie therefore highlighted that not only was her race as a black womxn an important identity factor for her as a form of who she was, but also the way that the world treated her and the forms of oppression that she experienced. Racism remains a menacing presence in South Africa, although often hidden in overt and more discreet ways so as to disguise the problem (Boswell, 2014). Despite efforts to transform higher education systems such as universities, they often remain places where racism may continue to thrive posing severe challenges in the education of young students of colour (Mekoa, 2011).

A few of the white participants were also cognisant of their race as being important to their identities, but mostly speaking of their race in terms of acknowledging white privilege within queer spaces.

Zoe: Well, it's important to me that I'm white in the sense that, like recognising the responsibility that comes with that in our context and recognising the.. the privilege and stuff that I have and like trying to unlearn. So, like it would be, I think, irresponsible of me not to say that that's important.

Although some of the white participants mentioned their race as a form of privilege, they did not discuss their race in as much detail as the womxn of colour, and some did not even mention their race at all. This could possibly be because of the way that white privilege operates. Peggy McIntosh (2007) states,

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions,

assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks (p. 377).

Gibson and Macleod (2012) found in a study involving eight womxn from Rhodes University in South Africa that womxn of colour spoke about where their racial identity, their class as well as their sexuality intersected, whereas white participants did not speak about their race. Sexuality and race cannot be separated as being two incongruent bodies of power, each standing alone on its own axis, but they rather combine into a system of intimately shared definitions that are intricately related and therein share the same meanings and understandings (Barnard, 2003). Furthermore, specifically relating to black queer womxn in South Africa, it becomes immediately apparent that these intersections amalgamate to further marginalise queer womxn (Morrissey, 2013).

A study in the USA with 29 queer black male participants in university residences highlighted that queer individuals were constantly bombarded by microaggressions as well as overt racism from other white students, as well as facing queerphobia from other students (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

When we discuss the intersection of being a white person as well as being queer, it is important to be vigilant of the set of privileges which come with the racial classification of whiteness (Riggs, 2010).

4.3.3. Class. Class was mentioned as being an important factor when it came to identity by some of the participants, but it was particularly salient for those who were either from well off families like Cloud who says, "*I'm from a family that's medium to wealthy. It.. it makes a big difference in your life.*" or if the person was on the other side of the spectrum, namely being from a working class family. What was interesting to note, however, was that Meli, who was the only participant who was from a working class family, spoke deeply about the nuances of privilege within the class system and how it may have an effect on a person.

Meli: But in class as well. And there's an experience that I have as a working class that someone from middle class or upper class don't have. And.. I feel like being within the varsity space, I kind of see now how class is almost like fluid for me in that I can navigate in different spaces. Also having the privilege.. you know, having that privileged position of having gone to a former model-c school. And then not having, you know, um.. when people hear me speak, uh, it's... "Ok, you can speak really well."

or "Your accent is palatable." Whereas other working class folk, you know, there's different like experiences that they have and, you know, the ability to articulate their experiences. I can articulate my experiences. And, you know, I have the privilege of navigating within a university setting a different, you know, a different class. Positions that I can take up with even though I'm still from a working class background, you know. I have different, like, privileges. Um, and I don't want to make the university seem as if when you come into a university space, all of a sudden you become elitist. Because I feel like that now is trying to silence and erase the working class experiences that you have within the university.

One of the ideas that Meli touches on is the experience of a working class person who comes from a previously model C school, which was classified as a white-only school during the apartheid era of South Africa. She says that due to this, she is able to "speak really well" and that her "accent is palatable". This concept points to the classism and racism which is held in language and accents. This is often referred to as linguism, which is comprised of a hierarchical system that favours and privileges those who are able to speak a language in a certain way, often in a privileged accent and dialect, specifically a colonial language, thus using these differences to assert and strengthen authority and supremacy (Cho, 2017; Skutnabb-Kangass, 1988). Meli explains that her ability to speak English in a palatable way allows her to articulate her experiences in a way that is acceptable and therefore this grants her more privilege than those who are from the same class, but who did not attend a previously classified model C school and thus speak with a different accent. She thus highlights that working class people are not a homogeneous group.

Class is very often overlooked when discussing the ways that queer people may experience their daily lives, and plays an important role in a queer person's identity (Riggs, 2010; Taylor, 2011). Santiago (2011) explores the reason why class might often be overlooked, believing that it might be due to the fact that those represented in research studies might oftentimes be from more affluent or middle-class experiences, with the experience of class maybe seeming normalised or less of a problem. This might speak to why Meli was the only participant who was from a working class family, which might stem from the fact that tertiary education is not as accessible to working class families, particularly not historically white universities (Badat, 2010).

Class was identified as an important factor in a study by Gibson and Macleod (2012) which included eight queer womxn from Rhodes University. Similarly, Prada-Castro and Graham (2017) found class to be an important identity marker where eleven queer womxn participated in their study at a tertiary institution in South Africa.

4.3.4. Religion. Religion came forward as an important part of the participants' identities. What was of particular interest was that all of the participants that spoke of religion spoke in terms of Christianity. However, this was not particularly surprising due to the fact that the dominant religion of the university was that of Christianity.

Religion was seen by two of the participants as a strongly positive aspect of their life, with a view of God as being accepting and loving.

Cinnamon: I am a Christian and the God that I believe in I don't know what you believe in, but the God that I, I believe in accepts me for who I am all that I am.

However, some of the participants expressed a battle with God and with the church. For Ella, this was a battle of the church community not accepting her and her relationship, and the questions her father was faced with due to her queerness.

Ella (journal entry): I took Zia to church for the first time. My father is a dominee and he was conducting the sermon. On Saturday, my mother told me that my father is worred for my sake. He was scarred that his congrigation would exclude his on daughter from the church upon finding that I was queer. I think he was scarred of the questions he would be faced with from them – questions he has no answers to. Why is she gay? How did this happen to the daughter of a dominee? Are you not aware of your daughter's destiny – she's going to hell surely?

For Ella she was not so much afraid of the concept of hell, but rather the opinion of those who were in the congregation as well as the way in which those opinions affected her family and her social standing within the community. This was particularly pertinent due to her father being a dominee, which can be translated to a pastor or a minister of a church. Thus, her religion served as a form of social support, and her queerness threatened her family's acceptance within the community.

For Meli, it was more to do with religious doctrine, where according to her church's doctrine, queerness is viewed as a sin. She herself identifies as a Christian, but battles with a church that views her identity as a sin.

> *Meli: But I was socialised, um and grew up as a Calvinist, which is very conservative. Um, and it matters because, um.. being a.. being queer within my church is viewed as the biggest sin ever. You can do anything. You can do adultery. It's acceptable. But being queer. It's the biggest sin ever. And this is why I decided, okay fuck the church, then. Oh God. (laughs) I'm just then not going to. Because it's always me battling with this. This is like a demon that.. it's a demon in and of itself that I'm facing.*

When discussing this topic she speaks with great conflict, describing her battle as a "demon" in and of itself. This terminology is of interest in the context of religion, in that the battle is the problem. The battle of whether her existence is a sin is what is keeping her from God, which she seems to be struggling with.

Similarly, the study by Prada-Castro and Graham (2017) with eleven queer womxn participants from a South African tertiary institution also revealed that religion was seen in two ways by their participants. Some of their participants felt condemned by religion and felt that religion was thus unjust. However, others in their study saw religion as just another aspect of their identity and believed that their sexual orientation should not have an effect on their religious identities and belief systems.

Lynch (2012) found that queer womxn described religion as being an important factor in their lives, as many religions, specifically Christianity, viewed queerness as a sin.

Levy and Reeves (2011) also reported that queer participants often felt conflicted between their religious beliefs and their queer identities, reporting difficulty in resolving this conflict. However, their participants reported that they were able to resolve this conflict by finding a new church family that accepted them and therein realised that God accepted them.

4.3.5. Sexuality. The majority of the participants, with the exception of one participant, identified with the word queer. Cloud felt that she did not identify with the word queer due to the fact that it was a word that was very academic and that she preferred the word gay instead.

> *Cloud: Because I only started hearing that term like when I came to university. I like the term gay, more. Because it reminds me of being happy and rainbows.*

A study by Mereish, Katz-Wise & Woulfe (2017) found that those who identified with the word queer were often more educated than those who identified with the label bisexual. This might have to do with how the term has been used in academic circles, and might not be as colloquially used. Cloud was the youngest participant and thus she had had the least exposure to the university environment, which might account for why she was not as comfortable with the word. However, other unknown factors could easily account for her reasoning.

The other participants felt that the word queer encapsulated the way that they identified in a succinct way, even though some of the participants also identified with other identity categories. Thus, a participant might identify as both lesbian and queer.

Many described the word queer as an umbrella term which captured all of the LGBTQIPA+ identities in one word. However, not all of the participants were certain of the label other than queer with which they best identified. Thus, identifying with the word queer allowed the participants to still capture their identity as being non-heterosexual, whilst still allowing them the ability to not have to choose an identity label or box in which they felt they would be stuck. It thus also allowed those not quite sure of which label best suited them a degree of fluidity.

Zoe: I used to, I've been through a lot of different, like, labels and stuff, but I think queer is the best, cause it's too difficult to figure out exactly how attraction works. So queer is nice little umbrella term. It allows for fluidity, which is cool.

Cinnamon: I do. I do identify with the word queer. Apart from queer being the umbrella term. I just think because sexuality is such like a spectrum. And we're not always here or there. I just I think it, it encapsulates everything that I am. You know, yeah, it's.. it's not boxed in, it doesn't feel like, you know, you're in a box for me. So queer, I like to use queer for myself.

Mikaso: It's kind of like a blanket term for everything with everything within the LGBTQIA plus community. And, um, so for my case, for instance, for someone who doesn't know, or even if you are like still figuring things out, it's much easier to say queer, doesn't come with any stereotypes or assumptions or things that might make you feel uncomfortable.

Participants did not always feel like the binaries that the LGBTQIPA+ community had created quite suited them, and felt that the word queer allowed them to be able to better express who they were. Labels were often described as fluid and changing, with participants describing a desire to not have to be boxed in by the assumptions and stereotypes which came with the labels. Participants described that queerness allowed them to like whomever they wanted without prescription of gender and type, and allowed them to be free of having to confine themselves to limitations of their sexuality and gender expression.

A study on queer identity by Peters (2001) revealed that queerness can mean a variety of things to different people, with the most salient themes being queerness meaning or being something that you can call yourself, it can be an action or something that you do, it can be theoretical or a way of thinking, and it can be a sexual or political action. Adopting a queer identity was more popular amongst younger participants, womxn and non-binary people (Morandini, Blaszczynski, & Dar-Nimrod, 2017).

The word queer has been reclaimed by queer academics and activists and serves as an umbrella term for any identities that are not cisheterosexual (Callis, 2013; Levy & Johnson, 2011). Queerness is often used by those who might be questioning their identities or who may feel that identity is fluid and changing, and may also be used by people who are attracted to people throughout the spectrum of genders instead of the binary of male and female (Mereish, Katz-Wise, & Woulfe, 2017; Morandini, Blaszczynski, & Dar-Nimrod, 2017). Womxn on college campuses in America were found to identify a lot more with fluid terms of sexuality such as "pansexual", "sexually fluid" or "queer" instead of fixed, normative labels that were monosexual and prescriptive to the binary notion of gender (Rupp, Taylor, Regev-Messalem, Fogarty, & England, 2014).

Participants also described queerness as an important word of power due to the fact that it had been previously used as a derogatory term, and thus they wanted to now reclaim the word. Meli discussed how in her community, being called queer was often associated with being either a moffie (a derogatory name for a gay man) or a lesbian. This came with the risk of violence and being discriminated against. Due to this, she used to disassociate with the word. However, upon arriving at university, she realised that she was able to reclaim the word and in essence reclaim her power which had been stripped away from her.

Ella: To me like I kind of like the idea of taking back a term that used to be used in quite a derogatory way. So it's kind of reclaiming that word and giving it power in your own right.

Meli: So.. I underwent a process where I was like, how can I reclaim the word being queer, and it's only when I came to university in 2015 that I started reclaiming the word queer. But I'm still cognisant that people in my community are still being killed for identifying as.. as queer. So I see, you know, I.. I reclaimed that word. It's almost like reclaim my power.

Language is a powerful tool in the reversal of discourse in a hierarchical power relationship, in that a marginalised group is able to reclaim a word and use it as a word of power instead of one to demean and insult them. However, that does not reduce the fact that the word is still associated with harm, and that the harm is still perpetuated against the community. This is clear in what Meli says in that she realises that there are those in her community who are still being killed despite her taking back the word 'queer'. Thus, it is important to always be cognisant that the reality of one person might not be the reality of another, and the word of power for one might still be a word of pain for another.

Participants described how queerness filtered into more than just their sexuality, but was also in essence a political statement, with Zoe stating bluntly, "*So for me, like, being a queer person and being in a queer body is a political life. Like, "The personal is political." all that stuff."* Queerness was seen as an action or a sense of being, and was related to more than a simple identity marker. Many described their queerness as being a state of standing out against a system, whether it be on purpose or entirely accidental. Participants spoke about queerness as a sense of questioning and critiquing of systems that existed, and going against the status quo.

Zoe: So many things. Um, I don't know. I just really like that your default state is being questioning about things and not necessarily thinking about them in, like, binary opposites. And that filters into everything in my life. And that's why I think I enjoy.. it intertwines with queer.. using the word queer so much. 'Cause it's not just..

"I love womxn." It's like, I don't know. The way that you think about everything in life. Like about all the institutions, like marriage and love and relationships and just being a person.

According to Zoe, queerness is a perspective in as much as it is a way of being. It is a way of viewing the world. In a world where one's every action is to go against a cisheteronormative patriarchal system it becomes engrained in one to take a stand on certain issues and to question and critique the societal norms that many take for granted. Thus, queerness might be seen as a critical lens through which some might view the world.

Queer theory originated by reclaiming the word queer, as it was originally used as a slur against queer people. Taking the word back meant breaking the taboos surrounding the word and the association that those who were not heterosexual were abnormal and deviant, and instead began celebrating identities which no longer were confined to monosexuality and cisgendered norms. This therefore took back the power from those who were using the word as a way of demeaning the queer community, and instead turned it into a word of power (Watson, 2005). The term queer has also been ascribed a potent political meaning to many, being used for political academic activism, as well as mobilising queer people and their allies to protest as well as to form cohesive associations and collections, and also inspiring authors to write numerous queer papers and books (Kornak, 2015).

4.3.6. Gender. All of the womxn in the study identified as cisgender womxn, except for Meli. Meli identifies as genderqueer, but still identifies with being a queer womxn, and thus responded to the invitation to be part of the study. This was due to the fact that she felt that she presented mostly as a womxn, and that she identified with the experiences of being a womxn. It was not part of the criteria of the study to be a cisgendered womxn. Meli explained that she understood being genderqueer as the following:

Meli: So genderqueer. Um, I feel like genderqueer.. there's a lot of literature around it and a lot of interpretations. But my interpretation of it is that, um, being a, you know, a womxn, there's certain societal constructions about being a womxn. So certain gender roles that you have to fulfil. And sometimes I'm not.. You know.. don't fit into those boxes that is given and I want to be able to have a choice whether or not I do fit into these boxes. So still in a way, putting myself in a box and still exploring, you know, other avenues, but I just want to, you know, have that.. that agency and

choice, and that is why I feel like I'm more comfortable identifying as genderqueer and not having a like set iden.. you know, gender identity put onto me.

Meli does not agree with the binaries which gender provides and even though she does identify with the experiences of a womxn, she does not feel that her gender entirely matches that of a womxn alone. She feels that this is because of the boxed identities that womxn have to fill and the assumptions and labels which come with being a womxn.

The womxn who participated in the study made it clear that they did not believe that gender was biological or that being a womxn was determined by having a vagina. Instead, the womxn described being a womxn as "that's how you feel" (Jen) or "just having a sense of that's what you are" (Zoe). Other womxn described that they personally had just felt comfortable in the bodies they had been born in, and that they never had felt the need to question this. Although the majority of womxn were cisgender, they all had a grasp on gender as not being something that everybody is just assigned at birth, and all seemed aware of and accepting of transgender womxn.

Keets: But I think you can have a penis and be a womxn. You're transgender, whatever. Then, ok that's what I believe. If you identify as a womxn. You can be a womxn.

Thus, the only essential part of being a womxn was the aspect of self-identification and of feeling that one was a womxn. It was not something that others could decide for you; but rather something that was internal instead of external. Coghlan (2002) states that studies have revealed that one's gender identity is decided in the womb and has very little to do with one's genitals, and therefore is ruled rather by the amygdala.

However, contrarily, a study by Steenkamp (2005) showed that young womxn understood that being a womxn was strongly tied to physical features such as having breasts, curves and being able to menstruate, which would be closely tied to the cisgendered experience of being a womxn. This study was completed in the Stellenbosch area and there were ten young womxn who participated in the study, of which five were coloured working class womxn and the other five were white middle-class university students. The study does not specify the sexual orientation of the participants, but one might assume that they were cisheterosexual, which might explain the differences.

However, what three participants in my study highlighted was that an important part of being a womxn to them was that of strength and overcoming obstacles. This was alluded to

by other womxn when discussing sexism, but not in as direct a manner as by these three womxn. These participants spoke of having to overcome obstacles in order to be taken as seriously as men would be, especially by cishet white men.

> *Callie: A lot of strength. Um I feel like being a woman is embodying all the characteristic of that are expected of what is essentially called the good man. And I feel like those not things that actually exist within the men, those are things that were taken from women. But yeah for me, being a woman definitely means a lot of strength, because it's come with a lot of hardship and tribulation. Like it's a lot that you go through just to exist on the same level as someone who seems to just be cruising through life, you need to jump over way more hurdles. Just to be at the same level. And most of the time, you don't even you're not even considered to be at that level when you do way more. So yeah, I feel like it's a lot of strengths. And it's, it's, it's a beautiful thing. Being a woman is a beautiful thing because there's nothing stronger than a woman.*

Callie refers to strength being necessary in order to overcome the hurdles of sexism and living in a world where one does not have male privilege. The patriarchy affords men certain privileges which allow them to reach goals with ease, whereas womxn need to overcome many more obstacles to achieve the same goals. Male privilege is 'systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance' (McIntosh, 2007, p. 383).

Womxn's lives have been dramatically impacted by the historical time in which we are living, with feminism, living in a post industrial age and other social changes giving womxn newfound freedom (Budgeon, 2003). Steenkamp (2005) states there is a perception that young womxn today are the forerunners of 'girl power' with unlimited choices and many more opportunities at their disposal than their predecessors. She also discusses that one of the salient themes in her study with ten young womxn on how they define womxnhood is that it was important for womxn to be the strong gender and to be empowered.

Womxn also mentioned the various microaggressions and experiences which womxn shared, and which in a sense formed part of a shared identity. Participants noted that when journaling they became even more aware of these common experiences of how they would be treated differently from a man in their everyday lives, and how their gender shaped their everyday experiences.

Callie: Um, I think more of noticing how people actually react towards you on a daily basis and, you know, people's actions, um, in response to maybe how you act and like being aware of the fact that, "Oh, when I did this this and that happened." Like just more awareness of your surroundings as a womxn and how your everyday is affected by the fact that you're just a womxn. Ja.

Callie speaks about how she noticed how she would be treated in a seemingly innocuous situation such as standing in a shop waiting to buy a sandwich and how a white man would be treated differently than her as a black womxn. The various ways that our identities intersect and interplay influence the way that we experience the world around us, and the way that people in our environment respond to us.

May (2013) discusses a workshop which was led by Tina Fey, in which womxn participants were asked when they first knew that they were womxn. The common theme among all the womxn was that they first knew that they were womxn at a very young age due to the fact that they began to face street harassment, discrimination and sexism. This could also be in the forms of microaggressions. A microaggression can be defined as a seemingly small and therefore harmless action or statement which is actually oppressive in nature and discriminatory, and can contribute to a student engaging less in the classroom as well as achieving less at a university level (Sparks, 2016).

Steenkamp (2005) states that in South Africa there is a gap in the literature in that young womxn are often only studied when they are faced with what researchers might view as challenges, such as sex work, being HIV+ and substance abuse problems. There is therefore a huge need for research to be done on how young womxn think about themselves and their identity construction. I personally also found it extremely challenging to find information about young South African womxn and their conceptualisations of gender and how they understand being a womxn.

4.3.7. Health. Meli was an outlier in the research in that she was the only HIV+ womxn in the study. However, I believed it extremely important to include her experience in the results, as she had shared how being an HIV+ womxn had affected her experience of being queer and at university. Her status was something which she was constantly struggling with, and she expressed great emotional pain while discussing her status.

Meli (journal entry): [referring to being HIV+] After I tested, he tested and so a web of lies came out of dormancy. I was shattered. I thought that my life was over, I still do at times when dating becomes difficult. My concern was how to tell my family? My revelation of my sexual identity was already so much of a shock and disappointment that I wondered whether they could process my status. I decided against telling them and to this day my status is private, a secret, a shame.

Her HIV status was something that filled her with great shame and she did not receive adequate support from the university, who told her that the focus of HIV campaigns was for men who have sex with men (MSM). Meli became infected with HIV when she was having a relationship with a queer man. Thus, one could term the relationship as a queer relationship. However, due to the fact that the partnership had a penis and a vagina it would be stereotypically thought of as a heterosexual relationship. However, queer theory removes the binaries and allows for deeper research into what constitutes a queer relationship. In understanding this, it would become easy to see why it would be important for more research to be done into other forms of queer relationships, as queer men do not only have sex with men, and thus MSM relationships do not only affect men. Furthermore, if informed by queer theory, HIV campaigns should not only be directed to queer men, but to all queer people who might be infected with HIV.

Meli felt that the compounding effects of being black, queer and HIV+ were incredibly painful for her to bear.

Meli: Being black can be negotiated. Being queer can eventually after much resistance accepted. But being black, queer and positive is damning.

Meli spoke about how she felt that her blackness was something which she was accepting of, and how her mother had fought for her when she had experienced racism at school. However, her queerness was something more challenging to negotiate. She states though that she feels that with some resistance her family and society could have accepted this too. However, it is the combination of the three identities that she feels is too much to bear. This speaks to the intersectionality of identities and how marginalised identities may compound in harmful ways.

Womxn are three times more likely to contract HIV than men are (Appelbaum, 2010). However, queer womxn are often erased from the discourse of HIV/AIDS, despite the fact that they are vulnerable to infection through sexual violence, through having sex with men and from risky sexual behaviours with other womxn (Logie & Gibson, 2013). Due to the fact that queer womxn are not seen as being at risk for HIV/AIDS, it has been easier for them to be institutionally marginalised and therefore not receive funding for programmes which would benefit them (Logie & Gibson, 2013). Muranda, Mugo and Antonites (2014) discuss how African queer womxn's identities are strongly linked to their HIV status, due to the perception that a 'real' lesbian would not be able to get HIV, and the vilification of those who have been infected. This often is tied with biphobia in which bisexual individuals are treated as dangerous to the queer community, as well as the lack of support and help for queer womxn who have been sexually assaulted.

Mental illness was also an important part of some of the participants' identities, with a few openly discussing their battles with mental illness. Meli believed that her mental illness was directly tied to her queerness in that her queerness fed her anxiety and depression.

> *Meli (journal entry): I've never thought of my sexual identity as an anxiety, but I think it is. My constant fear of being disliked or discriminated when it is revealed I am bi-sexual. The queer community not taking bisexuality as seriously as being lesbian – being told you are "confused" or want your bread buttered on both sides can really fuck with one's self-expression and freedom to be. The violences projected unto me from people outside of the queer community and inside of the queer community is a fuel for my anxiety or perhaps is my anxiety.*

Meli describes her anxiety as a fear of not being liked and of being treated differently because of her identifying as bisexual. She views this fear as stemming not only from coming from queerphobia from the outside community, but also from inside the queer community. She expresses that she feels that the queer community feels that her identity is not legitimate and that she is confused, or that she is greedy, which affects the way that she is able to express her identity and who she is, which also adds to her anxiety. Queer people are more likely to struggle with mental health problems than cisheterosexual people. Meyer (2003) explains this through the framework of minority stress which posits that 'stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a hostile and stressful social environment that causes mental health

problems' (p. 674). Almeida, Johnson, Corlis, Molnar and Azrael (2009) found that LGBTQIPA+ youth who perceived that they were being discriminated against were at a higher risk for depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and general emotional distress.

However, other participants viewed their mental illness as being separate parts of their identities, although these parts of their identities had an influence on how they experienced their queerness and their daily lives. Cinnamon spoke about nearly being excluded from university due to her bipolar and depression, as well as her mental health interfering with her ability to get out of bed in the morning.

> *Cinnamon: So I.. I have mental illness. I'm bipolar and I have depression.. Last year I went through a really rough patch and I almost got excluded from like university and they saw that these days I can't get out of bed. That's not a joke like, you know. It's terrible that it has to get bad, for people to like wake up, you know.*

Cinnamon spoke about how it was important for her that her therapist and her psychiatrist were supportive of queer issues. Her psychiatrist is a queer womxn which she related was extremely helpful and she also spoke about how she felt that she could share anything with her psychologist. Other participants also spoke about the university's counselling services not having queer counsellors or even queer friendly counsellors and shared that they did not feel that the counselling office was a place that they could go to with queer issues. When Meli spoke to someone at the university offices about her HIV status she had to speak to someone who was a white Afrikaans male whom she felt could not even vaguely understand what she was going through.

> *Meli: Weirdly enough I started confiding in Jan. Um, after a while I just stopped, because I felt really uncomfortable. I didn't know Jan's, you know, sexual identity at all, but I just felt uncomfortable talking to a white man about my experiences and then him also, you know, trying to comment on it and I'd be like, this is like far away from.. you know, what I'm actually saying. So this is why I just stopped. But I do feel like there.. there's a need.*
>
> *[she continues a little later]*
>
> *Meli: I couldn't, you know, open up fully about my experiences to a white man. And a white Afrikaner man, for crying out loud.*

This speaks to the concept of representation within counselling services such as psychological counselling as well as HIV counselling. Meli spoke concerning her identity as a queer black womxn who was HIV positive and what this meant to her, and the white Afrikaans man made assumptions as if he understood her lived reality, when in fact he had no idea as to what she was actually speaking about. She felt that the only way to bridge the gap between her counsellor and herself would have been to have more identity markers in common. Thus, a black queer womxn would have been the ideal counsellor for Meli.

Lehavot and Simoni (2011) found in a study with 1535 queer womxn participants that minority stress, measured by factors namely such as being victimised for being queer, internalised queerphobia and the need to conceal one's identity, was found to have a significant impact on mental health concerns as well as the use of substances. Bisexual womxn were found to have worse mental health than both heterosexual and monosexual queer people (Flanders, Dobinson, & Logie, 2017). However, one should not assume that queerness is the cause of mental health problems, as some of the participants felt that it was a stand-alone part of their identity and only part of who they were.

4.4. Theme 2: Experiences of being a queer womxn

The womxn who participated in the study identified in different ways along the queer spectrum, with two participants identifying as bisexual, two participants identifying as lesbian, one participant identifying as pansexual and five participants identifying as queer. When examining the identity of each participant, I found that certain experiences of being queer at university were shared by the womxn. Queerness can be used as an umbrella term to encapsulate the LGBTQIPA+ community.

The experiences which were the most salient were that of the feeling of erasure, stereotypes as well as sexualisation and fetishisation.

4.4.1. Erasure. Participants spoke about feeling erased or hidden within the university, as well as within society and the feeling of being invisible. Participants also spoke about being pushed aside and made to feel small within the university space as well as within society.

> *Meli (journal entry): I cannot help but to think how invisible queer people are and their struggle.*

Participants who were particularly vocal about this struggle were those who did not identify as monosexual, who felt invisible both in heterosexual society as well as within the queer community. Cinnamon highlighted how she felt that black bisexual womxn are painted as promiscuous and are told that they just need to find the right man or that they are going through a phase.

> *Cinnamon: Oh, yeah. Um, there's a lot of erasure in terms of just I've had many experiences where you know, you know bi-erasure, particularly of course. Um, you know, so you dated men and women. Um, but yeah, it's just um, I don't know how to put it. Let me think about this. Erasure in the sense that you know, as a black queer woman there is just a lot around you know being promiscuous, perhaps just being a promiscuous person or not really being accepted you know and thinking. I've had many experiences with my friends like, "We just need to find you like the perfect man" as a kind of stage that maybe I'm going through a phase, or whatever.*

One of the participants, Mikaso, speculated as to why when someone had dated a man they were seen to be going through a phase and likely to just need to find the right man. For her, she speculated that if a man has a relationship with a man it is assumed that he is gay but if a womxn has sex with a womxn it is assumed that it is a phase. She laughs and says that this is because *"we live in this very male-dominated society where all roads lead to dick."* (Mikaso). Thus, it is assumed that a womxn will ultimately turn her attention back to the heterosexual male, conforming to the norms of society. This is due to the way that patriarchal heterosexism operates, which assumes that heterosexuality is the norm and society enforces it as a standard.

Meli spoke about how she felt that queer spaces can become violent because of the way that bisexual people are sexualised. She also spoke about how bisexual womxn are told that they are confused about their identity and therefore their identity is delegitimised.

> *Meli: And so these spaces also become violent for us because we exist but we are hidden and invisible and we don't speak about some of the experiences that bisexual folk have to go through. Number one being that everyone fucking thinks that, you know, just because I identify as bisexual I am good for a threesome. Number two being that, you know, bisexual people being referred to as confused about their identity. So, definitely. I would say that there was a prioritization of, um, you know, lesbian folk.*

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Bisexual erasure might occur because sexuality is often seen as a binary. A person is seen as being either homosexual or heterosexual, whereas bisexuality does not tick this box of monosexuality. Bisexuality might refer to a range of sexual orientations that might include pansexuality, omnisexuality as well as the more common usage of bisexual which refers to being attracted to both men and womxn (Obradors-Campos, 2011). Thus, biphobia might be aggravated by not conforming to the binaries and boxes of society.

Bisexual people might face erasure from both the queer and the cishet community (Berbary & Guzman, 2018; Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell, 2009). Khuzwayo and Morison (2017) reiterate how bisexual womxn are often subjected to erasure from the queer community and from the cishet community, in essence feeling like they might not fit in anywhere. Their paper discusses how people would tell a bisexual womxn to 'pick a side' or that they just need to find the right man to come out of this phase. Callis (2013) also found that bisexual people are constantly being told that their sexual identity is not legitimate and that they are going through a phase.

Another prominent theme which arose was that of erasure, which participants felt when they were viewed as being 'straight passing' or not looking 'queer enough'. This was sometimes brought up in a contradictory way in that the womxn stated that in some ways it came with privilege in that they were less likely to be targeted or victimised, however, that it also came with a sense of feeling less legitimate as a queer person and also with a feeling of having to prove that you are queer.

> *Mikaso: It makes me feel really, like at first that really upset me because I felt like, I felt like okay so we deciding to come out now? Okay cool, I changed my whole appearance and the way I dress and the way I talk and the way I act and, but then I realized like, that like because I was even searching googling things how to dress gay. How to walk gay. (Laughs) Like, but then. Yeah. Just because you feel super isolated and you feel, like you just want people to notice you as what you are but then I realized I think I saw it on the internet because I was looking at how to dress gay and there was someone who was like, if you are gay the way you dress already is dressing gay. Because you are gay. You don't have to, there is no way. So I was like okay. But yeah that really upsets me.*

Mikaso came to the conclusion in the end that being gay was not defined by the way that you dress, the way that you act, or other finite, measurable things. Instead, simply existing and feeling that you were gay legitimised your existence as a gay person. However, this was not always recognised by society nor by the queer community, which could leave one feeling like one would have to change oneself in order to fit in.

Queer identity has historically been conceptualised as the ability to reverse the very idea of heterosexuality and all that comes with it, which may lead to a feeling of unity among the queer community and a mutual feeling of standing up against heterosexism, however it inhibits the ability to explore other ways of being queer (Young, 1997). Lynch (2012) found that bisexual womxn associated their outward appearances as being 'straight'. Her conclusions were that this related to the reinforcement of heterosexual idealistic perception of what a womxn should look like and other beauty standards. Queer people were reported to feel pressured into conforming to look and dress in a specific way that would match their queer identity, with an expectation of a certain look being associated with certain queer identities (Clarke & Turner, 2007).

4.4.2. Stereotypes. Oftentimes the queer experience is deeply entrenched in stereotyping, in that participants felt that others thought that queer people had to look a certain way in order to be queer. These stereotypes led to feelings of erasure when the person did not meet the specific stereotype, or feelings of rebellion in trying to specifically break the stereotype on purpose. Participants expressed a lot of frustration when discussing the stereotypes which were portrayed about queer people. Cloud spoke about how people often believe that she cannot be queer because she is what society believes to be "pretty", or feminine. This idea perpetuates the idea that queer womxn can only be butch and masculine. She also points out that oftentimes people associated queerness with an insult or someone that was not desirable. Other participants also spoke about queer-related terminology such as being gay, lesbian or so on being used as an insult or being taken as an insult when implied that the person might be queer.

> *Cloud: Like sometimes people are so shocked when I'm like I'm bisexual. They're like, "But why?" "You're so pretty." And like, "Mmm. Ja. Ok. Thanks."*
> *Interviewer: Alright. That's actually a very interesting point. Why do you think that is? Why do you think people say that?*

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Cloud: Because it's the stereotypes that they grew up with. People were raised to think that when.. it was kind of like an insult back in the day so.. they still associate it with the people that they used to insult with the words.

Cloud speaks about how it is said that she cannot be bisexual because she is pretty. This then refers to a stereotype that LBTQIPA+ womxn cannot be pretty, but need to be unattractive. This assumes that a pretty womxn dating a womxn would be a shame or waste, as she would not be dating a heterosexual man. Again, the normative idea of heterosexual relationships in society perpetuate queerphobia.

Stereotypes are often enforced by the media of how a queer person should act, with three main stereotypes of the queer person, namely the queer sissy, the queer villain and the queer victim (Crewe, 2015). These stereotypes can be found in shows which are popular amongst young people, such as Modern Family, where the two queer male characters often act in stereotypically gay ways. Crewe (2015) suggests that it is important for representation in the media to change in order to break these stereotypes and to challenge the heteronormative views on queer identities and labels.

Ace discussed how she felt like she needed to fit into certain boxes in order to fit in and be accepted as being queer enough. She felt that people assumed that her dressing in a feminine manner meant that she was heterosexual and that this really confused people, and she felt that because of this she was being made to feel like she should change the way she dressed as to not seem like she was assimilating into heterosexuality.

Ace: There's the stereotyping. A lot of the time. It's like you.. the moulds that you have to fit in. Um, 'cause some.. like, over the past year or so, my.. I have kind of, grown into my own style and I have become a little more feminine. And it fucks with people's brains. 'Cause they're just like, if I'm like wearing a dress, and I'm talking about how hot a girl is, they're just like, "I don't understand." "I'm just confused." "Tell me what's happening?" I think that's, like it's difficult not being able to fit in someone's box a lot of the time. Which makes me also sometimes feel like I have to act a certain way, in order to get by. Because I'd rather choose my queerness, than assimilate into straight culture.

Ace speaks about how she feels like her appearance is something that fills her with a lot of anxiety. She is constantly debating on how to dress as she feels that her outward appearance affects the way others judge her. She speaks on how she would like to dress in order to follow her own style, but she fears that she will be read as assimilating to straight culture and thus betray her queerness.

Queer people are unique and do not exist as fragments or parts which can be boxed off and labelled, which is why there is such a danger in stereotyping and labelling, as it attempts to make sense of the person in a hazardously narrow way that is not at all helpful (Leck, 2000). Stereotyping often involves how femme (feminine) or butch (masculine) a queer womxn is, and although there is very little evidence to support it, this is supposed to show whether the womxn is a top, or more dominant in sexual relations, or a bottom, which is more submissive in sexual relations, and thus also impacts the way the person is received in the queer community (Walker, Golub, Bimbi, & Parsons, 2012). However, this gives very little room for other forms of queer sexualities such as asexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, omnisexuality, demisexuality and so forth and often focuses purely on lesbian sexuality.

Ochse (2011) found that lesbian participants in a South African study found it important to emphasise that they were in every way normal and that they rejected the stereotypes which were placed upon them. Just because they were interested in womxn did not mean that they did not identify as a womxn or that they did not conform to gender-role behaviour; this was often assumed of them. Thus, people would assume that a lesbian wanted to be a man and other stereotypes.

Stereotyping of queer people as well as group positioning, or the concept that heterosexuality is superior was shown in a study by Bernstein (2014) to significantly increase queerphobia.

Keets spoke about how she had to do her teaching practical at schools in the surrounding area, which were often extremely conservative. She noted that amongst older people queerness is often associated with paedophilia and how that impacted her interactions with the children at the school, as she constantly had to be careful that she did not hug the children or be seen to be giving them special attention. She felt that these stereotypes led to discrimination and difficulties in her ability to progress in her studies.

> *Keets: Um, then I go to example [Afrikaans conservative school], and I do my practical there. There, like, even like drinking's frowned upon and like tattoos and everything, so, for coming out as gay there, my big issue, um, especially being a*

teacher, is a lot of the older generations, they associate like gay people with being paedophiles and all of that.

Potgieter (1997) discusses how in the 1950's academics at Afrikaans universities studied queer people earnestly because they believed that it was essential to treat queer people and, in essence cure them. This was due to the fact that they held the belief that queer people were actually attracted to children and were therefore paedophilic in nature, and thereby posed a danger to society. Thus, it was believed that once white queer people were cured of their ailment, they would be able to participate once again in creating a South Africa that the draconian apartheid government so wished to uphold. We can thus hypothesise that many older South Africans still hold the belief that queer people are attracted to children due to these 'scientific studies' on queer people during apartheid. Leck (2000) also states that the right wing in America attempts to paint queer people as paedophiles.

Meli felt that her entire identity was a stereotype in South Africa – being black, queer and HIV+. This was something that she found very difficult because of the assumptions that other people made about her, and the way that people judged her without getting to know her personal story. However, she also spoke about how she was working on breaking out of the stereotype and trying to be comfortable as an individual.

Meli: And also now having to be that stereotype.. I'm sorry to say it. But like, and I can be like quite can.. candid here, um, when you are.. when you are black, when you are queer and positive.. oh my word. Ultimate stereotype that you are in South Africa. So that for me, I'm still also trying to grapple with. I don't need to be a stereotype. It's what people from outside and how I'm going to try to navigate this space and try to be comfortable in my own skin.

Meli confronts her own internal struggles in this in that she realises that she herself is struggling with the stereotypes associated with being black, queer and HIV+. These stereotypes are both internalised as well as from the outside society. She describes how she feels like she is trying to become comfortable in her own skin, describing an inner conflict.

In a study amongst white young people in Johannesburg, South Africa, Nduna and Mendes (2010) found that participants held racist views about HIV/Aids. The study was conducted with three focus groups of young white people from a residential area in

Johannesburg. The salient themes which emerged were that participants held the stereotypical views that black people got HIV because they were ignorant, they were not literate, they were reliant on traditionalism, and that they were backward in their thinking. Racist discourse is often connected to the way people think of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

HIV/AIDS was first discovered in the Western world in the gay community, and therefore is also a disease known as the 'gay disease', associated with homosexuality, which is essentially seen as deviant behaviour which Robinson (2010) thought went against the strict sexual morality of the West. Thus, it has wrongly and stereotypically been associated with queer people up to this day.

4.4.3. Sexualisation and fetishisation. Participants spoke about how their sexual identity was often sexualised by heterosexual men within the university setting, specifically in the party scene. Callie discusses how men often ask her deeply personal questions when her sexuality comes up, such as how she has sex. She also found that men regularly thought it was appropriate to invite her to be part of a threesome, which in this case refers to a male sexual partner with two womxn sexual partners participating in sexual acts.

Callie: It's something I experienced definitely on a regular, like every time I mentioned my sexuality it's not a thing of, "Oh so do you have a girlfriend or anything?" It's "So how do you guys have sex? Do you guys do it like we see it in the porn movies?" Or the one that always comes up, "Oh so can you guys make out for us?" Or like would you like to have a threesome?

Men not only asked questions that were inappropriate, but invited womxn to take part in sexual activities which made the womxn feel uncomfortable; they felt this would usually be socially unacceptable to ask somebody this in such a callous manner. The womxn spoke about how this made them feel in terms of their identities not being taken seriously and being centred around men at all times. The problem the womxn had was not that the men had sexual fantasies about queer womxn, but rather that the men felt entitled to impose their fantasies onto them as womxn without consent, knowing full well that it would not be welcome. The idea can be likened to the concept of cat-calling, which is when the person makes use of either actions or words to elicit a certain response from another person, in most cases a womxn (Farmer & Jordan, 2017). Catcalling usually involves the person whistling, giving unwelcome commentary or remarks about a person, staring, flashing body parts at the womxn and/or persistently harassing her for her phone number or her name (Fairchild &

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Rudman, 2008). The person doing the cat-calling is very often a cisheterosexual man. Another form of catcalling is that of girlwatching, which involves watching a womxn, often at a place of work. In this, the womxn's other identities are annulled, reducing her to nothing more than a sexual object to the man (Quinn, 2002). These are all symptoms of what is known as rape culture. Rape culture 'commodifies women's sexuality, and debilitates their sexual agency, while simultaneously celebrating men's dominance over women and ideals of violent masculinity' (Lewis, Marine, & Kenney, 2018, p. 57).

Ella elaborated that often queer womxn were seen as being nothing more than existing for the pleasure of men, which she viewed as stemming from pornography which often makes use of 'hot lesbian' scenes created for the consumption of men. She spoke about how she would be dancing with a friend, not even a partner, and if men knew they were queer they would be asked to kiss. This made her feel like her sexuality was constantly being delegitimised and that she was being made to perform her identity for the pleasure of men, which she refused to entertain.

> *Ella: I think (sigh) I think one of the I did mention this just one of the one of the main issues queer woman have on campus and in the largest section of South Africa is you know your sexuality even if it's not always from the porn it's sexualized it's kind of perverted into something that. Fits a male fantasy. Um, you know, I will be I'll be out dancing with one of my friends and um, you know, ugh.. it will the topic will come up that we are queer and then you know men will all of a sudden just crowd around us and be like, "Won't you please kiss? Won't you please kiss?" It's kind of like I shouldn't have to perform my identity for your pleasure like even though clearly you okay with me being who I am, you're okay with it for your own pleasure.*

The manner in which these overtly expressed male fantasies presented themselves by constantly intruding in the lives of queer womxn interfered with the way that queer womxn were able to express themselves and their identities. When queer womxn were publicly seen expressing their sexuality (or in Ella's case simply dancing), their sexuality was policed by heterosexual men who attempted to claim any form of sexual autonomous existence outside of the heterosexual male fantasy. This demonstrated a sense of entitlement, which showcases that attractive womxn are seen as remaining the 'property' of men, despite their personal identities.

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However, due to heterosexism and patriarchy within the university spaces, these behaviours from heterosexual men were normalised and even celebrated by other men. Cloud speaks about how humiliating and frustrating it was when one of her friends and her girlfriend had to endure unnecessary sexualised commentary from a man on the street. She notes how instead of admonishing him, the men in his group walking with him high-fived him as if it was something to be celebrated.

Cloud: One of my friends was going out with her girlfriend and I was with at the time and they were walking to the club and then they were holding hands which is quite normal for girls.. I mean, it's not a big thing. And then, um, they gave each other like a quick kiss, which was normal for me. Like I didn't notice. And then one of the guys walking behind us made like a really rude comment. Like, "Come do that for me." and stuff. And all his friends was high-fiving him. And I was just like, "Why? Why do they? Why are they high-fiving him when like it's a bad thing?"

The encouragement of male friends to make sexual remarks towards queer womxn seemed to be a common occurrence, with men congratulating one another for crude remarks and commentary despite the reaction of the recipient. This may be resultant of lad culture, which often permeates universities. Lad culture can be defined as, 'misogynist banter, objectification of women and pressure around quantities and particular forms of sexual interaction and activity' (Phipps & Young, 2015, p. 3). It often combines both sexist as well as queerphobic banter (Phipps & Young, 2013). Modern day laddism is often focused on youthfulness, hedonism as well as a focus on bonding between heterosexual men (Phipps & Young, 2015).

Lastly, Jen discusses her ambivalent feeling about how queer womxn who do not fit the profile of attractive to the heterosexual male are often treated as if they are "gross". Although she admits that queerness has been sexualised, she also speaks about the contradiction of not being an acceptable queer, and the way that you are treated poorly because of that.

Jen: Um, because I talk more about the fact of how lesbianism is often very sexualised. So, like, it's ok to be a lesbian as long as you're blonde and super skinny and sexy. But as soon as like, you're an overweight lesbian and it's gross and you're too manly and, you know, then it's not hot anymore.

In this, Jen brings about an interesting juxtaposition, in that she speaks about how it feels to not meet the beauty standards of the heterosexual man, and thus that it is no longer acceptable to be a lesbian anymore. In this, she expresses in a sense a desire to be accepted by society despite the fact that this may come with being sexualised by men. Although it is quite normal to want to be accepted by society, this highlights an internalised sexism and queerphobia.

Khuzwayo and Morrison (2017) discuss how heterosexual men often sexualise bisexual womxn, showing entitlement to their bodies, creating the identity of the womxn around the man as if it were for the gratification of the man alone, as well as by demeaning the sexuality of the womxn by not taking it as a serious identity. They discuss how this could make a person feel like they did not want to disclose their status to others. Lynch (2012) also found that bisexual womxn spoke about how men constantly brought up threesomes and sexualised them, enjoying the idea of queer womxn being together but only when it was not infringing on their masculinity. Queer womxn in a study by Nadal et al. (2011) also discussed how heterosexual men objectified them and sexualised them, which made them feel bothered and annoyed.

Heterosexual males were found to put a high level of sexual gratification and erotic value on queer womxn, and images of sexualised queer womxn were used in advertisements, in movies as well as in pornographic films, with queer womxn often depicted as kissing, touching or locked in an intimate embrace (Gill, 2009; Puhl, 2010). Queer womxn described this appropriation of their sexuality for the consumption of men by the media as manipulative, and undermining of the true lived experiences of queer womxn (Randazzo, Farmer, & Lamb, 2015).

4.5. Theme 3: Gendered queerphobia

A common experience for queer womxn at university was the experience of queerphobia. However, the queerphobia took on a more insidious form, in that it was often gendered and therefore compounded with sexism. For womxn of colour, there was a further compounding implication of racism involved, and thus they experienced racist, sexist queerphobia.

The forms of queerphobia which were most prevalently spoken about were microaggressions, the threat of violence as well as discrimination.

4.5.1. Microaggressions. Queerphobia was often mentioned as being small, seemingly insignificant behaviours that had a lasting impact on the participants, and when all

of these incidents were added up, they made a huge impact on the participants' lives. These are often referred to as microaggressions. Zoe describes this succinctly as, *"violent actions can be more subtle as well."*

Microaggressions could be perpetuated on an interpersonal level, specifically amongst friends, family and acquaintances. These microaggressions were often said to be constantly repeated with very little knowledge by the heterosexual person perpetuating the action, due to the fact that they seem so small and insignificant, and the heterosexual person might be of the opinion that their actions are neither unusual nor hurtful. However, this ignorance only reinforces the hurt experienced. Participants spoke of these encounters as callous words spoken, questions asked, or behaviours constantly repeated that seemed 'innocent' and thus could easily be covered up by the person by asking why they were making such a fuss of nothing if told that the behaviour bothered them. Cloud spoke about a particular incident in which, after coming out to a group of friends, certain friends did not want to spend as much time with her any longer. Another one of Cloud's friends, who before would be comfortable changing in front of her, suddenly started asking her to leave the room once she knew she was gay. She found this frustrating as it was assumed that because she was gay she would automatically be attracted to her friend, or want to gaze at her friend in a sexual manner.

> *Cloud: But some of them still like then became awkward 'cause they didn't want to like hang out that much. They didn't really feel comfortable talking to me about their boyfriends and how they felt about it and like, uh.. my one friend, where'd she usually, uh, like.. we were very good friends for a long while, when I told her she wouldn't like continue.. like after she showered, continue and just do her hair and stuff in her towel. She'd ask me to leave the room and then.. and like.. I didn't fancy her at all so it wasn't like that for me and I wouldn't look at her so.. I was just like, "Oh, ok. I guess this is how it is now." Ja.*

Cloud pointed out that her coming out to her friends had a huge impact in the way that they viewed her, in that their opinions of her changed based on knowing a new aspect of her identity. This implies that people viewed her sexuality as changing who she was as a person, instead of just being a facet of who she was. The way that people view queerness impacts the way that they interact with queer people on a daily basis.

Classroom situations also allowed for microaggressions to be perpetuated, with peers making use of ignorant language and using queerness as an insult. Participants discussed how

fellow university peers might also become extremely insulted if they were to be asked in a casual manner if they were queer. Due to this, queer womxn were often afraid to ask another womxn whether or not she was queer if they were romantically or sexually attracted to them, which affected the womxn's ability to safely and comfortably navigate the dating scene on campus.

> *Mikaso: I mean sometimes in class you'll hear people saying like, "No dude that's so gay." or like "Dude you look like a lesbian with that haircut." Like but um directed at anybody I haven't experienced that, but I don't think that's not better.*

When someone uses one's identity as an insult it immediately implies that the person believes that your identity is something negative or unacceptable. It associates one's identity with an undesirable quality, which has implications on the thought processes which one must hold towards people of that identity. Woodford, Howell, Kulick and Silverschanz (2013) did a study with 2,568 participants making using of multiple regression analysis which revealed that making use of the phrase "That's so gay." was positively associated with two factors: Firstly, having a friend group which made use of the phrase, and secondly having negative perceptions about LGBTQIPA+ people.

Microaggressions might also be experienced on a systematic level, in that the university space itself is heteronormative, and this alone might send off small messages to queer people. Ella discusses how this might be something as simple as an invitation which says to bring your boyfriend to a dance for an all-womxn's res or bring your girlfriend to a dance to an all-men's res, instead of bring your partner or significant other. Thus, language use may seem small and insignificant, but may actually have the power to cause pain to the queer community.

> *Ella: I think like the university is quite heteronormative. So you know even just using, like using certain terms instead of others like saying like for a dance example, bring your boyfriend or bring your girlfriend, rather than bring your significant other. Like it's just tiny little things that actively do make you feel like an other.*

In examining the way that Ella speaks about microaggressions, one may notice that she speaks about "tiny little things" doubling up on the expression of describing how small

the transgressions are. However, even though these things are small, they add up to make one feel like one does not belong. The difficulty with microaggressions is that they often are a multitude of tiny infractions which are difficult to pinpoint, which makes it easier for them to be ignored.

Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo and Davidoff (2016) define microaggressions as "subtle forms of discrimination, often unconscious or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory messages, particularly to and about members of historically marginalized social groups (p. 488).

Nadal et al. (2011) discuss three ways that queer people might experience microaggressions, namely that of microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations. A microassault usually involves conscious actions by the offender and may involve examples such as the use of slurs such as calling the person a faggot or moffie, or telling queerphobic jokes. Another example of a microassault is using 'gay' as an insult such as saying 'that's so gay' or being told that queerness is a sin. Microinsults are often more unconscious behaviours. They may include statements as well as behaviours which send belittling messages to queer people. An example of this would be showing discomfort when being with queer people who are being affectionate with one another. Lastly, microinvalidations are when the queer person's experiences are delegitimized or negated. An example of this would be someone denying the existence of heterosexism or queerphobia.

The person who is the target of the microaggression may feel that it relates directly to the person's beliefs and thus that they are biased towards queer people and hold negative assumptions, which may cause feelings of hurt, frustration or leave the person feeling offended. However, the perpetrator of the microaggressions might view their behaviour as not being noteworthy, innocuous and well-intentioned (Nadal et al., 2016).

4.5.2. The threat of violence. The majority of the participants spoke about how the Constitution of South Africa was something that they were pleased with, and how it gave them some measure of protection. However, they also recognised that the Constitution only protected them within the legal system, and that the legal system did not often translate over into their everyday experience. Participants spoke about how they often grappled with the feelings of being in danger or under threat, and how this was a two-fold experience, because it was related to being queer, but also to the experience of being a womxn in South Africa. Participants spoke about how being a womxn alone in South Africa is frightening due to the high rates of femicide, rape and gender violence.

Meli: South Africa is extremely violent for womxn. So.. this again. You know. Comes into play, where you're viewed as a womxn. And where you are always having to protect yourself, so it's almost like, "Oh, I can be like free in terms of my gender. Um, you know, um, identity or my sexual orientation because I get to connect with various people. I can be very open about it. I can have sexual relationships, and those sexual relationships can be open, but I must still be cognisant that I am viewed as a womxn and that with that is, you know, a.. a danger, in and of itself because I can be, you know, raped. I can under.. I can experience sexual.. sexual violent experience anytime.

Rape was a particularly salient theme that womxn spoke about with great fear. South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world (Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Moffett (2008) estimates that approximately one in three womxn in South Africa will be raped in her lifetime.

When it came to the threat of violence for queer people, it was often related to a sense of danger related to stories which queer people hear about other queer people being severely hurt or killed. These attacks often come out of nowhere, and are life threatening. They serve as a constant reminder to queer people to be cautious and safe at all times.

Cinnamon: You're just never safe. Without even, taking the queerness out of it now, being a woman. Never, ever safe. And then being queer, of course. You just never know what might happen on a night out, perhaps, you'll just be attacked unprovoked. And.. People are really drastic. I mean I'm lucky enough that I've never, it's never happened to me. But I know so many murders and death, and people just being burnt alive.

Keets: There I will hide my identity if I'm walking on the street. Like I won't hold someone's hand and stuff like that. You kind of have to be.. also lot like safety wise, you hear so many stories. And I mean like, a lot of people are accepting, but you don't know what's the chance of someone that's going to be hateful towards you. That's going to tune you or even resort to violence.

These narratives amongst queer people served as a constant reminder of what could happen in a heteronormative society. The narratives came with a sense of anxiety of being public about one's queer identity in a place where one was not familiar with one's

surroundings, or where one did not know the people with whom you were with. It came with a constant sense of policing one's identity and having to be cautious and careful at all times.

Jen told the story of some of her close friends who had been spat on when they were out one night, and how that had impacted her thoughts when going out at night. She felt fear of being humiliated, which even though the violence was not physically violent, it still remained an emotionally violent and scarring action which she felt as a looming danger and a threat towards her.

Jen: And it also feels unsafe. Especially when you go out at night. You know, you don't know what people can do to you. Are they going to spit on you? Are they going to hurt you?

Lastly, Meli shared that not all of the students had the privilege of living on campus in a university residence or in flats nearby, and that many students had to travel home to their communities after class. She discussed how oftentimes, especially working class students, would go back into their community. The community could often be blatantly queerphobic and the person could face severe implications for being queer, even so far as the threat of being killed.

Meli: But the kumbaya bullshit that goes on in queer spaces really needs to stop. Because there's nothing to be kumbaya about, um, for someone that is working class that goes into the train and then has to.. you know, that goes to train, goes home in a train or goes back to their community, and has to face, you know, blatant, or goes into their home even which is supposed to be a safe space and have to face, um, you know, homophobic like sentiments and antiqueerness within their homes and so.. have to face the risk of being killed just because who you identify as.

Students might be reliant on other systems other than only the campus environment during their university careers. Queerphobia is a societal problem and does not end when the student leaves the gates of learning, but might continue when they enter their home spaces and communities, or might even be amplified.

Despite the fact that South Africa's constitution protects the rights of queer people, queer people are more likely to be victim to psychological or physical abuse, and queer

womxn are more likely to be sexually assaulted or raped (Balsam, Rothblum & Beauchaine, 2005; Moracco, Runyan, Bowling, & Earp, 2007; Morrissey, 2013).

Khuzwayo and Morison (2017) discuss how Khuzwayo, a bisexual womxn, constantly felt that she had to censor her sexuality in fear that she might face physical harm or violence, and that she often would hear people exclaim in disgust or give her looks for walking around with a female partner. She speaks about a constant feeling of fear and awareness when with a female partner.

Lesbian participants of another study, from UKZN reported fearing for their safety as well as fearing corrective rape due to their sexuality (Naidu & Matumbara, 2017).

4.5.3. Discrimination. But at the end of the day, the participants pointed out that they struggled with being treated differently just because they were queer. Mikaso puts it simply, "*And queerness is treated so differently and like taboo and wrong"* Ace shared a story where she was asked to leave a club by a stranger for kissing a womxn while a heterosexual couple humped and kissed one another a few metres away. She describes how it affected her confidence from then on, and how it took her years to comfortably be able to make moves on a womxn again at a club. Zoe describes how she believes her work which is based on queer themes was misunderstood by heterosexual lecturers which she believes is the reason why she failed a year of university. Cloud discusses how friends treated her differently when she came out and how this made her feel inferior. Keets speaks about how men treat her as a challenge when they find out that she is queer and how they will not accept her identity. Each womxn had a tale to tell of discrimination because of being queer.

> *Callie: But the reality of it is accepting this identity as who I am also comes with me accepting a lot of challenges that are meant to come with that identity with a lot of people not accepting that identity. A lot of people undermining its existence you know. A lot of people have you know there is a thing of not accepting it. And then just absolutely resenting it. So yeah, it's definitely a constant struggle. It's not an easy path.*

Our society is still not accepting towards those who do not fit into the binaries of the cisheteronormative box, and may resent those who deviate from the norm. Those who dare challenge the norm are faced with a great many challenges in the form of queerphobia and thus discriminatory behaviour.

Callie, a queer black womxn shares her personal story of how she has experienced queerphobia as chair of the queer society on campus, and how her leadership has constantly been undermined. She states that this has been to the extent that she has been denied venues for events for the society, purely because she is queer.

Callie: I've definitely experienced quite a bit of queerphobia as the chair of [Queer society] I've been denied like venues for events based on just my sexuality.

Ella shares in her journal how a queerphobic slur was thrown at her and her girlfriend.

Ella (journal entry): Zia and I were walking on the street, hand-in-hand obviously.. A middle-aged man sneered at us and remarked to his wife, "I don't know why they have to throw their gayness in our faces, fucking dykes."

Diangelo (1997) defines discrimination as putting prejudice into action. Prejudice is defined as the projection of bias, usually negative bias, towards a group of people grounded on inadequate experience, which can include the way a person thinks, feels, their attitude, their assumptions and their belief systems.

A study with eleven lesbian participants found that all of the womxn experienced queerphobia in their daily lived experiences, however that their encounters were different according to how 'queer' they looked, as well as the spaces in which they spent their time. The amount of queerphobia the womxn experienced also influenced how open the womxn were about their sexuality, and could lead the womxn to concealing their identity entirely (Prado-Castro & Graham, 2017).

Queer university students who experienced heterosexual harassment such as that of a person making jokes about queer people, using slurs against queer people or saying that queerness was abnormal or perverted, were more likely to not fit in well academically and experience negative emotional affect such as depression and anxiety, than someone who did not experience heterosexual harassment (Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008).

Mongie (2008) found in a study with 240 students from Stellenbosch University that men held more queerphobic beliefs than what womxn did, yet womxn did still however hold queerphobic beliefs. Some of these beliefs included those of not wanting to have a queer friend, not associating with a queer person, finding a new place to live if the person's roommate was queer, and these are but a few queerphobic beliefs and behaviours. This is

significant because queerphobic beliefs will often translate into queerphobic behaviours and discrimination against queer people.

Ochse (2009) found that lesbian womxn reported that although they did not experience overt discrimination, they did report that discrimination often was experienced in more subtle ways that were hurtful and dangerous, such as with gossip, jokes about queer people, threatening letters, derogatory comments about queer people and just a general sense of ignorance about queerness.

4.6. Theme 4: Systematic and institutionalised queerphobia

Systematic or institutionalised oppression can be defined as:

> The mistreatment of the out-group is embedded in laws, codes of ethics, values, beliefs, social norms, traditions, institutions and organizational structures. It is socially sanctioned and maintains a socioeconomic imbalance of power. Systematic oppression is no longer prejudice and discrimination on the individual realm; it is large-scale and on the societal level. It is historic, relentless, and embedded in our culture. Yet, since individuals create and maintain systems, the continuation of oppression and dominance is occurring simultaneously on both the individual and societal (macro) levels. Regardless of whether a particular member of the dominant group intends to participate in the oppression, they will be positioned within macro level systems and by virtue of that position will be granted power and status (Diangelo, 1997, p. 8).

In South Africa, tertiary education institutions were shaped by apartheid and thus the very foundations are built on the discrimination against people based on their race, their gender and their class (Naicker, 2013). We can further propose that this is built on cisheteronormativity, and thus the discrimination of people based on their sexuality and how well they fit into the gender binary.

In a university setting, it was found that simple things such as university campus tours might portray a certain message of what a "normal" student would look like, which would usually be a heterosexual, unmarried person who is interested in dating other people (Magolda, 2000).

The participants experienced systematic and institutionalised queerphobia in three main forms, namely that of cishet ignorance, from the university itself, and lastly in the form of culture.

4.6.1. Cishet ignorance. The university as well as outside society was described as being cisheteronormative in many ways by the participants. Students described this as being difficult in terms of cisheterosexual people very often being ignorant of what it meant to be queer. Participants described that at times this meant that they had to water down their queerness to be more acceptable to heterosexual people, or in order to fit in with wider society, thus they were forced to assimilate to straight culture in order to avoid queerphobia. Ella described how this might happen even at an event which the queer society attended annually, namely that of Pride.

> *Ella: ...and it also.. you know, it just.. it got me thinking about the role of allyship and how, you know, very often at.. even at pride, you know, we.. we are very accepting of allies and we say, you know, "Come join. Come see what this looks like." And.. and, you know, at what point are we just trying to, um, you know, kind of water down our experience of being queer to kind of fit in with what heteronormative people would want us to be.*

Thus, the difficulty became that in order for people to be allies for LGBTQIPA+ issues Ella argued that it was needed to make queer experiences more palatable for the cisheterosexuals. Thus, the queer experience is self-policed in order to maintain support, instead of queer people claiming the space which is rightfully theirs. Pride specifically represents queerness in a very specific light. Pride is known to be white, male, middle-class and is very much represented with rainbows, dancing and positivity. However, queer experiences are a lot more nuanced than that which is presented at Pride.

There was also a level of ignorance on the part of certain lecturers. Participants spoke about how it should be the duty of lecturers to inform themselves about queer issues, as well as take it upon themselves to attend sensitivity training. Zoe discussed how she felt that her work on queerness was misunderstood due to the fact that her lecturers were not well-informed on queer issues and did not understand the nuances of queerness.

Zoe: Mmm. Um.. In class situations. Especially studying what I am studying, I think sometimes it's quite difficult 'cause.. for example, last year I did.. did.. most of my work revolved around queer identity and specifically situated in our context and whatever. And, uh, I just felt that there was a lot of ignorance and a lot of, like complete lack of understanding. Just, like.. like I remember there was a time that I was talking about the problem with, like, the entanglement of gayness and whiteness and white gay men being represented as the entirety of the community and my lecturer was very confused and asked me what was wrong with white, gay men? (both chuckle) So I just think that there's like a gap in people's education about it. It's like... (makes hand motions of missing the point).

Again, often people miss the nuanced nature of queerness, and often assume it to be a homogenous identity. Within queer experiences there are intersectional identities, privilege and oppression, which lead to a varied interplay of how queer identity is formed. The heterosexual person might find this difficult to comprehend. This might be especially challenging in presenting queered work in that the complexity of the work might not be understood and the nuances might be missed due to the person who is reading the work not being informed about queer realities.

Participants also spoke about this constant teacher relationship with those around them and feeling like they were constantly educating cisheterosexual people on queerness. Ace explains it as, "*Mmm. It's interesting because a lot of my friends are very ignorant when it comes to queerness.. So I've become like the teacher.*" The participants often felt that they had to explain concepts to their friends, acquaintances, classmates and lecturers. There was not a lack of willingness to impart information, but rather just an expression of feeling like it was something which was taking up a large part of their time, and that it was draining and time consuming. Participants felt like they often had to take on assignments and research topics relating to their identity, and that it was often their job to speak on the behalf of other queer people, even though the task felt impossible. Furthermore, participants were constantly aware of their queerness in classes. Meli explains how this in and of itself becomes an emotionally draining task.

Meli: 'Cause I was thinking there also about how emotionally draining for me it is to have to keep on educating people about this and this and all these questions and I myself do not know all these identity markers. 'Cause there are so many. And people just expect you to like be a dictionary and to know everything and to be google.. Ja.

And it's a lot of stress and drain on me. But I also know that these people who are asking me these questions, they are not going to pick up a book about this. They are not going to google this. Because it is not of interest to them.

The difficulty that participants expressed was the worry that if they did not spend time educating and sharing the knowledge that they had amassed by doing their own research on queerness, that the person would not only continue to be ignorant, but would propagate their ideas in a queerphobic way. Because of the fact that one was a LGBTQIPA+ identifying person, one was expected to be an expert on all sexual orientations and gender identities, which participants described as being a very challenging if not impossible task. As a queer person it then becomes important to choose which battles to fight, and when to speak up and when to keep silent. Participants spoke about finding it challenging to draw the line as to when to educate someone and when to protect their peace or to protect themselves from the person retaliating, as not everybody likes hearing about queerness, or that they are being queerphobic.

Cinnamon: You just keep it moving, because as a queer person, especially in [university] we have so many struggles, we have institutional race, we have so many things going on that we need to choose our battles you can't do it all. Otherwise it will literally exhaust you. I actually saw it in the Fees Must Fall, 'cause you're fighting so many things and if you're going to give your energy to a beggar and then also people who constantly want to belittle people. Like please go read a book yeah I can't educate you.

Due to the fact that identity is intersectional, this also meant that the burden did not end at educating people about queerness, but often about other issues relating to one's identity. Thus, a person's intersectional identity again affected the way that they interacted with the outside world. Black and coloured students often had to educate others about racial issues. Womxn and genderqueer people had to educate people about gender issues. And thus, a fine balance had to be struck in order that the person not be overwhelmed and constantly be educating and fighting battles.

Society is overall inherently cisheterosexist, and due to this, cisheterosexual people have a combination of both social as well as economic privilege in comparison to their queer

counterparts. However, the majority of cisheterosexual people remain oblivious to this fact (Diangelo, 1997). Ellis (2004) found that university students had very little knowledge of queer history and culture, and that this reduced queerness to nothing more than sexual practice or preference when queerness actually has a rich tapestry of culture.

When a group that is marginalised is forced to constantly educate their oppressor, it allows the group in power to maintain their position and to constantly burden the oppressed. Audre Lorde (1984) speaks on the matter,

> Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future (p. 115).

Tuana (2004) argues that ignorance is never a passive experience. It is important for us to question the very nature of why certain knowledge structures exist and why others are absent, as well as those who are informed and those who remain ignorant. Clear patterns may immerge of how knowledge patterns may shift over periods of time and from place to place. It is important to notice what is being erased and silenced, and what is being amplified, and how these at times may be linked to systems of oppression.

Evans and Broido (2005) encourage academic staff at tertiary institutions and schools to begin the work of countering queerphobia and heterosexism. These concepts are based on fear and ignorance, and staff should target heterosexual students in protecting those who are queer in the student body. The goal would be to increase their knowledge and skills regarding queerness, increase students' awareness as well as transform their attitudes. This would take the pressure off queer students to constantly be educating their peers about queer issues.

4.6.2. The university. University residences were spoken about as being very difficult spaces for queer students, with queer students reporting that they did not feel comfortable nor at home in the university res system, and that they at times felt discriminated against because of being queer. Not all of the students felt this way, however the majority of the participants who did have experience in res or had friends in res spoke about res in a negative light. Res was spoken of as a space which was dominated by a cisheteronormative

culture, which was often also very religious in nature, with queer students not receiving enough protection from queerphobic remarks. There was also a feeling that not enough was being done to bring awareness to residences for fear of there being a fallout from occupants. Ella spoke about how the critical engagement committee of her residence, whose job it is to promote conversations concerning transformation, refused to send out information regarding a queer event. She spoke about how she felt betrayed by the critical engagement committee, and also spoke about how there were complaints from a few people in her res against the queer people who came to host a discussion at her res. The residents who had complained said that it was against their personal beliefs or their religion to have these discussions take place, and she expressed how upset this made her feel.

> *Ella: I have experienced at my res, um, so after coming out I did come out to my entire res. Um, so most people took it really well it wasn't really an issue, however, I did notice that some people stopped talking to me. Or they would be reluctant to greet me all of a sudden. Or would just be a bit uncomfortable. Um, one of the more negative experiences I had was so I was part of our critical engagement committee at our residence. We invited [queer student society] over to host a discussion. This was before I was even part of the [queer student society] organization. But I did invite them over to facilitate them over the conversation, so they were basically just explaining different terminologies to the ladies in the residence. And um afterward the main point of me inviting them was we opened up invitations to pride to the ladies here, so whether you were an allied or you were a member of the queer society we were like you can come, there was free transport. [Queer student society] providing that so sign up. And it was taken up very well we had a bunch of girls who did go through. So it was received very well however there were a few people who made complaints towards the HK who said that these conversations shouldn't be held within res because it's against their personal views. Or against their religion. Which to me was a bit troubling, since we were just exercising constitutional rights.*

In this, the conservative people not only expressed that they held certain views, but also expressed intolerance for certain views being discussed in their presence, as if the discussion in and of itself might contaminate them. Johnson (2005) argues that those opposed to queer people might construct the queer identity as being aberrant, selfish or not being

capable of self-sufficiency. Due to this, the "other" is understood as not being legitimate, whilst the privileged heterosexual identity is understood as being the universal and true way of being, which is in everybody's best interest. Thus, the privileged person does not see any need to empathise with the queer experience.

Ella also spoke about the rules in res concerning womxn spending the night at an all-womxn's res. She spoke about a disturbing incident where a queer womxn had a friend sleeping over at her res. However, because she was queer someone reported her, and the other womxn was kicked out at 2 am in the morning.

> *Ella: Just I think like res culture in general, so I know a lot of my queer friends who are male they experience lots of queerphobia within their spaces but then also some of my female, my female queer friends.. Um, for example, there's no rule in most of the female residences that you are not allowed to have a girl sleep over in your room. Normally you'd have to go through a process of just notifying someone that there is someone sleeping over but that is normally fine. And what happened to my one friend was she had one of her friends sleep over in her room and the HK then came in and said that this girl was not allowed to sleep here. On the basis that the girl that was hosting her was queer. Because then what happened was some of the residence members complained that why aren't they allowed to have their boyfriends over, but she's allowed to have her girlfriend over? Those two people weren't even romantically involved. But just because she was having a female over and she's attracted to women. Yeah and there's nothing in the constitution that stipulates that. There was no legal authority from res to justify that. They basically kicked this girl outside of the residence at two o clock in the morning.*

This was particularly alarming due to the fact that Ella stated that it is not safe for a womxn to be out on the streets alone at that time of night. Due to the fact that the womxn was queer, she was automatically assumed to be in a sexual relationship with the other womxn, despite the fact that the other womxn was a platonic friend.

Another concern for the womxn was the culture of res, where the house mother was able to make the living condition for one unbearable if you were found to be queer, which would leave you no option but to move out. Ace speaks about how in her first year she heard

about a girl who was there two years prior to her being there who experienced this, and the fear that this brought to her as a young first year in res.

> *Ace: But I heard this story that two years before I moved in or something there was this girl in my block who was living with another girl who was openly gay and her roommate felt uncomfortable, like getting changed in her room and doing all these things, and like knowing that there's a gay woman in her room, so she told our house mother, and our house mother not told her to move out, but kind of made it an impossible situation where she ended up leaving the res, because it's a very religious res and she just started bringing up religion and stuff like that. And this girl moved out. And that's also part of the reason why I was so terrified because I was like, "I can't move out." Because first of all, if I move out, my parents don't know I'm gay. They're going to wonder why I got kicked out.*

Even though the house mother could not explicitly kick one out, there were ways around the rules. It was possible to make things unbearable for a person through other means, especially for a person who was in their first year. This led to womxn feeling like they needed to conform to heteronormative standards and remain closeted in order that they not be found out to be queer, especially when they were new to the res. This feeling of secrecy was often further entrenched by not being out to family and friends, who might reject them when finding out they were queer.

A study with ten black queer participants in a South African university revealed that the university's residential spaces were steeped in cisheteronormative and patriarchal culture (Msibi and Jagessar, 2015). A study by Graziano (2004) with twenty participants from Stellenbosch University reported that students living in residences experienced intense queerphobia in which they had slurs written on their doors, received death threats, had been physically abused and intimidated and had been called moffies and faggots by other members of the residence.

Yet another major concern for the students was the disconnect between the management of the university and the student body, specifically that of the queer students. Management refers to the people in positions of power in the university system, specifically referring to how the university is run. Students felt that management was not doing anything that was against queer students, but rather that they were complicit by not doing anything at all.

Zoe: I just don't think that the.. the institution itself says anything. It's just silence. It's not like they're doing anything outright bad most of the time. It's just.. Like, radio-silence, I guess.

Callie: I think there's a bit of a disconnect between management and the student bodies, or the bodies on campus that are trying to like sort these things. I think there's a thing of this is their problem, and we have these issues. So I think that disconnect doesn't really help with like progress, like, for example, with and we've been trying to get gender-neutral bathrooms for the longest time. And that's something we can keep discussing over and over on this level. But if it doesn't get to that level, it's never going to happen. So I think that disconnect between our problems and their problems definitely poses like an issue in terms of responses to queer issues on campus.

Callie, the leader of a queer society, speaks about how the queer society has attempted to gain certain rights for some of its members, such as the basic humxn right of gender-neutral bathrooms. Surely we should all be able to feel safe when we use the lavatory. Something so simple has taken years and years of fighting against a management that does not seem to hear the students. She mentions that some of the changes which the queer community are aiming for are essential for the security of queer students. Gender-neutral bathrooms are one of the ways that universities and colleges can become safer spaces for transgender students (Beemyn, Domingue, Pettitt, & Smith, 2005; Bender-Baird, 2016; Porta et al., 2016; Singh, Meng, & Hansen, 2013).

Another way that this disconnect was felt was the way that management chose to funnel its resources, in that programmes for queer students received limited funding, and that the queer students felt that they were always being pushed aside.

Meli: Management is.. You know. Blatantly, I am going to just come out and say it. Management is problematic as fuck. There's no support for queer people. If there were support, then the Equality Unit would have had funds pumped into.. or injected into various projects in order to make sure that queer people on campus feel safe.

Meli describes management as "problematic as fuck" which is colloquial terms for describing inefficiency, an inability or lack of desire to try and understand or empathise with student problems, a sense of superiority, apathy as well as their general lack of action which upholds systematic oppression. The participants stated that they did not feel that the management was doing anything for queer people on campus, and that the queer society was not receiving much funding. They felt deserted by management.

Lastly, this was also felt by the way that the institution did not provide the students with adequate venues for queer events, again pushing them aside to dingy side classrooms where they could meet away from the view of other students. Students felt that it was always an issue to find a venue for queer events, and that there was no priority for queer students.

> *Mikaso: I feel they could have given us a better space to have the meetings in. A place that's maybe a little bit more accessible. A little bit more in an area where a lot of people are familiar with. Maybe with more space. More chairs. More convenient for everybody there, so that we can feel comfortable. We don't feel squished up, like little people pushed to the side. And.. I'm just thinking about this, and it frustrates me so much because why do we have to lag so far behind and why do we have to sit here frustrated and not do anything. We're all frustrated. But we can't do anything. We feel so tiny next to these people in power. It makes me so angry.*

Queer students related this physical sense of being pushed aside as being a symbol of how they were thought of by management in reality. The idea of not being allowed to take up space was related to a more physical idea of how much space queer bodies were allowed to take up within the university. Participants spoke about how frustrated this made them feel and how powerless they felt to change anything.

Hames (2007) points out that tertiary education institutions are not committed to transformation to include queer identifying people as indicated by the 1997 White Paper. Furthermore, it is often individuals who must bear the brunt of activism within the institutions, which often bears great personal consequences. Hames (2007) argues that policy change is needed to address discrimination on campuses. Msibi and Jagessar (2015) argue that although institutions of learning are attempting to address transformation, they are not addressing the root of the problem, which is that our institutions are deeply heterosexualised and ingrained in misogyny.

Daniels and Damon (2011) discuss how in hegemonic institutional settings, particularly educational settings such as tertiary education institutions, acts of privilege for

groups such as white students and academics are oftentimes not detectable, and due to this they are nearly impossible to prove. Privilege was originally conceptualised as white privilege by Peggy McIntosh (1988) and can be defined as having unearned advantages which one might not easily recognise, but that remove certain hurdles which marginalised people might be held back by. However, privilege is intersectional and can be related to many other forms of privilege, including that of heterosexual privilege (McIntosh, 2012). Heterosexual privilege is systematic benefits and prerogatives which the person does not earn, but receives simply for being heterosexual (Simoni & Walters, 2001). The outcome of this being that marginalised groups experiencing the consequences of these acts may experience a decrease in personal agency and this may be worsened by the fact that these experiences are oftentimes attributed to the people themselves or the marginalised group (Daniels & Damon, 2011).

Queerphobia in tertiary education institutions can be challenged by bringing awareness around queer issues as well as challenging heteronormativity within the institutions. However, in order for it to be most effective, it requires the management of the universities to commit to transforming university policies to combat queerphobia, cisheteronormativity, as well as be more inclusive of queer individuals (Matthyse, 2017).

4.6.3. Culture. Students related to me that being at the university came with a certain narrative of what a normal student should be like. The ideal student was a white, cisgendered, heterosexual, Afrikaans, Christian man. This led to the normalisation of certain cultural ideas on campus, and any student not meeting these cultural norms feeling as if they did not belong to the institutional culture of the university. Zoe related that she believed that this dated back to colonisation and the history of the university being rooted in apartheid.

> *Zoe: But I just think that because.. I mean, with our country's history and with the history of all of the universities that exist in this country, it's.. quite clear that there's a lot of colonial shit going on in the.. in the institutional culture.*

South African tertiary educational institutions were built on a foundation of apartheid and colonisation, and thus their epistemologies as well as their knowledge systems are firmly entrenched in a colonial, apartheid-based, Westernised worldview and are firmly rooted in patriarchal systems (Heleta, 2016; Hendricks, 2018). Zoe confirms how she has noticed that the legacy of apartheid and colonialism still remains, and that true transformation and decolonisation has not taken place.

Zoe also spoke about how the very architecture and space of the university was extremely colonial in and of itself.

> *Zoe: This whole town culture, everything. I mean, the architecture and stuff itself, half fits back to very white, heterosexual, Christian times. So that definitely has an influence on a person, even just moving through the space, if you remove the people from the equation.*

Buildings, statues, names of buildings and other inanimate objects have been tied with an institutional culture which reinforces the era in which they were created. Zoe ties the way that the buildings look and the names of the buildings with reinforcing a sense of a white, heterosexual, Christian time period, where she does not feel accepting of as a queer womxn. Another example of this hailed in the recent #RhodesMustFall protests in which students from UCT protested until the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was removed from their campus. Although the statue was an inanimate object, the statue served as a "symbolic physical representation of all that is wrong with our universities and country" (Pather, 2015, p. 7).

The culture of Afrikaner nationalism was a pervasive topic of discussion of queer students, regardless of race. Meli related to me that her friends would tell her that she "hails from the Broederbond" which is an underground society dedicated to furthering Afrikaner nationalism by any means necessary. She stated that being at such an Afrikaner nationalist university silences and intimidates queer culture, threatening the existence and safety of queer expression.

> *Meli: Um. This is why we were saying, like, the Afrikaner nationalist, you know, um, sentiments and, you know, spa.. the.. oeg.. just that Afrikaner nationalism that [university] puts forward and wherever I go people people are like, "Oh, you hail from the Broederbond." So.. Basically ja. Being at [other university], now even, you know. Um, this kind of, you know, silences, um and also, I feel like, tries to put a damper on queer culture in that queer culture only exists privately. But we can't come out. You know, and.. this is why I said there's a pseudo-freedom. And this is the contradiction. It's the idea of, you can be and express. Just because you aren't home. Now anymore. But also there's a danger in you expressing yourself, um, and there's not enough consciousness shaping that occurs in trying to make people aware.*

The likening of the university space to the Broederbond shows the intense portrayal of Afrikaans culture at the university, and the way that it is perceived as being threatening to anyone who is not a cisheterosexual white person. Meli expresses that she feels that any expression of one's queer sexuality might be dangerous because of the Afrikaans culture permeating the university.

Keets, a white queer student, on first arriving at the university, felt she could not express herself due to the overwhelming Afrikaans culture being too threatening.

Keets: When I first came to university, uh, I had the whole typical, ok, you had to kind of hide your identities. Like real Afrikaans people that are really anti-gays and stuff. And then so in the beginning I kind of like hid my identity.

Keets decided instead to hide her identity in order to protect herself from what she viewed as a threatening situation. She did not feel that it was safe for her to be out as a queer person, and thus rather chose to assimilate to heterosexual culture until she was able to establish herself in a sense of safety. She relates that she felt that it is in her opinion an Afrikaans cultural idea that queerness is not acceptable.

Jen states that the culture on campus is also very heteronormative and very white. She states that white heteronormative culture is pervasively anti-queer and that she does not feel comfortable expressing her queerness on campus at all.

Jen: Um, and then as well, obviously like the student culture here, and the culture that is at [university]. Um. It is very heteronormative. Um, also very white. So you don't feel comfortable walking in campus holding your girlfriend's hand.

Being in a relationship in university is often a very carefree time for most couples. It is a time where one can enjoy one another's company and roam the campus hand in hand. However, what Jen points out is that this is a privilege in and of itself, as queer couples are not able to enjoy this luxury, and are often forced to keep their relationships private and separate from the outside world in fear of facing queerphobia. The culture of the university has a direct impact on the way that the participants were able to experience the world around them, and the way that others interacted with them.

During apartheid, Afrikaner nationalism was firmly built on a foundation of puritan whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality (Rees, 2010). According to Vestergaard (2001),

this Afrikaner identity was based on values of God-fearing Calvinism, structures of patriarchal authority (husband and father, priest, school principal, political leaders--all of whom were representing God on earth), adherence to the traditions invented by the nationalist movement, conservative values such as the fundamental importance of the nuclear family and heterosexuality, and, above all, the importance of whiteness (p. 20-21).

Although since the end of apartheid South Africans have created a nation based on rhetoric of freedom from oppression, the legacy of apartheid and certain forms of racial and economic division which were historically enforced are still central components of South Africans' daily lives. Graziano (2004) argued that Afrikaner nationalism was one of the main reasons for queerphobia at Stellenbosch University in a study with twenty queer research participants, and argued that the university's legacy of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism remained a form of entrapment preventing any possible change.

4.7. Theme 5: Being a queer womxn at university

The experience of being a queer womxn at a university brought up common themes amongst the participants. These experiences seemed to play on the intersection of sexuality and gender, but other intersectional factors influenced the way the womxn experienced these factors and how the womxn spoke about them.

These common themes were that of a sense of community and social support, safe space, sexism and the queer patriarchy, queer relationships as well as one's university days being a time to explore.

4.7.1. Sense of community and social support. Coming into a university space allowed the young queer womxn to realise that they were not the only queer people around, and they were able to meet other queer people like themselves. Participants spoke about coming from towns where there was not much queer representation, or where they were unable to speak about queer issues, and how by coming to university they were suddenly able to meet up with other queer people and speak to them and spend time with them. However, due to the difficulties queer people face on campus and in society, there is also a need for queer people to band together and support one another and "have each other's backs" (Jen). Participants pointed out that the communities which were formed were formed by the queer

people themselves, who made up the community, who saw the need to stand together and that this was not initiated by the university. There was not much support for the formation of queer communities nor any other support from the university itself.

> *Zoe: When we have a sense of like a queer community it's more because some queer people in Stellenbosch recognise that there's a need for queer people to meet with each other and to like, become friends and to share with each other and stuff and then they make those spaces themselves.*

Again, the participants found it important to reinforce that the resources which were available to them were not due to the university itself, but rather due to the organisation of the queer community, which seemed to have created itself organically. This speaks to Foucault's (1978) reverse discourse, in which through the labelling of queer individuals as deviant, they are able to self-label and thus organise into communities for social support, which is likely how the queer community originally formed. Thus, the community is able to resist and organise as a unit.

Furthermore, participants noted that by meeting other queer people it allowed them to grow within their queerness and to expand their knowledge of queer experiences, queer identities, queer struggles, and to counteract the internalised queerphobia which had become so engrained in them throughout their lifetimes.

> *Meli: The great thing about being at university is that it gave me the opportunity to explore and meet people of, you know, different identities.. And I think that was definitely a positive. Also meeting other black, you know, queer people. People who identify as queer. Or who I think, you know, are queer. Um, that was a positive. And learning of their experiences and so forth, because like I said previously, within my community, it's.. it's.. it's kind of like you still want to be silent about that because of.. You know, the consequences of coming out and identifying and I understand that some people, you know, don't have the privilege of hiding. Um, so this is why I felt like affirmed at university. That I can come out and I can ex.. explore and that this is how, you know, my consciousness can be.. can be shaped. Because if you don't speak about it and you don't meet.. meet other in the same circles then how do you learn and unlearn, you know, ways, because even though I might identify or, you know, I knew that I didn't fit into specific moulds.. societal moulds, Um.. there was still the way in*

which I was socialised. So that internalised, you know, anti-o.. you know, queerness, or queerphobia.

Zoe: And then you come here and you're like, "Oh my god! Gay people exist!"And not even just gay people. Bisexual people! Pansexual people! Demisexual! Trans people! Gender queer people! Wah! So ja. It's great. And to learn from each other. You can make a little community, which is nice.

Participants spoke about how the queer community encouraged debate and discussion and how they felt that this allowed them to feel comfortable to discuss their ideas, specifically around queer issues. Furthermore, the queer community encouraged the process of 'learning and unlearning', which refers to the process where one learns about various identities, oppressions and privileges and unlearns the ways that one has become complicit in the systems which uphold them. Thus, meeting other queer individuals aided in broadening the intellectual horizons of the queer womxn. However, womxn of colour pointed out that queer spaces were still violent spaces for them, as these spaces often catered for white queer people and especially for men instead of for queer womxn of colour.

Gibson and Macleod (2012) found that black participants felt that there was hegemony of whiteness in queer spaces on their university campus, with their participants reporting that even though they felt that they were accepted for being queer, that they were othered because of their race.

In a study which interviewed 47 queer womxn in Australia, researchers found that being a part of a community contributed greatly to the positive well-being and happiness of a participant. The participants who engaged in their community reported higher levels of confidence, greater self-esteem as well as having a better sense of general wellbeing (Heath & Mulligan, 2008). Similarly, a study on lesbian students at UKZN found that the womxn felt that being part of the queer community made the university campus a more welcoming space for them (Naidu & Matumbara, 2017).

Participants also enjoyed the fact that there was a queer society on campus which created opportunities for students to meet other queer people, organised social events, offered support structures and provided educational talks, which students described as being extremely helpful in their process of accepting their identity. Students found a sense of safety in knowing that they were not alone, and in sharing their experiences with others. The events

allowed a space where they could just be themselves in the university space that did not always feel safe for them as queer students.

> *Ace: [Queer student society] really made it easier when I was in my first and second year. Because just the mere fact knowing that there's a society that's ok with it. Makes me.. At the time, it made me ok with it. Even if I didn't go to anything that they were holding. You know what I mean? Just the idea that there were people that were cool. You know?*

Queer societies on campus created a space for students which allowed them to feel that they shared a queer identity with other students, and that they had others who shared similar experiences with them. They were able to have their experiences legitimised as well as accepted as being normal. It was a space where the individual could feel that they belonged.

Students at UWC created a student society called Loud-Enuf, and the main purpose of the society was to make campus feel like 'home' for queer students, as well as challenge and oppose queerphobia, organise social events, networking events as well as workshops which deal with identity issues (Hames, 2007). Similarly, a study by Graziano (2004) at Stellenbosch University with twenty participants found that participants reported positive experiences with the student society called LesBiGay as well as a sense of social support and community being tied to a sense of belonging and positive self-esteem.

4.7.2. Safe spaces. Safe spaces were described as meetings which occurred once a week on campus where only queer students could attend. The meetings existed as a means of support, and students spoke about problems they were having, they played games, and this space provided an opportunity in which to meet other queer people. New safe spaces sprang up, which were similar, but not all of the participants were aware of the other safe spaces on campus. Participants spoke of safe space as a space in which they felt that they were accepted for who they were, as unique individuals, a space where they felt comfortable.

> *Ella: I think if you experience queerphobia a lot on campus, safe space can kind of be the one place where.. Where you feel like you can kind of take a breath and just, even if you don't talk about exclusively queer issues you can talk about anything. But it's just nice to know that you aren't being judged you are being accepted for who you are essentially in that space.*

In a cisheteronormative university where participants felt that they were constantly being judged for who they were, safe space was a place where they were able to find some respite. It was not important what activities occurred at safe space, or the content of safe space, but rather that there was a space in which only queer people were allowed and that participants could feel like they were amongst people who were not going to judge them for queer life experiences and reactions to those experiences.

However, participants highlighted that it was important to note that heterosexual people might not realise why safe spaces were so important to the queer community This was an issue raised on a social media platform in which people had stated that safe space excluded "straight people". Ella felt incredibly frustrated by this, because it made her realise how ignorant people were about queerphobia on campus, and how people believed that queer people should no longer hide away or be afraid. However, this is not the lived reality for the majority of queer people on campus.

> *Ella: I got frustrated by, you know, some people's ignorance about how safe campus is for people who are queer. Um, so I think.. (sighs) I think some people think that campus is very liberal and everyone is ok with people being queer so we must stop hiding away and just be. Um, which I get and that would be great if that were the case. But it's not the case at the moment. And if I listen to the stories of the people around me and even if I think about my own experience, you know, it's um.. you do very often still need, you know, certain spaces where you can just be yourself and be gay and talk about queer issues and in a way that.. that cishet people won't understand.*

With there being a disconnect between the wider population of campus and the queer community there is blatant denial that cisheterosexism and queerphobia exist, and this then leads to inattention of queer issues. The general community might believe that queer people now have rights due to the fact that they are protected by the Constitution, and therefore must just move on and get on with it. However, what they do not realise is that the queer community continues to suffer from queerphobia despite liberal legislature. Thus, fellow students might doubt the need for queer students to have safe spaces and instead view it as discriminatory against them as heterosexual students when they are excluded from these spaces reserved for queer people. The term 'reverse oppression' is thrown around, where

people believe that they are now being oppressed and excluded for being heterosexual. However, this is due to the fact that they do not understand the very nature of oppression in and of itself. Cisheterosexuals have never experienced oppression due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Safe space was not a safe space for all participants though, with some participants referring to it as "safer spaces" (Jen) in saying that it was only possible to make the space as safe as possible. However, there would still be exposure to being made to feel uncomfortable and that there was no perfect safe space. Others spoke about feeling objectified in safe space due to the fact that safe spaces had become a highly sexualised spaces. People had begun treating safe space as a place to get new dates, and due to the fact that the dating pool for queer womxn was smaller, it became like you were "fresh meat" (Mikaso) when joining a meeting for the first time. Meli spoke about how these spaces were inclined to be very geared towards discussing pleasant topics, and there was avoidance of difficult topics which she felt were important, such as racism within queer spaces.

> *Meli: It's actually a violent space. And, um, also not speaking about diff.. you know, I wouldn't say different, just because I think it's interlinked, but other experiences outside of like gender. Why can't we speak about race in queer spaces? Why can't we speak about activism within queer spaces? Why, you know, there was always.. when.. you know, when I wanted to bring that up, they were always like, "No. No. No. No. This is safe space. And we want to have a jolly vibe." Fuck it. Like.. I can have a jolly vibe on my own. Just because it's a jol.. I can speak about, you know, my experiences and then go back. So I think we should have.. instead of saying safe space, also like convert the spaces to brave spaces instead. Just because you're brave enough to come out and say this is my experience and there's someone in that room that has the exact same experiences.*

A person's intersectional identity again played a role in the way that they perceived safe space, with those with more oppressed identities feeling that there was a need for more discourse around pertinent issues surrounding other identity aspects around queerness. Queer safe spaces were easily taken as a casual, comfortable space for those who did not have as much to worry about, however, it became more an issue of life and death for those facing more oppression. Meli hoped that other queer humxns would want to address the problems

facing her with as much vigour that she did, and expressed disappointment in the way that her proposals were rebutted instead opting for what she terms as a jol, or an enjoyable time.

According to Poletta (1999), a safe space can be defined as:

small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization (p. 1).

Safe spaces are useful in that they can help a queer community forge shared spaces in which to deal with experiences of queerphobia and discrimination, as well as to form a sense of solidarity and unity. Furthermore, they can create a sense of community which can serve as social support when a person experiences an abusive situation, and the healing process can aid in forming a collective queer identity for the community (Browne, Bakshi, & Lim, 2011; Moran & Sharpe, 2004).

In an article by Shaazia Ebrahim (2018, June 25) she discusses what safe spaces mean in a South African context. Safe spaces often exist for a group of marginalised people, such as people of colour, queer people, womxn or other combinations of groups of people for the group to share their lived experiences and focus on issues which they might share. This gives a space in which a person might not feel like they are being judged or where they constantly might feel the need to justify their thoughts, feelings and emotions, and thus this gives a space to just exist.

4.7.3. Sexism and the queer patriarchy. Relating to the intersectionality of being both queer and being a womxn was the issue of experiencing both queerphobia and sexism as a queer womxn in the university setting.

Zoe: I relate to being a womxn is that I relate to the struggles of being a womxn and the sexism that comes from being a womxn, but uh, from being a queer womxn, there's obviously, like, very particular experiences of sexist queerphobia that I will experience that gay men will, for example, won't. Like all the fetishising things and the.. blah, blah, blah. So I definitely don't think that they're separate experiences. They work together.

Queer womxn have multiple identities, which interact in order to create the way that they experience the world and the oppressions which they experience. Queer womxn

experienced the world very differently from queer men due to the fact that they also experienced sexism, and thus the queer experience is not a homogeneous one. These experiences do not exist in isolation, but rather work together in a compounding way.

Womxn reported that they experienced sexism from men who were heterosexual, as well as men who were within the queer community, and that their experiences of queerphobia were often gendered in a sexist manner. Womxn related to me that some of the ways that they experienced sexism on campus from heterosexual people was a constant assumption that they had to be in a relationship with a man, that they were seen either as a challenge or a conquest, being sexualised and fetishized, having their authority, leadership, experience or skill undermined or underplayed, or being seen as a "bitch" for being too much of a leader (Jen), having to worry about problems relating to the reproductive system, rape culture and microaggressions from men. Quite a few womxn related using the term which is popular in South African feminist circles which is that they believed men are trash. When asked to explain this concept, Cinnamon explained it as follows:

> *Cinnamon: So men that are just, they feel that they have entitlement. Entitlement towards not only women but they have a say on any and everything. That they are men need to be catered for. Yeah, that women are ultimately at their disposal, whether that be... they are just made for men pretty much, you know. Yeah. Whether it's at the club or if someone is having a braai, who must be in the kitchen and things like that.*

Thus, the term referred to the assumption that there was an existence of toxic patriarchy which was negating their daily experience, and by stating it in these words they made use of language to exert power over this negative experience. The patriarchy was associated with a sense of entitlement to womxn, including queer womxn, as well as feeling that their opinions mattered more than that of womxn. It was the idea that men should be prioritised over womxn at all times, in all circumstances. Patriarchy permeated a variety of situations and Cinnamon reported that she felt it everywhere from the home to the club scene.

Queer men, however, were also spoken about as being "trashy" due to the fact that they seemed to believe that their queerness absolved them from their male privilege and that they were able to get away with behaviours that would otherwise be unacceptable.

> *Zoe: 'Cause they think that because they queer they have a nice little hall pass where they can just be as problematic and fucky as they want but they don't want to be*

called out on it because they're gay. Uh, I've been, like.. groped by gay men because it's ok. Because we're both queer. Which it's fucking not.

Thus, queer men seemed to believe that because they were oppressed in one aspect, that they were not to be held accountable for the areas which they did have privilege, and thus all oppressions were equal with reference to queer men and womxn. This negated the way that intersectional identities influenced the experience of queerness, and thus queer womxn felt that queer men needed to take responsibility for their sexism.

Callie discussed how some of these behaviours could go as far as sexual assault, in which she shared a story in which a gay man had repeatedly tried to force himself onto her to kiss her, even though she repeatedly told him she did not want to, and how she had to eventually get him forcefully removed from the space to get him to stop. Other womxn also shared stories of gay men groping them, believing that it was acceptable because they were both gay, and how violated they felt.

Callie: I think it was at one of the [student society] events I had one guy who was like, who kept coming to try and kiss me. So I was like why? He's like it doesn't matter. I'm gay, we could just make out I was like I don't think that's how it works, he's like no, it really doesn't matter. Like, we can do this. And then it kept like it. It got to a point where it seemed like it was getting even a bit violent. And I was like, okay, maybe you kind of need to remove yourself from my space. Because this is not okay. He said okay but you know, it's not an issue like kissing a girl. And I'm like, no, it's really not.

Queer men may be attracted to womxn, and thus are also able to sexually assault womxn. Thus, queerness did not mean that sexual assault was not possible. Queer men were also reported to objectify womxn and thus not respect their bodies. Thus, they believed that because they were gay and were not attracted to womxn they were entitled to grope or touch womxn as they felt fit. If this is done without consent, this is sexual assault despite there not being sexual attraction. Queer womxn described that they felt violated when queer men assaulted them, and that queer men felt no harm was done and often ignored them then with the excuse that they were gay.

Queer womxn experience both queerphobia as well as sexism, with sexism being perpetuated by both queer and heterosexual men (Linke, 2013). Queer men, specifically queer white men, may perpetuate misogyny towards womxn in ways which are less visible due to their marginalised identities, or might be seen as being less problematic due to their

sexualities (Hale & Ojeda, 2018). However, despite the fact that queer men may benefit to a lesser degree to heterosexual men from male privilege, they still do indeed experience certain benefits (Coston & Kimmel, 2012).

Richardson (2009) discusses misogyny in queer men by discussing the game show Playing it Straight, a game show where a womxn must choose between a group of men, of whom some identify as queer and others as heterosexual, but their identities are kept hidden. The aim of the game is for the womxn to choose a partner, hoping to seek out a heterosexual partner, and the man who wins gets a considerable prize. However, more ominously, the ulterior aim of the game is for the men to deceive the womxn, and thus manipulate and lie to them. The show highlights how queer and heterosexual men might bond with reference to men being analytical thinkers and being disciplined, and with the concept that they view womxn as being weak, emotional and irrational.

4.7.4. Queer relationships. Participants spoke about intimate romantic and/or sexual relationships being an important part of being a queer womxn at university. They discussed how the queer identity is often based on who a person has sex with, but queerness may often be relational. Cloud spoke about how she was a virgin, and that it was a constant expectation that due to the fact that she was gay that she should be sexually experienced with other womxn. However, she stated that she was still waiting for the right person before she had sex. Jen spoke about how queerness is very often sexualised, when she personally believes that love is what defines the queer identity.

> *Jen (journal entry): Falling in love… The act that defines our identity. An act often framed in public discourse as 'sex'. i.e. who you have sex with determines whether you 'gay' vs. who you fall in love with. Love – my favourite part of my identity!*

There is an overly sexualised stereotype which is associated with the queer identity, due to the fact that queerness has always been seen as an immoral deviant sexual behaviour, and thus has been associated purely with sex alone. This does not mean that queerness cannot only be about sex, and for some it may be that way. However, for others queer identity goes beyond just sexual expression. Queer identity can also be about who you may romantically fall in love with and develop intimate feelings for. Thus, it may be relational.

Queer womxn also spoke about different aspects of love, such as polyamory and exploring the dating scene freely. There was discussion about exploring their sexuality with

other womxn in open relationships and sexual encounters, but often with great fondness and care shared. They expressed sharing intimate moments with sexual partners who were not in a relationship with them, such as exploring difficult issues or cuddling all night with them. Intimacy was sometimes shared with a variety of partners in different ways, and was not always expressly reserved for a singular person.

> *Zoe (journal entry): I love being queer & exploring the different ways in which love exists & can be expressed, & the ways you can love multiple people in equally valid but different ways at the same time.*

Zoe muses to herself in her journal whether it is possible for heterosexual people to truly understand love in the same manner that queer people do. Queer love is not defined by boundaries and binaries, and can at times be freer than heterosexual love. It is not confined to rigid expectations of what constitutes a 'normal' relationship, and is often open to form according to the queer partners in the relationship's own needs and desires. At times there may be only two people in the relationship, whereas at other times there may be multiple partners in varied relationships. The person may also choose not to be in a relationship, but still have sexual or romantic relationships with people in other capacities.

Single womxn spoke about their trials and successes with Tinder and Bumble, which are two online dating sites which womxn might use to meet other womxn, and the difficulties encountered in meeting a suitable partner. They spoke about the challenges of dating on campus due to queerphobia, as it was difficult to know who was queer. Participants described how it was challenging to ask a person whether they were queer or not due to the fact that it could result in the person either being extremely offended, or result in queerphobic rhetoric or violence towards the womxn asking. This led to the womxn relying on dating sites to meet potential partners. Another source of meeting potential partners was through other queer friends, the queer community, the queer society on campus as well as at safe space. Queer networking was considered important if a person was wanting to meet a new partner.

> *Cloud: (journal entry) And I had some nice Tinder action. I matched with like 4 people in the span of 30 min and even had a 90 min chat on Whatsapp with this one girl. We exchanged a lot of pickup lines for the heck of it and talked a lot of shit.*

Another difficulty which queer womxn encountered was that they felt that their relationships were made less legitimate than heterosexual relationships. Firstly, this was due to the fact that heterosexual men would sexualise the womxn, and ask womxn in a relationship to perform their queerness, or to take part in threesomes. Furthermore, this was due to feeling like they were not able to do things that other couples were able to do, such as hold hands while walking down the streets without judgement or people eyeing them. Lastly, this might be by people asking them to keep the relationship low-key in order to keep prying eyes away and to avoid family drama. This is seen in the case of Ella, who was asked to keep her relationship low-key at a church event with her family.

> *Ella (journal entry): Zia told me I shouldn't mind too much that my mother politely asked me to keep our relationship low-key. But how could I not… My sister could hold Pieter's hand, but I can't hold my girlfriends? It makes it seem as if our relationship is not legitimate.*

It was hurtful to Ella that her sister was allowed to hold her boyfriend's hand in the exact same environment; however she was advised to not hold her girlfriend's hand. She understood that this was because of the way that the community at her parent's church was reacting to her relationship, and that they were giving her father a difficult time about it. However, she still felt that her parents were ashamed of her and her relationship, and that they were hiding it away. She felt in a way that they were telling her that it was less real than her sister's relationship, and had less meaning in the world. Queerphobia and cisheterosexualism can erase queer relationships and thus make people feel like their relationships are being delegitimised.

However, queer relationships were also spoken about with care as to not wrongly glorify them as being perfect. It was pointed out that often as queer people we might feel a need to glorify queer relationships in order to placate and satisfy heterosexual eyes. However, queer relationships, like any relationships, can be messy and hurtful, and can at times be abusive and destructive.

> *Meli: What about those of us that have been in queer relationships and that, you know, have had to, that have, gone through extremely violent experiences. I can remember when I was in a.. in a relationship, Um.. and we don't speak about this,*

hey? But there are a lot of queer relationships that are extremely violent in that we only feel like we have each other. 'Cause everyone else is against us. So, we kind of like, want to control. And I.. this is why, I feel like queer relationships are, if not even way worse than heterosexual relationships. Yes. And I think we often don't speak about that. That is.. that is silenced within.. within spaces, as well. Um, that we don't speak about the violence that.. the violences that exist within the queer community and queer relationships. 'Cause queer relationships are kind of like relegated to the private. Everyone is like no. Queer love is radical love. Really? Is it? Like? If we are putting out this position, Um, you know, if we are saying. "Queer love. We all love each other. Blah Blah blah." Aren't we maybe then erasing and silencing groups that have experienced violence within their relationship.

Because of the way that queer relationships are often hidden from the public eye, they may often also hide the difficulties which may come with any relationship. And because of the constant need to want to make queerness seem like it is only good and wholesome, queer people might defend queer relationships and say that queer love is radical and that it is only good. However, this is not always the case. There are many people who have faced various abusive situations from queer partners, and by speaking of queer relationships as a binary of only good we erase and silence their experiences.

Another relational problem which occurred was that of a very select few queer womxn in the community being predatory. This was explained as womxn who in a sense hunted other womxn purely for sex, oftentimes using manipulative means to bed them.

Zoe (journal entry): Predatory lesbians in [town name] who I thought were good friends & are now making a competition out of trying to get into my pants. Stop acting like shitty men.

Mikaso (journal entry): But what I wanted to say about it was, it was so nice, Um, for the first.. this is the first time that I'm experiencing someone from the lesbian community who doesn't just sexualise me or just want to hook up.

It is important to note that this was not something that was spoken about as being about all queer womxn, but rather a problem that the queer community felt that they experienced within their community.

It was also important how this was spoken about, as some of the womxn expressed how they found it disdainful how heterosexual womxn felt that they had the right to comment on predatory lesbians.

> *Zoe (journal entry): How many straight women have I met for the very first time, who launch into accounts of all the queer women who have hit on them in an attempt to disrupt their heterosexuality? Too many. "But it's like a challenge for you guys hey?" Um, no. Stay away from me str8 women I don't have the emotional energy to be your fun experiment. Also like… maybe it's not your place to talk about how predatory lesbians are when I'm only like 3rd one you've met? Predatory lesbians are real yes toxic masculinity isn't the sole property of men. But I seriously doubt this str8 girl understands the nuance of that conversation.*

Heterosexual womxn might state that queer womxn are predatory purely because a queer womxn has made it known that she likes her, which has made her feel uncomfortable because of queerphobic belief systems. Those who may be ignorant of queer people might overreact to a queer womxn making any form of advances on them, and view the behaviour as predatory instead of just a genuine show of interest. Zoe expresses that many queer womxn are not really interested in heterosexual womxn as partners, and would much rather pursue other queer womxn who do not see the relationship or sexual encounter as an experiment or game. Of course, this does not discount that there are queer womxn who might be abusive to heterosexual womxn, as this is always within the realm of possibility.

According to Ochse (2009), living in a heteronormative society may lead to heterosexual relationships being given more weight than queer relationships, and therefore often being considered more legitimate than queer relationships. This may cause queer womxn a great deal of frustration. This is despite the fact that legally queer relationships are considered equivalent. However, this does not change the fact that socially and culturally, queer relationships are considered deviant and therefore not legitimate in the eyes of many.

In a study by Ellis and Davis (2017) queer couples who were in same-sex relationships compared the support provided within their relationships with that of heterosexual couples, and found that their relationships were based much more on mutual support and the desire for support from their partner. Furthermore, queer couples also reported that they were more satisfied in their relationships, and were less likely to separate than heterosexual couples. Queer relationships were more likely to last if they contained two elements, namely that the couple were able to contain conflict within the relationship and that the couple were able to successfully and intimately communicate (Mackey, Diemer, & O'Brien, 2004).

Due to queerphobia, it is often difficult for queer people to discuss abusive relationships as well as for them to access support when relationships become abusive. This is due to the fact that the queer community is already negatively stereotyped as "sick" and "perverted" and thus queer people might avoid speaking about these issues in order to protect the community from harm (Ristock, 2005). Psychological abuse is something which is a phenomenon which does sometimes come to the fore amongst queer couples (Mason et al., 2014).

4.7.5. University: A time to explore. University was seen as the ideal time for queer students to explore their identities and to discover who they were. Participants elaborated that even though the university itself did not provide support, the queer community at university and the queer societies at university provided a support base which allowed a student to feel safe to explore issues of identity, consciousness as well as to explore new relationships.

Ella: I think university is kind of, it's that stereotypical thing of as a time to kind of find yourself. So, um, you have a lot of freedom on campus to express who you are and to explore who you are. The fact that there are organizations like [student society] which you can join and be a part of and really celebrate your identity and come to terms with it. Um, having a lot of support structures like for example the centre for students on campus to have that support structure available, um, I think being kind of away from your home environment also helps you to come to terms with who you are.

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Queer participants who were not yet out to their families and communities at home were able to explore their identities at university with much less risk of being exposed as being queer. The various support structures and queer society allowed participants to feel as if they were able to celebrate their queer identity, and therefore feel comfortable to explore the way that they existed in the world as unique individuals, as well as the more collective identity of being LGBTQIPA+. Many individuals eventually gathered the confidence to come out to their friends and family at home, and in other environments, and were able to live more authentic lives.

Furthermore, it was seen as being helpful to be away from the parental structure, specifically in situations where the home base was conservative or the participant was not out to their family.

> *Cloud: And like more people our age, that easily accepts it. So you don't.. you don't have to be like, "Oh, my mother's going to be here watching. Can't really act on it." You can kind of just interact with everyone. Be yourself... Ja. Um, I like.. Ja. I like the fact that people are so open about it. 'Cause I know.. You not really.. Ja. People are more open about it at university. It feels like that. You can explore easy. Ja. Easier to explore.*

The worry that people would be judging them seemed to be a great concern for many who lived in queerphobic communities and homes, and who would have faced a great deal of backlash if they had to explore their identities while under their families' roofs. The openness to experiences and different viewpoints which was inherent to being in a university space allowed participants to feel more freedom to explore their identities.

Participants also felt that the university environment expanded their linguistic abilities in that they were more able to discuss certain issues and therefore able to understand certain concepts in a more nuanced and complex way.

> *Meli: That I could come out and I could, you know, try to like shape my identity and who I am and explore my sexual identity and what I want to be identified as and the different language and meanings to describe myself. That for me was a positive. I'm now more confident in speaking about my identity than, you know, previously. Because I was very silent about it.*

Participants spoke about not only understanding their own identities in more depth, but also having a deeper understanding about the queer community, such as no longer being trans-exclusionary, understanding intersectionality, understanding the experiences of other queer people such as curative rape in the townships and other learning experiences. This allowed the participants to feel more confident in their identities as queer people.

Participants also spoke about being able to speak out about certain issues and being able to voice their opinions at university, which they felt ambivalent about being able to do in a working environment. Participants expressed caution about the working environment, with this being a more rigid setting providing very little freedom for self-expression.

Jen: I feel like it's kind of the most free in yourself you can be, right? Like in high school? I don't know. Being a teenager is just a pain. So you don't even know what's going on. And once you go into the working world, like you're so focused on your income and making money and not getting fired that you stay within those limits. Like you become that zombie, in a way. But where at university you have that freedom to speak your mind, to, you know, be who you are, completely. Because you know these people can't.. you know, there's not many rules that they can impose on you to stop you from being who you are.

Although the university itself was seen as being cisheteronormative, it was also acknowledged that there were no formative rules which discriminated overtly against queer people; this allowed for a certain amount of self-expression and an ability for them to be who they wanted to be and say what they wanted to say. The world of being a student afforded certain liberties which allowed the student to be critical, to be free to press boundaries and to explore new ways of being, with no implications in terms of academic penalties. However, this did not account for social implications or other non-formative means of standardising behaviour.

Prado-Castro and Graham (2017) argue that queer womxn who are university students in South Africa are afforded certain privileges due to the fact that they are the beneficiaries of a tertiary education. However, they still remain cognisant of the inequalities within South Africa, specifically relating to other queer people in South Africa. They argue that this is due to the people they network with, queer societies which they engage with, as well as the constant stream of news regarding queerphobic violence. In combination, this creates the

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perfect set of circumstances for the development of the queer identity and the ability to be more informed about queerness, which would not be available to them outside the university setting.

In a study with ten queer university students, Msibi and Jagessar (2015) found that students reported that they were happy to be away from the staunch and often conservative grips of their communities and families, as this brought with it a sense of freedom and ability to explore their identities. This was despite the students facing queerphobia, often on a daily basis. Khuzwayo and Morison (2017) discuss how Khuzwayo as a bisexual womxn felt that university was a place that allowed her to be open about her sexuality, as well as giving her the ability to explore and be comfortable about her identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

The data in my research study suggested that it is important to be cognisant of the intersectionality of the queer identity, and the way that the various parts of a person's identity may interact and interplay. Queer identity is complex, and multi-layered; it cannot be boxed in with binaries and is instead fluid and flux. Each queer person is unique, according to multiple intersectional components which all make up one's identity. These may include their race, their gender, their sexuality, their age, whether they are disabled or able-bodied, their language, their nationality and many other factors. When considering the queer identity, it is important to note that each of these identity markers intersect with the way that the person experiences their queerness, and therefore identity is multifaceted. Furthermore, identity also impacts the way that the world interacts with the person, which may influence the person's experience with queer daily life, the way that they experience queerphobia as well as the way that they interpret queerphobia. Some identities are marginalised, and therefore the person might experience oppression. When a person experiences more than one marginalised identity, they might experience compounded oppression and thus find it more challenging to overcome the same hurdles that a more privileged person might. A privileged person might not always realise that they hold privilege, and might not comprehend the ways that their life is being made easier due to the way that privilege manifests itself in invisible ways, and thus it is easily overlooked. Due to this, it is often not seen as a problem by the privileged, and thus it becomes challenging to achieve equity. The identities particularly salient to the participants in my study were their race, their class, their religion, their sexuality, their gender as well as their health.

Due to the intersectionality of identity, participants did not only experience queerphobia, but experienced other forms of oppression according to their identity. All the womxn experienced sexism from both within the queer community as well as from cisheterosexual men. However, womxn of colour also reported that they experienced racism from within and outside the queer community. Queer womxn of colour did not always feel that the queer community accommodated experiences of race, and felt that the community silenced and erased their experiences, opting rather for comfort than the challenging conversations needed to address the racism which was present in the queer community.

Queer students did not feel that the university was an inclusive space for queer people, and continued to feel marginalised and othered within tertiary education institutions. The queerphobia which the students experienced in these spaces was not always overt, however this did not make these experiences any less harmful. Participants reported experiencing queerphobia in the form of microaggressions, the threat of violence, discrimination, as well as systematic queerphobia. Students felt that they were pushed aside within the university spaces, and that they did not feel welcome in certain university spaces such as residences. Participants described that they felt that the positive and affirming queer experiences within university did not come from the university itself, but rather were due to the queer community coming together and forming counter-narratives to the queerphobia and challenges which they faced on campus. This was further reinforced by the lack of funding towards addressing issues of the queer community, and negligible funding for the queer society on campus. Participants viewed the university management as being silent on queer issues, and therefore being complicit in the queerphobia which they experienced.

5.2. Limitations of research

Certain limitations came forward during the completion of the research study. The first limitation which I identified was the manner of recruitment whereby the participants made themselves available and volunteered. This way of recruiting participants meant that those who partook in the study would assumedly have a certain amount of confidence in speaking about their experiences in order to nominate themselves to partake in the study. Conversely, one could assume that those who did not feel empowered or felt marginalised within the community might not have had the confidence to volunteer and thus their valuable voices might not have been recorded.

Another limitation of the study is that there are not many South African studies around the identity of queer womxn; studies available on the queer community focus on the problems which queer people might face, and there is not much of a focus on identity, specifically not amongst university students. Although the gaps in the literature revealed an intense need for further studies to be completed, it also served as a challenge to compare and contrast my data.

Lastly, the data was collected at only one tertiary university institution. Thus, it might be important to note that the experiences of the students might not be universal, but might differ from one university to another, according to the context of the tertiary institution and

the way in which it is structured. South Africa is a diverse country, with eleven official languages and a large number of different cultures. Therefore, if more universities were included in the study, a more complex representation would have been given of the South African context.

5.3. Recommendations for further research

Something which was touched on in the results was that there are certain resources which queer womxn utilise in order to cope with queerphobia, and that there is a difference of access for people of various identities to these resources. However, this was not salient enough to discuss in depth. It would be valuable to do further studies on the resources that queer womxn utilise in order to cope with queerphobia at tertiary education institutions, and to assess why all queer womxn do not have access to these resources, in order to affect policy changes.

Another useful study would be to understand the way that identity affects the experiences of queerphobia, as well as the interpretation of queerphobia. Our intersectional identities influence the way that we view the world, experience queerphobia and the way that we interpret queerphobia. Therefore, it is important to assess the way that intersectional issues interplay with queerphobia.

It would also be useful for a queer womxn of colour to do a study on how queer womxn of colour experience queerphobia at university. Due to the fact that I am a white queer womxn, there is a possibility that I missed some of the important nuances that came forward in the understanding of racism and queerphobia and the intersection of race and queerness. However, it was an extremely salient theme within my research. Thus, it would be useful to do further research on this topic.

Furthermore, it would be useful to complete the study at other tertiary university institutions in South Africa to compare and contrast the results. Universities may differ in terms of context, the structure of queerphobia, the way that management engages and other important factors. Although many factors might be similar, there might also be vast differences, and other issues which might arise at other universities. The study might also reveal different results at a different point of time at the same university due to the fact that political and structural changes might occur in that time. Thus, it is important to constantly be checking in on the queer community.

5.4. Implications for universities

This research project has direct implications for tertiary education institutions which are interested in making their institutions safe havens for queer students. Other studies confirmed that universities need to put more effort into making the university space more inclusive and welcoming for queer students (Lesch, Brits, & Naidoo, 2017; Matthyse, 2017; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Roper, 2005). Queer students noted the disconnect between management bodies and themselves, and they described feeling a sense of powerlessness. Furthermore, queer students are still experiencing queerphobia at university and do not feel that their rights are being given the attention they deserve. The following suggestions come from the research for universities:

- Queer students should not be seen as a homogeneous body of people, and it should be understood that intersectional identities may impact the person's experience of being queer, the queerphobia experienced as well as the person's interpretation of queerphobia

- Queer students would like to see more funding for queer issues, and should be allowed access to venues on campus for queer events such as safe space

- Queer students would like management to express an opinion on queer issues and address the queerphobia which students are experiencing

- Queerphobia is not always overt, and this needs to be acknowledged by the university structures, and strategies should be put in place to start decreasing these harmful actions and thought structures in their students

- Queer students hold queer societies in high regard, which would be an ideal way for management bodies to make contact with queer students in order to find out how they would be able to make the university a safer space for them.

- Queer students need to be involved in the process of policy change and transformation.

- Lecturers and staff should receive training in queer issues, and acknowledge that they may not always be the experts on queer lived experiences

- The university needs to take responsibility for the education of its student body in order to take the burden off queer students who are often cast in the role of teachers, which becomes burdensome.

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Appendix 1

Invitation to participate in study: Queer womxn in tertiary education

You are invited to participate in the research study: Being a queer womxn within the context of tertiary education institutions in South Africa: Identity and queerphobia

This study will be conducted by Mx Melissa Sparrow (Research Psychology Masters student) supervised by Prof Desmond Painter (PhD) from Stellenbosch University.

On the 8th of February 2016, the University of Stellenbosch released a statement condemning the discrimination and unfair treatment of queer individuals on campus after the group #BreakingBoxes made demands after queerphobic attacks on campus. This statement, and the flux of student activism around queer issues on campus, revealed a need for research in the area of queer students of campus, specifically womxn students who are often erased and marginalised.

Queer theory is the idea that research should begin to understand what it means to be LGBTQIPA+ without making people feel like they are objects to be studied, scrutinised and made to feel different from heterosexual people, and in a sense normalising the LGBTQIPA+ experience, without taking away the deep meaning and life experience.

This study thus holds the purpose to begin unpacking and exploring the lived experiences of queer womxn within the tertiary education environment in South Africa.

If you do agree to participate, you will receive information about the study, and will be asked to fill in an informed consent form, which will be written permission showing that you both understand what is required of you, and also that you consent for the information to be used in the research study. Once you have agreed to participate in the study, the following will be requested of you:

1. You will be requested to fill in a biographical information form which will request specific information about you. This information will be used to gather background information about you.

2. You will be requested to take part in an interview which will be tape-recorded with your permission in order that the researcher can transcribe it verbatim to aid in the data analysis process. This interview will be approximately between 40 and 60 minutes, and will take place at your home or a location that suits you.

3. You will then be asked to make use of reflective journaling. You will be requested to make three entries per week for two weeks. Thus, six entries in total from you as a research participant.

4. Lastly, you will be asked to take part in a brief follow up interview about the journal that you have created.

In order to participate in the study you are required to be a registered student at Stellenbosch University, who identifies as both queer and as a womxn. You are free to choose to not take part in the study, and if you choose to take part in the study, you may withdraw at any stage. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University as well as the Research Ethics Committee.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact Melissa Sparrow at 072 026 7253 or at sparrowm1991@gmail.com

Appendix 2

Interview schedule A

1) How do you identify in terms of your sexuality and gender identity?

2) How do you define 'queerness'?

    a. LGBTQIPA+? Or different?

3) What is your experience of being queer in the university setting?

    a. What do you like about being queer?

        i. Culture

        ii. Support systems

        iii. Resources

    b. What are some of the difficult experiences you have experienced?

        i. Queerphobia

        ii. Identity

    c. How do you feel the university treats those who are queer?

4) What is your experience of being queer in South Africa?

    a. What do you like about being queer?

        i. Culture

        ii. Support systems

        iii. Resources

    b. What are some of the difficult experiences you have experienced?

        i. Queerphobia

        ii. Identity

5) How do you define being a womxn?

6) How do you feel that being both queer and a womxn impacts your experience in a University setting?

7) How do you feel about queer cisgendered men? Why?

8) What other components of your identity are important to you and how/why?

    a. Intersectionality

    b. Identity is not always about intersectional issues

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Interview Schedule B

1) What new thoughts and emotions came forward with journaling?

2) Please explain any posts which you feel might be challenging to understand, or that you would like to highlight.

3) Which posts were the most meaningful to you and why?

Appendix 3: Instructions for reflective journal entries

You will be kindly asked to make use of a reflective journal in which you are requested to make three entries per week, for two weeks. Thus, six entries in total will be required from you as a research participant. It is important to note that the researcher will not be using the journal for any monetary profit.

In this journal, you may make use of various means of capturing your thoughts and feelings, depending on how you best communicate. You may make use of the lyrics of songs, photography, pictures, poetry, writing or any other means of conveying thought around queer identity and queerphobia. The only prerequisite is that you explain the meaning which you associate with each entry, particularly if it is not by means of writing.

Your journal is your own creative project, and you may either make use of an electronic copy or a hard copy, which will be provided for you by the researcher. You are requested to put the date at the top of each entry.

At the end of the two weeks, when you hand over your journal to me, you will be requested to take part in a brief interview in order to elaborate and debrief about the reflective journaling, and anything which you felt was important that came up for you during the two week period.

A reminder system will be set up for your convenience which can involve a SMS or WhatsApp to remind you to journal. It is easy with the hustle and bustle of life to forget to journal, and this will control for the factor.

Your journal will be kept confidential, and will be kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's house in Somerset West. None of your identifying information will be revealed at any time, and you may choose a pseudonym for yourself or one will be provided for you. Any identifying information will be blocked out or removed according to the researcher's discretion.

<u>Please fill in the following information regarding your journal:</u>

Name:_____

Preferred pseudonym: _____

Cell phone number: _____

Preferred method of contact: SMS/ WhatsApp message

Would you prefer a hard copy journal or are you happy to use a journal on your computer?

Hard copy   /   Computer

<u>Days I would like to journal:</u>

Week 1: (Please choose 3)

Monday   Tuesday   Wednesday   Thursday   Friday   Saturday   Sunday

Week 2: (Please choose 3)

Monday   Tuesday   Wednesday   Thursday   Friday   Saturday   Sunday

I agree for the researcher to contact me by my preferred method of contact in order to remind me to journal.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____/_____/2018
        (Day   /   Month)

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Appendix 4: Biographical information

*Instructions: Please complete the biographical form. **Circle t**he correct answer where applicable, or **fill in** the information on the dotted line. Please note that this information will be kept safe at all times and your personal information will not be revealed in the study.*

Name and Surname:...

Age: ....

Gender: ....

Ethnicity: Black / White / Coloured / Indian / Asian

Other (please specify): ....

Home Language:...

What sexual orientation do you identify with: ....

Are you: Undergraduate / Postgraduate   ?

What are you currently studying? ....

Do you feel like the university takes queer issues seriously?

Yes   /   No

Have you ever been treated differently at university because you are queer?

Yes   /   No

Have you ever experienced queerphobia?

Yes   /   No

Have you ever experienced sexism?

Yes   /   No

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Appendix 5

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Being a queer womxn within the context of tertiary education institutions in South Africa: Identity and queerphobia.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Melissa Sparrow (Masters student) and Desmond Painter (supervisor, PhD), from the psychology department at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will be used in a Masters' thesis, and will hopefully be published in an accredited journal. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been informed of the study by the information sheet and have contacted the researcher, and have agreed that you are interested in being part of the study. You meet the requirements of the study by being a registered student at Stellenbosch University who identifies as being both queer and as being a womxn.

1. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

➢ This study aims to investigate the lived experiences of queer (LGBTQIPA+) womxn in tertiary education, with the focus on the experiences of queer womxn in South Africa.

➢ This study is based on the principal of queer theory, which is the concept that research should begin upacking what it means to be LGBTQIPA+ without othering, objectifying and separating queer humxns as being different and therefore strange by the heteronormative eye.

➢ This study is important because many studies have focused on men who have sex with men (MSM) in South Africa, with very little research focusing on the experiences of queer womxn. This study will solely focus on queer womxn.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

> ➢ The interviews will be conducted at your home or at a location that suits you. The journals may be completed wherever you are comfortable.

> ➢ The data collection will start with the completion of a biographical questionnaire.

> ➢ This will be followed by a semi-structured interview, consisting of questions about your living experience as a queer womxn. This interview will last between 40-60 minutes. If you agree, the interview will be tape-recorded so that the interview can be transcribed verbatim to help with the process of data analysis.

> ➢ You will then be requested to make use of a reflective journal, in which you may make use of various mediums to describe your identity as a queer womxn, as well as your feelings and thoughts around queerphobia. You will be asked to journal three times a week for a two week period, thus a total of six entries.

> ➢ This will be followed by a brief follow up interview regarding your journal and your experience.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The only foreseeable risk that you may experience is emotional distress and/or discomfort during the interview. I do not anticipate that you as a participant in the proposed research will experience emotional distress and/or discomfort during the interview, to the extent where referral for counselling will be needed. However, if this is the case, I will refer you to a clinical psychologist at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at: 021-808-4994. You will also be provided with a hand-out of details of people you can contact if you are feeling emotional distress.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You will not directly benefit by taking part in this study. However, the findings of this study might be published as a scholarly article in a peer reviewed journal. Publication of these findings will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of the experience of queer womxn in South Africa in the tertiary education setting. The researcher will not use the journals for monetary profit.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no remuneration for participating in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

> Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of ascribing a pseudonym to each participant when analysing the data. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the collected data. The transcribed data as well as the journals will be kept safe in a locked drawer in the house of the researcher until analyses of the information have been completed and will then be destroyed and discarded appropriately.
> The interviews will be stored on the researcher's personal laptop and will be encrypted. They will not be used for educational purposes, and will not be accessible to other audiences. They will be deleted five years after the study is completed.
> If the research is published, any information which might give away personal information will be disguised by means of pseudonyms, and removing data which might reveal the person's identity.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Melissa Sparrow at 072 026 7253 or sparrowm1991@gmail.com or Desmond Painter at 021-808 3458 or email address: dpainter@sun.ac.za .

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by [*name of relevant person*] in [*Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other*] and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] _____. She/they was/were encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____

Signature of Investigator

Appendix 6: Support services

If you are experiencing any difficulties speaking about being a queer womxn at Stellenbosch University, there are services which have been dedicated to helping you. Please do not hesitate to make contact with the following contacts if you are experiencing any difficulties or need support.

- lesbigaystellies@gmail.com (LesBiGay's email address)

- unfair@sun.ac.za (The University mechanism for discrimination reporting)

LesBiGay's Chairperson (Tanaka Mukoki) – 072 046 9500

There is also a suicide hotline which is toll free, which also is available to understand those who may have varied racial identities, gender identities or sexualities. The number is:

083 977 8581

Another useful contact detail is the South African Depression and Anxiety group. You can find their website at: www.sadag.org

Their suicide crisis line is at: 0800 567 567 or you can sms at 31393

You can also contact the Triangle Project for more information, as well as counselling specific to being LGBTQIPA+. Their email address is: info@triangle.org.za and their contact details are: 081 257 6693

Some other useful contacts which have been made available to help students in need are:

Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at: 021-808-4994.

You can also contact Monica Du Toit of the Transformation Office:

021 808 9465/ 2864,

mdt2@sun.ac.za