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Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences of Lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

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To:

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As the candidate’s supervisor, I agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all those who have always felt as if the world does not understand what defines who they truly are. Those with the dreams to see a world that understands that we are all wired in different ways, but have a common goal to work towards the betterment of Africa.

> ***"Human rights are not a privilege granted by the few, they are a liberty entitled to all, and human rights include the rights of all humans, those in the dawn of life, the dusk of life or the shadows of life."(*Kay Granger)**

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ABSTRACT

The gap between human rights and sexual identities has gained much attention in the world. Despite the heated resentment of homosexuality in Africa, South Africa is the only African state which has embraced equal rights for all people despite their sexual orientation. However, this has not been a means to end the heinous and disturbing acts of violence and discrimination against LGBTI (Lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex) persons. It is evident that though the South African constitution is versatile and inclusive to all rights, the society is not as liberal as the legislation in recognizing the significance of sexual rights.

This study therefore, ascertains the extent to which these rights are consolidated and upheld in Higher Education Institutions like the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Using the responsibility to protect norm and social constructivism and social identity theories, the study explored the experiences of a small group of self-identifying lesbian students at the university. Findings reveal that most lesbian students encounter discrimination and social stigma on university premises. The social stigma perpetuates the silencing of some of the students' sexual identities, and silencing of one's sexuality constructs the dynamics which make the heteronormative status strengthened suppressing the lesbian status. Findings also reveal that most of the participants felt vulnerable and unsafe. The study in turn recommends-that there has to be more active awareness programs and a more specific policy that rules out discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The study concludes that it is the responsibility of Higher Education Institutions to make sure that all student rights are catered for.

Keyword/ Phrases: Lesbian students, Higher Education Institutions, Human Rights, Sexual Rights, Discrimination.

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
GASA	Gay Association of South Africa
GLOW	Gays and Lesbian of Witwatersrand
HCWG	Hate Crimes Working Group
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
NCGLE	National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Equality
OHCR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WHO	World Health Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ILO	International Labor Organisation
UNIADS	United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Literature Review: Lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights in Africa – An overview

1.1 Introduction

The dichotomy between human rights and sexual identities has gained much attention in the world, especially on the African continent and the issue of human rights has cut across the unfolding debate of legalization of homosexuality (Thoreson, 2014, 24). Although there is no standard definition of what Human rights are, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) adapted its own definition. "Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever one's nation**,** ethnic origin, color, religion, language or any other status"[1] (OHCHR, 1996**).** The OHCHR clearly states that all human beings are equally entitled to their rights without any form of discrimination. Forsythe (2012, 3) defines human rights to be " a means to a greater social end, and that it is a legal system that tells us at any point in time which rights are considered most fundamental." Akokpari and Zimbler (2008, 1) state that there are different types of rights which are namely, first generation rights, second generation rights and lastly, third generation rights. First generation rights encompass political and civil rights whilst second generation rights include economic, social and cultural rights and lastly, third generation rights constitute of solidarity rights which is the right to development. These constitute of all the rights that every human being is eligible to. Cohen-Almagor (2009, 2) also states that human rights can be put into categories such as civil political, economic and social and cultural rights. Civil political rights are referred to as 'negative rights' because they do not require the state to get involved or interfere with the rights of individuals. Cohen-Almagor further notes that the socio-economic rights are however viewed as the 'positive rights' because the state has the ability to interfere and make sure that equality is consolidated amongst all groups in the society, making sure that all people get access to basic living conditions. The basic living conditions encompass housing, access to food, work, social security and health. Both negative and positive rights therefore make it the obligation of the state to prevent or correct any form of discrimination whether for individuals or a group (Shalev, 2005, 68).

[1] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) is an agency of the United Nations that works to promote human rights in the international system strictly sticking to all human rights as stated in the 1945 Universal declaration of human rights.

To understand the concept of sexual identities, it is essential to provide literature that explains and unpacks their development of the concept of sexual identity and gender. Bucigrossi and Frost (2003, 2) define gender as much more than mere biological sex to which one is born, it could either be male or female. Fagbeminiyi and Oluwatoyin (2010, 1) concur and state that gender is how human beings are 'categorized' to enact as being either male or female. Scholars like Butler (1990, 43-44) argue that gender is not something that someone is born having, rather it is something that one does. Butler (1990, 43) states that, "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance." Therefore, this means that gender is something that is learnt and changes across cultures (see INSTRAW, Glossary of Gender-related Terms and Concepts).[2] Myers (2013, 6) uses social constructionism to analyze gender issues in postmodern theory, and argues that gender is a result of the surroundings and different social values and circumstances that people practice. Looking at gender using these lenses opposes the idea of gender being merely either female or male. As cited in Butler (1990, 8) de Beauvoir (1973, 301) notes that "one is not born a woman but rather becomes one." This clearly strengthens the view that gender is learnt behavior.

de Beauvoir (1973) further notes that one can only develop into being a woman or a male under a social, cultural or religious obligation to be one. This is corroborated by Fagbeminiyi and Oluwatoyin (2010, 1) who state that in the African society roles distinctively define one's gender. For instance, if one is female they are expected to follow the female gender roles which include house duties and child bearing whilst male roles usually include headship of the Family. This therefore means that gender identity is how we (are constructed to) distinguish ourselves and what we (are made to) call ourselves (see Bucigross and Frost, 2003, 2). The American Psychological Association (2006) also defines gender identity as, "one's sense of self as male, female or transgender." McGowan et al (2012, 36) articulates that identity is *the question about whom we are*.

When looking at biological sex it is evident that it is determined by different genetic and anatomical traits that determine one's sexuality. However, it is different from gender which as

[2] www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=76) accessed 15 September 2015 2.45 pm

pointed out above is constructed (Butler 1990, 2). Lober (1994), two decades ago, stated that, "gender and sex are not equivalent, and gender as a social construction does not flow automatically from genitalia and reproductive organs." What then is sexual orientation? Schwartz and Rutter (1998, 32) note that sexual orientation, "signifies the identity one has, based on the gender of the sexual partners one tends to pair with either at a particular time or a lifetime." Bucigross and Frost (2003, 2) and Plug et al (2011, 4) also define sexual orientation as a specific orientation to feeling attracted to one or both genders. The latter statement therefore requires one to know and understand the different types of sexualities that exist. Mizock et al (2014, 1) articulates that in cases where there is a mismatch between gender and the anatomical sex, one can be then defined as transsexual or transgender. Schwarts and Rutter (1998, 32) state that when one is transsexual, one will believe that they were born in the wrong body. When a person is heterosexual it means they are sexually attracted to persons of a different sex, for instance, a man being sexually attracted to a woman (Martin 2009, 190). Being bisexual then means that a person is sexually attracted to both women and men. Another type of sexuality or sexual orientation is homosexuality. The term homosexuality was coined in the 1880s as the sexual orientation of people whose primary emotional, physical, and sexual attraction is for people of the same gender (see Medhurst and Munt, 1997, 54; Masango, 2002, 958; Barnecka et al, 2005, 7).

According to Miller (2009, 8), an effort to close the gap between human rights and sexuality led to the development of important phrases or concepts like 'sexual rights'. Scholars like Saiz (2004, 66-67) state that the term cuts across all varieties of sexuality and empowers people to comprehend the link between sexual orientation, discrimination and other sexuality issues like the restriction on sexual oppression outside marriage as well as the exploitation of sex workers. Sexual rights reveal more the value of universalism since their focal point is on an essential constituent of the self that is common to all human beings, which is their sexuality. African feminists like Horn (2006, 8) articulate that the term 'sexual rights' cannot be regarded as a, 'new set of rights', instead it emanates from the current rights that are already recognized internationally within the scope of the sexual body. Horn (2006) further states that, "our bodies are our primary means of participating socially, economically, politically, spiritually and creatively in society.

They are the beginning point of the practical application of rights; the place in which rights are exercised, and for women in particular, the place where rights are most often violated." As such, scholars like Saiz (2004) note that acknowledging sexuality as an important element of being human, the term 'sexual rights', then gives 'sexual minorities'[3]as well as 'sexual majorities' the power and ability to be free and have access to all legal human rights.

Below is the definition of sexual rights adopted by the World Health Organization (2006):

> *"Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements. They include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:(1) the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;(2) seek , receive and impart information related to sexuality;(3) sexuality education;(4) respect for bodily integrity;(5) choose their partner;(6) decide to be sexually active or not;(7) consensual sexual relations;(8)consensual marriage;(9) decide whether or not, and when, to have children; and(10) pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life*."[4]

Whilst the promotion of human and sexual rights has gained attention in the international community, the gap between human rights and sexual orientation is still very visible when it comes to the LGBTI persons[5]. The acronym LGBTI represent a diversity of sexuality and gender identity, which include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex. The promotion of human rights for people who identify as LGBTI has become germane in the international and political arena and it has seen the involvement of different non-state actors. Pearlman and Cunningham (2012, 3) define, "a non-state actor as an organized political actor not directly connected to the state but pursuing aims that affect vital interests."

[3] The term sexual minority refers to a group of people whose sexual identity and practices are different from what the majority of the society they live in practice. The term is usually used when referring to Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people. Therefore, it means that the term sexual majority refers to heterosexuals.
[4] WHO (2006), Defining sexual health: report of a technical consultation 0n sexual health 28–31 January 2002, Geneva.
[5] Being LGBTI in most communities in the world automatically means deprivation of some benefits and rights that heterosexual persons get, for instance, access to health and marriage unions (Taylor, 2011).

As such, non-state actors like the United Nations have over the years put much effort towards the attainment of human rights for all people despite factors like sexual orientation (see United Nations, 2008, 1; Miller and Roseman, 2011, 102).

According to Akokpari and Zimbler (2008, 4) most African states adopted a Bill of Rights in their constitutions taking a stand against any form of discrimination. However, despite the widespread talks about human and sexuality rights, homophobic attitudes often combined with lack of legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity exposes many LGBTI persons to gross violations of their human rights. They are discriminated against in many avenues of society, for instance in learning spaces, work spaces as well as hospitals (see OHCHR, 1996; Mufweba, 2003; Mollema and Van der Bijl, 2014; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 7).

This introductory chapter will focus primarily on unpacking existing literature addressing human security issues and LGBTI. It will also focus on the background of the study, significance of the study against other studies, research questions and broader issues to be investigated.

1.2 Background and Rationale of the present study

The status of sexuality politics in international relations has received much attention in the contemporary world. It even has an impact on issues regarding foreign policy[6], health care, labor markets as well as education, "hence, creating new avenues for looking at the construction of conventional International Relations concepts" (Thiel, 2014).

According to the United Nations report (2008, 1) particular attention has been paid to tackling racial and sex discrimination as well as discrimination based on personal health status, disability or religious affiliation. More recently, the international community led by the United Nations has become increasingly concerned with the prevalence of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (UN report, 2008, 1). There has been increased global media

[6] Issues of sexuality have indeed turned out to be a 'hot topic' for states when engaging in foreign policy. For instance, the United States of America has for several times vied for the acknowledgement of homosexuality worldwide especially in African states. Presidents Obama's recent visit to Kenya highlighted that though Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta made it clear that the issue of LGBTI rights was a non-issue considering that for Kenya they considered other matters to be more pressing, however, President Obama had to mention it, for he is well known for being a staunch supporter of all the principles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (IOL News Online, 2015, Obama to tackle gay rights in Kenya).

attention on homophobic violence and discrimination on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community (Human Rights Watch 2011, 2).

As such, according to the United Nations Report of 2012, the organization has created different entities that incorporate issues of sexuality and gender identity in their line of work. “These entities include: the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund(UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labor Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNIAIDS).”All of the above entities have made it their mandate to put the issues of LGBTI rights as their primary focus when dealing with human security issues in the international system.

Non-Governmental Organizations like Amnesty International have also been advocating for LGBTI rights in the past few years. In more than 70 countries, legislation makes it a crime to be homosexual, exposing millions to the risk of arrest, imprisonment and in some cases execution (UN, 2008, 1). According to the Amnesty international report of 2012, most African countries have not welcomed the notion of LGBTI. For instance, the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe publicly stated that he believed gays and lesbians were, “no lower than pigs and perverts and therefore have no rights” (see Tiripano, 2000, 6; Luirink, 2000, 51). Littaure notes that President Mugabe even stepped up his campaign against LGBTI Zimbabweans during an election rally in 2013. President Mugabe argued, “if you take men and lock them in a house for five years and tell them to come up with two children and they fail to do that, then we will chop off their heads” (Littauer 2013).

President Mugabe has described gays as being worse than barn yard animals and has also criticized the United States and President Barrack Obama for using foreign aid for the protection of LGBTI rights. He cautioned African countries that have not criminalized same sex acts, saying they were falling for the European countries trickery all in the name of foreign aid (LGBTQI Nation, 2013).

Thus, the issue of LGBTI rights in Post-independence Africa still remains a contentious topic since for most of the states it is deemed taboo/ immoral and inhuman. Even though LGBTIs exist, they suppress or conceal their identities because of the fear of societal discrimination. However, despite this heated discussion on homosexuality, South Africa embraced the notion of lesbians and gays. However, constitutionality has not assured an end to social discrimination and violence (Francis and Msibi, 2011). There seems to be a missing element when it comes to the protection of lesbian rights in South Africa.

Herek and Beril (1992) asserted some time ago that lesbian women are part of a marginalized population that places them at risk of targeted victimization. Writing earlier, Nelson and Krieger (1997); Cohen and Felson (2003) and Wells and Poders (2006) writing later, also point out that the very factors which give homosexuals the chance to enjoy the benefits of life and exercise their rights, also increases their chances of encountering prejudice.

According to Rankin (2003, 2) discrimination against lesbians is found in all levels of society; hence, it is also found in educational institutions. The fact that some students are lesbian, they experience discrimination and marginalization one way or the other during their schooling and by extension, their university careers (Vollenhoven and Els, 2013, 266). In most situations, lesbians in Higher Education Institutions are not fully understood, appreciated and served (see Rankin, 2003 and Swank and Raiz, 2010). Collier (2001) asserts that women who self-identify as lesbian are often viewed as the other and it is difficult to understand because some lesbian women portray male characteristics in their lifestyle. In many cases lesbianism makes it difficult for other heterosexual students to understand them, normally generating disgust and hate towards lesbian students. Rankin (2003) and Collier (2001) posit that students in university communities often fear ‘coming out’ as lesbian for the sake of protecting their academic careers. In some instances they receive negative comments from their educators and some make it known by intentionally failing some LGBTI students (see Wells and Poders, 2005, 15; Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy 2015, 5). Francis and Msibi’s study (2011, 162) revealed that some educators even make disturbing remarks such as, “homosexuality is a social disease.”

The English Collins dictionary defines homophobia as hatred and disgust towards LGBTI persons. Research done on lesbian persons shows that homophobia does exist in South African

universities (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006; Francis and Msibi, 2011; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2014). From Msibi's 2013 study, it is evident that most lesbian students in Higher Education Institutions often have to deal with discrimination and negative attitudes from other heterosexual students. According to Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 267) the constitution of South Africa clearly defines that rights to which all citizens are entitled to *cannot* be taken away from or denied to anyone. As such, people should exercise these rights in all levels of society and in different institutions, tolerating diversity. Vollenhoven and Els (2013) further state that Higher Education Institutions should have policies that actually guide people to respect human rights regardless of differences.

Hence, the aim of this study is to probe the experiences of the lesbian students and interrogate how the lesbian students perceive their experiences within an institutional environment like the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study will ascertain the extent to which the rights of lesbian students are protected and respected as required by the constitution of the country.

1.3 Survey of Existing Research

This part of the study aims to review relevant existing literature on the subject of LGBTI human rights. For this study, a literature review is of great importance to help in avoiding duplication of existing literature, help in understanding the study in historical perspective and in relation to earlier or more primitive attacks on the same problem. It also helps in trying to identify new ideas and approaches which have not been tackled by other scholars, thus, filling in some gaps in scholarship. The literature reviewed gives an overview of the discourse of sexuality politics in the international system narrowing it down to Africa. It further unravels literature on the experiences of LGBTI students in institutions of higher education. It specifically looks at the prejudices and forms of discrimination that lesbian students encounter during their university careers. Since the study is located at a South African university, some of the literature reviewed also includes the discourse on human rights in South Africa mainly focusing on sexual rights. More will be elaborated in later sections of the study.

1.3.1The Human Security Concept

The discourse of human rights gained prominence in the 1990 era just after the cold war and it emphasized the concept of human security. The idea of human security was coined in the United

Nations Development Report of 1994 (UNDP, 1994). Baylis et al (2011) states that the origins of the concept trace back to the publication of the human development report. The UNDP report recognized the interdependence between security and development as the two main components of human life and human dignity (Katja, 2007)[7]. The Human development report was specific, listing "seven dimensions of human security which entailed economic, personal, food, health, political community and environmental security" (see UNDP, 1994; Katja 2009; Gomez and Gasper 2013). The characteristics of human security were broader and more inclusive than the definition proffered by some of the traditional International Relations theorists like Hans Morgenthau, E.H Carr and Karl Max whose theories mostly focused on national and state security (Ohta, 2009, 5).

Human security is defined as safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and subjugation as well as protection from unexpected and detrimental disruptions in the patterns of daily life (UNDP, 1994). Human security extends the whole idea of analyzing security focusing on territorial security; instead it shifts its attention to the security of people (see Gomez and Gasper 2013; Hagen, 2012). The 2012 United Nations General Assembly resolution reaffirmed the definition of human security. It reiterated the role of, "member states in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to survival, livelihood and dignity of their people." Central to the whole idea of human security, is that all persons are allowed to live freely in dignity, free from poverty and despondency, having access to an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.

Addressing threats to individual survival became more prominent rather than individual sovereign states. In light of the protection of human rights, personal security is relevant (see Ngubane 2013). It entails the protection of persons from violence whether from the state or external states, violent individuals or sub-state factors and domestic abuse. Ngubane (2013) further notes that, "gays and lesbians are restricted, discriminated against, threatened by violence and denied freedom to exercise their rights."

[7] The 1994 UNDP came at a time when the international community was trying to find a solution to development after the vestiges of the cold war. And it emerged that development had to first emanate from the security of the human individual.

Therefore, their personal security is something that should be looked into. O' Brien (2007) articulates that human security primarily focuses on the need for rights for all persons despite differences[8].

Worldwide, many people are subjected to continuous human rights violations because of their perceived sexual orientation and gender identity (see UN, 2008, 1; Human Rights Watch, 2011, 3; Amnesty International, 2012, 7; Amnesty International, 2015, 13). The violations take different forms, ranging from denial of the right to life, freedom from torture and security of the person, to discrimination in accessing economic, social and cultural rights such as health, housing, education and the rights to work, their sexualities being oppressed and attempts to impose heterosexual norms and pressure to remain silent and invisible (see Fisher et al, 2008, 208; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 7). Some time ago Dunton and Palmberg (1996) asserted that being a minority group in most communities', means that homosexuals do have a need for legal protection. Writing recently, Mugadaza et al (2015, 7) state that international legislation gives LGBTI persons the privilege to enjoy equal rights and protection as stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Against this backdrop, norms like the Responsibility to Protect have emerged in the broader framework of International Relations. The Responsibility to Protect also known as R2P articulates that it is the responsibility of a state to protect its people from crimes against humanity, discrimination and genocides (see ICISS Report, 2001; Murithi, 2007). Though scholars like Jayakumar (2014) concur that the R2P focuses on protecting the individual, they assert the need for a gender viewpoint to fit in the framework of global policy and international relations as a foundation for protection and intervention. Bond and Sheret (2006) are also of the view that the R2P doctrine tends to be gender blind in some instances. They postulate that even though the doctrine allows the responsibility to protect and intervene, it does not pay much attention when it concerns gender and sexuality issues; instead it focuses more on issues concerning conflict. Sewedo (2014) then articulates that though the R2P norm was pivotal in developing the debate on human rights and protection of people from genocides and crimes against humanity, in the current

[8] Human security cannot be assured to persons based on differences; hence, LGBTI persons are entitled to be assured of their security.

dispensation the violations of many based on sexuality and gender identity now take priority as part of the norm.

Adhering to this, the R2P norm was enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union in 2000 (see Murithi 2007). Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act affirms, " the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity" (AU 2000, article 4(h)). Ngubane (2013) points out that in post Independent Africa there is intense pressure to democratize the political systems thereby perpetuating the realization of human rights.

Embracing the Responsible to Protect norm, aims at providing legal and ethical basis for humanitarian intervention in states which are unwilling to fight genocide, massive killings and other human rights violations (Abeysonya, 2009). Abeysonya (2009) further notes that the R2P norm therefore places moral pressure on states to protect the human rights of its citizens. Whilst it is essential that African countries do everything in their power to protect their national interests, it is germane that they also follow the principles of the R2P norm. By adhering to the norm, they make sure "that their citizens are protected from all forms of human rights violation, especially those affecting human dignity and life" (Sewedo, 2014). The violence and discrimination that people who identify as LGBTI go through affects their human dignity, as such homosexuals have the right to be protected by the state.

The 6th of November 2006 marked the development of the Yogyakarta principles, which were later endorsed and launched officially at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on the 26th of March 2007 (see O' Flaherty and Fisher, 2008, 207; Brown, 2009, 828; Waites, 2009, 137). At an International Commission of Jurists meeting that was convened in Java, in November 2006, a group that comprised of International Human Rights pundits presented a paper that was titled, "The Yogyakarta Principles: Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity" (Ettelbrick and Zeran`, 2010, 1). Ettelbrick and Zeran` (2010), note that the principles were developed from the already existing treaties that were central to international human rights[9]. Brown (2009, 829) articulates that the principles were

[9] "The main treaties examined were the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant of Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Covenant on The Rights of The Child" (Ettelbrick and Zeran`, 2010, 1).

a response to continuous violence and discrimination toward LGBTI persons across the world. Therefore, the paper stressed the importance of states and the international community to put in place mitigating measures protecting the rights of LGBTI people. Horn (2006, 8) propounds that using the human rights lens to comprehend the discussions around sexuality helps one to examine closely the responsibility of states to protect their citizens as well as their rights.

1.3.2 LGBTI in Africa

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1945 article 2, everyone is entitled to all the rights of freedom:

> *"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without Distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other Opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty*."

The principle of universality has no exceptions therefore every human being is entitled to their human rights despite all differences (Amnesty, 2013, 11). Similar to the universal declaration of human rights the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples Rights, has a provision that guarantees rights to every individual and human being. The non-discrimination article 2 entitles every individual to the gratification of all the rights in the charter without distinction of any kind. Ndashe (2012) and Akokpari and Zimbler (2008, 5) state that like all instruments providing for the protection of fundamental rights, the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples Rights provides sufficient basis for the recognition of all rights without discrimination including the LGBTI rights.

However, the 'sexual orientation' part of the declaration and charter has never been fully embraced, especially within the African society. Van Ingen and Phala (2014, 54) give a number of examples of African states that do not tolerate homosexuality, namely Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Uganda. Van Ingen and Phala posit that most African countries prohibit

discrimination based on sexuality in their constitutional writings but justify homophobic legislation using the public opinion. The African public opinion has always come out strongly against homosexuality (see Butley and Astbury 2005, 816; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 4). Macauley (2004) argues that being born homosexual in an African society is confusing since it is regarded as taboo. Sewedo (2014) also notes that from an African standpoint, putting the protection and promotion of sexual rights on the table is difficult to do without sounding as if you are going against the cultures and perceptions of the society. Macauley (2004) further notes that given the chance to know if a child is homosexual before birth, most African parents would kill their children. The issue of lesbian rights is thus to be understood as controversial in post independent Africa and it has been deemed as cultural immorality and an abuse of traditional values (see Reddy, 2001; Van Ingen and Phala, 2014, 54; Tamale, 2014).

Epprecht (2012, 223) argues that, "campaigns for sexual rights in Africa are perceived as a form of western cultural imperialism leading to an exportation of western gay identities and provoking the African tradition." However, according to Jefferson (2011) homosexuality has been in existence since early times. It is recorded that it was common amongst the Greeks (Wilson and Rahman, 2005). Some social anthropological works and writings have revealed that homosexuality has always existed.

Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 269) then argue that discrimination against LGBTI persons in Africa is 'pinned on colonialism'. Too many times, homosexuality has been labelled as one of the vestiges of colonialism, white culture and post modernism. The notion that homosexuality is not an African phenomenon is echoed loudly by most African leaders who show little or rather no interest at all in protecting LGBTIs. Instead statesmen seek stricter measures to criminalize homosexuality (see Saiz 2005, 16; Amnesty International Report, 2013, 9; Vollenhoven and Els, 2013, 269). Though organizations like the African Union acknowledge that every human being is entitled to equal rights without any form of discrimination, it has not really taken a firm position on sexual orientation (Ndashe, 2012). This is visible with how skeptical most African states are with the topic of homosexuality. According to the Amnesty International (2015, 13) in the year 2014, there was a ray of light concerning LGBTI rights in Africa when the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights endorsed a bill that was inclusive of sexual rights. However, these developments did not put a halt to discrimination based on perceived sexuality in most African

states like Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Senegal, Gambia and Cameroon (see Amnesty International, 2015, 13; Mugadaza et al 2015, 7). It worsened the situation in other countries, for instance, the previous Nigerian President Sir Goodluck Jonathan quietly signed the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition law on the 7th of January, 2014, and this law even prohibited homosexuals to have gatherings (Ajibade, 2014, 5).

On the 9th of October, 2014, the Gambian President Yahya Jammeh signed a Bill that had been passed by parliament as the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 2014. It stipulated that homosexuality is a grave criminal offence that leads to a life imprisonment sentence (Gambian gazette, 2014). According to the 2012 Amnesty International report and Itaborahy & Zhu (2013) in Africa, 38 of 54 nations criminalize homosexuality or same-sex behavior. For instance, Uganda adopted the Anti-Homosexuality Act passed 20 December 2013, and it entails life in prison. The countries' explicit legislation against homosexuality then raises questions on whether these countries signed the universal declaration of human rights or they are just not adhering to the declaration.

Amidst this wave of resentment, South Africa has become one of the few countries in the world to embrace homosexuality in their constitution. South Africa was the first country in Africa to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in 1996, and the first in the world to include it in its constitution (see Cock, 2003, 35; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Wells and Poders, 2006, 20; Van Ingen and Phala, 2014, 54[10]). In this regard, "South Africa has got one of the most progressive and inclusive constitutions with regards to homosexuality in the world" (Andt and de Bruin, 2006, 17).

However, during the apartheid regime, discrimination of LGBTI persons was very common, and it was perpetuated by government laws (Long, 2003, 23; Vollenhoven and Els 2013, 264; Wells and Poders, 2006, 20). To support this, Long referred to the immorality act of 1957 apartheid which criminalized interracial sex, prostitution, solicitation for immoral purposes and a range of other activities that brought immorality. The first account of same sex relationships was recorded in the land of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis Holy Bible, New International Version). This form of relationship then gradually spread across the globe, although homosexuals were forbidden to

[10] South Africa was the Twentieth century country to legalize same sex marriages (Amnesty International, 2012).

express themselves. Banne (2010) further states that in South Africa, Section 20 of the Sexual Act Offences (communal law) regarded homosexual practices as criminal offences of sodomy, a word coined out of the behavior and conduct of people of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible.

Long (2003, 30) concurs with Banne that the apartheid law was built on the Dutch principles woven on a Godly doctrine, therefore sodomy was included as part of the activities that brought immorality to society. Because homosexuality was labeled illegal, it meant that lesbian women and gay men were denied justice even when they experienced criminal abuses (see Gevisser and Cameroon, 1994; Wells and Poders 2006, 20). This therefore meant that it was difficult, rather a futile attempt for lesbian women and gay men to claim that they had been victims of crimes. Because of their sexual orientation, they were already viewed as criminals or perpetrators against the law.

After the demise of apartheid, the new South African government had a great task of correcting the wrongs of apartheid. During the time of apartheid, it was portrayed as a regime that grossly violated human rights (Landsberg and Mackay, 2006, 2). Adhering to the international community's expectations, the newly assigned government drafted its constitution following the guidelines of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the new constitution of 1996, the Republic of South Africa introduced the Bill of Rights which acknowledged respect to all persons and their rights.

> *"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, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.*" (SA Constitution, Chapter 2, (9) (c)

Cock (2003, 26) articulates that, "the discourse of diversity, the celebration of difference and, especially, the right to freedom of sexual orientation were defended as part of the challenge of building a diverse, pluralistic society." Strengthening its views on sexual orientation, South Africa legalized same sex marriages in 2006. However, the question of the protection of LGBTI rights still stands. Although South Africa placed legislation supporting freedom of sexual orientation, discrimination and violence towards LGBTI persons is still prevalent.

Nel and Joubert (1997, 20) and Dworkin (2000, 165) articulate that the majority of people in South Africa live in heterosexual communities, where being homosexual is deemed as taboo and not normal. In such instances, heterosexual relationships are the only ones accepted and labeled as moral. Discrimination against lesbian woman can be understood if classified into two types, which are heterosexism and homophobia (Wells and Poders, 2006, 21). Heterosexism is the general assumption by most people that everyone is heterosexual (Ertetik, 2010, 20). Wells and Poders (2006), state that heterosexism has a powerful effect on same sex relationships. Most lesbian relationships are shaped on heterosexual grounds leading to one of the partners adopting an opposite sex gender role. For instance, in most cases the other woman usually becomes the man of the relationship.

Being part of a heterosexist society can stir up homophobia in most societies. The term homophobia was coined by Weinberg (1972) to mean the fear of being in close quarters with homosexuals. Buston and Hart (2001, 95) define homophobia as the term given to negative attitudes and behavior towards lesbians and gays. Thoreson (2014, 24) notes that by compiling incidents of homophobia, they reflect harsh and complex responses to sexual acts and identities. Homophobia manifests in the form of verbal and physical threats. In most cases, lesbian women and gay men are harassed verbally or physically resulting in gay bashing or rape. Reddy (2001, 83) points out that there are specific issues that arise as a result of homophobic tendencies which are, “fear of the other.” The most common issue relates to the fear of difference, change and variation. Secondly, homosexuality is seen as a disorder and when discomfort becomes hatred, it leads to irrational acts of violence and exclusion. Thirdly, the discourse of homophobia identifies homosexuals as outcasts.” Reddy further articulates that homophobia is a form of gender violence and consequently gender oppression. Reddy’s assumptions clearly state that society is scared of the unknown and this greatly contributes to the violations of the rights of LGBTI’s

Mbatha (2012, 3) argues that the protection of lesbian and gay rights is only on paper since the social outcome is always different. Lesbians continue to be victims of rape and violence (see Cock, 2003, 42; Brown, 2012, 47; Mwambene and Wheal, 2015, 52). Gender based violence against lesbians has never really been acknowledged and lesbians have been categorized as the, “silent and invisible minority” (see Varga, 2004; Wells and Poders, 2006; Bhana and Anderson, 2013). Mufweba (2003) and Bendix (2014) posit that lesbian women are often victims of sexual

rape. In most cases their predators commit such acts of violence with the intention of correcting the sexuality of their lesbian victims. Lesbians do not feel free because in most cases they are mocked, disowned by family and society, raped and murdered (Human Rights Watch, 2011, 2). This then raises the question on what the right of life and equality as enshrined in the South African constitution actually means.

1.3.3 LGBTI rights in Higher Education Institutional Spaces

Lesbian and gays are found in all walks of life, from different races, tribes and creeds (see Luirink, 2000; Nel and Judge, 2008; Mbatha, 2012, 3). Therefore, this means that lesbians can be found in Higher Education Institutions as well. Though the South African government has shown relentless effort and commitment to acknowledging and upholding LGBTI rights, negative attitudes and behavior towards LGBTI persons are still prevalent in university communities (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006, 16; Msibi, 2012, 250; Matebeni, 2013; Johnson, 2014, 1259; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 8).

The challenges and prejudices faced by lesbian students in universities remain pertinent to both international and national literature. Most International studies on lesbian students focuses on overt and covert forms of discrimination towards LGBTI persons, and also look at the views of other heterosexual students towards their lifestyle (see Evans and Broido, 1999; Rankin 2003; Jenkins et al, 2009; Swank and Raiz, 2010). Longerbeam et al (2007, 215) point out that the status of high research education on gay and lesbian students offers an incomplete picture of their overall university experience.

South African studies on lesbian students in Higher Education Institutions mainly focus on the attitudes of heterosexual students towards LGBTI students and how they perceive them (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006; Francis and Msibi, 2011; Msibi, 2013; Vollenhoven and Els, 2013; Abaver et al, 2014; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2014; Jagessar and Msibi, 2015). Some scholars like Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2015) also explore how first year LGBTI students perceive the university campuses in South Africa to be welcoming. Mavhandu-Mudzusi questions whether these students have an idea of what will be ahead of them or whether they base their opinions on a fallacy.

The university years are life changing for many students. Jagessar and Msibi (2015, 63) state that, "higher education environments usually become a second home away from home." During these crucial years, students come across new ideas that can challenge their foundational beliefs; they also meet people with different backgrounds and experiences. Whilst in most cases experiences add up to some of the good memories to one's university career, other students find that they have different, rather unique challenges that stem from how they are perceived and treated because of their sexual orientation and identity (Rankin, 2003, 2). For those who decide to be open about their sexuality, in most cases they face a range of discrimination which includes verbal or physical harassment and in some cases outright silencing of their sexuality (see Rankin, 2003, 2; Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama, 2013; Rockman, 2013).

Rankin (2003, 3) further argues that though universities provide a variety of opportunities and safety for their students, "these are greatly limited for those who fear for their safety when they walk on campus, or feel they must censor themselves in the classroom, or are so distracted by harassing remarks, that they are unable to concentrate on their studies ." Like Rankin, another international scholar Collier (2001, 11) propounds that most universities are cautious when it comes to extending equal rights and social justice to members of the LGBTI community. A South African scholar Msibi (2013, 67) concurs with this view, stating that when it comes to the issue of LGBTI rights, not much is said. Msibi further argues that it is probably because the topic is too controversial. Collier (2001, 11) notes that university administrators procrastinate when it comes to dealing with issues concerning LGBTI. They are slow to change hence discrimination against lesbian students' remains prevalent (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006; Francis and Msibi, 2011, 167).

Collier further states that university administrators often rubber stamp matters regarding LGBTI safety and rights on campus. Thus, South African studies conducted by Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama (2013) and Abaver et al (2014), recommended that universities should improve their awareness of the need to address issues of stigma and discrimination on campuses. There is need for universities to include LGBTI issues in their curriculum. This helps students understand more about other sexual identities, in the process addressing their own biases for better communicating in a socially-and culturally-appropriate manner with fellow students from all sexual orientations (Mathuri et al, 2012). A renowned international scholar, Rankin (2006)

concurs and emphasizes that universities should not stick to their past initiatives just for the sake of convenience but must strive to improve them as well.

Rankin (2003) articulates that most lesbian students do not 'come out' because of the hostile climate or reactions they experience on campuses. Jansen (2014) also states that homophobia in most South African educational facilities is increasingly wide spreading. Because of their sexual orientation, most female students are harassed verbally or physically. International studies by Schope and Eliason (2000) and Burn (2000) actually unpacked that most lesbian students had been assaulted verbally during the course of their university careers. Degrading words such as, 'fag', 'dyke', 'lesbo' and 'queer', are often used as insults in verbal exchanges. In the South African context denigrating words such as, 'moffie', ' isitabane'[11], 'buti', 'brother sister' or 'double adaptor', 'ungqingili', 'uvezubuso', 'inkwili', 'danone', are used to mock those who are identified as lesbian (see Reddy, 2005; Francis and Msibi, 2011, 163; Mavhandu- Mudzusi, 2014, 716).

Like Rankin, a study that was carried out by international scholars, Evans and Broido back in 1999 entitled, *"Coming Out In College Residence Halls: Negotiation, Mean Making, Challenges, Supports",* revealed that campus environments are not at all welcoming towards lesbian and gay men. Writing later on, Jenkins et al (2009) in their study, "*The Attitudes of Black and White College Students towards Gay and Lesbians"*, used students from the University of Midwestern in the United States of America (USA) and results concur with Evans and Broido (1999). The study revealed that stereotyping and negative attitudes of heterosexual students make the university life of most homosexual students a bitter experience. Swank and Raiz (2010) also used social work students across the USA to determine the different attitudes that undergraduate students in universities had towards lesbians and gays. Like Evans and Broido, a study by Jenkins et al (2009) unpacked that most heterosexual students did not tolerate and accommodate homosexuality. Abaver et al (2014) conducted a study, *"Knowledge, perception and behavior of students towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community at Walter Sisulu University, Eastern Cape, South Africa",* and it also revealed that most students felt that homosexuality was unnatural. However there seemed to be some level of tolerance when it came to lesbian students. Arndt and de Bruin (2006); Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama,

[11] The words 'moffie' and 'isitabane' in the South African context are a direct reference to both lesbians and gays.

(2013); Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014); Ncanana and Ige (2014) are also some of the South African scholars who have contributed some valuable literature concerning the attitudes of heterosexual students towards lesbian and gay students in Higher Education Institutions in South Africa.

Reason and Rankin (2006); Rankin and Weber (2010) articulate that it has become a norm for LGBTI students at university environments to deal with challenges of harassment and discrimination. Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender actually increases the chances of being harassed other than the heterosexual students. In a master's dissertation from the University of Zululand[12], Ngcobo (2007) found out that lesbian student on campus faced grueling discrimination from other students. The Natal witness 2005, 26 February reported an incident of one of the terrible incidents that occurred at the University of Zululand. Male students were reported to have "toyi toyied" (demonstrated)[13] against all lesbians and gays who resided in the University residences. Writing recently, Ncanana and Ige (2014) unpacked that most students at the University of Zululand disliked strongly the idea of lesbians and gays and they did not tolerate it. Ncanana and Ige (2014) justify their findings stating that these attitudes are likely to be driven by how sexuality is connected to roles in an African setup. Similar to the incident at University of Zululand, in 2012 another incident occurred at the University of the Western Cape[14]where a student was beaten in front of security staff (De Vos, 2012). This kind of behavior depicts how difficult it can be being a lesbian student in a South African university.

In their study Jagessar and Msibi (2015) unpacked the experiences of LGBTI students at a Higher Education Institution in Kwazulu-Natal. The study mainly focused on how LGBTI students who reside in the university accommodation spaces cope with the prevalence of homophobia. The study revealed that discrimination against LGBTI students in university residencies is a poignant issue that requires sound anti-discrimination policies from the university administration.

Msibi (2013, 67) also argues that homophobic tendencies at institutions of higher education are not only instigated by students, but also from some of the staff members. For example, a student

[12] The University of Zululand (also known as UniZulu) is a tertiary educational institution situated in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Wikipedia).

[13] To "toyi toyi" is a South African terminology that describes a demonstration by people against certain issues and it is usually associated with singing and chanting.

newspaper at the North West University in 2013 reported an incident of a student who was verbally harassed by a lecturer. The lecturer made it clear how she detested homosexuals and how she felt that they did not deserve to live and how they sinned terribly before the eyes of the Lord (see Duprez, 2013). Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015) also concur and in their study they unpack how stigma towards LGBTI students is sometimes related to religion. Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama (2013, 716) further state that lesbian students in institutions of higher education are sometimes denied the privilege of participating in extra co-curriculum activities like sport because of the discrimination.

Dworkin (2000, 165) argues that for most lesbian women the university years are when they undergo an identity transformation. According to Dworkin et al (2000) they go through a process that involves shifting their identities from being heterosexual to the "socially degraded" non-heterosexual identity of being lesbian. This makes their university experience difficult. Like Dworkin (2000), Dugan and Yurman (2011, 201) acknowledge that "indeed it is within the higher education context that many students begin to explore and or disclose their sexual identities." Arndt and de Bruin (2006, 19) state that the 'coming out' process is never easy because lesbian students have to face criticism for their sexual orientation choices. In their study, "*Coming Out In College Residence Halls: Negotiation, Meaning Making, Challenges Supports*." Evans and Broido (1999), almost two decades ago found out that most students feared 'coming out' as lesbian because they feared, "the feelings of concern for others who might be indirectly hurt by the student's being out, distress at being labeled, fears and actual experiences of harassment and rejection, needing to limit behaviors to avoid unsafe situations." Homophobic tendencies are also orchestrated from different religious perceptions that students have on campus. Arndt and de Bruin (2006) and Jenkins et al (2009, 595) mention that much of the resentment comes from Christian students who are very keen on upholding their religion and identify homosexuality as a great sin.

1.4 Significance of the study against other studies

This study is vital since not much research known to my knowledge has been written specifically to probe how lesbian students experience their life at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Most scholarly work concerning lesbian students in South African universities mainly focuses on the

attitudes and perceptions of other students towards lesbians (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006; Ncobo, 2007; Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama, 2013; Abaver et al, 2014; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2014; Ncanana and Ige, 2014; Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy, 2015). This study did not focus on the attitudes of other people, but on the students who identified as lesbians and privileges their 'voice' probing at how their lives are constructed at the UKZN. By understanding lesbian students' 'different experiences', it will potentially be able to offer the University authorities some insight into how they can better accommodate the lesbian community on Campus.

Scholars like Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama (2013), Abaver et al (2014); Ncanana and Ige (2014) and Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015) do give a summary of some of the experiences that lesbian students encounter. Most of the work however, explores the attitudes of students and staff towards lesbian students. In their recommendations they mention the need for direct action by Higher Education Institutions but they do not show how the human rights of lesbian students are violated and the need to make sure that they are exercised properly. Hence this study sought to explore the individual or groups which are supposed to be responsible for the wellbeing and protection of the lesbian community at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. By looking at how the lives of lesbian students are constructed within the institution, the study sought to validate whether their legal rights are upheld.

Ngcobo (2007) in his dissertation, "*Difficulties faced by homosexual students at the University of Zululand*", unpacked some of the grueling incidents that lesbians go through in South African Universities. Ngcobo did not explore how lesbian students perceived their own personal experiences. Ngcobo did not also look at whether the human rights of lesbian students were being safeguarded or not. Though Jagessar and Msibi (2015) looked at the experiences of LGBTI students at a university in KwaZulu-Natal, they mainly centered their experiences in the residential settings of the university and also their study looked at both gays and lesbians. However, this study focused exclusively and specifically on the experiences of lesbian students and prioritized-their overall experience in all sectors of the university.

The study thus sought to address how they can best exercise their rights without feeling discriminated or degraded. The following key questions intended to explore the experience of lesbians at the UKZN and bring out who should be responsible for their wellbeing.

1.5 Research questions and objectives: key questions to be asked:

1. What are the experiences of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What are some of the more specific prejudices that they feel they have to endure on campus?
3. Who do the lesbian students feel should be responsible for addressing their concerns around their experiences?

4. How do these students feel they can be better included in the institutional life of the University?

1.6 Broader Issues to be investigated

The study broadly looked at the experiences of lesbians within South Africa narrowing it down to a seemingly progressive institutional context. It also looked at the role of Universities in a national and global context in accommodating lesbian students. To understand the need for equal rights for lesbian students it sought to probe the discourse of sexual politics, focusing on sexual rights.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodologies and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Kothari (2004, 1) defines research as, "a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic." Kumar (2011, 1) states that research is a way of thinking critically examining issues, understanding them and formulating principles that guide a particular procedure as well as developing and testing new theories. To gain access to data that will help in developing a study and giving it relevance, there has to be a use of a methodological approach. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of lesbians at UKZN, there is need for methodological schema. This chapter is going to focus on the methodologies and conceptual framework used in this study.

Howell (2013) defines methodology as, "the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research is to be undertaken and among other things identifies the methods to be used." Therefore methods define the means or modes of data collection and how specific data was analyzed. Thus for this study, different methods were used hand in hand with theories to conduct, analyze and to ascertain the outcome of the study. The study used qualitative methods of research which included carrying out of interviews, focus groups and the use of open ended questionnaires. Theories are essential for this study because they help us to understand concepts and statements and arguments in which people set out to defend their assumptions especially in International Relations (see Baylis et al, 2011; McGowan et al, 2012).

Focusing on the research methodologies of the study did not only help to point out the methods involved during the study. However, it also gave the chance to explain in detail the reason for using each method over other possible methods. The critical analysis of each method enables other people other than the researcher to read and analyze results without difficulties. Thus, this chapter will unpack all methods that were used during the study and their relevance and how they were used to reach a conclusion in the study.

2.2 Research Design and Methods of Data Collection

As stated above, research entails quite a number of processes and a plan or strategy on how to go about these stages is relevant. Creswell (2007, 70) states that the research design entails a selection of respondents, the gathering techniques to be used and also the data analysis to be done.

2.3 Research Site

This study took place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The university is made up of five campuses, namely Howard College, Westville Campus, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Edgewood Campus, and the Nelson Mandela Medical School. Students who self-identify as LGBTI have a Forum that is found across all five campuses; therefore, contact was made with students who self-identified as lesbians from Westville campus and Howard college campus. Using the general overview information given by the LGBTI Forum leader, it was brought to my attention that Westville Campus and Howard College Campus had the larger LGBTI groups which consisted of more lesbian students. Other campus LGBTI groups were mainly made up of gay students. As such I ended up sampling students from these two campuses, specifically five students from Howard College campus and four from Westville Campus.

2.3.1 Data Collection

This study was qualitative. Hannock, Cokleford and Windridge (2009, 6) posit that qualitative research attempts to broaden or deepen our understanding of how things came to be. The researcher studies behavior in a natural setting, using people's accounts as data. The researcher normally focuses on reports of experience or on data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically. Devine (1992, 137) states that the context is the driving force behind qualitative research, what the research seeks is not what happens but also why and how.

To carry out this qualitative study, open ended interviews were used during the course of the fieldwork. Harrison (2001, 90) defines an interview as an encounter between a researcher and a respondent, where the respondent's answers provide the raw data. Concurring with Harrison, Stedward (1997, 151) states that interviews are a great vehicle for bringing a research topic to life.

It is an excellent method of obtaining data about contemporary subjects which have not been extensively studied. Unstandardized interviews also referred to as informal, focused, unstructured interviews (Harrison, 2001, 92). Burns (2000, 425) posits that an unstructured interview takes the form of a free flowing conversation relying heavily on the quality of the social interaction between the investigator and the informant. This allowed me some level of probing allowing flexibility and discovery of meaning.

Since it was an informal interview, formalized questions were not used, instead an aide 'memoir was used. Burns (2000, 428) defines the aide 'memoir as a brief list of topics to be covered though not in a particular order. This helped to keep the interview focused without actually undermining the flow of discussion that I was having with the participants. Being aware that my researcher status as heterosexual could influence my interpretation of views, I was more open minded and reflexive when engaging with the participants and analyzing data.

Each participant was involved in at least two interviews (other interviews were organized when there was a need for a follow up and further clarification). Since I was also attending some (open) LGBTI group meetings (with the permission of the group and Forum leader-Appendix 2.2) each interview lasted for about forty-five minutes, considering that participants would be students and they normally would have little free time. I endeavored to request times when students were finished with lectures for the day. However, interviews were open for any extension or reduction of time depending on the availability of time on the part of the participant. The interviews took place on the premises of the University of KwaZulu- Natal in one of the venues where LGBTI group meetings were usually held. At times, the interviews took place in another setting where the participants were comfortable. In cases where some participants where traumatized in the sharing of their experiences, they were referred to the UKZN student counselling services on campus.

Another way that was used to gather data was the use of a focus group. Mannheim and Rich (1995, 370) note that focus group methods involve bringing together small groups of approximately three carefully selected individuals for an in depth discussion. This was definitely useful because it helped me to rely on the interaction amongst the lesbians to generate an insight on their experiences on campus.

This also helped me to appreciate whether opinions were strongly held or were relatively weak. I capitalized on the fact that lesbians normally have gatherings and held a focus group during one of the meetings with approximately four participants. The focus group lasted for an hour and half. The participants for the focus group were also the same participants that had been interviewed individually. Only willing participants who were happy to indicate that they were comfortable talking in a group setting were part of the focus group.

'Questionnaires' or extended written interview schedules were also used as part of the data collection methods. Hancock et al (2009, 20) articulates that certain kinds of questionnaires are usually used to produce both quantitative and qualitative data. Since this was a qualitative study, the questionnaires were designed in a way that allowed respondents to write their desired opinions, thus questions were open ended. Creswell (2003, 6) states that, "the general open-ended questions allows participants to supply answers in their own words." All nine participants were given questionnaires that they filled in and returned, and most of the responses helped in structuring follow up individual interview questions. Questions that were used for the open ended questionnaire were the same as the questions that guided the interviews.

2.3.2 Sampling and sample selection techniques

Using snowball sampling, the study sampled nine female students who self-identified as lesbian. More than twelve students indicated that they would be part of the study, however due to other commitments only nine became part of the study. The study focused on a small number of participants so as to give an in-depth focus on their experiences. Therefore, the qualitative segment of this study aimed at enhancing our knowledge and insight into the lives and experiences of lesbian students at the UKZN. To make it easier to find participants for the study, contact was made with the LGBTI Forum leader at UKZN who was willing to assist with the study. A letter of Gatekeeper permission and informed consent was drafted asking for permission to interview willing participants from the Forum. To aid in recruiting participants for the study, the LGBT Forum leader at UKZN (Howard College), Ms. Siphe Ngubo, was informed and was willing to assist in this regard.

Given that it was not going to be easy to get into contact with participants who identify as lesbian, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling is one of the most essential techniques that one can use when trying to get data that is sensitive (Hancock and Gile, 2011). Participants were recruited from two campuses, Howard college campus and Westville campus. Initially the aim was to sample three students from at least all five campuses but it all depended on the willingness of participants. However due to logistical reasons, I ended up sampling five students from Howard College campus and four from Westville Campus. As part of the recruitment strategy, posters were also put up inviting willing students (in case some students were not part of the LGBTI Forum).

Interviews with nine self-identifying lesbian students and LGBTI Forum leader were conducted because qualitative research demands qualitative data collection, sustained contact and rapport building with participants rather than high numbers (Hannock, Cockleford and Windridge, 2009). Based on the preliminary feedback from the LGBTI Forum, the group of lesbian students at the UKZN is relatively small. As such the nine participants were lesbian students of different age groups and different levels of study.

2.3.3 Data Processing and analysis

After data collection, all interviews from electronic recordings were transcribed (often that was usually done immediately after an interview to make sure that all the necessary and relevant data was put down into writing). All Interview notes and transcripts were read several times to familiarize myself with the data and notes were made in the process. Data was put into themes to make it easier to understand the findings. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) state that, “the first step in data analysis is to reduce and to organize it so that the researchers can start to see the patterns or themes that emerge.” Interviews were then coded to make the data workable. Since coded information was transcribed, data had to be analyzed manually.

Narrative analysis was used to keep the originality of the shared experiences. Narrative analysis transforms knowing information into telling it (see Mishler 1986, Riessman 1993). After analysis the data was then put into themes to make it easier to understand.

2.4 Ethical considerations

The research proposal was submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus Research office for ethical approval. This was done to uphold the ethics of researchers as well as ensure that participants rights and morals were safe guarded.

Informed consent and approval

Potter (2006, 213) asserts that, "no significant data should be gathered from people who have not consented, been given a clear statement about why the information is going to be collected or been told how it is going to be used."

In this regard, authority was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's registrar to carry out the study. The informed consent letters given to the participants were in isiZulu and English. Participants were students and familiar with the English language and a need for a translator was not anticipated. However copies of the information form, informed consent form and the interview question were made available in isiZulu in case someone preferred to be interviewed in isiZulu. In this case there would be the use of a translator.

Participants were provided with adequate information about the study and were informed that they were not obligated to participate. Participation was voluntary hence if they felt like they wanted to withdraw at some point during the study they were free to do so. Participants were notified also that there were no incentives for participation. A letter to the LGBT Forum leader was written asking for permission to carry out the study using some of the members and permission to attend some of the LGBTI meetings

Confidentiality and anonymity

Since the thesis is going to be in the public domain, it is particularly important that the rights of sources are respected where necessary (Potter 200, 185).As such participants were assured of confidentiality between me and them. I made sure that they knew that no matter the circumstances, their identities would be protected so that they felt safe to engage in the study without the fear that their personal feelings would be published. Confidentiality was especially stressed within the focus groups and among the group participants. Participants were also assured

of their anonymity, as such pseudonyms were used in the study and were highlighted by the character *.

2.5 Limitations of the Study

As the study progressed there were quite a number of challenges that came up and they proved to be limitations to the study. The first challenge was my researcher status as heterosexual. Most of the participants did not feel the need to open up instantly because they felt as if their private and personal spaces were being invaded. Also the participants assumed that I would not understand them and the mere fact that a study was being carried out made them think that I perceived them to be abnormal.

Another challenge that arose was that most participants were skeptical about their identities being revealed. Even though they signed the informed consent form and were assured of their confidentiality they still felt that they were sharing a lot of their personal experiences hence some of the participants were not comfortable having the interviews on audio (which made it difficult to capture some of the important points raised). As the research progressed, it became clear that most of the members of the LGBTI Forum were gay students hence it was difficult to get into contact with lesbian students. Since the participants were recruited from two campuses instead of all five campuses it made the sample size to be smaller, hence, affecting the findings on the experiences of most lesbian students at the university. Even though I wished to sample all races, all the participants who were willing to engage in the study were all black Africans.

2.6. Principle Theories, Norms and Frameworks

Baylis et al (2011) define International Relations as the study of how state nations interact with each other. To clearly understand the study of International Relations there are existing principles that serve as conceptual and theoretical frameworks. McGowan et al (2012) posit that theories are there to help us gain more insight on the discourse of events and phenomena in the world. As such, they assist individuals and states in framing better policies and decision making. McGowan further notes that, “theories help us to understand concepts and statements and arguments in which people set out to defend their assumptions about international affairs.”

Sikkink (1998) asserts that the emergency of human rights has caused misperception amongst students of comparative politics and international relations. Sikkink posits that many of the leading theories of international relations like realism and liberalism have difficulties in trying to explain the rise of human rights and human security, except to dismiss them as marginal or insignificant. For instance, human rights were considered to be a 'merely moral' concern, a fall back that realist decision makers might look at after they had realized their real interests.

However, over the past three decades, human rights have developed to being the center of national interests rather than being used as alliance interests in the foreign policy of states. Realism entails that national interests are indeed the center of the foreign policy of most states; therefore international human rights have become one of the foreign policy interests that most states pursue (see Baylis et al, 2011, 506).

Forsythe and Sikkink (1998) further note that to understand the changes of roles in human rights in International Relations, other theories and norms have had to be developed. Ngubane (2013) states that the issue of human rights has become increasingly important; the extent to which society is aware of the violation of human rights is a clear sign in the constructions of foreign policy. Human rights present a clear platform for exploring and extending a theory of norms in international relations. As such this study is going to use the responsibility to protect norm (R2P) and other social science theories namely the social constructivism theory and the social identity theory.

Theoretical Framework:

2.6.1 The Responsibility to Protect Norm (R2P)

The R2P norm entails the evolving concept about the duties of a state to protect and end acts of violence against its citizens (ICISS report, 2001). The R2P gives states an international obligation to safeguard their people and when it fails, the international community takes over. Jayakumar (2014) articulates that the R2P endorses sovereignty as a responsibility and gives the state a duty to take care of its people. The norm embraces three specific responsibilities which are, "(i) the responsibility to prevent, which entails that it is the duty of a state is to make sure all possible root causes and direct causes to internal conflict and man-made crisis are dealt with before they grow

into something big. (ii) The other responsibility is the responsibility to react which requires states to act and respond to situations of compelling human needs. In cases where human security is at stake, the state is supposed to find ways to control the situations and maintain human security. In some cases it can involve sanctions. (iii) States also have the responsibility to rebuild which entitles them to address the causes of harm and make sure human security is fully maintained" (ICISS report, 11). The responsibility to prevent is the most crucial one and as such much dedication and resources should be exhausted in it other than reaction.

It is of relevance to this study because the University of KwaZulu-Natal is a public university of the government of South Africa and as such, it adheres to its core principles. If it is the responsibility of the government to protect LGBTI persons, it is the responsibility of the community as well. From probing the experiences of lesbians this norm helped the researcher identify who is responsible for the protection of the lesbian community at University of KwaZulu-Natal.

2.6.2 Social Constructivism

A theory that this study used was the Social Constructivism theory. Brown (2005) posits that constructivism is one of the fastest growing oppositional movements in International Relations theory. An early constructivist, Nicholas Onuf argued that, "the world in which we live is a, 'world of our making', that things are a certain way because that is how we perceive them, we do not live in a world that has been predetermined in advance by non-human forces" (Onuf, 1989). This theory argues that human knowledge is acquired through a process of active construction (Fox, 2001, 23). "Social construction describes the process through which our perceptions and interpretation of reality is inevitably colored by the assumptions of culture as encoded in our language as well" (Searle, 1997). Rosamund (2006) also states that constructivism gives position of the nature of social reality.

The use of social constructivism theory in this study aided to better understand the experiences of lesbians at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The knowledge that lesbians have is socially constructed, it is acquired from the social encounters that they face through their day to day lives. As such, social constructivism was essential in this study to enable one to understand how society has made lesbians perceive their university experiences.

2.6.3 Social Identity theory

The second theory that was used in this study was the social identity theory, it is also known as the identity theory. It attempts to explain cognitions and behavior with the help of group processes. The social identity theory assumes that humans show all kinds of group behavior such as solidarity, within our groups and also discriminate out groups as part of the social identity processes (Abram and Hogg, 1988). A group exists psychologically if three or more people see and evaluate themselves as sharing the same attributes that distinguish them from other people and develop the definition of who they are.

Ellemers et al (1999, 372) tried to resolve the conceptual confusion among different aspects of social identification. They proposed that three components contribute to one's social identity, "a cognitive component (a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group self-categorization), an evaluative component (a positive or negative value connotation attached to this group membership group self-esteem), and an emotional component (a sense of emotional involvement with the group and active commitment)."

Tajfel and Turner (1979) articulate that a person's sense of self is based on their membership of a social group such as social clubs, gender, age, faith and family. He further notes that these groups provide individuals with important sources of pride and self-esteem. Elison (1993) further notes that self- esteem is incorporated as a motivator for outcomes as a group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) also posit that there is the existence of the in group and the out group. The in group is the group that one chooses to be part of, and in order to enhance the groups self-image, people tend to discriminate and prejudice the other groups.

The use of the social identity theory in this study helps one understand the identity of lesbians at University of KwaZulu-Natal. Being a minority group in the institution, they may have related to each other and their experiences were likely to be similar. This helps in picking up if experiences amongst lesbians at UKZN are the same or different depending on different factors which might include age, where they stayed or the company that they had.

2.7 Structure of the Dissertation

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Literature Review

The first chapter gave the introductory part of the study defining the research question and explaining why the research topic was important to social studies as a discipline. It also looked at the assumptions and limitations of the existing research, identifying how the study will make a contribution to the extant body of knowledge. The chapter also gave an in depth review on existing literature concerning issues to be explored. It gave an insight on the development of human rights and how LGBTI rights are being protected in the international community, in South Africa and by extension Higher Education Institutions.

CHAPTER TWO: Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This chapter presented the methods that were used during the study to gather information and how the data collected was analyzed. It also presented how the ethical issues regarding this study were handled. It explored the theories guiding the study.

CHAPTER THREE: The discourse of human rights and LGBTI

This chapter discussed human rights, providing an in depth exploration of the discourse of LGBTI rights in South Africa. It looked at the development of LGBTI rights starting from the apartheid to post- apartheid eras, pointing out some of the distinct challenges which include the prevalence of homophobia. It-looked at the influence of social organizations like churches (and religious bodies on campuses) in shaping the status of LGBTI rights in South Africa (and within Higher Education Institutions). The role played by the South African government in consolidating sexual rights in the current dispensation is also tackled in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: Understanding the experiences of Lesbians at UKZN

This chapter presented some of the findings from data collection. It specifically explored the coming out processes of nine lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu- Natal. It focused on narratives that unfold the experiences of lesbian students, including the different kinds of prejudice they encounter during their university careers.

CHAPTER FIVE: The responsibility to protect lesbian rights at UKZN

This chapter presented further findings of the study. It mainly focused on the protection of lesbian rights at the University of KwaZulu-Natal seeking to establish who is responsible for consolidation and upholding of LGBTI rights at the university. It also looked at whether the safety of lesbian students was being upheld around the university premises. It sought to test the viability of the inclusive policy that the university (claims to) adhere to.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter unpacked some literature on the discourse of sexuality politics and sexual rights. It also gave a summary of the findings in this study, focusing primarily on the commonly emerging themes. It also gave possible recommendations on what should be done to ensure that sexual rights for lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal are upheld as part of the student's fundamental rights.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptualizing the discourse of LGBTI rights in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

As highlighted earlier on, South Africa is one of the few African countries with a progressive constitution towards LGBTI rights (see Cock, 2003, 35; Arndt and de Bruin, 2006, 17; Nel and Judge, 2008, 19; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 7). This is seen in the 1996 constitution which broke new grounds in human rights history in Africa, prohibiting the discrimination of persons based on their sexual orientation (Wells and Poders, 2006, 20). The constitution was different from the apartheid era which did not protect minority sexual preferences; instead lesbians and gays were condemned and criminalized (Isaacs et al, 1992; IIyayambwa, 2012, 51). The post-apartheid era, however, attempted to correct the mistakes of the apartheid government by the introduction of the equality clause as part of the Bill of Rights (see Barnard and De Vos, 2007, 795; Mkhize et al, 2010; Naidoo and Karel, 2012). In 2006 the post-apartheid government further allowed joint adoption by same sex couples and provided for same sex marriages. However, despite those provisions LGBTIs in South Africa are not entirely protected.

This chapter seeks to explore the discourse of LGBTI rights from the apartheid era moving into the post independent South Africa. This is of paramount importance for it allows one to understand the sole reason for further investigating the extent to which these rights are being upheld in Higher Education Institutions like the UKZN that will be unpacked later in the study.

3.2 LGBTI rights during the Apartheid era

According to Kennedy (2006), South Africa's lesbian and gay rights movements are rooted in the apartheid era. Kennedy further notes that LGBTI groups were mainly found in the urban areas such as Johannesburg and Cape Town and the groups consisted of the white people who were the majority of the 'out' homosexuals. Isaacs and McKendrick (1992) posit that the existence of lesbian and gays in South Africa was recognized before the 1950's, but however the first formal LGBTI movements emerged in January 1966.

Kennedy (2006), states that a stronger and purposeful mobilization of homosexuals in South Africa was in 1968. It was a mobilization in response to a police raid of a large gay party in a private home in Johannesburg. Isaac and McKendrick (1992, 146) further states that the officers in charge of the raid used the liquor act as a smokescreen stating that there was alcohol on the premises. However, the real reason was to punish homosexuals who had attended the party and it resulted in nine people being arrested.

These events occurred at the same time that the then Minister of Justice, Petrus Cornelius Pelser was in the midst of negotiating for a bill that would criminalize gay and lesbian sexual relations. Even though sodomy was already illegal under the common law[15], the proposed bill would make homosexual relations punishable and liable to a three year sentence. Kennedy (2006, 61) states that fearing for their lives in light of the proposed laws, a group of white middle class male gays formed the homosexual law reform fund. The sole purpose of the group was to raise money that would sustain funding the lawyers representing the nine people who had been arrested. On 10 April 1968, the group called for the first homosexual public meeting in the history of South Africa. The law reform fund proved to be successful when the bill that Minister Pelser was advocating for was not recognized. This therefore marked the first big step in politicizing homosexuality, demonstrating for equal rights on the grounds of sexuality. Despite these developments, LGBTI identities were non-existent or silent in the townships and the majority of homosexuals who were on the forefront of advocating were mostly white gays (see Isaacs et al, 1992; Massoud, 2003, 302; Cock, 2003, 37; Iyayambwa, 2012, 51).

According to De Vos (2007, 435) the year 1982 brought a breath of fresh air on the advocacy of equal rights because both lesbian and gays worlds combined and became more dominating in the struggle for the realization of LGBTI rights. On 1 April 1982, the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) was formed and it was the first gay and lesbian organization to be formed in South Africa (see Isaacs and McKendrick, 1992; Cock, 2003, 36; De Vos, 2007, 435). According to Croucher (2002) GASA's main mandate was to provide the answer for all the lesbian and gay needs and rights.

[15]The common law was based on past legal practice on the contributions of Dutch and French writers of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the final instance, on Roman Law. Therefore, crimes against morality can be said to be common law, crimes such as Sodomy and Unnatural Acts (Isaac, 1992, 146).

According to Cock (2003, 36) and Barnard and De Vos (2007,797) as the anti-apartheid movements picked up steam in the mid-eighties, an important figure emerged advocating for sexuality rights, Simon Nkoli, a young black man from Soweto, who was very active in the youth anti-apartheid movements. Barnard and De Vos (2007, 797) state that Nkoli was of the view that the struggle against apartheid was inseparable with homophobia and advocated that lesbians and gays also had to be free from discrimination based on their sexuality. Because of his public noise about LGBTI rights, Nkoli was arrested and tried along with Nelson Mandela in the Delman Treason Trial and during the time he was serving his three year sentence in Robben Island, he was already the world's most famous figure for gay rights (Cock, 2003, 37; Kennedy, 2006, 63).

According to Cock (2003, 37) most LGBTI rights organizations rallied behind Simon Nkoli, however GASA did not show any effort or support and hence portrayed that it was not ready for the struggle against apartheid. De Vos (2007) concur and states that GASA was then expelled from the International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGLA) in 1987. It was not perceived as an anti-apartheid organization and soon thereafter the organization dissolved (Isaacs, 1992; Cock, 2003, 37; De Vos, 2007, 436). According to Issacs (1992), even though GASA was not granted full membership by IGLA because of the sanctions against the apartheid regime, it vowed to support homosexuals' rights. So out of the remains of GASA, a number of racially mixed, militant, and politicized lesbian and gay organizations were formed. The Lesbians and Gays against Oppression (LAGO)[16] was then formed in 1986 and the Gays and Lesbians of Witwatersrand (GLOW) formed in 1988 with Simon Nkoli being its chairperson (Christiansen, 1997, 1024). This solidified their place in the new government created by the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Front (UDF). Because of their active participation in the promotion of the new South African government, LGBTI rights activists were able to have a voice in the creation of the new 1993 constitution, and it was this voice which led to the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the Bill of Rights (Cock, 2003, 37; De Vos, 2007, 438). De Vos (2007, 439) argues that though discrimination against sexual orientation was included in the 1993 interim constitution of post-apartheid South Africa, it was not an outright victory for LGBTI activist .

[16]Christiansen, E.1997. 'Ending the Apartheid from the closet, Sexual orientation in the South African Constitutional Process, *International Law and Politics*, 997(32), pp. 1023.

The constitution was still being revised and chances that the clause would be removed were likely. De Vos further notes that to ensure that the clause would be retained, 78 lesbian and gay groups got together to form an organization called The National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), which was formed in 1994. These developments materialized at the first ever national lesbian and gay human rights conference in South Africa (see Croucher, 2002, 320; Louw 1994, 461). De Vos further notes that the NCGLE was mainly focused on upholding the rights of same sex couples, fighting against discrimination and it had a great impact in the 1996 constitution. IIyayambwa (2012, 52) states that, "the NCGLE placed itself among the most successful Non-Governmental Organizations to bridge the gap between legal and social change in South Africa."

The NCGLE advocated for lesbian and gay pleas based on two themes which were equality and the uniformity of all forms of discrimination. According to a NCGLE report, a submission to the constitutional assembly emphasized that, ''equality and non-discrimination are the fundamental and overriding principles of the interim constitution." It further stated that discrimination against gays and lesbians displayed the same basic characteristics displayed with discrimination against race and gender. They also argued that sexual orientation was something that could not be changed or modified[17] hence it was natural and there was no need for it to be sidelined when it came to acquiring human rights (NCGLE, 1995, 8). Like De Vos (2007) and Cock (2003), Kennedy (2006) also asserts that the struggle for apartheid created an opportunity for LGBTIs to make their rights heard and acknowledged.

3.3 LGBTI rights in the Post-Apartheid South Africa

The LGBTI legal status in South Africa was a gradual process that started from the apartheid era. As mentioned earlier on, the period after independence in 1994 saw the formation of the NCGLE which relentlessly advocated for the rights of lesbians and gays in South Africa and in 1996 the Bill of rights clause was added on to the constitution (see Cock, 2003, 39; Barnard and De Vos, 2007; Grundlingh, 2011) .

[17] ''... Sexual orientation is immutable in that the individual cannot change it'' (NCGLE, 1995, p. 8).

Sachs (2012) asserts that the bill of rights stated that all persons were equal and discrimination was prohibited on the grounds of sexual discrimination amongst other factors like disability, race and gender[18].

This was a significant moment in South Africa for lesbians and gays, for their human rights were finally acknowledged constitutionally. And this portrayed the great efforts that the lesbian and gay movements were putting. Reid et al (2002) stated that the clause was important because it created a sense of citizenship. In other words the clause created a sense of belonging for homosexuals. Cock (2003, 39) highlights that the lesbian and gay group NCGLE did not back down when the bill of rights was included in the constitution instead, they had to make sure and strengthen the effectiveness of the clause. For instance, in 1998 the Pretoria High court ruled in favor of a lesbian police captain who didn't have the right to add her partner of eleven years on her medical scheme. The NCGLE acknowledged this as, "historical and a victory for equality, dignity for all people in South Africa*" (The Sunday independent* February 2, 1998). As part of its victories in achieving a non-discriminatory environment, a Pretoria High Court judge also ruled in 2000 that a lesbian mother could have full custody of her daughter (reported in *The Sunday Times*, October 27, 2000). This clearly validates the assertion that the discourse of LGBTI rights acknowledgement is a transitional process that keeps bearing positive results.

Against this background, Barnard and De Vos (2007, 798) articulate that the existing legislation of equal rights to all and efforts of the NCGLE perpetuated the Constitutional Courts decision on the judgement in the *Minister of Home Affairs vs Fourie* on 30 November 2004.[19] The judgement stated that the right of marriage was something that was entitled to all who lived in South Africa despite race; color and sexuality, therefore gays and lesbians had the right to enjoy the institution of marriage just like heterosexual couples did.

[18] See South African constitution 1996, Chapter 2, paragraph 9, (3).

[19] "In 2002 a lesbian couple, Marié Fourie and Cecelia Bonthuys, with the support of the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, launched an application in the Pretoria High Court to have their union recognized and recorded by the Department of Home Affairs as a valid marriage. Judge Pierre Roux dismissed the application on 18 October 2002, on the basis that they had not properly attacked the constitutionality of the definition of marriage or the Marriage Act, 1961.However they kept appealing to the Constitutional Court which in 2004 later judged that the existing Marriage act had some eras that needed to be amended"(*accessed online* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_South_Africa#The_Fourie_case). retrieved 12/08/2015

Barnard and De Vos (2007) further note that most of the members of the Constitutional Court highlighted that it was important for the parliament to debate on this matter and make amends to the existing law which excluded same-sex marriages[20]. The parliamentary cabinet deliberated on the proposed legislation and it became a hot topic that was discussed in public participation hearings of the parliamentary portfolio committee (see Barnard and De Vos, 2007, 798). The Bill was finally signed into law on the 30th of November 2006 and was titled the Civil Union Act (see Van Bred and Worringham, 2012).

However, despite all these efforts and results discrimination against homosexuality is still alive in South Africa and many societies are not as open minded as the legislation. South Africa still experiences high levels of sexual violence against lesbians, who fall victims to hate crimes and violent sexual attacks.

3.3. 1 Homophobia an ill in the South African society

Matabeni et al (2013) are of the view that most societies in South Africa are highly homophobic and heterosexist in nature. Heterosexuality is seen as the ideal and being privileged above other forms of sexuality. Heterosexism refers to the assumption or belief, that everyone is and should be heterosexual, and that the other sexual orientations are unhealthy, unnatural and a threat (see Wells and Poders, 2006, 21; Ertetik, 2010, 20). According to Matabeni et al (2013) in most cases, the South African LGBTI community contends with homophobic activities. Some in South Africa today still argue that, being gay or lesbian is a sickness, a sin, a criminal act or is un-African (see Macauley, 2004; Epprecht, 2012, 223; Naidu, 2013, 7; Tamale 2014). Religious condemnation, harassment in the workplace and open harassment and violence towards LGBTIs, are still rife

It seems as if LGBTI rights are 'just on paper' but are never put into practice. McGowan (2012) articulates that some of the problems in the world are rooted from the different ideas, culture and beliefs that people have about themselves. These may include identity which is the question, about whom we are, which groups we belong to, and what our expectations are about the roles these groups are supposed to play. McGowan (2012, 36) states that though human beings have identities, some identities are linked to a less powerful and dominating status that is often marginalized and oppressed.

[20] The law did not have provision for same sex couples; it only acknowledged the union of husband and wife.

"Often the superiority and inferiority associations are used consciously and unconsciously to justify aggressive or discriminatory behavior towards the 'other'" (McGowan, 2012, 36). In light of this assumption, it is clear that though there is legislation on the protection of lesbian rights in South Africa, the way the society is structured always leads to discrimination of the minority group of lesbians. The idea of adopting a lesbian identity in most of the African societies is seen as deviant and unethical. Many African feminists note that, "womanhood in Africa continues to be framed by narratives of domesticity" (see Mama, 1997; McFadden, 2000; Tamale, 2002; Horn, 2006, 9). The constructions of femininity in an African society entail that one is supposed to have sexual relations with people of the opposite sex. The universal beliefs and perceptions in most societies stipulate that people should condone heterosexual relationships in order to procreate (see Mama 2000, 45). Thus when one identifies as lesbian they come across as arrogant and deviant towards the existing African traditional and cultural norms. Tamale (2011, 2) elucidates this view and states that cultural and religious institutions propagate the existence of a heteronormative society that is not tolerant to homosexuality.

Nel and Judge (2008) state that homophobia is a pertinent issue that is still prevailing in the South African society. Hate crimes on the basis of sexuality are still prevalent and these can be either in the form of criminal acts such as corrective rape, assault, damage of property or hate speech. Smith (2004) states that lesbian women are more vulnerable to being discriminated against the moment they identify their sexuality. Studies by Graham and Kiguwa (2004) reveal that lesbian women are more prone to suffering violence twice as often as heterosexual women. Downie (2014, 4) notes that often homophobia in South Africa has resulted in appalling acts of violence particularly "corrective rape." Brown (2012, 47) states that the term "corrective rape" has been documented amongst many women in South Africa. It is a term that is used to describe rape perpetrated by straight man against lesbian women with the sole aim of correcting or curing their sexualities which are viewed as unnatural (Pillay, 2011). Muthien (2009) also concurs and states that corrective rape might as well be called curative rape because it refers to rape as cure. This clearly reveals that the sexuality of women in the South African society is confined to heteronormative norms and beliefs. Most people have misconceptions about gender and sexual identities thus, in most cases they try to 'fix' those identities they assume are not natural and normal.

Amnesty International Report (2013, 39) states that sexual violence is perpetuated against black lesbians to punish them for, or supposedly to cure them of their sexual or gender non-conformity. Perpetrators often state that victims need to be "taught how to be a black woman", as a way of asserting their male superiority. LGBTIs that do not conform to culturally approved models of femininity and masculinity live in fear of being assaulted, raped and murdered by men (see Human Rights Watch, 2011; Naidoo and Karel, 2012; Amnesty International Report, 2013, 49). Amnesty International Report (2013, 39) points out that this violence is mostly seen amongst black lesbians in South Africa, who are at risk of violence and murder. This violence has been condemned by the UN High Commission for Human Rights.

Sometimes sexual violence is perpetrated against lesbians to punish them, or supposedly to cure them of their sexual or gender non-conformity. According to the Human Rights Watch (2011, 20) homophobia in the South African society in some cases emanates from family households. The home proves not to be a welcoming environment for most lesbians the moment they make their sexual identity known to their families (see D'Augelli et al, 1998, 198). Many parents are of the view that they are the one's responsible for their child's sexual orientation. Being lesbian is perceived as a taboo and shameful, hence instigates violence and abuse and in some cases it leads to some lesbian women being disowned by their families. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (2011, 7) some lesbian women go through gruesome and painful experiences that are actually perpetrated by their own family members. For instance the report narrates the story of a young lesbian girl who was raped by her own cousin who did it intentionally claiming to 'help her realize her sexuality' (!). The Human Rights Watch report further reveals that after the incident, her family decided to deal with the matter privately and they did not want to report it to the police. And though she clearly identified as lesbian, in her twenties she was engaged in an arranged marriage. The sole reason was to try and turn her into a heterosexual woman. According to Bennet and Pereira (2013, 5), "gender has become a somewhat static framework through which the largely conservative norms, understandings and practices of heterosexuality can be scripted, that is 'women' as victims and 'men' as dangerous." This incident clearly questions the sustainability of LGBTI rights in South Africa.

The homophobic incidences do not only occur in family households, they also exist in learning spaces as well like universities (Jagessar and Msibi, 2015, 63). Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al (2014) also concurs with this view and states that lesbian women are subject to verbal harassment from other students around them and in some cases they just don't receive the right services and care like other students. Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2015) state that homophobia is very much alive in learning institutes coming from heterosexual students who ridicule homosexuals and in some extreme cases chase them away from their residences. In some instances LGBTI students are subject to, "corrective counselling", from campus based health workers. De Vos (2012) even accounts for a homophobic incident that occurred at the University of the Western Cape, whereby a student was attacked brutally by other straight students in front of the security guards. This then raises the question on whether the legislation on the equality of rights despite sexuality is really relevant and the question of who should be responsible for making sure that sexual rights are upheld.

Social factors that contribute to the intolerance of LGBTI in South Africa include religion. Despite positive developments of an inclusive and tolerating legislation on sexual orientation this has not stopped religious and traditional groups from attacking homosexuality as alien to African culture (see Iyayambwa, 2012, 57; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 9). In 2006, South Africa took another momentous step and became the first state in Africa, and 2nd amongst the Commonwealth countries after Canada, in 2005, to legalize same-sex marriages. Critics of homosexuality largely stated that gay rights were un-African and defended an amendment to the Constitution to ban same sex marriages (De Vos, 2007; Nel and Judge 2008).Adamcyzyk and Pitt (2009) state that religion is one of the social factors that greatly affects the attitudes of people to homosexuality. Culture and religion play a role in most African countries in deeming homosexuality immoral, hence, Roberts and Reddy (2008) and Adamcyzyk and Pitt (2009), share the same sentiments that most religions describe behavior associated with homosexuality as ungodly, and impure. Naidu (2013, 6) narrates the experiences of lesbian women who share that because of their sexuality they are sometimes named as or called demons or seen as unholy and unclean. The Human Rights Watch report (2011, 21) states that the church is central and is meant to play a pivotal role in the South African society, pointing out that the church often shapes the community life often providing spiritual and material help to those in need.

This then means that churches have a great influence on some of the social issues affecting communities. The Human Rights Watch (2011) further notes that, "conservative church teachings tend to shape public attitudes towards non-normative gender and sexual expression in South Africa." These teachings actually fuel violence and discrimination against lesbians in their communities. This clearly clarifies the views by Fox (2001, 3) which state that our social beliefs and perceptions are shaped by cultural and coded norms that are practiced in our day to day lives. The constructions of a lesbian identity in societies which have their values embedded in religious beliefs are difficult since it is condemned as ungodly. Thus, as cited by Achieng (2013, 38), an African feminist Sylvia Tamale points out that religion plays a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes of people on matters involving sexuality.

However, despite these negative sentiments, in the contemporary post-apartheid South Africa, there are some religious leaders who advocate for the rights of LGBTI's like Desmond Tutu. Offord (1998) quotes Tutu saying that, "he considers homosexual persecution as unjust as apartheid." In the apartheid era, even though homosexuality was a bone of contention, there was no formal intervention by churches. It was only for the individual members of various churches to speak on the matter (Grundlingh, 2011). Hafiz (2013) also narrates Reverend Tutu's views that he strongly made during the launch of the United Nations, "Free and Equal campaign" in 2013. "*I would not worship a God who is homophobic, that is how deeply I feel about this. I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. No I would say sorry, I mean I would rather go to the other place."* Tutu represents a recent trend of Christianity which accentuates more on acceptance rather than the fear of God and which wants to see the positive contribution of the church in pioneering the struggle for rights of those who are discriminated against.

Roberts and Reddy (2008) note how, despite the guaranteed constitutional freedoms, the South African society is still largely prejudiced against same-sex relations. Despite the positive policy shifts and legal reforms in the South African constitution, homophobic violence and discrimination still continue to exist against LGBTI persons (Downie, 2014, 4). Tatchell (2005) also indicates that even though "rights-based models govern citizenship claims in the country, attitude changes do not even go hand in hand with the rights."

3.4 Mitigating measures by the government

Before one can take a close look at the measures taken by the government in promoting and protecting LGBTI rights, it is worth mentioning that it is the duty of the South African Police to protect every citizen, whether black or white, lesbian or heterosexual. It is within their mandate to see that every citizen is protected and is safe. However, that is not always as straightforward as that. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (2011), South African police officials perpetuate secondary victimization, often by mocking and spiting survivors, which leads to many cases going unreported. This also concurs to the incident that has been mentioned earlier of how a homophobic incident occurred in front of security guards at the University of the Western Cape. What is often supposed to be the help and protection usually fails and hence homophobic incidents continue to prevail.

Whilst the government has some measures to protect LGBTI rights, there is a number of NGOs that are not passive. They keep on advocating for the equal rights based on sexuality and they even have initiatives to make sure the matter is also recognized by the government seriously. Organizations such as The Gay and Lesbian Network in Pietermaritzburg, Limpopo Proudly Out in Limpopo, and Luleki Sizwe in Cape Town, just to mention a few, are in the forefront of advocating and pressurizing the government to adhere to the promises made in the Constitution. South Africa's growth of LGBTI political activism, the emergency of regular social events such as pride marches and film festivals, are a force to be reckoned with in South African sexuality politics (see Soldati-Kahimbaara and Sibeko, 2012).

The government has also some tangible progressive efforts towards curbing violence against lesbians, under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Development together with civil society. According to Amnesty International Report (2013, 51) and Manyathi-Jele (2014) the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Jeff Radebe, together with the civil society formed up a Task Force Team in 2011. The function of the task force was to seek solutions for issues concerning gender-violence towards LGBTI persons, in particular lesbians. Manyathi-Jele (2014) further states that the Minister highlighted how the department would aggressively fight against discrimination against lesbian and gay persons. The Ministry of Justice also began to focus on developing a policy document, which may eventually lead to draft legislation (Amnesty International Report 2013, 51).

Amnesty International as a civil society which promotes and protects human rights is a member of the Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG), which seeks to contribute towards speeding the enactment of comprehensive hate crime laws, improving the policing of, and judicial responses to hate crimes, and assisting in the development of effective mechanisms to monitor hate crimes incidents in South Africa. Amnesty International, therefore, supports the HCWGs position in its call for hate crime legislation in South Africa.

According to Amnesty International (2012), internationally, South Africa is one of the 80 countries affiliated with the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and this affiliation has granted South Africa's LGBTIs movements' international recognition, as well as a driving force to furthering its socio-political and constitutional reform. This proves to be an advantage for LGBTI organizations such as OUT, FEW and Limpopo Proudly Out, to use as a platform to interact with other LGBTI organizations in seeking help in advocacy and visibility and to end hate crimes in South Africa. Again, the Lesbian and Equality Project (formerly known as the National Coalition on Gay and Lesbian Equality), serves as the national agency, presenting the needs of the LGBTI community in South Africa. This NGO works towards full legal and social equality for South African LGBTIs and it hopes to achieve this through advocacy, public policy, education and legal reform, as well as through of access to justice.

According to Jordaan (2012) the 17th of June 2011 was a significant moment for the United Nations Human Rights Council because it saw the adoption of the first resolution on sexual orientation and human rights[21]. Resolution 17/19 mainly highlighted a major concern at the continued and increased violence and discrimination towards LGBTI persons. This resolution won support from all the permanent members of the United Nations and South Africa was widely commended for leading such a progressive resolution through the Council. Reid (2014) articulates that South Africa played a pivotal role in strengthening the argument that there was a great need for such a resolution.

However, scholars like Jordaan (2012) argue that the role that South Africa played on coining the resolution was surprising, since a few months before the resolution was adopted South Africa was believed to have tried to slow down the process.

[21] A/HRC/RES17/19 – The United Nations resolution on sexual orientation was signed on the 17th of June.

Assumptions are that, this behavior was conjured by Nigeria and other African states who noted that the concept sexual orientation was not defined properly. Whilst appearing to be progressive Jordaan (2012) states that South Africa was stalling because with no definition of sexual orientation the resolution would not have been adopted. That is why South Africa's role in the final sexual orientation resolution when critically viewed against the wider background of the country's participation in the Human Rights Council was fraught with ambiguities (United Nations Resolution, 17/19. 2011).

3.5 Conclusion

This Chapter looked at the development of LGBTI rights in South Africa, during the Apartheid and the post-Apartheid eras. IIyayambwa (2012, 51) states that LGBTI rights were not at all acknowledged during the apartheid era. The people who identified as homosexual created a strong basis for the development of a number of criminal offences against homosexuality Du Plessis (1997, 123). Long (2003, 30) states that the apartheid law was sorely based on the Roman Dutch Law. Jivan (2007, 2150) notes that,' with the "Roman Dutch law a large number of sexual acts between adults, whether between men or between a man and a woman, were criminal, if not directed towards procreation."

Despite the existence of restricting laws on homosexuality, movements advocating for LGBTI rights pressed on until they gained recognition and sexual rights became a relevant issue in South Africa. This saw the democratic South Africa bringing about positive change in the lives of LGBTIs by providing legal protection in its Constitution (see SA constitution chapter 2, Article 9(3); Cock, 2003, 39; Barnard and De Vos, 2007; Sachs, 2012)

According to Matabeni et al (2012) the effort of providing legal protection for sexual minorities in South Africa is not really sustainable and viable. Despite all legal provisions, the lesbian and gay community still encounter multiple challenges and discrimination; in the social, public, work and educational environments (see Nel and Judge, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Naidoo and Karel, 2012; Amnesty International, 2013). Homophobic incidents in South Africa usually happen to lesbian women in most cases resulting in, 'corrective rape' (see Graham and Kiguwa, 2004; Pillay, 2011; Brown, 2012, 47).

According to the Human Rights Watch (2011) because of perceived sexual orientation, South African Police at times contribute to secondary victimization of most lesbian women, which in the long run leads to most LGBTI cases not being reported. The Human Rights Watch (2011) notes that the discourse of LGBTI rights in South Africa is also anchored on the role played by social institutions such as the Church. Grundlingh (2011) unpacks how popular icons like Desmond Tutu have been at the forefront of promoting rights for all persons despite sexual orientation. Tutu's views offer a positive influence of the churches towards LGBTI. However, most times the church plays a negative influence in shaping opinions about homosexuality and often it fuels the development of homophobia in South African societies (see Roberts and Reddy, 2008; Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009, Human Rights Watch, 2011; Naidu, 2013)

The status of South Africa concerning the equality of rights for all citizens is still a work in progress but that does not stop one from applauding it for its tolerant and comprehensive constitution. The next chapter will explore the different experiences that come with being a lesbian student at one of the South African universities *through their narratives*. It will specifically look at students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal who self-identify as lesbian and will explore the 'coming out' process and the challenges that come with it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Being different: The 'coming out' process of lesbian students

4.1 Introduction

Alternate sexual orientation such as homosexuality[22] has been and still is a controversial and sensitive topic (Umar 2015, 1). Coming out as lesbian is not considered a normal thing because most societies believe that it is unethical for two people of the same sex to be sexually attracted to each other. The general belief and assumption is that only people of the opposite sex can be attracted to each other (see Macauley, 2004; Wells and Poders, 2006, 2; Van Ingen and Phala, 2014, 54).

People are different in so many aspects, be it values or beliefs, but being lesbian in a stereotyped environment and society makes one's sexuality hyper visible and it usually comes with unwelcoming sentiments. Plummer (1992, 66) articulates that the imagery associated with the meaning of being lesbian is seen as something that does not suit the experiences that society expects and most often this prevents most women from identifying themselves as lesbian. The process of self-identifying as lesbian and letting others know is referred to as, 'coming out', and it symbolizes self-acceptance of one's sexual orientation (see Galatzer-Levy & Cohler, 2002; Ward & Winstanley, 2005). Rust (1993, 53) writes that, 'coming out', is a process of discovery in which the individual sheds a false heterosexual identity and comes to correctly identify and label her own true essence, which is homosexual." Coming out proves to be even more difficult in societies where identifying as lesbian will get you criminalized. Even though the legislation in South Africa acknowledges homosexuality, its very existence is denied in most of the cultures. The reality on the ground is that most societies do not embrace it and it usually impacts on the lives of homosexuals (Macauley, 2004; Van Bred and Worringham, 2012, 1; Van Ingen and Phala, 2014, 54). In as much as equal rights are concerned, being lesbian for some women comes at a price starting from letting their families and peers aware of their sexuality**.**

Many researchers propound that it is during the college years that most female students openly identify their sexualities as lesbian because in most cases, they get to leave their communities and

[22] The term 'homosexuality' in this chapter is specifically referring to lesbians.

spend most of their time on university campuses[23]. Lesbian students develop a sense of independence and freedom away from harsh criticism (see Evans and Broido, 1999, 665; Dworkin 2000, 165; Yurman, 2011, 201). Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2015) also concur and state that young people usually privatize their sexuality during their high school years. According to these scholars, students only get to 'come out' when they leave for universities and in most cases in the South African set up, Higher Education Institutions are usually in an urban setting. Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2015) further note that most students are of the view that these institutions have environments which are progressive and inclusive, unlike the peri-urban and rural communities they leave behind. Using some of the participants' shared experiences; this chapter will explore the concept of 'coming out' and unpack the challenges that come along with it in an institutional environment like UKZN.

4.2 'Coming out'

> *I realized I was attracted to girls in my 6th grade but back then I did not understand what was going on. (Khuliso*)*[24]

Those were the words of one of the research participants, Khuliso* .Sharing the same sentiments on how one finds it difficult to understand her own sexuality, Lufuno* a gentle and soft spoken young lady sat on the couch in the room, narrating her own journey.

> *Iyhooo (laughs)first there is realization, understanding and accepting .I realized I was different when I was very young, I was like in grade seven that was the first realization and then understand (pauses takes a deep breath thinking) I only then understood that was halfway through varsity.(Lufuno*)*

'Coming out' is a process that starts from one actually knowing that she is lesbian. Plummer (1992, 66) states that human beings try to better understand their environment in terms of social categories that are presented to them. Before the participants acknowledged and embraced their sexuality they passed the stage of realizing that they are different from the other people in the societies they live.

[23] African communities are usually characterized of strict cultures and norms where homosexuality is labelled as a taboo. Therefore, this makes it more difficult for someone to self-identify as lesbian.
[24] Names accompanied by the character * are pseudonyms.

For them to acknowledge their lesbian identity, they go through a process that starts with the idea or knowledge of the social category "lesbian." How the category is understood does not really matter as long as a woman is made aware of it, only then can they know and be sure of their sexuality hence adopting the lesbian identity. Reddy and Butler (2004, 116) state that, "identities are not made in a single moment. They are made again and again. This does not mean that identities are made radically new every time they are made. But it takes some time for identities to be brought out." This was echoed by some of Khuliso's* narratives.

> *….and because there was no language for me to explain what I was feeling until I started my high school. (Khuliso*)*

> *I never really knew that I was lesbian , in secondary school I wouldn't have noticed, uyabona I never took time for relationships, umama wami ustrict[25] so I was never interested in boys my age(Londiwe*)*

Some participants did not have any idea of the term, 'lesbian', therefore Khuliso* struggled to explain her feelings. The non- existence of a language that could explain having same-sex desires depicts that the issue of homosexuality or lesbianism is not something that is often talked about in most societies. Instead, women and/with men relationships are the kind of unions that are practiced and encouraged in most South African societies (see Francis and Msibi, 2011, 162). Hence when Khuliso* realized that she had an attraction for people of the same sex, she found it challenging to understand the feelings. However, for other participants like Londiwe* the idea that she was lesbian never crossed her mind because of the way she was raised. Having a strict mother who initially did not tolerate heterosexual relationships delayed her own ability of knowing that perhaps she was different form the other girls. Since discussions surrounding sexuality are silent in most African communities in South Africa, it becomes difficult for most lesbian students to be aware of the issues that construct being different, in terms of sexual orientation. This was clearly explained by the LGBTI Forum leader.

> *….as much as the student might identify as being LGBTI or feel different, they don't know what being LGBTI is , they don't know the issues around being gay or*

[25] Umama wami ustrict means my mother is strict in isiZulu.

lesbian, the issues that may arise with regards to being in a classroom and being discriminated. (LGBTI Forum leader)

I was in grade 10 and I remember saying in class, I went to a girl's school by the way. I remember saying I think I am bisexual (lowering her voice as she tried to show me the way she uttered those words) and I remember the class was very quiet and it was a maths class (she laughs as she narrates this incident) and the teacher was standing facing the board and she turned around and the whole class was looking at me, it was so random. I thought I was thinking out aloud, oh no (she quickly remembered the occurrence of events) I was talking to my best friend and naye[26] she was so embarrassed since it was weird and awkward to be talking about it especially in class. By the way, my friend is also lesbian she realized it later as well. That was like the first time I had said something about it but I never acted on it. I think the people I stayed with in my dorm suspected but they never really said anything because they knew I was dating guys. (Lufuno)*

Even when lesbian students realize that they are different from the other girls, most times they do not immediately declare that they are lesbian. Like Lufuno*, though she was now aware that she might be lesbian or bisexual she revealed that she did not act on it. Evans and Broido (1999, 662) and Coleman (2000) articulate that the first step of 'coming out' is coming out to one 'self. However, most students usually have their sexuality under wraps for a while before they gain the courage to disclose it to the other people who are close to them. Reynold and Hanjorgiris (2000) note that in forming one's sexual identity the process is not fixed, instead it is fluid and characterized of elements of progression and reversion. Most social spaces play an essential and forceful role in deterring the ability of one to proudly 'come out' as a lesbian despite having acknowledged a successful lesbian identity (Mbatha, 2012, 3; Ncanana and Ige, 2014, 570).

..Even though I would sometimes say, this girl is pretty in my mind, I just assumed everyone did that (she says this as she chuckles) I mean we all can recognize beauty… I understood my sexuality first year when I got to campus and I learnt that

[26] Naye is an isiZulu term, in this context it means, her also.

it was normal to see other girls as pretty and also I got linked up with my lesbian friends. (Londiwe)*

Londiwe* is short and light in complexion, probably in her early twenties, graced with a petite figure and knowing how to dress for it. Londiwe* and I had met through one of the research participants Thandeka*, and I later realized that we also took the same bus to campus which made it easier to create rapport. At first, when I had met her with Thandeka* she had been skeptical about telling me her side of the story but as time went on she began to open up.

Thandeka* also realized her sexual orientation when she was still in high school but she did not disclose it to anyone. She narrated that she only came out strongly with her sexuality when she finally got the chance to leave her home community in Hluhluwe[27] and come to study at the UKZN. Therefore, this reveals that the social environment where one grows up influences the behavior and attitudes that one portrays. Since Thandeka's home community is located in rural settings, the cultural beliefs surrounding homosexuality are negative; therefore, it proved difficult for her to disclose her sexual identity as lesbian. A burly earnest young lady with a pleasant and easygoing personality, Thandeka* sat crouched on the green grass outside the lecture rooms. She was the one who personally decided to have the interview carried outside of the lecture rooms because that was her only spare time before she could proceed with other lectures for that day. With a boyish box haircut she was dressed smartly in three quarter pants and a vintage brand of shirt that had a summer print feel and to complete her perfect look she wore black low cut tennis shoes.

Urrrgh (she growled) where do I start? Well I understood my sexuality during my secondary school days. Well you know high schools, when you are a girl you have to wear skirts and with most girls that was the, 'it thing'[28]. Trying to look all good, people always made sure that there were on point my friend (I could see that she was outspoken) and they would make sure that they wore short skirts, probably to woo the guys, I don't know(she laughed). But you see now with me I didn't even like all that I never felt comfortable wearing the skirts and all and I was that girl

[27] Hluhluwe is a small town in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
[28] The phrase 'it thing' in this context summarizes the style that was trending.

who always wore the long skirts and would feel comfortable in my tracksuit when we had to go for sports. (Thandeka)*

This narrative revealed that the idea of being a girl is shown by the type of clothing that one wears. In this context, the idea of young girls wearing short skirts reveals that perhaps they did it to attract the opposite sex. It reveals how dressing gives us an understanding into the constructions of femininity and how it can be used to determine or 'establish' one's gender and sexual identity. In this narrative, the discourses around femininity are not only portrayed by the gender or sexuality that one identifies as, but they are also shown by the type of dressing that one prefers or is seen to prefer. This assumption is elucidated by Msibi (2012, 248) who notes that clothing can actually be used as a form of representing one's sexuality. Study findings by Boonzaier and Zway (2015, 102) also concur with the narrative shared by Thandeka*. They note that some of the women who identify as (butch) lesbian use clothing as a marker of their sexual identities.

Most lesbian students get to be aware that their sexuality is different from the socially and culturally approved heteronormative heterosexuality before they start with their university careers. Most participants revealed that during their high school years, they had only slight knowledge concerning their sexuality. They 'just knew that they were different', but the idea of being dissimilar is something that most lesbian students do not get to understand easily. To elucidate this, Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 272) state that for both heterosexual and LGBTI people, sexuality is complex and it is discovered, understood and embraced as people grow up. Even though some lesbian students have a hint of their sexuality, they do not usually talk about it openly because it proves to be an awkward and embarrassing topic to discuss[29].

In South African society, if one identifies as a woman she is expected to be sexually attracted to men (see Ncanana and Ige, 2014, 572; Mwambene and Wheal, 2015, 61). Therefore, during the process of trying to understand their sexuality, some lesbian students like Lufuno* reveal that they get involved in relationships with people of the opposite sex. This corroborates the assumptions of Erving Goffman (1922-82in Lemert et al 1997, 23) which state that, "the self does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action, being generated by that

[29] For Instance Lufuno's* friend from High school did not want to engage in the conversation about being bisexual even though she later 'came out' as lesbian.

attribute of local events which renders them interpretable by witnesses." Kevin and Graziano (2012, 276) assert that the first stage is labeled, identity confusion, "which begins with individual's first awareness of same sex thoughts, feelings and attractions and is accompanied by confusion and anxiety." Mabaso and Naidoo's (2014, 6191) study concurs the narratives of the study highlight that most lesbians feel 'different' and they struggle trying to accept their identities and in most cases they live a split life conforming to their societies.

However, it is a different experience for some lesbian women, for they actually have an idea of their sexuality before even telling other people. *"I have always known"*, those where the words of another research participant Neliswa*. Gill also revealed the same thing, *"I always knew that I liked girls since puberty."* Whilst other lesbian students have a clue about their sexualities others never get to know. They only learn that they are lesbian when they start with their first year of college and get to associate with people who share the same interests and opinions as them.

4.2. 1 "You know what it is like…the pressure"

> *Now at UKZN I carried on dating the guy and you know what it is like , the pressure, the fact that you are not seeing people whom you identify yourself with and even if you do (she actually said this using an emphasizing tone) when you are walking on campus and there is this one lesbian whom people know and the people you are walking with will be ,like ooh there is the lesbian (she dramatizes the act of people pointing fingers), and you think to yourself so if I tell them that's what it is going to be , being that lesbian. (Lufuno*)*

Lufuno* found it difficult to come out with her sexuality because of the fear of the unknown as well of being called or named, *'that lesbian.'* The whole idea of being called, 'that lesbian', depicts the views of other students who in most cases are heterosexual and assume that being homosexual is 'an abnormal thing'. If one self-identifies as lesbian, it makes one stand out in a crowd, being an odd one out since the majority of students are heterosexual. The idea that Lufuno* kept dating a person of the opposite sex reveals that the pressures to conform to the beliefs and norms of the society influences one to go against one's own feelings in a bid to try and fit in. It also reveals that they can have multiple identities, but have one that they know is very dominant. For instance, Lufuno* dated a male but at the same time knew that her lesbian identity

was more dominant (more real) when she was amongst people who self-identified as lesbian. Most lesbian students find it difficult to 'come out' in Higher Education Institutions, because they want to avoid being seen as the 'other' and abnormal (see Rockman, 2013, 65; Ncanana and Ige, 2014, 570). The concept of being lesbian is not only a notion that is considered to be taboo in the communities that most students come from. It is a cultural behavior that is instilled in the minds of people as they grow up and coming to university does not in any way alter the way one thinks.

> *I carried on being myself up until second year. Only started a lesbian relationship that time and I think the only reason why I think I was able to start a lesbian relationship was because I was back home and you know social media (she then mentioned that back then it was during the era of mxit a chat social platform). It was easy for me because I wasn't under pressure of chatting to guys when I am at res and varsity and at home (she then rolls her eyes laughing sarcastically) nobody would really know who you are chatting to.(Lufuno*)*

> *....Even when my mother used to buy clothes for me I never really liked it when she bought dresses. (Thandeka)*

The pressure of trying to conform to heterosexuality does not only start when lesbian students start university, instead it stems from the families they come from. Writing earlier, D'Augelli (1998, 198) states that most parents are of the view that they are the ones responsible for what their children become. Londiwe's * mother was strict even about engaging in a heterosexual relationship therefore, the odds of her accepting her daughter being lesbian were low. Hence, the Human Rights Watch (2011, 7) and Ncanana and Ige (2014, 570) note that from their immediate families, children grow up being taught that one day they are supposed to marry. This automatically implies that at some point in their lives, they have to be sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex. This then creates a strict and punitive environment for many lesbians to fully explore their sexuality. For Lufuno* the idea that she used her phone to chat without anyone noticing that she was making relations with other lesbians helped her to embrace her sexuality but reflected how difficult it is to even let family know of one's sexuality.

Thandeka's* narratives also reflect how parents can try and shape the way their children are supposed to live, and by so doing impose a gender identity they assume is suitable and normal for their children. (Probably doing it unaware of her daughter's sexuality) Thandeka's* mother bought dresses conforming to the idea that girls are supposed to look feminine and different from boys.

> *That's how I connected with this girl. I come back now from the holidays and I have to meet this girl but I just don't know how I am going to be seen in public with her because she identifies as a lesbian because she is butch and I am feminine*[30] *(she then repeats that she is feminine using her hands to show that her body structure and appearance was indeed feminine.) So I went to see her and eeeh (laughs) I was so scared so I had to meet her in a public space somewhere in a shop maybe Edgars where I would pretend that I was liking shoes. All this while I didn't even want my friends to know. They would ask where I was going because I wasn't the type that would usually go around. I just couldn't say because it was just something they would not understand. (Lufuno*)*

For some lesbian students, the prevalence of homophobia in most communities makes it a daunting task for them to disclose their sexuality to their friends. Their friendship relations are usually affected, in the sense that sometimes they feel restricted to portray their sexual identities. They actually find themselves lying about how they feel and their personal lifestyles so as to blend in with their friends. Most students at the University come from very conservative backgrounds where being lesbian is rendered not to be African and a shame to the society. Therefore, the perception of most heterosexual students towards lesbians is negative. This corroborates with Rankin (2003, 1) who states that the university environment is composed of so many different people with different backgrounds and culture. Probably consciously aware of her friend's cultures and their values, Lufuno* assumed that her friends would disdain her the moment they knew of her sexuality, hence it was difficult to let them know.

> *Eventually I told them one by one and my friend Livhu* was like yeah I have always known and that was like the only reaction. And yhoooo (she then starts laughing*

[30] As cited in Rothblum (2010), Gibson and Meem (2002, 3) butch refers to how lesbians act *mannish* whilst lesbian women who act feminine are called *femme.*

shaking her head) I told Mitha and she was like eeeh eeeh she claps her hands) she is, has always been dramatic. My other friend Meregi* thought it was cool being lesbian and then they all started wanting to understand more about it. They were shocked though and they wanted to know why I am doing it, their first question was why because they all knew I was dating a guy. I was also confused and I just said that's who I am for now and that's how it started. (Lufuno*)*

Thandeka* also said that telling some of her friends from UKZN was a bit of a challenge but in her mind she hoped that it was not going to be difficult and that her friends intuitions about her were positive because of the way she carried herself.

*The day I finally decided to tell my friends I had to call all three of my closest buddies, and I said listen here this is what I am.(she said this as she rubbed her chin and pulled out a naughty smile. I just thought to myself that she was that kind of a person with a strong and bold character.) For two of my friends it wasn't a shock at all they actually laughed about it and told me that they had always known and at some point they had even joked about it but I just didn't say. Probably it was clear because of my sense of style because ever since ngafika lana[31] UKZN I could dress the way I want and most people knew me as the girl who had a tomboyish style. Well for my other friend she was shocked but she got to accept and understand me for who I am. (Thandeka *)*

When lesbian students have fully understood their sexuality they then decide to disclose it to their closest friends. However, it usually comes along with a string of questions that confront one's sexuality. For instance, questioning if one is sure about being lesbian depicts how most heterosexual students assume that being lesbian is a choice. Most students do not get the idea that perhaps it is not a choice, but it is how someone really feels inside and they are different in that way, just like how there are different races or how someone could be disabled. Similar to Lufuno and Thandeka's * experience Nomzamo's* friends were also shocked and had a lot of questions to ask about her sexuality and why she acknowledged that she was lesbian.

[31] Ngafika lana means 'got here' in isiZulu.

I didn't really let my peers know, but it came up in a conversation and they were a lot of questions that came along. I would say it came as a surprise to my friends but they were very understanding and wanted to know more about it. (Nomzamo)*

Whilst some lesbian students who self-identified as lesbian might have disclosed their sexuality to their friends for some students like Prisca* and Neliswa* that journey has been rough and they still haven't said anything. *"I have always known that I am attracted to other women but I did not tell any of my friends about this and they still don't know, probably they might suspect but they certainly did not hear it from me."(Neliswa*)*

Prisca* also had to say, *"I realized that I was different around my twenties and I really didn't make it known to my friends*" *(Prisca* is 22 now and saying she learnt about her sexuality in her twenties means that she had already started her university career at UKZN).*

Some participants find it difficult to disclose their sexuality to their friends because of the fear of being marginalized. Rockman (2013, 85) notes that for most LGBTI students in colleges they do not say out their sexualities because of the fear of being marginalized or being left alone with no friends. For Khuliso*, Londiwe* and Gill* telling their friends was not really a burden because they let them know through their day to day conversations.

I have never been in the "closet", I guess because I have always embraced who I am and my sexuality. When meeting new friends and then somehow we end up talking about relationships and they are talking about boys, I would make the same reference, but to girls. And that's how they will know.....I have been fortunate enough to associate myself with very open minded and non-judgmental people. I guess it is true what they say, "show me your friends and I will tell you who you are", because I am free spirited. I tend to befriend people who are more or less like me. (Khuliso)*

I didn't need to tell anyone, remember I told you that my friends since first year have always been other lesbians. So I have always been free with who I am and my friends totally understand me. (Londiwe)*

> *Haw that wasn't really difficult, I have always had friends who are so understanding and open minded so when I told them it wasn't much of a big deal we still carried on with our lives normally.(Gill*)*

It was also the same experience for Anita* who mentioned that she realized that she was lesbian at the age of fifteen. Starting her first year at UKZN she says she had learnt to accept and understand who she was therefore she never really had any problems letting her friends know. In her own words she said, *"I did not really tell my friends about my sexuality but I guess they just realized after we met and I was very happy about it."* This was so because Anita* self identifies as lesbian strongly because her behavior and mannerisms portray male characteristics. Graced with a slim and slender figure and usually wearing male clothing the entire time, one cannot quickly tell that she is female until she starts speaking with her soft voice. The above narratives clearly unpack the constructions of a lesbian identity in a negative space. In some instances, other heterosexual students are open-minded and tolerant about someone identifying as lesbian. Therefore, it makes it easier for one to fully embrace and own the social identity of being a lesbian woman.

Though the 'coming out' process may be difficult for some students, for others it is easier. Perhaps because the idea or knowledge that people are different whether race, color or sexuality is something that some students have embraced and have come to accept. The 21st generation is composed of vibrant youths who are overly exposed to social media. Social media has been a great and successful platform for many organizations to advocate for the rights of LGBTI's through campaigns. Therefore, the idea of homosexuality is something that has received positive response from the awareness campaigns hence making it easier for some lesbian students to announce their sexuality.

These views corroborate with those of Renn (2007) and Umar (2015, 14) that most students at university campuses are aware of the issue of homosexuality as they are aware of other contemporary issues that take center stage in the public debates and political arena. Herdt (2001) concurs with Renn that most students have grown up in an era where homosexuality is talked about daily and tolerance for sexual minorities is advocated for. Therefore, students who are

educated and are advanced intellectually are likely to be tolerant and open minded about issues relating to homosexuality (Arndt and de Bruin, 2006, 26)

Pahoua (2008, 99) and Mabaso and Naidoo (2014, 6192) note that 'coming out' for most LGBTI persons is liberating and it provides relief because it gives one a sense of being true and authentic to oneself. However, from most of the experiences narrated 'coming out' is not an easy task considering the different perceptions that people have of lesbians. Umar (2015, 15) states that for most university students in an African society have strong negative perceptions towards homosexuality and this makes it difficult for most LGBTI students to come out of their closets.

4.2.2 "I just didn't want to be this person who would be discriminated against"

> *You know the rumor spreads so fast, the whole residence knew I was a lesbian. I was even so afraid to bring my partner to my residence it took a very long time until she asked why I never asked her to come visit me. I didn't want anybody to know. As much as my friends knew about it I didn't want the whole residence to just know me as that person. I didn't want to be "the lesbian" and I was scared and felt it wasn't normal and I just didn't want to be this person who would be discriminated against. Society as whole discriminates us. And you know when you are on campus and some people will be like I don't understand people who do this and you are sitting there and you have this huge secret inside you and it makes you think that's what I am going to be called. It's not an easy thing. (Lufuno*)*

> *I did not tell any of my friends about this and they still don't know, probably they might suspect but they certainly did not hear it from me."(Neliswa*).*

The narratives above also reveal that the perceptions that most heterosexual students have about lesbians being abnormal, actually influences the way some of the lesbian participants handle or enact themselves or their social selves. It is evident that in some cases lesbian students are forced not to disclose their sexuality because they dread to be seen as 'abnormal'. Most of the times those who chose to disclose their sexuality are discriminated against, hence, for those that would not have identified as lesbian it becomes a difficult task, for they fear getting the same treatment as well.

For lesbian students, the most crucial part about, 'coming out', is letting their friends know about their sexual orientation. What matters most to them is that they become open to the most important people in their lives and their support systems. However, it seems that even though they tell their friends most participants do not want the 'whole world' to know of their sexuality because of the fear of being discriminated against. As much as friends may be comfortable, the views of other students are usually opposing and different. This view concurs with that of D'Augelli (1998, 189) who states that most lesbians usually rely on and trust the small groups and cliques of friends that they actually revealed their sexuality to. They make sure that they keep hiding it from everyone else. Thandeka also revealed that one of the challenges she faced being a student at the UKZN was not being able to just let everyone know that she was interested in people of the same sex

> *The fact that at some point in time I had to live under the shadows was a great challenge. I could not even find anyone whom I related to or someone who was also lesbian. I think that was so, because nobody really says it out aloud that I am lesbian you will only get to know after a while. In my case I only started associating with people with the same interests as me when I attended an LGBTI church service in town. That's how I connected with some lesbians and was even surprised to meet some familiar faces from campus. (Thandeka*)*

Thandeka's* response clearly revealed that some students get to boldly identify themselves as lesbian women when they get the chance to associate with other people who also identify as lesbian. This showcases Tajfel and Turners (1979) assumptions which state that one starts to 'own' the social identity and in turn openly associate with other people who portray the same beliefs and attitudes. Like Thandeka*, Lufuno* and Nomzamo*, Neliswa* also found it difficult to blend in to the UKZN community; she noted that she found it difficult to fit in, as she felt like people looked at her as an abnormal person.

> *One of the challenges I have faced here on campus is that of people not looking at me as a normal individual. I hate it a lot when I am walking around campus and I see a poster saying, "no to homosexuality." I feel like some people just do not understand and they treat us like we are not human. Imagine I had to attend one of*

the church groups on campus and during the service they start preaching about homosexuality as a sin. It is as if being lesbian is a huge sin and I am not normal. (Nomzamo)*

I hate it when people use the bible as ammunition, they forget that religion is a choice, always I hear that what you are doing is so unchristian they tell me about Sodom and Gomorrah, like really (she said this as she shook her head in a sarcastic way) FYI[32] , we aren't all Christian, I mean we cannot all say that. Maybe I don't believe in all that so who are you to judge and tell me that what I am doing is wrong. (I could tell that she was getting emotional about the issue as she tried to defend her point.) It's not as if those people don't sin God said you can't be luke warm and you see most of the people are perverts they indulge in all sorts of evil things , they lie they steal, they fornicate but (she then laughs sarcastically)they still judge me. (Gill)*

God never made Eve and Eve; he made Adam and Eve… (Anita)*

The responses suggest that the social and religious perceptions that other heterosexual students hold create an environment that conjures ridicule and discrimination towards the students that identify as lesbian. The Christian beliefs and values hold that engaging in same-sex relations is a great sin. They use the metaphor of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the bible to explain how God unleashed his wrath on the people who engaged in sexual immorality that included homosexuality. Therefore most times, many of the heterosexual students' Christian beliefs perpetuate the prevalence of homophobic tendencies towards those who identify as lesbian on campus.

Most participants also revealed that their sexuality made people view them as abnormal persons and most people failed to realize that they are just like any other human beings, with just a difference in whom they feel attracted to. Lesbian students also revealed how they did not tolerate the hate speech and religious derogatory remarks that they came across on the university premises.

[32] FYI is an abbreviation that means for your own information.

As much as most students are aware that everyone is equal and no one deserves to be discriminated against because of who they are, most times students turn a blind eye to that. Strongly grounded in (Christian) religious values, some students tend to be homophobic towards lesbian students and put out their views in public through posters around campuses. The Human Rights Watch (2009) articulates that the prevalence of discriminatory practices in universities is mostly coined from the religious affiliations that most heterosexual students are linked to. Studies by Ncanana and Ige (2014, 576) revealed that most students at the University of Zululand were against homosexuality deeming it as unchristian and noting that all the students who engaged in homosexuality would burn in hell. Writing recently, Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015, 5) highlight that indeed religion has a great effect on stigma and discrimination against university students. In one of the narratives used in their study Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015, 5) revealed that some students were name called demons because of their sexuality.

The narratives also suggest that making friends after one self-identifies as lesbian is not an easy task in a university environment because most heterosexual students do not understand nor tolerate the idea of one being lesbian. One would then think that it is easier to make friends with other lesbian students, however Thandeka's* narratives showed that it is difficult because not many self-identifying lesbian students show or talk about their sexualities. Another research participant Khuliso* really did not have a hard time coming out of her closet but however she shared the same sentiments with Lufuno* concerning the challenges that come along with letting others know of your sexuality on the UKZN campus.

> *I personally have not faced any harsh challenges but I know people who have gone through a lot because of who they choose to love. I mean hate speech is nothing compared to people who have endured physical and sexual abuse because of their masculine identities. I personally feel that some of the harsh words that people say demoralize and they affect other people's self-esteem. You never know what might affect student's concentration and performance. (Khuliso*)*

However Lufuno*, Thandeka* and Nomzamo* have at some point in their university careers at UKZN encountered some of the direct hate speech from other students.

The challenge I usually face is people just not taking me seriously even with my friends they just don't think I am a human also, who goes through stuff, they assume I am different enough to be facing problems. And some of the things that happen around campus are just not easy to take in (As she starts saying this I could easily tell that the question had rubbed a sensitive nerve, with a brittle and lower voice she continues to narrate). If I am walking with my friends sometimes people especially male students make disturbing statements like saying why should I be moving around with lesbians instead of being with us men. Or you can actually hear people talking about you behind your back as you pass by. What I have also felt before, let's say you have guy friends, as much as they don't say anything to me they will tell you to be careful of Lufuno. Lufuno*)*

.. As I walk around campus I know I usually get those weird stares from people as if I am not normal. I remember very well some time back a guy actually made a slimy comment and he made sure that I had heard it loud and clear. He called me isitabane[33] and went on to say why I tried so hard to imitate a guy when I am a girl, and for him it was funny and it was as if he wanted points from his fellow friends. (Thandeka)*

...hmmm (as she thinks) I cannot really say I have faced challenges at UKZN. Probably not being able to tell people about my sexuality easily. Let's say I meet you today I befriend you; I just can't say I am lesbian you will never know what one will be thinking or the reaction you will get. Yeah I guess that's one of the challenges I have faced. (She says this as she nods her head trying to think if she had left anything out. (Londiwe)*

Anita* also said that most of the times when on campus, she has received negative and derogatory remarks about her appearance.

*...God never made Eve and Eve, he made Adam and Eve, asikho isdingo sokuzenza indoda ungeyonaso (why try act like a man when you aren't one). Anita**

[33] Derogatory term used to refer to a person who identifies as homosexual.

In some instances lesbian gender expressions put some of the students in vulnerable and compromising positions. Particularly lesbian students who present themselves as so called 'butch,' they normally receive derogatory remarks that question why they portray masculine (sic) attributes when they are supposed to be feminine since they are women. According to Rothblum (2010, 1) the categorization of femme and butch are essential for lesbian values because they structure the social and sexual relationships of lesbians. Haller (2009) notes that so called femme lesbians are not different from straight women because they usually have the same mannerisms, only the difference in the sexual partners they are attracted to. When some of the participants portray the so called masculine attributes, they are often mocked by other students who have the mentality and mistaken belief that lesbians are women who desire to be men. Swarr (2009, 531) concurs and states that the term lesbian for most South African societies facilitates misunderstandings of what it means to be lesbian. Therefore, the Human Rights Watch (2011, 19) notes that lesbian women who are butch often do not disclose their sexual identities, as it is already visible because they are masculine. And this usually fuels ridicule and negative discriminating comments (see Human rights watch, 2011, 26). Diaz et al (2001) articulate that the unfavorable judgements that come with sexual orientation have a great impact on most lesbian persons and it usually makes it difficult for them to come to terms with their identity. From some of the experiences mentioned, it is evident that most of the discrimination towards lesbian students comes from male students. A wide range of research has indeed proved that males hold the most negative attitudes towards homosexuality (see Herek, 1998, 41; Msibi, 2012, 248; Ncanana and Ige, 2014, 572).

As cited in Herek (1998), Kite and Whitley (1996) assert that some of the attitudes against lesbian women, from males emanate from the different evaluations and assumptions on gender roles. Male views on homosexuality are never positive because in a way they feel as if the male gender roles are degraded by those who choose to engage in role behavior associated with the other sex (see Herek, 1998, 41; Loftus, 2001). Herek further notes that males normally perceive lesbian behavioral patterns as a violation and mockery of the male gender roles. If the status of women in society is assumed as lower than the men, having a woman portray male gender roles stirs up feelings of contempt and disapproval.

D'Augelli (1998, 200) states that learning institutions sometimes provide a conducive environment for victimization and homophobic attacks on lesbians. Often students encounter verbal harassment and in some cases physical abuse (see Schope and Eliason, 2000; Rankin, 2003; Reddy, 2005 and Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2013, 716).

> *I know it's a cliché, but it is those day to day name callings, being excluded, been sworn at, that's about the most common that students have experienced. (LGBTI Forum leader)*

The Human rights watch report (2011, 26) states that verbal abuse and harassment makes lesbian women aware and conscious that some members of their societies loathe them. It further states that verbal abuse creates a negative self- image and this inhibits their ability to come out with their sexualities and in some instances seek justice and help when mistreated. Judging from some of the participants' responses, it is clear that the fear of being judged can lead to some students keeping their sexuality under the wraps. Kevin and Graziano (2012, 280) study narratives summarize that homosexual students at universities fear coming out of the closet because of the levels of victimization that occur around campus and these also include verbal harassment

Nomzamo* and Gill's* experiences give rise to an interesting theme about religiosity on university campuses as a social factor that contributes to discrimination against lesbian students. Belue (2015, 2) purports that religion plays a pivotal role in brewing up a rife environment against homosexuality thus perpetuating discrimination. Graham and Kiguwa (2005, 8) concur with Belue (2015) and state that religion is used to discredit the status of those who self-identify as lesbian or gay and terms it as a sin. Being heterosexual is what is perceived to be normal and it comes from the theological understanding that God created two complementary sexes (Gerber 2008, 13). Naidu (2013, 5) asserts that aspects of mainstream religion usually leads to a silencing of one's sexuality just so one can, 'fit in', and avoid being seen as, 'abnormal', and being called "unclean" or being "demonized."

4.2.3 "… **I used to date a guy back in the day"**

After the formal interview, Lufuno grew to be a close friend of mine and during some of our casual chats she would say somethings that added on to the findings of the study. One day on our way to the library we passed a male student whom she remarked as handsome. Not understanding how she could relate to a male looking good, I just had to ask how it was possible because she had said she is attracted to women, she laughed back and said;

> *Remember I used to date a guy back in the day because that was what everyone was doing even though I didn't get it. Trust me dear I know what a hot[34] guy looks like, I used to date one. (Lufuno*)*

Thandeka also said that though she knew that she did not have an interest in what other girls her age were doing, she never really said it out to anyone or talked about it because she felt it was just her own sense of style and no one would really get her. However, at some stage she found an explanation for all her feelings and knew that she was lesbian.

> *Even though I now had an explanation to the way I felt I never told a soul. It was only until I got to UKZN that I finally came out of my shell. I could dress the way I want with no one telling me that I was supposed to look lady like.(Thandeka*)*

The latter narrative reveals that the expectations of other people, in this case the community influences the way one handles herself. Since being lesbian is regarded as a taboo in most communities, lesbian students do not strongly show off their identities, instead they conform to the expected, 'social reality', and follow suit on what the other girls their age will be doing. One only reveals and owns their lesbian identity freely when they are in social spaces that do not impose a lot of expectations. The title of being lesbian can prove to be a heavy burden to take, even though it is something that has been used and talked about in many avenues more especially on a political level (considering the remarkable struggles for sexual equality in South Africa). Indeed, society is still not as open minded as the legislation. D'Augelli (1998, 189) posits that at some point in their youth most lesbian women find it difficult to make their sexuality known. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014, 716) also states that the prevalence and intensity of homophobia on a

[34] 'Hot' is a colloquial term that is used to describe a boy who is handsome.

university environment often forces some lesbian students to behave as heterosexual people. Even though they feel different they withdraw and they try to fit in to the society and they grow to be pretentious acting as straight women. Mbatha (2012, 13) notes that in most African societies, family is valued as an important aspect of life. Therefore, there is a great need to keep it alive and intact. To achieve that, there has to be procreation. Hence, if one is to 'come out' as lesbian, it would undermine the importance of family. This assumption explains why in some cases, lesbian students pretended to be heterosexual before they started their university careers.

The pressures of society to act as heterosexuals actually takes a toll on lesbian women to express their gender even if they feel that they are certain of their sexualities (see Reynolds and Hanjorgiris, 2000; Macauley, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Vollenhoven and Els , 2013, 271). Progress towards the attainment of human rights for sexual minorities is unfortunately inadequate in most South African societies. Despite the awareness campaigns that are conducted, it is still a norm that is detested Epprecht (2012, 230). Macauley (2004) states that it is difficult to understand being a homosexual in African culture that is forever denying the growing demands of lesbian and gays for their human rights and their need to feel safe under the law. Macauley further notes that for most lesbian women their sexual identities still remain secrets from their families and friends.

4.3 Conclusion

Though the law in South Africa is liberal and broad-minded when it comes to sexual rights, most communities and societies, especially the African communities, do not embrace homosexuality (see Van Breda and Worringham, 2012, 1; Mugadaza et al, 2015, 7). Van Ingen and Phala (2014, 54) highlight that homophobic tendencies are usually rife in rural areas and in traditionally bound societies which are staunch in preserving the African practices and traditions[35]. According to Tamale (2011, 1) sexuality and gender play a pivotal role in sustaining the power relations in African societies. Therefore, in her study in 2003, Tamale notes that the existence of patriarchy in African societies influences gender hierarchy. This entails that the roles of women in the society are narrowed down to taking care of the household chores and giving birth (see Mama, 2014, 61).

[35] According to Macauley (2004), most African societies are strict about the issue of homosexuality. It is regarded as an unthinkable act or shame.

Thus, if one identifies as lesbian it is seen as going against the laws of nature and a disturbance to procreation (see Mbatha, 2012, 13). As such, growing up in environments like this makes it a daunting task for most African lesbian students to 'come out'. Based on the South African setup most institutions of Higher Education in South Africa are located in urban areas. This therefore means that aspiring university students get to leave their strict home communities to university environments which are perceived as being more or less inclusive and it often influences them to 'come out' easily (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006, 26; Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2015).

Though the 'coming out' process is portrayed to be easier at Higher Education Institutions, it does not mean that the experiences of lesbian students are made any easier. However, university environments create conducive spaces for lesbian victimization (see Rankin, 2003; Ngcobo, 2007; Rockman, 2013; Ncanana and Ige, 2014 Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy, 2015). Self-identifying as lesbian openly invites forms of discrimination. From the narratives of lesbian students at UKZN, the most common form of discrimination that the participants experienced was verbal abuse, and it was mostly instigated by male students. Most times, lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal face discrimination from other students. The fear of being discriminated sometimes makes it difficult for some lesbian students to 'come out', and at times some students revealed that they became involved in relationships with males so that they could fit into the society and avoid being discriminated against. This corroborates Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 272) who articulate that sexuality is something that is understood and embraced over time and at times can cause confusion before one truly accepts who she is.

The next chapter will explore the experiences of the participants, unpacking their views on whether they feel safe at the UKZN. It also seeks to problematize who lesbian students think should be responsible for making sure that their sexual freedom and safety needs are accommodated on UKZN premises.

CHAPTER FIVE

Protection of Lesbian Rights at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

5.1 INTRODUCTION

From the previous chapters, it is evident that the South African constitution is a 'work in progress' when it comes to issues concerning sexuality politics. The implementation and execution of these contentious rights does not only end on the drawing board where South Africa is recognized as the only African country that is lenient and tolerant to same-sex relations. It inextricably involves the broader society at large. This means that lesbian rights should be protected in all avenues of society whether they are work spaces, health spaces, public spaces and of course educational spaces.

Given the progressive legislative views on homosexuality in South Africa, it is the responsibility of different organizations and institutions to make sure that the rights of this minority group in the society are accommodated. Hence universities are also part of a community that should make sure that LGBTI rights issues are catered for (see Mathuri et al, 2012; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2013; Abaver et al, 2014). In light of this, other South African universities take a pragmatic approach in addressing this matter, for instance early 2015 the University of Venda[36] included an LGBTI program under the campus health unit.

Having looked at 'coming out' experiences of different lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, this chapter probes whether the University of KwaZulu-Natal is a welcoming and accommodative environment for lesbian students to freely exercise their rights. Using the narratives of the participants it seeks to unpack the lesbian students' views concerning their safety around university premises.

5.2 Safety around the UKZN premises for Lesbian students

It is relevant to note that in this chapter, the phrase 'safety' is deconstructed into two categories which are physical safety and psychological safety. Naidu and Mkhize (2005, 34) note that

[36] The issue of LGBTI rights was very controversial and brewed up into conflict amongst student politics, with some members who were LGBTI advocating for recognition as one of the university organizations. Having the program is a stepping stone in terms of LGBTI rights at the University of Venda.

physical safety means that one is protected from physical threats such as assault as well as forced sexual activities and harassment. Psychological safety therefore entails that one is protected from emotional abuse that involves criticizing, mocking and undermining someone because of their norms and values.

> *I think every woman identifying person has some sense of fear when walking around campus alone and especially at night. But now it gets even tricky when you are a lesbian woman and even trickier when you are a masculine woman. You see the reason why I feel this way is the fear of being corrected in to straightness, the physical and sexual abuse by our fellow brothers because we are, "taking their girlfriends")they want to show us that we are women and we need a real thing. Ey bathong[37] it is scary (Khuliso)*

Those were Khuliso's* words as she tried to explain whether she found the university premises safe for her. She raised a major concern about how women in most societies are vulnerable to violence and abuse and how it is made worse when one identifies as lesbian. Lufuno* also shared the same sentiments.

> *You see the thing is being a woman I don't feel safe at all (she even made hand gestures to clearly show what she felt about her safety). It's even worse when people know that you are lesbian, and then now you see you are prone to corrective rape, you know. So no (she strongly said), I am never safe. I don't even walk alone at night. Another thing that happens, let's say I happen to be standing with a girl and then I happen to have to walk back wherever I am coming from I don't feel safe at all you know campus can be very dark……some time back I was almost raped. I thank God some guy rescued me. (This was obviously a sensitive topic she didn't want to dwell on for long, so I moved on to the next question.)-(Lufuno)**

> *(Thinks hard) well I can say that I feel safe around campus during the day. I really do not feel safe in the evenings though. It's not because I am lesbian or what, despite that I am sure we have all heard about people getting mugged or raped in*

[37] Bathong is a Sepedi informal way of saying people.

the vicinity of the campus, so yeah I wouldn't dare move around at night.(Thandeka)*

From the above narratives it is evident that some of the participants do not feel safe on the university premises primarily because they are women and the feeling is made worse considering their sexuality as lesbian. For some of the lesbian students, previous experiences[38] haunt them and make it difficult for them to feel safe on the university especially during the night. According to Peters (1995, 12) a number of women have their human rights violated because they are female and other factors like sexuality and ethnicity perpetuate the continuous violence against women (Muholi, 2004; Slater, 2013, 1; Gordon and Collins, 2013, 93). According to Bennet (1999), "gender based violence is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of his/her gender identity." The constant media talks and awareness campaigns on issues concerning women's rights and sexual freedom emphasizes on how women are vulnerable victims of rape and violence. Du Toit (2014, 58) states that the continuous sexual violence towards women in South Africa, "violates their sexual freedom and their most basic rights such as bodily integrity and freedom of movement." Gordon and Collins (2013, 93) and Mkhize et al (2010) allude that gender based violence is a recurring and pertinent issue in the South African society. Being a woman has at many times landed many in compromising and vulnerable situations. Therefore, some participants felt that being lesbian made them more vulnerable.

I was mugged because I was wearing pants; imagine if I was wearing a skirt that day, what could have happened to me. (Nomzamo)*

It is a major concern that some participants did not really want to talk about the violence that takes place on campus environments. From the narratives, participants like Thandeka* and Lufuno* were constrained to really talk about some of the physical abuse incidents that occur on the university premises, they just mentioned in passing but they did not really get into detail. The fact that these students continue to feel vulnerable suggests that perhaps not much was done to solve the previous cases.

[38] This refers to Lufuno, whom in her narratives mentioned that she encountered a near rape experience. Therefore, this situation left her traumatized and it makes her not to feel safe even on the university campus especially at night.

The silence that is portrayed by some of the participants clarifies the views by Muholi (2004, 118) who notes that for lesbian women, "revealing intimate violation to anyone is painful and can be delegitimizing and disempowering", in terms of their sexual identity construction. Some lesbian participants also revealed that they felt unsafe on campus because of the lack of trust in the security and personnel appointed.

> *No I don't feel safe on campus; I feel that the security is not really on point. Or probably I am the one who feels vulnerable. (Prisca*)*

This reveals that the social conceptions that some of the security staff might have against students who identify as lesbian affects the way they handle security issues. For instance if a lesbian student was to report a matter it would not be taken seriously because of the negative views that surround being non-heterosexual, and how they are pejoratively constructed by the security staff. This view is the same as the one that was revealed by the studies conducted by Rockman (2013, 79) who states that LGBTI students in universities sometimes did not feel safe in the vicinity of the campus, because even if they were to report any incident they felt as if the campus security were not nice towards LGBTI persons. Though the university 'puts up' mitigating factors to make sure that all students are safe on campus, the responses and lack of support from the people who are obligated to protect the rights of all students, makes female lesbian students skeptical about their safety (see Muholi, 2004, 119; Gordons and Collins, 2013, 101).

The Human Rights Watch (2010) points out that South Africa has been labelled the, "rape capital", of the world. Living in a society which is defined by such immoral activities often makes one question her safety based on gender as well as sexuality. As elaborated earlier in the study, stories of lesbian women being raped have been shared and talked about and in most cases they are issues that are just kept under the carpet, therefore rendering lesbian women voiceless(see Human Rights watch, 2011, 7). The United Nations Economic and Social Report (2001) also elucidate this assumption stating that, "women's human rights factions including those that are active on issues of sexuality are often vulnerable to prejudice, to marginalization and public repudiation, not only by state forces but by other social actors."[39]

[39] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders, E/CN.4/2001/94 (2001), para 89(g).

Tangible and valid statistics on incidents of corrective rape are not easy to come by which therefore makes it so difficult to put an end to such heinous acts (Pillay, 2011). This is so because most of the incidents never see the light of day for probable justice. And if they happen to be reported they are not really recognized as homophobic attacks because of the stigma that comes along with sexual orientation. Davis (2012) study highlighted that about 73% of lesbian women never reported their cases because of the fear of not being taken seriously. To some extent gender based violence has become normalized and victims usually do not report to the police because they get so used to it happening in their communities and even see it as a custom or norm (see Varga, 2004, 164; Bhana and Anderson, 2013).

> *There has been an incident in one of the campus whereby a student identifying as being lesbian was assaulted, so we could consider that as a hate crime. (LGBTI Forum leader)*

The latter narrative suggests that the physical attacks that are inflicted on lesbian students can be labelled as a crime. This therefore means that the personal security of some of the lesbian students is jeopardized. As such, this suggests that students who identify as lesbian need protection from such incidents. According to Meyer (2003) hate crimes are "common sources of prejudice that arise from perceived or real differences in race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability." The fact that some lesbian students might be aware of such incidents contributes to how they perceive the campus environment in terms of safety. Mwambene and Wheal (2015, 52-53) give an insight into some of the heart breaking cases of hate crimes and corrective rape that had so much attention from the public. They noted the story of Eudy Simelane a former popular Banyana Banyana soccer player and well known lesbian who was raped and then murdered in one of the popular townships of Kwa- Thema in Johannesburg on the 28th of April 2008.[40] They also mention the story of twenty-six year old Duduzile "Dudu" Zozo who was found dead on the 30th of June 2013. She was found a few meters away from her house with a toilet brush forcefully pushed up in her vagina and her autopsy also showed that indeed she had been raped before the other gruesome acts.

[40] Human Rights Watch, 2011, "We'll show you you're a woman" Violence and discrimination against black lesbians and transgender men in South Africa" , pp.52

These heinous acts amongst other acts that never saw daylight make many lesbian women aware of some of the possible challenges and dangers that come along with identifying as a lesbian woman. Hence, some of the participants strongly felt that they were vulnerable and the idea that they are lesbian made it even worse. It is evident that most South African communities do not embrace homosexuality and this has led to a number of hate crimes being committed against lesbians. From the narratives given, it clearly shows that from the many publicized crimes against homosexuality, most participants feel as if their livelihood is threatened by a double edged-sword and makes them feel more vulnerable and aware of their need for safety. However whilst some lesbian students feel that the UKZN premises are unsafe, for participants like Londiwe, Neliswa*, Nomzamo* and Anita* the university premises are safe for them.

> *I can say that the UKZN premises are safe and I for one have never come across anything hectic that can make me question my safety when I am on campus. Probably it's because I stay off campus and I am only here when I need to attend so I wouldn't really know. (Londiwe*)*

> *Yes I do feel safe, I have never encountered any bad experiences that can make me fear being on campus. (Neliswa*)*

5.3 "I mean I have no problem using the ladies restroom"

> *Well honestly, I would just say they are in between. I mean I have no problem using the ladies restrooms or being allocated a room in the girl's residence. But well this might just be my own experience because I have a friend who encountered problems with her roommate. Because she had identified as lesbian from day one she got into that room, her roomie actually showed it that she wasn't comfortable even dressing up whilst she was in. (Khuliso*)*

The latter narrative reveals that some of the heterosexual students have the common social belief that denotes that lesbian women are sexually attracted to ALL other women. Therefore given chance to share a room with a self-identifying lesbian student is seen as abhorrent. One might have a mistaken belief that the lesbian student can become attracted to them sexually or probably try and change their sexual identities; hence most female heterosexual students do not feel at ease

sharing the same social space with students who identify as lesbian. And in most cases heterosexual students make sure that their concerns and feelings are well known.

The idea brought out by Khuliso* that the campus environment is 'in between' reveals that there is an element of discriminatory behavior from the other students, and it contributes to the environment to be unwelcoming. Most lesbian students feel comfortable using the universities public facilities like the restrooms. However, the idea of lesbians using and sharing ladies restrooms brings up an important point that gender is fluid,[41] and it is essential that it is promoted and consolidated in university spaces as well. However, discrimination against lesbians is also salient in the universities residential spaces (see Evans and Broido, 1990, 664; Msibi, 2013, 70; Jagessar and Msibi, 2015, 63. In some situations it proves too difficult for a lesbian self-identifying student to share a room with a female student who is heterosexual. The general assumption is that being lesbian is unethical hence given the chance to share a room with a lesbian student other heterosexual students do not feel comfortable.

> *Oh yes I cannot really say that it isn't welcoming. Despite the fact that there is discrimination sometimes it does not really make me dread coming to campus or attend classes I just feel it's a normal environment which has its own advantages and disadvantages (Thandeka*)*

> *Oh Victoria (that's the name Lufuno* would normally use) you see one thing I told myself when you are going to come out you have to brace yourself for any circumstances because it is definitely not going to be smooth sailing. But generally I can say that the UKZN environment is kind of welcoming you can actually lead a normal perfect life, well (she then laughs) that is if you don't care about the sleazy comments that will come along. Yeah (she thinks as she nods her head) even in class it's all good, I did gender studies and I remember there was this one lesbian who came out so strongly and would express some of the points using her own experiences. So yeah basically I think though there is discrimination and all, there can be some level of tolerance for us guys. I have been around for a while now and yea I am kind of used to the environment now. (Lufuno*)*

[41] Evans and Broido (1999, 664) state that sexuality is fluid meaning that it can change one can pose as heterosexual and then the next minute realise that probably he/ she is bisexual.

Though there are a number of discriminatory incidents that lesbian students encounter, most participants reveal that they feel that the university's campuses are welcoming towards lesbians, and the experience is more or less the same as heterosexual students. One is skeptical of how candid the students are being. As scholars like Jagessar and Msibi (2015) critically dismiss this assumption and state that homophobic incidents do occur in university spaces, but the problem is that they are etched in most lesbian student's minds as a small and not so effective part of their well-being. They become jaded and naturalized to these occurrences. This influences many lesbian students not to mind the views of society towards them, rather to just ignore them and continue with their basic daily routines, even though their personal rights are violated. In most cases lesbian students depict a happy image whilst deep down they feel humiliated looked down upon and discriminated against.[42]D'Augelli (1991) notes that this silencing of one's sexuality constructs the dynamics which make the heteronormative[43] status strengthened suppressing the lesbian status. Graziano (2004) in the study that was conducted at the University of Stellenbosch revealed that some students played a part in their own victimization in a bid to try and fit into the society or to avoid being discriminated against. Instead of acknowledging that stigmatization and discrimination violates one's personal rights, most participants' narratives highlight that they have accepted discrimination as part of being a lesbian in the UKZN community. They emphasize that being a lesbian comes along with being discriminated against.

> *I have learnt to just live and stress about the relevant things unlike stressing about discrimination that will always be there the moment I say I am lesbian.(Lufuno*)*

> *Discrimination is everywhere, even amongst straight people, not everybody will be satisfied with others. (Londiwe*)*

[42] Rapport (2010-05-29) online archive http://www.rapport.co.za/Suid-Afrika/ Nuus/Gays-is-slegter-as-honde-gn-beledigend-se-pastoor-20100529-2 (accessed 1 October 2015).

[43] Heteronormativity includes the presumption that there is only the existence of two sexes, and that it is only the opposite sexes that can get attracted to each other. Hence, same sex attraction and desire is assumed abnormal (Kitzinger, 2005, 478).

In a focus group discussions Londiwe*, Gill*, Neliswa* and Anita* unanimously noted that being part of the LGBTI[44] group that is functional on campus made it easier for them to cope around the university spaces.

> *As I said before, my circles have always been comprised of other lesbians, so I don't really feel unwelcome when I am around campus. I feel that the group that we have is a great support system, at least we get to socialize and know other people whom we identify with. (Londiwe*)*

> *Yah it totally makes one aware that everything is okay we are just normal people and well, what I like about the group is we get to develop strong and honest friendships actually knowing that no one is judging you. (Gill*)*

> *Honestly (she chuckles) I don't know what I would do without this group because they are the ones who just make my stay here at UKZN easier and welcoming (Neliswa*)*

> *I would say the University premises are welcoming because most of the friends I have made over the past year are from this group. (She smiles) Anita**

It is evident that one's persona is socially constructed from the groups and type of people one usually spends a lot of time with. Some of the participants highlighted that being part of the LGBTI Forum helped them to be more free about who they chose to identify as. It is in the Forum that their dominant lesbian identities are depicted. This is so, because the behavior and the attitudes of the other students in the group are compatible with their views as well. This illustrates the valuable social capital that comes from such groups.

Lesbian students usually have cliques which comprise of other lesbian students. These cliques help in providing a support system in the sense that all individuals will understand each other better because of the fact that they are all lesbians. It is amongst these groups that there is the development of shared values and norms that only lesbians do understand, and often a communal social identity. Most participants appreciate the existence of an LGBTI Forum at the university,

[44] The LGBTI forum at University of KwaZulu-Natal was launched in April 2014 by the National AIDS Convention of South Africa (NACOSA) across all five campuses.

stating that it also helps in social development. The group also creates a sense of belonging, and for most participants, it strengthens the notion that there is nothing abnormal with being lesbian. The group highlights the common characteristics amongst lesbian students and what makes them different from other people. This elucidates Rockman's (2013, 82) assumptions which state that LGBTI clubs on university campuses provide a chance for the development of positive experiences for LGBTI students. This is reflected by some of Nomzamo's* words which were:

> *Being in spaces where there are other lesbians is helpful. That helps internally to knowing who you are. (Nomzamo*)*

The narratives above strongly concur with Hagen (2007, 4) who states that lesbian student organizations play a fundamental role for most students. Many times they create a social platform and great support system where students get to interact and make lifetime and honest friendships.

> *…..students come together and they speak about issues, such issues are different from one individual to another and so I thought let me form this group across all five campuses whereby in each campus they will share all of their experiences and they will be able to advise the other on how to handle situations. (LGBTI Forum leader)*

The Forum provides a place where lesbian students are not afraid of being judged; instead it creates a social kinship platform for nurturing self-value and being able to own their lesbian identity with pride. Leck (1998, 375) articulates that LGBTI groups are somehow a safe haven or an "oasis", for most students to come out of their shells. Attending the group meetings for most LGBTI students gives them a chance to mingle with people who have the same identity as them and it automatically develops into strong cohorts where they find solace and comfort. Rockman's (2013,65) study also shows that the existence of LGBTI student clubs actually helps and supports LGBTI students to come out easily and boost their self-confidence around campus.

Rankin (2003, 40) also states that the existence of LGBTI support groups makes some homosexual students gain a visible voice in the university environment. Having lesbian friends and peers around actually makes one feel the need to come out of the closet if they had not made that choice before (Evans and Broido, 1999, 663).

LGBTI groups are versatile and they usually have different functions which include support, advocacy, and education, social and personal development. Support usually includes getting together a peer group where members get the chance to discuss different issues that come along with being homosexual. Support groups are also there to provide peer counselling and they providing safe environments for coming out (Mallory, 1998). Mallory further states that support groups are also there to advocate for issues concerning LGBTI to the university authorities and perhaps help them formulate policies that are favorable to the group. This was clarified by the LGBTI Forum leader who shared;

> *The program itself started last year and it started as more of a groundwork type of implementation method, in which I was trying to get the internal stakeholders, be it your cooperate relations, your SRC , RMS, housing unit, clinic staff and some of the colleges to come and be part of this initiative in terms of how we go out doing sensitization trainings, whereby I would educate or provide information with regards to LGBTI particularly in the clinics not on how to necessarily treat, but how to speak in a way that doesn't discriminate a person if they are identifying as LGBTI. (LGBTI Forum leader)*

Lynch (2005, 13) notes that the groups or forums are also there for personal and social development which can be achieved through dance parties or dinner parties hosted by some of the members. "LGBTI groups are inherently focused on personal development since they seek to support and challenge their members as those members come to understand and take pride in their sexual identity" (Lynch 2005, 13). Education is also another function of the groups and they usually help in making students who self-identify as lesbians and gay, self-confident and proud of themselves. As mentioned earlier in chapter four, the LGBTI Forum at the University of KwaZulu-Natal also plays the part of imparting knowledge to the LGBTI themselves before they embark on sharing acquaintance to the rest of the community.

> *Within the very same forum I also do sensitization trainings because as much as the student might identify as being LGBTI, or feel different, they don't know what it is being lesbian or gay, they don't know the issues around being LGBTI…..And within the LGBTI forum itself they stigmatize and discriminate themselves. From*

what I discovered, there are certain levels; there are lesbians who are of lower class and those who say they are the higher class. There seems to be a hierarchy similarly to heterosexual people you have low class people and high class people. (LGBTI Forum leader)

Although outside the immediate purview of this study, the latter narrative sheds light on the divisions that exist within the LGBTI Forum. As the group comprises of other students who identify as lesbians one would assume that there are no divisions. However, there is also the existence of social stigma and discrimination. There is the construction of classes whereby other lesbian students view themselves to be the superior ones or the, 'better lesbians'. Before dealing with the already existing stigma that is salient on the university premises, some of the lesbians who are part of the Forum deal with the stigma that emanates amid their own circles.

Being a minority group on campus, it is of great importance that lesbian students have all the necessary knowledge on issues relating to being lesbian. Earlier on in chapter four, most participants revealed that they did not have adequate information on what it meant to be sexually attracted to other girls. Hence, they grappled with embracing who they were. The existence of the Forum then helps in expanding their knowledge on matters concerning LGBTI. For example, *sensitization of issues that may arise during the process of 'coming out' (LGBTI Forum leader).* These narratives also reveal that lesbian students do sometimes have divisions amongst themselves and it is the function of the group to make sure the gaps are closed to provide a stronger and support system.

5.4 "…. saying I am lesbo is exercising my rights…"

Most of the participants are of the view that they do exercise their rights as stipulated by the constitution of South Africa. The mere fact that students can firmly confirm that they are lesbian means that their rights are recognized on the UKZN spaces. However, students do point out that the acknowledgment of their rights is not an easy task since it comes along with discrimination. Some of the participants like Lufuno*, strongly stated the great need for other heterosexual students to accept lesbian students as they are.

It is not about rights, me saying I am lesbo is exercising my rights uyabona, [45]the issue is about respect for difference. We cannot all be the same. (Lufuno)*

Look, the fact that the university has agreed to have this program running, it says something. It says we acknowledge every student whether you are straight or whether you are LGBTI. When the university moto says inspiring greatness it is saying greatness for all no matter what, despite race or sexual orientation. (LGBTI Forum leader)

The use of the colloquial term lesbo by Lufuno* highlights that in some instances the term is not used as a derogatory remark, instead it is self-affirmation from the lesbian students themselves. It reveals a sense of pride in one's identity as a lesbian woman and it also reveals a sense of self-worth and personal value that is attached to owning the lesbian identity. All of this reveals that identity can be self-ascribed, or self-constructed.

The provision of needs for lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, such as the creation of the LGBTI Forum, appears to show that the University has the rights of lesbian students seemingly catered for. According to the South African constitution when one is said to exercise equal rights it means that they have access to all the basic needs and public services like education, health and the freedom to fully express their sexuality.[46] Hunt (2004) also articulates that, "rights based on sexuality include the right of all persons to express their sexual orientation, with due regard for the well-being and rights of others, without fear of persecution, denial of liberty or social interference."

Having the chance to attend lectures and engaging in some extra-curricular activities just like any student means that my rights are valid. But sometimes they are violated. Being free means not being discriminated for who you are. So yeah I do exercise my rights partially. (Khuliso)*

[45] Uyabona is an isiZulu term which means, 'you see'.

[46] Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa entitled the Bill of Rights, section 2 states that equality comprises of the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. Section 3 of the chapter stresses out that there should be no discrimination of any persons based upon the race gender, nationality, sexuality pregnancy religion and culture.

Though revealing that by being able to engage in some activities, through the LGBTI Forum, the lesbian students exercise their rights, most participants narrate a poignant aspect that clearly shows that discrimination is salient in the university spaces. It depicts the extent to which social interference can be an impediment to the full realization of equal sexual rights. According to Miller (2009, 7) over the past years, there has been great and noticeable change concerning how human rights link with sexuality. In the contemporary world, the engagement of sexuality and human rights is not really the focal point, rather there is much concentration on meaningful interrogations like, "on what terms does one get access to rights, about which aspects of sexuality and with what limits"?

The university affirms that it is inclusive, and therefore notes that there should be equality of rights for all students at the institution. Based on the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Transformation Charter it is clear that on paper lesbian students have the same equal rights as any other student at UKZN. The charter further notes that there should not be any form of discrimination based on a different number of aspects including sexuality. The University of KwaZulu-Natal Transformation Charter is the charter that carries the vision of the institution. It is primarily based on the constitution of South Africa; hence some of the key essential guidelines from the constitution were adopted as part of the UKZN Transformation Charter. For instance the charter states that the university is, "free of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and disability." This vision statement therefore gives the university the task and responsibility to ensure that the learning and social spaces at the university are safe for all people despite differences. Now looking at the narratives from most of the participants in this study, it is evident that most of them encounter discrimination around the university premises. Therefore, this questions the extent to which the university has managed to put into practice some of its vision. Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 279) concur and state that discrimination against lesbian students is indeed a violation of their rights.

> *It is fifty-fifty, I can openly say that I am a lesbian, but the reactions from the societies we live in questions whether I have equal rights or not. (Gill*)*

> *Here it is easy to say that as a lesbian student I exercise my rights. Discrimination is everywhere, even amongst straight people, not everybody will be satisfied with*

others ht. But life goes on, as long as I don't hide who I am then, yes, I am exercising my rights. (Londiwe)*

Londiwe's* views strongly validate Jagessar and Msibi's (2015, 67) assumptions that in most cases LGBTI students get so used to the homophobia to an extent where they normalize it and just focus more on them living not considering their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Whilst most lesbian students feel that they do exercise their rights to some extent, there are other participants like Prisca* who adamantly refute these views and state that lesbian students are deprived of their rights.

No, not all because there really is no equality, we are looked down upon. (Prisca)*

For Prisca* equal rights mean being acknowledged and being respected by other students in the university community for who she is and how she feels. The discrimination towards LGBTI persons on campus makes some lesbian students feel as if they are being deprived of their rights. That is probably one of the reasons why some participants revealed that they never really tell their friends about their sexuality. Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 270) supports this assumption and state that discrimination is a violation against the personal rights of lesbian students. One can only determine that the human rights of a particular person are being violated, when the person is restricted from engaging in certain activities that the other people will be participating in. For instance, in the case of lesbian student's rights, it is unavoidable for one to say that their rights are being dishonored when they are excluded from some of the activities that take place around the university. This was expounded by some of the LGBTI Forum leader's views;

There has been stigma and discrimination in situations whereby students who identify, and who are known to be identifying as LGBTI. If they want to participate in whatever event that is occurring in the campus, some of them have experienced exclusion on the basis of their sexual orientation. A perfect example last year there was an incident at a particular campus that happened. It was during the SRC[47] election process and they were canvassing, so a particular person said no, you guys do not vote. (LGBTI Forum leader)

[47] SRC (Student Representative Council).

Because of their identity as LGBTI, some of the students were not allowed to be part of the canvassing activities that were taking place on campus. The exclusion comments that came from some of the students towards LGBTI persons reveal that heterosexual students have the idea that other lesbian students are not worthy to be part of the activities they engage in because of who they choose to identify as. This highlights that there is a tendency of social comparison towards non-heterosexual students. When some heterosexual students believe that lesbian women do not emulate or share the same ideas as they do, they therefore view them to be undeserving to be in the same social space as them. In order to improve their own image as the deserving and rightful students who should take part in any activities, heterosexual students then discriminate against any other person who does not identify sexually as they do.

Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014, 715) notes that exclusion is one of the forms of discrimination that most lesbian students face in universities, stating that "being an LGBTI student is like a criterion for exclusion." The Student Representative Council at the UKZN is a group that is mandated to represent all students at the university despite color, ethnicity or sexuality. It is tasked with the duty of catering for every student's interests not to focus on a group. Therefore, the narrated incident indicates that in some instances, lesbian students are deprived of their rights just because of how they identify themselves.

5.5 "Maybe more outreach sensitization and awareness campaigns…."

As data collection progressed, participants were asked of their thoughts on how the University of KwaZulu-Natal can solve some of the challenges that lesbian students come across, such as continuous discrimination and how to make the UKZN premises safe and welcoming.

Most of the participants revealed that there is a need for awareness and campaigns on LGBTI issues. Two participants Khuliso* and Lufuno* had the most salient concerns about the need for vibrant campaigns and awareness programs on issues concerning lesbian students.

> *Maybe by doing more outreach programs, sensitization and awareness campaigns for both management and students. I feel that people hate because they do not know. So every bit of information will definitely go a long way. Awareness will*

*definitely make it clear that we are not "special beings" or "aliens"; we are women who just love women. That is all that there is to it. (Khuliso)**

Khuliso* notes that some of the negative attitudes heterosexual students have towards lesbian students emanate from the lack of knowledge on issues concerning LGBTI. It reveals that the ideas shared by other people can help influence the attitudes of the next person in a positive or negative way. By embarking on outreach programs that explain more about being LGBTI it creates provision for possible attitude change from other heterosexual students towards lesbian students at the UKZN.

I think the university (she stammers a bit as she is thinking of how best to put out her response) I don't know especially with Howard[48] *it's not something you see, like they have got the language policy and all and the unit for the disabled. But with the LGBTI organization it's there but it's not something that's very active. If I was to ask another lesbian like, oh my God have you heard about this? They wouldn't really know because it's something that's not really acknowledged. (Lufuno*)* (She strongly emphasized this because initially when we were just having small talk she had highlighted that she never really knew that there was an LGBTI Forum at UKZN).

They do those things you[49] *said they do at Shepstone and get remarks from other students but it's not very active. I think that it happens because if the organization was out there then people wouldn't be shocked when they campaign .People can talk about something, but once they are aware of something then they don't have to say anything negative. It's something that is not talked about. You see with the University we have the disability unit and it's so active and it's so alive, it speaks you know, and represents the minority why isn't the group like that. I was actually surprised when you mentioned about it. (Lufuno*)*

[48] Howard College is one of the five campuses of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

[49] The 'things' that Lufuno meant referred to an awareness campaign that was carried out by the LGBTI forum at UKZN and I happened to have mentioned it to her and she was surprised that there was a group.

Lufuno's* narratives clearly reveal that there is a Forum that caters for LGBTI persons at the University of Kwazulu. However, some participants felt that more has to be done by the Forum for it to be recognized and acknowledged. In an interview with one of the members from the university's student support services the idea of the LGBTI Forum not being so active emerged to be a major concern.

> *I recently learnt that there is a group here on campus which looks at LGBTI issues, it is not so vibrant. I only got to know about it because I am doing something that involves that department. (Diana Khumalo*)*

The above statement is alarming because of who it comes from! Diana Khumalo* is a student psychologist and counselling officer who works for the student support services at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In a meeting held with her, she revealed that the student support service does offer counselling help to all students at the UKZN, including lesbian students, and is trying to make sure that the counselling services assist with the challenges the lesbian students face. However, student support services appeared unaware, until recently of the LGBTI Forum!

In an interview with the LGBTI Forum leader it was brought to my attention that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex group at the University of KwaZulu-Natal was part of the Campus HIV/AIDS Support Unit (CHASU). In a society that already has so much negativity towards homosexuality having the Forum under HIV/AIDS unit raises much misconceptions about lesbian students, for instance the assumption that homosexuals are the ones who are responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS (see Cantwell, 2011; Avert, 2015). This is echoed by the statement made by Diana Khumalo*.

> *I do feel that having the Forum in the HIV and AIDS unit is wrong though, because what questions does it raise? Is it that LGBTI persons are the ones spreading HIV? I still feel that the group should break free and be a unit of its own that way then it can be easily acknowledged. Having it under the HIV unit draws attention and invites stigma. (Diana Khumalo*)*

One of the reasons for the existence of an LGBTI group at the UKZN is to create awareness about issues concerning non-heterosexual persons. However, having the group located under the

HIV/AIDS unit constructs multiple fallacies. In a university community that is already characterized by negative attitudes towards LGBTI persons, having the Forum operating in the HIV/AIDS unit poses a massive challenge. Instead of shaping students' attitudes to be more tolerant and lenient they may possibly contribute to the mistaken belief that lesbian students are responsible for the spread of HIV. However, this fallacious assumption about lesbians and HIV/AIDS spread can be critically dismissed using the information provided by the Forum leader with regards to HIV/AIDS issue.

> *Part of the work as well was to encourage HIV/AIDS testing amongst LGBTI persons, because statistics show that there is a low uptake of HCT[50] amongst LGBTI students, as well as there is high percentage of those who test positive. So from the small amount of LGBTI who go for testing they have tested positive, why? Because they don't have enough information on the proper usage of barrier methods, proper usage of lubricants, low uptake of HCT in the sense that they are afraid of being stigmatized in your campus based clinics, they wouldn't want to go there. (LGTBI Forum leader)*

This statement also explicated how the views of the staff at the university campus clinics influence negatively on the health of those students who identify or are known to be lesbian. Since most of the staff from the campus clinics has their own social beliefs about homosexuality, it influences the way they administer assistance to students who identify as lesbian. Instead of helping them, they end up stigmatizing them. It reveals that the nurses have their own self concepts about issues pertaining to being LGBTI. Hence, when they come across LGBTI students, they appeared to question/rehabilitate them or try to impose their beliefs. And this in turn makes LGBTI students avoid going to seek medical help and counselling at the campus clinics.

> *For instance a gay person goes to the clinic with an anal infection, it would be so obvious how they got it, and you get some of the nurses saying, oh you do know this is wrong. (LGBTI Forum leader)*

[50] HCT is the abbreviation that is used for HIV counselling and testing.

Though the LGBTI Forum leader gave an example of a gay student, it also raises a major concern that can also affect lesbian students. Because of the stigma that is attached to being non-heterosexual, some lesbian students might be afraid to fully disclose their sexual histories and sexualities to the clinic staff. As much as the constitution of South Africa in Chapter 2 (27) (1) (a) stipulates that every citizen of South Africa has inalienable rights to have access to good health, discrimination poses an alarming aspect that deters the process for most lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The narratives reveal that students who identify as lesbian often do not like going to campus clinics, therefore they miss out on some of the important health information like the proper use of barrier methods against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

While some have the mistaken idea that lesbian women spread diseases, there is also the contrary mistaken view; that lesbian women cannot contract sexual diseases. Mbatha (2012, 30) notes that despite the discrimination factor there is not much knowledge concerning the sexual behavior of lesbians, and the assumption is that lesbian women have a low chance of contracting the virus leading to most lesbians testing positive. As part of its mission the LGBTI Forum on campus tries to close the gap of knowledge between the lesbian students as well as the clinic staff. However, the student counselling services seem not to be so fully involved.

Making sure that students at universities are sensitized and have adequate knowledge about LGBTI issues is of paramount importance in tackling some of the challenges that come along (Umar, 2015, 1). The recognition of homosexuality has increased in the contemporary world and as mentioned earlier in the study, South Africa is the only country in Africa that does not tolerate discrimination of persons based on their sexual orientation (see Smith, 2011; Kretz , 2013; Umar , 2015, 1) Because of the amplified attention that is given to issues concerning human rights based on sexual orientation most students are aware of the notion LGBTI .However, this has not in any way stopped students from having negative perceptions about lesbians. There is a great need for awareness campaigns which are direct to avoid hearsay and assumptions or even negative feeling towards lesbian students on campus. Richardson (2004, 160) notes that some students can be resistant to and ignore knowledge which turns out to be against their different cultural and religious beliefs.

Awareness campaigns therefore challenge them to be open minded to the notion of a girl being attracted to other girls. Participants revealed that the reason why other people who are not lesbian are 'ignorant' (sic) and are always discriminating people who identify as lesbian, was because they do not have adequate knowledge and understanding of what exactly it is when someone says that they are lesbian. Most people have their judgements and decisions clouded by the social and cultural conceptions of homosexuality such that they tend to be discriminative. This means that sensitization campaigns are essential for imparting necessary and much needed knowledge on issues concerning LGBTI. Collier (2001, 13) states that lesbian women are in most cases viewed as the 'other', therefore, universities should teach and make sure that it is known that discrimination of any form is wrong.

> *My sexuality is like me being black and I am proud of it, there should be more awareness, knowledge is power in every spectrum. (Nomzamo*)*

Nomzamo* equates her sexuality to her race and this clearly shows that for her, as with all the other participants, that sexual rights are not in any way different from other rights stipulated in the country's constitution. The idea that she mentions that she is proud of being lesbian is self-affirmation that she embraces her personal worth and value as a lesbian woman. The issue of equality based on racial grounds has always been the bone of contention in South African politics (see Keswell 2004, 1; Seeking, 2008, 9).

At UKZN, through the Center of Critical Research on Race and Identity (CCRRI), the university has engaged more on issues of racial classification in the institution. This means that sexual identities too, should have the similar attention as given to the constructions of racial identities, so as to ensure safety and protection for all students. Equating her sexuality to the color of her skin, Nomzamo* reveals how important it is for sexual rights to be advocated for. It indicates how rights for LGBTI persons are a pressing issue and how there is a need for much awareness to make sure that they are realized and protected. Francis and Msibi (2011, 163) assert that many people are aware of the use of race as a form of oppression, therefore conveying the recognition to understand how heterosexuality suppresses homosexuality will also help one to understand the need for the protection of LGBTI rights.

5.6 Conclusion

The fact that lesbian persons in South Africa have equal rights just like any other citizen means that they are entitled to their safety as well. This chapter explored whether the lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal felt safe. Since the narratives were wide, the idea of safety was deconstructed into physical safety as well as psychological safety. Whilst some participants were of the view that they felt safe, others disagreed and highlighted that their safety was threatened. It emerged that the feeling was attributed to the idea of being a woman as well identifying as lesbian. Peters and Wolper (1995, 12) note that in most cases violence against women is influenced by a number of elements which happen to include sexuality, ethnicity and race. According to Mkhize et al (2010) and Du Toit (2014, 58) the notion of gender based violence has been a recurring theme in most South African communities and it has somehow instilled fear and made many women feel vulnerable. Being aware of the way societies are structured concerning violence against women, most lesbian students revealed that they felt vulnerable.

This chapter also looked at the dynamics of how lesbian students fit into the University of KwaZulu-Natal's environment. Though feeling vulnerable, some participants highlighted how they thought the University caters for their needs, for instance the access of some of the public services provided such as easy access to public restrooms and academic facilities (like any other student). However, this does not at all halt the prevalence of discrimination from other students. Jagessar and Msibi (2015, 67) articulate that at times, lesbian students are discriminated in the residential spaces of the university, but they turn a blind eye to such matters. Tragically they appeared to normalize and naturalize the situation of being discriminated against.

The existence of an LGBTI Forum on the University of KwaZulu-Natal is of paramount importance in making the campus environment more accommodating for lesbian students. As stated by Rankin (2003, 40) and Hagen (2007, 4) social groups are essential because they help with social and personal development hence some of the participants revealed that they valued the existence of the group. The next chapter unpacks the key findings. It will also include the recommendations that seem necessary in attaining equal rights and protection for all students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

CHAPTER SIX

General conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 2 of the African Charter on Human Rights, it is the contention of this study that all persons are entitled to their rights based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender and sexuality among others. The clash between sexual identities and human rights is one that is visible in the contemporary world. On the African continent, homosexuality is actually rendered as taboo, unethical and a fallacy of human rights, which results in the criminalization of homosexuals in some countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Gambia and Zimbabwe (Amnesty International, 2015, 13). South Africa is the only African state which has adopted sexual rights and has even incorporated it in its constitution (see Cock, 2003, 35; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Wells and Poders, 2006, 20; Amnesty International, 2012).

However, despite all of these liberal legal motions, the South African society at large has presented a number of ambiguities which make it difficult to consolidate the rights of LGBTI persons. As much as LGBTIs are entitled to their rights, most of them still undergo gruesome and appalling acts of violence and discrimination. Because of their sexuality, some people are deprived of health and public services; others are even disqualified or looked down upon in work places, while others are even killed, whilst some go through verbal harassment (see OHCHR, 1996; Mufweba, 2003; Mollema and Van der Bijl, 2014; Mugadaza, 2015, 7).

This study specifically investigated how sexual rights are protected at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to point out the key findings of the study as well as give the necessary recommendations that can be helpful to the university when dealing with LGBTI issues.

6.2 Understanding sexuality politics

Gender inequalities and the taboos that surround sexuality issues often perpetuate the marginalization and violence of many. According to Samuelius and Wanberg (2005), in most societies, for one to be labelled a proper ‘woman’ or ‘man’ one has to conform to heterosexuality.

Thus, if one identifies as LGBTI, it puts one at the risk of exclusion and discrimination. This assumption is also clarified by Mama (2003) as cited in Bennet et al (2007, 85) who states that, "being a "human being" is negotiated through lifelong engagements with the constructions of, "manhood", and, "womanhood" upon which the possibility of society itself is predicted."

According to the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), gender identity is defined as, "a person's deeply-felt identification as male or female." Gender expressions are then defined as, "the external manifestation of a person's gender identity."[51] The Human Rights Watch (2011, 19) notes that gender expressions can be conveyed through clothing, hairstyle and mannerisms. However, Butler (1990, 25) articulates that, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender, identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results." This assumption reiterates the idea that gender is an act, it is what we do in our day to day lives, and not the universal definition that states that gender is who we are. Butler's work leaves provision for the existence of gender identities other than the universally known male or female. Instead of gender being a fixed aspect, it should then be viewed as an element that is fluid and has the ability to change at any given condition (Gauntlett, 2008). Therefore when it comes to the question of human rights, everyone is entitled to inalienable rights despite the fact of identifying as male, female or LGBTI.

However, scholars like Steans (2013, 2) note that in most communities in the international system, gender is seen as common sense that one is supposed to be either male or female. The everyday beliefs about gender, "often give rise to prejudices against groups and individuals who confound gender stereotypes." Reddy and Butler (2004, 119) articulate that, "social conditions that determine us absolutely, restrict us absolutely, and actually produce victims of us all." In other words, despite the fluidity of gender and the existence of other sexualities besides male or female, these provisions are the same reasons that have often led to the spread and continuation of atrocious violence and discrimination (see Ilkkaracan and Jolly, 2007, 1). As cited in Alexander and Mohanty (2013) the African feminist Amina Mama (1997) states that, "prevailing gender ideologies have much bearing on the types of violence that are manifested in a given context."

[51] See The Glossary of Terms of Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), http://www.teni.ie/page.aspx?contentid=139, (accessed 10th November 2015).

This assumption clearly reflects on the constructions of gender and sexuality in the South African context. To be labelled a true 'African woman' one has to be heterosexual, thus, most lesbian women in South Africa have encountered discrimination and violence, usually corrective rape being the most recorded form of violence instigated towards lesbian women (Muholi, 2004, 122; Human Rights Watch 2011, 24). Muholi (2004, 122) notes that the violence and discrimination of lesbian women in South Africa only affirms the identity of 'African women' to be heterosexuals, mothers and women. Therefore being lesbian is deemed as a transgression to the heteronormative status (see Naidu, 2013).

IIkkaracan and Jolly (2007, 1) argue that even though sexuality is related to some negative aspects like marginalization, it can in fact lead to empowerment. This empowerment can only be attained through the existence of sexual rights. According to WHO (2004) "sexuality is an essential aspect of being a human and it comprises of different components like, sex, gender identities and roles. Sexuality is experienced in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships." However, as much as sexuality includes all these components, not all of them are experienced or fully expressed because of socio-cultural, religious and political forces (IIkkaracan and Jolly, 2007). "Social and cultural norms and religious beliefs constitute the screws that keep the clamp of sexual repression firmly in place" (Achieng, 2013, 4) As stated earlier on, since attaining independence, South Africa has engaged in a number of policies that ensure that sexual rights are respected and upheld (see Cock, 2003; Barnard and De Vos, 2007; IIyayambwa, 2012; Mugadaza et al, 2015).

Adhering to the principle of inclusivity stipulated in the constitution, most South African universities have embraced the concept of inclusivity as part of their guiding frameworks. This therefore automatically means that issues concerning equality based on sexual rights should be accommodated in Higher Education Institutions. Scholars like Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 276) articulate that the constitution of South Africa stipulates that the interests of all persons are essential and therefore include the right not to be discriminated against based on sexual orientation. Likewise, the aim of the National Education Policy of South Africa is to provide a legitimately led transformation in national education that acknowledges the rights of all people

despite their sexuality.[52] The policy elucidates section 4 (a) (i) of the South African constitution stating that all students in educational institutions should be protected from any form of discrimination as well as discrimination against sexual orientation. However, despite these legal frameworks physical and psychological abuse in the form of name calling or bullying is very much prevalent in educational institutions in South Africa. According to the South African Human Rights Commission report (2008), most students in educational spaces encounter prejudices and these lead to their victimization and marginalization in their learning spaces. The report clearly stated that these negative judgements towards LGBTI students are usually conjured by other heterosexual students.

Embarking on this study I had the assumption that every citizen of South Africa has equal rights as cited in the country's constitution, equal rights regardless of ,"one's race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth." The constitution also reiterates that there should not be any form of discrimination based on these aspects. As such, this study sought to understand the extent to which sexuality rights are being practiced and respected, specifically at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

6.3 Critical Review of Key findings

The study was guided by four key questions. The first question sought to understand the different experiences that lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu- Natal face. As such the second question focused more on the specific prejudices and challenges that lesbians felt they encounter on the campus environment. The third question asked whom the lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal felt should be responsible for addressing their grievances around their lived experiences. And the last question probed how the students felt they could be better included in the institutional life of the university.

[52] The National Education Policy Act 1996, Act no.27 of 1996 was made official on the 16th of April 1996 and its sole mandate was to formulate initiatives that would ensure the provision of education of all South Africans effectively and fairly.

During the progression of the study a number of themes emerged but however four thematic issues stood out based on the reference that was made to them by the participants in the study:

1. Challenges with the 'coming out' process.
2. The pressure of conforming to heterosexuality.
3. The fear of being discriminated against.
4. The protection of lesbian rights at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Even though two of the themes made up the qualitative part of the study, and have been discussed extensively, I endeavor to further analyze and critique these themes and their findings.

6.3.1 Challenges with the 'coming out' process

This theme looked at 'coming out' experiences of the lesbian students who were involved in this study. Their shared narratives revealed that most of the students realized that they were different from the socially constructed heteronormativity during their primary school years, which was before they started with their university careers. Some of these views as highlighted in Chapter Four are:

> *I realized I was attracted to girls in my 6th grade but back then I did not understand what was going on. (Khuliso*)*

> *……first there is realization, understanding and accepting .I realized I was different when I was very young, I was like in grade seven that was the first realization.(Lufuno*)*

> *I always knew that I liked girls since puberty. (Gill*)*

The different narratives of how some of the participants in this study disclosed their sexuality strongly highlighted that the 'coming out' process involves a number of stages. The participants revealed that realization to oneself was the first step on embarking on the journey of disclosing one's sexuality.

As research has shown (see Plummer 1992, 66; Evans and Broido, 1999, 662; Coleman, 2000; Kevin and Graziano, 2012, 276) realization is the most crucial step in forming a lesbian identity, one has to accept who one is first before they decide to share it with the people who are close to them. As such, Kevin and Graziano (2012, 276), clarify that a lesbian identity developed from the individual's first awareness that they are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Realization, as asserted by Plummer (1992, 66) stems from the social process of learning and accumulating knowledge or ideas of the actuality of the social category 'lesbian'. This echoes Tajfel and Turner's (1979) ideas about social identity which state that there is a process of social labelling whereby one has the prerogative of deciding the group or the identity they want to be or belong to.

However, some of the lesbian participants in the study pointed out that realizing their different sexuality did not immediately influence them to, 'come out', because they struggled with understanding what it meant. This assumption was perfectly alluded to by Khuliso* when she said; … *because there was no language for me to explain what I was feeling until I started my high school.* As stated by Francis and Msibi (2011, 162) most LGBTI students experience identity confusion, therefore it is possible that the silence about homosexuality aided Khuliso's* identity confusion as she tried to grapple with the idea of being attracted to other girls. Despite understanding one's sexuality, most of the participants from this study portrayed that, 'coming out', is an overwhelming assignment such that most lesbian students found it difficult to disclose their sexuality even though they were certain that they were lesbian. This clarifies Vollenhoven and Els's (2013, 272) views which state that sexuality matters are complex and dynamic such that they are discovered, understood and embraced over a course of time. Since sexuality is fluid, it is characterized by different attributes like progression and regression (see Reynolds and Hanjorgiris, 2000). Therefore, it is explainable why most participants in this study oscillated between keeping their sexuality a secret and disclosing it.

6.3.2 The Pressure of conforming to heterosexuality

Mabaso and Naidoo (2014, 6191) assert that most lesbian women encounter challenges with disclosing their sexuality, hence too many at times live a double life. They are usually free and

open around other lesbians but they are secretive about their sexualities when they spend time with their heterosexual friends. This was highlighted by some of the views in chapter 4;

> *I think the people I stayed with in my dorm suspected but they never really said it because they knew I was dating guys..... I didn't even want my friends to know.....I just couldn't say because it was just something they wouldn't understand. (Lufuno*)*

Just like Lufuno* some of the lesbian students in this study revealed that on many occasions they were compelled to pretend that they were heterosexual. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) people are capable of having multiple groups that they belong to. But however they will have a group were they feel that their identities are more dominant and emerging. For Lufuno* even though the people she shared the same room with might have had a hint of her lesbian sexuality, they had no concreate evidence because they had the idea that she was attracted to the opposite sex. Therefore it was easy for her to blend with other heterosexual students. In most cases lesbian students divert the attention from their own sexualities by conforming to what the society expects of a female individual. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014, 716) asserts that lesbian students in universities are often psychologically forced to suppress their lesbian identities. Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 271) also state that the outright silencing of one's sexuality takes a toll on most lesbian students.

> *Even though I know I had an explanation to the way I felt, I never told a soul. (Thandeka*)*

> *.....they still don't know probably they might suspect but they are certainly didn't hear it from me (Neliswa*)*

However, despite the fact that this theme strongly explicated the pressure that most lesbian students succumb to in a bid to keep their sexualities under the wraps, some lesbian participants in this study revealed different views. For instance, in chapter four Khuliso* revealed that she did not struggle with disclosing her sexuality.

> *….I have been fortunate enough to associate myself with very open minded and non- judgmental people (Khuliso*)*

Arndt and de Bruin (2006, 26) assert that for some university students disclosing their sexuality is not a difficult task because it is aided by the environments that surround them. Because LGBTI issues are germane in the current social and political dispensation, most students at university level are usually open minded and tolerant about issues concerning homosexuality (see Arndt and de Bruin, 2006, 26; Umar, 2015, 14). Hence some participants in this study did not struggle with 'coming out' to the people whom they are close to, as well as the public.

6.3.3 The fear of being discriminated against

As stated earlier by Coleman (2000) the 'coming out' process constitutes a crucial stage whereby an individual has to tell someone about their sexual identity. However, Mbatha (2012, 31) notes that most LGBTI students oscillate between disclosing their sexual orientation and keeping it as their own deep darkest secret. The beliefs that other students have concerning LGBTI matters often shape the lifestyle of the students who identify as lesbian. In most instances people have the mistaken belief that lesbians are women who try to change themselves to be men. And as the theme revealed, some students view lesbian students as abnormal and they often distance themselves. *I now come out as this animal out there to get people. (Lufuno*)* As noted by (Steans, 2013, 3) the social beliefs surrounding gender can cause those who identify as the 'degraded LGBTI' to be labelled as a danger or a threat to the society. Due to the negative attitudes and behavior that is reflected by other students towards non-heterosexual students, it influences the decision of most lesbian students to either keep quiet about their sexuality or disclose it.

This theme revealed that the reason why most lesbian students found it difficult to disclose their sexual identity was because of their fear of being rejected and discriminated. Writing earlier on D 'Augelli (1998, 20) noted that learning spaces often construct conducive platforms that perpetuate the violation and victimization of students who present themselves as LGBTI. Most lesbian participants revealed that during their university careers they had encountered different forms of discrimination and the most common was verbal discrimination. Schope and Eliason (2000), Francis and Msibi (2011, 163), Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014, 716) corroborate these views and note that verbal discrimination is most often used to propagate homophobia. This theme also

revealed that often the verbal discrimination against lesbian students is instigated by other male students and this was indicated in chapter four by some of Thandeka's* views.

> *He called me isitabane and went on to say why I tried so hard to imitate a guy when I am a girl, and for him it was funny and it was as if he wanted points from his fellow friends. (Thandeka*)*

Ncanana and Ige (2014, 572) assert that male university students are commonly not tolerant when it comes to issues concerning homosexuality because they believe that it undermines and degrades the male traditional roles. In his study, Msibi (2012) revealed that males did not like to be associated with homosexual tendencies. Besides the male students being responsible for most of the discriminatory incidents on campus, the study revealed that it emanates from heterosexual students who presented themselves as staunch Christians. In most instances, they use the bible to justify and give leverage to their strong beliefs that same sex relations are a sin.

> *I hear that what you are doing is so unchristian they tell me about Sodom and Gomorra. (Gill*)*

As cited in Naidu (2013, 8), sin is labelled as a fall from the grace of the Lord.[53] Same sex relations are seen as a great sin and some of the participants in this study revealed how Sodom and Gomorrah[54] are used by other students as a metaphor to describe how homosexuality is a sin. Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015, 5) also assert that indeed religion plays a negative role in brewing up homophobia towards LGBTI students on university campuses in South Africa.

6.3.4 The Protection of lesbian rights at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

This theme unpacked the extent to which the University of KwaZulu-Natal provides safety for its students, specifically the lesbian students. Safety was deconstructed into two parts, physical safety as well as the psychological safety. By looking at whether the campus environments are safe for LGBTI students, it also determined the extent to which lesbian students exercise their constitutional rights at the university. Most of the participants in this study revealed that they did

[53] Galatians 5: 4 -Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace (King James Version).

[54] Genesis 14 vs 1-24 - It narrates how the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by the wrath of God after the people had been indulging in iniquities which included same sex relations.

not feel safe on campus. This was so, because they assumed that they were more vulnerable than other students because of the mere fact that they are women and also lesbian. This is shown by some of Khuliso's* views in chapter 5;

> *I think every woman identifying person has some sense of fear when walking around campus alone and especially at night. But now it gets even tricky when you are a lesbian woman. (Khuliso*)*

Peter (1995, 12) avers that the rights of most women are often violated in most societies and this is usually intensified by some factors such as sexuality and ethnicity. Feeling unsafe on campus is also attributed to the perceived responses from the people responsible for maintaining order and safety at the campus (see Rockman, 2013, 79; Gordons and Collins, 2013, 101). In evaluating whether the University of KwaZulu-Natal plays a part in consolidating LGBTI rights as stipulated by the constitution of South Africa, this theme explicated how lesbian students have easy access to some of the public facilities like the rest rooms. But however, discrimination is prevalent in some of the campus residences and discrimination on its own can be regarded as a violation of one's personal rights and integrity (see Vollenhoven and Els, 2013, 279). Jagesser and Msibi (2015, 63) assert that campus residences automatically turn out to be students homes away from their actual homes. Hence, besides attending lectures, most of the students spend most of their time in the residences. Therefore, scholars like Msibi (2013, 67) strengthen this view and note that homophobic tendencies are usually rife in campus residences.

Despite the continuous occurrence of discrimination towards LGBTI persons, some of the participants revealed that they felt that they were exercising their rights fully. They supported this assumption by noting that having access to an education and being able to be at the university showed that they were accommodated. However, the question of the deprivation of human rights can only be justified when there is a scenario which reflects how lesbian students are excluded from some of the activities on the university. And this was clearly highlighted in chapter five where the narratives unraveled how lesbian students were at some point denied the privilege to participate in the SRC elections because of their sexuality.

As stipulated by the 'Responsibility to Protect norm'; personal rights form part of the basis for human security, hence exclusion and discrimination pose as critical violations to the personal security of any human being.

To make it easier to adapt to the campus environment as a lesbian, some of the participants also revealed that they were members of an LGBTI group. For some lesbian students, the group provides a suitable and conducive environment and social network for them to get to know each other and know more about what constitutes 'being lesbian' in a university environment. Hagen (2007, 4) asserts that LGBTI groups on educational institutions are essential in constructing the wellbeing of LGBTI students. Despite the positive feedback about the existence of an LGBTI group on campus, some students interviewed also highlighted that they were not aware of the group which was a major concern.

6.4 Ideas towards creating a safe environment for all students at the UKZN

Since the term 'safety' in this study referred to the physical and psychological safety, it guides us on the kind of ideas that should be implemented so as to make sure that the UKZN is safe and able to accommodate the equal rights of all students; past differences such as sexuality. The findings of this study showed that most of the lesbian students have at some point in their university careers, encountered discrimination. As stated in chapter five, some of the discrimination is instigated by the lack of knowledge on matters concerning LGBTI issues.

> *I feel that people hate because they do not know. So every bit of information will definitely go a long way (Khuliso*)*

People can talk about something, but once they are aware of something then they don't have to say anything negative.(Lufuno)*Therefore it is essential that everyone in the university community is well informed about LGBTI issues and this can perhaps lower the prevalence of discrimination against lesbian students. It then becomes the duty of the existing LGBTI Forum to make sure that all stakeholders in the university community are well informed about LGBTI matters. For instance, the clinic staff, housing unit, Student Representative Council, the Risk Management Services and the academic staff should be well acquainted on how to treat and handle those students who self-identify as lesbian. As much as people have their own different

views about homosexuality, holding LGBTI dialogues and talks that involve members from different groups of the university community can probably change the attitude and tolerance of other people. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014, 718) notes that Higher Education Institutions are a means for change in the South African communities hence they should ensure equality amongst all qualifying students. This can only be achieved if all the members of the university community compromise and respect the existence of difference. To make the awareness campaigns more successful, it is advisable that it starts by the management of the university because they inextricably link to the function of the whole university. This was echoed by some of the participants when I asked about their thoughts on how to improve the atmosphere towards LGBTI on campus.

> *I think the management has the power to change things around if it is willing. As long as discrimination and stigma is coming from the top, things will never change. It needs to start with management and the rest will follow. (Khuliso*)*

> *…I don't know many lesbians on campus we at least should be able to know one another..... The group should improve like if you go to Mangosuthu University, you know they are an active group. They call it something alive, I think. And you know that's a very active group. Yah at UKZN it's there but it feels like it's not the issue of the moment, it's so low. (Lufuno*)*

> *It is definitely the responsibility of the University to make sure that LGBTI issues are sorted out. Yes there might be the group that's there for us but I do feel that that's the only effort that it put and that was it. It's more like doing it for the sake of saying oh yes we do acknowledge LGBTI's and then that's the end of it. (Gill*)*

Some of the narratives reveal that some of the students have no idea of the existence of the LGBTI Forum. Therefore, it is essential that the Forum tries to be more visible by increasing some of the outreach campaigns they do on campus. If they do not often conduct campaigns, the chances of other students not knowing that it exists are high. Therefore, it is recommended that the Forum frequently engages with the university community through campaigns.

Well it is supposed to be the University, first they should draw up some sort of policy, I don't really know, some policy which goes hand in hand with the LGBTI group to ensure that there are more awareness groups, more inclusion. (Lufuno)*

According to Vollenhoven and Els (2013, 279) the discrimination that most lesbian and gay people face in educational institutions violates their personal rights and integrity. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the management and executive of the University of KwaZulu-Natal to address issues that surround lesbian and gay rights. It is essential that they attend to them with the kind of keenness and zest that has been directed to other issues relating to race, language and disability. As cited in Francis and Msibi (2011, 161), Richard (2004) notes that though the constitution has the equality, not much has been done to curb heterosexist and homophobic attitudes at Higher Education Institutions. This is similar to the University of KwaZulu-Natal; even though the university Charter stresses equality and inclusivity and even though there is the recent addition of an LGBTI Forum, homophobic attitudes are still prevalent in the universities spaces. Therefore, there is the need for a program or policy that does not only sensitize the university community about homosexuality but one that explains the connection between sexual orientation and the other forms of identification. As cited by Msibi (2013, 70), "Higher Education Institutions [should] play an important role as site[s] where issues of tolerance, inclusion, access, and structural inequalities could be addressed effectively" (Cross, 2004, 391). This view therefore strengthens the idea that there should be a policy that monitors and regulates the prevalence of discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation.

It is also of paramount importance that the university engages with the outside community as well in educating people about LGBTI. Most of the participants noted that despite some of the hurdles they come across because of their sexuality, they actually feel freer when they are on campus unlike when they are home. This explains why most students found it difficult to disclose their sexualities because in most cases they had realized it when there were in environments they could not say anything about it. Therefore, it is important that they are community engagement programs spearheaded by the university itself, specifically designed to inform the religious, traditional and political leaders of communities about issues concerning lesbian and gay rights.

6.5 Conclusion

The Bill of rights in the South African constitution points out the equality clause that stipulates that all citizens are equal. As such, many institutions under the government have adopted these basic principles as part of their vision statements. In this context, the University of KwaZulu-Natal Transformation Charter articulates that it is the duty of the institution to make sure that there is no discrimination of students based on their sexual orientation. However, Msibi (2013,65) articulates that, "transformation in higher education institutions has tended to focus more on race and sex at the expense of other forms of discrimination." It is the contention of this study that lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal undergo a number of unfavorable experiences because of the mere fact that they have a different sexuality. Therefore, this study primarily sought to understand the extent to which students who identify as lesbian felt they could exercise their constitutional right to sexual freedom.

Durgan and Yurman (2011, 201) and Nduna and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2015) assert that most students who identify as lesbian or gay start to explore and understand that they are different from the others during their university years. This phase of trying to understand one's sexuality comes along with the overwhelming task of disclosing their sexual identity to the people in their communities. This study critically unpacked the 'coming out' process of most lesbian students and some complex issues emerged. Lesbian students fear disclosing their sexualities because of the discrimination that is rife on the university campuses, UKZN included. And in some instances, their sexualities are silenced as they try to fit in the heterosexist world (see D' Augelli, 1991; Graziano, 2004; Msibi 2013, 70).

It is also the contention of this study that discrimination against lesbian students is a violation of their constitutional rights. To make sure that all lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal enjoy the benefits of their rights, it is necessary that the administration and necessary individuals work on informing all the relevant stakeholders about LGBTI concerns and also to structure a policy that looks specifically at sexuality and discrimination. Though some scholars argue that policy is usually different from practice (Soudien, 2010; Hemson and Singh, 2010; Vandeyar, 2010) it is worth Higher Education institutions to begin the transformative process, in both policy AND praxis!

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APPENDIX 1: Ethical clearance from UKZN

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

14 October 2015

Ms Marcia V Mutambara (215078349)
School of Social Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Mutambara

Protocol reference number: HSS/1107/015M
Project title: Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Full Approval – Committee Reviewed Protocol
With regards to your response received on 13 October 2015 to our letter of 09 October 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh(Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr Maheshvari Naidu
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Sabine Marschall
cc School Administrator: Ms Nonhlanhla Radebe

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
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APPENDIX 2.1: Gatekeeper letter from the registrar

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

28 May 2015

Ms Victoria Marcia Mutambara
School of Social Sciences
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
UKZN
Email: 215078349@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Dear Ms Mutambara

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by approaching female students, who willingly identify themselves as lesbians, and who are willing to participate in interviews at UKZN.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR B POO
REGISTRAR (ACTING)

APPENDIX 2.2: Gatekeeper letter from LGBTI Forum leader

14 June 2015

Ms Marcia Victoria Mutambara

School of Human Social Sciences

College of Humanities

Howard College Campus

UKZN

Email: 215078349@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Dear Ms Mutambara

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research with the assistance of some willing members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI). You may observe, recruit participants and record interviews, provided ethical clearance has been obtained.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours Sincerely

Ms Ngubo. S

MSM/LGBTI Programme Co-ordinator

APPENDIX 3.I : Study description letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dear Respondent

Fieldworker: Marcia Victoria Mutambara (0790818030/vmutambara@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Prof. Maheshvari Naidu (031-2607657/naiduu@ukzn.ac.za)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

I, Marcia Victoria Mutambara, an International Relations Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal wishes to invite you to participate in a research project titled: Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal . You have been chosen because of your sexual orientation as lesbian; hence your contribution will be vital to this study.

This study intends to explore the experiences of student who are lesbian at the UKZN. Your participation in this study will enable me to understand the specific prejudices that lesbian students endure during their university careers. The study will possibly and potentially be able to offer University authorities with an insight on how they can possibly accommodate the lesbian community on campus.Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from participating at any point or choose not to answer some of the questions if you feel uncomfortable. There will be no penalty of any sort if you are to withdraw or choose not to answer any question. The information that will be gathered from this study may be published in academic journals and presented orally. Anonymity will be upheld at all times by using pseudonyms in the writing up of the thesis. Unfortunately due to my condition as a student, I will not be able to afford you any financial benefit for participating in this study.

The study will involve two one to one interviews or more if you wish. These interviews will last for approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded at your consent. There will also be focus groups with other participants that will last for an hour and a half. These meeting will be at the venue you normally gather for your LGBT meetings or any venue of your choice. I hope you will take the time to participate.If you have any queries about participating in this study, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the details provided. Feedback of the study will also be given out to you after the final write-up.

Yours Sincerely

Marcia Victoria Mutambara

Investigators Signature: ……. Date: ……

APPENDIX 3.2 : Study description letter in isizulu

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Fieldworker: Marcia Victoria Mutambara (079818030)

Supervisor: Prof Maheshvari Naidu (031-2607657/naiduu@ukzn.ac.za)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

Mina uMarcia Victoria Mutambara, umfundi International Relations Masters enyuvesi ya KwaZulu-Natal efisa ukuba ube iqhaza locwaningo osihloko sithi: Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experience of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Ukhethwe ngesizathu sokuthi yokuthi usitshele kabanzi nge-orientation yakho ocansini njengoba uyi-lesbian, ngakhoke kubalulekile ukuzwa uvo lakho ukuze lolu cwaningo lube yimpumelelo.

Lolucwaningo luhlose ukuhlola ngezigameko ezake zenzeka kuma lesbian enYuvesi ya-Kwa-Zulu Natali. Ukuba yingxenye yakho kulolu cwaningo kubalulekile kakhulu uma kunemibuzo ongeke ukwazi ukuyiphendula ngoba ungakhululekile ngayo uvumelekile ukungayiphenduli. Ucwaningo ngeke okungenzeka futhi engase akwazi ukunikela iziphathimandla University nge ukuqondisisa sendlela ukwazi ihlanganise umphakathit lesbian ecampus. Ukubamba kwakho iqhaza kwakho kulolucwaningo akuphoqelekile. Ungase ukhethe ukuba ukuhoxea ukubamba iqhaza nganoma yingasiphi isikhathi ofuna ngaso noma ukukhetha ukungazanelisi ukuphendula eminye yemibuzo uma uzizwa ungakhululekile. Ngeke kube khona isigwebo sanoma yiluphi uhlobo uma ukuhoxisa ukukhetha ukungaphenduli zane noma yimuphi umbuzo. Ulwazi oluzothola kala kulolucwaningo luzotholakala ezincwadini zabafundile and luphinde lwethulwe ngomlomo. Kulolu cwaningo kuyaqinisekiswa ukuthi igama lakho ngeke livezwe .Ngebhadi ngenxa yesimo sami njengomfundi, ngeke ngikwazi ukukhokhela wena inzuzo yezimali nge qhaza lakho ozolidlala kulolu cwaningo. Ucwaningo luzofaka izingxoxo ezimbili eyodwa noma ngaphezulu uma ufisa. Lezi zingxoxo zizothatha cishe imizuzu eyishumi nanhlanu kuya emashumini amabili futhi kuzoqoshwa ngemvume yakho.Futhi kuzoba khona amaqembu qembu namanye amaqoqo okuzothatha ihora nesigamu. Lomhlangano uyoba endaweni ejwayelekile ukuthi ubanjelwe khona LGBTI noma yiyiphi indawo efunwa yinina. Ngiyethemba uzotha isikhathi sakho ubambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo.

Uma unemibuzo mayelana nokubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo, sicela ukhululeke ukuxhumana nami noma umqondisi wami esebenzisa imininingwane enikeziwe ngenhla.

Ozithobayo

Marcia Victoria Mutambara

Abaphenyi Signature: ..... Usuku: .....

APPENDIX 4.1: Informed consent form

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Fieldworker: Marcia Victoria Mutambara

Supervisor: Prof. Maheshvari Naidu (031-2607657/naiduu@ukzn.ac.za)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

I _____ (optional and may be replaced by initials) hereby declare that I am fully informed about the nature of the research titled: Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, by the researcher.

Yes…… No……..

I have also been well informed about the role that I stand to play if I am to participate in this project, which is participating in a one to one interview and in a focus group meeting. I am also aware that participation is voluntary and I can choose to withdraw from the process at any stage without any consequences to my withdrawal.

Yes…….. No……

I am aware that all information obtained from me in the course of this project will remain confidential and that my identity will be well guided in the case of any publication of the obtained information.

Yes…… No……..

I agree that the interview process will be electronically recorded and all collected information will be kept with confidentiality and high security. Yes…… No……..

I Marcia Victoria Mutambara do solemnly declare that I have fully informed the above participant of the nature and purpose of my research and the demands involved in her participation. I also declare to do all in my power to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participant as I fully keep to the ethical conduct requested of me as a fieldworker.

Signature…….. Date……..
Place……

APPENDIX 4.2 : Informed consent letter in isizulu

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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Mina _____ (uyazikhethela kanti bangase esikhundleni salo kube zokuqala) umemezela ukuthi ngingubani unolwazi ngokugcwele ebabuza socwaningo osesikhundleni: Equal rights without discrimination: Probing the experiences of lesbian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, yilo umcwaningi. Yebo ..... Akukho .....

Ngiphinde bebelokhu kahle mayelana indima ngimi ukudlala uma mina iqhaza kule project, okuyinto iqhaza umuntu eyodwa interview kanye emhlanganweni focus group. Ngiyaqaphela futhi ukuthi kubalulekile yokuzithandela futhi angikwazi ukukhetha sishiye inqubo noma nini ngaphandle imiphumela ukuhoxiswa yami.

Yebo ..... Akhuko .....

Ngiyaqaphela ukuthi yonke imininingwane etholakala nami nalokhu project izohlala eyimfihlo nokuthi ungubani yami uzobe kahle kunoma isiphi kushicilelwe ulwazi etholakale.

Yebo ..... Akhuko..... ..

Ngiyavuma ukuthi inqubo interview uzobe elekthroniki kuqoshwe futhi yonke imininingwane eqoqwe azohlala nge zobumfihlo nokuphepha eliphezulu.

Yebo..... Akhuko.....

Mina uMarcia Victoria Mutambara ingabe nenza amemezele ukuthi ngiyinikele ukwaziswa ngokugcwele iqhaza ngenhla we isimo kanye nenhloso yocwaningo yami izimfuno bahileleke yakhe/iqhaza wakhe. Ngiphinde amemezele ukwenza konke okusemandleni ami ukuba alondoloze imfihlo nokungazani we obambe iqhaza njengoba ngiqhubeka ngokugcwele ukuziphatha sokuziphatha eceliwe Ngami njengendlela fieldworker.

Isiginesha..... Usuku..... Indawo.....

APPENDIX 5 : Researchers Interview guide and questionnare questions

1. When did you realize that you are different from other girls?

2. How did you let your peers or other students know about your sexuality?

3. How did they take it?

4. How did you feel afterwards?

5. What can you say are some of the challenges you have faced?

6. Where these challenges instigated by fellow students or staff members?

7. Did you share the challenges you faced with anyone?

8. If you did, did you find it helpful?

9. Do you feel safe around the UKZN premises?

10. If not, can you explain why you feel that way?

11. Do you think the University premises are welcoming towards lesbian persons?

12. If not, what do you think should be done to improve this?

13. Whom do you think should ensure that your stay at UKZN is comfortable and worthwhile?

14. What do you feel the University should do to accommodate the lesbian community?

Thank you for your time and contribution.

NOTE:

-These questions were used by the interviewer as a guide during the interview sessions.

-Since the interview questions were open- ended there were other questions that were asked that might not have been on the interview schedule

APPENDIX 5.1: Focus group interview schedule

1. How did you let your peers or other students know about your sexuality?

2. Can you say the campus environment is welcoming towards lesbians?

3. What are some of the challenges you face being lesbian?

4. Do you share these prejudices with anyone?

5. If so, in all encounters do you find it helpful?

6. Whom do you feel is responsible for ensuring that your university experience is worthwhile considering being lesbian?

7. What do you feel should be improved to cater for the lesbian community?

Thank you for your time and contribution.

APPENDIX 6: “why do you hate me”, some of the lesbian students at an LGBTI campaign on campus.

APPENDIX 7: Gill*, Londiwe* and Neliswa* during an LGBTI awareness campaign.

APPENDIX 8: The Rainbow flag

It is also referred to as LGBTI pride flag or gay pride flag, it was designed by Gilbert Baker, and its eight colors actually stand for something; hot pink-sexuality, red -life, orange-healing, yellow-sunlight, green-nature, turquoise-magic/art, indigo/blue/-serenity/harmony and violet-spirit.

In all it means that we are supposed to acknowledge that we are all different and diverse and we are like a rainbow hence there should be no hatred and violence rather there should be tolerance respect and equality. (Adapted from Wikipedia) accessed online 15 October 2015

APPENDIX 9: Khuliso* during an LGBTI outing.