

Teachers' constructions of transgender identities in rural secondary schools



A research study submitted as the full dissertation component in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education Degree in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Gobizazi Lucky Mbonambi

215003344

Supervisor: Professor Deevia Bhana

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SUPERVISORS DECLARATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.



Signed: _____

Name: Professor Deevia Bhana

Date: December 2021

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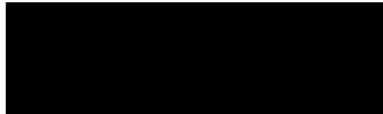
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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine South African teachers' understanding of transgenderism. Although there is ample evidence in South African society of inequality and discrimination based on sexual orientation, teachers' understandings of transgender identities are not well documented, especially within educational settings. The study utilised a qualitative research design that involved individual interviews with twenty-four teachers across three schools in a working class African rural context. Three research questions underpinned the study. Firstly, the study sought to examine rural secondary school teachers' constructions of transgender identities and, secondly, the study examined the influence of socio-cultural norms on these constructions and, lastly, the accommodation or rejection of transgender identities in the classroom. Data analysis comprised of thematic analysis to present the research findings.

The research findings indicated that teachers had a limited understanding of transgender identity and, further, that teachers' constructions of transgender identities closely relate to gendered ideologies. The study revealed that teachers' lack of understanding of transgender identity produces discrimination against gender non-conforming learners, including tolerating homophobia. The research identified heteronormativity, compulsory heterosexuality and related socio-cultural norms as major components which shape how teachers construct transgender identities in their respective schools. Conversely, teachers who identified as gay demonstrated an understanding of gender fluidity by supporting and advocating for the rights of gender non-conforming learners in the school context.

The research also found that teachers are not willing to discuss or teach topics involving gender and sexuality as they regard these topics as sensitive. Rather, teachers opt to focus solely on prescribed subject content, indicating that the teaching of gender diversity should fall to Life Orientation teachers. The study also found unequal representation of genders in the Life Orientation curriculum, which results in the erasure of certain genders whilst normalising others.

The research concludes by proposing that transgenderism should be addressed in South African schools through ensuring that both teachers and learners obtain a greater understanding of transgender identity. Further, that the prevalence of socio-cultural norms focusing on compulsory heterosexuality, heteronormativity, and gender binarism should be disrupted within school settings. The hidden curriculum can play an important role for all teachers to ensure an inclusive learning environment that does not marginalise gender non-conforming learners.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction to the Study

Emma, a high school learner who self-identifies as transgender, explains some of her struggles with sexuality and gender identity in the following way:

Bathrooms, changing rooms, and otherwise gendered public facilities are some of the most intimidating places. Some trans youth plan their entire day around avoiding school bathrooms and changing. For so many of us, our daily movements are dictated by fear (Belly, 2018, p. 2).

Private facilities such as bathrooms are obvious examples of spaces that are gendered because of the associated gender binarism. Those that struggle with their gender identity tend to experience anxiety in gendered spaces (National Center for Lesbians Rights, 2015). Emma's example is but one way in which gender non-conforming learners grapple with otherwise normal and everyday settings and circumstances.

South Africa is recognised globally for ensuring the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and other gender non-conforming individuals (LGBTQI+) (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Although these rights are formally guaranteed, the reality is much different, especially for LGBTQI+ learners in educational settings. Take for example the following statement by a gender non-conforming learner:

I also had a problem with the teachers when I went to high school. There was a day I wanted to drag, and I did. People were screaming and following me, the teachers called me and told me I was dressed inappropriately. I was told to go home and change. I went home to change but I didn't go back. I took it very badly. I was just wearing skinny jeans and heels (Daniels et al., 2019).

This statement suggests that some teachers act in ways that assume that all learners subscribe to binarism identifying as either male or female. Some teachers disregard the fact that an individual learner might not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. Socially transitioned individuals are routinely affected by the fact that other people are often aware of their sex as assigned at birth (James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine, 2003), which assignment holds a series of expectations with regards to how the individual should behave.

Similarly, learners who identify as transgender (in that they do not identify with the sex that was assigned to them at birth), face many challenges and discrimination (Wight, 2011).

Transphobic harassment and discrimination of individuals who choose to identify differently is prevalent in South Africa as in many other countries. In a study conducted by Msibi (2012), the findings suggest that queer learners are discriminated against by their teachers. Discrimination by teachers who are meant to protect learners, often reinforces patriarchal gender norms, and entrenches heteronormativity.

This study explores how teachers construct transgender identities in rural secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of teachers' understandings of transgender identities. Teachers can potentially be agents of change because of the unique bonds they have with learners.

Transgender studies emphasise the importance of integrating trans and non-binary ways of being and living. Queer theory draws on gender and sexuality discourses by disrupting social hierarchies that endorse and normalise heterosexuality and that disregard other expressions of gender and sexuality (Namaste, 2000). Non-binary refers to a variety of gender identities or expressions that are seen as inconsistent with expected heterosexuality and heteronormativity (Green, Benner & Pear, 2018). Stryker (2013) notes that transgender studies represent the rapidly growing work that explores the diversity of gender and that includes examining the intersections of sex and gender as related to cultural representation. This study draws on transgender studies and queer theory.

The study also relies on Butler's (2009) theory of gender performativity, which refers to gender elicitation through conformist modes of engagement, and norms that are constructed and reinforced in society. Further, the study will discuss and draw on Connell's (1987) theory of multiple masculinities that engages gender order theory and that serves as an analytical instrument to identify people's behaviours in perpetuating gender inequalities. This includes compulsory heterosexuality and social expectations of men as dominant.

Queer theory builds on feminist theory that views gender as socially constructed (Boyarin, Itzkovitz & Pellegrini, 2003). Societies have normalised heterosexuality by making it the foundation of heteronormative solidity whilst queerness focuses on the mismatches between sex, gender and desire (Boyarin, 2003). Jagger (2008) explains that queerness has been associated with LGBTQI+ activism and identity. Queer theory holds that sexuality is not

stable but fluid and variable and, accordingly, sexuality may also vary throughout the life of an individual (Boyarín et al., 2008).

Butler (2009) notes that gender is expressed heteronormatively by following strict gendered categories. This results in people performing their gender, which performance is confused or perceived as an indication of the intrinsic truth of gender. According to Butler (2009, p. 11), the theory of gender performativity suggest that norms are acting on us before we have a chance to act at all. Butler explains that gender is an expression of how you represent your being, and this constitutes gender performativity. Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990) denotes the rules of behavior along a heterosexual matrix extreme idea of men as masculine and women as feminine are socialised, constructed and reinforced by cultural and traditional norms. This perception of gender tends to consider certain individuals as superior and others as inferior as it relates to the heterosexual matrix. Connell (2012) explains that these patterns of inferiority and superiority or patterns of subordination include coercion and consent.

There is limited literature on teachers' construction of transgender identities in rural secondary South African schools. According to Moletsane and Ntombela (2010), in rural contexts, gender and culture reproduce heteronormativity. Similarly, Bhana (2010, p.11) has noted in a study conducted in rural KwaZulu-Natal (Umbumbulu area) that from a young age men were inducted into masculine rituals through cattle herding and stick-fighting as they prepared to assume the role of the umnumzana (head of the household). Moreover, Bhana's (2010) assertions appear to be relevant in the context of rurality; gender and sexuality is interwoven with the history of a society's construction of cultural norms and expectations for boys and girls respectively. Culture affects gender and sexuality and thus transgender identities.

Transgenderism is part of broader and ongoing discussions that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals (LGBTQI+) (Yarhouse, 2015). Seelman (2014) argues that the literature on transgendered individuals reveals that the LGBTQI+ community is frequently marginalised and oppressed within schools. A study by Whittle et al (2007) concluded that trans individuals are often confronted with inequalities and discrimination in their everyday lives. This is supported by Meyer (2010) who explains that transgendered and gender non-conforming learners are often invisible in schools or educational contexts. These learners go to great lengths to avoid being mocked, harassed, and scorned by family members, peers, and teachers. Meyer (2010) and Whittle et al. (2007) confirm the fact that there is limited data on learners' experiences of gendered harassment and victimisation based on their non-conforming

to society's sexual and gender expectations.

A study conducted by Haas, Rodgers and Herman (2014) demonstrated that some 64% of female-to-male transsexuals (trans-men) and 44% of male-to-female transsexuals (trans-females) are degraded, harassed or bullied at school. The practice of categorising children according to sex assigned at birth and subsequently teaching them to conform to a cultural heteronormative gender order, results in heteronormativity and heterosexuality seeming natural (Ehrensaft, 2011). Gender non-conforming learners do not only experience discrimination from their peers but are also victimised by school staff, including teaching staff. Haas (2020) indicates that rates of discrimination and victimisation are higher among transgender learners when compared to lesbian and gay learners. Further, high numbers of suicide attempts are recorded in schools among individuals who are intimidated, harassed, attacked and expelled based on the fact that they are transgendered or gender non- conforming (Connell, 2012).

Further, Haas (2020) notes that suicide attempt rates increases dramatically in those instances where teachers were reported as perpetrators of discrimination and victimisation. Moreover, Haas (2020) found that 59% of learners were harassed or intimidated by teachers, 76% were physically beaten by teachers and 69% were assaulted by teachers. Violence against and harassment of gender non-conforming learners by their peers and teachers are rampant in different school contexts (Haas, Rodgers & Herman, 2014).

This pervasive violence is compounded by the fact that survivors of sexual harassment are reluctant to report it for many reasons, including fear of not being believed, stigmatisation, and lack of professional support (Jeff, 2016). Some studies (Ullman & Peter et al, 2018) have indicated that victims self-blame, which can affect mental health and, in some cases, lead to self-harm. Further, when victims blame themselves, they do not feel it necessary to seek help (Jeff, 2016). Moreover, victims do not seek help because of perceived lack of social support (Hye, 2016).

Mampane and Bouwer (as cited in Msibi, 2012) note the fact that girl learners and gender non-conforming learners are more vulnerable to violence than their male and conforming counterparts. Gender-based violence and entrenched patriarchy leads to non-conforming learners being invisible in South Africa (Msibi, 2012). Francis and Msibi (2011) point out that compulsory heterosexuality is normalised whilst homosexuality is perceived as an illicit way of expressing sexual desire. The authors further note that teachers' perception of homosexuality is that it is morally wrong or deviant (Francis & Msibi, 2011). Bhana (2016) states that many

teachers reproduce gender inequalities by promoting ideas of hegemonic masculinity. In the context of rurality, the following view was expressed by a participant in a study conducted by DePalma and Francis (2020, p. 555): ‘the black culture tends to keep quiet about sexuality, it’s part of their cultural thing, you know, if you go to the Zulu culture and talk about gays and lesbians, they’ll kill you’. Similarly, Richardson (2008) has stated that many schools are violent, heterosexist and promote transphobic harassment.

According to Zibane (2017), a number of interrelated and complex beliefs shape people’s understanding of human sexuality. Zibane explains that definitions of sexuality generally relate and are limited to certain historical constructs. Zibane (2017) also notes that schools are sites where learners’ sexualities and gender identities are reproduced and adopted. According to Zibane (2017, p. 20), school is an arena that contributes to gender discrepancy, it marginalises and oppresses some, while it advantages others.

In South Africa, sexuality is frequently discussed in relation to culture (DePalma & Francis, 2014). Zibane (2012) explains that within African cultures, patriarchy plays a prominent role in the socialisation of boys and girls. Zibane (2012) further notes that schools are social orders that promote the domination of males, reproducing women as inferior. In a study conducted by Msibi (2012) entitled ‘I am now used to it’, a participant stated:

Mrs Nhleko called me to the staffroom. She started shouting at me and was telling me to stop acting like a boy. She said I need to stop this lesbian thing because I will start making other learners like me... (p. 523).

Similarly, Msibi (2012) found that some heterosexual teachers hold negative attitudes towards queer learners.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The study seeks to contribute to the body of literature on transgender identities and, specifically, teachers’ understandings and constructions of transgender identities. Msibi (2012) indicates that schools are sites of violence for queer learners and teachers often perpetuate this violence. Furthermore, when heterosexual learners perpetuate abuse towards queer learners, teachers tend to be complicit in the abuse. As such, the study attempts to highlight the role of teachers in constructing gender identity as well as highlighting the violence perpetrated against gender non-conforming learners in educational settings.

Several factors motivated the study, including the need to bring urgent attention to discrimination against LGBTQI+ learners. I was also inspired by the SABC1 soapy *Generations: The Legacy*. The show represents progressive storytelling as it introduced a transgender character called Wandile or "Wandi". Wandile (boy) transitioned to Wandi (girl) and further continued to explore her gender and sexuality, despite encountering transphobic violence and emotional abuse from family, friends, and community members. Examples in television and popular media play an important role in highlighting discrimination and have the potential to change attitudes towards gender non-conforming individuals.

Transgender identities have historically received little attention within studies that focus on gender and sexuality. As such, the study hopes to meaningfully contribute to the literature on transgender identities, especially as it relates to rural and school settings.

Transgendered individuals' understanding of their gender is completely different from their biological sex, gendered social construction and concomitant social expectations (Bethea & McCollum, 2013). These individuals often express or perform their gender in ways that diverge from society's dominant gender roles. Further, as Holtby, Klein, Cook and Travers (2015) reported, transgender people are not acknowledged within the spaces that they occupy and are actively erased.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- 1.3.1. To determine rural secondary school teachers' constructions of transgender identities.
- 1.3.2. To explore how rural socio-cultural norms influence secondary school teachers' constructions of transgender identities.
- 1.3.3. To understand how teachers' accommodate or reject transgender identities in the classroom.

1.4 . Research Questions

- 1.4.1. What are rural secondary school teachers' constructions of transgender identities?
- 1.4.2. How do rural socio-cultural norms shape secondary school teacher's constructions of transgender identities?
- 1.4.3. How do teachers accommodate or reject transgender identities in the classroom?

1.5 . Context of the Study

This study was conducted in the valley of a thousand hills' in Botha's Hill (KwaNyuswa), west of Durban. KwaNyuswa is a rural community outside Hillcrest characterised by economic inequality. The location of the valley is approximately fifty kilometres outside the main city centre of Durban (eThekweni). The rural area of KwaNyuswa reflects and reinforces social practices and gender roles. In some parts of the valley, the community's economic backbone is still cattle and land.

The study was undertaken across three rural schools at KwaNyuswa, namely Fundanathi Secondary, Ibanathi Secondary, and Ifalakhe High (pseudonyms). The study enrolled 24 teacher participants. The selected schools are identified as quantile 3 schools, with teachers and learners from African ethnic groups only. I began collecting data after I received ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

As mentioned, in South Africa, there are few studies involving transgender identities within rural educational settings. I selected secondary schools as a way to limit the scope of the research. The study was thus limited to this phase of schooling and to the specific geographical area. The schools were chosen because of feasibility; they are located in the area where I reside. Additionally, as will be explained below, I was acquainted with many of the participants and school principals before conducting the study. The selected schools in the research site are all approximately 22 minutes away from each other. I purposively selected these schools mainly because they are based in the same rural area.

1.6 Research Methodology

This research followed an interpretive paradigm. Within an interpretive framing, experiences and subjective understandings of individuals serve as the focus point (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2011). When individuals frame knowledge, it is always subjective. As such, a qualitative approach was best suited to understand individuals' subjective experiences and understandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), specifically, teachers' constructions of transgender identities.

The study employed purposive sampling as it was the most appropriate method for responding to the research questions. Therefore, I made a specific choice regarding the participants that were to be included in the study. Maxwell (as cited in Taderhoost, 2016) explains that purposive sampling is a method of sampling that is based on a cohort of participants and, as such, data for this type of study cannot be generated without purposively selecting the sample. The

criterion for participation in this study was only open to African teachers employed in the selected schools. Although some teachers did not live within the boundaries of the research site, they were influenced to a great degree by the cultural norms that are enforced in the broader rural community. To surmise, sampling was purposive for the selection of participants and based on convenience for the selection of the schools.

Data was collected by conducting semi-structured individual interviews. This data collection method is common in qualitative research and significantly influences the outcome of the study and can potentially make it more plausible (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). This method of data collection was selected as it provides the researcher an opportunity to ask open-ended questions and probe the responses of the participants (Kallio et al., 2016).

The data was analysed thematically. This method of analysing data helps to deduce themes and patterns (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). The interviews were recorded and were transcribed and thus accurately (verbatim) reflected what participants said during the interview process. After this process, I returned the responses to the participants to ensure that their views were captured accurately and that they were not in any way misrepresented. This contributed to a consistent and precise method of analysis.

Informed consent was secured from all the relevant institutional bodies and individuals, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Education, the principals of the selected schools, and the teachers who were willing to participate in the study. Letters to participants included their right to participate in the study, the nature of their participation, what was expected of them, and how the data collected through their participation managed and reported on. Upon receiving the signed informed consent, I proceeded with data generation.

Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018) define credibility as the confidence that can be placed in the research findings. To ensure credibility in my study, participants were interviewed in English. However, as most teachers were second-language English speakers, teachers could codeswitch to IsiZulu when responding. All IsiZulu words were transcribed and translated into English.

Confirmability is described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) as the interpretation of data not grounded in the researcher's point of view. To ensure confirmability as an enquirer, the analysis was drawn from the data generated from the participants and inferences were made based on the data set that became available through the research process. Reflexivity is the process of

understanding the nature of the study one is conducting and it includes understanding one's role as a researcher and enquirer within the research site. It also involves being as reflexive as possible when collecting data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). As I have my own understandings, beliefs, and experiences as well as academic background on the nature of the study, I would have inevitably influenced the research process and data analysis. As such, I endeavoured to be as reflexive as possible throughout the study.

The participants were drawn from three schools in one rural area located in KwaZulu-Natal and, as such, the generalisability of this study could perhaps be seen as limited. However, within small-scale qualitative studies such as this study, the concept of transferability (where a researcher seeks to determine whether their research findings can be transferred to another context (Cope, 2014)) is preferred to generalisability.

1.7 Chapter Overview

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study, provides background to the research, and sheds light on the rationale for the study. The chapter also sets out the research aims and questions as well as the methodology and provides an overview of the chapters.

Chapter 2: This chapter sets out the theoretical framework of the study. This discussion involves examining three theoretical frameworks that serve to guide the study. The first involves queer theory with specific focus on the cultural constructions of sexual identities. The second theory involves Butler's arguments on gender performativity. Thirdly, I will discuss Connell's analysis on masculinities and the way in which gender equality is perpetuated through certain behaviours.

Chapter 3: This chapter comprises of the literature review. I discuss literature on transgender identities, including relevant international and local South African studies. The chapter also investigates how transgender identities are defined. It includes critical reflection on the issues of rurality, gender as a social construct, transgender identities, and the African cultural context.

Chapter 4: This chapter explains the methodology and provides justification for the approaches used in the study. As noted, the study is interpretive and based on a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods were used in the form of semi-structured interviews and followed thematic analysis. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the credibility, confirmability, reflexivity and transferability of the study. Lastly, the limitations of the study are explained.

Chapter 5: This chapter analyses the research findings and discusses these findings in light of the research aims and questions.

Chapter 6: This chapter presents a summary of the findings and offers recommendations on how to accommodate transgender identities in rural school settings.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study, the research objectives and questions as well as the methodology employed. It also provided an overview of the chapters that follow. The following chapter, chapter 2, presents the theoretical framework for the study.

CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the study. First, the chapter explains transgenderism in relation to biology, identity, and performance, and examines the interrelatedness of these concepts in forming transgender identity. Secondly, I look at the notion of 'performativity' as conceptualised by Judith Butler (1990) and specifically her contention that gender is expressed heteronormatively by following strict gendered categories, which individuals perform. Finally, I conclude by discussing the gender relational theory and theory of masculinities as conceptualised by Raewyn Connell (Connell, 1987, 1995, 2002). These frameworks allow for an understanding of how gender is performed, and they provide the background against which the study examines how societal and traditional constructions of masculinities and femininities impact on (i) teachers' construction of transgender identities in rural secondary schools and (ii) how these constructions inform teachers' understandings of such identities. Further, these frameworks help to understand the ways in which violence is produced by various ideologies.

2.2 Transgender Identity and Biology

According to Kennedy and Helen (2010), the term 'transgender' originally described the desire of certain individuals to change their gender and this can include individuals that want to undergo physical surgical modification. 'Transgender' eventually became an umbrella term that captures multiple ways of doing gender (Nangeroni, 2003, p.23; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2014). Transgender more concretely refers to transgressing or crossing the binary boundaries of gender. Transgender identity is an individual's identity that accords with their inner awareness of their gender (Park, 2010). This performance of gender deviates from the gender assigned at birth (Conron & Reisner, 2014). Further, Mangin (2018) defines 'transgender' as a range of gendered experiences and expressions beyond the boundaries of 'man' and 'woman'. As mentioned, the internal sense of gender of transgender individuals is not congruent with their natal sex. It is imperative to note that an individual's gendered identity is not absolute and there is a possibility of change (Bradford, Cahill, Grasso & Makadon, 2012). Transgender individuals may engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the same sex or the opposite sex or other gender non-conforming individuals.

In order to define transgenderism, it is useful to explore the example of famous reality star, Jazz Jennings. According to Goldberg and Andriano (2007), Jazz was born a natal male but has always expressed female identity, which was obviously a state of discord between the internal sense of gender and biological sex. At the age of 5 years old, before any medical intervention could take place, Jazz's parents did not object to Jazz living as a girl and her social transition was accepted. Before most children can claim their identity as transgender, they first experience gender dysphoria', which is the idea of the wrong body (Hines, 2010, p. 401). Bruce Jenner who transitioned to Caitlyn Jenner, for example, stated that she suffered from gender dysphoria since childhood (Macleans, 2017, p. 1). The term transgender' has thus expanded the ways of living beyond being male or female and refers to those individuals whose personal identity does not correspond to the stipulated binary notions of masculinity or femininity assigned to them. Interestingly, transgender' can also broadly refer to all individuals whose gender expression is perceived to be different than the traditional ideas of correct gender expression (Greytak, Kosciw & Diaz, 2009). The concepts of biology, identity and performance are of importance in this study as these concepts can aid in understanding the ways in which teachers construct transgender identities. The concepts inform their understandings.

2.3 Understanding Gender Construction, Sex and Sexuality

Several scholars have explored the ways in which transgenderism and individuals who express their sexuality differently problematise the cultural norms of gender (Bornstein, 1995; Bornstein & Bergman, 2010; Butler, 1990; Nestle, Howell, & Wilchins, 2002; Stryker, 2008). These scholars suggest that the normative understanding of gender is dominant and binary. In this binary framework, there are two fixed choices, male or female, in accordance with biological sex (Goffman, 1997; Valocchi, 2005). Gender binarism closely relates to heterosexuality as it is tied to the sex assigned at birth (Bloch & Lemish, 2005). Similarly, Schilt and Westbrook (2009) explain that heteronormativity is regarded as superior in terms of binarism; it constantly dehumanises individuals who do not submit to gender norms. When individuals refuse to subscribe to binary categories, they are not regarded as 'human' (McCall, 1979). Moreover, being male-bodied women and female-bodied men present a challenge to heteronormativity (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009, p., 441). Living transgender is a decision that is negotiated and understood in the social life and there is consensus regarding the fact that discrimination and violence is prevalent amongst gender minorities (Francis, 2014, p. 540).

Gender is not necessarily consistent with sex. Everyone is created with an external physical

body as well as internal feelings, thoughts and emotions. People identify in ways that may not necessarily align with their external or internal elements. Olson, Kay and Eaton (2015, p., 34) explain that a person could be a boy on the outside and feel like a girl on the inside or could be a girl on the outside and feel like a boy on the inside. They further note that an individual might identify both as masculine and feminine and others might identify as neither. Thus, how we look externally may be completely different from what we feel internally. However, the cultural understandings of gender seem to literalise the sex of the body (Prosser, 2006).

Although people may not want to conform to binaries of penis/vagina, man/women, hetero/homo (Youdell, 2010, p. 88), dominant discourse asserts the aforesaid binaries before a child is even born. These binaries are enforced upon us and we might find ourselves attached to them, i.e., socially (Youdell, 2010). Gender non-conforming individuals may identify as masculine or feminine despite the gender presumed to follow from their outward appearance (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009, p., 441). Schilt and Westbrook (2009) further explain that a non-conforming individual's appearance may at times reflect their biological sex.

Msibi (2012) argues that some individuals do not necessarily perceive themselves nor are they perceived by others as dynamic beings. However, self-expression may align with fluid sexuality. Presentation of the self also reflects identity. In examining the relationship between sex and gender culture, some theorists reveal understandings of sex and gender by investigating cultural enforcement as well as the experiences of gender based on fluidity (Butler, 1990, 2008; Sedwick, 1985).

Queer theorists such as Gagnon and Simon (1973) and Butler (1990) maintain that sexuality should not be seen as natural and unchanging; it is fluid and flexible. Rather than binarism that is socially constructed, sexuality instead involves a diverse unit (Sedgwick, 1990). This diverse unit disrupts socio-cultural norms and dominant prescripts that perceive gender as an essentialised concept derived from biological structures (Garfinkel, 1967; Kessler and McKenna, 1978; Sedgwick).

The theory of gender performativity suggests that some individuals perform their gender in ways that are often incongruent with the expected cultural norms of the society. This becomes a challenge to gender norms and these individuals can be subjected to hostility and exclusion by others who subscribe to heteronormativity (Aoki, 2010; Butler, 1990, 1993; Scourfield, Roen & McDermott, 2008). Those performing their gender in non-normative ways are often not accepted by others who relate to the dominant culture (Beemyn, 2005; Butler, 1990). An

individual's performance of gender is communicated through gender identity.

When we talk about gender, we do not solely concentrate on the sex of an individual, but instead also highlight their sexual desire towards the other sex (Rubin, 1993). However, the norms of society remain dominant in constructing gender identity and sexuality, and, as such, reinforce heterosexuality (Butler, 1990). For Connell (2002, p. 28), socio-cultural beliefs are at the center of producing ideologies of natural difference. For instance, men are considered masculine, and they should not show emotions as that may be a sign of weakness and women are considered feminine and they are expected to show their emotions (Connell, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In this regard, gender is considered natural. Some cultural beliefs that follow natural' gender patterns refuse to accept transgender identities and these individuals are considered wrong' and deviant (Connell, 2002; Reddy, 2019). The dominant belief regarding gender identity views gender through the lens of biology. From this perspective, transgendered identities are deemed inferior, and therefore are not readily accepted nor accommodated in the society.

2.4 Performativity, Gender Culture and Masculinities

According to Butler (1990; 2008, p. 22), gender identity is more integral to society than any other form of identity and persons only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognisable standards of gender intelligibility. In this regard, Butler does not mean that we only become persons after gender identity. Rather, discourse about an individual occurs after gender identity. Gender is associated with duality or in binary terms, that categorises and distinguishes males from females (Ehrensaft, 2009). In this way, transgender individuals disturb the binary categories of gender because they experience a gender identity that is fluid.

Butler (1990, p. 30), in her seminal book titled *Gender Trouble*, argues that the concept of gender as a performance and a unity of experience creates a series of gendered expressions that establishes an idealised gender. She further postulates that performativity is created through the binaries of gender identity how people understand sexed bodies and the culture of gender. Performativity is multi-dimensional in relation to gender history, culture, and agency. The binaries will always exist. Thus, no matter how people may choose to perform their identity, they will inextricably be categorised as either male or female (Wight, 2011, p.78). In this way, transgender performance is not accepted because of its fluidity and incongruence with gender categories. The process of doing gender is inseparable from the maintenance of

heteronormativity (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Therefore, those who do gender in ways incongruent to their biological sex are seen as a threat to heterosexuality (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

Transgender identities can simultaneously belong to the dominant gender culture of heteronormativity and the smaller culture and community that an individual identifies with (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). The smaller culture and the culture that assumes heteronormativity as normal gender identity will both play a pertinent role (Connelly, 2010; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Ting-Tommy, 2004). Theorist Sherilyn Connelly (2010) uses her own transgenderism as an example. She was born male by biology, but her sex was not congruent with the gender identity she wanted to perform. She may take part in a transgender culture but also participates in a dominant culture, even though it is not likely that she will be granted all the privileges of that culture as she may be seen as a threat' (Connelly, p.18). Within the school or educational context, the gender performance of a learner is normally treated as one they will identify with for the rest of their lives. However, gender identities begin within the spaces we occupy; different identities remain realisable as they are continuously portrayed, rehearsed, performed and it resist gender binaries and the definitions of heterosexuality. The dominant gender order may or may not determine our gender performance. In this case, the incongruence of biological sex and performativity may hinder transgender individuals to not be accepted by those who are gender-conforming.

Masculinities are defined in contrast to femininities and are based on an understanding of hierarchies within genders, emphasising the hierarchical relations between them (Francis, 2014, p., 540). For Connell (1995), ways of being a man overlap; each one is closely linked to positions of power and certain ways dominate in a particular culture. As such, the hierarchy of masculinities shows the unequal distribution of privilege by men in different groups (Connell, 1996); that is men, who, for instance, have a subordinate masculinity or men who disrupt the gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Homosexual masculinities are most likely to be vulnerable as they are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of masculinities and are considered as feminine (Connell, 1995).

Feminine masculinity is constantly threatened with violence and discrimination by those who subscribe to heteronormativity (Butler, 1995). This homophobic behavior is in reaction to the threat it poses for hegemonic masculinity (Butler, 1995). Like Connell (1987; 1995), Butler (1990, p., 49) contests that any feminist theory that sets constraints on how people view

masculinity and femininity leads to limiting other gender expressions. In this regard, she argues against what she calls 'regimes of truth' (Butler, 1990, p., 49) which construct some gender expressions to be inconsistent and that employ a discourse of truth in trying to disrupt gender binary boxes. The LGBTQI+ community must be able to lead their true authentic lives without being violated for being who they are (Butler, 1990). Regimes of truth about gender will result in new or different discourses that limit the possibilities of expression (Butler, 1990, p. 49).

Therefore, for Connell (1987; 1995; 2002), regimes of truth may open doors to subordination and marginalisation by members of the dominant culture and can result in discrimination and violence against gender identities that do not correspond with the truth' about gender. Transgender individuals destabilise and disturb gender norms and roles and traditional conceptualisations of sex/gender, including destabilising the idea that one's gender identity is congruent to one's natal sex (Pitcher, 2018, p., 9). According to Connell (1987), hegemonic forms of masculinity maintain violence. The more a person's inner awareness of gender identity deviates from the expectations of society, the greater the chance of isolation and victimisation (Daley, Solomon, Newman & Mishna, 2008; Pitcher, 2018). Msibi (2012) takes this idea further and postulates that these violent forms of masculinity support compulsory heterosexuality. Transgender learners constantly have to resist the hegemony that suggest their inferiority (Connelly, 1995). Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett (1985) highlights that the gender regime, which is maintained through daily activities in schools, normalises dynamics of power imbalance. These are structures through which power is organised (Pitcher, 2018).

Butler's (1990) theory of performativity is important to this study as it disrupts the ways in which gender is conceptualised and challenges the ways in which gender is defined. As such, it encourages individuals to question how they were socialised culturally and to question dominant thinking about gender and sexualities. How gender is performed is associated with the norms of society and expectations (Butler, 1990). In this framework, men are placed at the top and assert dominance in a way that reproduces inequality (Sheerin & Linehan, 2018). The notion of gender hierarchies helps this study to make sense of how high school teachers are influenced by heteronormativity and, as such, reject transgender identities at school.

Within this study, the theories discussed above are particularly useful in demonstrating how gender expression is socially constructed rather than natural. Knowledge that is socially constructed relates to the dominant expectations of masculinity, sexuality and gender

expression. In addition, these concepts enable this study to challenge and dismantle heteronormativity that aims to make transgender identities invisible within the spaces occupied by non-conforming individuals in society (Morrell, Epstein & Moletsane, 2012).

2.5 Conclusion

Gender hierarchy normalises inequality in society. This is evident in societies that are deeply rooted in cultures where heteronormativity still prevails (Connell, 2002). Discrimination and violence towards LGBTQI+ learners in rural schools remain prevalent due to the influence of patriarchy and its related power dynamics (Bhana & Mayeza, 2018). This chapter presents a theoretical framework which draws on Butler (1990) and Connell (1987; 1995; 2002), deemed suitable in understanding and examining how teachers might construct transgender identities in rural secondary schools. Further, these theories also contribute to understanding the ways in which cultural norms influence understandings of masculinities and femininities. The next chapter is the literature review, discussing transgender identities in educational settings.

CHAPTER THREE - LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

As mentioned above, this study seeks to explore how teachers construct transgender identities in rural secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter explores literature on teachers' construction of gender and sexually diverse identities, specifically transgender identities in educational settings. Understandings of transgender identity is shaped not only by how non-conforming individuals act and express themselves, but also by how others perceive their expression of identity and react to it. In this literature review, I will investigate the intersection between heteronormativity, compulsory heterosexuality, identity, and discrimination. This discussion will also contemplate the intersections between race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality. In South Africa, there is minimal literature dealing with how teachers construct transgender identities in schools. This chapter will, therefore, attempt to contribute to the literature on transgender identities in schools in South Africa. It will also explore international studies and provide an overview of the available literature on sexually diverse identities.

3.2 Defining Transgender

Transgender is a broad term used to describe individuals whose gender identity or expression do not correspond with their anatomical sex. A transgender individual can thus identify as male in spite of being born with female anatomy (Park, 2010). To explain transgenderism, I firstly discuss gender identity versus natal sex.

3.2.1 Gender Identity

Gender is not necessarily consistent with sex. Everyone is created with a physical exterior encompassing the human body and an emotional interior that comprises of an individual's emotions and their ability to think and feel. Different people identify differently; the exterior body and emotional interior corresponds for some individuals whilst it might not for others. As mentioned, Olson, Kay and Eaton (2015) state that a person could be a boy on the outside and feel like a girl on the inside or could be a girl on the outside and feel like a boy on the inside (pg. 13). They further add that other individuals may feel like they are both, neither and, importantly, this can change over time. How we look may be completely different from what we feel. People may not want to conform to binaries of penis/vagina, man/women, hetero/homo (Youdell, 2010, p. 88). However, the dominant discourses that surround us enforce these binaries before we are born. These binaries are thus forced upon us by the society and culture

which we are born into. (Youdell, 2010). Msibi (2012) argues that individuals rarely think of themselves as fluid and are also not considered by others as fluid; however, their active performances might fall under fluid understandings of sexuality. The ways in which people represent themselves and their actions reflect identity.

3.2.1.1 Name Identity

Pina-Cabral (2010, p. 5) explains that how people identify is imperative for psychological wellbeing. A transgender individual may be called by a name they do not identify with. Calling an individual by a name that is not congruent to their true self may be considered offensive. These individuals often experience discord between their name and who they are (Van der Schans, 2015, p. 2). For individuals, their name marks or reflects who they are. Transgender individuals may not want to undergo physical changes but would like to change socially, which may include finding a name they prefer when introducing themselves to the world. This renaming can allow for a detachment from a former identity in order to represent a newfound identity (VanderSchans, 2015). A participant in a study by VanderSchans (2015, p.12) noted the following:

For my middle name, I wanted to respect my parents as much as possible. I thought of just leaving it as the female name I was given, Christine, but decided to masculinize it. It came down to Christopher' or Christian.' I've decided on Christian because the meaning of the name is the same.

This is how Christian now identifies and would like to be perceived by others and is thus integral in performing his new identity.

3.2.1.2 Current Inner Identity as Discordant with "Natal Sex"

As mentioned above, according to Kennedy and Helen (2010), the term 'transgender' originated to refer to individuals who desired to change gender, whether or not through surgical physical modification. The term became an umbrella term for multiple ways of doing gender (Nangeroni, 2003, p.23). The term therefore embraces different ways of gender expression and transgresses the boundaries of binary gender. And individual's transgender identity accord to their inner awareness of gender, rather than to their sex assigned at birth. As mentioned, Mangin (2018) defines transgender' as a variety of gender experiences that can extend across, between or beyond the constant boundaries of what is considered man' and woman'. It is important to restate that one's gender identity can undergo transformations throughout one's

lifespan (Bradford, Cahill, Grasso & Makadon, 2012). Transgender individuals may have romantic and sexual relationships with the same sex and encompass a gender expression that does not adhere to normative gendered standards.

Transgender individuals usually experience a discord between their internal gender and their sex. This is called gender dysphoria (Hines, 2010, p. 401) and has to do with the feeling of being in the wrong body. The term transgender' can be described as expanding ways of living beyond the male and female binary. As such, and as mentioned above, the term can also be used as a broad term to refer to all individuals whose gender expression contravenes traditional ideas of correct gender expression (Greytak, Kosciw & Diaz, 2009).

3.3 Understanding LGBTQI+ Youth on a Global and Local Scale

3.3.1 The Global Issue of Homophobia and Transphobia

Throughout history, violence and discrimination have been directed at minority groups such as LGBTQI+ individuals. This marginalisation has been experienced in countries across the world. Scholars that have studied gender variations and gender identity have highlighted that being sexually diverse is not a mental illness (Maclean, 2017; Mangin, 2018; Olson, Kay & Eaten, 2015; Pina-Cabral, 2010); a notion that many people still adhere to. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) held meetings to deliberate concerns that involve the LGBTQI+ community. A number of issues, including isolation due to being sexually diverse in educational institutions (Jones, 2015) were discussed. These types of initiatives and recognition of the struggles of the LGBTQI+ community is much needed in order to eradicate the discrimination that many community members suffer. Fear of rejection has made those who are sexually diverse reluctant of coming out about their sexual orientation (Mayock, Brain, Kerr & Kitching, 2009). Although some people still do not accept those individuals whose gender is not congruent to their natal sex' (Jones, 2015), LGBTQI+ individuals have seen the numbers of allies increasing.

Several states in the United State of America (USA) including Massachusetts, Connecticut, Washington, and Colorado have laws or have implemented policies to ensure that transgender students are protected in schools. In 2014, California became the first state to address transgender issues by means of policy and law reform. Moreover, the country's Assembly Bill 1266 grants learners in schools the right to use binary facilities, take part in programs that are sex-segregated as well as other activities which are based on how learners perceive

themselves regardless of their natal' sex (California Legislative information). Culturally, the US as well as Canada have made a number of strides; there is increased focus on gender identity, and it has become important for people to recognise an individual's chosen gender identity. Further, more and more people are ensuring that they do not unintentionally misgender non-conforming individuals (Arielle, 2015).

There are growing concerns across the globe about training teachers to support LGBTQI+ learners to counteract gender discrimination (Greytak, Kosciw & Boesen, 2013; Kwok & Lee, 2018; Szalacha, 2004). However, China has not aligned itself with the worldwide trend of teacher training programmes to support LGBTQI+ learners. According to Kwok (2017), some regions have a high prevalence of harmful public attitudes towards sexual minorities. The rights of the LGBTQI+ are opposed by religious groups, especially Christians, and some schools become sites of reproducing homophobia as a result. In addition, cultural taboos do not allow discussions about sexual diversity in a context where socio-cultural norms such as heterosexual marriage focus on the maintenance of family continuance. In a study conducted in Hong Kong by Kwok (2019, p. 354), a male teacher participant noted:

I feel that the family value of filial piety works along with religious concepts to stir up trouble. For example, marriage and giving birth for the continuation of the ancestral line are a must for Chinese. The church will then stir up trouble by saying that homosexuals will end up with these situations: unable to giving birth, no offspring and abnormal, creating very prejudiced voices in our school.

Kwok (2019) asserts that teachers demonstrate an awareness of the intolerance and prejudicial attitudes towards non-normative gender identities in Chinese society, and the exclusion of LGBTQI+ identities often stem from traditional values and religion.

3.3.2 South Africa: Silence, Invisibility and Marginalisation of LGBTQI+

During the apartheid regime in South Africa, several laws criminalised homosexuality. The members of the LGBTQI+ community were perceived as perpetrators of crimes merely because of their sexuality. This made it very difficult for LGBTQI+ individuals to report any criminal offences that were directed towards them (Cook, 2003). The year 1994 marked the beginning of democracy in South Africa and the equality clause in the new South African Constitution, 1996 legalised homosexuality (Cock, 2003; Matebeni, 2013). According to Butler et. al. (2003,

p. 5), in the post-apartheid South Africa the tenets of inclusivity, non-discrimination and tolerance are actively encouraged and legislated across all sectors of society, including education. In some parts of Africa, there exists a virulent anti-gay sentiment produced by cultural and religious beliefs. Throughout history, LGBTQI+ individuals were and still are discriminated against, harassed and stigmatised (Ellis, 2009). Although gay and lesbian individuals have been granted legal protection and human rights, the literature in South Africa suggests high levels of homophobia and transphobia (Matebeni, 2013).

The cultural background of many people in South Africa entrenches heterosexism; society perceives heterosexuality as the only natural model for relationships. This conception was also previously sanctioned by law, i.e., same sex marriages were illegal. In general, heterosexual relationships were, and to some extent still are, considered superior to homosexual relationships (Barker, 2012). Homophobia can emanate from living in a society that is rooted in dominant culture that has a specific and rigid understanding of gender and masculinity (Reddy, 2002). In this context, homosexual behavior may be seen as a threat to cultural dominance. In rural communities, people's expressions are rooted in cultural traditions and values (Maluleke, 2012). These generational traditions include compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchy (Ngubane, 2012). In the context of rurality, heterosexual procreation is important and is a social expectation established by the rural community at large (Msibi, 2018; Ngubane 2010).

A study conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network found that 90% of queer South Africans were at some point emotionally abused and more than half faced physical abuse (2007). In South Africa, hate crimes based on LGBTQI discrimination are not documented separately. Consequently, these crimes are concealed by overall crime statistics and it results in unaccountability for violent attacks of discrimination against LGBTQI individuals. The limited South African data is indicative of elevated levels of anti-gay victimisation that are in line with the findings of studies conducted globally (Wells & Poldor, 2006).

Sexually diverse identities frequently face marginalisation and stigmatisation (Stryker, 2008; Kennedy & Helen, 2010; Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2012; Msibi, 2012; Bhana, 2014; Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014; Malo-Juvera, 2016). These individuals' fundamental human rights are infringed upon by the heterosexual majority who sometimes position their identities as subordinate and inferior.

Bhana (2014) argues that sexuality is a cultural construct, which is highly gendered. Societies

deeply rooted in the dominant culture, remain discriminative against sexually diverse identities; there is still a culture of silence around sexuality and gender topics. Moreover, Bhana (2014) contends that cultural expectations relating to gender in a patriarchal society often shapes how heterosexual individuals commit acts of violence and abuse. In addition, Bhana (2010, p. 14) argues that cultural and social context exacerbates these expectations and hinders the work towards equality. Learners are heavily influenced by their families and peers as well as the larger societies they live in.

Some studies in the South African context demonstrate that many still regard homosexuality as un-African (Msibi, 2011; Reddy, 2002; Jagessar, 2016). This view perceives homosexuality as foreign to Africa. Msibi (2011) affirms this belief by explaining that contemporary African society believes that sexually diverse identities did not exist before colonialism and were introduced to African communities by Western settlers. Moreover, Jagessar (2016, p. 38) notes that this belief is also present in many educational contexts across the country. In addition, Francis and Msibi (2011) argue that heterosexuality is normalised in schools and this hinders support for LGBTQI+ learners as well as education on sexuality.

3.4 Issues of Rurality and the African Cultural Context: Rejection and Erasure of LGBTQI+ Identities.

South Africa, like many other countries, is heavily influenced by patriarchy. However, massive legislative and societal strides have seen women empowered and many LGBTQI+ individuals are increasingly accepted and embraced by those who are heterosexual. However, for many, this threatens masculinity and can subsequently lead to anger and aggression. LGBTQI+ individuals form part of a marginalised populace and are exposed to high levels of homophobic and transphobic violence (Maake, Rugunanan & Smuts, 2019).

Researching gender diversity in rural schools is important in assisting teachers and learners to help develop strategies to combat impediments surrounding acceptance and inclusivity (Tuters, 2014). Several scholars have written about issues of gender and culture in the rural South African context (Moletsane & Ntombela, 2010, Msibi, 2012 & Bhana, 2003; 2016).

Msibi (2009) noted:

In 2008, queer learners were escorted out of the residence by straight male students at the University of Zululand, an institution of higher learning, and a place where social norms should be challenged and destabilised.

Evidently, in the context of rural South Africa, homophobic violence is pervasive, and the queer community is seen as deviant and as representing a threat to the cultural norms of society. Msibi (2009, p. 53) explains that deviance from normative constructions of masculinity may result in homophobia or homophobic violence directed at those who do conform. In rural communities, traditional and normative masculinities are still dominant. Bhana (2010, p.10) argues that gender in rural KwaZulu-Natal bears the stamp of historical processes.

Culture, tradition, and religion have played a major role in the refusal to accept LGBTQI+ identities. In this regard, sexual diverse individuals are perceived as sinful and a threat to heteronormativity, which is valued traditionally as well as in terms of religion (Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017). The heteronormative binary conception of gender generally reflects societal norms and expectations (Woolley, 2017), and is defined as a cultural phenomenon that reinforces hate crimes towards the LGBTQI+ community (De Palma & Jenet, 2010). The refusal to accept or to marginalise LGBTQI+ individuals is an active way in which those who fit in traditional gender boxes maintain power and position in society. As a result of cultural and societal norms, LGBTQI+ individuals may be victimised and excluded from their families and society (Shah et al., 2018).

3.5 School Climate: Persistent Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia in South African Schools.

In South African educational settings, there has been an increased focus on investigating sexual diversity (Francis, 2017). The way in which teachers categorise learners in schools, is a result of their own socialisation and their embeddedness in their society and culture. Teachers can obviously also be influenced by the views of their colleagues (Coburn, 2005). Research by Msibi (2012) discloses important insight when it comes to how teachers treat queer learners as well as how homophobic teachers respond when other teachers embrace these learners. Tutors (2015) explains that rural places are often seen as homogeneous and perceived as lacking diversity. However, as Solomon and Sekayi (2007) have argued, learners in rural schools have diverse identities with regards to gender, sexuality, class, religion, and cultural backgrounds. Woolley (2017) highlights the embeddedness of heteronormative binary gender expectation; when societal norms are maintained through heteronormativity, those who identify as queer are seen as a threat to cultural expectations that view gender as natural.

The body of literature highlighting the experiences of transgender individuals indicate that there is a prevalence of violence directed at transgender individuals. Homophobic and transphobic

harassment is a global phenomenon that extends across all cultures and beliefs (Nixon, 2010).

3.5.1 Construction of Masculinities in Maintaining Patriarchy

In schools, boys are faced with a substantial amount of pressure to declare and perform their masculinity (De Wet 2007; Morojele, 2013). This pressure emanates from the deep embeddedness of patriarchy (Morojele, 2013). The nature of patriarchal ideologies is influenced by strong cultural beliefs and socio-cultural expectations that often work hand in hand with religion (UNICEF, 2014). These social structures are very influential and dangerous as they feed one another in constructing masculinities. Msibi (2012) argues that violence prevails as a means of maintaining heterosexuality, masculinity, and patriarchy. Hence, it is perceived as imperative for men to conform to constructed masculinities to avoid homophobic violence (Msibi, 2009).

The construction of masculinities is, therefore, associated with heteronormativity (Reygan & Lynette, 2014). Hubbard (2007) notes that dominant African traditions have socialised boys to exercise and possess power to control and dominate and they, therefore, assert their masculinity, which is readily accepted and celebrated in a heteronormative society. In many societies, heterosexual boys are raised in ways which maintain and encourage masculine behaviour (Adam & Coltrane, 2005). These boys are likely to express their hostility towards LGBTQI+ individuals (Youdell, 2004) by teasing them at school, using homophobic insults and isolating them as they see these learners as deviating from socio-cultural norms (Haywood & Macan Ghaill, 2012). Understanding these traditional expressions of masculinity becomes important in order to make sense of how gender inequalities are reproduced in schools.

A study in Lesotho by De Wet (2007) found that gender inequality in schools is an indicator for patriarchal regimes in a particular society. Domination and marginalisation in schools are about unequal power relations that often produce violence towards sexually diverse identities (Ngakane, Muthukrishna & Ngcobo, 2012). South African schools are influenced by the dominant sexual culture that supports heterosexuality (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis 2017; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012) while marginalising homosexuality and providing limited knowledge about sexually diverse identities (Francis 2012; 2017; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012). South Africa has recorded high levels of violence across the board with black African heterosexuals largely alleged as perpetrators (Msibi, 2012).

3.5.2 Reinforcing Gender Confinement

Schools are social sites that often allow for the development and reinforcement of sex segregations, stereotypes, and even discriminatory actions (Glickman, 2016).

In Australian schools, transgender identities are becoming more visible. However, school uniforms are still gendered (Jones et al., 2016) and learners are compelled to wear uniforms that align with their natal sex (Glickman, 2016). Transgender individuals are being silenced in schools by segregated uniforms. For example, in a study by Jones et al. (2016), a transgender female participant described how wearing trousers was discouraged at their school and was deemed inappropriate for girls. The same study found that boys were sent for detention for wearing girls' uniforms and transgender females were forced to wear a dress/skirt (Jones et al., 2016).

Most schools have not accepted and/or are not accommodative of transgender identities; there is no flexibility in terms of school uniforms and the needs of transgender identities are not met. For Leonardi and Staley (2018), teachers in the US show no interest in disrupting the privileged normative gender identities and challenging gender binaries that are prevalent in schools. DePalma and Jennett (2012) argue that homophobia and transphobia are cultural constructs and are thus endorsed in schools. This is evident in places like school washrooms and bathrooms facilities, which are gender labelled as 'boys' or 'girls'. These areas are designed to accommodate gender binarism without consideration for transgender learners who may also want to use the same facilities (Kennedy & Helen, 2010).

Schools should be gender inclusive and support and make all learners feel comfortable. Gender binarism should not be emphasised. For example, schools should not force learners to line up as boys and girls during assembly. This relays the message that the school is not accommodative to learners who are gender non-conforming or transgender.

3.5.3 Teachers' Contribution to Hostile Environments for Queer Learners

The number of learners identifying as trans and who have transitioned socially are increasing in rural school settings (Fast & Olson, 2018). In these schools, teachers have a fixed assumption that all learners are heterosexual, and this often reflects societies' expectation within the dominant cultural ideology that purports that people are either male or female (Drescher, 2010; Valocchi, 2005). These beliefs disregard other sexualities. One student in a school setting noted that the teacher tried to 'chase me' from the class because she didn't want to teach an

‘istabane’ (Human Rights Watch, 2011, p. 9). It is evident that learners who do not follow dominant gender norms are vulnerable to discrimination.

Reygan (2016) asserts that despite South Africa’s inclusive legislative policies, the country is recognised as having one of the highest rates of hate crimes against the queer community in the world. For Msibi (2009, p.51), South Africa is still very much a patriarchal society.

According to Bhana (2012) and Francis (2012), teachers do not possess the required expertise to appropriately manage sexual diversity in their classrooms. Zibane (2012) states that many African teachers perpetuate patriarchy; for example, in some schools, LGBTQI+ learners are not allowed to wear school uniforms of the opposite sex and teachers often use the school’s rules to ensure that heterosexuality and homophobia are maintained (Msibi, 2012). Msibi (2012, p. 526) also writes that in conservative South African contexts, particularly in Zulu settings, it is still seen as wrong for women to wear pants as these are meant for men. In rural settings, people are still heavily influenced by traditional cultural norms.

A study conducted in Mpumalanga provides insight into how queer learners suppress their sexual identities because of hostile schooling environments (Daniels, Struthers, Maleke, Catabay, Lane, McInteyre & Coastes, 2019). Most of the participants in the study (Daniels et al., 2019) reported to have experienced discrimination and some were forced to conform to gender norms imposed by the established social structure and reinforced in the school system (Daniel, et al., 2019, p. 364). Social structures based on gender are formed indirectly and directly. Direct and indirect influences are equally dangerous as each feed of the other. Similarly, a participant in Msibi’s study (2012, p. 527) noted that, in South Africa it is difficult to talk about gender issues, and much more when it comes to gay and lesbian issues. It is apparent that in Zulu cultures, sexism and homophobia are also maintained through a culture of silence.

Msibi (2012) explained how some teachers made homophobic comments in such a way so as to be heard by teachers who support queer learners. In his study, a teacher participant noted that:

I’m tired of being assigned gay children. Whenever Mdu (a gay learner participant) comes into the office (staff room), other teachers just look at me and say your person is here ... talk quickly to him so that he can get out here (p. 525).

Teachers who support queer learners are given the responsibility to attend to queer learners, (Bhana, 2014) while teachers who hold homophobic and heterosexist views refuse to provide

equal education and treatment to non-conforming learners (Chandra, 2019). Similarly, Francis (2017) asserts that the research highlights how heterosexuality is normalised in schools. Butler (2008) states that this often includes the removal of queer learners by ignoring them and disregarding their existence mainly because they are considered different'. Queer people are considered as deviant, and the expectation is still that all individuals should follow a gender identity that aligns with heteronormativity (Schilt, 2010).

Several scholars examining diverse sexualities and have focused their research on the school setting in an effort to destabilise the heteronormativity associated with it (Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier and Mitchell, 2016; Gegenfurter & Gebhardt, 2017; Mangin, 2018). The Department of Basic Education (2015) notes the prevalence of homophobic bullying in South African schools and argues that it creates an unhealthy school environment. Similarly, the report from Wells and Polders (2006) show how some teachers and school principals intentionally make schooling extremely hard for some learners, particularly by enforcing binary dress codes, which comes down to compulsory heterosexuality. For Francis (2017), teachers remain central in maintaining heterosexual norms in school and educational settings.

Bhana (2012) conducted a qualitative analysis across five schools in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng and found that teachers did not feel comfortable teaching about issues that involve homosexuality. The study found religion to be the most frequent hindrance for the acceptance of LGBTQI+ identities. Schools are sites where transphobia and homophobia are continuously produced (Bhana, 2012). In addition, Bhana (2012, p. 313) found that LGBTQI+ learners are constantly silenced. One teacher participant noted that 'I don't need to know it, I don't need to see it'. Lastly, findings in a study conducted by Francis and DePalma (2014) found that teachers lacked knowledge on sexual diversity.

Learners with sexually diverse identities often have a negative schooling experience because of stigmatisation and marginalisation within the spaces they occupy (Msibi, 2012; Bhana, 2012; Hasan & Shukar, 2018). They are ostracised (Kennedy & Helen, 2010) and some heterosexuals readily infringe on their basic human rights (Syed, 2019). A study conducted by Russell and Hatzenbuehler (2017) found that transgender learners are mistreated in schools. They are maltreated by their peers in the form of physical, verbal, and sexual harassment (Boesen & Palmer, 2012). Teachers are no exception as they also discriminate against queer youth (Butler, Alpaslan, Allen & Astbury, 2003).

3.5.4 Derogative Language and Homophobic Remarks towards LGBTQI+

Avalos (2011) postulates that teacher expectations can promote gender diversity. Gender diversity can be realised by teachers who are invested in educational and social change. There is a dire need for teachers to show learners how to embrace diversity (Rudd, 2013). However, a number of challenges exist in realising this ideal. Schools can easily reproduce gender stereotyping and inequality. A participant in Msibi's (2012, p.5) study noted that 'the other day, someone called me a stabane' in class and Mr Msomi just laughed with the other kids. I felt like crying'. For some learners, schools are an oppressive environment and teachers can make the schooling experience mentally and emotionally challenging, especially when not providing the necessary support (Msibi, 2012; Bhana, 2014; Francis, 2012). Teachers share the responsibility of making the school environment safe and are thus obligated to address the problem of homophobic language in school settings. Greytak, Kosciw and Diaz (2009) assert that when staff fail to interject when learners use discriminatory language, it normalises homophobia. Similarly, Francis (2017) argues that teachers who turn a blind eye to homophobic bullying suggest to learners that such behaviour is allowed.

In a study conducted by Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier and Mitchel (2016), one participant (transgender male) explained how he was verbally abused and discriminated against by his principal:

"The school principal said he will never call me a male or use male pronouns until I have my gender reassignment therapy done, which will never happen until I have left school. It makes me depressed so much that a lot of the time I can't focus at school. Sometimes I really hate myself for this, and I want to die or to hit myself so hard so that I could faint".

Greytak, Kosciw and Diaz (2009) discuss the experiences of transgender learners and state that gender expression and sexual orientation are targeted characteristics when it comes to discrimination and bullying. Teachers are not supposed to mis-gender or dead name (the name that a transgender individual used before they transitioned) sexually diverse learners. Stone and Dahir (2015) assert that the duty of teachers is always intertwined with the fact that teachers are agents of change and transformation. Unfortunately, many learners are called names and threatened in the presence of teachers. It is imperative that teachers accept and or/respect the rights of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming learners; it is critical to act as an ally or agent of change for LGBTQI+ learners. Greytal et al. (2009) found

that 87% of transgender learners were reported to have been harassed verbally due to their gender expression and 89% because of their sexual orientation. It is apparent that transgender learners are at an increased risk of victimisation in comparison to their non-transgender counterparts.

Teachers are the ones responsible for destabilising the cultural norms of masculine hegemony in schools because they are harming social equality. However, many teachers remain homophobic. Transgender persons are frequently subjected to comments about how they expressed their gender at school, for example, a learner being told that he is not masculine enough or homophobic remarks such as faggot or moffie. The findings of Greytak et al. (2009) suggest that 90% of learners reported that it is common to hear biased language, homophobic remarks and derogative language directed at transgender learners while at school. According to Bhana (2014), discrimination of this kind can manifest in a school environment when gender roles are defined by language and culture. Schools reflect the society in which they are embedded.

3.5.5 Curriculum for Sexual Diversity

The formal and informal curriculum are largely affected by the heteronormativity that exists within an educational context (Haddad, 2013). It comprises of the unnoticed attitudes and norms that are marked by compulsory heterosexuality reinforced in the curriculum (Francis, 2017). This curriculum serves the dominant culture of heterosexuality that is pervasive in South Africa. The curriculum leaves teachers with inaccurate knowledge, which learners are taught either directly or indirectly (Francis, 2017).

Hidden curriculum also plays a major role in constructing gender inequalities. Alongside the formal curriculum, values and perspectives are communicated to learners. The hidden curriculum plays a role as a secondary source of reinforcement with regards to the functions of sex, sexuality, and gender inequalities (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Gender differences occur in the realm of classroom behaviour. In this regard, teachers are already struggling with teaching sex education; teaching sexual diversity becomes even more difficult since the curriculum doesn't provide proper guidance (Francis, 2012).

In South Africa, issues relating to sexual diversity can possibly be taught under the subject of Life Orientation. Sexual diversity remains unaddressed within the Life Orientation curriculum (Francis, 2012). The subject is premised on teaching career choices and physical education. There is no educational policy that calls for the need to address issues involving homosexuality and sexual diversity (Richardson, 2002), despite the South African Constitution's declaration

of equality in respect of sexual orientation (Francis & Msibi, 2011; Francis, 2012). Teachers often avoid or minimise discussions of sexuality and sexual diversity in their classrooms; this is due to several factors, including that fact that teachers themselves may hold negative attitudes towards non-conforming individuals (Francis, 2012). In a study conducted by Francis (2012) and that comprised of 11 Life Orientation teachers, teachers highlighted that the curriculum does not stipulate what is expected in this regard and they therefore do not know how to approach such subject matters.

3.6 Impact of Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia

School environments influence the educational success of all learners, including LGBTQI+ learners (Black, Fedewa & Gonzalez, 2012; Kosciw, Gretak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Richardson, 2009). It is no surprise that research indicates hostile school climates as having negative effects on transgender youth's academic success. Schools are guided by clear policies to promote gender equality (Riggs and Bartholomaeus, 2018; Taylor, Meyer, Peter, Ristock, Short and Campbell, 2016). However, transgender learners are victims of violence and have an increased risk of attempting suicide because of the high levels of discrimination perpetrated by their heterosexual peers and their teachers' complicity in this violence (Jones et al., 2016).

For some heterosexual learners, schooling is an exciting experience; for many queer learners it can be harrowing as they have to deal not only with their own struggles about their identity but also with the discrimination and homophobic attitudes that they face daily (Chandra, 2019). Teachers remain responsible for addressing issues of social inequality within school settings (Francis, 2017). Bhana (2014, p. 7) note the following statement by a study participant:

“That’s why I say as long as it’s not a major issue, it is their situation, they sort it out ... I’m not saying they are not human beings, I’m just saying, don’t put it in my face and expect me to do something about it, it’s not what I believe in”.

A harmful school environment has a detrimental impact on LGBTQI+ learners. Butler et. al. (2003) notes an example of two gender diverse learners that committed suicide after their principal threatened to have them expelled because they expressed their gender in a way that did not correspond with their natal sex. This depicts homo/transphobia which violates the human rights, social well-being, and dignity of LGBTQI+ learners (Divan, Cortez, Smelyanskaya & Keatley, 2016). According to Human Rights Watch (2011), the level of

homophobia and transphobia in schools endangers queer learners and many teachers undermine the human rights of queer learners (Francis, 2017). Schools can create a cauldron of homophobic and transphobic sentiment. Queer learners often feel neglected and isolated within schools and this impacts negatively on their psychosocial development and education; it may also lead to high levels of absenteeism (McAurthur, 2015). Eight studies reviewed for this study have emphasised the vast and irreparable personal and educational trauma and damage of LGBTQI+ learners in unsupportive and volatile educational settings (Bhana, 2012, 2014; Msibi, 2012; Francis, 2012, 2017; Wells & Polders, 2006; Kowen & Davis; Butler et. al., 2003; Butler, 2008).

Nunn and Bolt (2015) affirm that one of the consequences of victimisation is the negative effect on educational progress and success. Transgender learners who have experienced hate crimes in schools are much more likely to be affected in their abilities to maintain their education. They tend to lose interest in their academic activities and their performance suffers because of the stress triggered by being frequently victimised. Greytak et. al. (2009, p. 48) note that in this way, school-based victimisation may impinge on students' right to an education. The National School Climate Survey in 2007 documented that incidences of harassment were closely linked to educational ambitions and absenteeism; many LGBTQI+ learners feared for their safety and thus do not want to attend school. Therefore, by missing school, these learners try to avoid hurtful experiences of victimisation.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed teachers' construction of transgender identities from both a global and South African perspective. The literature shows how the intersections between heteronormativity, compulsory heterosexuality, identity, and discrimination are reflected in race, culture, education, gender, and sexuality. The literature also revealed how transgender identities are perceived and constructed in school settings. It is evident that teachers' understanding and construction of transgender identities are influenced by the social and cultural norms of the communities they teach in. The impact that homophobia and transphobia have on sexually diverse learners was also explored.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research involves a systematic process of collecting and logically analysing data for a specific purpose (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.490). In this research study, I examined how teachers of grade nine and ten learners aged between fourteen and sixteen years old construct transgender identities. In doing so, I investigated how constructions of transgender identities are intimately entangled with societal norms and religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs as well as established notions of femininities and masculinities. These components often work together to propagate violence towards gender non-conforming individuals. A review of the literature was presented in the preceding chapter in order to theoretically determine how gender and sexually diverse identities are formed. This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was utilised to conduct my research study. Thereafter, I discuss the following key components in conducting the study: the research context, sampling and data collection methods, and the data analysis procedure used to analyse my findings. I also explain how trustworthiness was achieved and discuss the ethical considerations at play. Below is a representation of the process of data collection activities.



Figure 4.1: Data collection activities. Adapted from Creswell (2013).

4.2 Research Design and Paradigm

Research Site	Research Design	Methodology, instruments and sampling	Participants	Phase	Interview duration
KwaZulu-Natal, Botha's Hill, the valley of a thousand hills KwaNyuswa.	Research Approach: Qualitative Epistemology: Interpretivist paradigm Analysis: Thematic Phenomenology	Methodology: Phenomenological study Research, instruments/methods: Semi-structured individual interviews with 24 secondary school teachers.	Participants: 24 teachers Race: African Gender: Teachers: 8 males and 16 females.	Senior & Further Education and Training	Individual: 00:17:10 minutes 01:10:00 minutes NB. Duration varied depending on how long each participant took to answer all questions asked.

Table 4.2: Table of Study

4.2.1 Research Design

In this study, I adopted a qualitative research approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) note that one of the aims of qualitative research is to describe, understand and interpret people's experiences of the phenomenon under consideration. It allows for flexibility within the research process and this flexibility is vital as qualitative research deals with actual human beings who exist within complex real-life contexts. Additionally, this flexibility allows the researcher to gather meaningful and in-depth data from research participants, specifically the meanings they attach to the phenomenon that is being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Reddy, 2019).

Creswell (2013) notes that qualitative research emphasises the importance of acknowledging the researcher's role in the research process and thus the ways in which the researcher can influence the research process as well as its overall findings. In this study, a qualitative research approach was the appropriate research methodology to conduct an in-depth investigation into how teachers construct transgender identities. A qualitative research approach also provided a platform to acknowledge the impact I have on the research findings. Pitcher (2018) notes that the use of qualitative research allows for different perspectives. Additionally, flexibility allows for initial questions to be changed or asked in different ways (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

4.2.2 An Interpretivist Paradigm

This study adopted an interpretive research paradigm. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) note that within an interpretive paradigm, the researcher acknowledges that the subjective knowledge that research participants produce are shaped by their individual views and experiences.

Creswell (2007) relates the interpretive paradigm with social constructivism. An interpretivist research paradigm focuses on understanding research participants who demonstrate diverse attitudes, views and behaviours (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, it seeks to understand the influence of social context in shaping meanings and therefore understands meanings as socially constructed (Creswell, 2007; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). Singh (2004; 48) notes the following:

Qualitative approach makes it possible for the researcher to get close to the data in order to produce certain levels of explanation in what is being observed. This gives the researcher an opportunity to interact with the speakers by engaging in a dialogue without any preconceived notions of what the problem areas might be. It is an ongoing process which the researcher will understand the phenomenon being studied from the participants.

A paradigm is often constructed as a worldview, involving a collection of beliefs that leads to action (Lincoln and Guba, 2002). Researchers are able to explore and understand the world by interpreting individual attitudes and perceptions and this allows for a different set of meanings (Creswell, 2007). The interpretive research paradigm is appropriate for the aims of my research study as it established a suitable platform to allow participants to provide open and honest accounts of their experiences and understandings of the phenomenon being studied.

4.2.3A Phenomenological Study

This study adopted a phenomenological method. This method seeks to understand a specific phenomenon by means of interpreting the experiences of diverse individuals (Creswell, 2007). The term phenomenological refers to participants' perspectives of an event (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.346). Within this methodology, participants are able to describe meanings based on their experiences (Creswell, 2017). Teacher participants shared commonalities with regards to the factors that influenced their ideas and understandings of the phenomenon being investigated. It was found that most of the participants' first exposure or encounter with gender non-conforming people were at university. This methodology, therefore, enabled teacher participants to disclose their experience of learners' gender identities.

4.3 Location and Context of the Study

Figure 4.3 shows a map of Botha's Hill, KwaNyuswa rural area.



The research site is based in the valley of a thousand hills in Botha's hill (KwaNyuswa), west of Durban, outside Hillcrest. KwaNyuswa is a rural community characterised by extreme economic inequality. The location of the valley is approximately fifty kilometres outside the main city centre of Durban (eThekweni) (Jukuda, 2010). The rural area of KwaNyuswa is marked by normative social practices that often reinforce highly gendered norms. Within certain areas of the valley, the ownership of cattle and land forms the basis of economic activity, as is common in many rural communities. Some of the households still cultivate home gardens. Depending on the size of the property, these gardens may contribute significantly to food security (Cross, 2002). Some families cultivate up to 10 000 m² to harvest food (Cross, 2002). These families are thus dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The KwaNyuswa area (Valley of a Thousand Hills) has steep mountains that separate regions.

The area also has water channels located west of the Durban city; this city previously formed part of the KwaZulu homeland but now forms part of the Durban Metropolitan Area (Mzimela, 2013). Large tribal communities inhabit this area, and it is situated on the outermost peripheries of urban development (west of the Inanda Dam and north-west of Pinetown). Located to the south is emaQadini, a tribal community, and on the east side is KwaNgcolosi. North lies the Umngeni river and the area of emaPhephetheni that is relatively remote and inhabited by a tribal community. To the south of KwaNyuswa are white-owned farms, and farming towns can be found alongside the Durban/Pietermaritzburg transport roads. This area is changing into a beautiful tourist destination and suburbs are developing. To the far south, is the Shongweni area, which is famous for horse racing, polo, farming, and tourism (Mzimela, 2013).

Before the 1990's, basic service delivery and infrastructure in the Valley were limited. However, inner parts of KwaNyuswa now have more established infrastructure. HIV/AIDS is prevalent in the area and, as such, the area has many community-level AIDS services. KwaNyuswa settlement is the largest in the Thousand Hills valley and it extends across most of the central high ground between the Umngeni and Umlazi rivers (Mzimela, 2013, p.40). The community has access to a hospice and orphanage in the nearest town and these facilities also help individuals that suffer from AIDS. According to Valley Trust (2001), the area also has a local clinic that provides care to AIDS patients and a small hospital that takes care of patients affected by tuberculosis. The population numbers in the area are increasing and this has a negative impact on its economic structure, which is based on older rural ways of stock raising and household farming.

Although a large part of KwaNyuswa falls under local governmental authority, the izigodi ward sections (about 50% of the area) remains under rural, tribal organisation (Integrated Development Plan, 2011/2012). In this area, traditional authorities are normally given the task to undertake processes of ukubekwa which refers to land allocation and grant approvals for development which do not compromise amasimu which refers to agricultural areas; amangcwaba refers to ritual sensitive areas that are of cultural importance. However, Municipal Demarcation legislation has resulted in many tribally structured territories in the south and west of the city of Durban being demarcated under municipal authority.

Residents of the Thousand Hills region do not welcome these developments. Rather than seeing it as an improvement to their quality of life, community members are fearful of losing their comparatively affordable way of life founded upon old economic strategies of farming and land

cultivation. Simultaneously, they are also fearful of losing the more affable system of local micro-governance, a progressive but weakly structured chieftaincy. Additionally, this loss of micro-governance would mean that they would also be subjected to metro urban taxes and charges.

The total population of the KwaNyuswa area is 34, 750. 46% of the population are male and 54% female (EThekweni Community Profile, 2011-2016). About 12, 367 are illiterate, which amounts to around 44% whilst 22, 383 or 56% are literate (EThekweni Community Profile, 2011-2016). The area is made up of African people who are Zulu speaking. It is important to note that people from neighbouring areas have easy access to KwaNyuswa and this leads to population growth.

This study consists of three high schools in the area of KwaNyuswa, namely, Fundanathi Secondary, Ibanathi Secondary and Ifalakhe Secondary in the Pinetown District. I have selected these schools as research sites because they are easily accessible as I reside within the area. These public schools are organised into quintiles. The schools are rated as quintile 3 due to the fact that they have inadequate resources, and they are non-fee-paying schools and government owned. Although these schools are surrounded by tuck shops, most learners cannot afford goods or stuffs from these shops. Many learners come from impoverished backgrounds and they rely on feeding schemes provided by the government.

These schools are relatively large and consist of four blocks and two stories. They are also well resourced with numerous facilities, such as sick-rooms, science labs, agricultural science labs, technical drawing rooms, kitchens, boardrooms, libraries, changing rooms and halls. The number of learners per classroom ranges from 35-45 making teaching and learning manageable. The schools have large assembly areas and sports fields where learners undergo physical education and take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities such as soccer, volleyball, and netball. As I was interviewing teachers from these schools, they often complained about learners being absent from school and classes on a regular basis, especially male learners. Bullying and teasing towards female learners and male learners who were perceived to be gay, or transgender also presented a continuous problem. This site was thus a suitable site for me to investigate how teachers construct transgender identities that do not fit into gender binary categories and norms of society. In the next section, I explain the steps undertaken to recruit participants for the desired sample size and research objectives.

4.4 Sample Recruitment (Purposive Sampling)

In this study, purposive sampling was used as it was most suited to the research aims and objectives. Robinson (2014) notes that determining the target population is vital within qualitative research as participants need to possess certain criteria that are important to the research aims and objectives. The criterion for participation in this study was only open to African teachers who were teaching in the selected schools in the research site. Most of the participants grew up and lived in the area. Those that did not grow up or live in the area were influenced by the cultural norms generally enforced in rural settings. Additionally, all participants met the criteria of the study in presenting their constructions of transgender identities (Reddy, 2019, p.54). Sampling was convenient for the selection of the schools and purposive for the selection of the participants.

Purposive sampling is a sampling procedure within which specific participants or research settings are selected in order to provide relevant data for a specific research phenomenon that cannot be generated by random participants. Participants were carefully chosen with intent (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Participants had experience in teaching in rural settings and, therefore, capable to provide data that is relevant to the research outcomes. The specific observations, knowledge and experiences of the participants meant that they could meaningfully contribute to the study. A sample of 24 high school teachers was purposively recruited. These teachers are African and Zulu speakers. I anticipated that they have deeper understandings of the socio-cultural norms in this specific rural research site, and that they may have varying understandings and/or constructions of sexual identities and transgenderism specifically. I assumed that they have had personal encounters with gender non-conforming learners and have had different experiences with them. Lastly, whether these teachers accommodate or reject these learners may be influenced by culture, experiences, or emotions.

Robinson (2014) notes that convenience sampling entails a process of choosing participants who are accessible and readily available. For this reason, I selected participants that I already had previously encountered. Their participation was on a voluntary basis and dependent on their time availability during or outside school hours. Teachers who wanted to participate made it clear from the beginning, whilst those that weren't interested also expressed as much early on. I chose these schools because of feasibility and for convenience purposes. The research sites were easily accessible as they are located in KwaNyuswa where I live. Since some teachers also lived in the area, I anticipated travelling to their homes or meeting in a place where they would be comfortable. I had the option to either use local transport or walk when I wanted to

move between the selected schools.

4.5 Conducting Qualitative Research

Figure 4.5: Table of teacher participants' profiles: Individual semi-structured interviews

No	Teacher participant	Race	Sex	Subjects taught	Interview Duration
1.	Ms Zungu	African	F	Life Sciences & Geography	00:20:12
2.	Ms Mapanga	African	F	Life Sciences	00:34:32
3.	Ms Ngema	African	F	English First Additional Language	00:26:09
4.	Ms Ndawonde	African	F	Dramatic Arts & English First Additional Language	00:29:35
5.	Ms Blose	African	F	English First Additional Language	00:27:40
6.	Mr Sulelo	African	M	English First Additional Language & Tourism	00:18:41
7.	Mr Mayisela	African	M	Geography & Physics	00:52:43
8.	Ms Shibe	African	F	Geography & Life Orientation	00:29:12
9.	Mr Tusi	African	M	Geography & Life Orientation	00:28:46
10.	Ms Jele	African	F	Economic and Management Sciences & Maths	00:30:00
11.	Mr Mhlungu	African	M	Geography & Tourism	00:21:53
12.	Ms Dongwe	Nigerian	F	Mathematical Literacy	00:19:55
13.	Ms Bulawayo	African	F	IsiZulu & Business Studies	00:21:50
14.	Ms Mapisa	African	F	English First Additional Language & Social Sciences	00:31:54
15.	Mr Basi	African	M	Life Sciences & Geography	00:31:42
16.	Ms Zindela	African	F	History	00:30:12

17.	Mr Sothole	African	M	Geography	00:26:51
18.	Ms Nxumalo	African	F	Life Orientation& English First Additional Language	00:17:12
19.	Ms Maklina	African	F	Maths & LifeOrientation	00:23:39
20.	Ms Tethwayo	African	F	Physical Sciences & Life Orientation	00:29:13
21.	Mr Zikhali	African	M	English First Additional Language	00:19:05
22.	Mr BL	African	M	History	00:24:29
23.	Ms Mathenjwa	African	F	English FirstAdditional Language & Drama Arts	00:24:58
24.	Ms Ndlovu	African	F	English First Additional Language & Creative Arts	00:21:05

4.5.1 Interview Processes (Semi-structured Interviews)

Qualitative research does not prescribe rigid rules when it comes to sample size. Rather, it depends on the required answers, time, and resources (Patton, 2002). This study consists of 24 participants. As I collected data, I attempted to recruit additional participants, but my attempts were futile. I was also discouraged by different participants who kept on producing the same information. As a result, this led me to a difficult point in the study.

Data collection is a process that involves questioning, observing, and reviewing. In this study, I chose semi-structured individual interviews as a data collection tool. This data collection method is common in qualitative research and greatly impacts the plausibility of the research (Cassell & Symon, 2004). This method of data collection was selected as it allowed me to ask open-ended questions and probe participants to obtain an in depth understanding of the research phenomenon.

According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), semi-structured interviews can be conducted face-to-face or telephonically. Although the initial plan was to have face-to-face interviews, I had to resort to conducting interviews telephonically. This was necessitated in order to adhere to the Covid-19 rules preventing physical contact to reduce the spread of the pandemic (Sokhulu, 2020). I had initially planned for interviews to last an hour. However, this was not possible as

I could not force participants to speak when they felt they had said everything they wanted to say.

Data collection through interviews can assist in generating different opinions on a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Creswell (2007) highlights the fact that qualitative research centralises human interaction and allows for various perspectives on a phenomenon. Similarly, properly formulated interview questions can assist participants to respond efficiently (Flick, 2009). I ensured that participants could share honest and truthful opinions based on the questions asked and ensured throughout the process that participants were not intimidated (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009). All semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in English. However, participants could use their first language in order to feel comfortable when responding and to not feel limited in their ability to respond. The interviews were recorded with a cell phone App. These interviews were transcribed verbatim and later saved on emails, a laptop and to an external drive. All of these platforms and devices were secured with passwords that were known only to me for privacy purposes. I then translated all responses to English.

4.6 Data Analysis

During the recruitment stage, many of the teachers that were willing to take part in the study already shared stories about LGBTQI+ learners being discriminated against by other teachers. During this stage, I wanted to make brief notes to use at a later stage of the research. However, this was impossible as we had to observe the Covid-19 regulations and we could not have face to face contact.

In this study, I adopted a thematic data analysis approach to analyse the collected data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) note that data analysis in qualitative research involves a process whereby the data is organised and explained. A researcher makes sense of data according to how the participants define the situation and then notes themes and patterns (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This research comprises of data that is analysed thematically as an iterative (Pitcher, 2018). Tesch (1990) outlines eight steps of data analysis. These steps were used in analysing data in the study:

- a) Making sense of the data: Here the researcher reads that data several times to become familiar with the data.
- b) Data elimination: In this process the data that is not useful to the studies aims and

objectives are removed in order to focus solely on the data that is useful to answering the research question.

- c) Classifying and categorising: In this step the researcher reads the transcripts again and makes notes that attempt to make sense of what the participants were saying.
- d) Coding: Similar responses and ideas that were outlined by participants are grouped together.
- e) Constructing relevant themes: Relevant themes are constructed from the categories constructed.
- f) Cut and paste: Similar topics are cut and pasted within suitable themes
- g) The data is recording on paper.
- h) The data/findings are verified.

The data was analysed thematically by using the process as set out above. This method of analysing data allowed for the discerning of themes and patterns (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). This method involves interpretation, which is fundamental to analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The interviews were recorded verbatim and were transcribed. I shared each participant's interview with them to ensure that they weren't misrepresented. This helped me to establish a precise and consistent way of analysing.

I thoroughly familiarised myself with the collected data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, it is vital that researchers familiarise themselves with the data they have collected. Vaughn and Turner (2016) mention that this is a challenging part of qualitative study because not all data collected is necessarily worth examining and analysing. As mentioned, conducted interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by using a cell phone app. To familiarise myself with the data, I listened to each recording before and after transcribing each interview; I played recordings numerous times for verification and ensured that the transcribed data was accurate. During this process, I made summary notes highlighting phrases and words that I felt were important and aligned with research questions. This enabled me to choose significant data from the data collected. I then produced codes established during close reading of the data. These codes enabled me to see similarities and incongruences in the generated data. I classified the data into common themes to capture the essence of the codes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.377). This was the course of analysis (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Under each theme, I noted similar concepts and ideas and delineated according to sub-themes (Pitcher, 2018, p. 43). Once this stage was completed, I refined all the themes and their interconnections through the use of mind maps. This was done to make sure that the data was accurately captured under

corresponding and congruent themes.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

The first stage of the research involved obtaining research approval to conduct this study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I also attempted to obtain formal consent to use the schools as research sites. This was denied by the principals of the selected schools and they suggested that I obtain permission from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). I then secured this formal permit (see Appendices) and later produced it to all gatekeepers. Thereafter, I was granted permission to use all three schools as researching sites (see Appendices). I pursued this study after Ethical Clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see Appendices).

Thereafter, I phoned all three school principals and arranged to do a brief presentation for this study. The principals consented but on the condition that I first brief them about the content of the study. One principal requested that I present them with the printed literature review. I did all the above without any hesitation. Upon doing this, the principals agreed to the presentations. Most teachers were keen to volunteer as research participants for the study. I secured 28 cell-phone numbers and email addresses from teachers who were interested. I could not obtain enough particulars from possible teacher participants as many of the teachers had to attend to learners, and I did not want to interfere with the teaching and learning process.

Before I could revisit the schools, the South African government announced a state of emergency and the country had to go into lockdown level 5 due to Covid-19. During lockdown, schools were closed, and gatherings were not allowed. I could thus not have face to face meetings with teacher participants. The Research Ethics Committee of the University sent out communication to all students doing research to refrain entirely from such meetings and allowed only for communication that did not involve direct contact with study participants.

Subsequently, I sent out letters to participants through emails and on WhatsApp. Letters included their right to participate in the study, the nature of their participation, what was expected of them, and how the data collected through their participation was managed and reported.

Ethical considerations are important when conducting a research study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Consent forms were sent to all 28 teacher participants, however, only 24 were returned. Teacher participants were reminded of their right of participation and withdrawal

throughout the process, and they were frequently reassured of their anonymity and the protection of their identities.

All data recorded was kept in a safe place that only I had access to. I ensured schools' and participants' anonymity by using pseudonyms to refer to and protect identities. All parties were made aware of the confidentiality of their information. Rallis and Rossman (2009) note that confidentiality refers to the fact that the researcher knows who they collected data from, but they are not allowed to publicise or share this information. This is to ensure participants' right to privacy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I constantly reminded all the teacher participants that their participation was voluntary and that they can withdraw at any stage of the research process if they felt uncomfortable in any way. This information was also included in the participant consent forms. All participants were comfortable in answering all the questions posed. I could not choose a safe space for the participants since we had no contact sessions, however, they were interviewed telephonically outside working hours when some of them were home.

Some participants preferred remaining in their cars after school hours and be interviewed. The reason for this was that some of them were married and have husbands and children. When they get home, they do not get time because they had to be busy with personal stuff. The car was a very private space where they felt they could engage effectively without being disturbed.

4.8 Trustworthiness of the Research

Flick (2009) asserts that it is vital to safeguard the well-being of all research participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) concur and state that a credible study is one that is congruent with ethics. Trustworthiness of the research is, therefore, important as it allows for the evaluation of the worth of the study. Furthermore, credibility, confirmability and reflexivity are the fundamental principles of trustworthiness (Korsjen & Moser, 2018).

4.8.1. Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in Korstjens and Moser (2018) define credibility as one's ability to demonstrate confidence in the research findings. Credibility determines whether the findings of the research are reflective of dependable data from research participants (Anney, 2014). This study used tested research methods that were suitable to the research aims and objectives of the study. The way in which I approached and engaged with participants during the interviews made them comfortable to speak freely. To facilitate this, I informed all

participants beforehand that their participation was voluntary and that they would be at liberty to withdraw at any stage of the research if they wished to do so without any consequences. Many strategies were used in this study to ensure credibility of the findings, all of which were appropriate for the research questions. I constantly emphasised to all participants that the findings of this project would be anonymous and that I made use of pseudonyms. To challenge any personal biases in generating data, my mentor, supervisor and a professional proof-reader checked my work. This allowed several people to note any assumptions and errors (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, external examination of this project forms part of the process. In addition, I enhanced credibility by having WhatsApp video calls with each participant to discuss the findings and presented them with the verbatim transcriptions for verification (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). Participants' full quotes were used in the findings chapter. All the methods used promote the credibility of this dissertation.

4.8.2 Confirmability

Confirmability is described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) as the interpretation of data that should be not grounded in the researcher's viewpoint. To ensure confirmability as an enquirer, the analysis is drawn from the data generated from the participants and inferences are made based on the data set that becomes available through the research process. This process is described by Creswell (2014) as the necessary steps to confirm accuracy. Creswell (2013) recommends that a researcher uses a different set of strategies in order to promote credibility and accuracy. The focus of confirmability is ensuring that the interpretations of data findings are not based on the researcher's preference (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, there were clear audit trails regarding the assertions made and clear evidence generated by the data.

To ensure confirmability, I asked participants the same question in different ways during the interview process to confirm their responses. I used this strategy to ensure dependability and authenticity regarding the information and data obtained; this process is referred to as an audit trial to guarantee that the research is transparent (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.122). I ensured accuracy and rigour by audio recording all interviews with the use of a cell phone Call-App; I activated this app each time I was on a call with a participant. I transcribed all the interviews verbatim and I developed categories of analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

4.8.3 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of understanding the nature of one's study as a researcher and it

includes understanding one's role as an enquirer inside the research site as well as the need to be reflexive when collecting data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As I have theoretical knowledge on the research phenomenon as well as my own understandings, experiences, and beliefs, I inevitably influenced the research process and data analysis. This required that I recognised my bias. I endeavoured to ensure that I was always led by the data generated from the participants in my analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, field notes were recorded to reflect my personal insights gained from and discerned through the data generation process. These field notes were used as reference points in my data management, data analysis and interpretations. Moreover, I noted personal feelings that I felt may influence my analysis during data collection. As Korstjen and Moser (2018) note, an enquirer needs to be reflexive and have a diary to record all preconceptions and biases relating to the research. All analytical data need to be supplemented with reflexive notes (Korstjen & Moser, 2018, p.23). For this reason, I aimed to not allow my personal feelings to affect the results of the study. Since I am part of the LGBTQI+ community, this may have had an influence or resulted in bias when it came to the interview questions and participants' responses. However, noting my biases and past experiences and assumptions has enabled me to maintain as neutral stance as possible during the process of this research. Reflexivity forms a crucial and necessary step in a qualitative research process as researchers must be reflexive and aware of their position throughout the process of gathering data, analysing, and processing; it can easily shape how research findings are interpreted (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

According to Fineafter-Rosenbluh (2017), the researcher's role may interfere with the participants' responses during the interview process. During the interview process, I started by greeting the participants. Thereafter, I asked questions about the subjects and grades they teach in order to make them comfortable. I also endeavoured to be friendly, open, and considerate and showed an interest in their teaching (Fineafter-Rosenbluh, 2017). I felt that this was important so as to not be seen as an authority figure (Reddy, 2019, p.59). This resulted in the participants trusting me, and about five male teacher participants who identify as gay felt comfortable to disclose their sexuality to me. One of these participants was even comfortable enough to give me details about his personal romantic relationship with his partner and how his colleagues perceived his sexual identity. Other teachers contradicted themselves in the sense that they started by rejecting the idea that other sexual identities (as opposed to male/female binarism) should be expressed. As the interviews continued, they became more comfortable and many admitted that they were scared to speak about a subject that they were misinformed

about. During interviews, many participants admitted having friends, relatives and/or family members who formed part of the LGBTQI+ community. Throughout the interviews, I aimed to be as objective as possible towards the teacher participants' responses. However, this was not always an easy task as I matriculated from one of the schools and conducted my teaching practice at the other. Thus, some teachers still viewed me as a former learner and others as a colleague. On the other hand, I did not personally know any individuals in the schools. Thus, in that sense, objectivity could easily be maintained.

The interviews were an incredible experience as the teachers respected me as their former learner, colleague, and most of all as a researcher. Most teachers availed themselves for the interview prior to the scheduled time. Those who were not available called me and asked to reschedule since some were married and had household responsibilities. Some were often tired after a long day of teaching and learning, but still managed to make time in their busy schedules.

4.8.4 Transferability

In ensuring transferability of this study, I provided a detailed background information about the chosen research site which offers context of the research. Gill (1979) emphasised the importance of the researcher in conveying contextual data as it enables transferability. The sample size contributed to the transferability of this study, as it allowed for deeper descriptions of transgender identities during the data collection process. The participants' responses reflect different realities that exist in secondary schools, this has contributed to the body of knowledge that exist and assisted in extensive understanding of the phenomenon being researched.

4.8.5 Limitation of the study

This section presents the limitations I experienced during the study. My initial target was to get 30 teacher participants but I ended up having 24 teacher participants which was below my target. The major limitation that I encountered in this study was time. This was a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its rules. There was a shift in qualitative research methods, researchers had to shift from primary methods of contact sessions to the use of digital technologies. As a result, this study was completed through telephonic interviews and this exceeded the initial time plan to finish interviews. Moreover, during telephonic interviews, some participants often had poor network connection which was a struggle and we sometimes had to reschedule and this presented another time challenge.

A male principal was not comfortable with the study topic and he kept on asking me personal

questions about my sexuality. I had to keep calm and answer some of the questions. I was not comfortable responding because they were not related to the study. He ended up telling me that he will not allow me to conduct the study in the school because he does not own the school. I had to send emails to the Department of Education authorities to ask for a permission to use the chosen school as a research site. This process was time consuming as I had to wait for Departments' response.

When I started the data collection process, I had an agreement with participants that we were going to have our interviews after school hours. The reason being that the research should not interfere with the teaching and learning process. Most of my participants were female, after a long day at work, they had to go home and deal with the house chores, sometimes I would call them and only to find that they were too busy to be interviewed. This was increasingly difficult as I had to often reschedule some of the interviews to ensure that participants had adequate time to answer all questions freely.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. As mentioned, this project is a qualitative study which used an interpretivist paradigm and phenomenological methodology. This approach was best suited to this study as it seeks to examine teachers' constructions of transgender identities in rural secondary schools. This chapter further outlined the purposive and convenience sampling methods of the study. The chapter also outlined the nature of semi-structured interviews and discussed thematic data analysis. Further, the chapter discussed how trustworthiness, validity, credibility, and reflexivity were ensured in this study. Finally, the chapter outlined all ethical and other necessary considerations. In the next chapter, I present my research findings and an analysis of the data that was collected in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I detailed the research methodology adopted in this study. The data analysis is presented over the following two chapters. This chapter, chapter 5, focuses on teachers' constructions and understandings of gender diversity and the second analysis chapter, chapter 6, focuses on the rejection and/or accommodation of gender non-conforming learners.

The data have been organised around common themes, which reveal how transgender identities are constructed by African teachers in the selected rural secondary schools. The following analysis, as mentioned, is derived from Butler's (1990) theory of performativity. As explained above, this theory views gender and sexuality differently and purports that gender is constructed through performance brought about by heteronormative expectations and socio-cultural norms.

Categories grouped into main themes
5.1 Understanding gender, sex and sexual diversity: <i>“Oh yes they sometimes say sex and sometimes they say its gender, oh gosh! All along I thought that was the same thing, isn't? I just thought it is one and the same thing.”</i>
5.2 Teachers constructions of transgender identities: <i>I can imagine in the morning, on the assembly we are all standing and you rock up like that, learners would be shocked, teachers would be shocked and we would laugh and talk about it all day, so the whole equilibrium of the school would be disturbed.”</i>

5.1 Understanding Gender, Sex and Sexual Diversity: “Oh yes they sometimes say sex and sometimes they say its gender, oh gosh! All along I thought that was the same thing, isn't? I just thought it is one and the same thing.”

There are many learners who do subscribe to dominant heterosexual norms in rural school settings (Fast & Olson, 2018). Gender non-conforming learners are part of existing academic discussions on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTQI+) movement (Yarhouse, 2015). According to Zibane (2017), schools are arenas where sexualities and

gender identities of learners are produced and adopted. It is, therefore, important to note that schools in rural settings also comprise of learners who are gender non-conforming.

South African schools are influenced by a dominant sexual culture that treats heterosexuality as the norm (DePalma & Francis, 2014), and teachers may assume that learners are either male or female. This is deeply rooted in heteronormativity. Most of the teacher participants categorised their learners into males and females; this was evident in their common responses when they were asked about the diversity amongst their learners at school. Teachers responded as follows:

Miss Nxumalo: Oh yeah... I have both males and females.

Mr BL: In terms of gender, the one that... we have like... we have like girls, boys that what I know of, yes.

Miss Ndawonde: Diversity in terms of what? In terms of race, I only teach African learners, black learners and I have male and females.

Miss Tetwayo: In terms of gender I have both males and females between the ages of 14 and 19.

The above teacher participant responses reinforce gender binarism, which assumes two genders as the norm: male and female. Miss Tetwayo's response was of significance when she said: "I have both males and females", which relays that there is no other gender beyond this duality. Both means two and thus disregards the fluidity of gender or the existence of other genders. The norms of society remain dominant in constructing gender identity and sexuality. These norms only focus on heterosexuality and anything that falls outside of the male and female categories are not generally acknowledged (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002). Take the following example, Miss Tetwayo further responded "Mmh... in my understanding I believe there is... okay... only two which is boy or girl or male and female, yeah so I believe there is only those two". Francis (2013) postulates that some people reinforce heterosexism and have fixed ideas about gender and sexuality. The assertions by the participants portray a lack of understanding of the diverse aspects of gender identity. Similarly, Mr BL stated in his response "... we have like girls, boys that what I know of, yes". These were common sentiments for some teachers, which implies silence and denial. Such silence and denial contribute to the erasure of gender non-conforming learners.

Researcher: How do you know you have boys and girls?

Mr BL: Because they have signed as boys and girls on their entry forms, that's the gender we have on their registers so I cannot comment further on that because I am not sure...

Mr Mayisela (Gay teacher): (laughs) when you are filling your details maybe in a form or something, they will write gender and make you choose between male and female

Miss Tetwayo: (laughs) I think we take that from the documentations that they submit during the registration process and even in classes when we are filling the registers, we ask them to indicate their gender and we normally get only males and females or we are using boy or girl, so those are the two genders that we have.

According to Butler (1993a), gender binarism is closely related to the sex of an individual. In the above extracts, teacher participants maintain that learners are registered as boys and girls in their respective schools. Heterosexuality is thus the dominant ideology in some schools and other possible categories are not recognised. Mr BL's response reveals that he does not want to talk about other possible gender identities that were silenced or erased when learners were accepted into his school. In the extract below, a participant extends the cultural ideology of gender that is tied to biologically sexed bodies, she emphasises:

Miss Ndawonde: Umh, I am taking it from my socialisation, growing up we were socialised that we only have a male and a female I just look at it in that way.

The above excerpt indicates the socialisation of gender. The culture of heteronormativity that confines sexed bodies as a binary (Bornstein, 1995; Bornstein & Bergman, 2010; Butler, 1990; Nestle, Howell & Wilchins, 2002; Stryker, 2008) is internalised by this participant as she reveals that for her, one is either male or female. This ideology ignores the fluidity of gender.

There is a misconception that LGBTQI+ people do not occupy spaces in rural settings and that urban areas are perceived as more welcoming to the LGBTQI+ community (Gray, 2009). However, most of the teacher participants who self-identified as gay did not conform to gender binaries as experienced through the lens of anatomy (sex). These participants demonstrated an understanding of the fluidity of gender and have identified learners who are, for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual or other sexualities that were not specified. For example,

Mr Basi (gay teacher):

Researcher: Please tell me more about the diversity of your learners in terms of gender?

Mr Basi (Gay teacher): ...I don't want to lie they are very diverse to a point that I have heterosexuals, I have my gay kids, I think they are 4 if I am not mistaken, 4 who are openly gay cause you can't say unless they have confirmed, so others I am not sure of their sexuality and we have those who are bisexual, and some are not too sure about their sexuality.

Miss Zindela: I have few learners who are gay, I think about nine and one girl, a lesbian.

Miss Maphisa: we do have female learners who are acting as males and males who are acting as females.

Mr Sulelo: From the classes that I have taught, I have had gays, lesbians and learners who non-gender conforming.

The above teacher participants were not hesitant to reveal the sexual diversity amongst their learners; most teachers were, however, unfamiliar with transgenderism, and this widespread misrecognition of transgender individuals eradicates a vital component of the LGBTQI+ community. Mr Basi, in his response above, indicated that he has 4 learners are openly gay because you can't say unless they have confirmed. It is clear that he does not want to categorise his learners based on their sexuality, instead he wants his learners to confirm their sexuality themselves. He further stated that others I am not sure of their sexuality and this illustrates his level of gender awareness. He does not want to invade his learners' privacy by attributing to them labels concerning their gender and sexuality. He does not state their sexual preference nor their gender, not in terms of being heterosexual or otherwise.

Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) state that teachers do not have to hide their sexual gender identity as this may result in learners not coming out or not expressing their own gender or sexuality. This is important for learners who are gender, sex and sexually diverse as this can

enable a better and healthier school environment. Mr Basi provides an explanation around how he has chosen to become a change agent in his school. He commented “*it’s because I am an openly gay teacher...*” which shows that he is in a sense queering his school located in rural KwaNyuswa. Mr Basi elaborates:

Yes, I am not hiding anything about me, what you see is what you get, so my learners will easily pick that up cause like it is something they see almost everyday when I am in class, even during break time they would come to me and then we chat about family and stuff cause I am from around the area, and then in between the conversation sometimes we would talk about sexuality. Obviously, they can see that I am gay, but they can’t just assume, I need to confirm for them, so they would ask me personal questions like which gender do I date, and stuff and I don’t find it offensive because it always comes from an innocent place, from someone who really wants to know. I answer these questions because I want them to feel comfortable with themselves, sometimes they ask because they want to get the courage to open up about their sexualities so they need a teacher that will not judge them, and I am that teacher. I also answer these questions because in high school I had nobody to turn whenever I needed information about my sexuality, so with them it’s better because I am here for them. These learners won’t end up taking wrong decisions like ending up getting HIV because they don’t know or are not informed about how things work, the more us as teachers don’t hide our sexualities, the more the learners will be comfortable with themselves and actually realise that there is nothing wrong with being who you are.

Msibi (2009) notes that young men living in rural areas tend to hide their gender non-conforming identities because society views them as threatening norms of masculinity. He further states that these young men are regimented by culture to maintain traditional forms of masculinity. However, Mr Basi, in the above extract, has demonstrated that by expressing his own gender identity (gay), he contributes to dismantling the culture of silence about gender, sex and sexually diverse persons. It is apparent that he serves as an ally to learners who might want to identify differently. He says, “*I am not hiding anything about me, what you see is what you get*”, which basically relays that, in his performance of gender, he is not interested in hiding who he really is just because he is at work. He sees no point in portraying a masculine identity because there is no way he can keep up with that for the rest of his life. Mr

Basi also mentions that he is around his learners most of the time as he lives in the same area.

This allows him to be comfortable in discussing his sexuality with learners. He has thus created a bond with his learners to the extent that they are familiar with him and are not afraid to ask him personal questions about his sexuality and, further, he does not find this offensive. He indicates that he understands the curiosity of his learners and his sole intention is to make them feel safe to open up to a teacher who is gender, sex and sexually diverse without fear of being judged.

Mr Basi chooses to be an ally to his learners. His rationale is that during his school days, there were no openly gay teachers who were brave enough to engage in these discussions. He doesn't want his learners to feel alone and, in a sense, acts to rescue them, especially as it involves issues such as the risks of getting sexually transmitted diseases that could have been avoided had they gotten adequate information. Along the lines of Macgillivray and Jennings' (2008) assertions stated above, Mr Basi does not hide his sexual identity because he sees it as encouraging learners and thus demonstrating that being gender, sex and sexually diverse is natural and not a taboo. Additionally, as Malley, Hoty and Slattery (2009) insist, teachers have little, if any impact in their learners' lives. Mr Basi is aware of the intentional impact he is making in transforming his learners' lives.

The term sex and gender were used interchangeably by participants, indicating that the majority of participants were unclear about the differences between the terms. I asked, "*Is there a difference between sex and gender?*" Ms Nxumalo responded:

Okay, correct me if we are talking about sex, we are talking about intercourse, right?

Ms Nxumalo first wanted to be corrected, which indicated uncertainty about what she was about to say. In her response, she understands sex to be sexual intercourse and related behavior (Gentile, p. 120). Her definition of sex is not incorrect since the term is complicated and has many meanings. Her response indicates confusion when the terms were associated with gender. Similarly, Miss Jele further stated:

Umh... So, when we talking about gender it is where by we differentiate that this person is female and the other is male, then sex (laughs) I don't know if it is different but yeah maybe it is when we talk about sexual intercourse or sex like

before they used to say sex when referring to male or female but now, they say gender.

Mrs Blose in the extract below indicates a stereotypical view of gender:

So, when you go the shops, clothes are separated, let's say for instance a person is expecting a baby and there is this thing of separating clothes (with colours) you will find that blue is for boys and girls have to wear pink, yeah.

To define gender, Mrs Blose used the examples of gendered clothes and colours. When viewed through the lens of gender, this statement demonstrates the socially constructed nature of gender (Butler, 1990); before a baby is born, most people buy clothes of certain colours and associate these colours with the biological sex of the baby; as the participant asserted above, blue is for boys and girls have to wear pink. Parents gender their children. However, this might not align with their children's own inner awareness of gender (Kennedy & Helen, 2010). In the below extracts, some participants expressed that they view gender and sex as similar.

Mr Zikhali: I think they are more or less the same.

Mr Mayisela (Gay teacher): (laughs) Okay, now when it comes to sex and gender, I don't know but I think generally for me I treat them as the same, I have never dwelled in details.

Mr BL: I think... I never looked at it that way, I thought maybe it was just the same thing.

Miss Nxumalo: Oh yes, they sometimes say sex and sometimes they say its gender, oh gosh! All along I thought that was the same thing, isn't? I just thought it is one and the same thing.

According to Bhana (2012) and Francis (2017), most teachers are critical in working towards gender justice and challenge the prevalent norms of heterosexuality that marginalises sex, gender and sexual diversity in schools. It is, therefore, surprising to find that teachers view sex and gender as similar and consistent.

West and Zimmerman (1987) state that gender and sex is different. Sex is based on the genitalia of an individual, which is male or female, and gender is considered as actions and

behaviour that is accepted by society based on one's sex. Contrary to this definition, the above participants indicated that they consider gender and sex as terminologies with no separate meaning. One teacher participant knew that there was indeed a difference between the two terms but could not provide clear a distinction.

Miss Ndawonde: I do not know which one is it (laughs) it confuses me but I know that there is one that deals with sexual orientation that you have this part of body parts and you identify as this gender, and I know that the other one is how you see or view yourself, I know there is something like that.

Mr BL: ...now you have asked I think I understand, so I don't think it's the same thing, gender has to do with are you a male? Do you have a penis or vagina? But sex is more about sexuality like you can be a male with different sex and you can be a female also with different sex, so that is what I think this is about.

Miss Ndawonde indicated an awareness of difference between the terms, however, she did not know which one is its meaning. She confuses both terms and attaches one of the terms to sexual orientation, which has no link to either of the terms. West and Zimmerman define sexual orientation as the preference of an individual for a sexual partner. It is not related to sex or gender.

The participants' statement reveals that physical characteristics must be congruent to the gender that one identifies with. This shows confusion and misconception regarding the difference between sex and gender. Physical characteristics of transgender people who have transitioned socially without undergoing surgery are usually incongruent with how they perform their gender identity. The above participants' responses suggest the incorrect conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality (Bhana, 2012; DePalma & Francis, 2017; Francis 2014). Some participants had a clear understanding of the distinction between sex and gender by relating sex to the biological sexual organ and gender to social construction:

Mr Thusi (Gay teacher): Yeah, from what I know, sex would your sexual organ, that being your maleness or femaleness, and from what I was taught at varsity, gender would be a social construction like how our maleness and femaleness was constructed when we were growing up in terms of gender roles and stuff. If you are a male, there are types of chores that are associated with male, you will clean the yard or maybe herd cattle and if you are a female, you would clean the house,

do the dishes and cook, all these are assigned by the society and sometimes it does not always align with how you see yourself, and if you do not conform to what is assigned to you, you are then not seen as women or man enough.

Mr Mayisela: ...sex is biological like it's the sexual organs that you are born with, for males and females, it's either you have a penis or vagina. With gender, it is more of a social construct, so if you are born male by sex, gender is how you are supposed to behave in alignment with your sex, and it is the society's construction of how a male should behave. That's why I always say that every individual has a right to identify themselves according to how they feel, so gender is just a social construct, and it is wrong to say that a male or female should be like this, behave like that, where does all of that come from? Life cannot be a straight line like that.

Mr Sulele: Yes there is a big difference, sex is biological and sex is constructed.

Mr Mhlungu: Yes I believe that there is a difference between sex and gender, I think sex is how you were born in respect of the biological difference in a sex that you were born as a male or female, and gender is more defined as the role in which I as a male figure am expected to play, it is more of a social expectation like this is how you are expected to behave if you are male and a way in which you are expected to behave as a female.

According to Butler (1990), the difference between sex and gender disrupts the fixed gender binaries which assume compulsory heterosexuality. Some participants shared common responses and revealed that sex and gender are not related but rather independent. This non-independence grants freedom to people who prefer to be in same sex relationships instead of opposite sex relationships and to people who are gender or sexually diverse. According to the extracts above, sex is closely linked to biology in terms of physical make-up which relate to persons born with a penis or vagina. Some participants demonstrated an extensive understanding of gender as associated with social expectations - how men and women are expected to behave according to gender roles.

Mr Thusi, as stated above, talks about the complex ways in which gender is socially institutionalised and uses the example of gender stereotypical roles according to the dominant culture of heteronormativity, namely, that women's place is in the kitchen and men belong outside the house. These gender roles and social expectations are associated with the general

assumption that if you have a penis you are a male and supposed to be masculine, and if this is incongruent, then you are considered as deviant and a threat to the framework of hegemonic masculinity. Sex is associated with a set of genetic attributes such as physical features, and gender is a socially constructed role that includes expression of gendered behaviour, gender performance and identities of girls/women, boys/men and sex, gender, and sexual diverse individuals.

5.2 Teachers' Construction of Transgender Identities: "I can imagine in the morning, on the assembly we are all standing and you rock up like that, learners would be shocked, teachers would be shocked and we would laugh and talk about it all day, so the whole equilibrium of the school would be disturbed."

Gender identities are defined according to how an individual experience their own gender (Pinto, Aratanga, Abramovich, Devotta, Nisenbaum, Wang and Kiran, 2019). How a person identifies is a personal and internal feeling entrenched along the gender continuum (Reddy, 2019). They can identify as boy/male, male/female or sex, gender and sexually diverse. The term transgender can be used to refer to male-to-female which are transgender women and female-to-male which are transgender men. An understanding of gender identity beyond constraints of homo/heterosexuality is important for recognising a variety of sexual identities, especially transgender identities (Flanders, LeBreton, Robinson, Bian & Caravaca-Morena, 2017; Lapointe; 2016).

Researcher: What is a transgender?

Mr Zikhali: I think my understanding of transgender is whereby a person changes from one gender to another, like for instance, a male who now wants to become female because of his body and their hormones.

Miss Ngema: A transgender I think it would be someone who has had a sex change, they're born female and then they want to be male or vice-versa.

Mrs Dongwe: Ah in my understanding, a transgender would be someone who is for instance born a female and now she would like to live like a male, yeah that is my understanding but I stand to be corrected anyway.

The inner self-awareness of gender identity of transgender people do not conform to fixed norms of being male or female. The majority of the participants shared common responses

and defined transgender as a transition from one gender to another outlining the examples of a male becoming a female. For most participants, a transgender individual is someone who is born with certain sex organs that does not align with how they feel and would like to live their lives according to a different gender. However, some participants reflected contrasting ideas about transgenderism and reported:

Miss Ndawonde: I think its people who have transitioned their sexuality or people who have a different sexual identity to their gender, for example I would like to give you a certain individual whom I think is a transgender, Ellen, that lady who has a show on TV.

The above extract demonstrates a degree of understanding of transgenderism; however, the participant confuses it with sexual preference. She has an idea that such a person identifies differently as she used the American comedian and television host Ellen DeGeneres as an example of a transgender person.

Miss Shibe: When we talk about a transgender person in my own understanding I don't know if I am correct but we are talking about a person who changed from being a boy but inside they feel like a girl but they had a male organ then they go maybe to hospitals or whatever where they will change their gender and put private parts of a female and breasts all those things so in that way they have changed from being a male to female now.

Mr Sulelo (Gay teacher): From my understanding, when we are talking about transgender, we are talking about people who have transitioned from their primary gender or sex that they were born in because here we are looking at people who were born as certain sex and changed to another but that is transsexual, and then when you are transgender it is when you were born as male sex wise and also follow a male gender but within or rather as you grow older you realise that the gender that you are partaking in as a male is not actually what you feel inside and that's why it is trans because you are transitioning now from that form of gender to another. These people would say they don't feel as male for instance, they are male sex wise but now the sex and gender is contradicting each other, they feel as females inside but they have a male sex organ or vice versa.

Ms Shibe above reveals that a transgender person is a person who changes from their primary gender to another, for example, male to female. Her example of transgender encompasses a sex

change by undergoing surgical modification and the removal of the sex organ that you were born with and replacing it with another sex organ that matches how you self-identify. However, the participant confuses transgender identity with transsexuality. Mr Sulelos' response indicates sex and gender as independent; being transgender does not necessarily mean change of sexual organs but rather a mismatch between physical make-up and inner awareness. This demonstrates that gender is not static but fluid and changing. In the below excerpt, Mr Mayisela shares his perspective with regards to transgenderism:

Mr Mayisela (Gay teacher): Mmh! My understanding of transgender is... probably about gender, like its from a gay person to being a transgender because when you are gay you are still a boy but now when it comes to trans, it is now when you try to transition into a gender that matches how you are feeling inside and how you would want to express yourself as an individual, for example, me as a gay person, as a male gay person, there are moments where I wanna feel like a women so in transgender it is just trying to be comfortable in my feelings and inviting the who I really feel inside to come to existence.

The above response indicates the understanding that transgender identity emanates from homosexuality which reveals a relationship between homosexuality and transgenderism. This accounts for the fluidity of gender and its flexibility. Transgenderism is about crossing the constant boundaries of being male and female and expressing an inner gender through performance. This means that transgender performance is personal. Importantly, the response above indicates a problematic understanding of gender, namely, that transitioning to another gender is determined by being attracted to the same sex. This limits sex and gender into fixed ideologies (Reddy, 2019). Additionally, the participants' explanations of transgenderism was drawn from personal experience with gender; he identifies as gay but sometimes he feels like a woman and wants to express his feelings that disrupts the rigid ideologies of gender and sexuality by expressing his fluidity of gender.

How do you identify such identities?

Ms Tetwayo: Okay, what I can point out, it is their behavior in class, you know that the boys are masculine, they are masculine at the youngest age from how they play, how they talk, how they do things, who they around with. I have had a case

whereby one boy was... I don't want to conclude and say he was gay but... I don't want to say that there is a certain behaviour that is associated with gay man but okay the learner had female besties, he had a small voice, very feminine and you could tell that it was only the uniform that compelled him to be a boy, you could even tell from how he holds a pen, how he handled himself, that kind of behaviour we usually see it on females, that is very much different from boys, even in class he would sit with girls, even now in our classes it is still happening we do note such learners and we don't concentrate much on that, we just let them be because there is nothing we can or that we need to do anyway.

Miss Mapanga: Yes, they like being noticed that they are here like miss today are you not giving us any homework? miss this, miss that, they don't say like miss today are you not giving us any homework'. And like the other one likes to write on the board on my behalf, he would take the chalk and write and like how they react when they are talking, their hands, they just don't behave like boys.

Participants reported learners who are sexually deviant as seeking attention, they always want to be in the spotlight and act like girls. This is not an acceptable behaviour from boys because they are supposed to be masculine. These ideas of normative expectations are deeply entrenched in heterosexuality and if boys deviate from this norm, then it is considered a threat to the hegemonic forms of masculinity that consider men as rough and strong (Bhana, Crewe & Aggleton 2019; Msibi, 2009). Participants indicated that a boy who had inferior masculinity did not associate with other boys but preferred to hang around with girls and this results in teachers constructing their learners' sexuality and gender identity. Actions such as writing on the chalkboard, using hand gestures when talking, are regarded as something that can only be done by females and this was noted as identifiers or indicators of sexually deviant learners. Miss Ndawonde responded:

Miss Ndawonde: Well, I think I see by how they dress to be honest, otherwise I would not be able to identify them, yes how they dress and behave.

The extract indicates that the ways in which transgender individuals dress and behave are major identifiers. Participants were asked how they would feel about a male learner coming to school wearing a skirt, participants elaborated:

Miss Ndawonde (Female teacher): To be honest I would be shocked, I would be shocked and I will definitely call a learner outside to talk to the learner, and ask him what is going on? Why are you dressed like this? Because you know that you are supposed to be dressed in this uniform and not this one, so I would definitely talk to the learner and find out what happened and based on the story he is telling, then obviously I would have to take the matter to the principal as well and inform him that I have this type of a learner and today they decided to just rock up wearing this type of uniform, so what do we do? How do we handle it? In terms of the school policy and stuff.

Mr Zikhali: Obviously I would be shocked but I wouldn't say anything to offend that learner because you may never know the reason behind all that, so I rather ask him aside and talk to him and find out if everything is alright and try to get a solution for that, but if that's the way if he wants to look like in terms of you know...

The participants revealed common feelings of shock. Miss Ndawonde questions the dress code of the learner that does not align with what is stipulated in the school code of conduct. Most teachers opted to confront the learner and bring the matter to the principal's attention, which indicates that teachers are not well equipped in dealing with learners who fall outside of the male and female categories. This sends a message that the school policy is not gender inclusive and suppresses learners who want to dress according to how they identify and that fall outside of the normality of fixed gender binaries. South African schools are influenced by the dominant sexual culture that supports heterosexuality (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis 2017; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012) while marginalising homosexuality. Other participants shared sentiments of social stigma towards gender non-conforming behaviour:

Miss Mapanga: (laughs) Wow! It would look weird, it would really be weird, yes we understand that there are people who are gay and whatnot but it would be weird seriously because we have been indoctrinated that only a girl can wear a skirt, we know that a girl can wear a skirt and also wear a trouser but I think we are just brainwashed that a guy cannot wear a skirt, so it would be a new thing in which it would be weird and I'm sure that learner will not learn that day because he would be laughed at the entire day, learners and teachers would laugh at him, I know I personally would laugh too cause it is something we are not used to but then as then as the time goes by I think everybody would get used to it but for the first time

we would really laugh (laughs).

The social stigma that is attached to gender non-conforming individuals discourages them to perform their desired gender identity at school. Schools are an oppressive setting for some learners who are gender, sex and sexually diverse; teachers can make the schooling experience traumatic for queer learners by not giving them the support that they need (Msibi, 2012; Bhana, 2014; Francis, 2012). Participants reported that gender non-conforming individuals could be laughed at and teased by both teachers and learners if they performed their desired gender identity. Butler (1990) maintains that rejection and stigma that is attached to sexual minorities in schools restricts learners' freedom to be who they want to be. It is clear that in the scenario presented above, gender non-conforming learners have no one to turn to when faced with discrimination because teachers and other learners are teaming up' against learners who are sexually deviant by displaying negative attitudes. Furthermore, learners might not come out as gender non-conforming because they are protecting themselves (Francis, 2017) out of fear of being discriminated against. It may be concluded that teachers who portray negative attitudes towards learners who are considered different are not only allowing homo/transphobia in schools but are actually actively contributing to it, placing these learners at great risk of victimisation.

Miss Mapanga also reported that cultural norms don't allow boys to wear skirts, but girls do wear pants and that there is nothing wrong with it. Central to the above excerpts highlight a joke that gender non-conforming individuals would cause laughter and shock in the school, and this would create an unbearable disorder in the school and no teaching and learning activities would take place as a result. Other teachers did not approve of learners performing their gender identity by wearing the uniform that aligns with their inner awareness of gender. They elaborated in the below extract:

Mr Mhlungu: I think that is not acceptable personally, there are school rules that stipulates that a boy is expected to wear pants and a girl is expected to wear a skirt and if you are not doing so, it means that you are breaking the school rules and I think that is not acceptable unless if the school rules stipulates that you can wear, it doesn't matter if you are a boy or girl, you can wear whatever you feel be it a skirt or pants.

Mr Basi: Eh... I won't lie, I don't think its allowed because there are certain procedures that one should follow and that goes for teachers too, there is a certain

dress code that we should follow, there are things that we wear and things that we shouldn't wear. I don't think that even learners would appreciate it if I as a male teacher come to class wearing a skirt or a bum shorts (laughs) you see what I am talking about. What I mean is I like how diverse they can be, I recognise it but I think they can wear those skirt outside the school, on their own time but wear the correct uniform at school. I support his expression outside the school because even myself I wear my bum shorts after school, flops and vest and there is no problem with that.

According to Zibane (2017), African teachers perpetuate patriarchy and, in some schools, LGBTQI+ learners are not allowed to wear school uniforms of the opposite sex'; teachers often use the school rules to ensure that heterosexuality and homophobia are maintained (Msibi, 2012). Participants revealed that learners who are gender non-conforming are not allowed to wear a school uniform that matches their gender identity. Transgender identities are as such being silenced in schools through the use of segregated uniforms. For some schools, the uniform code of conduct at their school is strongly gendered. For example, in Jones, et. al. (2016), a transgender female participant described how wearing trousers was discouraged at their school and was deemed inappropriate for girls. The same study found that boys were given detention for wearing girls' uniforms and some transgender females were forced to wear a dress/skirt at their school (Jones, et. al., 2016). Homophobia and transphobia are the dominant cultural constructs actively promoted in schools. Moreover, Mr Basi indicates that the constant removal and erasure of gender non-conforming individuals is the same for teachers who may identify differently from the rest. It is clear that the participant has accepted the discrimination involved in gendered uniforms since he agrees with it. Gender non-conforming learners are further discriminated against by teachers who should protect them as they belong to the same LGBTQI+ community. Mr Basi, in this instance, revealed earlier that he is openly gay. Most of participants revealed feelings of shock and disapproval regarding the visibility of transgender individuals and justified it with the specified gendered code of conduct. However, Mr Thusi shared different sentiments, which indicated sympathy towards the learners who are sexually different and stated:

Mr Thusi: Well... Ummh, personally I do not want to say I'd feel ashamed but I will feel sorry for the learner because the other learners will discriminate against him and say all sort of thing and even insult him for wearing a skirt simply because he is a boy. According to the society or culture, boys are supposed to wear trousers not

skirts, so if you are in a school that I am working at, shame I feel sorry because they normally say you will rue the day' (laughs).

The response above indicates the heteronormativity of the school environment that Mr Thusi is teaching in. He is concerned about the negative attitude that other heterosexual learners might direct towards learners who are gender non-conforming. Significant to the above excerpt is that learners who express their gender non-conforming identities by wearing a non-assigned uniform can end up regretting their decision as it might draw attention. As a result, this might be detrimental and lead to increased vulnerability in environments that are intolerant of such individuals.

Researcher: Okay but how do you feel being in that space or environment?

Mr Thusi: Honestly, I feel like change is needed but even if I try to change it, I am alone and the management of the school has this stereotypical mind-set when it comes to these issues, they only believe in a culture of heterosexuality, if you try and talk about these things, I swear they will look at you in a different way and start thinking you are part of it too. I remember this one time... oh so at my school, it is me, the HOD and the principal who are males and then the rest are females, so at school they have this tendency or belief rather, that a man does not touch the pots or anything that concerns cooking and stuff. So this one time we were forming a committee of teachers who will be on nutrition, no male teacher wanted to be part of it, so I suggested that why can't we as males be part of it so that the committee is complete cause some of us are not in other committees, and they said to me straight up that no man touches anything that concerns food in our school, you can't even go to the kitchen because it is a woman's place, you only take food when it is served and your job as a man other than teaching is lookout for anything regarding maintenance.

The above excerpt indicates a school environment that is dominated by heteronormative gendered culture that holds stereotypical views in terms of gender roles. Mr Thusi indicates that there is a lack of gender sensitivity and gender balance in his school as it comprises of more female than male teachers. There is an assumption that when teachers like Mr Thusi support learners who are gender non-conforming it is because they belong to the same marginalised group. This may mean that teachers who want to be allies to LGBTQI+ learners will be hesitant because of the stigma around it. He mentions an example where he really felt

the prevalence of gender stereotyping in his school: male teachers are not allowed to be part of the nutrition committee in his school as anything that concerns the kitchen is regarded as feminine and thus only for women; men are assigned duties that are considered masculine.

Researcher: Mmh... how did you feel when they said that to you in the meeting?

Mr Thusi: Honestly I feel like they are still stuck in the past, they have the worst mentality and belief because I for one love and enjoy being in the kitchen, so it made me feel less of a man when they said that not knowing I love cooking, it was more of I was being discriminated against cause this says that if I go to the kitchen they will discriminate against me because to them that will mean I am not man enough because I deal with pots and food, so in a way they will not allow me to be the person that I am because of their beliefs or culture that a man must be outside the house while a woman is inside.

Mr Thusi's words are personal and significant as he felt that he was denied an opportunity to be in the kitchen and to do what he loves and enjoys. In an environment that is heterosexist and heteronormative, he is viewed as feminine because other expressions of masculinity are overlooked. It is, therefore, in this type of environment, difficult for learners who are gender non-conforming to express who they really are in terms of gender identity.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented some of the findings of this study regarding teachers' construction of transgender identities in rural secondary schools. It became clear that teachers' constructions of transgender identities involve an understanding of medical procedures before transitioning to another gender. Patriarchy in rural societies is rooted in unequal power relations that claim particular roles for boys and girls. Socio-cultural norms and school policy contribute to the erasure and rejection of transgender identities by participants in this study as they reinforce compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity by supporting gender binarism. This is reflected by participants' views on gender norms, school policy and curriculum. Additionally, tolerance, understanding and acceptance of transgender identities were highlighted by participants who either belonged to or regarded themselves as allies of the LGBTQI+ community.

CHAPTER SIX – ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The analysis in this chapter draws on Connell’s (1987, 1995, 2002) gender relational theory and theory of masculinities that examine socio-cultural beliefs about gender. Gender, when understood in dualistic terms, strengthens cultural ideas of masculinities and femininities, which results in violence due to the unequal power relations it produces. This chapter involves ideologies of heteronormativity which result in the erasure of LGBTQI+ identities within gender binarism. This chapter will examine the ways in which rural secondary school teachers construct transgender identities by showing how their culture and tradition shape their constructions. The intersection of power, gender binarism, compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormative ideologies are reflected in participants’ responses. The figure below shows themes and sub-themes that surfaced from this study.

6.2 Rejection of Transgender identities in rural schools: Code of conduct and Curriculum	6.2.1 Erasure of transgender learners
6.3 Teachers as Change Agents: Challenging gender stereotypes	6.3.1 Accommodation of gender, sex and sexual diversity

6.2 Rejection of Transgender Identities

Most schools often deny and/or erase sexual diversity (Bhana, 2014; DePalma & Francis, 2014). This leads to discrimination against gender non-conforming learners (Francis, 2012). The school curriculum plays a major role in upholding the heteronormative framework as it does not recognise other sexual identities (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2019) and normalises heterosexuality. However, Life Orientation, as a compulsory subject, comprises of topics that presents real life situations and that deals with gender and sexual diversity (Department of Education, 2002).

6.2.1 Erasure of Transgender Identities in Rural Schools

According to Wilmot and Naidoo (2014), the LGBTQI+ community is under represented in learners’ textbooks and this further perpetuates prejudice against learners who fall into this

category. Francis (2017) further states that in the Life Orientation curriculum, there is no mention of sexual orientation. This leads to a cultural perception that sees heterosexuality as norm. Most teachers are not willing to include any discussions or content related to the LGBTQI+ individuals as it is not fully detailed in the Life Orientation curriculum. Teachers who do not teach Life Orientation tend to focus only on the content that is outlined in subjects that they teach. In the excerpts below, there are different responses from teacher participants when they were asked how they would include gender diversity in their subjects:

Mr BL: No I teach History, it's about content, there is no way that we discuss social issues, and like we are content based and we have never even had one topic that touches on how people live their lives.

The above extract indicates that the participant only focuses on the designed content and nothing else. He confirms that the subject that he teaches does not include content on gender diversity. Some teachers believe that it is only in Life Orientation where discussions related to gender and sexuality should be incorporated. However, other participants have included gender diversity in their subjects. This is how Mr Nodangala responded:

Mr Nodangala: As much as I focus on content but if I am making examples about things that happens in our daily lives, even learners themselves they do refer to a certain soapies, tv drama or a novel that they have read because these things happen a lot when you are teaching literature and then maybe you come across a short story, so I do talk about those things.

The participant indicates that he focuses on content. However, this does not present a limitation as he sometimes engages his learners on gender diversity, especially in literature as learners sometimes talk about examples that relate to gender diversity. Francis (2019) study reveals that learners are curious when it comes to sexuality education - this curiosity dismantles heteronormative frameworks and suggests a more inclusive curriculum that addresses gender and sexuality in a more detailed manner. Mr Nodangala is an English teacher, and he includes gender diversity when he refers to real life situations as the literature section of his subject allows him to. Similarly, central to the excerpt below is the idea of discussions being content driven:

Ms Zungu: Well, although I do not talk about it all the time in my class, it depends on the content, if it takes me there, then I go there and go deeper on it as I was telling you about inheriting gender and all, what I can say is that I just don't go and talk

about in class just for fun because boys in my class they literally hate gays so if I speak about gays in a positive way in class without content taking me there because that will aggravate boys and also if I ill-talk gays I am hurting them, so I am just a neutral teacher, I teach what I have to teach especially when it comes to gender identities and all then stop there because I do not want to hurt anyone's feelings.

The extract above reveals that Ms Zungu's Life Sciences subject includes content on gender diversity. She confirms that the only time she talks about gender diversity is when the content demands it. Gender and sexuality are a sensitive issue for Ms Zungu as her class is very diverse in terms of gender. She states that she is a neutral teacher. It is noticeable that the participant has respect for gender diversity but does not want to show that in class as she is aware that there are learners who have negative attitudes towards gender non-conforming individuals. Further, she does not want to put gender non-conforming learners at risk of homophobia from their peers by showing her support for the LGBTQI+ community. She therefore fears as being seen to promote homosexuality. Francis' (2013) study, conducted in the Free State, reveals that learners who have fixed understandings of gender believe in heteronormativity, and deny the existence of gender diversity. This makes it difficult for teachers to discuss topics that are against the personal values of some of their learners and results in the erasure of gender and sexuality in the curriculum (Reygan & Francis, 2009). This erasure also results in compulsory heterosexuality (Msibi, 2012). Moreover, in the extract below Ms Blose gives an example of how she includes gender diversity in her class.

Ms Blose: I think making a few examples about when I am teaching, there are people (homosexuals) who are very much successful in the world and they have been accepted by people, so if I make examples of how they succeeded regardless of their sexual diversity and how other people have looked beyond their sexual identities and recognised them and relating to what I am teaching in class in that moment, so I think that also brings sort of inclusivity.

The above excerpt reveals that gender diversity is not included in the curriculum. Ms Blose uses hidden curriculum to include gender diversity in her teaching. What is also significant in this participant's statement is that identifying differently is not a limitation to success. It is notable that Ms Blose is supportive of gender non-conforming individuals and makes it her task to understand all her learners. The inclusion of sex, gender, and sexually diverse learners in the curriculum and school policy is important.

Ms Shibe: Sometimes it does come up that we have to treat everybody equally, things like that and in L.O. they do mention this thing of sex and gender but I think that authors are also a bit backwards cause if we talk about sex and gender they talk about a male and female but they don't mention that what if you are not a boy or a girl then where do you fit because there are learners like that. I remember last year a learner raised up their hand and asked what 'if I fall under both male and female what do I then do if gender is male and female?' I was a little bit shocked by that question from a grade 8 learner, I then said that you will follow what is true for you and what you feel inside because there was nothing about transgender or bisexual, they only say male and female.

Ms Shibe is a grade 8 Life Orientation teacher. The above extract reveals that there is an unequal representation of genders in this subject's curriculum, which may result in the removal of other genders while heteronormativity is normalised. Furthermore, it is clear that learners are curious about gender diversity and this shocks the participant; she mentions that learners have asked unexpected questions during lessons. Similarly, the study conducted by Francis (2014) revealed that there is a need for the inclusion of sexual diversity because learners were intrigued by these topics. The question posed by the learner serves to undermine heteronormativity and suggests the need for a more inclusive curriculum that speaks about real life situations (Francis, 2019). Learners in schools are diverse in terms of gender and sexuality. Therefore, both the curriculum and school policy should be inclusive of gender and sexual diversity so that all learners feel a sense of belonging. In the following extracts, teachers were asked if their school policy and code of conduct was accommodative of sexual diversity, and their common responses highlighted that it was not:

Ms Ndawonde: I don't think it is accommodative, you know I think it is founded on the old policy, you know, where as a learner like a girl learner should wear a skirt and then for a boy, you should wear pants. I realize this even at the beginning of the year, parents are given a list that has the stationery that they should buy and in terms of uniform, we always indicate that boys, pants and girls, skirts and this, this, you know.

The above extract reveals that learners are compelled to wear school uniforms that match their sex assigned at birth (Glickman, 2016; Jones et al., 2016; Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), 2016). This is a form of discrimination that silences gender variation in schools and

infringes on learners' rights to express how they identify through the dress code. The LGBTQI+ learners are marginalised by the school code of conduct before they are admitted, and learners who break the school code of conduct by wearing different uniforms might be expelled (Jones et al., 2016). The school policy is very strict in specifying the uniform that should be worn by male and female learners respectively. There is nothing in the policy that notes learners who may identify differently.

Researcher: And how do you feel about that?

Ms Ndawonde: To be honest with you, I have never been indifferent about it as I have never seen anything wrong with it, you know, as I was saying that from a very young age, I was socialised so for me, it speaks to me that if you are a girl, you wear this and if you are a boy, you wear this, so it is just the language I understand. However, me being a grown up, I am now accommodating because I just see human beings at the end of the day, it is just that when we are in a particular structure you know we have to follow those conventions, that's how I see it.

It is clear from the above excerpt that the participant is heavily influenced by the socio-cultural norms that are deeply rooted in heteronormativity as she reveals that the way in which the school policy is implemented is nothing new to her. Ms Ngema grew up in a patriarchal society that still exists in the rural community where the school is located (Msibi, 2009). This resulted in her being socialised and influenced by these notions (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). She supports the gendered school uniforms stipulated in the school policy. Some school policies have tried to include gender diversity, however, in most schools, it lacks implementation in reality (Jones et al., 2016). It's hard for teachers who are influenced by patriarchal ideas to be allies to gender non-conforming learners; patriarchy and heteronormativity are also maintained in the community where the school is located and thus gender non-conforming learners are compelled to categorise themselves as either male or female inside and outside of school (Francis et al., 2019; Morojele, 2013). Similarly, Ms Ngema indicates that the school's policy is not accommodative of sexual diversity. However, she indicates that she is against the school policy:

Ms Ngema: No, it doesn't, I don't think it is something in which they even consider it. How do I feel about that? I feel like it is totally wrong because in today's world it is not like before where gender was seen as something that is black and white, today we have the in between so they should be included in our education system and I have heard like. I am not sure if the school is in my area but earlier this year I heard

that this female learner identifies as a male and she wanted to enrol in a certain school and she was turned away because she was told that she can't wear pants, in that school, girls wear skirts and they wanted her to do that because that is what she must do as a girl. So now this means that she's being denied a chance of education because she identifies as different as to what society thinks and who is society anyway and why society says that and not say people should dress according to how they feel because we are living in a democratic South Africa that has freedom of what and then why are learners not free in our schools in whatever way that they choose, who said it is alright for male learners to wear pants and females to wear skirts, who came up with that and why do we follow it, see something like that, so it is bad more especially in our school cause it is in a rural area so you get that people don't understand, it is not that they don't understand, it is because people don't want to understand they just act like it is a taboo like I don't know what kind of an animal, it's just sad.

The above extract reveals that the school policy is not inclusive of gender diversity. The participant does not support this policy as it denies and erases gender variation. This might be because of the fact that she previously revealed during the interview that she has friends who are gender non-conforming, and they were mistreated because of their sexuality. Furthermore, the participant noted how gender has evolved over the years but in her school, this is ignored. Likewise, Bhana (2010, p.10) argues that gender in rural KwaZulu-Natal bears the stamp of historical processes. It is not that teachers and school managers are unaware of the gender diversity that exists amongst their learners. Rather, they are still attached to and influenced by heteronormative culture and they use the outdated school policy to hide behind or ignore the reality of gender diversity amongst their learners and society at large.

The participant also references an incident where a learner had been denied her right to education because she identified differently to the majority and wanted to perform a gender identity that is incongruent with her natal sex. This has a negative impact on gender non-conforming learners as they could be reluctant to go to school because of the fear of discrimination by their peers and teachers (Francis, 2019; Francis, 2012). This is even more problematic given the fact that teachers are the ones entrusted with the responsibility to protect all learners and assure a safe and welcoming environment for the LGBTQI+ learners (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). The participant is against the dominant cultural norms of society pervading school settings. Bhana (2014) indicates that in South Africa, schools are sites where

heterosexuality is promoted; this leaves learners that do not conform to heteronormativity or the category of male and female to feel inferior, with no sense of belonging. In a similar vein, Mr Sulelo, a gay male participant noted that learners are excluded on the basis of school policy:

Mr Sulelo: In my school, no I wouldn't say it is because I'd give you an example, there was this one time, I think last year where there was this one learner, she came to school wearing a full on boys uniform and the security guards were not so nice to her, they were like 'why are you wearing like this, a boy's school uniform, this is not how a girl should dress', I couldn't help myself but I instantly went to him and told him that 'listen as much as she is wearing a boys uniform, but she is wearing it correctly and it is our school uniform, the fact that she is wearing a boy's uniform does not hinder her to get into school, this is her sexuality'. So for me as long as the uniform is worn correctly I don't see a problem, so the school policy is against other gender and sexuality and that makes learners feel excluded from the school itself because they don't know how to behave or carry themselves because of the negative attitude they will get from the school and hence that leads to them to bottle up what feel inside and they will be bullied by other learners, they will just know that if we bully them now they will have no one to run to, they don't feel accepted because each time they try to do something that is line with how they feel, they are being shouted and they will be made to feel different as in being different is a crime, so I don't think the school is inclusive as much as we can see that they are here but there is nothing in black and white that say you can be who you are.

In the above extract, the participant points out that the school policy in his school is not gender inclusive. He references an incident that transpired on the school premises where non-teaching staff conveyed a negative attitude towards a learner whose gender performance did not match anatomical sex, the learner was wearing a school uniform of the opposite' sex, which is not allowed by the school's policy. These are the devastating challenges that gender diverse learners face in schools, and which perpetuates violence. Lesbian learners are seen as a threat to masculinity (Msibi, 2009). Forbidding non-conforming learners to wear clothes according to what they feel will only marginalise them in the school but does not change their inner awareness of gender.

Mr Sulelo acknowledges the gender diversity in his school. Hence, he is not in favour of the discriminative policy that focuses on gender duality. The reason behind this could be his own

sexuality as he mentioned earlier in the interview that he was gay. Furthermore, he sees nothing wrong with learners wearing any uniform as long as it is a school uniform and is worn correctly. For this participant, gender binary uniforms delegitimises learners who fall into the LGBTQI+ category (Reddy, 2019, p.41). This act dehumanises learners who identify differently. Compelling learners to wear gendered uniforms is forcing a social expectation; it adds to gender non-conforming learners' vulnerability and comes down to a violation of their human rights (Mahlangu, 2017; Msibi, 2012). What is significant in this participant's comments is the need for accommodation of all learners, equal treatment and fairness. This could be achieved in a school where gender diversity is equally valued by the school managers, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff. The participant opted to be an ally and stood against the homophobic behaviour directed to the learner.

Researcher: So the school policy erases them?

Mr Sulelo (Gay teacher): Yes completely erases them, there is never a point where they are recognized. There is a point that says do not discriminate, this point is not specific it is just general and it doesn't say much and teachers go against this point because they discriminate against gender and sexual diversity. These are just some of the things that are not addressed and I feel they need to be addressed.

Researcher: Wait, you said something about teachers.

Mr Sulelo: I feel like the teachers are the driving force, if they are able to make lawyers, nurses, doctors and all other professions, why can't we use the same amount of time, that one minute you get in your class to talk about these issues, it may not be enough but it is something, why can't we preach, tolerance and acceptance and say listen as much as we all different in terms of gender, race, sexuality but at the end of the day we all the same because we are all human. Imagine if we were all created the same way, behaved the same, walk in a same way, talk in a same way, and imagine how boring the world would be, so no guys (laughs).

Mr Sulelo points out that the school policy does not include any reference to gender diversity. He further revealed that teachers are the main problem and are responsible for spreading homophobia in schools because of their intolerance towards sexuality diversity. The participant argues that since teachers are able to shape the learner's future, it would be very easy for them to teach about humanity, tolerance and respect with regards to gender diversity through hidden

curriculum. Similarly, Msibi (2012) states that teachers are able to use their authority to either teach or remove topics that are gender and sexuality related in the school context. Lastly, the excerpt reveals that it is imperative to respect, understand and accept that each individual is unique. This could result in a more accommodative environment that promote equal rights for all learners. It is notable that Mr Sulelo prefers an inclusive curriculum and an accommodative school policy that promotes gender inclusivity.

6.3 Teachers as Change Agents: Challenging Gender Stereotypes

According to Stone and Dahir (2015), the duty of teachers always involves acting as agents of change and transformation within schools. It is through cultural norms that certain roles are attached to gender, which results in certain activities being gendered. There is a constant need for teachers to accept and respect the right of learners who are transgender and gender non-conforming; it is an important part of being an agent of change.

6.3.1 Accommodation of Gender, Sex and Sexual Diversity

Participants were asked how they distribute and divide duties amongst their learners, most participants elaborated:

Miss Ndawonde: For me as I have said, I do not look at gender, so when I am distributing roles, for instance if I want learners to do a task for me, maybe I have boxes of textbooks that needs to be carried from class to the staffroom, I would choose a learner who is naughty in my class, if you are that naughty and always troublesome it means you are very much active and you need to be kept active otherwise you would get bored, so I would choose you despite your gender.

Gender is not attached to certain duties. This is indicated in the above extract. Miss Ndawonde does not use gendered stereotypes to assign duties to learners. She has opted to occupy learners who behave in a mischievous manner with duties.

For example, Miss Maphisa elaborated:

Miss Maphisa: Usually, you see like the naughty ones (laughs) my naughty ones are the ones I make sure that I keep them busy, I do not want to look at gender when I distribute, like for example they clean after school and I put them according to the sections they sit, and on each section I have boys and girls, so to speak, so if I want them to sweep or mop the class, I would never ask a girl to do a girls job and I would

never ask a boy to do a boys job, so if I need water I will just take anyone, I need water, whatever it is that I need it to be done, I just take anyone. I have a brother, sorry to point this out, I have a brother that cooks and cleans, so we call this a hidden curriculum, it is this hidden curriculum that we teach to our kids, it is wrong because we tend to teach our girls that they are the ones who are weak and that boys are the only ones that are strong, I don't know but when I give duties, I give them to whoever learner without looking at gender.

Most participants in the study reported that when assigning duties to learners, gender is overlooked. For instance, Miss Mapisa makes her learners clean the classroom after school according to the setting that they sit in and it comprises of boys and girls. This means that regardless of gender, every learner gets to clean the classroom. Associating certain duties with gender reflects inequalities that teachers reproduce. Miss Mapisa disrupts stereotypes associated with gender roles. One possible reason behind this disruption may involve the family environment that she grew up in. She indicated that her brother performed activities not related to gender roles by cleaning and cooking. Hidden curriculum can be used to dismantle or reproduce gender inequalities in the classroom. There is a need for teachers to be mindful of the unintended lessons in class as they might hinder the work towards achieving gender equality. In a similar vein, Mr Mhlungu responded:

Mr Mhlungu: No in my class there are no gender roles, it is them (learners) who have that tendency that guys will move desks and girls are only going to sweep but I have put a stop to that because I realized that that mentality was disturbing equality that I am for, it was even the guys who always took out the bin so I put a stop to that, we don't have it anymore because everyone is equal regardless of gender.

Children are taught about gender roles at a very young age. This is apparent in the above excerpt; learners attach themselves to certain roles because of their gender. For example, boys assigned themselves duties that require more strength and girls' duties usually require less physicality.

Miss Mapanga: Is that everything I do, I do it equally amongst my learners, I don't exclude my learners in certain activities and also if they have done something wrong and I am angry, I become angry to everyone, I don't become angry to certain individuals, you seen, if I distribute activities, I distribute them equally, for instance, if we are cleaning in my class, I don't say that boys clean windows because they are

boys, I mix them in groups and then they clean windows both boys and girls, and even for girls I don't say that they will sweep because they are girls, no, I mix them and tell them that they will sweep, so everything that I do it equally to everyone.

Researcher: Do you promote gender equality amongst your learners? How?

Miss Ngema: We need to remember that we are teaching children and how we behave as teachers it is going to be in turn how they behave as well. So in my classroom I embrace people's sexualities, if a person (learner) is talking and the other is laughing, I'd be like 'What are you laughing? What is funny?' We address it there and there and they need to know that if I am in class, the moment I enter the classroom all this stops, they can take their chances with the other teachers but not me cause if you too as a teacher you're not going to correct it then other learners will assume it is right to do something like this and they will keep doing it, and then what are we doing to that learner? We are crippling him and in turn what are we doing? We are playing with their future and they resort to dropping out and that is not, I don't know if I am now stereotyping but well I am only a human after all, you tend to see that learners who are like this, they are top achievers and when we are doing that we are crippling them to a point where they no longer want to say anything in class, they no longer answer because when they say something it becomes a joke of the week, whereas if another person (learner) would have said the very same thing and nobody laughs, but just because it is them so you see.

Importantly, the responses above indicate that teachers also contribute to discrimination that gender non-conforming learners experience within schools. Discrimination needs to be addressed when it transpires in the school environment because when teachers are complicit other learners will think that it is allowed to discriminate against a person who identifies differently. Miss Ngema does not tolerate negative attitudes displayed by heterosexual learners towards those who deviate from the gender binarism. She indicates that she reprimands learners who perpetuate any form of discrimination towards others in her class. She reveals that teachers who are not observant or paying attention might have a detrimental impact on non-conforming learners. Victimisation of such learners may result in them dropping out of school because of the fear of emotional abuse that they experience. Additionally, the participant indicates that learners who are gender non-conforming excel academically; if their rights are not respected and taken seriously within schools, it might yield negative academic results in the future. In the

excerpt below, Mr Thusi talks about how the flexibility of his subjects allows for gender sensitivity and accommodation of gender non-conforming, he elaborates:

Mr Thusi (Gay teacher): As a Life Orientation teacher, like this term we were talking about the Constitution and the rights of the people, we were more focused on the Bill of Rights and I made sure to emphasize that everyone is unique, important and equal, even before the law, it does not matter if you are a man, woman or any other sexual identity, young or old, we are all equally important. Even if I make examples, I also state that on television if they are advertising something that has to do with family, you haven't seen any advert with a man and man with a child, why? Are they teaching people at home or viewers that a perfect family is that of a man and woman and the other families of same sex are not recognised? So all this is not promoted, so what I do is I try to also touch on those issues and I try not to associate any role with any gender. I want them to be free and comfortable in being themselves because society has suppressed these kind of identities, even the management of the school is not allowing them, so every chance I get I do touch on these issues.

The above excerpt reveals that the Life Orientation subject has made the participant aware of the gender diversity in his class. The subject enables Mr Thusi to include issues of gender when engaging with his learners; this is indicated by the examples he uses in his class. It is clear that learners are sensitised during his Life Orientation lessons. Talking about gender diversity gives learners a sense of belonging in class because they are included in the curriculum. The participant indicates that rurality has an impact on learners hiding their gender identities but, in his class, he embraces gender diversity by destabilising the culture of heteronormativity that is prevalent in the community where he lives and teaches. It is important for teachers to support and accommodate sexual diversity in schools. The above extract reveals that Life Orientation content drives the participant to prepare learners for an ever-changing and transforming society; this subject is focused on the study of self in relation to others (Department of Education, 2014, p. 9).

Mr Sulelo (Gay teacher): So, if I want someone to erase a board for me, I call anyone irrespective of gender or sex because I am trying to rub off the socially constructed gender roles that is males should do this and that, and females should do that. So, if I want a desk to be moved, I would still call a female to move it because in doing so I am able to promote equality and say that everybody is equal here and I can do what you can do. Even when I am making examples in class I make sure that

everybody is accommodated, especially when I was teaching Life Orientation, I would make examples of a man and a man, a woman and a woman to deconstruct this heteronormativity in their heads and they would not understand why I am making such examples, sometimes I would tell them that listen, as much as other teachers don't talk about this but I personally will talk about because I have studied it and I feel a need that you should know about it as well, so that when they come across it they don't see it as being satanic, devilish or a taboo.

The excerpt above reveals how the participant deconstructs gender roles that are socially constructed. In terms of distributing gender roles, Mr Sulelo has chosen not to associate duties to any gender. This promotes equality in such a way that learners learn that it is possible to perform absolutely any duty that is assigned to them. The participant specialises in Life Orientation and he illustrates how the subject has allowed him to be gender neutral in class and to include topics that most teachers do not really pay attention to. He reveals that learners view same sex relationships as forbidden. Therefore, he constantly disrupts the idea of heterosexuality as the only norm. Furthermore, he includes same sex relationships when giving examples during his lessons so that learners view people who fall outside of the gender binary as normal. This might encourage learners who are gender non-conforming to be comfortable with who they are, and other learners will unlearn the negative and stereotypical views that were instilled in them by the culture of compulsory heterosexuality.

Miss Ndawonde: I am always aware of what I say because to myself I just say if I have a learner who is gay or transgender or whatever the case may be, I would not want them to feel less of a human you know, although I am not acknowledging that but I just want them to fit in, that is why most of the times I like using learners, when I am greeting them, I just say good morning learners so I try again not to say boys and girls because I know that I have to be accommodative.

The above excerpt indicates how the participant is selective of the words she uses when engaging with her learners because she is aware that there might be learners who are gender non-conforming in her class. She is thus careful to not dehumanise or offend learners in anyway. For example, she chooses to be neutral when greeting learners. However, it is clear that Miss Ndawonde has not fully accepted the fact that she has learners in her class who are gender, sex and sexually diverse. For example, she stated that she does not acknowledge it; she navigates through socially constructed norms and her own cultural socialisation.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the silences, neglect, and avoidance of gender and sexual diversity in the three selected schools. The findings presented in this chapter were centred on Butler's (1990) performative theory and Connell's (1987, 1995, 2002) gender relational theory and theory of masculinities. The findings in this chapter revealed that schools are heterosexist environments where gender binary ideologies are reproduced, resulting in the vulnerability of gender non-conforming learners (Bhana, 2014). However, some teachers are able to demonstrate tolerance, understanding and advocate their support for gender non-conforming learners. Moreover, teachers revealed the need to revisit school policies to accommodate LGBTQI+ learners at the school. The next chapter presents an overview of the study and its findings and proposes recommendations which could help dismantle heteronormativity and bring about tolerance and acceptance of gender non-conforming learners. This necessitates creating an accommodative environment for both learners and teachers who are gender non-conforming. The school dress code and curriculum are two specific avenues through which transgender identities can be accommodated in the rural school setting.

CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

According to Reygan and Francis (2015), African cultural norms, undergirded by socio-cultural norms of heteronormativity and heterosexuality, disassociates from LGBTQI+ identities. In rural areas where patriarchy is prevalent, gender non-conforming individuals are subjected to high levels of discrimination and marginalisation, which creates an intimidating environment thereby placing them at risk of gender-based violence (Williams, 2015).

This study examined teachers' constructions of transgender identities in rural secondary schools. This chapter begins by presenting an overview of all the chapters in the research. Findings of this study are presented under each theme in relation to how teachers' constructions of transgender identities in rural secondary schools intersect with socio-cultural norms, compulsory heterosexuality, gender binarism and heteronormativity. Lastly, based on the findings of this study, recommendations are put forward.

7.2 Overview of Chapters

Chapter one discussed the prevalence of homophobic attitudes and discrimination by teachers towards gender non-conforming learners in South African rural schools. The chapter justified the importance of conducting research on transgender identities within schools to assist schools and teachers to reduce discrimination and intolerance towards gender non-conforming learners and to create a LGBTQI+ inclusive environment. The background of the study was also presented and included theories that guided this study. The chapter also introduced a review of literature from a global and national perspective. I then provided the aims and objectives of the study as well as the key research questions. I explained the context within which the study took place, and then outlined and described the research methodology adopted in the study. Lastly, I presented an overview of all the chapters.

Chapter two presented the theoretical frameworks supporting this study. The study was guided by Butler's (1990) theory of performativity with a focus on queer theory and Connell's (1987, 1995, 2002) gender relational theory and theory of masculinities. These theories were important in examining how ideologies of gender constructed by teachers were dominated by heterosexuality, thus portraying male as masculine and female as feminine. These understandings of gender do not enable the construction of gender as changeable or fluid.

Chapter three presented the literature review that started from a global perspective and moved to a more localised South African perspective. This chapter highlighted how socio- cultural norms and ideas surrounding masculinities have an influence on the construction of identities of gender non-conforming individuals. The literature review was structured according to themes and sub-themes with reference to the specific phenomenon studied, namely, teachers' constructions of transgender identities in schools.

Chapter four described the research design and methodology used in this study. In this chapter, I first tabulated a summary of the research method, thereafter, each aspect was explained in detail. This study employed a qualitative research design, the interpretivist paradigm, and a phenomenological methodology, as these approaches were appropriate to understand how teachers construct transgender identities in rural secondary schools. The location and context of the study was described and the procedure of recruiting participants was explained. Furthermore, I explained the data collection method used in this study, which were semi-structured individual interviews. I then tabulated profiles of all teacher participants in this study, followed by detailed steps of data analysis. Next, the trustworthiness of the study and reflexivity was explained. Finally, the ethical considerations and limitations of the study were clarified.

Chapter five analysed the data generated in the study. Data was organised around common themes. The data presented in this chapter revealed how socio-cultural norms have an influence on teachers' construction of transgender identities that result in intolerance, discrimination, and non-acceptance of gender diversity in schools in rural areas. Although the data revealed that the school policy and curriculum is not accommodative to gender non- conforming identities, the majority of the data highlighted that teachers accepted and accommodated learners who are gender non-conforming.

7.3 Main Findings

7.3.1 Understanding gender, sex and sexual diversity: Oh yes, they sometimes say sex and sometimes they say its gender, oh gosh! All along I thought that was the same thing, isn't? I just thought it is one and the same thing.

The findings revealed that teachers reinforce gender binarism, which assumes male or female as norms. Miss Tetwayo's response was notable when she said, I have both males and females, which relays an understanding that only two genders exist. The norms of the society remain dominant

in constructing gender identity and sexuality. These norms only focus on heterosexuality and do not consider identity beyond the traditional construction of gender. Many responses thus portrayed a lack of understanding of sexuality and identity that falls outside of the male and female binary categories (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002). Francis (2013) affirms that some people reinforce heterosexism and have fixed ideas of gender and sexuality that does not include diverse aspects of gender identity.

According to Butler (1993a), binarism is closely related to the sex of an individual. In the same way, teachers in this study revealed that learners are registered as boys and girls in their respective schools. This reveals the prevalence of heterosexuality as the dominant ideology in their schools. Cultural ideology is tied to biologically sexed bodies. One participant revealed that learners are accepted into the school as boys and girls, and this reinforces the silencing and denial of gender non-conforming learners and thus ignores the fluidity of gender. However, most of the teacher participants who self-identified as gay did not conform to gender binaries that adhere to biological anatomy; they demonstrated an understanding of the fluidity of gender and have identified learners who are, for example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual. One male teacher participant, who identify as gay, confirmed that he had four openly gay learners in his class. These young men are, however, regimented by culture to maintain traditional forms of masculinities (Msibi, 2009). This participant can be described as an ally to gender non-conforming learners as he is open about his own sexuality and he supports and advocates for learners' rights and gender equality in the school. This encourages the view that gender, sex and sexual diversity is natural rather than taboo.

The research also found that most participants asserted that physical characteristics have to be congruent to the gender that one identifies with. This shows confusion and misconception regarding the difference between sex and gender. Physical characteristics of transgender people who have transitioned socially without undergoing surgery are incongruent with how they perform their gender identity. Participants' responses suggest the incorrect conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality (Bhana, 2012; DePalma & Francis, 2017; Francis 2014). Some participants did however have a clear understanding of the distinction between sex and gender by relating sex to the biological sexual organ and gender to a social construct. According to Butler (1990), the difference between sex and gender disrupts the fixed gender binaries which assume compulsory heterosexuality. Participants shared common responses and revealed that sex and gender are not related but rather independent. This non-dependence grants freedom to people who prefer to be in same sex relationships instead of opposite sex relationships.

According to the extracts discussed above, sex is closely linked to biology in terms of physical make-up, which relate to persons born with a penis or vagina. Some participants demonstrated an extensive understanding of gender as they associated it with social expectations how men and women are expected to behave according to specified gender roles.

7.3.2 Teachers Construction of Transgender Identities: I can imagine in the morning, on the assembly we are all standing and you rock up like that, learners would be shocked, teachers would be shocked and we would laugh and talk about it all day, so the whole equilibrium of the school would be disturbed.

The study found that most of the participants defined transgenderism as a transition from one gender to another, outlining the example of a male becoming a female. For most participants, 'transgender' refers to an individual born with certain sex organs that does not align with how they feel. One female participant demonstrated a degree of understanding of transgenderism, however she confused it with sexuality. She therefore demonstrated some understanding of transgenderism as identifying differently. Other participants understood sex and gender as independent, demonstrating that transgenderism does not necessarily mean the physical changing of sexual organs but rather refers to a mismatch between physical make-up and self-identification. This demonstrates that gender is not static but fluid and changing.

The majority of participants revealed common feelings of shock when witnessing learners identifying differently. Miss Ndawonde questioned the dress code of a learner that did not align with what is stipulated in the school code of conduct. Most teachers opted to confront the learner and to refer the matter to the principal, which indicates that teachers are not well equipped in dealing with learners who identify as gender non-conforming. This sends a message that the school policy is not gender inclusive and suppresses any kind of dress or expression that falls outside of the normality' of the fixed gender binaries. South African schools are influenced by a dominant sexual culture that supports heterosexuality (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis 2017; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012) while erasing homosexuality. Other participants shared sentiments of social stigma and discrimination associated with being gender non-conforming.

The social stigma attached to gender non-conforming individuals discourages them to perform their desired gender identity at school. Schools are an oppressive setting for some learners who are gender, sex and sexually diverse; teachers can make the schooling experience traumatic for these learners by not giving them the support that they need (Msibi, 2012; Bhana, 2014;

Francis, 2012). Participants reported that gender non-conforming individuals would possibly be laughed at and teased by both teachers and learners if performing their desired gender identity. Butler (1990) maintains that rejection and the stigma attached to sexual minorities in schools restricts learners' freedom of being who they want to be. It is clear that in the scenario presented above, gender non-conforming learners have no one to turn to when faced with discrimination because teachers and other learners display negative attitudes toward these learners. Furthermore, learners might not come out as being gender non-conforming because they are protecting themselves (Francis, 2017) out of fear of being discriminated against. It may be concluded that teachers who portray negative attitudes towards learners who are considered different are not only allowing homo/transphobia in schools but are actively contributing to it, which in turn leaves these learners at great risk of victimisation.

The study also found that the school environment is dominated by a heteronormative gendered culture that holds stereotypical views in terms of gender roles. Mr Thusi revealed that there is a lack of gender sensitivity and gender balance in his school as it comprises of more female than male teachers. There is also an assumption that when teachers like Mr Thusi are supporting learners who are gender non-conforming, it is because they belong to the same marginal group. This may mean that teachers who want to be allies to LGBTQI+ learners will be hesitant because of the stigma around it. He mentioned an incident where he really felt the prevalence of gender stereotyping in his school; male teachers are not allowed to be part of the nutrition committee in his school as this is regarded feminine; men are assigned duties that are considered masculine.

The research further demonstrated that teachers who self-identify as gay deconstruct dominant gender roles. In terms of distributing classroom duties, most teachers do not associate duties with any gender, and this promotes equality in such a way that learners learn that it is possible to do absolutely any duty that is assigned to them. Mr Sulelo, for example, specialises in Life Orientation. He shared during his interview that the subject allows him to be gender neutral in class and he also pays attention to topics that most teachers do not pay attention to. He also revealed that learners view same sex relationships as forbidden. This is why he constantly disrupts the idea of heterosexuality as the only norm. Furthermore, he includes same sex relationship examples in his teaching, normalising such relationships. This might encourage learners who are gender non-conforming to be comfortable in being who they are, and other learners will possibly unlearn the negative and stereotypical views instilled by the culture of compulsory heterosexuality

The research also found that participants view a transgender person as a person who changes from their primary (biological) gender to another, for example, male to female. One female participant used the example of transgenderism as encompassing a sex change during her interview, i.e., by undergoing surgical modification and removing the sex organ that a person was born with and replacing it with another sex organ that matches how the person self-identifies. However, the participant confused transgender identity with transsexuality.

The study found that some teacher participants relate transgender identity to homosexuality. This accounts for the fluidity of gender and its flexibility. However, transgenderism is about crossing the boundaries of male and female and wanting to express one's inner gender through performance. This means that transgender performance is personal. As an example, a gay male participant indicated a problematic understanding of gender during his interview; that transitioning to another gender is determined by being attracted to the same sex. This limits sex and gender into fixed ideologies (Reddy, 2019). In addition, the participant's justification was drawn from his own personal experience with gender. He identifies as gay but sometimes feels like a woman and wants to express his feelings and fluidity and disrupt the rigid ideologies of gender and sexuality.

The study also found that learners who are sexually deviant are seen as seeking attention; one female participant asserted that these learners always want to be in the spotlight and that they act like girls. These ideas of normative expectations are deeply entrenched in compulsory heterosexuality and if boys deviate from this norm, it is considered a threat to the hegemonic forms of masculinity that considers man as rough and strong (Bhana & Chens, 2019; Msibi, 2009). Most participants in this study revealed that boys who have inferior masculinities (effeminate) do not associate with other boys but prefer to socialise with girls. This results in teachers constructing the learners' sexuality and gender identity in a specific rigid way. Actions such as writing on the chalkboard and using hand gestures when talking, are regarded as something that can only be exhibited by female learners and this behaviour is seen as a major identifier of sexually deviant learners.

7.4 Rejection of Transgender Identities

Many schools deny and erase sexual diversity (Bhana, 2014; DePalma & Francis, 2014). This leads to discrimination against learners who identify differently (Francis, 2012). The school curriculum plays a major role in upholding the heteronormative framework when not recognising other genders (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2019). However, Life Orientation as a

compulsory subject comprises of topics that presents real life situations, for instance, discussions on gender and sexual diversity (Department of Education, 2002). The study found that teachers were not willing to include discussions or content related to the LGBTQI+ community. Teachers who do not teach Life Orientation tend to focus only on the content that is outlined in the curricula.

7.4.1 Erasure of Transgender Identities in Rural Schools

The study found that most teachers only focus on the designed content. Mr BL confirmed during his interview that the subject that he teaches does not include gender diversity. Some teachers assume that it is only in Life Orientation where discussions related to gender and sexuality should be incorporated. However, other participants include gender diversity in their subjects, and the subject's content therefore does not present a limitation. Mr Zikhali sometimes engages his learners on gender diversity, especially in literature. Learners themselves also come up with examples from what they have seen or read that relates to gender diversity. Francis' (2019) study revealed that learners are curious when it comes to sexuality education and they want to know; this curiosity dismantles heteronormative frameworks and suggests a more inclusive curriculum that addresses gender and sexuality in a more detailed manner. Mr Nodangala is an English teacher, and he also includes gender diversity when he refers to real life situations, and the literature section in his subject allows him to include these examples.

The study also found that the Life Sciences subject includes content on gender diversity. Ms Zungu confirmed that the only time she talks about gender diversity is when the content calls for it. Gender and sexuality are a sensitive topic for Ms Zungu as her class is very diverse in terms of gender. Importantly, some teachers do not want to put the lives and physical health of their gender non-conforming learners at risk (from victimisation by homophobic peers) by showing support for the LGBTQI+ community. Some fear to be viewed as responsible for promoting homosexuality. Francis's (2013) study in the Free State revealed that learners who have fixed understandings of gender believe in heteronormativity and denied the existence of gender diversity. This makes it difficult for teachers to discuss topics that are against the personal values of their learners and this also results in the rejection of discussions on gender and sexuality in the curriculum (Reygan & Francis, 2009). This erasure also results in compulsory heterosexuality (Msibi, 2012).

The study found that there is an unequal representation of genders in the Life Orientation curriculum. This may result in further normalisation of gender binarism and heteronormativity.

Learners are curious about gender diversity and this is shocking to some teachers. For example, it was noted that grade 8 learners have asked unexpected questions during lessons. Similarly, the study conducted by Francis (2014) demonstrated that there is a need for the inclusion of sexual diversity because learners were intrigued by these topics. The questions posed by learners in this regard suggest the need for a more inclusive curriculum that speaks about real life situations (Francis, 2019). Learners in schools are diverse in terms of gender and sexuality and therefore, both the curriculum and school policy should be inclusive of gender and sexual diversity so that every learner feels a sense of belonging.

Most of the teacher participants are heavily influenced by socio-cultural norms deeply rooted in heteronormativity. Many participants demonstrated support for gender binary school uniforms and considered it normal. Most participants grew up in a patriarchal society that persists in the rural community where the schools are located (Msibi, 2009). Participants were therefore socialised and influenced by dominant patriarchal norms (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Teachers support the gendered school uniforms stipulated in the school policy. Some schools have attempted to include gender diversity in school policy. However, in most schools it lacks implementation (Jones et al., 2016). It is hard for teachers who are influenced by patriarchal ideals to be allies to gender non-conforming learners; patriarchy and heteronormativity is also maintained in the community where the school is located and thus gender non-conforming learners are compelled to adhere to dominant gender categories inside as well as outside of the school environment (Francis et al., 2019; Morojele, 2012).

One teacher participant conveyed that a non-teaching staff member displayed a negative attitude towards a learner whose gender performance did not match anatomical sex. The learner was wearing an incorrect school uniform, the opposite of what is assigned in the school policy. These are the devastating challenges that gender diverse learners face in schools which perpetuates violence. Lesbian learners, for example, are seen as posing a threat to masculinity (Msibi, 2009). Forbidding sexually diverse learners to wear clothing that accords with how they feel will only silence them and, importantly, it does not change the inner awareness of their gender.

The study also found that school policies do not consider or include gender diversity. More pertinently, the policies do not mention anything about gender diversity. One participant mentioned that teachers are the main problem and are responsible for spreading homophobia in schools because of their own intolerance towards sexual diversity. The participant argued

that since teachers are able to shape the futures of learners, it would be easy for them to teach about humanity, tolerance and respect with regards to gender diversity through hidden curriculum. Similarly, Msibi (2012) states that teachers can use their authority to either teach or reject topics that are gender and sexuality related in the school context. It is imperative to respect, understand, and accept that each individual learner is unique.

7.5 Teachers as Change Agents: Challenging Gender Stereotypes

According to Stone and Dahir (2015), the duty of teachers is always tied to being agents of change and transformation within schools. It is through cultural norms that certain roles are attached to gender, which results in certain activities being gendered. There is a constant need for teachers to accept and respect the rights of learners who are transgender and gender non-conforming; it is an important part of being an agent of change.

7.5.1 Accommodation of Gender, Sex and Sexual Diversity

Interestingly, the study found that classroom duties were not assigned according to gender. Regardless of gender, every learner gets a turn to clean the classroom. Associating certain duties with gender is a reflection of inequalities that teachers reproduce. Hidden curriculum can be used to dismantle or reproduce gender inequalities in the classroom. Some teachers confirmed that they use the unintended or hidden curriculum to teach learners about sexual diversity whenever they get the opportunity to do so.

The research found that talking about gender diversity gives learners a sense of belonging in class. One participant indicated that rurality has contributed to learners hiding their gender identities; but in his class he embraces gender diversity by destabilising the culture of heteronormativity that is prevalent in the community where he lives and teaches. It is important for teachers to support and accommodate sexual diversity in schools. Life Orientation especially, is a flexible subject and enables teachers to prepare learners for everchanging and transforming society. This subject is focused on the study of self in relation to others (Department of Education, 2014, p. 9). Teaching gender and sexuality might encourage learners who are gender non-conforming to be comfortable in being who they are, and other learners will possibly unlearn the negative and stereotypical views that were instilled by the culture of compulsory heterosexuality.

7.6 Recommendations

This study found that the majority of the participants' understandings of transgender identities stems from their homes and society. Their constructions of transgender identities promote the silencing of gender non-conforming individuals within the school. It is important that teachers, learners, and parents understand sexual diversity as this will help to disrupt gender discrimination. This can be achieved in many ways. I recommend the following:

7.6.1 Inclusion of the LGBTQI+ Learners in the Curriculum and School Policy

The prevalence of socio-cultural norms including heteronormativity results in the denial and silencing of gender non-conforming learners (Reygan, 2019). It should not be the responsibility of Life Orientation teachers only to teach gender and sexual diversity; everyone needs to take part in making sure that learners learn about sexual diversity. Teachers should not focus only on content; sexual diversity can be taught through the hidden curriculum. Life Orientation teachers who are not specialised in the subject often fail to address sexual diversity. Therefore, schools should have qualified Life Orientation teachers as the subject plays a major role in educating learners on respecting the uniqueness of others and internalising moral values (Francis, 2019). Content on gender and sexuality should not be avoided as it serves as a powerful means to embrace gender and sexual diversity (Reygan, 2020; Francis, 2019). For this to be achieved, pre-service and in-service teachers need to be trained and educated to teach gender and sexual diversity (Reygan, 2019; Msibi, 2012). This will also allow teachers to be confident and comfortable in teaching and addressing gender issues and it will also help to strengthen their own understanding. In this way, gender stereotyping and homophobia can be decreased, and heteronormativity can be destabilised in South African schools (Msibi, 2012).

The work of accommodating gender non-conforming learners in schools should be a shared responsibility between parents and the school. The inclusion of parents is of critical importance because they are also responsible for teaching their children knowledge and values. Schools need to host workshops on gender and sexuality in order for parents to be sensitised when it comes to sexual diversity.

Gender binary uniforms are discriminative and contribute to compulsory heterosexuality. I suggest that school policies and codes of conduct need to be revisited and include the accommodation of gender non-conforming learners. Learners should not feel discriminated against even before entering the school premises. Learners should be allowed to wear a stipulated uniform that accords with the gender of their choosing. The inclusion of gender

non-conforming learners should be stated in the vision and mission statement of the school so that these learners are ensured a welcoming and accommodative environment.

7.7. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the main findings of this study that were presented according to themes. The study attempted to contribute to understanding how teachers in rural secondary schools' construct and understand transgender identities. Further, the study attempted to provide insight into how dominant socio-cultural norms, and specifically compulsory heterosexuality, perpetuate discrimination and further the silencing of transgender individuals in secondary schools. The responsibility of social justice lies with all the stakeholders involved in the school. There is a need to revisit school policies and school codes of conduct to ensure that LGBTQI+ learners are included and accommodated. Gender sensitivity training for both teachers and parents is of paramount importance in attempting to reduce and disrupt gender binarism and heteronormativity. The recommendations made in this chapter aims to pave a way towards the accommodation of sexual diversity in schools. South African schools need to aspire towards resembling an inclusive school environment that accommodates and advocates the rights of all learners, including LGBTQI+ learners.

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APPENDICES

Permission from Department of Education to conduct research in KZN DoE Institutions.



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Tel: 033 392 1063/51

Ref.:2/4/8/4085


Mr Gobizazi Lucky Mbonambi
C 1285 Umlazi Township
DURBAN
4066

Dear Mr Mbonambi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"CONSTRUCTIONS OF TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES AMONGST TEACHERS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 27 February 2020 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 27 February 2020

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KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa

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Permission from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), University of KwaZulu-Natal.

02 September 2020

Mr Gobizazi Lucky Mbonambi (215003344)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Mbonambi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001362/2020

Project title: Teachers' construction of transgender identities in rural secondary schools

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 28 July 2020 to our letter of 09 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has 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.

This approval is valid for one year until 02 September 2021

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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