

**“Just trying to live our lives”: gay, lesbian and
bisexual students’ experiences of being “at home” in
university residence life**

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in South Africa is faced with a paramount task to help erode the social and structural inequalities that have been inherited from the Apartheid system (Department of Education 1997; Council on Higher Education 2000:12). The findings from the Soudien Report (2008:116-117) point out that the post-Apartheid higher education system in South Africa is characterised by various forms of discrimination and institutional cultures that marginalise some members of institutions resulting in pervasive feelings of alienation. In the South African higher education field, the concept of a “home” for all has been used by a variety of commentators to depict a vision of what transformed, inclusive higher education institutional cultures might look like. In this thesis, I interpret the experiences of residence life on the part of gay, lesbian and bisexual students on a largely residential campus. I ask how gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience being “at home” in the campus’s residence system. The thesis is based on 18 in-depth qualitative interviews with students who self-identify as gay/lesbian or bisexual who have experienced residence life on the campus for a period longer than six months. A wide literature exists on the concept of “home”. Drawing from many different disciplines including anthropology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology, architecture and sociology, I distil the essential features of “at homeness” as incorporating comfort, privacy, security, acceptance, companionship and community. The research was concerned to inquire into how central the idea of home is to human flourishing and then into how gay, lesbian and bisexual students are routinely denied many of the essential comforts associated with being “at home” that heterosexual students have the privilege of taking for granted.

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List of Abbreviations

DOS	Dean of Students
LGB	Lesbian, gay and bisexual
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
O Week	Orientation Week
PDA	Public Display of Affection

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of current study

Higher education in South Africa is faced with a paramount task to help erode the social and structural inequalities that have been inherited from the Apartheid system (White Paper 1997; Council on Higher Education 2000:12). In 2008, the then Minister of Education Ms. Naledi Pandor established the Ministerial Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions to “investigate discrimination in public higher education institutions, with a particular focus on racism, and to make appropriate recommendations to combat discrimination and promote social cohesion” (Soudien 2008:23; Higher Education South Africa 2010). This call also forms part of the attempt at transformation in higher education institutions across the country that has been the focus of post-Apartheid government policy as outlined in the Education White Paper 3 (1997). The findings from the Soudien Report (2008:116-117) point out that the post-Apartheid higher education system in South Africa is characterised by various forms of discrimination and institutional cultures that marginalise and discriminate against some, resulting in pervasive feelings of alienation amongst some members of higher education institutions.

1.2 Rationale

For the purpose of this thesis, transformation is understood as that process which an institution undergoes in order to create an inclusive environment for everyone within that particular institution regardless of their race, class, gender and, the particular focus of the present thesis, sexual orientation (see for instance Viljoen and Rothmann 2002; Niemann 2010; Bitzer 2010). While there is work that has focused on transformation in higher education in South Africa based on gender, race and class (Mabokela 2003; Van Wyk 2004; Nel 2012; Idahosa 2014), there is little qualitative research that focuses on issues of transformation in relation to discrimination based on sexual preference within higher education in South Africa (Soudien 2008:23; Msibi 2013;

Donaldson 2015). Renn (2010:139) moreover has called for a “. . . comprehensive research agenda that retains practical, applied elements (like campus climate studies)” in higher education.

To date the existing research that has incorporated questions of sexuality in relation to higher education transformation in South Africa has employed quantitative methodologies such as surveys and questionnaires (see for instance Arndt and de Bruin 2006) that focus on attitudes towards homosexual students. The qualitative work that has been done by some scholars such as Butler *et al* (2003), Butler and Astbury (2004), Bhana (2012) and Msibi (2012b) focuses on the experiences of gay and lesbian youths in secondary schools but there has been little of this kind of work to date that focuses on experiences of homosexual students in universities (Graziano 2004). It is against this backdrop that the present thesis seeks to investigate an aspect of the institutional climate at one university as it is experienced by gay, lesbian and bisexual students. The experiences of these students is thought to be an important indicator of the extent to which a vision of a more inclusive institutional environment is being realised in practice as they represent a minority that has, in the South African context, been reviled.

Institutions of higher education have been said to mirror the societies they exist in (Evans and Broido 1999). Institutions do not exist in vacuums but are influenced by the socio-economic and political contexts of the societies they exist in. Various actors within an institution display beliefs and practices that are dominant within the societies they come from. South Africa is beset by a culture of violent homophobia (Soudien Report 2008; Msibi 2013:67). I seek to investigate whether the Rhodes University environment, especially the residence system where students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual share the space with other students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, is accommodating and welcoming to students who self-identify as homosexual, considering that there is evidence to suggest that there is widespread discrimination in university residences in South Africa (Soudien 2008:117).

1.3 Conceptual framing: the concept of “home”

The site of the study is Rhodes University, chosen because it is a largely residential campus where the majority of students who are first-time entrants spend at least some time in the residence system. The former Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University, Dr. Saleem Badat, frequently reiterated in his speeches his desire that Rhodes University should be “a home for all” regardless of race, class, gender or sexual orientation. This speaks to the idea that Rhodes University is expected to be experienced as a comfortable and welcoming space for all who become part of the university. With this in mind, the thesis seeks to understand whether the institutional home at Rhodes is experienced as a comfortable and welcoming place for all its members from the perspective of students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual.

Various disciplines including anthropology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology, architecture and sociology have theorised the meaning of “home” as a place that produces essential features of “at homeness” such as security, comfort, privacy and well-being which are all produced through social relations and social practices prevailing among those who inhabit that space identified as home. University residences are homes away from home where students spend large parts of the year. Residences have been identified by scholars such as Soudien (2008:75) as “social cauldrons” where students with various socio-economic, racial and sexual identities come together and have to live together during their academic years at university. Individuals create and establish relationships with each other and participate in social life that produces various moments of inclusion and exclusion for different groups and individuals because of the institutional culture(s) and social practices that exist within an institution.

This work seeks to demonstrate how homosexual students experience institutional life using the idea of “at homeness” to investigate how the residences as homes for these students provide a sense of inclusion and belonging or alienation (if any) on the basis of their sexual orientation through day-to-day interactions in the different residences across the Rhodes University Campus.

1.4 Methods, procedures and techniques

A detailed description of the research methods, procedures and techniques used in the study is provided in Chapter 4. This research employs an interpretive paradigm to analyse the experiences of “at homeness” of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who have at any point in their academic life lived in residence at Rhodes University for a period longer than six months. In-depth open-ended narrative interviews were conducted with 18 participants who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual in order to access the participants’ stories and experiences of residence life in the institution. The interview process was ended when thematic saturation was reached. The collected data was analysed using thematic narrative analysis and NVivo data analysis software.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is on students who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual at Rhodes University and who have experienced living in residence for a minimum period of six months. Participants in this study shared narrative experiences of living in different residences, which were interpreted to get an understanding of how some homosexual students experience residence life at Rhodes University.

This work does not claim to speak for all gay, lesbian and bisexual students at Rhodes University or indeed in South African higher education institutions in general but presents evidence that points to the fact that some gay, lesbian and bisexual students have particular experiences and needs based on their sexual orientation and social attitudes towards homosexuality that render comfortable proclamations of any institution being a “home for all” questionable. The narrative experiences of the participants in this study provide insights into some of the particular challenges and hardships that gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience because of their sexual orientation. The stories shared in this study, I argue, reveal that in comparison to their heterosexual peers, gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience various challenges that result from their sexual orientation. Also presented here are ways in which experiencing residence life as estranging rather than homely is negotiated by the participants and how institutional practices, policies and mechanisms can serve to ameliorate or accentuate experiences of exclusion, alienation and discomfort.

1.6 Structure

1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview and background of the study, rationale, methods and theoretical framing of the study

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Context

This chapter locates the research in the Rhodes University context. The chapter looks at the structures and policies that have been implemented at the university in trying to address the various issues and challenges that students face based on their sexual orientation. This chapter also locates itself in the broader context of South Africa which, in some communities, can be a hostile and unaccommodating environment for gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens. The chapter seeks also to place the thesis within the context of the existing research that has been done on the experiences of homosexual students in institutions of higher education both in South Africa and more broadly.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: Conceptual framing: the concept of “home”

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of how the concept of “home” has been theorised from various disciplines including anthropology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology, architecture and sociology. It describes how home has been theorised as a place/space that produces essential features of “at homeness” such as security, comfort, privacy and well-being. It describes also a literature that talks of home in less positive terms as producing violence, marginalisation and exclusion. These contradictory representations of home are produced mainly through social relations and social practices established and performed by those who inhabit the places identified as home.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter serves to provide a step-by-step account of the research process employed, the paradigm that was used, the data-collection process, the data-analysis process, using NVivo software for qualitative data analysis, and how the theoretical lens influenced the use of thematic constructs to analyse the data.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Home comforts/discomforts

This chapter looks at home as a place primarily associated with comfort and being comfortable. Seen through this lens, for many gay, lesbian and bisexual students, residence life is not comfortable. For a variety of reasons these students often experience profound discomfort in the very places where they are supposed to feel most at home.

1.6.6 Chapter 6: Home as privacy

The idea of home is very closely tied to privacy – homes are by definition places removed from the public eye, to which individuals can retreat. Literature suggests that the security that privacy provides, moreover, is essential to the development of a secure sense of self. For many gay, lesbian and bisexual students, their sexuality subjects them constantly to public scrutiny even when they are “at home”.

1.6.7 Chapter 7: Feeling “at home” in heteronormative/homophobic homes

This chapter highlights the heteronormative mores that prevail in both institutional life and social interaction. Heteronormativity, moreover, the chapter argues, not infrequently provides the legitimising substratum within which homophobic practices unfold.

1.6.8 Chapter 8: Negotiating strangeness

The antithesis of being “at home” might be thought to be captured by the notion of “strangeness” or the “stranger” or feeling “estranged”. Drawing on the work of Shane Phelan concerning what she calls “sexual strangers”, this chapter examines how gay, lesbian and bisexual students who, as a result of their sexual preference, in an environment of pervasive heteronormativity, find themselves estranged rather than “at home” negotiate that strangeness. The chapter documents a

range of strategies deployed by the participants themselves as well as ways in which institutional responses and support structures can assist in the amelioration of “strangeness”.

1.6.9 Chapter 9: Conclusion

The chapter presents a summary of the argument based on the concept of “home”. I look at how the various representations in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 contribute towards the understanding and experiences of “at homeness” by gay, lesbian and bisexual students living in residences at Rhodes University.

1.7 Summary

This thesis examines how gay, lesbian and bisexual students at Rhodes University experience living in residences through their storied experiences of residence life. Employing an interpretive approach, using the concept of “home” as my theoretical framework, I examine how homosexual students narrate their experiences of living in residences at Rhodes University which are considered to be home for students for most of the year during their studies at university. Thematic analysis of the data yielded four themes which I here term “home comforts/discomforts”, “home as privacy”, “feeling ‘at home’ in heteronormative/homophobic homes” and “negotiating strangeness” which I use to interpret the experiences of homosexual students in residences at Rhodes University. While there is evidence to suggest that some homosexual students experience Rhodes University residences as a liberating and comfortable place where they are able to express their identity, there is a large body of evidence that points to how homosexual students experience marginality, exclusion and discrimination in the institutional home because of their sexuality. Their day-to-day experiences of living in residences with peers who are heterosexual produce moments where they do not feel welcomed in the residences because of their sexual orientation. The narratives portray how gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience both negative and positive experiences of being sexual minorities living in residences that are characterised by a dominant culture of heteronormativity and, at times, blatant homophobia.

2. Chapter Two: Context

The experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual students in institutions of higher education have been studied in various contexts around the world, especially in the United States of America, since the late 1980s. The research highlights the challenges that homosexual students face at institutions of higher education as a result of their sexual orientation. A number of scholars (Herek 1986; D'Augelli 1989 a, b, 1992; Epstein *et al* 2000; Sears 2002; Rankin 2005; Msibi 2013) have argued that the social climate that prevails at institutions of higher education has resulted in the marginalisation and stigmatisation of homosexual students. Universities are frequently characterised by environments that are not safe or accepting of homosexual students (Reed *et al* 2010; Yost and Gilmore 2011; Woodford *et al* b. 2012; Tetreault *et al* 2013)

Both quantitative and, to a lesser extent, qualitative research has been employed to study homophobia in educational institutions. Quantitative work (see Bowen and Bourgeois (2001); Ellis *et al* (2003); Arndt and de Bruin (2006) and Roper and Halloran (2007) has focused on the attitudes of heterosexual students towards homosexual students. The qualitative work done by scholars such as Evans and Broido (1999); Rhoads (1995); and Graziano (2004) has focused on the experiences of gay students as their sexual orientation becomes known – so-called “coming out” experiences (Eichberg 1990; Arndt and de Bruin 2006) which involve publically acknowledging that one does not subscribe to the socially-acceptable heterosexual identity and instead publically adopting what may be a denigrated non-heterosexual lesbian and gay identity (Epstein *et al* 2000). Evans and Broido's (1999) findings point to how the environment plays an important role in the “coming out” process. They also conclude that institutions of higher education reflect the homophobic and heterosexist nature of society. Their work points also to failures on the part of institutions when it comes to confronting harassment and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. Rhoads (1995:73) found that some students who reveal their sexual identity face harassment and victimisation from other students. Incidents of harassment range in severity from verbal abuse in the form of homophobic comments to discrimination and violence (Westefeld *et al* 2001; Jenkins *et al* 2009; Francis and Msibi 2011; Msibi 2013). D'Augelli (1989a) found that almost half of the students who participated in a survey on their experiences of harassment and discrimination chose

to conceal their homosexuality, pretended to be heterosexual so as to avoid victimisation, or dissociated from known gay and lesbian peers (see also Tetreault *et al* 2013:949). Work done by Ngcobo (2007) in the South African context indicates that homosexual students face harassment, discrimination and violation of their constitutional rights because of their sexual orientation.

Research has shown that there are high chances of one being harassed when one is identified as lesbian or gay, whether this characteristic is disclosed, discovered or presumed. In the research Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) did at a large South East university in the United States, they found that most heterosexual students at that institution reported more negative attitudes towards gay and lesbian students than towards students whose sexual orientation was not revealed. Evans and D’Augelli (1996:222) challenged institutions of higher education to fulfil their moral responsibility of providing gay and lesbian students with a safe environment where free expression can thrive for this group of students. More recent work (by scholars such as Jenkins *et al*, 2009; Francis and Msibi 2011, Msibi 2013) suggests that the challenge remains unmet. They continue to experience homophobia and discrimination in heterosexist environments.

Rankin (2005:17) defines campus climate as “the cumulative attitudes, behaviours and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities and potential.” Research suggests that gay students continue to encounter campus climates that are hostile to them because of their sexual orientation (D’Augelli 1992:392; Evans and D’Augelli 1996; Rankin 2003; Woodford *et al* b. 2012; Beemyn and Rankin 2011; Msibi 2013). Research conducted by Mohr and Sedlacek (2000:73) indicates that, for example, 18.9% of students who participated in the research at one large public institution reported no interest in having a lesbian or gay friend. Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997) found that heterosexual male students expressed intolerance and discomfort, and were less accepting when they were expected to interact with gay students in public, such as being invited to a gay bar, working with a gay student on a class project or being invited to a football game by a group of gay students (Engstrom and Sedlacek 1997:572).

Work by scholars – D’Augelli (1993), Evans and D’Augelli (1996) – speaks to the psychological impact that homophobia has on the lives of homosexual students. Harassment and ostracism play a role in suicide, substance abuse, depression and anxiety amongst homosexual students in college (Blumenfeld *et al* 1993; Williamson 2000:103; Rivers 2002; Woodford *et al*, b. 2012). Extant research thus suggests that homophobia is endemic in institutions of higher education (Ellis 2008:6; Kane 2013:829) and that its effects on the well-being of homosexual students are severe and far-reaching. Research moreover has shown that cases of harassment frequently go unreported to institutional authorities due to the perception that such authorities are not sympathetic to those who experience discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation (Nelson and Baker 1990; Engstrom and Sedlacek 1997; Scourfield *et al* 2008:330; Francis and Msibi 2011).

Arndt and de Bruin’s (2006) work speaks to how tertiary education institutions need to create gay-friendly, conducive and accommodating environments. Engstrom and Sedlacek (1997:575) argue that:

. . . it is important to confront institutional structures which assume a heterosexist ideology. Equitable policies and procedures such as health care, insurance and tuition benefits, and access to recreational facilities for gay male and lesbian partners serve to challenge what are cultural givens and heterosexual privileges.

The need to empower homosexual students is a global initiative with a variety of scholars identifying the need to create supporting structures for homosexual students at universities and for sensitivity and awareness to permeate all students’ services (Blumenfeld *et al* 1993; Evans and D’Augelli 1996:218-222; Engstrom and Sedlacek 1997:574). Nelson and Baker (1990) point out however that a safer environment for homosexual students should transcend the legal laws and policies and organisational structures to permeate day-to-day practices, values and assumptions.

In South Africa and on South African campuses the need is particularly great. South Africa was the first country in the world to include a sexual orientation clause in its Bill of Rights (Graziano 2004:273). South Africa’s constitution has been hailed as the most liberal constitution in the world,

not least with regard to the question of gay rights (Graziano 2004:273). However, according to a survey investigation conducted in 1995, 44% of South Africans oppose gay and lesbian rights (Charney 1995 in Cock 2003:38). There exists a large disparity between the language of inclusivity and non-discrimination entrenched in the constitution and the reality that homosexual people face on a daily basis in the country (Richardson 2008; Msibi 2013). There is evidence that the gay community in South Africa faces widespread discrimination and that homosexuality continues to be constructed as “deviant” (Dhladha 2001 in Graziano 2004:274). The stigmatisation that the homosexual community faces is not only limited to South African communities but is a widespread phenomenon across most African countries with statesmen like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe declaring publicly his disgust and loathing for homosexual people (Graziano 2004).

The social context is thus one in which homosexuality is widely viewed as a “disease” that needs to be cured. As Francis and Msibi (2011) note, there is a prejudicial belief that runs across the continent, which has been promoted by political leaders, that homosexuality is a disease and “un-African” (also see Richardson 2006), and this prejudice has become the foundation for harassment and discrimination against homosexual people in black communities across not only South Africa but the continent. This is part of the justification for example that is put forward by perpetrators of “corrective rape” of lesbians in South Africa (Msibi 2013:67). Survey questionnaires completed by the Equality Project for the years 2001 and 2002 demonstrate a high level of homophobic violence in South Africa (Arndt and de Bruin 2006:17). Msibi has argued that this climate of hostility and violence has a silencing effect both on homosexual people themselves and on social commentary and academic research. Queer research is viewed as dangerous terrain and scholars interested in researching such issues are suspected of themselves subscribing to “deviant” sexual behaviour (Msibi 2013:67).

There is thus a paucity of research that has been done on the experiences of gay and lesbian students in institutions of higher education in South Africa (Msibi 2013). Most of the existing research conducted in South Africa at institutions of higher education has taken the form of surveys and questionnaires (Arndt 2004; Arndt and de Bruin 2006) that focus on attitudes towards homosexual students. The qualitative work that has been done has focused mainly on the secondary

school context. Higher education institutions in South Africa are undergoing transformation processes on many levels, including the demographics of the students they are enrolling and their staff, policies and procedures (Portnoi 2009:373). According to the Education White Paper 3, “the higher education system must be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities” (White Paper 1997: Foreword; Cele and Menon 2006). The main vision for higher education as outlined in the White Paper (1997: Vision) is to establish a transformed, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist system of higher education that will:

- Promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress of past inequalities.
- Support a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights by educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist, non-sexist social order.

Transformation is multidimensional, encompassing management practices and ways of doing things, structures, processes and procedures, changes in values, and norms, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours amongst all that occupy the institutional space. The Soudien Report (2008) argues that a transformed institution needs to display characteristics of non-marginalisation, a respect for minorities and an appreciation of human diversity in personalities, individual preferences, human skills and workplace skills (Soudien Report 2008:36). As Badat (2009:8) has argued, transformed universities should produce graduates who are not just capable professionals, but individuals who are sensitive and can be critical citizens who are able to play a role in the advancement of a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights, tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, just, non-racist and non-sexist society (Badat 2009:8). It has been noted, however, that to date little attention has been paid to the question of sexual minorities and cultures of heteronormativity and homophobia in South Africa’s higher education transformation debates (Donaldson 2015:130). The Soudien Report (2008:46) pointed out, for instance, that the issue of

sexual orientation, along with ethnicity and social class, received less attention in institutional transformation reports than questions of race and gender, for example.

Soudien (2008:75) has argued that university residences are a particularly important site to focus on with regard to the transformation of higher education institutional cultures. He argues that university residences are “homes away from home” which he describes as “social cauldrons” where young people from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and with very different life experiences are thrown together and spend most of their time on campus. He also argues that it is in the residence system that most of the ill social practices such as racism are felt directly rather than covertly or subliminally (Soudien 2008:75). Initiation activities and traditions that are passed from one year to the next within the residence systems but which do not result in bodily harm may be regarded as trivial (Soudien 2008:84). While participation in these traditions is not compulsory, there are instances when those who decline to participate in the activities may experience ostracism, isolation and treatment that labels them as outcasts (Soudien 2008:82).

What the above discussion shows is that, in the context of wider transformation and democratisation imperatives in South Africa and in higher education in particular, there is a need for qualitative research which is able to provide new insights into the day-to-day lived experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual students at South African institutions of higher education. Moreover, as Soudien has argued, residences are a particularly significant site of interaction on campuses. For this reason, the present study takes as its focus one particular South African university campus which is largely residential in nature. Rhodes University is one of the four “English” universities in the country. Some 45% of the student body (70% of first years and 57% of all undergraduates) reside on campus (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics 2011:D1).

In its current Vision and Mission Statement the University undertakes to develop shared values that embrace basic human and civil rights (Rhodes University Vision and Mission Statement 2000:1). This declaration serves as an indication of commitment to making Rhodes University an institution that upholds values of human dignity and expresses a sense of respect for all individuals

who form part of this Rhodes community. The University's Admissions Policy states that admission into the institution is based on a system that does not take into consideration potential candidates' race, gender, ethnic origin, marital status or sexual orientation (Rhodes Admission Policy 2010:Principles 2). The institution is committed to promoting a sense of belonging amongst all its students, not only academically but as a place where personal well-being is prioritised.

Quality of Residence Life Surveys conducted at the institution between 2010 and 2013 found that most students living in residences report that they have not directly experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation: 75.9% of the 2451 students surveyed in 2010, 75.3% of the 2534 participants in 2011, 73.1% of the 2737 in 2012 and 75.2% of the 2639 in 2013. However, the surveys do point to some participants having witnessed incidents of homophobia in their residences: 54 participants (2.1%) in 2010, 147 participants (5.7%) in 2011, 71 participants (2.6%) in 2012 and 86 participants (3.3%) in 2013. The present thesis seeks to augment these quantitative survey findings with more detailed qualitative data concerning how residence life is experienced from the perspective of homosexual students.

In its policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination and Harassment, Rhodes University expresses a commitment to eradicating discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, gender and ethnicity. Rule 15.27 states that:

Any student who utters, distributes, displays, shows, screens or projects any disparaging or derogatory remarks or innuendos based on a person's race, gender or sexual orientation, or any form of hate speech shall be guilty of a disciplinary offence.

The formal policies of the institution make a commitment to intolerance of any form of discrimination and undertake to take disciplinary action against those who infringe the policy (Policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination and Harassment: 2). This policy is informed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, Section 9, Equality which prohibits unfair discrimination (Policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination and Harassment: 2). The policy also prohibits discrimination amongst the

institution's members on the basis of sex, gender, ethnic origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. This means that students who self-identify as homosexual are protected by both the Constitution and the University's policies. The institution continues to express zero tolerance of the infringement of its policies. As Rule 15.30 clearly states,

Any student who commits any form of racial, sexual, gender, religious or other form of harassment shall be guilty of a disciplinary offence.

One of the main objectives of the harassment policy at Rhodes University is to ensure that the University fosters social cohesion through effecting understanding among the University community of the importance of promoting a culture that supports all staff and students, irrespective of their membership of a particular group or lifestyle choice (Dealing with Harassment and Unfair Discrimination: Policy Objectives). The university has taken the initiative to enable the creation of channels that can facilitate the dissemination of information on this policy. The institution has committed to ensuring that Heads of departments, divisions and institutes commit to the implementation of the policy through educating and ensuring awareness of the policy amongst members of staff and students in their respective departments. Members of staff are made aware of the offices to contact in the event that they experience any incidents discriminatory in nature. In the case of students, the Dean of Students Office, as well as the residential Wardening staff, is also responsible for dealing with incidents and cases of harassment and discrimination (Dealing with Harassment and Unfair Discrimination: 3.1.2. Principles that underpin the eradication of unfair discrimination and harassment).

The University has also made the commitment to orient and inform new members of the institution, be they students or staff members, about the policy. Rhodes University also undertakes to commit to the provision of adequate resources in order to encourage students to approach relevant offices for support, for instance the Dean of Students Office, in order to work towards the eradication of discrimination at the institution. Other offices that have been tasked with the implementation of this policy at the institution include those of the Dean of Teaching and Learning, Deans, the

Director: Human Resources and the Director of Equity and Institutional Culture (Dealing with Harassment and Unfair Discrimination: 3.1.2. Principles that underpin the eradication of unfair discrimination and harassment). The institution can be seen as demonstrating its utmost commitment and highest level of attention towards addressing issues around harassment and unfair discrimination at the university through these various policies. A Staff Co-Ordinating Officer, Student Co-Ordinating Officer, and Reporting Officers are part of the team that the institution has set up to deal with complaints and address concerns amongst staff and students at this institution.

The Dean of Students Office at Rhodes University has also displayed its commitment to support the Vision and Mission of the institution by vowing to promote the existence of an environment that promotes academic and personal growth (DOS: Vision and Mission Statement). Included in its aims is the provision of a nurturing and caring environment that is free from discrimination, intimidation and harassment (DOS: Vision and Mission Statement). The division also expresses commitment to building graduates who “embrace diversity and value tolerance and mutual respect” (DOS: Vision and Mission Statement). The division’s aim is to create a campus climate that is conducive for academic study as well as personal development of all its students. The policy environment of Rhodes shares much with the Higher Education sector in South Africa, where attempts have been made to create institutional environments that accommodate all students. In the present thesis, I examine how that climate is experienced through the eyes of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who represent, given the social context, a particularly vulnerable group on campus and whose interests and well-being these formal policies are meant to protect.

3. Chapter Three: Conceptual Framing.

The concept of “home”

While Rhodes University has put in place policies aimed at creating an environment of inclusion and non-discrimination, not everyone feels equally at one with the dominant, insider culture of the institution. In the present thesis, the concept of “home” is employed as a lens through which to explore this duality from the point of view of experiences of members of the institution who self-identify as homosexual. There are elements within any institutional culture that create discomfort for some while at the same time others might experience a sense of comfortable “at homeness” with those very elements, making it possible for these members to be comfortable and thrive in the culture that is created within that same space where others do not feel comfortable and experience an unwelcoming environment. The attempt to create a culture of inclusion and non-discrimination, is encapsulated in the idea, often expressed by the former Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University, Dr. Saleem Badat, that Rhodes University belongs to all its students and that it is a “home for all” (Vice Chancellor’s Speech 2010; 2011). This idea of the university as a “home for all” envisages an institution that is intolerant of all forms of discrimination and that does not accommodate “racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic or any other chauvinist behaviour” (Badat 2010; Rhodes University 2000), and in which every student who enrolls occupies the same social status as everyone else.

The concept of “home” which Badat here invokes has been used as a frame to understand a variety of issues pertaining to the transformation of institutional culture(s) in higher education in South Africa (Thaver 2006). But “home” is a contested concept amongst academics (Easthope 2004:134; also see Bowlby *et al* 1997). Thaver (2006:18) argues that the concept of home can be used within an institution to establish who is at home (sites, symbols, practices and relations) and similarly, in contrast, who is not at home (locating emergent hostilities, disaffirmed identities, insecurities and demotivation). A wide literature exists on the concept of “home”. Different disciplines including anthropology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology, architecture and sociology have theorised the concept of home and the various conceptualisations that exist about home (Porteous 1976; Williams 1984; Sixsmith 1986; Lawrence 1991; Smith 1994; Dupuis and Thorns 1998;

Wardhaugh 1999; Manzo 2003; Easthope 2004; Hauge 2007; Moore 2007; Jacobson 2009). Hayward (1977:9) describes home as a multi-dimensional concept that is composed of a range of concepts such as family, social networks, self-identity, privacy, continuity, personalisation, behaviour and dwelling (also see Sixsmith 1986:294). Some scholars have queried whether home refers to a place(s), space(s), feeling(s), practices or an active state of being in the world (Mallet 2004:62). Scholars such as Sixsmith (1986:282) and Dekkers (2009:338) point out that home is a complex phenomenon that is not easy to describe or pinpoint. Easthope (2004:135) argues that there are numerous and varied understandings of “home” because home might mean “different things at different times and in different contexts” for different people (also see Sixsmith 1986:294; Lawrence 1991:92).

Smith (1994:31) argues that qualities of continuity, privacy, self-expression and personal identity, social relations, warmth and suitable physical structures are associated with home environments (Smith 1994:31). There is clear evidence that elements of identity, social relations, privacy and self-expression form part of the fundamental elements that characterise a home. Cristoforetti *et al* (2011:226) argue that the home seems to primarily represent a comfortable place whose comfort is both physical and emotional in nature. The comfort is derived from familiarity, personal rituals and routines (Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:226; Mallet, 2004:63). Sixsmith (1986:291) argues that the home is not just a place that is shared with others but that it is also a place that allows entertainment and enjoyment of other people’s company such as friends and relatives. Easthope (2004:130) argues that this sense of comfort and belonging derives from the fact that part of how people define themselves is symbolised by certain qualities of that place.

Easthope (2004:134) references scholars such as Saunders and Williams (1988), who argue that home is a socio-spatial entity, the result of the “fusion” of the “physical unit of the house” and the “social unit of the household” (also see Jacobson 2009:363). Somerville (1992, and 1997 in Easthope 2004:135) is of the view that one needs to incorporate the emotive aspects into defining home as sociological and psychological definitions of home do not alone fully define the concept. These differing views from different scholars have led to the understanding of the concept of “home” in a multitude of different ways. In summary, “home” has been seen as spatial, social,

psychological and emotive (Easthope 2004). Scholars such as Moore (2000:208) argue that the concept of home is very hard to define explicitly. Moore (2000:208) argues that this difficulty in defining the concept is because of its layered meanings. She equates trying to understand home to describing an onion: home has to be examined in terms of its parts as well as a whole in order to get a fuller understanding of the concept.

Thaver (2006:17) points to two main opposing positions emerging in the literature on “home”: home as a place of enchantment and home as a place of disenchantment. Scholars writing on home have provided opposing views, with one group focusing on what they call the enchantment thesis while the other group has focused on how the home is a contested terrain – disenchantment thesis (Thaver 2006:17). Scholars like Vice (2015:50) have argued that “home” is a positive space and being home is a valuable experience (also see Dekkers 2009:346; Wright 1991:213). Dovey (1985:36) is of the view that home is a sacred place, a secure place, a place of certainty as well as a place of stability (also see Price 2002:40). Tuan (1975:154) argues that the home has been primarily theorised as a nurturing shelter where people perform the most basic functions such as eating, bathing and sleeping amongst the fulfilment of other human needs. Smith (1994) argues that one experiences a sense of continuity, stability and permanence when they have a place they can return to where they feel they belong. The home in this framing is regarded as the setting for the enhancement and support of a range of interpersonal relationships (Smith 1994:33; Mallet 2004:63). Home is an intimate space which provides occupants with an atmosphere for close and caring relationships (Mallet 2004:71; Bowlby *et al* 1997:344).

However, scholars such as George (1996:1) adopt a less hopeful vision of home, introducing the realities of patriarchal hierarchy, unequal power relations and gendered identities, which cohabit with “shelter, comfort, nurture and protection” in both the physical space and the concept of “home”. George (1996:9) argues that homes are places of violence as well as nurturing. Kaplan (1987:194) similarly points out that “home” is not a comfortable place for everyone: “we must leave home, as it were, since our homes are often the sites of racism, sexism and other damaging social practices”. These arguments give insight into the realities that are embedded in the places people call home. These scholars reject the idealised view of home and point out the realities of

the different experiences that are possible on the part of those who inhabit places that they call “home” (Mallet 2004:71; Sixsmith 1986:291).

Sibley (1995:95) points to questions of the exercise of power in the home. He argues that the home can become a place of conflict, especially when there are non-conforming individuals who do not share the characteristics that are valued by other occupants. Bowlby *et al* (1997:343) argue that the home can become the site of exclusion for the undesirables who do not conform to social expectations and social norms. Individuals in the home who are unable to, or choose not to, conform to the norms which are used to establish a conventional household are symbolically and often literally excluded from the home (Wardhaugh 1999:97). The normatively excluded individuals remain visible in the home however – often hyper-visible and a perceived threat to the way of life of the other occupants of the home (Wardhaugh 1999:97). Cresswell (2009:5) argues that the people who are labelled as being out of place are those who have transgressed invisible boundaries that define what is appropriate and inappropriate in the home.

Young (1997:134) in Vice (2015:50) argues that “home” can be a space where some benefit at the expense of others, restrictive of personal growth and autonomy, suspicious of change and difference, complacent and conservative. George (1996:2) expresses similar sentiments when she argues that the notion of “home” is built in a pattern of selective inclusions and exclusions. Cristoforetti *et al* (2011:226) argue that the home is a highly gendered space which can also be a place of fear, abuse, isolation and loneliness. Dupuis and Thorns (1998) argue that for some the home is a site of oppression and fear, a prison rather than a place of freedom and security (also see Wardhaugh 1999; Mallet 2004:72). The home is a site of violence where those who are abused and violated are likely to experience being “homeless within the home” (Mallet 2004:73). A sense of homelessness can be experienced by individuals, communities or even nations as a result of marginalisation, alienation, expulsions or migration (Wardhaugh 1999:95). Manzo (2003:51) expresses the same sentiments about home by arguing that for some home is not a place of refuge but a place where violence occurs (also see Dekkers 2009:346; Cresswell 2009:5). Home is thus not always an ideal space where positive attributes emanate from but is also a space where negative practices originate and are reinforced through daily practices by those who inhabit the home.

Home can be conceptualised as the physical place where social relations and institutions are established and reinforced (Mallet 2004:68). It is the place where socio-cultural and historical ideas around gender, ethnicity and even sexuality are reinforced (Mallet 2004:78). Sixsmith (1986:282) echoes the same sentiments when she says that home can be seen as the centre of emotional significance, of familiarity and belonging. In that sense the home might not necessarily be a physical structure but may exist on any existential space such as neighbourhood, city or country (Sixsmith 1986:282). The home is a focal point in the politics of identity and belonging (Rowles 1983; Mallet 2004:66, Healy-Clancy and Hickel 2014:15). Home can be thought to be the centre of one's world as it serves as a symbol of how people see themselves and how others should see them (Hayward 1977:10). Home is "a key element in the development of people's sense of themselves as belonging to a place" (Easthope 2004:135; Kaur *et al* 2009). Home not only signifies a physical place but also represents a centre of activities, a source of identity and belonging and a place for personal and social development (Moore 2007:145).

Gareth Williams (1984:187) argues that social relations with others with whom people share the home is the site where a sense of identity is developed and constrained, nurtured and broken. This means that it is through social interaction with others that our sense of identity and belonging develops and is maintained; it is also where our sense of identity and belonging can be undermined, destroyed or brought under scrutiny and questioning. Sixsmith (1986:291) similarly argues that it is the presence of, and relationships with, others that contributes towards turning a place into a home (see also Dekkers 2009:341). It has been argued by some scholars that the relationship that exists between people and places plays an important role in influencing the identities of individuals and groups (Williams and McIntyre 2001:392; Easthope 2004:137; Kyle and Chick 2007:212). The networks of social relations created in the home play a crucial role in the lives of those who live in the home (Sixsmith 1986:291). Saunders and Williams (in Easthope 2004) further argue that home is a crucial "locale" because it is where "basic" social relations and institutions are constituted and reproduced.

The fraught idea of “the home” can be contrasted with the notion of feeling “at home”. Said (1983) has pointed out that there is a distinction between the physical place as home and the social relations that “produces that state of being ‘at home’”. It is quite possible to be “home” and not to feel “at home”, and conversely to be elsewhere and yet to feel “at home”. There is thus a distinction to be made between “being at home” and “feeling at home”. For Thaver (2006:18) the distinction has to do, critically, with social relations:

The critical factor here is that it is in social relations with other social actors in a given place that mutual assurances, fitness, belonging, etc. obtain and through which the feeling of being “at home” is ultimately generated. The question is never: Do you feel at home? It is rather: Where, and with whom, doing what, and to what end, do you feel comfortable enough to be able to say, “I feel ‘at home’ or ‘in place’ in this institutional culture”?

Porteous (1976) argues that what lies at the core of what we describe as “feeling at home” is the satisfaction of three basic needs: identity, security and stimulation (also see, Smith 1994:32). For Porteous (1976), the satisfaction of the three needs does not happen in isolation but results from the nature and content of social relations. The three needs that Porteous (1976) mentions work together: in the context of a university the idea of stimulation speaks to how students are able to perform their identities in social contexts within which their identity remains intact and can flourish and be developed (also see Vice 2015:53). Stimulation has to do with performing, expressing and maintaining one’s identity in the space that is “home”. Easthope (2004:134) also argues that stimulation has to do with the idea of having control over one’s life in a site that offers individuals the freedom to be themselves away from the surveillance that is part of the external world (also see Dupuis and Thorns 1998:25). Stimulation also involves the acknowledgement and recognition of one’s identity on the part of others with whom one is in the “home” and “at home” with. Central to this idea is control over space: personalisation of space promotes both security and identity (Porteous 1976:384; also see Smith 1994:33; Moore 2007). The home is then theorised as a very important place for identity formation (Zendehdelan and Pouyanfar 2013:56, see also Giuliani 1991:140; Hauge 2007:44; Jacobson 2009:363; Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:226). Williams and McIntyre (2001:395) argue that the very notion of home has long represented the geographic

centre for constructing a self-identity. Cuba and Hummon (1993:112) argue that home as a place is where identity is constructed, maintained and transformed. Applying the idea of home at the institutional level, Vice (2015:53) argues that “feeling at home” is enabling and productive, and that when we feel at home in an institution we perform our tasks unimpeded and with more success and less friction and frustration .

Homes are places for character and identity building, the space where an individual’s development takes place and where we develop a sense of who we are (Perkins *et al* 2002:3). Home is not only a physical place but a social, emotional and psychological space as well. Gurney (in Easthope, 2004:134) describes home as:

. . . an emotional warehouse wherein grief, anger, love, regret and guilt are experienced as powerfully real and, at the same time, deposited, stored and sorted to create a powerful domestic geography, which, in turn sustains a complex and dynamic symbolism and meaning to rooms and spaces.

It can therefore be stated that it is through social relations that an individual can establish a sense of belonging or alienation in a place they live in and identify as being their home. Inclusion or exclusion is produced through social intercourse which results from the relationship that develops between an individual and the place they call home.

George (1996:9) reminds us that building a home that is a desired and desirable place to be is fought for. As primary territories homes are frequently a site of struggle for exclusive control by individuals, families, or other groups and the values, norms, way of life and practices that the powerful support and subscribe to (see Smith 1994:32). Membership and cohesion are maintained by bonds of love, power, desire and control (George 1996:9). Homes are the most basic and potent environment within which an individual can be located – they are marked by both physical and symbolic boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control access to, and behaviour within (Dovey 1985:36). In that sense the home is a deeply personal space which others can only enter by

invitation (Sibley 1995:90; Hareven 1991; Tuan 1975:155). The home serves as a boundary between the self and the outside world and provides privacy to the individual (Sibley 1995:94, see also Kumar and Makarova 2008; Dekkers 2009:336; Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:226). Situated away from the public gaze, the home affords its occupants freedom from public scrutiny (Mallet 2004:71). The development of a sense of individuality is said to rely crucially on this permeability of the boundaries between the private and the public being under the control of an individual (Sibley 1995:94). The home confers upon its residents a sense of privacy because it has the capacity to exclude strangers and non-residents (Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:226). When homes are a safe haven, they provide the privacy and autonomy that is crucial for occupants in the performance of their identities (Porteous 1976:386, see also, Smith 1994:32; Dovey 1985:41; Mallet 2004:70; Zendehdelan and Pouyanfar 2013:56). Homes thus embody privacy; a safe haven from the outside world (Hockey 1999:110; Mallet 2004:75) that we associate with the feelings of ease and relaxation that homes provide. Positive experiences of home require not only control of space but also control of the social interactions that take place within that space.

Security is identified as one of the most important qualities associated with the meaning of home (Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:225). This has to do, as George (1996:2) mentions, with the fact that homes are usually physically fixed, rooted and stable. But Dupuis and Thorns (1998) extend the point about the physical security that homes provide to the idea of ontological security. As Dovey (1985:46) puts it, home is a place of

. . . security within an insecure world, a place of certainty within doubt, a familiar place in a strange world, a sacred place in a profane world. It is a place of autonomy and power in an increasingly heteronomous world where others make the rules.

The security, certainty, order, family, privacy, comfort of home imply a contrast with the strangeness, risk, insecurity, danger, fear, discomfort that are always a prospect when one enters the public realm (Wardhaugh 1999:96). However, as Mallet (2004:72) argues, for some inhabitants of some homes, danger, fear and insecurity are not necessarily located in the outside world. Fear

and violations of privacy and security can be found within the home. Homes can be sites where unequal power relations are created, maintained and reproduced (Bowlby *et al* 1997:345). The privacy and security of the home boundaries rely on a sense not only of inclusion but also of who is excluded (Mitty and Flores 2009:126).

Dovey (1985) describes home in terms of the relationship people develop with the physical environment they inhabit. She argues that home is the environment we inhabit day after day until it becomes taken for granted and is unselfconscious (Dovey 1985:37, also see Zendehtelan and Pouyanfar 2013:56). Wardhaugh (1999:93) argues that “being at home” is “an unselfconscious and taken for granted state”. It is a highly complex system of ordered relations with place, and order that orients us in space, in time and in society (Dovey 1985:39). Dovey further suggests that home is a schema of relationships that bring order, integrity, and meaning to experience in place – a series of connections between person and world. Dekkers (2009:340) describes home as a place cherished by many people. Mallet (2004:71) argues that the outside world is perceived as imposing, threatening and a dangerous space in contrast to how the home is perceived. Homes can therefore be both strange and familiar, places to escape to and places to escape from (George 1996:9). Never neutral, they are places of contradictions and oppositions (Mallet 2004:77). To understand people’s sense of home or a lack of it, it is important then to develop an understanding of social relations and lived experiences of homes (Easthope 2004:135). The aim of this study was to explore, by way of qualitative research, the concept of “at homeness” in residence life at Rhodes University through the lens of the experiences of students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual. I took as my starting point Thaver’s (2006) question of with whom, doing what and to what end individuals feel comfortable enough to be able to say I feel “at home” at Rhodes University?

4. Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Research methods, procedures and techniques

The aim of qualitative research is developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds (Fossey *et al* 2002:717; Thorne 2000:68). Qualitative methodologies are not a single research approach but numerous approaches that can be used in order to develop an understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who experience it (Vaismoradi *et al* 2013:398; Braun and Clarke 2006:4).

Kenneth Plummer argues that stories, while told by individuals, embody social worlds and that relations of power are central to their telling and their interpretation (Plummer 1995:16-17, also see Bamberg 2006:145; Bell 2002; Herman and Vervaeck 2001:1). Richardson (1990 in Özyıldırım, 2009:1220) defines narrative as the “primary way through which humans organise their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes”. Narrative allows researchers to understand peoples' experiences because narratives let researchers get at information that people do not consciously know themselves (Bell 2002:209). In this study I employed narrative interviews with students who self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual, who have experienced residence life at Rhodes University.

Weiss (in Eliot 2005:19) argues that:

Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about the work of occupations and how people fashion careers, about cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges people confront as they live their lives. We can learn also, through interviewing about people's interior experiencesWe can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition.

Such insights into human experiences are possible to attain through narrative interviews because qualitative interviewing is a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin peoples'

experiences (Elliot 2005:19). Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) argue that narrative interviewing stimulates the interviewee to tell a story (or stories) of significant events in a particular context. For the purpose of this study, unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted with students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual, who are currently studying at Rhodes University and who have lived in residence at any point of their academic life in the institution (Fossey *et al* 2002:727; Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000).

The main purpose of this study was to seek an understanding from my participants of their experiences in the institution's residences in the following particular areas:

- Their understandings of home and what it means to them;
- How relations with heterosexual peers in residences inform their experiences of living in an environment that is heterosexual in nature;
- Insights into whether the institutional home provides them with needs of home environments that have been theorised by different scholars as providing for individuals, especially taking into consideration that they identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual students;
- Their experiences of how they negotiated being gay, lesbian and bisexual students at an institution that was largely heterosexual in nature.

Narrative analysis is the systematic study of personal experience and meaning through participants' stories (Franzosi 1998:547; Riessman 2000:24; Thorne 2000:69). The story itself is the object of investigation in narrative analysis (Riessman 2000:4), and the analysis of peoples' stories allows the surfacing of deeply hidden assumptions (Bell 2002:209). Researchers have focused on analysing the content of narrative interviews (Elliot 2005:39). The focus in this form of analysis is to analyse an individual's narrative in its entirety. It mainly concentrates on an understanding of an individual's narrative (Elliot 2005:39). Plummer (in Elliot 2005:39) notes that the study of a single narrative does not only reveal information about an individual but an

understanding of an individual within a society. Sociologists analyse an individual's narrative to develop an understanding of social groups, classes and culture and the structural relationships between them (Elliot 2005:39).

Narrative analyses of texts focus mainly on the stories, which are then transformed into descriptions and theories of the lives they represent (Sandelowski 1991:162). Narratives can be seen as forms of discourse that arrange events in peoples' lives (Sandelowski 1991; Riessman 1989; Elliot 2005). Frank (2002:115) argues that stories are attempts of a self to find identity in terms outside itself. When people story their identities they offer the researcher insight into how they perceive and experience the world, how meaning is made from experiences, how identities are constructed in the social and cultural setting within which those experiences arise (Linde 1986; Riessman 1989; 1990; Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Smith 2000:328; Sørderberg 2006:399; Webster and Mertova 2007:1; Özyıldırım 2009).

Using the insights suggested by the literature into being "at home", I conducted a theoretically-directed thematic analysis of narrative interview transcripts. This form of analysis is influenced by a theoretical interest in the area under study and is deductive in nature (Braun and Clarke 2006:85). With thematic analysis, interest lies in what is told rather than in the telling (Elliot 2005:20; Riessman 2005:2); in what participants say rather than how, to whom or for what purpose it is being told. In taking this approach I drew on the work of scholars of narrative research such as Gareth Williams (1984) and Janice Goodman (2004) who, respectively, employed thematic narrative analysis in their work on the onset of chronic disease and the coping strategies that young refugee youths from Sudan used for survival in the United States of America.

Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of a particular phenomenon (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006:82 also see Braun and Clarke 2006:79; Vaismoradi *et al* 2013:400). Thematic analysis requires an active role by the researcher in identifying the important themes that can be reported on from the data itself (Braun and Clarke 2006:80). Thematic analysis involves the immersion of the researcher in their data set in order to

identify a form of pattern recognition in the data, which can be used to find the main categories for interpreting experiences of participants in that particular study (Braun and Clarke 2006:89; Buetow 2010; Floersch *et al* 2010:2). Boyartzis (1998 in Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006:83) defines a theme as “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon”. Scholars such as Vaismoradi *et al* (2013:400) argue that thematic analysis is a flexible research tool which can be used to provide a detailed and rich account of the data.

The purposive selection of participants in this study was based on the recruitment of students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual and who were willing to share their experiences with me. Initial communication and contact with potential participants was made through an email that was sent to OUTRhodes – an organisation in the institution that represents students who identify as homosexual¹. I requested the organisation to assist me with circulating the email outlining the purpose of the study to its members so that any interested individuals who wanted to participate in the study could contact me in order to arrange a suitable interview time. It was clearly stated in the email that the purpose of the study was to gain some insight into the experiences of students who self-identify as homosexual who had lived in residence at any point in their academic life. The choice in the sample selection was influenced by the fact that residences are “homes” away from home for most students for parts of the year throughout their university life (Soudien 2008:75), and the purpose of this study was to understand how students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual experience being “at home” in university residence considering the fact that they belong to a sexual minority group (Bowen 2008:140).

The snowballing technique was also employed as a means of recruiting participants. This sampling technique yields participants through referrals by current participants to individuals who share the same identity and similar experiences (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981:141; Atkinson and Flint 2001; Petersen and Valdez 2005:154). It is a method of attaining recommendations for other participants whose experience is relevant to the study by current participants (Kuper *et al* 2008:688; Marshall

¹ See Appendix A

1996:523). Biernacki and Waldorf (1981:141) argue that this method is well suited for research of a personal nature which might require the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study. Seeking to understand the experiences of individuals based on their identity can be a sensitive subject hence it became important to establish contact with potential participants through the initial circle of participants who had accepted to be interviewed by me for the purpose of the study. I requested contact details of friends and colleagues of my participants who they thought would be interested in taking part in the study in order to arrange interviews with them. I made it clear that the provision of such information was entirely at their discretion and I clearly explained that they were under no obligation to provide me with such details. I sent the recommended individuals emails in order to explain to them the purpose of the study and mentioned the fact that I had been referred to them by certain individuals who had provided me with their contact details to request interview sessions with them in the event that they were interested in taking part in my study². Six individuals who were approached using the snowballing method agreed to take part in the study and were all interviewed at their convenience.

Eighteen narrative interviews of at least one hour in length were conducted with students who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Bearing in mind the drawback of snowballing as a method of recruiting participants, namely the possibility that the sample will become very uniform because it is drawn from one particular circle, I deliberately attempted to ensure as much diversity in the sample of participants as possible while remaining within the main criteria for inclusion, which were the sexuality of the person and their having personal experience of residence life at the institution. Participants in this study were at different stages of their education, ranging from first year to fifth. Seven of the participants were first year students, two were in second year, three were third year students, four in their fourth year of study and two students were in their fifth year of study. Participants included eight women and ten men. The “racial” composition of the sample included three white participants and fifteen black participants. Four of the participants identified as bisexual.

² See Appendix B

List of participants in the study

Pseudonym	Sexual Orientation	Gender	Race	Current Year of Study
Anele	Lesbian	Female	Black	2nd year student
Heather	Bisexual	Female	Black	3rd year student
Josh	Gay	Male	White	1st year student
Kirsty	Lesbian	Female	Black	4th year student
Kudzai	Gay	Male	Black	4th year student
Lebo	Lesbian	Female	Black	1st year student
Lundi	Gay	Male	Black	4th year student
Lungile	Gay	Male	Black	2nd year student
Mandla	Gay	Male	Black	3rd year student
Megan	Bisexual	Female	White	1st year student
Mpho	Lesbian	Female	Black	5th year student
Musa	Bisexual	Male	Black	3rd year student
Olwetu	Lesbian	Female	Black	4th year student
Sbusiso	Gay	Male	Black	5th year student
Siyabonga	Gay	Male	Black	1st year student
Thabo	Gay	Male	Black	1st year student
Thato	Bisexual	Female	Black	1st year student
Tom	Gay	Male	White	1st year student

Table 1: Participant Demographics

The duration of the interviews ranged from a minimum of one hour to an hour and a half. Participants were presented with an opportunity to take a leading role in the interviewing process while they shared their stories and I took on the role of an active and attentive listener, in an attempt to allow participants as much space as possible to elaborate on their experiences without my intervention (Fossey *et al* 2002:727; Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). Interviews were conducted in spaces where participants felt comfortable, which ranged from coffee cafés in town, and the botanical gardens on campus, to participants' residence rooms at the university. I requested

permission from all participants to audio tape the interviews and they all consented to this request. This allowed me to listen to them over and over again in preparation for the data analysis processes and writing up of the findings.

Ethical considerations are an integral part of any qualitative research (Bell 2002:210; Fossey, *et al*; 2002:723; Frank 2002:115; Patton and Cochran 2002; Scourfield *et al* 2008:331). During this study, numerous ethical considerations were observed. Informed consent was elicited from all the research participants through the signing of consent forms which clearly outlined the purpose of the study and the protection of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the right to withdraw that I guaranteed as the researcher conducting the work (Elliot 2005:141). A copy of the consent form is enclosed in the appendices³. All the eighteen participants in this study signed consent forms prior to each interview. All the participants in the study acknowledged voluntary participation by signing the consent forms and provided verbal confirmation that was recorded as an audio confirmation during the course of the interviews.

All participants were clearly informed about their rights before the start of each interview and that they had the freedom to withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any stage without any penalty. In order to ensure that their identities were protected for security reasons and privacy considerations, pseudonyms were used in data presentation to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Elliot 2005:142). This was also done to ensure that no direct link could be made from the study to trace the identity of any one of my participants. Some details that could provide leads in identifying some of the participants that came up in the interviews were altered in order to protect the identities of all my participants without changing the meaning of the data provided. For instance, names of residences, my participants' home towns, dates and venues were systematically changed in order to protect the identities of all my participants.

³ See Appendix C

This study attempts to understand the experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who live in residences at Rhodes University. In doing so my aim was to seek to understand the world that gay, lesbian and bisexual students inhabit at the institution. These experiences result from their interactions with other students whose sexual orientation is heterosexual and these are the experiences that inform their understanding of their place and social relations with other students. Fossey *et al* (2002:718) describe a “paradigm” as a system of ideas, or worldview that is invoked by a community of researchers to generate knowledge. It refers to a set of assumptions, research strategies and criteria for rigour that are shared, and even taken for granted, by that community. The interpretive paradigm places emphasis on seeking understanding of the meanings of human actions and experiences, and on generating accounts of their meaning from the viewpoints of those involved (Czarniawska 1998:5; Fossey *et al* 2002:719-720; Elliot 2005:37; Feldman *et al* 2004:148). The purpose of the current study was to seek an understanding of how the participants experience residence life in the institution, taking into consideration that their sexual orientation leaves them in the minority within the institution and society at large.

Saldaña (2009:150) argues that, in qualitative data analysis, a researcher is allowed some interpretive leeway in order to achieve a new and striking perspective on the data. The coding methods Saldaña (2009:150) profiles are neither prescriptive nor inflexible but should be viewed as guidelines that researchers use in order to create new opportunities and ideas in handling and interpreting data for research. This therefore means that there is no one prescribed right way of doing analysis in qualitative research. Saldaña (2009) argues that coding is an important component of doing narrative analysis. He (2009:3) defines a code as

. . . a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.

Saldaña (2009:4) also argues that coding is primarily an interpretive act, which means that no one script can be coded the same way because researchers interpret information differently. For Saldaña (2009:4), coding “is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive

data analysis”. Coding permits data to be “segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation” (Saldaña 2009:8). One of the most important coding decisions that a researcher must make is concerning whether to code inductively or deductively. For the purpose of this study initial inductive coding of the data was employed and the resultant codes analysed in the light of the literature on the concept of “home”. A second phase of coding then interpreted the emergent themes in the data from the perspective of the concept of “home” as described by scholars such as Porteous (1976); Hayward (1977); Dovey (1985); Sixsmith (1986); Smith (1994) ; Mallet (2004); Thaver (2006); Moore (2007); Jacobson (2009).

Interviews were transcribed verbatim using the Dragon software programme. The edited and corrected transcripts were printed and read several times to get a sense of the kind of data I was presented with from my participants’ interviews (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000; Tuckett 2005:80; Braun and Clarke 2006:90). I performed five key procedures during the process of analysing my data, namely: pre-coding, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes and finalising themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Before I started my first cycle coding, I “pre-coded” my data from my interviews in order to identify elements that I thought stood out from the information that my participants were telling me which related to my theoretical framework (Saldaña 2009:16). The coding process was also initiated during this time of reading and re-reading of the data because it helped me gain a holistic sense of the stories that my participants had shared with me during their interviews. I also began to make “marginal notes” and remarks on the hard copy transcripts that were printed (Tuckett 2005:80). In addition, I commenced the process of creating analytical memos from my data set. Clarke (in Saldaña 2009:32) describes analytical memos as “the site of conversations with ourselves about our data”. Memos are a form of reflection on the phenomenon being studied and a moment of critical thought, an opportunity for the researcher to engage with their research deeply, in order to perform the puzzle-piecing, connection-making, strategy-building, and problem-solving engagement with the research data (Saldaña 2009:32). I reflected on my data and wrote analytical memos that I linked to the codes I had created in NVivo during the (first) phase of inductive analysis (Saldaña 2009:33). I then determined and incorporated my analytical memos into the data corpus as well as in the data analysis and writing process (Saldaña 2009:33).

The number of interviews conducted for this research was determined by the principle of “saturation” – the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest *et al* 2006; Kuper *et al* 2008:687; Bowen 2008:140). The interviewing process with students who self-identified as homosexual was brought to a stop when there were no new insights on the experiences of being “at home” in the institution emerging from further interviews. After an initial coding of at least thirteen of the eighteen interviews, I realised that there were no new codes coming up in the data as the codes that had been identified were now resurfacing in the other interviews that were being coded after the thirteenth interview. This told me that further interviews would be likely to offer minimal new insights.

Data organisation plays a crucial part in the process of data analysis (Tuckett 2005:77). The coding process was done electronically using NVivo software (Saldaña 2009). NVivo software does not actually code the data for a researcher because the coding task is solely the researcher’s (Saldaña 2009:22; Fossey *et al* 2002:729; Thorne 2000:68). The software is used to store, organise, manage and reconfigure the data to enable the researcher to analytically reflect on the data itself (Saldaña 2009:22). All the interviews for the study were imported into the NVivo software and systematically coded using first and second cycle coding methods. I also created “nodes and child nodes” from the data, which were reorganised and reconfigured throughout the analysis process using the same software.

At the beginning of the data analysis process, I performed initial coding as a first cycle coding method (Saldaña 2009). Initial coding of the data was done in order to split the data into individually-coded segments (Saldaña 2009:40; Braun and Clarke 2006:91; Charmaz 2006:47-57). These small segments were examined and compared for similarities and differences (Saldaña 2009:81). Initial coding offered me an opportunity to reflect deeply on the contents of my corpus in order to begin the process of understanding how to arrange the data accordingly and providing me with a sense of the direction which the study was going to take. In my first cycle coding, I generated 113 codes (including child nodes) from my data corpus from the eighteen interviews

that were conducted with my participants in this study using the NVivo software⁴. Each interview transcript was coded individually to generate new codes but eventually material from other interviews which was similar to some coded material was categorised under similar codes: this is because Saldaña, (2009:18) suggests that it is useful to code interviews individually before proceeding to the next interviews. I also performed attribute coding of my data to find the descriptive information about my participants, which included their sexual orientation, gender, race and year of study during the first cycle coding.

For my second cycle coding, I used focused coding to develop a coherent synthesis of my data corpus (Saldaña 2009:150; Charmaz 2006). According to Saldaña (2009:150), the main purpose of second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual or theoretical organisation from the array of codes developed during the first cycle of coding. Second cycle coding involves the reorganising and reanalysing data coded in the first cycle (Charmaz 2006:57). During this cycle of coding, I used focused coding to search for the most frequent and significant codes in order to develop major categories that I could use in the study (Saldaña 2009:155). During this process, I began to identify the similarities between codes and merged those that related to each other together, as well as arranging the categories into my major themes for this study (Braun and Clarke 2006:93). I reorganised and merged some codes that were similar in nature and reconfigured other codes, and eventually developed categories that I fitted into the four broader themes that I maintained and used in the writing process (Saldaña 2009:150; Braun and Clarke 2006:92) The four major themes on home, informed by the literature which describes home, were used to organise the codes and themes into these four main categories. Below is the table with the categories in the relevant themes.

⁴ See Appendix D

Categories and Themes

Home comforts/discomforts	Home as privacy	Feeling “at home” in heteronormative/homophobic homes	Negotiating Strangeness
Comfort and Discomfort	Privacy	Dominant Heteronormative Culture	Negotiating Strangeness
Security	Sexual Identity	Homophobia	Support structures
Students’ impressions of Rhodes University	Bathroom encounters	Body politics	
Relations and conversations in dining hall.			
Characteristics of Rhodes University			

Table 2: Categories and Themes

Elliot (2005:20) argues that data from narrative interviews cannot be treated as an unproblematic window into the social world. Rather, narratives tell us something about the cultural frame within which individuals make sense of their lives (Elliot 2005:28). A relatively small sample of narratives can be considered to provide evidence that can be used to create an understanding of the inter-subjective meanings that are shared by the whole community. Taking this into consideration, this work does not claim to speak for all gay, lesbian and bisexual students at the institution but can be seen as a representation of some of the experiences of homosexual students and how the idea of the institution being a “home for all” might be experienced in diverse ways by a diverse student body. These particular participants’ experiences provide valuable insights because they occupy a precarious social position as a result of their sexual identity. Seeing our institutions through the lens of the experiences of the most vulnerable and marginalised has the potential to

act as barometer of transformation. By foregrounding the experiences of those who do not occupy the position of the dominant norm, we are able to be alerted to ways in which our presuppositions and practices might perpetuate relations of dominance and subordination and may not be as incorporative as we would hope them to be. On the other hand, to the extent that the experiences of the vulnerable and marginalised reflect positively on existing practices and social relations, this can be taken as an indication that policies embracing diversity and equality are being put into practice effectively.

Whittemore *et al* (2001:523) define reliability as referring to the stability of findings, whereas validity represents the truthfulness of findings. Webster and Mertova (2007:89) also define reliability in narrative research in terms of the dependability of the data, while validity typically refers to the strength of the analysis of data and the trustworthiness of the data, as well as the ease of access to that data. In narrative research, validity is more concerned with the research being well-grounded and supportable by the data that has been collected as it does not provide results that produce generalisable truths, “prescribing” how things are or ought to be (Webster and Mertova 2007:90). Elliot (2005:26) argues that, in narrative research, issues of validity and reliability tend to be resolved if the research focus is more on the meanings attached to individuals’ experiences and/or on the way that those experiences are communicated to others. Narratives provide an ideal medium for researching and understanding individuals’ lives in social context. The trustworthiness and “truths” in narrative can be confirmed when one considers the social context in which these narratives are communicated, because Sandelowski (1991:165) argues that narratives are truthful fictions which are open to different kinds of interpretation. Reliability in narrative is not measured by statistical measures but is measured by the accuracy and accessibility of the data reporting (Webster and Mertova 2007:93). Reliability can also be assessed through aspects such as persuasiveness and coherence of the data (Webster and Mertova 2007:93). Reissman (1993 in Webster and Mertova 2007:93) suggests that persuasiveness is possible to attain when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants’ accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered. Atkinson and Delamont (2006:169) argue that veracity and verisimilitude are to be inspected as embedded in narratives that people tell.

Freeman (1984 in Sandelowski 1991:165) argues that “tellings are remembrances, retrospections and constructions about the past in a fleeting present moment soon to be past.”

Various scholars have pointed out the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research (see for instance, Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Elliot 2005; Dowling, 2006, Jootun *et al*, 2009; Haynes 2014). The notion of reflexivity looks at the awareness of the researcher of their role in the research process (Elliot, 2005: 153). As a researcher working in the interpretive paradigm, I acknowledge the collaborative role that I played in the research process. Scholars such as Connelly and Clandinin (1990:4-5) argue that the process of analysing and making meaning of narratives is a collaboration between the researcher and the participant and that this collaboration is a process that occurs from the beginning to end in narrative inquiry (Connelly and Cladinin, 1990:10). In analysing the narratives, the participants’ stories were treated as a rendition of life as perceived by the tellers themselves and not as an accurate reconstruction of life events (Webster and Mertova 2007:3). Narrative analysis rests on the assumption that we are meaning making human beings and that this process of making meanings is done through the “imposition of story structures” on the random events of our lives (Bell 2002). The aim of analysis is therefore to present a supportable and well-grounded analysis not the ‘truth’ of an individual’s experience (Webster and Mertova 2007:4). I approached the interviewing process in the same way I would treat a relationship with a friend. Cladinin and Connelly (1990:4) note that,

In everyday life, the idea of friendship implies a sharing, an interpenetration of two or more persons' spheres of experience. Mere contact is acquaintanceship, not friendship. The same may be said for collaborative research which requires a close relationship akin to friendship.

Each interview sessions was conducted as if it were a conversation with an old friend which made it easier for my participant to feel empowered to share their experiences with me the researcher. Alvesson (1996:465) suggests that the research interview is better viewed as the scene for a conversation rather than a simple tool for collection of “data” and my desire was for this sensibility to be reflected in the manner in which I rendered and told my participants’ stories in the thesis.

5. Chapter Five: Home comforts/discomforts

5.1 Introduction

Cristoforetti *et al* (2011:226) argue that the home primarily represents a place of comfort whose comfort is both physical and emotional in nature. We commonly refer to “home comfort”, signifying the comfort that is derived from the familiarity, personal rituals and routines that we associate with feeling “at home” (Cristoforetti *et al* 2011:226; Mallet 2004:63; Gott *et al* 2004). While this is the common association that we have with idealised conceptions of “home”, for many home is a place of *discomfort* – where abuse, violence and fear might prevail (Sixsmith 1986:291). Comfort connotes a state of “physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint” (The Oxford Dictionaries Online). Experiences of comfort and discomfort, moreover, can be said to emanate chiefly from interactions with others. Dilley (2005:75) points out that institutional environments have the potential to positively or negatively affect homosexual students in their identity formation, depending on the ways in which the institutional context and the social relations which characterise that context are responsible for producing varying degrees of comfort and discomfort in the lived experience of these students. The present research found that the institutional context in which the participants are embedded and the social relations characterising that context produce moments of both comfort and discomfort for LGB students.

5.2 Comfort

It’s a good res This res particularly is very . . . I feel at home. I feel comfortable (Thato).

Some participants experienced the university environment as one in which they are able to express themselves and to feel “free” to exhibit their identity because they encounter more open-minded attitudes towards being gay on the part of the members of the community. To feel that one will not be rejected because of one’s identity is a critical feature of being able to experience an environment as homely and is particularly critical for individuals who are at a stage in their lives when they are growing into an adult identity (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997). Josh, for example, talks of experiencing

university as a place to “be who you are” and where he could “do so much more” than was possible in his (real) home in a small conservative town.

Actually Rhodes is the first time I’ve actually managed to meet other people who identify as homosexual because I’m from a very conservative small town. You can do so much more here than you can do at home. You can be who you are at Rhodes. There is less restriction on how you can behave. People are very supportive here and it’s not hard to find people with similar interests. There’s a greater sense of community here. I feel like there is more freedom to express yourself here at Rhodes than is at home (Josh).

Josh’s narrative speaks to some of the most essential qualities of home: a support structure, a sense of community life and “freedom” all contribute to a sense of being at home. The last quality is experienced particularly starkly by those whose prior “home” experiences were infused with hostility and restrictions on the performance of their identity.

I come from a family where I have always been told that it’s wrong [being gay], it’s dirty. I have been told that if you are gay you are a soiled person, you are a soulless person and less of a person just because you like someone of the same sex. My dad always drilled that into my head that being homosexual is wrong. My cousin’s dad tells my cousin [because she is lesbian] that she is the scam of the earth because of her sexual orientation (Thato).

Several participants pointed to the context of security that a sense of “home” provides as essential to individual growth and coming to “know yourself”, in contrast to the stunting, stifling effect of having to continually hide one’s identity.

Rhodes is one of those places where you grow. The independence at Rhodes gives you [enough space to grow] because it’s considered to be a liberal university. If I have kids one day, I will send them here because I know that once they come here they will come out knowing themselves (Lungile).

I think the home here at Rhodes allows you to grow, it allows you to establish your own values and allows you to know yourself because it allows you to experience life (Siyabonga).

To be at home is to experience a certain freedom to be oneself, to be unguarded and open, which arises when there are others who are “like” one and who are able to recognise who we are. Research suggests that it is not uncommon for people who identify as gay to have their first opportunities to express their sexual identity at university (Evans 2000; Arndt and de Bruin 2006). Kirsty, for instance, associates “liberty” with finding gay friends and a gay culture for the first time:

I had never really been in a relationship before Rhodes and I wanted to see what the culture was like because at home I didn't have any gay friends or a gay culture and I never really experienced any sort of liberty there. And when I came here I wanted to try being in a relationship, to express myself because most people find their identities at university and that's what happened with me (Kirsty).

Evans (2000:84) finds that, since university is often a place where individuals experience their first intimate relationships, for LGB students an environment of security and acceptance makes tertiary education institutions crucial sites where these students are often able to come to terms with their sexual orientation. Heather, for instance, described experiencing university as a place where “I feel like I can express myself the way that I want” in relation to all the facets of the self: academic, social and love life.

In the South African social context, characterised by high levels of homophobia in many communities, the home environments that students leave when coming to university are often not places where individuals can feel at home with their gay identity (Nel and Judge 2008; Gontek 2009; Vincent and Howell 2014). Megan, for instance, spoke of the discomfort of her homophobic home environment in contrast to feeling “more comfortable” at university.

I feel more comfortable here because I'm not out to my father because he is very homophobic and racist and that's uncomfortable for me. It's ironic because he has a bisexual daughter (Megan).

Mpho recalls her own experience of coming to university:

My home background wasn't as open as Rhodes so I wasn't really sure about my sexuality and all the issues related to that. Then I came to Rhodes and you know it was just something that people did. People were just hooking up and sleeping over. So it became easier to be myself here. It's been great for me here. I had my first real girlfriend here, I fell in love and it was beautiful (Mpho).

Similarly, for Anele, to be at home was to experience university as a place of "openness" and being able to "be myself".

Well ever since I got here I must say the sense of openness in this place is great. It's much easier for me to be myself Coming to Rhodes did open up opportunities for me to be myself (Anele).

We played a lot of games in res in order to get to know each other. In one game we had to tell two lies and one truth about ourselves and I said, "I'm left-handed, anti-Christ and I'm bisexual, which one is a lie?" And everybody guessed right. Even after they found out that I'm bisexual nobody really cared and it was just one of those things (Heather).

For these participants, transitioning to university is experienced as finding the essential qualities of "home" such as freedom, comfort, belonging, acceptance and companionship, which in some cases had been absent in their family and community homes.

Smith (1994:32) argues that having a place where one feels a sense of belonging engenders feelings of continuity, stability and permanence, which we would typically associate with feeling "at

home”. Family homes are typically situated in communities where a sense of belonging contributes to a positive sense of “home life”. Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Walton and Cohen (2007) argue that human beings desire the establishment of long lasting bonds with others, which stimulates a sense of belonging. When individuals perceive that they have social support, their mental and physical health is maintained (Walton and Cohen 2007:82). Some participants, like Megan, invoked this sense of good neighbourliness and community as characterising their experience of residence life.

It kinda feels like I live with my family. It’s like when I run out of milk, I can knock on someone else’s door and say dude can I please have some milk I’ve run out. You form relationships and you’re able to talk about anything that’s bothering you. Your neighbours can just knock on your door to tell you what happened to them. So yeah there is actually a sense of feeling at home (Megan).

Similarly, Siyabonga experiences a sense of “community” in his university residence because it is a place where people care about his well-being:

I think in my res, there’s a sense of community. I think I’m very lucky because my res is not particularly like other residences. I am in a lucky situation because people go to the extent of enquiring about people in my life. They are concerned about your well-being and I think I’m just lucky to be living with people like that (Siyabonga).

Several contrasted the feeling of community in university residence life with the absence of that feeling in their previous home environments.

It’s much more open-minded here. Like I know at home I couldn’t just be openly bisexual because I’m not out to my friends at home because I know that they are still a bit touchy about it . . . (Megan).

Students here tend to be more open-minded, more liberal leaning so there is room to be more open about who you are here at Rhodes. You are free to express yourself in ways I could definitely not do back home in Port Elizabeth (Josh).

Essential to being able to feel comfortable is being able to feel secure. For many people, the idea of “security” is the most immediate connotation that they have with “home”. As much as security inheres at the level of personal identity and social relationships, it is also very much related to the physicality and materiality of home. The geographic location of an institution, for instance, has been pointed out as one of the most crucial factors individuals take into consideration when choosing a university (Lukwaro 2013; Kane 2013). Geographic location is of particular importance in the experience of gay students, who welcome a sense of distance and being removed from their families and home contexts. Lungile for instance described experiencing the university’s isolated setting as “like being on an island away from everything”.

I don’t think that there is a University in South Africa that can afford homosexual students with an opportunity to be themselves like Rhodes does. The fact that Rhodes is in Grahamstown, a small town is a good thing because no one just comes to Grahamstown and that’s what’s nice about it. No one can just come here and be like hey I was just passing by . . . it’s like you’re on this island away from everything (Lungile).

The inaccessibility of the university offers a welcome respite from the scrutiny of those family members and friends who might not approve of homosexuality. However, not all students experience residence life as comforting. As Rankin (2006:113) argues, as much as tertiary education environments might be experienced as a place of personal growth, identity formation and flourishing relationships, in many instances campuses have proven to be difficult environments for students who do not identify as heterosexual.

5.3 Discomfort

To experience discomfort refers to experiences of pain, being constrained in one's self-expression or feelings of uneasiness. If the idea of "home" connotes acceptance, the contrast is to find oneself "judged" as Lebo explains:

Everything is a little bit different in res. I have friends who are conservative. I've kinda found it hard to talk to them about what I feel and my sexuality. [For example] if I meet someone I can't say I met this girl 'cause I start to think about what they will say. Whether they will judge me or not. I would like my res to just make me feel a little bit more at home. People don't realise that there might be people struggling with their identities but can't talk to anybody in the res (Lebo).

Lebo invoked also the idea of home connoting filial bonds, which are often explicitly appealed to in university residence environments where those in leadership positions attempt to create a sense of belonging but which can serve to be exclusionary. She refers to how "they always say we are sisters at this res" but went on to comment that "as sisters we don't do any of these things that makes us sisters". When a sense, for example, of "sisterhood" is created among residence members, this very act of creating belonging through shared experiences can serve to exclude those who do not share these experiences. Shared confidences about relationships become a source of belonging for some while at the same time isolating others because, as Thato explains, to confide in people about one's sexual identity has consequences for being able to "fit in" when that identity is gay:

I think with res it's not issues with the res. It's society and the way it handles people with different sexual orientations. We always have to be careful who we tell because it changes how people will view you no matter how open minded they may be For the first couple of months I couldn't get myself to be okay with being who I was in this space. And it's not because there aren't measures in place or anything like that, it's just difficult especially in first year. Trying to fit in and those initial couple of weeks are very difficult to be gay (Thato).

In some instances, as Evans' (2000:82) work has found, LGB students experience direct hostility as a result of their sexuality, which leads to them feeling the need to exercise caution when approaching certain situations. This attitude of tentativeness and carefulness is the antithesis of what is commonly associated with feeling "at home". Heather illustrates this point in the following way:

[I have noticed that even here at Rhodes] there isn't a very high tolerance for homosexuality, so it's either you make up your mind to either date people of the opposite sex or face the consequences of being gay (Heather).

Mandla's experience of feeling the need to "move residences" suggests that, rather than being able to generalise across an institution to describe prevalent social relations as entirely homophobic or entirely welcoming to LGB members, campuses are comprised of multiple cultures, some more welcoming than others. Far from being at home and comfortable in his residence environment, Mandla spends as little time as possible in the environment because "I'm not comfortable". Rather than the residence being a home where one relaxes and socialises, it becomes a place for performing basic functions like sleeping, eating and showering.

This year I come back to the same res but I was just fed up to the point where I actually decided to move residences. I moved into a new place which is even worse than the other res When I walk into the dining hall it's so awkward because no one wants to sit next to me at the dining table. All I do is put my headsets on and I eat my food then leave. This is what I do every day. But even if someone ends up sitting with me it will be a matter of just greeting each other, no conversation. When I try to initiate conversation I can really sense that the other person doesn't want to talk to me so I just leave them alone. I never make the mistake of leaving my headset behind when I go to the dining hall. My coping mechanism is to actually not spend time in the res. I'm never there. It's because I'm not comfortable . . . and the only way I can deal with all the stresses that I encounter in res is to wake up, shower and be on campus. Even when I do not have lectures I am on campus. The time that I'm supposed to spend in my room I spend it on campus. I literally go to my res for lunch then come back down. I go back when everyone is minding their own business in their rooms. That's my experience with res life. I think in the residences they still have a long way to go and I think it's also because the res is supposed to be home and if I

am gay in my house I'm expecting that they are the first core of support more than anything. And if I don't get that, I mean it's not home it's just a place where I shower and sleep (Mandla).

While being comfortable and at home requires a sense of ease in a space in which one is able to socialise with friends and engage in a more intimate set of relationships and exchanges, Thato refers to the dilemmas attached to the expression of one's sexual identity when that identity is not heterosexual.

I may be able to hold a girl's hand in public but if I'm sober to kiss her? It's unimaginable. I don't know why I would feel uncomfortable with that especially in res. I don't think I could walk in the corridor and make out with my girlfriend or hold her hand. It's not like someone is watching you and saying don't do that but it just doesn't feel right (Thato).

While a young heterosexual couple "making out" in the residence corridor would attract few comments, when the intimacy is between two members of the same sex it is amplified and noticed so that it "just doesn't feel right". Thato's important insight demonstrates how heteronormativity reproduces itself, not by decree or design or explicit rules. But the internalisation of anticipated disapproval acts as a powerful mechanism to produce the same effect.

When gay students feel at home at university, campus can become a place for growth, identity formation and positive social relations. But when those conditions are absent, social ostracism is an ever-present fear; home becomes a battleground as Olwetu describes:

I hate having to wake up every morning and feel like I'm fighting a battle. Every day I ask myself if I'm dressed too gay or not? Or if my haircut is too boyish or if I should get offended every time someone makes a mistake that I'm a boy. This can't be my life. I should be stressing about something else like being broke like other students and not about my identity (Olwetu).

D'Emilio (1990:18) argues that residence halls are one of the prime places on university campuses that homosexual students experience harassment and numerous other forms of violence from their peers. Some participants, like Kirsty, described residence as a hostile environment in which she felt uncomfortable:

I will say, I know it's supposed to be a home on paper, but it's not really. It is a place to live for all but I wouldn't say it's a home for all. I did feel uncomfortable especially in one of the residences I lived in because it was a hostile environment. There was a lot of hostility expressed towards me by the other students and there was a lot of judgments directed towards me It was just certain people looking at you in a certain way (Kirsty).

Taylor (1994:25) argues that people's identities are partially shaped by recognition or the misrecognition that is communicated by those who surround them (Honneth 1992:188). Lesbian, gay and bisexual students can experience the institutional home as unaccommodating and hostile when they perceive their heterosexual peers to lack understanding or to "misrecognise" what it means to be gay. Beverly Skeggs (2001:296) argues that "to make a recognition is to participate in a system of judgment and classification" of others within a particular space or society. For Taylor (1994:26), recognition is not merely a courtesy but a human need.

I think a lot of people think I hate men. I don't hate men but as soon as I say men annoy me [they all say] yeah it's 'cause you're gay, [and I try to explain] that that's not how it is and they won't even give me a chance to explain. It's just an immediate attack: No Lebo you're gay just because you're gay doesn't mean all men are bad. They tell me that I haven't been in a heterosexual relationship so I don't know any better. I just wished they understood that I don't hate men (Lebo).

Fraser (1995:77-78) argues that to be misrecognised is not only to be devalued but also to be denied the right to be a full partner in social interaction, and homosexual individuals constantly experience this denial. Tully (2000:470) also argues that misrecognition undermines the basic self-respect and self-esteem necessary to empower individuals to develop the sense of autonomy and self-worth

needed to participate in public and private life. Taylor (1994:25) argues that an individual or a group of people can suffer real damage if the people around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning picture of themselves. Misrecognition can inflict harm on those who experience it and it can be a form of oppression that imprisons individuals in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being (Taylor 1994:25; Chariandy 2005:147).

Walton and Cohen (2007:82) argue that members of stigmatised groups in academic settings are more uncertain about the quality of their social bonds and hence experience “belonging uncertainty”. They further argue that belonging uncertainty may lead to individuals feeling that “people like me do not belong here” (Walton and Cohen 2007:83), which is what Lebo pointed to:

The first term I didn't pay much attention to it and the second term I was getting a little bit of a vibe here that these people are not too accepting and I think as the months have gone by, I've seen it more. I'm seeing it more now it's [homosexuality] just not something that they are willing to accept (Lebo).

For Mpho, the discomfort arises from her own insecurity about her sexuality, which is reinforced by her sense that her otherness leads to discomfort on the part of others. Knowing that home is a place where people ought to be able to feel at ease in private spaces, such as the bathroom, she fears that her presence will occasion discomfort.

Well when I got to Rhodes I was still not comfortable with my sexuality and therefore everything that I saw happening because of my own insecurity I felt like people were just discriminating against me. For example I was acutely aware even without saying it that I was a lesbian and when I went to the showers I was like oh my goodness they know and do they think I will be checking them out. Am I making them uncomfortable by being here and [I was] always worried about what they thought. I was worried that they thought that just because they are women and I like women then I would like them. That I would look at them inappropriately if they were naked (Mpho).

Participants in the present study, while expressing a yearning to belong, at times described excluding themselves from social interactions in order to minimise their discomfort.

[I hope] eventually people will get to a point where they are fine with homosexuals because not everyone is there yet. People tell you they are fine with it and then you act as the person that you are and they pull back. If somebody tells you they are not comfortable with you, you will respect their space. The problem is that people act as if they are fine with homosexuality but then they are not. The only reason why I'm comfortable here (Rhodes) is because I keep to myself. I'm naturally someone who keeps to myself but I'm more so because of the environment that I live in. If I was living in an environment where homosexuality is highly acceptable I would have been more outgoing and not keeping to myself. I think I keep to myself more because of the environment (Musa).

Denied a sense of belonging, Musa chooses being “reserved” as a mechanism to protect himself from being “judged”.

I can see people walking around talking, people judging you for who you are. For me it's even worse because people judge me because they think that I'm in the closet, they look at me and think that I feel like I'm hotter than everybody else (Musa).

Valentine (1995) argues that homosexual individuals develop a sense of “sexual geography” whereby they may consider migration as an option in order to find “safe zones” where they can perform their identity. For those who inhabit home spaces that are inhospitable to their homosexuality, going to university represents the hope of a new kind of space where the development and expression of an identity that is stigmatised at home might become possible. Scholars such as D'Augelli, (1991a; 1992:383), Dugan and Yurman, (2011) and Ellis (2008) argue that adolescents acquire opportunities to explore their sexuality upon arrival at universities and away from the home and the scrutiny of friends and relatives. This hope is not always fulfilled. Tom for example spoke of his disappointment at not feeling able to “grow as a gay guy” at university:

Since I've been at Rhodes [it's been] difficult to find that gay culture that has really allowed me to start exploring in a tangible way what it means to be gay and I don't mean having sex. I just mean interactions with other gays. I haven't had enough of that. It is a source of insecurity and discomfort for me 'cause I never really got any of that when I was at home because of the nature of my hometown. I feel like I'm not growing as a gay guy because it's almost a stifling environment right now. It's very disappointing for me (Tom).

There is a legitimate expectation that leaving home and coming to university will provide a young person with the opportunity to explore and resolve issues around sexual orientation (Epstein *et al* 2000; Arndt and de Bruin 2006; Woodford *et al* 2012), but for Tom the absence of concrete contact with other students who identify openly as homosexuals makes that difficult. Literature suggests that support groups for LGB students can aid in the establishment of a sense of universality – the feeling that one is not alone – which is important for identity development (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:60). As Bowen and Bourgeois (2001) have argued, contact with a gay community can be a stepping stone in the social and emotional development of a homosexual student. But, as Dietz and Dettlaff (1997) remind us, many homosexual students experience challenges in this regard (also see Ellis, 2008).

. . . I feel like there is something wrong with me to get into a gay culture and that's why I haven't found one. I just feel like there's something I'm doing wrong. Maybe I'm supposed to do something about my personality, or the way I act. I'm not exactly sure what it is most of the time. It's very difficult and having all this in my head makes it all confusing. I don't know how I'm feeling most of the time because there are so many social nuances at play and I don't know where the web is connecting (Tom).

For Josh, continually being in the position of occupying the minority position is trying.

I mean nowadays I don't mean to hate on my friends but they are all straight so a lot of times it ends up me being the token gay guy, which is kinda weird (Josh).

Sexual minorities living in communities that are highly heterosexual in nature experience isolation and an exaggerated sense of being different (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:60). Isolation from supportive peers can hinder the development of one's identity. Scholars such as D'Augelli (1993) have argued that this means that young adults who identify as homosexuals experience stress in the management of their sexual orientation. Swank and Raiz (2010:26-27) point out that, as a result of living in heterosexist homes and communities where there is a perpetuation of stereotypes and negative perceptions about homosexuality, by the time homosexual youths arrive at university they have internalised homophobia and blame themselves, as Tom does, for their isolation. Conflicting thoughts and ideas around how and whether it is appropriate to perform one's identity can hinder the development of some homosexual students because they become torn between decisions on whether it is appropriate to be free to express themselves completely and under which circumstances it is acceptable to perform their identity as Mpho explains:

The res itself was never an issue. Of course the issues were with me. It was always an internal questioning: should I bring a girl over, if I bring a girl over will they know? And if they know will that change anything? It was all about how I thought they would react. So the interrogation was never external it was always internal (Mpho).

The social relations that prevail in the home, as Gareth Williams (1984:187) argues, play a central role in how a sense of identity is developed and constrained, nurtured or broken. It is in the home that one either develops a sense of who one is by having the freedom to express oneself or one experiences suppression and denial of the opportunity to perform one's identity as desired. It is through interaction with others in the home that individuals either are able to confidently express themselves or struggle to establish a concrete sense of who they are. Dating is a prominent example of how residence life can be an impediment to self-expression for homosexual students. Some participants expressed high levels of anxiety – or “fear” – occasioned by the risk of exposure.

It's a fear. It's an innate fear that you will be judged and you will be treated differently and we really just want to be loved for who we are. And it is what it is. Literally shit your pants kinda fear (Thato).

Leary (2006:2) argues that human beings have a strong need to belong and are wary of rejection and a lack of acceptance from others. Human beings value the establishment and maintenance of positive interpersonal relations with others, and failure to have such relations can be distressing for those who are rejected (Leary 2006:2). It is often "at home" that one has an expectation of experiencing belonging, acceptance and, as Thato puts it, a lack of "judgement" but these are the features that might precisely be lacking for the person who is gay in residence.

I think in truth, just like everyone else we don't want to be judged. We want to be accepted for who we are. I would like people to realise that we are not saddened by the fact that we are different. It's not something that we are ashamed of. I mean . . . we get to a place where now we realise that it's who we are. We also don't want people to feel sorry for us. I just wish people would realise that what we need is someone to understand . . . to just try to understand instead of just being afraid of us or being uncomfortable around us And I think people have to realise that we have dreams, we have aspirations. You come to a point where you can't now stop and die every time that someone does something weird or says something . . . we're just trying to live our lives (Thato).

As is signalled, by the ubiquitous "welcome" mat associated with homely homes, to feel "welcomed" is one of the most obvious connotations of home. For gay students, feeling welcome is all the more important because, as Lebo says, "it is tough being gay".

It's all about just feeling welcomed because it is tough being gay. I'm always dealing with thoughts that I'm this outcast. I just need somebody who understands what I'm going through and I have none of that. Here it's just like this one man mission where I'm just like Lebo you can do this, just self-motivation that I can do this . . . (Lebo).

5.4 Conclusion

When home is experienced as comfortable it is characterised by a set of social relationships that fulfil the fundamental human need for positive and lasting relationships (DeWall and Bushman 2011). Comfortable home environments provide their occupants with a sense of belonging. The flipside of belonging is ostracism – the process whereby individuals or groups are ignored and excluded by those who occupy positions of dominance in a particular environment (Williams 2007:428). The social relations that are established and maintained in the residence context between homosexual students and their heterosexual peers either produce a sense of belonging and comfort or of exclusion and discomfort. Negative experiences may range from mild insensitivity to open hostility or even violence (Engberg *et al* 2007; Jayakumar 2009). In addition to the usual student issues concerning academic performance and financial constraints, homosexual students can be said to experience a “double burden” because their sexual identity creates another encumbrance they need to deal with in comparison to their heterosexual peers who do not necessarily need to worry about their gender being misrecognised or misinterpreted.

6. Chapter Six: Home as privacy

. . . so this girl fell in love with her best friend from the same res and they started dating. People from their res started having issues with their relationship and started a petition to get them kicked out. They were constantly under surveillance They were constantly being watched. The petition was made but eventually got discarded but obviously they were treated differently in their res. They broke up then one decided that being gay was wrong and went straight And . . . I understand exactly where she is coming from because if I had experienced the same thing I would be in fear that falling in love with someone of the same sex can lead to such indignity (Mpho).

Young (2005:26) describes privacy as “the autonomy and control a person has to allow or not allow access to her person, information about her, the things that are meaningfully associated with her person”. Literature suggests that the home is the site where individuals experience identity development, and that a sense of privacy is central to making this possible (see for instance, Gorman-Murray 2007; Cristoforetti *et al* 2011; Wardhaugh 1999; Price 2002; Jacobson 2009). Home is a locus of identity and we develop a sense of who we are at home (Johnston and Valentine 1995:99; Perkins *et al* 2002:3). Privacy is an important human need (Pedersen 1997:147). Privacy at home refers to freedom from surveillance, which in turn gives rise to a sense of safety and security (Gorman-Murray 2007:230; Mallet 2004:71). It entails the non-participation in collective life and the right to not allow society to interfere in personal matters (see for instance, Solove 2008:89, Schoeman 1984:2). Privacy can be described in simple terms as “the right to be let alone” (Solove 2008:89; Hetcher 2004:271).

Privacy can include seclusion, solitude, anonymity, confidentiality, secrecy, intimacy and reserve (Allen 1988:18; also see Pedersen 1999; Margulis 2003:412). Privacy is related to self-development (Solove 2008:79). When a home provides privacy an individual is afforded control over their living space in order for them to feel secure in the construction and performance of their identity (Young, 2005:26; also see Gorman-Murray 2007:239; Wardhaugh 1999:105). If privacy has to do with being protected from (unwanted) intrusion, Solove (2008:93) argues that one way

in which privacy is encroached upon is through the social enforcement of norms, evoking feelings of guilt and shame in an individual who does not embody those norms, as well as activating a system of social rewards and punishments (2008:94). Sandy Smith (1994) argues that primary territories such as home are areas of exclusive control by individuals, families or other groups (Smith 1994:32). This control of space can be construed as control of social interactions within a particular space (Smith 1994:32; Young 2005), which confers a sense of ownership of space and promotes a sense of autonomy for individuals (Young 2005:26).

While the conventional expectation of “home” is that it will be a place in which individuals have privacy, as Johnston and Valentine (1995:100) have argued, those who inhabit the home can significantly infringe one another’s privacy, through surveillance and policing of behaviour according to the dominant norms and expectations. Solove (2008:12-13) describes privacy as limited access to the self and the right to be let alone, while anonymity is protection from unwanted attention. Privacy might incorporate dimensions of secrecy -- the right to conceal certain matters from others. Anele for example, insists on control over access to information about her intimate relationships in an attempt to protect her privacy.

I don’t give them a platform to confront me about it because I feel it’s really none of their business. The same way I would never walk up to them and ask them about their boyfriends. It’s none of my business. So if I find you at the dining hall eating, I will come and sit with you, we are going to talk about the weather, we’re going to talk about anything else but I’m not gonna get you to that part, not because I’m gay but I feel like it’s none of your business (Anele).

Gerstein (1984:265) argues that most people seek a degree of isolation from outsiders in their experiences of intimacy and regard it as indecent for the outside world to invade that space. He argues that, when one feels that one is being observed by outsiders, intimacy is undermined (Gerstein 1984:269). Anele demarcates the boundary over who can access information about her intimate life and insists on her privacy being recognised. Similarly, Sbusiso refers to the importance of boundaries which demarcate his autonomy and right to privacy:

I think I set boundaries, so if I don't talk to you about your girlfriend, why are you talking to me about my boyfriend? I think people could not get to a point where they could discuss that kind of thing with me so I've never had that except for my friends asking me. I think I have put enough boundaries around that (Sbusiso).

When individuals' privacy needs are met, feelings of comfort and freedom are possible (Hayward 1977:10). For gay students, privacy is constantly at risk because they experience their intimate lives as outside of the norm and therefore subject to scrutiny (being "seen") and social comment.

My res is very awkward because we only have one door and the door leads straight to the common room and it's just forty of us. I mean most of the time you bring someone over, there's bound to be someone sitting there in the common room especially now that there are no exams, people watch TV until one in the morning so if you walk in with someone they see (Mandla).

Initially when that person came, I opened the door and we went upstairs. No one really saw anything. It was his first time in my res so I was just showing him around and then we went to my room and we chilled for nearly 45 minutes. We went down when it was the time people were coming from lectures and as we were walking down I could see It was a bit uncomfortable. It was different . . . so I had to make petty conversations with this person that I was with just to divert their attention because people were just looking and saying we've never seen this guy before and asking why I was leaving our res with some guy (Thabo).

Physical features of residences, such as a single entrance and exit in certain smaller residences like the one Mandla lives in, can make it difficult for individuals who wish to keep their private lives away from the prying eyes of their fellow residence mates. In other cases, the size of the institution itself poses a problem as far as privacy is concerned.

Oh . . . Rhodes is such a small place. I don't think it can afford you that kind of privacy. . . . No, I don't think so. I would like to see a little bit of privacy because

. . . that can mess up a relationship also 'cause people always have their two senses to add and you don't need that . . . (Lebo).

This may sound absurd – while I was dating someone I got to their res at 11:00 p.m. and left at 5:30 a.m. to go back to my res because obviously there are negative connotations with someone leaving another male student's room at seven in the morning. People become suspicious and start asking questions like when did that person get here in the first place? (Thabo).

The social proscription of displays of homosexual intimacy in public places makes the need for privacy all the more acute for gay students.

Heather and Megan point to practices in residences, such as the signing in of visitors in the residence register, which can contribute towards a sense of being under surveillance for gay students.

[When] you bring somebody over you have to sign them in. I bring both guys and girls and they are mostly people I just hang out or work with [and my res mates ask] “why are you bringing all these people in? Are you dating all these people? What are you guys doing? Are you hooking up?”[And I respond] “No we are not dating we are just chilling, they are just people I know.” People always assume that [when] you bring someone in, you're dating that person. I feel like in digs, everybody's just minding their own business but in res, it's kind of in everyone's face. Everybody isn't really minding their own business. [One time] I was signing somebody out [and was asked] who they were. I was reminded that the other day I had signed in a different guy. Generally, you don't have so much privacy. . . . You just have everybody's business in your face (Heather).

My friends will ask if they see someone they know I'm a bit interested in and if they see their name signed in the register they will be like ooh . . . is something happening there, but if it's just a random name and I've signed then they will just be like who's that? I have brought partners to res before, both male and female, and in both instances people have been like ooh . . . dating – we see you (Megan).

Hayward (1977:10) relates privacy to the idea of refuge, a chance not to be bothered (also see Romanelli 2013:216-217). For some participants, residence does not offer refuge or respite from outside interference because of constant policing and interrogations from others. The hyper-visibility of being gay means that residence life does not offer gay students the same privacy and anonymity as it might for heterosexual students.

In terms of dating, you only see each other when people have closed their doors. In my experience we saw each other when people had closed their doors, you have to 'cause myself and the person weren't really open about it. And if they came to my room I had to be on the lookout so that people wouldn't find out (Thabo).

[When] I brought someone with me it was automatically assumed that I was dating that person. And I was like: What the fuck? There were friends that I brought from other resies and I would be asked: "Is that your girlfriend?" No that's my friend. Oh ok. Done. End of story. But because I am a girl and I like girls every girl was automatically my girlfriend. Even if they were just a friend or even a group member from class (Mpho).

. . . guys automatically get ideas and I think that's the main reason why I wanna leave res. There was this one incident when I brought someone I was seeing to my res and as we were leaving, I could get the impression . . . walking down to our dining hall because we are not in the same res but in the same dining hall, I could feel the eyes of people looking and probably trying to question why I had just brought a guy they didn't know from another res into ours. You usually see guys bring in their girlfriends to their rooms and I'm assuming they think this person and I to be in the same room is too close for comfort. That's the main reason I want to move into digs so that I can have the liberties of bringing anyone I want to spend time with comfortably (Thabo).

Lebo describes the numerous sessions of cross-examination to which she is subjected to as a struggle:

I went out last weekend with this girl and then this one girl from my res is coming to me saying that's my girlfriend. Every time I see her she's like, "that's your girlfriend" and I'm denying it. I'm struggling with that at the moment. She waited for me till the next day and it was kinda like hey I saw you with a girl is that your girlfriend? I was like, oh no She was like, "no don't lie, she's hot, that's definitely your girlfriend." This happened last week Saturday and she's still going on about it till today. I've been trying to convince her that she's just my friend and she's refusing to accept that (Lebo).

Lundi refers to how race layered onto sexuality intensifies the intrusive curiosity that he has to endure.

. . . and I'm black, they want to find out my family situation, what's going on, what my father is saying about this. Why he's letting me do this, which is something very odd for me because I really do appreciate my family for, I wouldn't say allowing me but letting me be me and not attaching sexuality on me since a young age. I do tell them about that and they find it very hard to believe. (Lundi)

For individuals like Lebo, a lack of privacy can result in a yearning for its existence to the extent that she has been forced to create boundaries around herself and her relationships while living in residence:

I don't talk about my love life anymore. It's kinda like if you see me out there with someone and we look like we are dating then that's that. I'm not gonna tell you more than that. What you see is your business (Lebo).

. . . and then there are those people every time when you meet up with them they want to discuss your sexuality, it always amazes them every time, and I'm always telling them that nothing is going to change, nothing is going to develop. I'm still gay and people ask me if I still don't want girls (Sbusiso).

Thabo has also chosen to disengage in conversations that he feels compromise his dignity as a gay person:

. . . but it's usually how do two men have sex? What do they do in sexual activities and I think that's very uneducated and wrong so I decide not to really engage in those things . . . (Thabo).

Control of boundaries is vital for safeguarding relationships with individuals, which is important for family life and social intercourse (Solove 2008:93).

For me I'm not interested in other people's sex life, not even my friends'. In fact it's my friends and other people who come to me and say, guess what I did last night and things like that. For me, relationships and sexual issues are personal matters, those belong behind my closed doors. I'm not one to share such details. And I have nothing against those who do speak about it, but for me I think it will get out of hand and people won't know where to draw the line (Siyabonga).

I hate that question. I'm like, how do you have sex? Does anybody ask you how you have sex? Or when did you become a lesbian? When did you become straight? Honestly . . . it's those kind of things that . . . because people don't understand (Thato).

Individuals like Siyabonga and Thato hold privacy in high regard and expect respect for their privacy and to be able to maintain a sense of control over information or access to themselves by others (Schoeman 1984:3).

Solove (2008:93) points out that human curiosity can become intrusive and prying in ways that have the potential to wound and humiliate. In some cases, verbal intrusion spills over to become physical, as Lundi describes:

It's always sexual, it's like just because I'm a gay man I only want sex, there's nothing else I do besides having sex. I've stopped watching movies or reading about gays because that's the only thing they portray. You find very little material that portrays the gay person as a person rather than someone wanting sex. I remember someone working at the library asking me if I live in res and if I was seducing people or tantalised other boys in res. Others want to touch you, yes they actually want to touch you (Lundi).

Lundi, like most individuals, desires to be acknowledged as any other ordinary person rather than being put on the spot because he happens to be a gay man.

Heather experiences the fascination of others with her sexuality as a source of annoyance.

Questions like: so when did you realise that you are bisexual or why do you even date both guys and girls? Is it because you really like both or does it seem cool to be bisexual? So when did you have your first girlfriend? It's annoying when you tell a guy, they expect you to be this freakish person who wants to have a threesome. They just assume that you are this crazy person who is in for anything (Heather).

Sbusiso describes how, in a heteronormative environment, a gay person is expected to reinforce dominant expectations of gay sexuality. Even if he is willing to respond to intrusive questioning he is expected to respond in way that fulfils those expectations.

People are weird and then they ask you these questions, they expect the answer to be a certain way, and if you don't answer them in the way that they want to be answered they think that you are lying (Sbusiso).

The extent to which residence is experienced positively as a home where one can express one's identity and have the privacy and acceptance to enjoy intimate relationships is dependent, as Heather's comments confirm, not on formal rules and procedures but on how one is treated by those with whom the home is shared.

It's been alright, Rhodes is too small but I mean it's been fine. I really didn't have many complaints when I got here. Last year I dated a girl in res, it was okay. A few people in res got to know and they weren't judgmental or anything, they just accepted it. So it's been fine (Heather).

Lungile is one of those whose experience is of the institution as a liberating space and a place of identity development where there is freedom to perform one's sexual identity:

When it comes to public display of affection, I will take my boyfriend out, we will dance and kiss if we want to. If you had asked me this question maybe last year, in my first year, I would be like hell no, I'm not doing that. I think as you grow up, Rhodes has an environment that allows you to grow, to be the person you want to be and you become comfortable with that. I am at that point right now where I don't care if you see me with my boyfriend. I will put him up on my Facebook cover page (Lungile).

While the public display of affection is hardly worth mentioning when those involved are heterosexual – these displays are a very common part of university campus life – for gay students showing affection in public to a partner becomes something that one either does not do or does with an associated sense of risk and defiance. Mandla, for example, has to anticipate that some may regard him as “not normal” and may “see”.

When my boyfriend drops me off, I will kiss him goodbye and when I meet him I will kiss him. Whoever sees, whoever doesn't see I really don't care. I hold his hand in public. It is very normal in my life, whoever doesn't see it as normal that's their own baby to carry (Mandla).

Seidman (2010) argues that sexual hierarchies establish boundaries between legitimate and illicit sexualities. Certain desires, acts and identities are seen as abnormal, sinful, and immoral while at the same time privileging “normal” and “good” forms of sexuality and punishing those categorised as “abnormal” and “bad” (Seidman 2010:23-24). This system of rewards and punishments is

responsible for the concealment of nonconforming sexual identities as individuals fear being punished for being different. Kirsty and Olwetu's experiences suggest that lesbian women (as opposed to gay men) may attract particular unwanted attention from heterosexual men who seek to reinterpret lesbian sexuality in the common frame of "wanting to watch" "hot lesbians" (see for example Jackson and Gilbertson 2009).

We used to do PDA a lot. I know it did make certain people uncomfortable. We never really got approached by people to say stop it you are disgusting or whatever but we usually had some men, especially black men would be quite crude and I can't understand what they said but it would be quite rude. It was homophobic and there would be one of those, I want to watch kind of people (Kirsty).

My relationship as a gay woman is so undermined by the straight world. My girlfriend had this guy hit on her this one time and she said no to this dude. I popped up and he was like what the hell is this and she told him I was her girlfriend. The two main responses are A) come on guys involve me, let's have a threesome or make out in front of me or there is another one: B) wait . . . ooh so she's your girlfriend, it's not real, there is no way that this relationship could be real . . . (Olwetu).

Kudzai reminds us of what Valentine (1995) calls "sexual geography" – the idea of particular physical, geographic places considered safe or not safe for gay people and gay people needing to become "sexual geographers" – to be able to identify places and spaces that are safe, unlike heterosexual individuals who can express their affection and love publicly anywhere and who do not need to be acutely attuned to sexual geographies in the same way. For several participants, the university precincts are a "safe zone" in contrast to other parts of the town.

I usually do what I want to do. And unless it's in an area usually where my safety is at risk you know, you don't want to go to a tavern somewhere and then [people] start staring . . . Like what are you doing? But at Rhodes I feel that if I'm in a relationship and I want to hold hands, I'm gonna do it and if I want to make out I'm gonna do what I want . . . (Kudzai).

Wolfers in (Baldwin 1997:13) characterises security as the “absence of threats to acquired values”. Security can also refer to physical safety – a feeling of being protected against attack. Participants suggested that, while the institutional space itself might be experienced as a relatively secure environment in which to express their sexuality, they are acutely aware of the spatial limits to this freedom.

You can be gay on campus but street kids will give you issues in town but don't be gay further down. When you get to the Anglican Cathedral, you have gone too far. You can be gay up until Steers then you must be straight all the way. And like I said, my partner and I can walk holding each other's hands until we get to Ultimate Gifts but after that we sort of walk close to each other and share loving looks but we won't hold hands (Kirsty).

I don't feel secure when I need to get my hair cut 'cause I have to go and search for a barber in Grahamstown, it's a struggle. There's like the upper town and then there's a break and that's where you meet different people who don't treat you the same because of our sexual orientation (Lundi).

As Siyabonga described, race is also a feature of being gay in South Africa, with townships experienced by some as among the most unsafe places of all for a person to be outwardly gay in their self-presentation (Msibi 2012b; Nel and Judge 2008:22).

Being off campus can really be scary. In the township I think there are very robust ideas about heteronormativity, that's where people can genuinely beat you up because you are gay. I'm not saying that wouldn't happen on campus, but their reality is more real that you can see, you can feel it (Siyabonga).

Even campus itself was experienced as a bifurcated place by some participants – encompassing safe and unsafe places – although the kind of insecurity reported was less of a physical nature and more of a sense of being “watched”.

Within the institution it depends where I am. It depends on what I'm involved in and who I am exposed to. I feel I'm safe in my department and other offices. Everywhere else I feel as though someone is watching me. You know when you sense that it feels like someone is watching you all the time, that's the kind of feeling I get when I'm on campus (Mandla).

For others, encounters with people who are just not able to understand or who are unaccepting makes life "hard":

I think that people are just not accepting especially about homosexuality It's hard. We still have a long way to go especially at Rhodes. It's hard, especially for me because I don't show it. I think maybe I should get a sticker on my forehead saying "I'm bisexual" or "I'm gay" and then people will actually understand (Musa).

Musa experiences the common tension that homosexual people face in heteronormative environments, between intimacy as private and personal and a homosexual identity needing constantly to be publicly described, explained and "confessed" to (MacGillivray 2000). The bathroom is a particular part of the home that combines the characteristics of intimacy and privacy that are central to the concept of "home" (Penner 2012; Madigan and Munro 1999:68). The presence of the homosexual man who is "effeminate" in a bathroom constructed as "male" becomes an "infringement" of privacy. In this way, Penner (2012) argues, bathrooms become a place where power relations are played out. Homosexual men are constructed as predatory and heterosexual men are able to cast their anxieties and/or homophobia as emanating from their fear of being the object of a form of sexual desire which they wish to repudiate. Phelan (2001:57) has discussed the body anxieties that heterosexual military people in the United States express as a result of living with homosexual colleagues. Homosexual military men are seen as posing a threat to heterosexual men who fear being looked at as an object of sexual desire, reserving the right to gaze upon a sexual object and fearing being themselves the object of the gaze. The same can be said about the bathroom encounters that take place in residences as related by some of the participants in this study who are confronted with the discomfort expressed by heterosexual male

students who express feelings of being threatened by the presence of homosexual students in shared residence bathrooms.

Guys tend to think that, if you are gay, you're going to hit on them, you're gonna want them and you're going to be doing crazy things in the bathroom. They need to understand that that's not how it works (Kudzai).

As Musa, explains, the incongruity of the presence of a gay man in a "single sex" space that is constructed according to a strict male/female gender binary is rendered more acute when the gay person in question chooses to present themselves in a way that interrupts the binary.

The guys are relaxed around me because I'm not effeminate especially when it comes to going to the bathroom, in the showers, you just go. We guys are not insecure about our bodies. I have just realised how heterosexual guys are more cautious around this one guy because he is feminine. It always looks as if he is invading their space. They always say that they are fine with gay guys but their actions say otherwise. Our bathrooms in residence are structured in the way that it's just basically the shower area on the one side and toilets on the other and then there is an area in the centre for basins, so for example when guys are on the basin shaving and I walk in, we have a good conversation because I'm straight looking but when an effeminate guy arrives, the straight guys will basically start checking themselves out to see if they are fine, if their towels are still secure because in a sense, they are scared that the gay guy might be perving and the towel might fall and he might force himself on them or he might make gestures to do certain things. I remember this one incident in res, we had these green shower curtains which showed your shadow and this guy went to complain to the house committee about the shower curtains because he claimed that he felt insecure around gay guys. He was worried that gay guys in res would pounce on him in the shower. Most guys in res have this mind-set that gay people just want to have sex, gay people just want to convert heterosexual guys to be gay by forcing themselves on them. Most guys are so insecure about themselves that they feel as if gay guys in res are invading their space, especially in the bathrooms (Musa).

Gay students who exhibit feminine traits are viewed as having "transgressed" (binary) gender expectations. By the same token, those gay men who choose to portray conventional masculine

traits are offered a certain protection from social sanction because their disruption of gender binaries is not as visible.

People do get preconceived ideas if you are flamboyant and you dress in a certain way that you identify with. I'm not very flamboyant, I don't fit the category of stereotypes so people don't treat me differently because they haven't really been able to make assumptions about me unless I take the initiative to tell certain people about my sexuality (Thabo).

In residences, guys are more cautious around more feminine guys. They respond differently to effeminate gay guys, which is very wrong because they relate to me better because I'm not effeminate (Musa).

Many young people experience all kinds of "coming of age" struggles and indeterminacies but, for the gay student, there is often a public accounting that has to take place, which makes it difficult for these private struggles to remain private as Kirsty's experience of being "gossiped about" suggests.

A lot of people did say I was a lesbian until graduation, that it was a phase. A lot of people said I was so girly and these are rumours I heard from my friend. People who didn't think my friends were my friends would say that in front of them and it would reach me. And these are people I don't know, a bunch of people saying wait till she graduates and she'll be straight, she's just doing this for the attention. I wasn't doing it for the attention. Everyone else, I mean most people experiment with their sexuality and I view that as an experimentation of my sexuality. Because I don't think I was solidly gay and I don't think I'm solidly straight either you know. It really did piss me off, it still does to hear that from a bunch of people I don't know. . . . I was struggling with understanding how I'm so girly with the fact that I'm lesbian. When I went to [live in another res], they gossiped about me a lot. It was just a bunch of people I didn't know saying all this stuff about me, acting like they know me (Kirsty).

On one level, not constantly being submitted to the gaze of public attention and scrutiny is one of the privileges of privacy denied to homosexual people. On another level, though, equally important

to a sense of self is public acknowledgement and recognition for who you are. In a heteronormative environment, heterosexual people are able to more easily control the boundaries between public and private, whereas for gay people there is a sense of constantly being on display and there is always the danger that others withhold recognition, and this in itself is an expression of the power of the dominant norm.

In the club or on campus, people are disrespectful. It's just disrespect, they don't see that a homosexual relationship has as much love and meaningfulness as a straight one does. I have this in our group and none of those people are in meaningful relationships right now. I've been in a relationship with my girl for a year but they are hooking up . . . it's only a straight relationship that is taken seriously. Do you see where my problem is? (Olwetu).

Scholars such as MacGillivray (2000:303-304) argue that institutions in societies operate on what he calls "heterologic" that normalises heterosexuality. It is this normalisation that leads to an absence of acknowledgement for same-sex relations. There is a sense in which homosexual relations are viewed as relationships that do not measure up to heterosexual relations and therefore cannot be accepted as legitimate relationships by the heterosexual world. This lack of validation of gay relationships on the part of peers leads to a yearning to be acknowledged, respected and taken seriously. The issue of acknowledgement is one of the issues at the core of Phelan's arguments in relation to what she terms "sexual strangers". She argues that citizenship is about recognition and that one's ability to practise one's citizenship is shaped by others' reception and acknowledgement of one's legitimate presence and participation (Phelan 2001:13).

When they refuse to acknowledge it for me is like you are completely ignoring me. If I tell you something about my sexuality or my love life and you completely ignore it but then when it's your turn you're expecting me to listen, that also bugs me. I have to listen to you because you're straight (Lebo).

As much as homes provide privacy, they also include social interaction, typically at meal times. In the residence context meals take place in dining halls, which are much more public than

conventional homes and can be fraught social spaces for those who for some reason do not fit in with the norms and rituals of the everyday.

In the dining hall they always talk about football and I don't enjoy football that much. When they don't talk about that they talk about the stuff when they go out partying but then it's all about girls again. It's an extremely heteronormative space. I feel isolated because I don't want to just talk about sports and girls. A lot of the times especially at the end of the day when I come home [res] I just get into my room and that's the worst part of the day for me. It's incredibly lonely. I'm basically surrounded by an entire res with people but I'm not comfortable with most of them (Tom).

There was a time in the dining hall, even now it still happens 'cause I'm in an all-male Dining Hall and the guys I sit with always talked about their girlfriends and having sex with them. And I felt excluded from the conversations. I felt like they were pushing me out because I'm not straight (Lungile).

Gressgård (2011:25) argues that people who inhabit the binaries set up in heteronormativity differently are experienced as disruptive. While it would be possible for Tom to constantly interject with a different perspective to the usual rituals of girls and soccer that pervade heterosexual masculine talk in the dining room, to do so would only confirm his difference, his interrupting of the comfortable normalcy of meal time conversations. Heteronormativity thus limits participation in the mundane routines that make everyday life at home comfortable and comforting for those who are part of it. Shared spaces such as residence “common” rooms become places of exclusion precisely because the experiences of gay students are “uncommon” – that is to say, an interruption of the heterosexual norm.

Well it's kind of weird when they are all talking about their girlfriends [in the dining hall and in the common room]. It gets kinda awkward for me (Josh).

The challenges that homosexual students experience around conversations regarding dating and relationships contribute towards their exclusion because they cannot interact with their peers fully and easily, contributing to isolation and alienation.

6.1 Conclusion

The home is a safe haven that confers a certain privacy and autonomy upon its occupants in the performance of their identities (Porteous 1976:386; Dovey 1985:41; Després 1991; Smith 1994:32). One can therefore argue that privacy allows individuals to flourish in their self-identities as autonomous entities (see for instance Phelan, 2001:22). Edney and Buda (1976:285) argue that it is at home that an individual usually has both territorial rights and privacy. The regulation of privacy in the home ensures that the identity of individuals flourishes (Altman and Werner 1985 Introduction: xix). Altman (1977:68) goes further to argue that privacy is related to personal identity, autonomy and self-esteem. He argues that an individual who can successfully control interaction with others is likely to develop a sense of competence and self-worth in comparison to an individual who struggles to control their interaction (Altman 1977:68). If home is conceptualised in this manner then one can argue that the absence of privacy and autonomy therefore can hinder the performance of the identity of others in the home. The identity of other individuals in the home is compromised and prevented from flourishing as a result of others they share the home space with. What the data from the present study was able to show was that it would not be accurate to characterise an institutional culture as a whole as either “homophobic” or “non-homophobic”. Nor is it helpful to view “institutional culture” as an external, uniform or objective reality. Rather it is a reality that shifts in part according to who is interacting with it and the identity, prior experiences and so on of those individuals.

7 Chapter Seven: Feeling “at home” in heteronormative/homophobic homes

I’ve lived in res before at [another university]. Believe you me I never encountered any homophobia in that whole university. Coming to Rhodes I was expecting something homely you know, having read the policies . . . but . . . I still think there’s a lot of homophobia [at] Rhodes, there just is (Mandla).

I remember one time I told this guy I was gay and he was really confused. He succinctly said that maybe if I try it [sex] with a girl she will be great and that would stop me from thinking that I was gay (Lungile).

The term heteronormativity was coined by Michael Warner in 1991 to describe a regime that organises sex, gender and sexuality in order to match heterosexual norms (Warner 1991; Do Marco Castro Varela *et al* 2011:11). Schilt and Westbrook (2009:441) define heteronormativity as the suite of cultural, legal, and institutional practices which maintain normative assumptions that there are two and only two genders in the world and that only sexual attraction between these “opposite” genders is natural or acceptable (Richardson 1996; Kitzinger 2005; Maurer-Starks *et al* 2008; Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Do Marco Castro Valera *et al* 2011). Heteronormativity privileges heterosexuality as the “natural”, correct and healthy way of being sexual and this privilege is reinforced by various institutions in society (Jackson 1999; Suter and Dass 2007; Seidman 2010:57). Heteronormativity manifests itself in norms, values and beliefs (Do Marco Castro Varela *et al* 2011:12) and is present everywhere: in social relations, people’s language, belief systems and social institutions (Yep 2003; Kitzinger 2005; Maurer-Starks *et al* 2008). Heteronormativity, also known as “compulsory heterosexuality”, points to the myriad ways in which heterosexuality is produced as a natural, unproblematic, taken-for-granted and ordinary phenomenon (Bickmore 2002; Kitzinger 2005:478). The reproduction of heteronormativity occurs at both the institutional and interactional levels (Ripley *et al* 2012).

Dominant sexual hierarchies respect and value certain sexual desires while at the same time punishing, criminalising and stigmatising others (Phelan 2001). Yep (2003:18) argues that the normalisation of heterosexuality as the only true form of sexuality through heteronormativity reproduces a taken-for-granted and all-encompassing standard that is used to measure goodness, desirability, morality and a host of other dominant cultural values which are used to marginalise and exclude homosexual individuals. Normalisation is an instrument of power in societies as it is used to enforce laws and regulations that control, govern and repress others (Foucault 1978). Furthermore, it actively and methodically subordinates, disempowers, denies and rejects individuals who do not conform to the heterosexual mandate by criminalising them, denying them protection against discrimination, refusing them basic rights and recognition (Yep 2003:24-25; Weiss 2001:132).

Scholars such as Yep (2003) and Kitzinger (2005) argue that language is one of the means through which heteronormativity is reproduced, for instance, everyday conversations reproduce and reinforce heteronormativity. Some of the narratives shared by participants in this study reflect this observation. For instance, Lebo shares the struggles she experiences in her residence:

My friends have not really acknowledged that I am lesbian. I remember when we went to sign up for the societies and they asked me which ones I had signed up for and when I said OUTRhodes their reaction was different. Every time they refer to me as having someone it is always a “he” and everything in me wants to say not “he”, but I can’t do that because I’m afraid that they will judge me and look at me differently. It does get awkward when I’m out with my friends and they are all talking about guys endlessly. I just sit and listen because there is nothing I’m gonna say about it. I don’t get annoyed with it anymore. I just ignore it (Lebo).

To live in a heterosexual society is to live in a context where heterosexuality is conferred the privilege of being the assumed norm, as is revealed for instance in the easy way that a heterosexual person can simply reveal their sexual identity by talking casually about their girlfriends or boyfriends (Seidman 2010:43). As Thabo points out, to do the same thing as a gay person shatters the comfortable normalcy of such conversations – is “groundbreaking” and “changes everything”.

The guys talk freely about being with girls, they talk as we walk, they pass comments about girls and I can't say the same about a guy. I can't afford to say that because if I say that then it's groundbreaking you know. That comment changes everything whereas if I'm with the girls from down campus I know I can say "oh my gosh" this guy is good-looking. I like that guy. I can communicate freely but when I'm that side [in res with male friends] I cannot communicate about these things, I have to put on a façade and act in a certain way (Thabo).

Yep (2003) argues that normalisation is a "site of violence" because individuals and groups of people who do not conform to the set standards are constantly examined, evaluated and punished for being different. The violence can take numerous forms such as prejudice, stereotypes and misconceptions. Yep (2002:168) argues that heteronormativity produces violence towards those considered as outcasts and this is because heterosexual bodies, subjects, norms and practices are always articulated and naturalised in relation to non-normative sexualities and genders (Ward and Schneider 2009:434). What Yep (2002:170) refers to as discursive violence includes words, gestures and images that degrade and pathologise homosexual people. In Olwetü's story, discursive violence lies in the characterisation of homosexuality as "sin":

It was O week and people were giving out fliers everywhere. There was this one lady from His People Church who gave me a flier. We started talking and she asked me if I was gay and I said yes. And then she said that I should attend their services because God loved me regardless of my sin and assured me that I would get past this sin [homosexuality] with the help of my brothers and sisters from the church and that's when I made her stop and said, "I don't want to be rude, but this is not how it works" and I walked away. It was shocking to me because this was O week, I didn't expect that. I didn't expect religious fanatics to come to me at Rhodes and say such hurtful things to me (Olwetü).

Stereotypes are representations of the characteristics of individuals who belong to particular groups (McGarty *et al* 2002:2) and are often the basis for essentialism and social injustices towards those regarded as "Other" in comparison to the dominant group (Allport 1954:187; Hegarty and Pratto 2001; Haslam *et al* 2006). They are beliefs that members of a category share deep-seated

properties that determine their identity (Haslam and Whelan 2008:1297). Homosexuality has long been subject to a range of stereotyping, for instance the portrayal of gay men as effeminate (Simmons 1965; Taywaditep 2002; Lynch 2008:412; Kathuria 2014). Stereotypes are used to justify the repudiation of those perceived as “deviant” (McIntosh 1968:183). Such essentialism can be harmful to individuals because there is an assumption that all homosexuals belong to a single homogeneous group whereas heterosexual students are afforded the privilege of diverse forms of self-expression (Raymond 2002:100).

When I went to the OUTRhodes signing up meeting for the first time, one of the committee members said he was a bit shocked to see me there and actually said, “I would have never guessed you were gay”. I was surprised by this comment 'cause I didn't think I looked any different from other people who were there. Most people are always surprised when I tell them that I'm gay. I always get the “I would never have thought you are gay speech” which is quite annoying (Josh).

People have various perceptions about how being gay looks like. There is a whole spectrum of being gay. Society has taught people that gay men are very effeminate but it's not true. Not every homosexual is effeminate. People make all kinds of silly remarks such as “but you don't look like a girl so why are you gay?” Or “you dress very well you don't even look gay” they don't understand that there is a whole spectrum of being gay (Lundi).

Allport (1954) argues that stereotypes are justificatory devices used to rationalise discrimination.

For some of them being gay is basically wearing a dress or acting like you wanna be a girl which is not the case. I don't want to be a girl because I am a man, I know that. Most people here don't understand why we are gay if we don't want to be girls. I don't know why they associate being gay with being a girl. It's very difficult to have a conversation with people here without them treating you in a way that makes you uncomfortable (Lundi).

Aside from the expectation that gay men will look and act like girls, as Siyabonga and Lundi point out, another prevalent stereotype is the assumption that gay men are sexual predators who will constantly be trying to pick up the heterosexual men in their midst.

I think what really destroys initial relationships and interactions between people is stereotypes. When people have the inclination that you are gay, they think you're going to wear skirts and crop tops. They think you've got a huge attitude and can't relate to males unless if you are picking them up to hook up (Siyabonga).

There's a perception that circulates in male resies that if you are gay then it means that you want everyone who is a man and we tell them that it's not like that. We say to them just because you're heterosexual doesn't mean you want everyone yourself and the same applies to us as gay guys (Lundi).

Stereotypes like these are often the basis for prejudice. Several participants described how when they decided to disclose their sexual identity "things changed".

[Since I told my straight friends that I was gay] things have changed. It's not the same. I can feel it and I can see it. I can see how people interact around me now, it's not the same. I do get the distancing that's going on. I think some people now think that they cannot say certain things around me hence they avoid me (Sbusiso).

As Thato put it, "people view you differently once they know":

People view you differently once they know that you have a girlfriend. They just view you differently. It's very passive: I don't actually know that I'm doing it but I am. Something shifts. [And when] you come out to people that you are bisexual or you are a lesbian, you get viewed as very promiscuous (Thato).

While to feel “at home” connotes companionship and an environment of acceptance, prejudice leads to isolation and estrangement.

I think some of the guys who aren't comfortable with us have kind of just stayed away and they don't really interact with us but then it doesn't bother me (Kudzai).

People think that you vicariously get it [homosexuality]. They think that you vicariously get being gay through hanging out with certain people (Sbusiso).

Seidman (2010:50) argues that individuals establish their heterosexual identity through distancing themselves from homosexual individuals and this distancing can often be displayed through homophobic behaviour which reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is “good” and homosexuality is “bad”. A common mechanism of homophobic discourse is the association of homosexuality with disease. As Sbusiso describes, the insistence that homosexuality is tantamount to disease serves as a discursive strategy for the repudiation of homosexuality.

Some other girl thought that by virtue of being gay, you will get AIDS. If you have unprotected sex as gay people you will get AIDS. I tried explaining to her but she was adamant that all gay people die from AIDS. I have had a couple of people tell me that being gay is unethical and by the time I get to 40 I will be wearing nappies . . . (Sbusiso).

A feature of heteronormativity is the assumption that homosexuality is a temporary interruption waiting for “normal” life to resume.

Other people think that you can be gay but there's a point when you're going to be straight, they are like, are you still gay? What do you mean by that? Asking if I'm still gay? That is who I am (Musa).

Homosexuality is treated as a passing phase and individuals are expected to eventually “see the light” and return to their natural state of being heterosexual. The insistence that homosexuality is a temporary condition suggests that heterosexuality is the state of normalcy to which the individual will inevitably return at some point, which is extremely offensive to gay individuals, denying an aspect of their identity which is seen by many of the participants as fundamental to who they are and far from temporary. Another characteristic of heteronormativity is the insistence that homosexuality is a form of sexual perversion. Heteronormative environments make gay people feel that their public presence is magnified and on display, which makes normal day-to-day human interaction seem, Thato says, “weird”.

It just looks more okay for Kelly and her boyfriend to hold hands and walk into res but if I come with my girlfriend it’s very weird for me (Thato).

Alongside informal practices and everyday social interactions, sanctioned institutional practices also facilitate the reproduction and consolidation of a culture of heteronormativity. One practice that has become tradition at the university, which can be used as an example to illustrate this point, is the culture of “serenading” that takes place at the beginning of every academic year. Serenading has been described as a form of initiation of new students, specifically first year students living in residence (de Klerk 2013; Minde and Sidiyo 2015). The practice has been operating for almost two decades and involves activities such as singing and dancing and (deliberately contrived) interaction between students from men’s residences with students from women’s residences (de Klerk 2013).

I came to Rhodes this year so I did serenades this year. I had to sing all these romantic songs to girls. For me I just told myself that I was just singing to girls and that’s all, no strings attached. After serenades are done, I go on with my life and on two occasions girls asked me out on dates and I explained to them that I was gay (Siyabonga).

Homosexual students like Siyabonga are drawn into performing a heterosexual identity for the duration of the initiation process because that is how serenading is structured. For the duration of

serenades, the institution's tradition forces everyone to participate in compulsory heterosexuality. There is a level of coercion attached to the serenading tradition in university residences (de Klerk 2013:96). Siyabonga's account reveals the element of compulsory heterosexuality that is engrained in serenading and there is not much that homosexual students can do to escape this trap of conforming to a heterosexual culture even if it is only temporary.

Serenades are heterosexual in the way that they are performed. Girls singing to the boys and vice versa and doing the stupid dances. When you refuse to do them they make you feel ostracised because you are not involved enough in the res, it's just bullshit. I didn't want to do the dances 'cause I didn't like wearing certain kinds of pyjamas. I didn't want to do that. There is a point when you do key swapping to chat. They take your room keys and give it to a boy and then whichever key corresponds to the boy's key determines who chats with who. I didn't want to have a conversation with a guy, I wasn't interested. I just wanted to have a conversation with a girl. Purely on the friendly basis but they [house committee members] know as well as I do that those arrangements are not meant to be platonic; they are meant to end up in naps [term used by Rhodes students to refer to casual sex] and hookups, so I know I wasn't being trivial when I said I did not want to do it. Just so I got along with the res, I just did it [serenading]. I just refused to do certain dances because I have certain values that no one can take away from me. I spoke to the boys, I took part in as much as I could stand but I did bring it up for house comm meetings that it's not a heterosexual world anymore you know, it's not (Olwetu).

I hated serenades and I hated participating in serenades. It wasn't emphasised that it was by choice that one took part. They were made compulsory. It was like: everyone come this is an initiation [the serenading]. And for me looking back at it, it doesn't really bother me that much, it's tradition though it would really be nice as well just to accommodate gay people. It would be nice to have homosexual students' serenades. It would be great if they emphasise that people have a choice to either do it or not. We don't hate girls and going to serenade girls isn't a big issue but it would be nice to accommodate us [homosexual students] as well (Kudzai).

Yep (2003:19) argues that people who live under regimes of heteronormativity need to learn to either conform, ignore or banish their suffering as means of survival.

Siyabonga describes taking the route of temporary conformity – going along to get along – while at the same time holding on to a sense of his own identity.

So for me I just took it as a passing phase because I told myself that I'm just doing this [serenading] for a week and it will be over and obviously there will be some residual responses like questions such as who did you ask out for a date from my res mates, but I knew exactly who I was and how I would respond to such questions and that's exactly what happened (Siyabonga).

Musa, while recognising the extreme discomfort that heteronormative practices like serenading can cause, especially for example someone who is “extremely feminine” being put into a situation of enforced “hooking up” with a girl, is able to deploy serenades for his own ends.

I took serenades as a chance to get to know other people rather than as a chance to get a girl for naps. But I think it's an issue for gay people who are extremely feminine because it's as if they are trying to hook you up with a girl. I think people should see it as a way of trying to get you accustomed to other people, to just be friends especially during Orientation Week. This is first week and you don't know anybody and then they [house committee members] just drop you in a girls res. I think people should see it as trying to get people to know Rhodes more and to actually interact with people. If you see it in that sense that you are going to get to know people and make friends after that then its fine. I've got friends that I made during serenades and I'm still good friends with them (Musa).

Lungile similarly chooses to redefine the purpose of serenading from an obviously heterosexual project to one of making friends.

If you look at serenades as serving a purpose to get people girlfriends it's a problem. It's problematic for homosexuals because they don't fit into the convention of going and looking for a partner from the opposite sex. For me I didn't see it that way. For me it was just getting to know people and most of the girls I met during my first year are still my friends and they know that I'm gay. The whole point of it though is for first-year students to know each other but not to initiate dating. I think that's where the problem comes. I know that in some

guy residences, the house comm people and the Sub-Wardens tell their first years that the point of serenades is for them to go hunting [seeking out girls to get involved with romantically] when actually that's not the case (Lungile).

While individuals like Musa and Lungile have the ability to deploy serenades as a social networking project, there is evidence to suggest that this is not true of many students' experiences with serenading (de Klerk 2013). Lungile's comments reveal also the extent to which the predatory heterosexual ("hunting") component of serenades is actively produced and reproduced by people in positions of authority, such as house committee members, and that an alternative, more positive and incorporative framing of the practice is quite possible.

Another example of how institutional practices unwittingly reinforce heteronormativity is in relation to attempts to provide students with sexuality education.

We should not call Rhodes "a home for all" when it brings in people to do sex talks and it's not a wide spectrum of everyone in the world who wants to have sex (Olwetu).

In my res we once had a sex talk where basically it was about sexual health and I thought it would be all-inclusive and not just like this is a penis and a vagina that equals sex, don't get pregnant from it, don't get a disease. So then I actually raised a point because it was actually just that. It was like this is how you put a condom on a penis and that's how you prevent diseases. You must do this, go on birth control and you won't get pregnant. I had to ask questions about oral sex. Questions such as those concerning the use of dental dams during sex and the person who was giving the talk actually didn't know what a dental dam was. It was awkward for me because I ended up explaining to the whole res what a dental dam was (Heather).

Living in an environment that is largely heteronormative in its social and cultural practices impacts negatively on the everyday lives of homosexual students. Negotiating this environment, as Kirsty explains, sometimes requires conformity to expected social norms:

I have a friend who is bisexual who lives in res. He is what we call a bear because he is a very manly man. He goes to the gym and climbs mountains. He loves adventures. The gay community knows he is bisexual but the straight community doesn't because it is so glossed over by his physical appearance. They sort of ignore that part of him because he doesn't fit the stereotype . . . whereas some of my gay friends who are effeminate are treated differently (Kirsty).

Kudzai similarly comments on how the performance of dominant masculine traits protects some gay men from social sanction:

I think if you look very effeminate and you sit around with very masculine guys it always tends to be awkward (Kudzai).

Heteronormativity pressures nonconforming individuals to abide by social rules and norms that define what it means to be a man and woman. Dunne (2003) argues that one of the ways in which this is achieved is through expectations surrounding clothing and modes of dressing. Mitchell *et al* (2012:4) argue that dress is more than items of clothing because there are socio-political power dynamics attached to dressing. Dress, Msibi (2012a:244) points out, is a vehicle for policing sexuality. As such, choices about clothing might be a site of privileged and joyous self-expression for those young people who embody normative social expectations, for instance surrounding body size, shape and sex/gender performativity, for others, like Thato, dress is a site of anxiety because the identity that she wishes to express through an item of clothing is a reviled identity.

I have a hoodie that says "dip me in chocolate and feed me to a lesbian" and I remember the first time I wore that in my res I was literally shitting my pants. I walked into the dining hall and I said to myself okay, I'm gonna do this. Breakfast was fine no one asked any questions. The questions started during lunch. One particular res mate of mine asked me why they must now feed me to a lesbian and kept inquiring what was going on. Others were asking me what was up with the hoodie and I couldn't say anything. I just kept saying it's just a hoodie. One of the girls from my res who is very Christian and conservative

looked at the hoodie a couple of times, she grimaced a couple of times before she shook her head and asked me why I was wearing it. Eventually she said it was so funny but she said it in a very condescending manner. After that, I didn't wear my hoodie for a couple of months. So it's those kind of experiences in res that tell you that you need to fit in a box, that you can't wear those kind of hoodies and certain types of clothes. It's very difficult (Thato).

Kate Soper (2001:21) argues that dress is used to police and regulate social and sexual hierarchies. Such regulation can be said to instil fear in individuals about how they will be identified by others (Msibi 2012a:247). Suthrell (2004:14) argues that people use dress, consciously or unconsciously, as one of the ways in which to project themselves, the self they wish to present to the world and the group with which they desire to be associated. Several participants spoke about the ways in which clothing choices become the site of public disapproval for gay people who express their identity through their dress.

In res, it was automatically assumed that I was gay because of the way that I dress. They never even asked me. They just assumed without even talking to me. But outside of res it was an accusation that I dress the way I do because I want to be a man (Mpho).

Some people can kinda pick up that I'm gay from the way I dress 'cause I don't wear skirts or dresses. I just don't do that. A few people can pick that up a few can't. A few of my friends tried to get me to wear skirts and dresses but I refused (Lebo).

While heteronormativity often operates at a subterranean level, consisting of unspoken and unacknowledged norms and assumptions, the privileging of heterosexuality as "normality" that characterises heteronormative cultures is the context in which homophobia can come to be legitimised.

Homophobia can be described as irrational fear, hatred and intolerance for individuals who are gay, lesbian and bisexual (Obear 1991:39; Donaldson 2015) and is expressed in a range of overt

ways. Examples include the use of derogatory language and names, hate crimes, and physical aggression including harassment, threats, rape and murder (Obear 1991; Flowers and Buston 2001; Waldo 1998; Wells and Polders 2004:1; Butler *et al* 2003). Research suggests that universities are not immune to homophobic practices and that some homosexual students experience different forms of homophobia on campus (Nelson and Krieger 1997; Graziano 2004). Although experiences of direct physical harm on campus are relatively rare, they are not unheard of.

I was leaving the library in my first year around June exams and it was pretty late. I was around the grounds in garden department and quite a large guy wearing a hoodie [approached me]. I couldn't identify him and I wasn't even paying attention because I had earphones. He pushed me [and I fell to the ground] and asked me if I thought I could come to Rhodes and take his women. He said I should leave this kind of shit at home no one wants to see it. I was scared because I didn't expect it and I let him finish . . . I thought that was gonna get worse. He ran away after that. I started crying and I went straight to my Warden (Olwetu).

In first year it just appeared to me that there was a very macho atmosphere in res and I was one of the very first open and effeminate gay guys and so it was very difficult. I had an incident when one of the guys in res . . . He was very hostile towards me. And at one time I remember we had a party in res and I was on my way to get one of my friends who had come to see me and I bumped into him at the door and he looked at me and he called me in a very angry way and I went to him [and as] I got closer, I saw that he was actually drunk and then I walked away and he followed me and started insulting me. He was being very aggressive and so I decided to stand where the camera could see 'cause I actually thought he was going to hit me. We have cameras [in our res]. He was being very aggressive and he kept on saying he hated me, [because] I thought I'm better than everyone. And he called me all sorts of names – gay names and swear words. One of the guys actually had to stop him (Kudzai).

Given that security is a central expectation that we have of what it means to be at home, incidents such as these severely compromise gay students' ability to feel "at home" on campus. Prejudice is part of a spectrum of homophobic behaviours which threaten to spill over into direct violence.

[I was sharing a double room with another student and] when he moved back when the returning students came in I was in my room getting ready for

orientation week lectures. He arrived in the morning but didn't greet me. He just [threw] a tantrum asking why he was sharing [the room] with a flippin first-year who was even gay. [He insisted] on going to Desiree Weeks. We didn't get along at all and it was really awkward to be in the room with him. Eventually, [it] got to a point where we had a fight, where I was threatened in my own room and my personal belongings were damaged (Mandla).

Research suggests that homophobia has a negative impact on the academic performance of homosexual students (UNESCO 2012:20). Academic performance is also severely affected by fear, loss of confidence, reduced self-esteem, psychological stress and social isolation (UNESCO 2012:21). Overt violence and expressions of prejudice are part of a continuum of homophobic behaviours which serve to reinforce gay students' discomfort. As Lebo says, often these behaviours are subtle and to be found in "the smallest things".

I think it's the smallest things that people say that really gets to you hey. They think you don't hear it and then you do and when you leave the room or [place] you are just like I wish so and so had not said this and now I feel like this and it annoys me and every time I see them I'm just gonna think back to that (Lebo).

Name calling is one example of a seemingly small gesture with powerful effects (see Burman *et al* 1997; Flowers and Buston 2001:51).

They use terms such as "Stabani" which is a very derogatory term for gay people (Thabo).

The use of language as a tool for discrimination is well documented in the literature (Lopez and Chism, 1993; Plummer 2001; Cowan *et al* 2005; Francis and Msibi 2011, Msibi 2013; Epprecht 2013:23, Donaldson 2015:141) and there is evidence to suggest that it can be a very influential tool in the reinforcement and entrenchment of a climate of homophobia and heterosexism, resulting in embarrassment and shame for those who endure it and, as several participants called attention to, often spilling over into the legitimisation of physical abuse.

Walking to town, the street people will want to touch you or they will call you names like “baby” and “twink”, they want to grab your private parts. It doesn’t make sense to me (Lundi).

. . . my friends and I were coming from the dining hall and this one guy was like, “hey girls” and we were like, no. And he was like I thought you guys wanted to be called that and we were like no! (Sbusiso).

It [was] one of the guys [who] was trying to hook up with her so he asked me if she was lesbian because he saw that on Facebook she said she’s in a relationship with a girl and then people I sit with started to inquire why I was friends with a lesbian . . . Then one of them said “Sies”. I tried to defend her because they were asking how they have sex. And I was just saying please don’t disrespect her, you don’t know her really I’m the one who knows her, don’t make preconceived assumptions about her. [They made] comments that well if you’re lesbian you are half a man, half a woman. I feel fighting them would be very counter-productive in a sense because if I argue with them it escalates further [and] I will be fighting a losing battle and it just escalates into me opening up to them about my sexuality and I know they wouldn’t receive it that well. Res environment does play a role ’cause if you’re there with people who are liberal and who don’t demean and marginalise people [then that’s] cool Because I feel that one comment saying “Sies” can block someone for a very long time from actually thinking about it or voicing it because you would be afraid of the reactions (Thabo).

People usually group words together like “fag” and “moffie”. Sometimes it makes me very angry. I don’t know if it hurts anymore, but it makes me angry. I think it doesn’t hurt as much as it used to. The other time I was going up the hill [and there were] people who are walking down and this other guy made a comment like: look, look on the other side, there’s a gay guy, there’s a gay guy and I don’t remember what else he said. I think sometimes people will take chances with people they think cannot defend themselves or will not say anything if [they] pass on a comment, because most of the time they would never say anything to my friends because they think that they might rebut but since I look smaller . . . they always try and find a weak person to target (Sbusiso).

Homophobic bullying has been described as violence committed against individuals on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation and is a global concern (UNESCO 2012:16). Homophobia can also be directed at straight students who form part of a support or peer group for gay students. Kirsty spoke of a “straight friend who got gay bashed probably because of her relationship with me”. This is not an uncommon finding. Msibi’s (2012b) research found that individuals who were friends with queer learners were also victimised and harassed, which serves to further isolate homosexual people (Msibi 2012b:524). Msibi (2012b:524) further argues that such behaviour is meant to send a message to those who ally with homosexual individuals to refrain from associating with those who are perceived as undesirable. Nel and Judge (2008:22) argue that, regardless of whether these crimes are relatively uncommon, they serve to create a climate of fear and repression. The overall effect is the opposite of the sense of community and support associated with home, isolating gay people from one another and from potential support groups and networks. Several participants spoke of this fear of isolation and ostracism.

At the same time I also don’t want to lose my male friends because being in res that’s your home, those are the people that you see every day and being unable to talk to them because of one’s sexual orientation is [terrible] (Thabo).

You have that initial fear that you gonna fall and literally there will be no one there to catch you. You don’t have anyone. [When you are new here] you don’t have family, you don’t have people you know and you don’t have friends here and you don’t want your sexuality to now affect everything else. It scared the living shit out of me to think that coming out or being honest about my sexuality could potentially make me leave or cause some kind of reason why I should go. When I got here I lied that’s what I did. I realised that maybe I’m not ok with who I am as someone who likes other women (Thato).

No one actually wants to be alienated by society because of how they feel, because of who they are attracted to. No one wants to be an outcast (Anele).

You don’t disclose that [sexual orientation] to your church friends. It’s just one of those things and you wanna fit into that box especially when you are a spiritual person like I am (Thato).

Was I attracted to a few people in my res? Sure. But not enough to do anything about it. It was just like simple crushes. But the reason why I didn't go for it was because I just didn't want to mess up the vibe of the res not because we are all women. I [just didn't] want to mess up the vibe (Mpho).

7.1 Conclusion

The idea of “home” is associated with acceptance and comfort. But as scholars such as Kaplan (1987) point out, home is not a comfortable place for all its occupants. This chapter has demonstrated how a dominant heteronormative culture creates the institutional home as a place of seclusion and violence for some homosexual students. An environment of heteronormativity allows for behaviours and institutional practices, such as serenading and sex education initiatives, which produce LGB students as disgraced, invisible, stigmatised and excluded, systematically marginalised and violated through heteronormativity.

8 Chapter Eight: Negotiating strangeness

“Negotiating strangeness” has to do with how lesbian, gay and bisexual students deal with exclusion in order to create room for themselves so that they can experience a sense of comfort within the Rhodes home and attempt to avert rejection from their heterosexual peers with whom they live. Negotiating strangeness therefore looks into the coping mechanisms and strategies that homosexual students undertake in their daily experiences with other heterosexual students within the institution. Using insights from Vangelisti and Crumley’s (1998) categories of behaviour in responding to exclusion, I will explore how gay, lesbian and bisexual students are able to deal with exclusion and rejection from their heterosexual peers in the Rhodes home.

Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) identify three distinct categories of behaviours, namely “acquiescent”, “invulnerable” and “verbal active”, that individuals who face exclusion and rejection employ in order to deal with exclusion and rejection. The “acquiescent” category comprises behaviours, such as apologising, which necessitate a safe passage in dealing with social pain; the “invulnerable” category points to behaviours, such as ignoring the source of hurt, that serve to help one avoid or withdraw from a hurtful exchange; and the “verbal active” category consists of behaviours, such as verbally attacking and confronting the source of hurt, that enable one to defend oneself in order to avoid social pain (Vangelisti and Crumley 1998; MacDonald and Leary 2005:205).

In this context, homosexual students in the Rhodes home, I argue, find themselves on the social margins and are viewed as “strangers”, “outsiders” or “Other” because of their sexual orientation. Donaldson (2015:132) for instance argues that homosexuals are seen as the “Other” of the perceived normative heterosexual identity. In this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how the excluded individuals, in this case gay, lesbian and bisexual students in the residence system, negotiate living on the peripheries of the social circle within their home. The argument I seek to make is that some homosexual students attempt to come up with strategies to help them cope with the exclusion they face, which I have termed as “negotiating strangeness” in the Rhodes home.

The rationale behind this title draws its influence from the work of Shane Phelan (2001:29-31), who argues that homosexual individuals are “sexual strangers” to the heterosexual community because of their different sexual orientation. Their strangeness comes about because they are viewed as individuals who “are not like us” by the heterosexual community because they have “transgressed” the invisible boundaries and borders that define what is appropriate and inappropriate in the home and, in this instance, what is acceptable sexual orientation and sexual behaviour (Phelan 2001:29; Cresswell 2009:5; Sandercock 2000:22). Their sexual orientation renders them undesirable and socially unacceptable because of their non-conformity to the heterosexual norm.

8.1.1 “Acquiescent responses” in relation to exclusion

Yeah . . . I’ve actually kind of distanced myself a little bit from them this term. I’ve just broken up from them a little bit this term It’s hard though ’cause they have been my friends for six months and they were the first friends I made in the res who welcomed me so now when you have to distance yourself it’s weird . . . (Lebo).

Like Lebo, some of the participants who took part in this study have decided to minimise contact with others and keep to themselves, which is a “distancing mechanism”, due to the negative experiences they encounter with their peers in their residences. These negative encounters result in the experience of painful emotions, which guides one away from sources of rejection (MacDonald and Leary 2005:204). Lebo’s action is a means to protect herself from those she lives with, because their behaviour is a source of discomfort and exclusion. MacDonald and Leary (2005:204) also argue that individuals who reject, exclude or ignore someone are often not likely to be safe or stable sources of support for an individual and can probably cause harm to that person, hence this dissociation from others is a mechanism for self-protection. Distancing mechanisms are used as forms of protection of oneself from harm and rejection (Murray *et al* 1998:1459; MacDonald and Leary 2005). Research has also shown that individuals are less likely to seek the company of individuals who have insulted, ostracised or hurt them (MacDonald and Leary 2005:204; Bourgeois and Leary 2001:102; Williams and Zadro 2001:26), which can be demonstrated in Lebo’s case.

The experiences of Thato, another participant, have informed her decision to withdraw contact from those surrounding her:

I keep to myself a lot I'm not in people's faces a lot so they don't have much to say or talk about. I don't put myself out there to be talked about because it's inevitable it will happen. There are a lot of people who are very uncomfortable with people of different sexual orientations. It kinda just happens that way if someone has homophobic issues or homophobic tendencies you stay away from them that's just survival of the fittest. That's just the way you do things so I don't have particularly close relationships with those kind of people. It only affects me that moment when you get that reaction then you are like ok . . . then you know. It's like an indicator. Like. I don't know. Like a test It's like a test . . . so normally I decide to stop (Thato).

MacDonald and Leary (2005:204) argue that people are highly attuned to social cues indicating that social pain is likely to occur, and individuals take all precautionary measures to avoid the occurrence of such incidences once they detect such cues. In Thato's case, the reactions she gets from people can be suggested to be "cues" that inform her decisions to detach herself from their company in order to avoid the occurrence of an unpleasant situation. One can argue that such awareness can be a means to gauge and judge the social climate that is in existence and draw a conclusion as to whether it is friendly or hostile towards one. This avoidance behaviour shields individuals from interactions that may result in any form of harm or social threat which is undesirable to an individual (MacDonald and Leary 2005:204; Murray *et al* 1998):

I'm an introvert. I stick to my circle of friends and that's it. But again even if I met a random person down the hall, an acquaintance of the res walking down it would be hi, hi and that's it. I never got involved in their lives and they never got involved in mine. So my introverted nature I guess protects me in that way (Mpho).

8.1.2 Strategies for resisting the heteronormative construction of space

Massey (1994:137) argues that “places are shared spaces”. As such, the dining hall can be assumed to be a neutral space where people conduct some of the various domestic activities associated with being at home, which include eating and socialising with others, but scholars such as Massey (1994:186), Spain (1992) Smyth (2008) and Connell (1987) argue that spaces like these are gendered. Rather than being neutral territory for the enactment of the mundane business of life, dining halls are places where heteronormativity is (re) enforced precisely through the enactment of the routine and the mundane. It is the everyday normalcy of conversations that take place during meal times that homosexual students threaten to interrupt. Faced with the heteronormativity of the dining hall space, participants described differing responses ranging from an insistence on inclusion, to self-exclusion, to the creation of spaces constructed as exclusively gay.

8.1.2.1 Making the conversation “relevant to me”

There is very little room to manoeuvre for the gay person finding themselves in the midst of a conversation that is comfortably heteronormative in its assumptions. To insist, as Kudzai does, on “making the conversation relevant to me as well” is one possible response.

If I sit at the dining table with straight guys who are talking about girls I usually make contributions of my own experiences and make comments about how ridiculous they are with girls. I make the conversation relevant to me as well (Kudzai).

But, as Lungile’s remarks make clear, to do so is to make one’s sexuality the subject of conversation.

It was a very cold day and for some reason everyone at the dining table was saying they needed a girlfriend over. I just thought it was such an odd conversation to have at the dining table. I also said I needed a guy over too and then people just laughed and said they had seen the signs that I was gay. They

were like dude we know, you have been bringing guys to res and we figured you are gay (Lungile).

8.1.2.2 “Sitting with the girls”

For Tom, insisting on being included in talk experienced as heterosexual male is not a comfortable option. His alternative is to “sit with the girls” – a course of action which he must then publicly account for.

All the guys from my res sit at one table every day in the dining hall. There is this huge gender divide. I sit with all my friends in the middle and I’m basically the only guy in the group of girls. There’s this kind of social barrier between me and the guys in my res It got to a point where I was explaining to the guys why I don’t sit with them in the dining hall. It’s mainly because of the conversations about sport, women, sex and cheating that drove me away from their table (Tom).

8.1.2.3 Turning the tables on heteronormativity

Smith (1994:33) describes personalisation as a “way in which individuals express themselves and their identity”. Lawrence (in Smith, 1994) argues that personal objects are used to communicate the identity of their owner(s) and their self-esteem. Some participants described adopting a strategy that might be termed “turning the tables on heteronormativity” – the deliberate and public announcement of a space that is exclusively gay. Here Kirsty describes the way in which the “gay table” is reserved for people that members of the group “like” and how unwelcome intruders are repelled.

I have a couple of gay friends who are the resident gays in their res. They have a table outside the dining hall they call it the pink table. After lunch they all sit together at that table with some of their straight friends who are very shy, very retreating and sexually ambiguous. They sit there to smoke cigarettes and hang out with each other. And if somebody they don’t like sits at the table, they will all look at him and ask them if they are lost. At one time they even bought a pink

tablecloth and doused it over, that was them being able to express themselves . . . (Kirsty).

The object of the pink tablecloth can be seen as a defiant public announcement of the nature of the space that has been created and how it ought to be interpreted by outsiders (Bryan 2014; Axelrod 2008, 2011). In this way the pink table participants can be seen to disturb the prevailing power dynamics, challenging the heterosexual status quo by marking particular territories as their own.

In most of these cases, there is evidence that these students maintain a small circle of friends, like in Mpho's case, whom they confide in and feel more comfortable socialising with and sharing their private lives with instead of associating with everyone they live with. In other cases, a common identity influences the choices and decisions around who to befriend. Some of their friends also identify as gay hence this becomes a determining factor in the establishment of friendly relations. Phelan (2001:32) points out that individuals identified as strangers can sometimes "retreat into strangerhood" in order to find solidarity and confidence. By means of befriending other gay students, there is a sense in which a common identity is a key factor in establishing relationships due to the common understanding that exists as a result of a shared identity:

Guys who I know who are gay are very quiet and only hang out with other gays. I know one of the guys I used to live in the same Hall with. Well he only really hangs out with other gay people or people in his department. He is very shy and keeps to himself (Kirsty).

Furthermore, individuals can be motivated to invest in relationships with trusted individuals like friends as a result of the social pain that one experiences from others (MacDonald and Leary 2005:204; D'Augelli 1992). The small network of friends that they maintain can also be considered as a mechanism to attain privacy by keeping other individuals at bay.

Other individuals such as Lebo resort to subtle approaches in dealing with unpleasant situations:

I remember this one time when we were playing this memory game where you kinda say I'm going to a party and I'm bringing . . . I'm going And then there came a line that was usually clean and they turned it dirty and they were bringing models and alcohol and it was kinda like ok and then they said we are bringing models and then people were like guys, guys . . . male models and I was getting annoyed because I just wanted the game to end. I could see this one girl looking at her friend in a weird way. I could see the look on their faces and I was just like gosh can we grow up. I just let it go. I'm not big on confrontation I just let it go. When I get to my room I know I will just scream. I won't do it in front of them, I'm not big on confrontation (Lebo).

Lebo's response to the incident can be viewed as diplomatic and non-aggressive. This approach can be considered as a cautious way of protecting oneself from the pain that could result from confronting others about their behaviour, which MacDonald and Leary (2005) point to as the rationale behind using this approach to resolve conflict. However, such an approach can also be viewed as a moment that creates a sense of powerlessness in individuals like Lebo when such incidents occur because there is a moment of denial of full expression of oneself, which can result in difficulties and challenges for some students who identify as homosexual living amongst their heterosexual peers.

8.1.3 “Verbal active responses”

There is also evidence to suggest that other individuals stand up for themselves in order to re-establish boundaries around their privacy in order to avoid instances where social pain can be experienced due to the loss of autonomy of one's personal space in their residences:

Well [the other day] I saw her and she was drunk and she said: “Where is your girlfriend?” in front of everybody. We were by the corner at Debonairs and there were a lot of people from my res. And [when I saw her again the next day] I kinda told her, I was like, “look here stop going around shouting out about my love life . . . that is not my girlfriend and let's just leave it there” and she just laughed and brushed it off But I feel like it's gonna happen again though (Lebo).

There is an awareness brought up in Lebo's narrative about the importance of privacy and maintaining control over one's private affairs. Confronting other heterosexual peers over their conduct which is perceived as an infringement on personal privacy and boundaries becomes a coping mechanism that others use in the residence:

There are times when we confront them basically because I don't know why they are very fascinated with our rooms. There was a time when it was like 35°C in Grahamstown, this guy came to ask for sugar and you know what, there are people who are just not tea people, we actually confronted them about it, at 35 degrees outside, like what were you doing, what is it that you were trying to do especially that he was half naked. And he is a good-looking boy but he's not our preference. So we were like I don't even know what you were trying to do, it's just much better for you to say what you want to say because this body language is not working (Lundi).

Defending oneself and reacting to challenges in a confident way has been pointed out by Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) as a response mechanism that helps excluded individuals deal with the challenges they face:

I will say the way I carry myself here at Rhodes people can actually see that I do not even care what you have to say to me about my sexuality because I will actually respond to you. I will not be there fighting or whatnot I'll actually stop you and tell you exactly what it is (Lundi).

Confronting individuals can become a means to deal with exclusion that one experiences at the hands of others. Scholars such as Scourfield *et al* (2008:332) also argue that fighting back can result in the bolstering of one's sexual identity hence one can argue that when some homosexual individuals stand up for themselves they are reaffirming their identity in some way.

Phelan (2001:82-83) argues that the world we live in is one that is carefully regulated by regimes of nationality, gender, race, and sexuality amongst other factors that do not promote or encourage universal standards of decency but instead promote dissociation and a denial of equality amongst different people. Given these circumstances, it is common then for individuals to stand up and defend themselves and fight for what they believe in as a means to respond to the exclusion they experience:

I voiced out my opinions, I voiced out my concerns publicly to the house at house meetings. I would always be the person who was seen as the wild one, even though everyone knew in that room that I was actually fighting for my democratic rights. I do not care if you are the Warden or the Sub-Warden, I will call you to order if you are not doing things right (Mandla).

Lundi and his friends also experience problems that require them to respond in a pragmatic manner:

There was an incident with my friend in res. This other guy said that he flashed him and I knew he'd never do that and actually [my friend] was very upset about what he had heard and he went to confront him and he denied it. We confront people so that people know that we don't tolerate lies (Lundi).

Mandla and Lundi and his friends stand up for themselves and challenge those they live with who trample upon their rights as individuals. This behaviour is typical of individuals whose character is wounded by others. Vangelisti and Crumley (1998:175) argue that responses to hurt are shaped by the manner in which individuals interpret the behaviour of others. For instance, if interpretation of others' words or actions is considered as offensive, individuals will respond accordingly in order to address the effects of others' behaviour, hence the manner in which Mandla, Lundi and his friends react towards others in their respective incidences coincides with Vangelisti and Crumley's (1998) argument.

Other participants who took part in this study revealed that their personal characters have played an influential role in ensuring that their efforts to lead normal lives are realised:

I just feel like I have never been one to be influenced by the people around me. Even in high school, I was a prefect but you could still tell that I was different. And I take pride in that because I feel like there's nothing as beautiful as being different so even [at] school, there were younger kids who were gay and it's one of the issues we were working around that guys don't change who you are to suit somebody else because that person is living their lives. So that's one thing I can say about myself that I really like because I'm not one to be influenced by what's happening around me, I'm really not (Anele).

Anele's determination to lead a normal life as a lesbian student in the institution can be seen as her saving grace. Anele displays positive elements of embracing her identity, and this in turn influences her outlook on life in the institution. Her understanding that her sexuality is a part of her that should not affect her daily experiences in a way can be said to be a coping mechanism that shields her from unnecessary social or emotional pain. One can draw parallels between her story and the stories of other participants who express their determination to not allow their sexual orientation to have a negative influence on how they experience their lives while they are at Rhodes.

In other instances individuals like Megan feel it is necessary to stand up and speak for themselves in order to correct misconceptions carried by other heterosexual students about her identity:

I once walked in on a conversation in the common room about relationships and cheating. There were people debating that bisexual people cheat. It was a straight girl arguing with a lesbian and I said actually I take offence because I'm actually bisexual and what you are saying is not true and opinions like that are quite hurtful and actually false. It's just a stupid stereotype that people somehow get which is obviously not true because people of any [sexual] orientation and gender can cheat. In actual fact being bisexual doesn't really open up your dating box that much it's like a tiny fraction more. They didn't talk back to me or try and argue their point because I had effectively made my point (Megan).

This mechanism, which can also be referred to as “active verbal”, comprises behaviours such as verbally attacking and confronting the source of hurt (MacDonald and Leary, 2005:205). Being vocal about certain matters can be suggested to be a practical way of confronting a problem in order to rectify misconceptions about issues surrounding sexuality, for instance. Vangelisti and Crumley (1998:175) argue that people can experience being hurt as a result of what others may say or do to them and individuals tend to respond in different ways in such situations. One can suggest that expressing one’s self can be empowering in a way because it becomes an act of standing up to challenge the dominant ideas that have been developed about the homosexual identity. Phelan (2001:32) argues that “strangers may attempt to subvert the hierarchies of the hegemonic order”. With this in mind, one can suggest that Megan can be said to be challenging the misconceptions that exist around her sexual orientation.

Wardhaugh (1999:97) argues that individuals in the home who are unable to or choose not to conform to gender, class and sexuality which are used to establish a conventional household are symbolically and often literally excluded from the home:

The thing is it’s a guy res but you need to also understand that you can’t always do things based on what the majority wants or what you think the majority prefers. A lot of decisions would be straight and not considering the fact that it was the six of us in res that were actually identifying as gay and they would be like, guys we are going to do this and that, but where do we fit in in this we would ask? No, the house decide and I would ask why we were not included. They would say the majority decided. So I would not support the decisions because I wasn’t included. Decisions on the hoodie design or your t-shirt design or your braai all the social things we were never consulted on. I ended up not buying anything. So I decided to move out. I moved to a new res but I’m not involved at all in [residence activities]. And I told them from the word go to not expect me to get involved because I’m only there to shower and sleep that’s it (Mandla).

Mandla’s experiences typify the argument made by Wardhaugh (1999) on exclusion. His refusal to buy the residence hoodie, for instance, can be interpreted as a form of resistance towards

expectations of conforming to group decisions. This action can be viewed as a distancing mechanism from the exclusion that is being experienced in this context because non-participation in the residence activities is a strategy to avoid the reoccurrence of such incidences where one can experience social pain because of one's different sexual orientation. This form of action is in line with the argument made by MacDonald and Leary (2005:204) that people tend to withdraw contact from people who have rejected or excluded them before as they begin to be viewed as possessing the potential to hurt them again.

Being assertive in nature is one of the character traits that enable some of the participants in this study to cope in their daily experiences:

We are just confident in our sexuality. We were speaking during orientation week when there was a talk about sexuality. I wanted people to understand that we are not here to try to seduce them. I wanted them to know that I was the last person they needed to be worried about because there are different kinds of gay people at Rhodes. I told them that people were gonna approach them but I was the last person they needed to be worried about. Firstly they are young for me, I don't want anyone. I told them that even if they got approached, they just needed to politely reject them and say no they were not gay rather than being rude (Lundi).

Being bold and expressing characteristics of opening up to talk about one's identity forms part of "active verbal" responses. The willingness to educate and inform other heterosexual students about one's personality as a gay student can be considered to be a mechanism used to bring down barriers and misconceptions surrounding homosexuality. One can interpret this as an establishment of a new form of visibility for homosexual students and redressing common beliefs around how homosexual people are perceived as sexually promiscuous people around their heterosexual peers. Lundi's narrative can be understood as an attempt to make the homosexual identity normal while at the same time dispelling the misconceptions around how homosexual people behave.

Challenging heteronormativity is also a mechanism that helps other individuals to establish and maintain their identity amongst their peers. Olwetu and Megan navigate around the exclusion they might experience by openly sharing with their peers their experiences with dating as gay students:

Yeah that's never been an issue for me when they talk about their boyfriends I talk about my girlfriend. If you have a boyfriend that's fine, I have a girlfriend (Olwetu).

I don't try to actively hide it and I'm not ashamed I will see people talking about their crushes and I'd be like: oh yes me too there is this cute girl I like (Megan).

Both Olwetu and Megan's stories can be considered to reflect elements of reinforcement of one's identity. Opening up about relationships and experiences of dating with peers who are heterosexual can be suggested as a means to normalising sexual orientations that often experience social and cultural prejudices which label them as "abnormal" and "taboo" (Donaldson 2015:131-132). Emphasising one's sexual identity can be suggested to be a strategy to create room for oneself to be acknowledged as an individual who leads a normal life regardless of the different sexual orientation. Homosexual students exist in societies that privilege, celebrate and affirm heterosexuality and this alone sets them on the margins of society (MacGillivray 2000:304). The sharing of experiences alongside heterosexual peers can be said to challenge the existing heteronormative status quo in a space where heterosexuality is considered to be the norm. The reinforcement of one's identity aids in the creation of visibility for an identity that is overshadowed by a heteronormative environment, which can result in the breaking down of barriers of exclusion that homosexual students often experience; this is highlighted by scholars such as Donaldson (2015:131) who argue that heteronormativity results in the exclusion of "non-normative" sexualities.

Others also refuse to conform to expectations from their peers, as evidenced by Lungile's remarks:

In my first year one of the house comm members asked me if I had met a great girl. And I told him I wasn't looking for that. I was very frank. There was a time we had to take roses to our sister res and take them out for a date. I said I would take flowers and I would take a friend but just don't ask me what happens afterwards, it just ends there. I don't have a problem with taking a female friend as my partner to an event, it's not a problem (Lungile).

Lungile's narrative can be seen as demonstrating a refusal to conform to the heterosexual expectations surrounding dating and relationships that are predominantly heterosexual in nature. This resistance to conformity, one can argue, is important in reinforcing one's identity because it denotes elements of absence of fear in expressing one's true identity despite the pressures of living in a community that is very heteronormative in nature. Lungile's case can be seen as an example of how some homosexual students assert their identities and refrain from peer pressure to compromise on their identity in order to fit in with the group and be accepted by their peers. Hames (2007) points out that the issue of peer pressure to conform to heteronormativity is one that has been identified as affecting some lesbian and bisexual students during their time at university.

8.1.4 “Invulnerable responses”

According to Bourgeois and Leary (2001), individuals can resort to derogating those who reject them. This derogation is a means to buffer themselves against the implications of rejection. This for instance means one can belittle the conduct of others in order to dismiss the effects of their actions towards one's wellbeing:

I don't care what people think about me, I really don't care. The issues that you have with me you can keep them that's fine but I'll keep greeting you and saying hello to you and make you feel this small because that's how big you are in my life. I don't care. My parents love me, my siblings and girlfriend love me. It's just my carefree attitude that has allowed me to get through so much. My carefree attitude comes through for me. Sometimes I just say you have to treat these people like idiots, don't go down to their level (Olwetu).

Courtesy towards those individuals who exclude one can also be suggested to be a form of derogation. The carefree attitude that Olwetu speaks about can be considered to be a coping mechanism that assists her to deal with the pressure of living amongst individuals who express elements of excluding people of her sexual orientation. Hames (2007) provides evidence to suggest that bisexual and lesbian students who come from supportive backgrounds and families have more potential to withstand the pressure from heteronormativity, and Olwetu's story can be pointed out as reflecting this finding.

Mandla's story also reflects similar qualities in response, which can be categorised under "invulnerable":

And then I met friends who are openly gay. I spoke to them and they assured me that I would be fine and it actually worked. I just told myself that I'm going to be myself no one is going to dictate or structure my life for me and ever since then I really don't care what the next person thinks or says. I don't care. I think that's the one thing that actually helps me to grow and not notice these things. Not noticing helps me to focus on the actual things I am here for (Mandla).

Mandla's choice not to concern himself with paying attention to the hostility and negative elements from the people that surround him can be interpreted as an attempt to block out negativity that can affect his well-being and academic development. Donaldson (2015:142) argues that experiencing hate speech is psychologically and emotionally damaging to an individual as its goal is to humiliate and degrade individuals who are inferior. There is research evidence to indicate that negative attitudes towards homosexual students can result in problems for them such as limited identity development and low self-esteem, amongst others (Bowen and Bourgeois 2001:91), hence Mandla's actions can be viewed as an example of a form of protection for oneself.

On the other hand, Musa's experiences of being on the peripheries of the social circle has provided him with critical life lessons:

Being gay is another thing, it motivates you to work hard because life is more difficult to you because of your sexual orientation so you basically have to work hard. I have to work twice as hard to get what people have in order to make sure that I don't ever have to beg for anything because people are going to deny helping you because you are gay. People think that gay people are just after money and sex, that they give sex for money. It's rough out there just because of your sexual orientation, something so small. It doesn't make sense (Musa).

8.2 Coping mechanisms for LGB individuals against homophobia

In his research on minority groups, Allport (1954) observes that members of minority groups often develop defenses to cope with the prejudice that they experience, as individuals cannot be indifferent towards negative experiences. He distinguishes between what he identifies as “extropunitive defenses”, which are directed at the source of discrimination, and “intropunitive defenses”, which focus inwardly on an individual (Allport 1954:156; Herek 2004:19). This research is also relevant in the context of sexual minorities in trying to understand how they cope with prejudice that is displayed towards them. From this point onwards, I will focus on discussing how some homosexual students respond to homophobia.

8.2.1 “Extropunitive defenses” towards homophobia

8.2.1.1 Resistance to homophobia

I have a gay friend who was bashed in his dining hall. Some of the guys [he lives with are homophobic]. This one guy who lives across from him took down the Rhodes hates homophobia [sticker] and my friend put another one up (Kirsty).

There is a sense in which the above-mentioned individual can be said to be demonstrating an “extropunitive defense” mechanism to cope with homophobia. The act of replacing a sticker that has been removed in a homophobic act can be taken to indicate the resilience that some students express towards the hostility they experience from their heterosexual peers. This can be taken as a

form of resistance and fighting against the homophobia that some students experience from their peers in the Rhodes home.

8.2.2 “Intropunitive defenses” towards homophobia

Intropunitive defense mechanisms as suggested by Allport (1954) focus on how individuals cope with homophobia internally. These coping mechanisms can be identified as those that expose how individuals experience homophobia internally. In this study, there is evidence that participants tend to accept homophobia, live in denial of its existence, as well as rationalising the hate crimes that homosexual individuals experience in the institutional home.

8.2.2.1 Accepting homophobia

In some cases, individuals end up accepting the mistreatment that results from homophobic encounters with others around them as exemplified by one participant below:

You get used to it. I think that's the biggest issue with the LGBT community. We tend to get used to it and be like okay these things happen but that's not ok. In as much as it bothers me, I'm not crushed by it. I'm not crumbling because of these little things. It's one of those [things] you get used to it (Thato).

By becoming accustomed to bad treatment from others based on sexual orientation, homosexual students can cope with living in an institution where they experience discrimination regularly. Thato's remarks can be suggested to indicate that homosexual individuals eventually yield into accepting the status quo that sees them experiencing violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation. It sets up heterosexuality as the norm and homosexuality as abnormal, hence it becomes acceptable for the minority to endure violence and victimisation based on their sexual orientation.

8.2.2.2 Denial

Some of the participants in this study demonstrate elements of being in denial of the reality of the discrimination faced by their homosexual peers at Rhodes:

I do not like classifying people as homophobic 'cause I actually don't think they are. They just don't know about us. It also comes back to homosexual people like I said when you are insecure about your own sexuality then you just assume that everything is directed towards you just because you are homosexual but it's not. The Dean of Students last year had residence life surveys and a number of people were saying that they were experiencing discrimination because they are homosexual. Sometimes those things are not true in the sense that just because you are feeling so vulnerable everything that is done is against you. There's still a lot of work that needs to be done with the homosexual people in terms of accepting themselves and being assertive with who they are (Lungile).

Living in denial can become a coping mechanism against the harsh reality of homophobia that persists around the institution. Lungile projects the blame or fault to the homosexual community itself and its individuals for the unpleasant experiences they endure at the hands of their heterosexual peers. Allport (1954:365) argues that direct projection is a conscience-soothing falsity, which is used by individuals to solve inner conflict by means of ascribing to other individuals or groups behaviours that belong to the individuals themselves. It can be argued that Lungile's projection of fault to homosexual students exonerates heterosexual individuals from being accountable for the homophobia they display towards gay, lesbian and bisexual students in the institution, because he labels their homophobia as ignorance about homosexuality. Allport (1954:317) further argues that, when individuals deny that a problem exists, they forestall the turmoil it could cause for themselves if they were to face the problem. It is appropriate then for one to suggest that Lungile's denial of homophobia can be taken to be a defensive mechanism against a problem he might eventually have to confront.

8.2.2.3 Rationalising homophobia

In some instances, some homosexual students rationalise the homophobia they experience and attempt to justify other people's actions and behaviours towards them, as expressed by Thabo and Heather's comments below:

I try not to blame the individuals who are making the comments but the context where they come from because these things could be drilled into them in church

or by the society they come from. One of my friends who was [saying] lesbians are just half man, half woman comes from the township where homosexuality is condemned and he doesn't know any better you know. I don't condone what he's saying but I understand where it comes from (Thabo).

I don't take offence anymore because I kinda understand that it's just the way that everybody has been socialised into thinking. I just ignore it. I just don't entertain it. I don't let it get to me that easily. I'm quite chilled about it (Heather).

The accounts from both Thabo and Heather illustrate some of the means through which homosexual students cope with the discrimination. Rationalisation can be seen as serving the purpose of reducing the pain experienced at the hands of others as homosexual students begin to find explanations and justifications for their victimisation.

The perpetuation of such violence in the Rhodes residence system and the campus at large is indicative of the fact that the home can be a site of violence and discomfort for other occupants of the home. The experiences of homophobia among students at Rhodes resonate with Kaplan's (1987:194) argument that the home can be the site of damaging social practices. Homophobia results in negative experiences which compromise the comfort of homosexual students in the home because of their sexual orientation. In this regard, the institutional home can then be understood as not being a sanctuary for everyone because of such negative experiences endured on a regular basis by homosexual students in the Rhodes home. Such experiences dispel the dominant conceptualisations of the home as a safe haven and a positive space that provides comfort for all.

8.2.2.4 Pressure to conform to gender roles and expectations

Ingraham (1994) argues that gender and heterosexuality are interconnected and that conceptualisations of gender express an assumption of heteronormativity. Ingraham (1994:215) argues that to become gendered is to learn the proper way to be a woman in relation to a man, or feminine in relation to the masculine (Dunne 2003:59). This argument then confirms arguments made by Seidman (2010) that gender and sexuality are both socially constructed. Adrienne Rich

(in Seidman, 2010:20) notes that we are all taught and coerced into adopting conventional gender identities and that, in most societies, being respectable men and women means being heterosexual. The social pressures that create a gender-divided and compulsory heterosexual order are concealed by ideologies that stress the naturalness of heterosexuality. Some homosexual students at Rhodes experience the same pressure attached to gender during their time at this institution. Heather's remarks can be seen as exemplifying the pressures that reinforce the gender divide in society:

I'm not very girly and I always wear clothes that make me feel comfortable like track pants and shorts but my female friends always say that I should dress like a girl, carry handbags and walk in heels but I always want to be comfortable (Heather).

Thato also shares experiences similar to those shared by Heather below:

When I first came here, I dressed in a certain way then after two weeks I went to Edgars and got a whole new wardrobe. I used to dress a lot like a boy because when I want to feel comfortable I always dress like a boy. And then when I got here I wanted to shift and I guess it's because of the pressures up in res. You see girls coming to borrow clothes and that kind of thing (Thato).

Judith Butler (1999:43) argues that gender is the repeated stylisation of the body through a series of acts in a highly rigid regulatory frame. Butler (2009:1) argues that gender is performative in the sense that it is a certain kind of enactment: the "appearance" of gender through the body and how individuals present themselves and behave amongst people in society. Butler (in Salih 2002:55) argues that gender is not something that one is but something that one does. Butler argues that there is no gender which is pre-social because all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (Salih 2002:55). Practices of bodily display and performance that are presented through dress are political because they are systematically used by society to demarcate that which is acceptable from what should be condemned (Parkins 2002:2). One can argue that the presentation of the body in the institutional home can be seen as holding much significance in how some gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience the environment at Rhodes University. Heather

and Thato's comments can be seen as expressing that there is a form of surveillance on the body by heterosexual students that takes place within the residences in order to distinguish gay, lesbian and bisexual students from their heterosexual counterparts.

Entwistle (2001:47) argues that what constitutes living in a society is the social and moral imperative to learn the appropriate manner in which one should perform one's identity through dress, which means that individuals have to learn to abide by the codes of dressing that have been instituted by society for its members. For individuals like Kirsty, the performance of their gender has ensured that they experience the institutional space differently compared to their colleagues who are perceived as not performing their genders in the "right" manner. Her comments below exemplify this argument:

Rhodes has been a safe place for me because I act in a certain way. I identify as extremely feminine. I like lipstick and I love wearing high heels so basically there's not really much difference between me and most straight girls. Some people think I'm a straight girl because of how I dress and present myself (Kirsty).

By performing her gender "correctly", Kirsty can be seen as experiencing the residence as a safe place in the institution because she does not cross the "boundaries" defining the behaviour of both male and female students that have been set within the institution.

As Kudzai explains, strategies adopted by gay students in overwhelmingly heteronormative environments range from "trying to fit in" to complete concealment, which includes shunning other gay students for fear of being identified.

When you come here and you don't know anyone, you either have the choice to be yourself or to make friends with a bunch of very masculine guys who always talk about girls and so now your life becomes all about trying to fit in with those guys. It's there in our Dining Hall. We can actually tell that some people are gay

but they are friends with these straight guys and they don't want to interact with other gay guys. I know a lot of guys who are in the closet from my Dining Hall (Kudzai).

Concealment of one's own sexuality, associating with those who conform to dominant expectations of masculinity or femininity and eschewing those who are seen as deviant are painful mechanisms for negotiating an identity that Goffman (1963) might have termed "spoiled". Decisions to align oneself with heterosexual guys in the residences can be seen as a means to conceal one's homosexuality in order to avoid the negative consequences that can result from the disclosure of one's homosexuality; this is because homosexuals are among those stigmatised by society because they do not have full social acceptance and are constantly striving to adjust their social identities (Crossman n.d.).

Josh's experiences with how some gay students conduct themselves in the institutional home also provide evidence for the reward and punishment system that heteronormativity has established:

I have noticed that towards the end of last year as well as this year there are guys who are clearly gay but still have identity issues because they're hooking up and having sex with other guys but they think that they are being secretive about it but everybody knows anyway (Josh).

The concealment of sexual identity by some homosexual students in the institutional home can be seen as being influenced by the regulations that society has put in place to define what is acceptable and unacceptable. Concealment then becomes a mechanism to shield oneself from the ridicule and shame that comes with the awareness of one's homosexual identity, which society deems undesirable.

Rhodes University has implemented policies in order to deal with issues of discrimination (Donaldson 2015:132). These include the Unfair Discrimination and Harassment Policy that protects individuals from discrimination based on their sexual orientation (Donaldson 2015). The

University's leadership has also on several occasions expressed intolerance towards sexist, racist and homophobic behaviour from students (Vice Chancellor's Speeches 2010, 2011; Rhodes University 2000). Furthermore, the institution puts emphasis on how students found guilty of such conduct will be liable for a disciplinary hearing (Policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination, 2.1:2) For instance, Rule 15.27 of the policy states that:

Any student who utters, distributes, displays, shows, screens or projects any disparaging or derogatory remarks or innuendos based on a person's race, gender or sexual orientation, or any form of hate speech shall be guilty of a disciplinary offence.

Such commitments of intolerance from the institution towards threats to the welfare of its student body is an indication that the university is concerned about the well-being of its students. These policies reveal the institution's clear intentions of dealing with the issue of discrimination effectively in order to ensure a safe and conducive environment for everyone regardless of their sexual orientation.

8.3 Ineffective institutional responses to homophobia

Residence administration plays an important role in how students experience life living in the institution and Thabo's narrative reveals some of the elements that result in the discomfort of homosexual students:

I think it also comes down to res systems because when we got there we were told about racial integration but not about homosexuality. It's not discussed when we have house meetings it's about other issues. I think there is an automatic expectation that people will accept that because we are at Rhodes and because it's a liberal university but it's not the case really. It's a liberal university but it doesn't mean that people are tolerant, or liberal to those issues because that comes down to an individual and people are not tolerant (Thabo).

There is less attention towards addressing issues around sexuality in residences and this can be attributed to the amount of homophobia that homosexual students experience within the

institutional home. Obear (1991:95), for instance, argues that many institutions offer training to staff, faculty and student leaders on sexism and racism but there is little attention focusing on the matters that affect homosexual students. There is a lack of commitment to address issues that affect homosexual students while they attend university. I acknowledge that the observation Obear (1991) makes is about two and half decades old; however, it remains relevant as there is research evidence to point out that not much has changed in the way homosexual students experience life in institutions. Various societal institutions continue to perform practices and norms that privilege heterosexuality and condemn homosexuality on a daily basis (Obear 1991:45, UNESCO 2012:23).

Donaldson (2015:143) argues that homosexual students who are assaulted are less likely to report the cases due to the response from administration that might be unsympathetic and unhelpful (Obear 1991:47; Nelson and Baker 1990), and this can be illustrated by Olwetu's experience below:

I reported it [but it] wasn't really followed up on. Rhodes works with procedure and protocols way too much when it comes to issues like that. I think they need to throw protocol out of the window sometimes just to make us feel safer. [The Warden] said that she would follow it up with the Dean of Students Office or the Harassment Office. There wasn't much communication after that. I did get an email from Larisa saying that we've opened an investigation but there is not much we can do without evidence even a name or student number. For me I feel like if I keep going to the Dean of Students Office with small things which are huge battles for me I will annoy them and nothing is gonna come out you know (Olwetu).

Graziano (2004:280) provides evidence that is consistent with the argument that administration expresses a lack of willingness to assist homosexual students who experience victimisation.

In other cases, there is loss of any hope that homosexual students might have towards the resolving of their grievances by the leadership in their residences:

I don't even have the energy because the leadership in that res is so incompetent. I think the three positions of leadership in that res are just a waste of money to the University. It's like speaking to a brick wall with the head student, speaking to the dead cow when you speaking to the Sub Warden. You never see the Warden and you can't just go straight to your Warden you have to follow the proper channel. They will just give you a smile and say okay and that's it. When [the fight with the roommate] happened, I called the Warden myself because I had reported it to all the House Comm members on several occasions and they kept saying they would speak to the Warden and nothing happened (Mandla).

8.3.1 Effective responses

In some instances, there is effective response by the residence staff in relation to issues involving homophobia. Mandla provides an example of an incident where the residence staff responded in a positive way to homophobia below:

In my first residence, I reported it [incident with roommate] to the Warden who took it through protocol and he [the roommate] was asked to move out of the res and he moved into another res (Mandla).

When residence staff demonstrate such pro-activeness in response to incidents that involve homophobia, it can be said to be encouraging and providing support for gay, lesbians and bisexual students. A prioritisation of issues that affect homosexual students can be said to create a conducive environment for homosexual students in the institutional home.

8.4 Social support

Research indicates that, although diversity is presumed to be celebrated on various university campuses, a difference in sexual orientation is probably the least tolerated and the individuals who display such difference are often exposed to violence and discrimination (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:59). When homosexual students experience hostility, the presence or absence of support is important. Social support has been defined as “metness” or gratification of a person’s social needs, such as approval, esteem and succour that is available in a particular social environment (Kaplan *et al* 1977:50). Glazer (2006) argues that social support includes “structural” and “functional support”. Structural support refers to the mere presence of other people in one’s life and how

relations with those people are organised (Glazer 2006; Sherbourne and Stewart 1991:705). Functional support refers to the supportive actions, tangible and intangible, that are provided by supportive others (Glazer 2006:606). Functional support also refers to the degree to which interpersonal relationships serve particular functions (Sherbourne and Stewart 1991:705). There are two basic components of functional support: instrumental support and emotional support. Instrumental support refers to tangible assistance, such as money, information, and assistance with work, whereas emotional support refers to the provision of esteem and empathy, which are provided through listening and demonstrating compassion (Glazer 2006:606; Gottlieb and Bergen 2010:512). Social support refers to the functions performed for the individual by significant others, such as family members, friends, and co-workers (Funch *et al* 1986:337; Caligiuri and Lazarova 2002). Significant others can provide instrumental, informational, and/or emotional assistance (Thoits 1995:64). Simplified, social support refers to resources provided by others, which are used to cater for one's well-being (Cohen and Syme 1985; Gottlieb and Bergen 2010:512).

Support is also defined by the presence or absence of psychosocial support resource from significant others including family and friends (Kaplan *et al* 1977:50-51). Kaplan *et al* (1977) argue that humans and primates have needs that can only be satisfied through social interaction. Scholars such as Sophie (1982:342) and Levine and Evans (1991:8) also argue that the presence of a positive support network is important for a positive identity for homosexual individuals. This means that the absence of such networks of support can hinder the progress of some homosexual individuals. Troiden (in Cohen and Savin-Williams 1996:144) argues that there are various "facilitating factors" that ease the transition to a non-heterosexual identity for gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals and education and supportive friends and family form part of these important facilitating factors.

Gottlieb and Bergen (2010:512) define a social network as a social structure composed of the individual's social ties and the ties among them. A social network then can be said to comprise family, friends and colleagues, whom Williams and Durrance (2008) define as social network actors. The resources provided by social networks might include social support, emotional support, companionship, time, information and money to mention but a few. Social support is considered a

coping resource, which is a social “fund” from which people may draw when handling stressors (Thoits 1995:64). In the context of this study, social support therefore refers to the various forms of support that gay, lesbian and bisexual students receive from various social actors who may include their partners, family, and friends amongst other individuals or group sources of social support.

While conflicts are not uncommon in any home – even the most comfortable of homes – central to experiencing a space as “home” is the presence or absence of mechanisms of support in times of hardship. It is important, then, to ask what forms of support are available to LGB students in an institutional context which may serve to ameliorate experiences of encountering rejection or hostility. While informal networks typically provide various forms of support, in the context of an institutional commitment to equality and transformation, it is particularly important to examine experiences of ways in which the structures and practices of the institution do or do not provide a supportive environment for those who are sexual minorities.

8.4.1 Partners and friends

Cohen and Syme (1985:7) argue that resources provided by others may redefine and reduce the potential for harm posed by a situation. These resources can include emotional support for individuals who are experiencing certain difficulties. Olwetu for instance described experiencing relief as a result of telling her girlfriend about a homophobic incident “and she was just like don’t worry about that dude people are always gonna do that”. The intimacy of a relationship can provide participants with instrumental support – encouragement, easing trauma, lessening feelings of isolation or anger. Olwetu receives instrumental support from a partner who is willing to listen to her story and comfort her. Her partner’s support can be said to have assisted in easing the trauma and stress often attached to homophobia that homosexual students experience. Sherbourne and Stewart (1991:705) argue that the availability of someone to talk to and share such experiences is important as it can help an individual to cope with encountering negativity and hostility. The support of friends and partners takes the form of affirming that, as Thato puts it, being gay is “okay” which is of great significance in the context of heterosexuality being regarded as the norm.

Significant actors in social networks who have, for one reason or another, developed a sense of confidence about their sexual identity can perform the function of affirming gay identity as acceptable and being valuable role models for demanding acceptance.

I have always had people around me who always said it was okay. As much as there were people who said no, there were people who said it's fine. I identified as a lesbian but when it came to telling people it became such a huge issue. And then I met my girlfriend who just told people she was lesbian and for the life of me I could not understand how that could have happened. She really helped me open up about my sexuality (Thato).

Some of the male participants pointed out that female friends are positive sources of support for gay men who may lack a male support structure outside of the gay community.

Well, most of [the girls I'm friends with] know I am gay. I told them because I'm good friends with them. A majority of the friends I have are girls and they've been fine with it. Some of them are from my Dining Hall and some are from down campus. I chill with them when I'm not up there [in res] The girls have been amazing They are the reason why I stay here at Rhodes really. They are just awesome. I haven't told my straight male friends though [about my sexual orientation]. I don't think I can ever get to a point of telling them because of their comment and their religious beliefs. I don't see myself telling them. If it does happen and they judge me and I feel then we can't be friends I will just stick to my circle of friends who are accepting (Thabo).

Tom went so far as to describe himself as being “a bit afraid of guys” as the explanation for why he sought out mostly female friends and is “more comfortable around girls”. Scholars such as Hinrichs and Rossenberg (2002:68), Arndt and de Bruin (2006:23) and Jenkins *et al* (2009:602) argue that men tend to express more negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians in comparison to women. In addition to this, they argue that men are more likely to engage in homophobic behaviour as a form of self-reaffirmation of their identity and a demonstration of the magnitude of their rejection of homosexuality, which explains why gay male students tend to gravitate towards female friends as compared to male friends. Arndt and de Bruin (2006:23) further

suggest that women might display more empathy for the social status of homosexual individuals because of women's greater care-giving roles as well as their subjective experiences of sexism hence female friends can be seen as more accepting and therefore performing valuable support roles in gay men's lives.

Research suggests that family is one of the key entities that provides "structural support" to individuals (Glazer 2006). While some participants reported having family support many had either not revealed their sexuality to their families or had experienced rejection of their sexual identity from members of their family. Cohen and Savin-Williams (1996:136) argue that a lack of support from family can contribute to individuals struggling with issues associated with sexual identity. Students therefore bring to campus with them diverse prior experiences which place them in different positions regarding their ability to feel confident about expressing their identity. Evans and Broido (1999:659) report that individuals who receive support and acceptance from others including family members are likely to be open about their sexual orientation once they arrive at university.

I grew up in a very loving home and I came out to my parents when I was sixteen and they never made me feel any less for being gay. My family didn't treat [my homosexuality] like a big deal. When I came out to my dad he said okay that's cool it's not like your brother has to tell me he's straight. It was the best thing hearing my dad say that to me. I don't know how to put it in words but it was just [great hearing him say that]. I have a strong support system around me, it's just great and I'm lucky (Olwetu).

Research indicates that parental acceptance has been related to feeling comfortable with being gay and confers confidence in the enactment of one's identity (Cohen and Savin-Williams 1996:136). Those, like Anele, who have had the benefit of the acceptance of significant family members, even if not parents, come to university with higher self-esteem and more comfortable to be who they are when they arrive at university:

My aunt is the first person who motivated me to be who I am. She would tell me every day that I'm absolutely beautiful the way I am and that I shouldn't try and change myself to try and suit society. I've been very lucky in that regard because if I had stayed at home I don't think I would've turned out the way that I am. I would probably have gotten very suicidal as well because my mom would have none of it [her lesbianism] (Anele).

Approval and acceptance from family members prior to arriving at university are a resource that people like Anele are able to draw from when having to negotiate their entry into the higher education environment. Family support influences how LGB students experience life in the residence system of the university and how they are able to negotiate new relationships and experiences. A lack of support can lead to isolation and loneliness, which some individuals cope with by forming new bonds with friends who come to be seen as a form of "family" (Nardi 1992). Scholars such as Weston (1991:116) argue that, for some homosexual individuals, friends become families, substituting for blood relatives who regard being gay as unacceptable. In research conducted by D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) three quarters of the participants had first disclosed their sexual orientation to friends before their families. Rubin (in Nardi 1992:109) points to the important role that friends play in the reinforcement and shaping of self by providing a point of reference outside of families that individuals can use to measure and judge themselves.

I had a roommate who was openly gay so it became easier to just be like her. I never had some existential crisis about my sexual orientation because I had support from my friends. And even if I were to have a breakdown, I knew there were people around me who understood (Mpho).

I have found a good group of friends and that's wonderful. They have actually been one of the best support systems I've had here (Tom).

They [his friends] are definitely a social support for me. It's just nice to be with people and not isolating yourself (Siyabonga).

I only have one friend who lives off-campus. We literally tell each other everything, we support each other financially and emotionally it's that kind of

friendship. I can call her at two in the morning and tell her, “I need you now” and she will literally walk to my res. I have never gone into a panic state because of the support system that I have in her (Mandla).

For participants like Mpho, Tom, Siyabonga, Mandla and Kudzai (below), friends are a source of emotional support which in turn, as Kudzai comments, shapes how one experiences the institutional environment that one finds oneself in.

My gay friends [in res] have really helped a lot. And one of the things that you can very easily underestimate is how much your friends can influence you. Your friends actually influence your experiences. I actually have a close network of gay friends who are always around me. My second year was a huge turning point because that’s when I had more gay friends. It just so happened that my best friend moved into this res and then there were two other gay guys here and we’re all different but we are also on the same journey because we are all out. So the atmosphere just became very friendly (Kudzai).

Kudzai’s comments suggest that, rather than being able to point to an institutional culture that is or is not gay-friendly, how someone experiences the institutional culture depends to some extent on having supportive social networks that make it possible to experience the “atmosphere” as “friendly”. Having gay friends in one’s residence can assist one in feeling comfortable in the institutional home because of the presence of others who share a similar identity. This in a way can be said to prevent the development of a sense of alienation in some homosexual students. The presence of individuals one can relate to and get along with can be pointed out as having a positive impact on Kudzai’s sense of self and his performance of his sexual identity because he is surrounded by other individuals who are likely to face the same struggles as him. The question from an institutional point of view then becomes one of what the institution might do to facilitate such positive experiences, so that whether or not a person comes to be inserted into such a network where one is “looked after” is not left to chance or luck as Heather suggests:

Lucky enough I have made amazing friends who are also cool. Our friendship group is basically like a family. I know I’m surrounded by people who will look

after me and people who will look out for me. Obviously I've got a roof over my head, a door that locks but it kind of comes down to the people more than the actual structural safety. I've got a roof over my head, there is enough food, all those basic needs are met but then also the people make it just that one step better. Because they offer a support system for someone to talk to. They are like family (Heather).

Thoits (1995:64) argues that people can experience what is called "perceived social support", which refers to the beliefs that love, caring, sympathy and understanding are available from significant others. He argues that this perception or belief that emotional support is available has a strong influence on an individual's mental health (Thoits 1995:64; Sherbourne and Stewart 1991:706; Newland and Furnham 1999:660). Heather's remarks point to a critical feature of "home" which is that it is more than a physical structure within which basic needs are met.

The instrumental and emotional support that individuals receive from friends helps to ameliorate the social exclusion and isolation that is a well-documented feature of homosexual students' experience at schools and universities (Cohen and Savin-Williams 1996:184-185). Belonging to a social group helps individuals to feel that they are not the "only one" dealing with the issues at hand (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:60). This can result in the development of a sense of universality amongst homosexual students as they begin to understand that there are others on the same journey as themselves (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:60). There is evidence in literature that some gay, lesbian and bisexual college students lose friends upon disclosure of sexual orientation because those friends struggle to realign their views of their heterosexual friends to gay, lesbian and bisexual (Evans and D'Augelli 1996:211).

When I was ready to come out as gay, I had to make sure I had the right group of friends that supported me until I was strong because one has to understand that if you do come out as gay you need some people to stand by you. They were very strong and supportive. [My friends and I] got to a point where we became open about everything and for me that was a great space [to be]. Even if I had a rough day, I would go back to tell them that this is what happened and we would laugh about it. They created an environment for me that I could come back and debrief them everything when I felt I wasn't coping (Lungile).

Another participant Sbusiso shares the same sentiment about the importance his friends hold in his life while studying at Rhodes in the following extract:

Most of the time my friends are there and if I need anything they are always there. If I didn't have that support structure I don't think it would have been easier and I think it's the calibre of friends that I have. I think you have some friends that are just about fun and you have your friends whom you discuss future plans with. You discuss problems and those are the people that you can trust. If you have that support structure you can move on with life (Sbusiso).

The fulfilment of emotional needs can be seen as a factor that sets friendships as very important for homosexual students. The presence of either individuals or groups of people that offer support to homosexual individuals plays a major role in their development.

Flowers and Buston (2001:52) argue that the presence of other identifiable minority group members helps in providing protection from minority stress. Smith and Ingram (2004:57) define "minority stress" as the stress that is experienced by individuals who are members of a minority group that is marginalised and oppressed. It can result from alienation, the internalisation of negative societal evaluations and negative sexual orientation-related life events (Smith and Ingram 2004:57). This means that gay friendship circles become critically important for these individuals, and it is with regard to creating a space for the emergence of these networks and their availability and accessibility to those who may benefit from the resources they provide, that the institution might play a valuable role. While peers are important, as Olwetu points out being accepted by those who are identified with the institution is of critical importance, suggesting that staff members have a significant leadership role to play in providing the structural support which is essential to making the institution a home for all.

I really have good friends and a good support system. My male friends treat me as one of the boys if anything I'm really safe with them. The one thing I really

feel good about is seeing a few of the staff who belong to the LGBT community which is really cool. It makes me feel like I'm at home My lecturer you know. It takes away the shame (Olwetu).

In addition to the presence of role models in leadership positions, Dietz and Dettlaff (1997) argue that support organisations can also provide role models in the form of other group members who have struggled and succeeded in resolving issues related to their sexual identity. By sharing their experiences, the members can instil hope in other homosexual students to face and survive life challenges. In contrast a lack of such organisations accentuates the isolation that results from a lack of visibility for gay, lesbian and bisexual students (Dietz and Dettlaff, 1997:63).

8.5 Structural support

8.5.1 Residence staff

The support that exists in some residences can be said to ease the pressure of living in a heterosexual community.

I don't see how else I would have been myself outside of res. There was just a safety net there. They told us about Counsellors. They told us we could go to the Warden and that we could communicate with our head students. The House Comm also encouraged us to talk to the senior students if we had any problems. It was just like a family system. It really was a family system. You had your siblings who were younger than yourself, siblings the same age as you and the cousins who were older than you. You had the parent in the House Warden. It's like the pseudo-family structure. And it just worked. I don't see it working elsewhere in terms of if I were out of res. I don't see myself having the same support structure or an organised support structure because if you are outside of res you have to go out and look for it (Mpho).

Residence staff play an important role in how homosexual students experience life within the institution. Participants expressed the importance of living in residences where staff members such as Wardens and Sub-Wardens recognised and catered for their various needs as homosexual students.

The Sub-Wardens and the Warden are very clear at the beginning of the year when first years arrive. They are given the talk and the house rules and the residence's expectations from them. But you know the things that people actually do in reality and the way they act with you is different. I found that my experience every year is actually significantly different and it just depends on the people I'm around and the kind of culture that is cultivated in that year (Kudzai).

Our Warden is very supportive because he doesn't allow people to say anything homophobic and he encourages us to report it when we have any incidents when we feel like we've been attacked (Lundi).

The residence staff help to create an environment that is accommodating to homosexual students and this can be important in ensuring that homosexual students experience the institutional home in a positive way.

I think of all the people who have helped me get past [my challenges with my sexual orientation] is my Sub-Warden. She has really helped me out a lot. That's why I always say res does feel like home at times. I think it's because I have such a close relationship with her in particular and as much as she's straight she understands me and at a level that not many people have ever understood me. Being able to go into a room and know that I will not be judged and that it's alright to feel whichever way and I know that if I need my ass to be kicked or someone to tell me that you are fucking up then she will be there to do that for me (Thato).

8.5.2 Support groups

According to Dietz and Dettlaff (1997:59), group theory suggests that a support group helps meet the needs of a specific population by permitting members to share their experiences, learn from each other, offering suggestions to new members, and provide support and encouragement to those who are struggling with difficult issues. Evans and D'Augelli (1996) argue that campus organisations that cater for gay, lesbian and bisexual students play an extremely important role in determining how homosexual students experience the institutional environment. They argue that involvement with such organisations opens up new opportunities for homosexual students to increase their friendship networks and gain access to valuable sources of support (Evans and D'Augelli 1996:212). According to their work, such organisations:

. . . anchor the youth's identity in a social matrix that teaches the youth about what it means to be lesbian, gay or bisexual in a particular setting, and they provide support when high school or college friends or parents are ambivalent or rejecting.

A support group serves as a mutual aid system in which individuals help each other by sharing their common experiences (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:59; Kane 2013). One such organisation that exists in the context of the present study is OUTRhodes. OUTRhodes is a campus society that celebrates the sexual orientation of all students, with a specific focus on the issues of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gendered students. Organisations like OUTRhodes have the potential to fulfil both emotional and instrumental support functions in LGBT students' lives. With regard to the former, the society seeks to provide an environment that is comfortable, supportive and fun for all students. In relation to the latter, function support is provided in the form of counselling facilities and support groups for students who might be struggling with issues related to their sexual orientation as well as the provision of information about issues affecting LGBT people. The organisation also aims to raise awareness about LGBT and other social justice issues and works to create safe and affirming social spaces for LGBT students both on campus and in the surrounding town. Another function that the society fulfils is an educative one: to educate those students who have prejudices against homosexuals, bisexuals and trans-gendered people and in this way to endeavour to ensure that the university environment is one where all students can be proud of who

they are (OUTRhodes 2010). Several participants in the present study referred to the role that OUTRhodes played in helping them to resolve their concerns about their identity.

I think there is a strong LGBT community here at Rhodes. We have OUTRhodes society which is going pretty strong. Rhodes also has several policies in place to ensure that discrimination is if not completely eradicated at least minimised. It doesn't take long to realise that Rhodes is a completely different space from home because the gay community here is very strong. It's a very supportive space especially for the first years. It's their first time coming out publicly. So they have a lot of support meetings. They share their own coming out stories and they try to create a safe space so I think that's really important (Josh).

Support groups can also facilitate a learning environment for homosexual students about issues relating to homosexuality in contexts where a person may have had few prior opportunities to openly ask questions related to their sexuality. Great emphasis is placed on sexuality education in South Africa but research shows that this education seldom incorporates an explicit acknowledgement of gay sexuality. As Quinlivan and Town (1999:515) point out, most of the information and educational material on sexuality provided to students takes for granted the idea that sex is always potentially reproductive, for instance focusing on avoiding pregnancy or what to do in the event of an unintended pregnancy. This serves (even if inadvertently) to reinforce the sense of homosexuality as being abnormal. For those who identify as LGBT, the educational function of support groups can play a significant role in the provision of instrumental support.

I have been to several sex talk discussions and the only inclusive talk I have been to was the one that OUTRhodes organised at one of their koffie kroeg. It was the most inclusive sex talk I've ever been to and I thought everyone of every sexual orientation should have a sex talk like that, 'cause literally every sex life under the sun . . . how to do it safely and not get diseases and if applicable pregnancy was discussed and I was very happy about it. There were so many people who should have been there and I just wish all sex talks were like that because people don't cover things like oral sex in safe sex talks which is probably something that ninety percent of couples do no matter what their sexual orientation is. And even simple things like that should be covered more no matter what you do and I think that should be the basis of every sex talk (Heather).

The physical sense of safety in numbers that is provided by support groups is another instance of what Glazer (2006) refers to as “instrumental” support. Olwetu, for example, recalled an instance in which she had been attacked and commented on how “this changed everything” and caused her to “gravitate towards OUTRhodes ’cause I felt like I needed to be with other people like me to be safe”. In addition to the simple fact of it being “‘nice’ to be around everyone who is like me”. For those whose sexual preference turns them into a minority, for those who lack the support and acknowledgement of their families to turn to in the normal way that a person who had faced victimisation would tend to do, as D’Augelli *et al* (1998:369) argue, support groups are a vital source of instrumental support.

Organisations like OUTRhodes therefore potentially offer members both structural and instrumental forms of support that is needed in order to develop a strong identity and view oneself in a positive light (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997). Some participants, however, pointed to a need for more instrumental forms of support that go beyond merely being surrounded by similar people and having the opportunity to interact socially.

When I first signed up I asked them [OUTRhodes] what their goals were and what they did and they said to me we have a lot of discussions. I’m all for discussions it’s nice to find out about what people think but there is only so much discussing can do. I said to myself I don’t want to join a society where it’s all about partying and that’s been great ’cause they’ve had like one party . . . that’s been good. I would like a little bit more from them rather than these koffie kroegs. Because I also think that those koffie kroegs are more of a social where people sit and get to know each other but what are we doing as a group, what’s the way forward? (Lebo).

Moreover, as Kudzai’s comments highlight, the mere fact that an organisation is made up of gay people does not in itself make it a space of equality removed from wider inequities and prejudices. As he puts it, a gay community can also be “very mean” and constituted of cliques and in-groups that serve to exclude, which means that not even a gay society is a “home for all” gay people.

Rhodes in my first year had a very mean gay community. And we actually didn't like OUTFRhodes. When I got here and heard that there was OUTFRhodes my friends as I wanted to join but decided against it because of the kind of people who were there. We used to avoid OUTFRhodes as much as possible because there were others who thought that they were better than everyone else. We did get people being very mean and horrible towards us in first year. The senior students who were here especially in the dining hall used to sit in different places from us and they used to stare down at us and when we went out partying it was the same thing you know, people would form various small cliques. That was my experience in first and second year (Kudzai).

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how LGB students negotiate their position in their various residences across campus at Rhodes. The home is a place where the people are familiar, where strangers are kept out, but in some instances people experience strangeness within the home. Gay, lesbian and bisexual students experience the Rhodes home as a site of marginalisation and exclusion, as argued by Gorman-Murray (2007:231). The various mechanisms discussed in this chapter indicate that homosexual students challenge their exclusion within the institution in various different ways as a means to counter the marginalisation they experience from their heterosexual peers. The need to maintain privacy over their personal affairs is one of the push factors that encourages students to distance themselves from others they share the home with because of the unpleasant experiences that result from these encounters, which creates a sense of discomfort for some of these students. These various strategies used by these individuals can be seen as efforts to maintain their identity in order to lead "normal" lives within an environment that can be experienced as exclusionary by sexual minorities. This chapter also highlights the importance of support structures that exist in the institutional home for LGB students and the various forms of support that those groups provide for them in order to deal with the challenges they face.

9 Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The call for transforming higher education institutions in South Africa embedded in the White Paper (1997) and the Soudien Report (2008) indicates that there is need for immediate response from institutions to transform their spaces in order to promote a sense of belonging and comfort for various individuals who come into contact with these institutions. Findings from the Soudien Report (2008) indicate that institutions of higher education in South Africa are characterised by structural discrimination that discourages other members enrolled at universities from experiencing the institution as an inclusive space where everyone has a sense of being welcomed. Instead, they produce moments whereby discrimination, alienation and marginalisation are experienced by those who do not fit into the institutional culture (s) that exists at university. This study reinforces the idea that there is need for institutions such as Rhodes University in the post-Apartheid state to address the issues of institutional transformation along the lines of sexuality in order to create a conducive environment that caters for all its student population.

Steyn and van Zyl (2001:9) define institutional culture as “the prevailing ethos – the deep-rooted sets of norms, assumptions and values that predominate and pervade most of the environment on a day to day basis”. This definition of institutional culture reveals how transforming institutional cultures can be difficult because, over time, certain practices become normative and deeply rooted in day-to-day experiences, to the extent that they cannot be easily uprooted or transformed in order to create a much more inclusive environment for those marginalised through institutional practices and norms. Schein (2010:14) presents the realities attached to attempts at transforming the culture of an institution by arguing that it is difficult to change culture because group members value the stability that comes with particular cultures and also because it provides predictability and meaning. Rhodes University expresses a dominant heteronormative culture that (re) produces and reinforces practices that systematically exclude and marginalise those who belong in the sexual minority. Participants in this study express how the institutional home and its various actors continue to perform social practices that perpetuate and entrench a dominant heteronormative culture.

This heteronormative culture is responsible for the alienation, marginalisation and silencing, as well as the victimisation of students within the institution who self-identify as homosexual. Social norms entrenched in gendered notions around dressing, for instance, continue to be performed, which create pressure for some homosexual students to conform to a heterosexual ordering of the institutional home or risk being located at the peripheries of the social circle by their heterosexual peers. This perverse culture silences any other identities that do not fit in with the dominant identities which become normative over a long period of time. This silencing reinforces the idea of the lack of acknowledgement of the existence of homosexual students in the institutional home, which poses various negative outcomes for them in various residences at Rhodes University. This results in the experiencing of the institutional home as an uncomfortable place characterised by marginalisation and exclusion for some gay, lesbian and bisexual students because of their sexual orientation. The feelings of exclusion and marginality are encountered through moments of social interactions with other students in various residences across campus. These negative encounters highlight how the residence spaces homosexual students identify as home during their time while studying at Rhodes University become the sites of conflict, ill-treatment and exclusion on the basis of sexual identity.

Various scholars (D'Augelli 1992; Schellenberg *et al* 1999; Evans and Broido 1999; Woodford *et al* a and b 2012; Beemyn and Rankin 2011) provide evidence that homosexual students in institutions of higher education experience a hostile and unaccommodating environment because of their sexual orientation. There is evidence that a culture of violence based on sexual orientation, which sees homosexual students being harassed and experiencing various forms of homophobia from their heterosexual colleagues, is prevalent in universities on many institutional campuses across the globe and that South African institutions of higher education such as Rhodes University are not immune to this culture of violence. It is this perverse culture of violence that results in fear and negative psychological impact in some homosexual students to the extent that they embark on concealing their sexual identity as a mechanism to protect themselves from the violence that is attached to the realisation that one is homosexual.

Taking the narratives of 18 students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual and who have experienced living in various residences at Rhodes University, I provide an account of how some homosexual students experience various challenges around exclusion, marginality and harassment based on their sexual orientation when they live in institutional environments that are largely heteronormative in nature. I demonstrate how the institutional home and the element of “at homeness” can be experienced on three distinct levels namely: personal, social relational and physical.

This study has reflected elements that speak to the contesting schools of thought on how “home” has been theorised. The narratives in this study provide reflections of home as a place of enchantment as well as a place of disenchantment that Thaver (2006) points out in his work. While many homosexual students narrate experiencing various forms of negativity and hostility from their peers in the institutional home, others experience the institutional home at Rhodes University as a liberating space where they can perform their identity in a much more open way, which in turn promotes psychological growth due to the liberal sense they experience in the institutional home. For some, this institution represents a positive space away from their restrictive family homes and hostile communities that enables them to be comfortable enough to form and establish intimate relationships during the duration of their studies at this university.

Evidence from this study also suggests that Rhodes University is a positive space for some homosexual students as they are able to establish support networks through societies such as OUTRhodes, which improves some of their social experiences in the institutional home. Literature suggests that support groups for LGB students can aid in the establishment of a sense of universality – the feeling that one is not alone, which is important for identity development (Dietz and Dettlaff 1997:60). Bowen and Bourgeois (2001) have argued that contact with a gay community can be a stepping stone in the establishment of social and emotional development for homosexual students. The social bonds and networks that some homosexual students create with other students in their residences and within the institution provide various forms of support that they need while at Rhodes University, which is important in the moments that discomfort arises from interactions with others. The idea of the institutional home being a positive space speaks to

how home has been theorised as a positive space where identity development and security form the core of that environment, as scholars such as Smith (1994); Cristoforetti *et al* (2011) and Vice (2015) point out.

However, some homosexual students struggle to experience privacy over their intimate relations in residences, which is an integral element in the experience of home as a pleasant and positive environment for individuals (Pedersen 1997:147; Allen 1988:36). Scholars such as Gorman-Murray (2007:230) and Mallet (2004:71) argue that the control of access to oneself in the home encourages individuals to experience home in a positive light where security exists, and this allows for individuals to express and perform their identities in a much more open and free manner (Wardhaugh 1999:105; Young 2005:26; Gorman-Murray 2007:239). The lack of control of access to oneself creates an environment where individuals are not satisfied in the fulfilment of this need for privacy (Schoeman 1984:3; Altman 1977). There is evidence from this study which indicates that some homosexual students experience policing and various forms of surveillance from their heterosexual peers. This form of surveillance, expressed mainly towards homosexual students and their intimate relations and love life, infringes on their rights to control access to themselves as autonomous individuals entitled to lead their lives as they wish, which most heterosexual students have the privilege of experiencing.

The arguments presented in this thesis validate the fact that home is not experienced the same by everyone as it can become a place of violence and exclusion, as theorised by scholars such as George (1996); Price (2002); Dekkers (2009) and Cresswell (2009). Narratives presented in this thesis provide insight into how the home is a contested space where power relations exist that marginalise and disadvantage others. The violence and exclusion experienced by some homosexual students at Rhodes University, which emanates from social interaction with heterosexual students, produces various forms of marginalisation and exclusion towards homosexual students because of their sexuality and results in challenges that affect their social and academic well-being at Rhodes University. The exclusion and discrimination which is commonly produced through aspects that are usually taken-for-granted by their heterosexual colleagues are

communicated through language, for instance during interactions in spaces such as dining hall tables, residence common rooms and bathrooms, which has been pointed out as contributing towards the large amount of socio-psychological marginalisation and alienation that some LGB students experience in residences at Rhodes University. It has been demonstrated through this work that it is in moments of social interactions that most homosexual students develop and experience a sense of alienation, exclusion and invisibility from their heterosexual mates, and such moments inform how they understand and experience their day-to-day life in the institutional home, whether in a positive or negative light.

Scholars such as Bowlby *et al* (1997:343) and Sibley (1995:95) have argued that the home can become the site of exclusion for non-conforming members. As evidenced in earlier sections in this work, there is a systematic exclusion of the “Other” who is viewed as deviant because of their failure to abide by the rules that govern social expectations and social norms (Wardhaugh, 1999). Even though exclusion and rejection might take place, the excluded individuals do not cease to exist as they remain visible in the home and continue to pose a threat in the purified space that they are excluded from by others (Wardhaugh, 1999:97). As a result, the home can become a place of conflict because of the presence of individuals who are considered as breaching the acceptable social behaviour within that space (Sibley 1995:95).

There is evidence in literature that suggests that individuals who face exclusion are identified as strangers (see for instance Sandercock, 2000; Shack 1979; Phelan, 2001; McLemore, 1970; Simmel, 1950; Kearney, 2003). “Strangers” have been defined in different ways in the literature, for example, Sandercock (2000:22) defines strangers as those individuals who should be excluded according to the stereotypes of social order. Various terms such as “outsiders”, “intruders”, “aliens”, “foreigners” and “Other” have been used as labels to mark individuals or groups of people who are placed on the margins of society due to reasons that may include custom, language or even social role (Shack 1979:1). Strangers occupy an ambiguous position that lacks clarity because they are neither friends nor enemies (Bauman 1990:143). Their ambiguity of “they look like us” but aren’t is more threatening than simply their difference (Phelan 2001:116). Phelan (2001:30) argues that what intensifies sexual minorities’ status as strangers is the fact that homosexuals do

not constitute a population that has fixed territories or a unified national, ethnic or racial history that distinguishes them from their neighbours; they live and exist amidst their heterosexual families and communities and are just like everyone else around them. Shane Phelan (2001:19) also points out that, unlike women and people classified as racial minorities, sexual minorities have varying abilities to conceal or leave their differences “suppressed or uncertain”, which most people in the heterosexual community prefer they remain.

There are suggestions in the literature that communities respond and react in various ways towards those categorised as “strangers” (Shack 1979:7). The attitudes range from friendliness to ambivalence, fear or antagonism (Shack 1979:7). In other instances, actions such as outright ostracism, set to keep the stranger on the outside, are performed by the majority (see Kearney 2003:26; Williams and Zadro 2001). What results from this exclusion is what scholars such as MacDonald and Leary (2005:205) have theorised as social pain, which is defined as a specific emotional reaction towards the perception that one is being excluded from desired relationships, or being devalued by desired relationship partners or groups (MacDonald *et al* 2005:78). As a result of this, the stranger can use various strategies in response to exclusion and rejection (Phelan 2001:31). Yep (2003:19) argues that people who live under the heteronormative regime need to learn to either conform, ignore or banish their suffering as a means of survival. Allport (1954) argues that marginalised social groups adopt various coping mechanisms to deal with the exclusion they experience from others within society. He identifies two distinct forms of coping mechanisms namely “extropunitive defenses” directed at the source of discrimination and “intropunitive defenses”, which refer to inward response by individuals (Allport 1954:138-158). For some, withdrawing contact with friends and residence mates due to the strained nature of relationships produced through homophobic acts becomes an “extropunitive defense” mechanism used to deal with the pain. For others, transferring residences for security reasons due to threats on their physical and psychological security becomes a practical solution to the challenges attached to living amongst individuals who are homophobic. Another strategy is choosing to live in denial as an “intropunitive defense” mechanism used to deal with the hostile experiences. All these forms of coping mechanism speak to one idea of efforts made by homosexual students to create room and a comfortable place for themselves as marginalised individuals.

There is evidence from this study which indicates that the institutional home at Rhodes University is experienced as both a positive and negative space by some homosexual students. The study demonstrates how pleasant moments of security and freedom are experienced in the institutional home by some homosexual students. Enrolling at Rhodes University provides for most homosexual students their first opportunity to perform their identity away from the criticism of family members and friends alike. The remote location of the institution itself presents an advantageous geographical element and a sense of security for some gay students. However, for others, the positive elements are short lived as most homosexual students experience a sense of “sexual geography” which requires them to constantly assess and recognise spaces and places that are secure to perform their identities. The idea of “sexual geography” speaks to the nature of hostility and unreceptiveness that societies and communities demonstrate towards homosexuals. This study has highlighted how, even within the institutional home, some homosexual students have to become “sexual geographers” in order to ensure their security. In comparison to their heterosexual peers, homosexual students face an immense challenge in the expression of their identity on a daily basis because of the constant need to look out for moments that could potentially result in them being harmed. Heterosexual students at Rhodes University have the privilege of not experiencing constant fear and a sense of insecurity on a daily basis because their sexual orientation is considered as normative (Seidman 2010:43).

On the basis of the above argument, it becomes pertinent to argue that the claim that Rhodes University is “a home for all” cannot be fully validated when one takes into consideration the various forms which homophobia takes on this institutional campus. There is a systematic exclusion of those who self-identify as homosexual in overt and subliminal forms, which results in homosexual students experiencing less pleasant moments in the institutional home in comparison to their heterosexual colleagues in residences who have the privilege to not experience exclusion on the basis of their sexual orientation.

To put it in Shane Phelan (2001)'s words, homosexual students living in residences at Rhodes University are "sexual strangers" whose identity and rights constantly come under attack, scrutiny and surveillance from their heterosexual colleagues. Such negative experiences compromise on their experiences of a positive institutional experience that is inclusive and welcoming to all students regardless of their sexual orientation. The narratives from the participants in this study validate the argument that universities and institutions of higher education do not exist in vacuums but that they mirror the socio-political and economic contexts of the societies they are located in. Rhodes University residences reflect the violent, hostile and non-receptive environment that exists for homosexual individuals, which is reflected in the broader context in South Africa.

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11 APPENDIX A: EMAIL REQUESTING FOR PARTICIPANTS SENT TO OUTRHODES

From: Chipo Munyuki

To: OUTRhodes Society Members.

Subject: Request for participants for a Masters Research project.

Dear OUTRhodes Society

My name is Chipo Munyuki. I am a Masters Student under Professor Vincent's supervision in the Political and International Studies Department.

I am writing this email to request for assistance with my research project from members of your society who might be keen to participate in my research.

The aim of my research is to investigate the experiences of Rhodes University students who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual and any other alternative sexuality that is not heterosexual from the perspective of the idea of feeling "at home". I am particularly interested in my participants' experiences of residence life at Rhodes.

I am simply interested in hearing your stories that might tell me something about moments and times when, where and how you have or have not felt "at home" at Rhodes – and what feeling "at home" means to them. I would like to conduct one hour long interviews with any members who might be keen to take part in this research. I would like to assure you in advance that I will adhere to the strictest confidentiality procedures. All data will be anonymised and no participants' identity will be communicated to anyone.

I look forward to your response and hope you will be able to participate in my research.

Warm Regards,

Chipo Munyuki.

12 APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO STUDENTS RECOMMENDED BY OTHER PARTICIPANTS

From: Chipo Munyuki

To: Recommended participants

Subject: Request for participation in research study.

Dear [Student]

My name is Chipo Munyuki. I am a Masters Student under Professor Vincent's supervision in the Political and International Studies Department. I was introduced to you by XX who gave me your contact details and suggested I email you to inform you about my project which XX suggested you might be interested in taking part in.

The aim of my research is to investigate the experiences of Rhodes University students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual from the perspective of the idea of feeling "at home". I am particularly interested in my participants' experiences of residence life at Rhodes.

I am simply interested in hearing your stories that might tell me something about moments and times when, where and how you have or have not felt "at home" at Rhodes – and what feeling "at home" means to you. I would like to conduct an hour long interview with you and would want to know your schedule so that we can arrange a meeting time and venue for the interview if you are interested in taking part in this project.

I look forward to your response and hope you will be able to participate in the research.

Warm Regards,

Chipo Munyuki.

13 APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Agreement between Chipo Munyuki (researcher) and

(participant)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. This document serves to inform you about the purpose of the research and what you might expect from me regarding ethical practice. Please feel free to ask me any further questions you may have before signing this consent form.

The former Vice Chancellor of Rhodes Dr. Saleem Badat has often reiterated in his speeches that Rhodes University is a home for all. This implies that everyone at this institution should feel a sense of belonging regardless of factors such as their sex, race or sexual orientation. The aim of my research is to investigate the experiences of Rhodes University students who self-identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual from the perspective of this idea of feeling ‘at home’. I am particularly interested in my participants’ experiences of residence life at Rhodes.

This research will form the basis of my Master’s thesis which is being written under the supervision of Professor Louise Vincent. I am simply interested in hearing your stories that might tell me something about moments and times when, where and how you have or have not felt “at home” at Rhodes – and what feeling “at home” means to you. In addition to writing a thesis I hope to publish aspects of my results in the form of an academic journal article. I will strictly preserve the anonymity of my participants by employing pseudonyms and removing any personal information from transcripts that might in some way identify a participant. I undertake to treat your stories with respect and confidentiality during the process of transcription, analysis and storage of my data. Participation in my research is of course entirely voluntary and if at any stage you wish to withdraw your consent for some reason you are fully entitled to do so.

If at any stage after the interview you wish to contact me, my number is 0761702415 (cell phone) or chipo4m@gmail.com (email). You are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Prof Louise Vincent on l.vincent@ru.ac.za.

I _____agree to be interviewed by Chipo Munyuki concerning my experiences of being ‘at home’ at Rhodes University.

I understand that:

1. The research is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Master’s degree at Rhodes University.
2. In addition to a thesis, aspects of the study may be published in the form of an academic article.
3. My participation will involve being interviewed at my convenience for a duration of about one hour per interview.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time should I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date):

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

14 APPENDIX D: NODES

Attributes
Essential Qualities of Home
Understandings of home
Home as a physical space
Bathroom encounters
Characteristics of Rhodes University
Reality of diversity
Personalization of space
Relations and conversations in the Dining Hall
Residence size influential in relations
Security
Lack of security
Residence as a safety net
Security
Sense of security context specific
Student impressions of Rhodes
Home as a set of social relationships
Body Politics
Issue of dressing
Issue of strangeness
The body
Comfort and Discomfort
Acceptance
Challenges
Comfort
Comfort in the alternative spaces away from Rhodes
Discomfort
Hardships
Judgemental
Lack of acceptance
Lack of understanding
Open-minded
Place of growth
Sense of community
Unwelcomed
welcoming
Heteronormativity
Different treatment
Distancing mechanisms
Dominant Heteronormative Culture
Loneliness
Misconceptions, Stereotypes and Media's Portrayal of LGBT people
Media's influence on portrayal of LGBT people and their love life

Misconceptions
Stereotypes
Pressure to conform
Reactions of heterosexuals
Religious beliefs
Responses of heterosexual people
Serenades
Homophobia at Rhodes
Accepting mistreatment
Denial
Effective response by administration
Fear
Fear of being labelled as homosexual
Fear of isolation
Fear of losing friends
Fear of making relationship public
Fear of people's response
Fear of rejection
Homophobia
Inadequate support
Ineffective leadership in Res
Lack of response from Administration
Language as a tool for homophobia
Name calling
Less attention towards addressing issues around sexuality in res
Rationalizing homophobia
Silencing of the minority
Support structures
Close family members
Females as positive figures
Friends
Friendship
Girlfriend or Boyfriend
Institutional Support
OUTRhodes
Relations with other gay students
Residence support
Sub-wardens
Home as personal
Feelings and Emotions
Negotiating strangeness
Assertiveness
Coping mechanisms
Determination
Exclusion

Cliques and exclusive social circles
Ostracism
Looking out for one' self
Resistance
Challenging heteronormativity
Resisting conformity
Standing up for one'self
Privacy and Refuge
Alternative sources to create privacy
Desirability for privacy around relationships and intimacy
Intrusive questions
Lack of Privacy
Policing each other
Sexual Identity
Consciousness about sexual orientation
Dating
Complications with dating
Lack of acknowledgement and respect for homosexuality and homosexual relationships
Public Display of Affection
Temptations in Res
Yearning for recognition and acceptance
Identity
Openess about sexuality issues
Questioning oneself about sexual identity
Satisfaction with one's identity