



**Understanding teachers' construction of transgender identity:
Perspectives from primary school teachers in Amanzimtoti within
KwaZulu- Natal.**

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

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August 2021

SUPERVISORS DECLARATION

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

Signed:  _____

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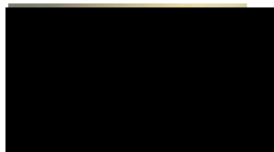
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ABSTRACT

A dearth of research of primary school teachers' knowledge of transgender people in South African education led to this research. The experiences of transgender people in South African society are not well documented although evidence of inequalities based on sexual orientation exist. The research design involved individual interviews (using a photo elicitation method) with teachers in a working-class suburban context. Two research questions underpinned the study. Firstly, the study sought to examine the meanings that primary school teachers make of transgender identities and secondly, the processes through which such perceptions and understandings were made. Data analysis was influenced by thematic analysis which structured the research findings. The findings from the data analysis displayed the intersection of primary school teachers' construction of gender identities with that of the gender binary, compulsory heteronormativity, age, and power dynamics in relation to sex, sexuality, culture, and religion.

The research findings indicated limited knowledge of the term transgender as well as the meaning that individuals who identify as such attach to it. Further, teachers viewed sex and gender as one and the same, attributing this notion to male-female differences, thus further perpetuating the outdated theory of essentialism and naturalism. Coupled with the failure of the national sex and sexuality curriculum (Life Orientation and Life Skills) and teachers' reluctance to effectively teach learners about sex, gender, and sexuality education, tended to create a schooling culture that was intolerant and harmful to learners who were gender non-conforming.

The dissertation concludes with recommendations aimed at addressing transgender in South African schools through processes and interventions that ensure that teachers and learners, obtain greater understanding and acceptance of transgender learners and individuals. This can promote an inclusive and more all-encompassing learning environment and school culture that is accepting, tolerant, and non-discriminatory towards learners based on their gender and sexuality.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Abstract

“Mr. Cates, please come to the office. Mr. Cates, please come to the office.” Upon hearing my name over the intercom, I made my way to the main office. When I arrived, Mrs. Dudley, the principal’s secretary told me that Dr. Owens, our principal, wanted to speak with me. I sat down in the chairs outside of his office and began to wonder why he wanted to see me. “Mr. Cates come on in,” Principal Owens said. I entered his office and sat down. “I’ll make this quick because I know you need to get back to class,” he said. “Do you know Tre Parker?” I told him I did not. He went on to tell me that Tre was a sophomore boy who, since the beginning of the year, had been coming to school wearing make-up, nail polish, and recently, began carrying a purse. Although I didn’t know his name, as Dr. Owens described Tre’s appearance, I recalled seeing him in the hallway during passing periods. “I’m worried he’s going to get beat up for dressing like a girl.....I thought you’d be a good person to ask him to stop wearing make-up to school.” “I’m not quite sure what I would say to him,” I said. “Tell him it’s for his safety,” Principal Owens replied, and with a great deal of uncertainty, I agreed. Dr. Owens said he would make arrangements for me to meet with Tre in a large conference room located in the main office during my planning period the next day (Cates, 2019, pp. 4-5).

Pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development often highlight the importance of educators’ empathy, perspectives, and cultural awareness in effectively engaging with diverse students (Warren, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). However, the above abstract by Cates (2019), demonstrates that in this particular incident, educators often lack the knowledge required and necessary to create inclusive learning experiences for all students including transgender students (Cates, 2019). Hence, the importance and relevance of probing and exploring teacher’s constructions of transgender, in relation to how they interact with such individuals.

In our local context, South Africa is almost three decades into democracy, with the most dynamic, progressive and comprehensive constitutions (Galston, 2018). Yet, the country still

remains divided and unequal with regards to wealth, power, poverty, race, income and gender (SAHRC, 2012). Viciousness and separation, dependent on people's gender and sexualities occur due to the misconceptions and myths surrounding individual's non-traditional sexuality and gender expressions (Marx et al., 2017). A study conducted by the South African Human Rights Commission, (2016), reported that terminologies referring to sexuality and gender identities are not always recognised in South Africa. One explanation for this occurrence is cisnormativity, which is the presumption that an individual's biological sex should align to their sexual orientation and personality. Within this context, understandings of gender and sexuality are perceived as heteronormative, whilst gender and sexuality non-conformity are illegitimate pronouncements of desire (Francis & Msibi, 2011; DePalma & Francis, 2014). In essence, the relationship between gender and sexuality is automatically assumed within the heteronormative spectrum, thereby opening the door to the discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of individuals who do not ascribe nor fall into these exclusionary societal norms (Müller et al., 2018).

The following cases serve as support to these theories:

Given Seoketsi, a male pupil from Kwena Malopo Comprehensive Farm School in the Gauteng province, was expelled from school for wearing a dress on casual day (Francis, 2017). After the incident Given was summoned to the principal's office who demanded to know how Given identified, in terms of his sexuality (Masego, 2009, p. 2). Upon Given informing the principal that he identified himself as queer, the principal called his mother to a meeting to discuss her child's sexuality. During this meeting, the mother was informed that the school serviced male and female students only and as Given identified outside of those binaries he would have to leave the school (Francis, 2016). According to DePalma and Francis (2014), discrimination against students identifying with non-conforming genders and sexualities creates media waves as it contradicts South Africa's progressive and inclusive constitution. Though this school was reprimanded by the Department of Education (DOE) for excluding a learner on the basis of sexual orientation, a broader thought was highlighted in many South Africans' minds. This thought concerned how teachers address, treat and deal with learners who do not subscribe to the socially accepted heteronormative spectrum of sexuality (Brown, 2020). Moreover, the relationship between teachers' constructions of non-conforming sexualities and their subsequent interactions with such learners as a result of these constructions is cast in the spotlight (Francis, 2017).

Billy Moon, another male student attending a South African high school, was constantly physically and verbally assaulted by his peers for identifying as queer (Newman, 2009). When his mother appealed to the school for help, she was informed that her son “was different and should be taken to church.” (Newman, 2009, p. 2). The mother opined that the school leadership and stakeholders were not assisting her son with solutions to his situation but were rather requiring her son to ‘change’ himself and his sexual identity. This was to concede to the dominant heteronormative paradigm for the bullying to stop (Lee, 2020). Several similar cases have reported on instances where schools failed to uphold learners’ constitutional rights of freedom of sexual orientation (van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013; Mdunge, 2019). These incidences promote the manner in which educators’ own beliefs and perceptions about non-heterosexual learners influence the way these learners are treated within South African Schools (Francis, 2017; Lees, 2017).

Nare Mphela was a 28-year-old transgender activist who was found murdered in early January of 2020, outside of Mokopane, Limpopo (Mapanga, 2020). Mphela made headlines in 2017 when she was awarded over R60 000 by the Department of Education, in Equity Court, where she brought the case to the South African Human Rights Commission (Mapanga, 2020). Mphela stated that the principal of her school discriminating against her due to her gender identity as a trans woman. This landmark case was a great victory for the LGBTQI+ community and set forward a trend regarding equality for gender non- conforming individuals.

In this study, I aimed to understand how transgender identities are constructed from primary school teachers’ perspectives in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. South Africans, like all other global citizens have diverse sexuality and gender identities. Diverse and non-conforming identities include lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and androgynous (LGBTIQA+). These identities are constantly increasing and evolving to include more identities, thus the inclusion of the plus (+) sign (Fiani & Han, 2019).

This study is relevant as it provides a current perspective of primary school teachers’ understanding of transgender identity. Such a perspective could assist policy makers and implementers improve the education, teaching and learning environment. Additionally, it could assist in highlighting teachers’ patterns and beliefs regarding transgender identities. The findings could assist in improving outcomes and contribute to a non-discriminatory and

inclusive school environment due to some teachers not understanding transgender identities, hence they unfairly discriminate against transgender individuals. Moreover, the findings feed into the United Nations 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at eliminating all forms of inequalities in endeavours to leave no one behind by 2030 (Park & Mendos, 2019).

1.2 Background

This study conceptualized primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities using a theoretical framework that embraced two theories. These theories are Connell's (2005) theory

around gender as a social construction and Judith Butler's Queer theory (2003) that deconstructs the dominance of heterosexuality to make sense of transgender. The theories highlight how sexuality and gender expression are socially constructed rather than natural or essential and detail the relationship between socially constructed knowledge and hegemonic masculinities, sexuality, and gender expression.

Butler (1990) focuses on queer theory and gender theorists. She argues "If gender hierarchy produces and consolidates gender, and if the gender hierarchy presupposes an operative notion of gender, then gender is what causes gender, and the formulation culminates in tautology" (Butler, 1990, p.14). This emphasises the social construction of gender. Moreover, an argument can be made that queer theory constructs feminist challenges and gender by conflating gay and lesbians with socially constructed gender and sexual identities (Beresford, 2014; Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020). In addition, queer identities include gays, lesbians, cross-dressers, gender ambigui, and gender and sexual anomalies. As the queer analytical lens positions and includes transgender identities it is used to interrogate whether a heteronormative and non-confirmative school environment exists and how schoolteachers construct and understand the gender and sexual diversity of transgender identities. Additional reasons are to ascertain whether teachers' understandings of transgender are reinforced by the dominant heteronormative narrative and if the school environment embraces, respects, promotes or excludes non-conforming sexual and gender identities such as transgender. In addition, the study explored whether sexual and gender inclusivity and equality are prevalent within the school environment.

Connell's (1995) theory of masculinities focuses on various forms of masculinities and their performance, with hegemonic masculinity referencing how culture and cultural practises are normalised. These social and cultural oppositions are embraced by social constructionism theorists, to be dependent on the performance of gender according to socio-cultural expectations (Harris et al., 2011). Moreover, Wenzlaff et al. (2018) argue that the social construction of gender and gendered behaviour is dependent on anatomical features such as facial structure, individual's voice and dress sense and code. Therefore, personal representations or executions of gender that are considered non-standard or that contradict traditional sexual role beliefs, are viewed as non-conforming. Furthermore, these pronounced masculinities purport a power and gender programme which replicates and reproduces a skewed power dynamic that favours men. Gender-based violence (GBV) is prevalent and a challenge in all societies given its generality and consequences. It is produced and reproduced in the negotiation of relations and power dynamics between men and women (Kiss et al., 2020).

Koenig (2018) highlight that how boys are raised in society support a personality of masculinity and encourage such behaviour.

The school environment is a site where learners acquire and develop social and intellectual skills, engage in social networks, and confront and contest issues surrounding the construction of their sexuality and gender and that of others (Francis, 2017). Though, South African educational institutions are instructed to promote learners' rights including LGBTQIA+ learners (Section 9 (1) of the Constitution, 1994), there is evidence that this responsibility is still not being met (Francis, 2012). Transgender learners in South Africa, still encounter many challenges at school due to verbal and physical discrimination as homophobia and transphobia is spread by educators and learners (Bhana, 2012; Msibi, 2012). This is due to a prevailing heteronormative school environment, which is based on power promoted by gender binaries (Bhana, 2012). A study conducted by Msibi, (2012) revealed a dearth of information on the experiences of transgender learners and schooling and a developing collection of work on gender and sexuality pertaining to lesbian and gay learners in South African township schools (Msibi, 2012). Hence, the relevance of my study focusing on transgender due to the shortage of research on this topic. Moreover, sexual and gender non-conforming people, inclusive of transgender individuals, are considered second-class citizens (Francis, 2017). I argued that this form of discrimination can be likened to apartheid as transgender individuals are oppressed due to their sexual and gender identities.

According to Sital et al. (2017) the school curriculum is silent about non-conforming gender and sexualities. This *lack of education* on sexual and gender diverse identities can lead to transgender individuals being misidentified or them misidentifying themselves as 'gay' or 'lesbian' instead of 'trans'. Additionally, other transgender individuals identify as 'gay' or 'lesbian' as the members of the communities within which they reside, do not understand the term transgender due to the labels 'gay' and 'lesbian' being more frequently used. Furthermore, educators are ill-informed about sexuality and gender, are untrained to teach and facilitate conversations or recognize discrimination relating to non-traditional expressions of gender and sexuality (McArthur, 2015).

The turn of this decade saw global education rights activists' campaign for the recognition of diverse gender and sexuality identities (Jones et al., 2016). Although this global activism has resulted in changes to educational systems, some educational policies and learning materials still discriminate against learners who are gender non-conforming or attracted to individuals of the same-gender (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2018). Furthermore,

in relation to LGBTQIA+ learners, there is a lack of protection and representation in many international schools, as gender non-conforming learners are excluded and ostracized (Clark et al., 2014). Transgender and non-conforming gender learners are exposed to labels and name-calling due to their gender and sexual identity (Neary, 2013). The understanding of transgender identities cannot be dismissed as two United Nations (UN) events were held in 2016 to encourage global gatekeepers to “sign a *Call to Action* affirming their political commitment to ensure the right to education in a safe environment for all learners regardless of gender identity or expression” (Jones, 2016, p. 2). Although this was a global outcry, many researchers avoid or resist this area of research due to public backlash, career sabotage and even possible violence. The wider choice of transgender research from the global south as opposed to the north can be attributed to this (Epprecht, 2012; Lee, 2013; Case & Meier, 2014). Consequently, there is an absence of research in this area which is critically required (Jones et al 2016).

Common to South African and international literature is an increase in sexual and gender diversity with more focus on same-sex, queer, gay and lesbian scholarship. Worth noting is that transgender identities are gaining momentum (Ender et al., 2016; Miller, 2016). However, the (T) in LGBTIQ+ has not received equal attention in educational research which could be attributed to the tensions between queer, feminism, and transgender (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018). Additionally, Martino & Cumming-Potvin (2018) highlight the heightened interest in the compilation of informative material about the treatment and support of transgender and gender queer students, rather than how gender education is taught and practiced in schools and communities.

As this study primarily focused on primary school teachers’ understanding of transgender identities, I will commence with a definition thereof:

Transgender alludes to people whose sex character is unique or doesn’t compare with their sex at birth, including non-conforming or gender and sexually diverse individuals (Pega & Veale, 2015). Within the school context, transgender learners are not exempt from challenges either (Herriot et al., 2018). Here, one of the biggest challenges confronting learners’ experiences is discrimination based on their sex, sexual character or sexual identity (Bhana 2014). Discrimination occurs in various forms including biased language, verbal and physical provocation and emotional abuse from both learners and teachers (Kosciw et al., 2016). Such injustices occur due to misunderstandings of non-traditional sexuality and gender expressions (Jones, 2016). Hence, it is imperative that teachers are informed about the various types of

sexualities, and how to deal with and interact with such learners, colleagues, and other people. In this way, teachers become agents of change and initiate an avalanche impact and effect on learners, educators, and the immediate and external communities (Jones, 2016).

In the findings of their study, Payne and Smith, (2014), indicated that teachers articulated their discomfort with teaching learners about LGBTQIA+, the LGBTQIA+ community thus contributing to learners' reactions to and their unsupportive nature of LGBTQIA+ learners. Moreover, the South African education department is not mindful of issues confronting transgender learners with this lack of awareness facilitating violence and discrimination against these learners.

1.3 Rationale

My interest and inspiration for leading this investigation on how teachers perceive or make meaning of transgender identities is two-folded and emanated from:

Being an educator within a school located in Amanzimtoti, where I have heard teachers in the staff room discussing and laughing about learners (particularly male learners) who they label as 'moffies' or 'gay'. When I have enquired why they call some of the learners these names, I was informed that it is due to them displaying effeminate behaviours through their gestures and manner of speech. Moreover, I have witnessed the different way these learners are treated by the teachers. They are denied their basic right to be treated with humility, dignity and respect by teachers, are publicly reprimanded and meted out harsher punishment for misdemeanors compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Reygan, (2016, p.174) explains this phenomenon as "as weapons of both sexism and homophobia."

My enquiry about their understanding of the term transgender was met with mixed responses. Some said that they understood transgender as 'males who dress like females and females who dress like males.' Other responses ranged from transgender being similar to gay to transgendered individuals being the 'Devil's pawn and them having serious mental issues.' These responses prompted me to think that there is a fundamental misconception in primary school teachers' understanding about the term 'transgender' (Journell, 2017). Further, on reflection and introspection I realized there is a dire need for such research as most of the existing research on LGBTQIA+ does not assign sufficient attention to the T (transgender) community (McCarty-Caplan, 2018). Therefore, with this research, I aimed to enhance the

current body of knowledge by closing the transgender literature gaps, adding value to non-conforming sexualities and being able to assist teachers to communicate about transgender identities and make a difference to young sexualities.

I found that transgender was a sensitive topic, and in some instances, traumatic to some and uncomfortable to discuss. As researchers, we try to connect ourselves and our topics with our participants and can often make ourselves, as well as our participants, vulnerable to indifference, judgment, and ridicule. This is the nature of research, and as the researcher, I committed to be mindful of this and strove to be supportive. I employed this through the use of the following:

- Gave participants a brief time out when I sensed that they may have needed a quiet reprieve
- Asked participants to record their immediate reactions in their personal notebooks
- Kept a reflexive research journal, to explore my own thoughts, processes, and growth
- Consulted with other researchers (doing their research in a similar topic) regarding my concerns and challenges

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the study are:

To determine how teachers in a primary school construct transgender identity.

To determine the factors that shape primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities.

1.5 Questions asked

Key Research Question: How do primary school teachers construct transgender identities?

Sub- question:

What factors shape primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities?

1.6 Context of the study

This study was conducted in the historical township of Amanzimtoti, within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Amanzimtoti is nestled between the surrounding suburbs of Umlazi, Isipingo and Mobeni. The demise of apartheid resulted in many people relocating from rural areas to townships such as Umlazi in an endeavour to seek employment opportunities in its'

neighbouring suburbs. According to the Census (2011), Amanzimtoti has a population of 13,813 and 4,390 households, varying in race. The racial makeup of the area is estimated at 67.3% white, 22.1% Black, 8.2% Indian, 1.9% Coloured and 0.5% other.

I undertook this study at Ladybug Primary School (Pseudonym) as I am employed there, and the school is in close distance of my residence. Ladybug Primary School is a functioning school and celebrated its 40th birthday this year. It's identified as a quintile 5 school as it that cater for the least poor 20% of learners (Reddy et al., 2012). Poorer quintiles have higher targets than the less poor quintiles. The 'adequacy benchmark' is the school allocation amount that Government believes is the minimum needed by each learner in each school. Often times, these schools are well-resourced schools typically located in the suburbs. The school is well equipped with several facilities, including a sick room, computer lab, kitchen, library, swimming pool, cricket pitch, netball court, changing rooms and a large school hall. It has a large sports field where learners can choose to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities (soccer, rugby, netball, and cricket) on offer.

The school has an estimated learner population of 690, with 35 educators. The learner population comprises of 653 black African learners (327 males, 326 female) 10 Indian learners (6 males, 4 females) 16 coloured learners (4 males, 12 females) and 7 white learners (3 males, 4 females). The staff population consists of 11 black African teachers (2 males, 9 females) 6 Indian teachers (1 male, 5 females), 2 coloured teachers (1 male, 1 female), and 16 White teachers (3 males, 13 females). The diverse nature of the school population in terms of race, culture, religion, and gender aided in data saturation being attained and rich data being generated.

1.7 Research methodology

This study followed a qualitative research approach which “is a strategy for addressing the research question including specifications for enhancing the study’s integrity” (Nyangu, 2016, p. 42). This was due to it being an empirical study, its aim of determining primary school teachers’ construction of transgender identities, using primary data from focus groups, photo elicitation and interviews being employed through the use of a phenomenological approach to best understand a phenomenon (transgender identities).

The interpretivist paradigm allowed me to see the world through the discernments and encounters of the participants as commonly used in the qualitative research. Additionally, I utilized the participants' voices to develop and decipher their comprehension of transgender from the assembled information. The use of this paradigm was relevant as this study aimed to understand how teachers at Ladybug Primary School make meaning of transgender identities.

This study assumed a non-probability sampling method as all educators employed in the school were asked to volunteer as participants in the study. Although no strategic choices were used with regards to sampling, the selection of school study setting is *convenient* as I am an educator employed in a school near the research site.

I utilized a number of different strategies to select my 30 participants as discussed in the methodology chapter. Consent forms were only given once permission was gained from the school principal and ethical clearance attained. My fieldwork for this study only commenced once ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Department of Education were granted.

To comprehensively answer the research questions, the use of more than one method was necessary to ensure the retrieval of broadened and heightened data. Hence, the data generation method used in this study was 30 semi-structured interviews which included photo elicitation.

A six-step data analysis approach was followed utilising thematic analysis as it is a flexible method to attain themes and patterns in the collected data and transcripts, which will be fully explained in the Methodology Chapter (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The data analysis was regularly checked, verified, and discussed with the supervisor and academic colleagues and peers. Butler's (1990) Queer Theory and Connell's (1995) Theory of Masculinities was employed to aid in the analyses of the generated data. Use of these theories, within the analyses process, allowed for the unfolding of whether and how socially accepted norms pertaining to gender binaries are used to marginalise and exclude learners and individuals who do not identify with these pre-conceived expectations.

Credibility focuses on establishing the trustworthiness value by incorporating the inherent nature of the situation or circumstance under study by involving different information (data) gathering methods to validate the collected data and the interpretations thereof (Groat & Wang, 2013). In the context of this study, it was reached using triangulation during the interview process. Trustworthiness was established through the use of photo-elicitation, vignettes and

understanding- level language. Interviews were conducted in English, as all the participants spoke the language fluently and requested that this be the medium of data collection. Validity was achieved as all interviewees were asked to check and cross reference their interview transcripts to verify if their transcripts were correct and an honest representation of their input (Hadi & Closs, 2016).

Yanow (2014) and Korstjens and Moser (2018, p. 2) state that “Transferability concerns the aspect of applicability”. In this study, the sample size of 30 participants ensured a sense of rich, dense data of which the findings could be transferred to similar studies. Dependability was achieved through consistency as my data analysis was congruent with my chosen research design.

Confirmability is about ensuring the investigators’ objectivity, which is attained through triangulation and reflexivity (Groat & Wang, 2013). In this study, confirmability was accomplished through dual-recorded interviews and discussion groups, transcribing, and confirming transcripts (Anney, 2014). Reflexivity is a method of reflection whereby investigators identify, observe, and know how their “social background, setting and expectations affect their research practice” (Palaganas et al., 2017, p.427). The researcher shared reflectivity learning purposes, to enhance theory building and to ensure credibility and conformability of the study’s findings. A reflexive journal was kept ensuring daily reflexivity within the data collection process regarding what was learnt, the experiences at the study site and concerns and challenges (Mulqueeny & Taylor, 2019).

1.8 Overview of chapters

Chapter One introduces and provides a background to the study based on local and national literature on gender and sexual minorities including transgender identities. Thereafter, the background, rationale, research aims and objectives, key research questions, context and research methodology of the study were explained. Lastly, this chapter provides a brief overview on the ensuing chapters.

Chapter Two draws on the study’s theoretical framework which embraces two theories to provide an analytical lens in order to understand primary school teachers’ construction of transgender identities. Connell’s (1995, 2005) theory around gender as a social construction and Butler’s Queer theory (2003) that deconstructs the dominance of heterosexuality to make sense of transgender. These theories assist in highlighting how sexuality and gender expression

are socially constructed rather than natural or essential. Additionally, they detail the relationship between socially constructed knowledge and hegemonic masculinities, sexuality, and gender expression.

Chapter Three comprises of a literature review. As I examine primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities within the South African school environment, my literature review includes literature on gender, global and South African transgender identities. In addition, literature on transgender identities within the global and South African school context are included.

Chapter Four presents and explains the methodological approaches used in this study. As this study seeks to ascertain how teachers in a primary school construct transgender identity, careful consideration was taken in choosing the study method to achieve a nuanced understanding of their constructions. Hence, the layout of this chapter is as follows: Research design, methodology (research instruments, collections of data, analysis), limitations, ethical considerations, and a conclusion.

Chapter Five presents an analysis of the collected data, in terms of how teachers' construct transgender in terms of socially accepted gender binaries. These expectations and norms promote gender stereotypes and roles that result in tension around sexuality. Further society still reveres a patriarchal and hegemonic culture that perpetuates violence and intolerance of gender diversity.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided perceptions into how teachers in a primary school context construct transgendered individuals' identities. These constructions often support the assumptions that only hetero-sexual relationships and individuals are recognised. Further, schools perpetuate these normative beliefs resulting in learners and educators becoming intolerant to individuals who do not reflect on the heteronormative spectrum. Consequently, "outliers" are more susceptible to discrimination, violence, and marginalisation. I thereafter presented the rationale of this study after the research aims and objectives, key research questions and sub-questions, and the study's context. Lastly, an overview of the chapters was provided. The next chapter draws on the theoretical framework employed to understand how teachers construct transgender identities at Ladybug Primary School.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The central aim of this study is to understand how South African primary school teachers conceptualize and construct transgender identities. This chapter outlines key theoretical concepts and perspectives that shape the framework for my study, which is informed by a feminist lens. I have drawn on post structural ideologies to assist analyse how South African primary school teachers conceptualize and construct transgender identities. To this end, I have elected to draw from Foucault (1980), Butler (1990), and Connell (1995).

These following eclectic influences (Foucault, 1980, Butler, 1990 and Connell, 1995) have aided my study:

I have relied on Foucault to understand sexuality and power, Judith Butler (1990) to understand queer theory as it allows for the deconstruction of gender and sexuality and the heterosexual matrix. I also draw on Butler's (1990, 1993) to understand the theory of performativity. Connell provided insight into understanding gender relational theory and theory of masculinities.

These theories will assist in highlighting how sexuality and gender expression are socially constructed rather than natural, therefore depicting gender as performative rather than essential. The theories further elucidate hegemonic masculinities, sexuality, and gender expression, which will provide a framework to analyse primary school teachers' constructions of transgender.

A recent study conducted by Smith and Payne (2016), found that American primary school teachers' responses to having transgender learners in their classrooms ranged from fear and panic to holding on to the notion of childhood innocence and personal beliefs of "normatively gendered interpretations of students and preservation of the gender binary" (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 35). The researchers accredit the teachers' feelings to their disruptions of the belief in gender binaries, where the only genders they could and would identify with were "boy" and "girl" (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 35). Teachers expressed their concerns that childhood innocence would be dismantled by educating learners about other genders and that transgender learners would then become visible, rather than remaining "stealth" or "passing" (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 36).

Further, the findings showed that many of these teachers viewed transgender learners as “hypersexual” and voiced concerns that they would influence other learners and were “highly resistant to the possibility of exploring gender diversity through the formal and informal school curriculum...” (Smith & Paine, 2016, p. 35). This study assists to put into context and lend insight to my study.

2.2 Essentialism: sex and gender as a biological construct

Well known expressions such as ‘Men are from Venus’ and ‘Women are from Mars’ are explicit examples of essentialist thinking whereby individuals believe that certain people belong in the same category due to them sharing “essential” or “natural” traits, and for purposes of this study, one of these traits are being born with the same sex organs (Skewes et al., 2018, p. 17). Essentialism and its beliefs refer to “Taking its cue from the philosophical claim that certain categories, dubbed ‘natural kinds’, possess such causal essences, a body of social psychological work has argued that laypeople often hold essentialist beliefs about social groups” (Skewes et al., 2018, p.17). Within any school environment, one of the first categories that learners and teachers apply, is gender. Here, the school culture understands gender as very essentialized, natural and biological (Skewes et al., 2018). Smith and Payne (2016) reiterate this notion by stating that their study findings reported that American transgender primary school learners opined that in their schooling contexts teachers acknowledge children according to categories of being ‘boy’, ‘girl’ and ‘heterosexual’. Their accounts of their schooling experiences included feeling ostracized, side-lined, and bullied with their “schools refusing to honour name and pronoun changes or to disrupt the status quo of gender-specific facilities, dress codes, and activities” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 35).

Within the South African context, learners have reported experiencing similar feelings and situations due to teachers holding an essentialist belief of gender, whereby they see gender no different to biological sex and only within terms of the gender binary (Mayeza, 2018). His paper focused on primary school children (within an African township school) and their interactions with their teachers during ‘free play’. Mayeza (2018) found that majority of the teachers “policed” boys for playing with dolls and girls for playing with trucks and toy soldiers, having categorized these toys as ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ toys, respectively. His theory for teachers behaving in such a manner was due to many of them still holding the belief that sex and gender were the same, essential, natural, and fixed biological structures and hence children should only be assigned categories of either boy or girl (Mayeza, 2018). Teachers believed that if children

are only categorized as boys, girls, and heterosexual, they would behave according to the stereotypical categories and assume gendered stereotypical roles.

This essentialist view of sex and gender as a biological construct within a school environment is damaging as it reproduces polarization of gender, perpetuates harmful and digressive gender stereotypes and inequalities while marginalizing non-normative gender identities (Smith & Paine, 2016; Mayeza, 2018). To better explain my study, I adopt the theory of sex and gender as a social construction rather than essentialist.

2.3 The socialization of sex and gender

Moving away from the essentialist theory, Francis (2017) and McNaughton and Gray (2000) are of the belief that gender is socially constructed, performed, and navigated through everyday interaction between humans, within contexts of culture and existing societal norms and expectations. Schools are not only sites of learning but are also places of socialization as interaction occurs between learners and learners, as well as learners and teachers (Mayeza, 2018). Here, Mayeza (2018) argues that children are not passively socialized in terms of gender, but rather are active participants in making their own meaning and deciphering their personal understandings of gender. According to Bigler, Hayes and Hamilton (2013) schooling environments can either perpetuate gender polarization or diminish it by creating gender equality environments or highlighting gender differences, where learners learn these patterns through socialization. Bigler et al. (2013) concur with Mayeza's (2018) notion that both teachers and peers are fundamental sources of learning and making meaning about gender. Smith & Payne (2016) and Bigler et al. (2013) found that in their observations of American primary schools, teachers' personal gender prejudices and stereotypes molded the classroom environment, in three ways. Firstly, teachers often exhibited gender-stereotypical behaviour (female teachers portraying a phobia for STEM subjects such as Math and Science). Secondly, and in alignment with Mayeza's (2018) findings of South African teachers, many teachers displayed differential expectations for girl and boy learners by ensuring boys played with trucks while girls played with dolls, thereby enforcing, and reinforcing gender differentiation. Lastly, teachers supported learners' gender biases by using gender as a marker, to label and organize children, such as girls lining up on the left, with boys on the right (Bigler et al., 2013). Bigler et al. (2013, p. 2) concluded that "Young children whose teachers labelled and used gender showed higher levels of gender stereotyping than their peers."

It is evident from the researchers (Mayeza, 2018; Smith & Payne, 2016; Bigler et al., 2013) findings that due to schooling environments, and particularly teachers' understandings and biases of gender, learners are socialized in terms of sex and gender, rather than exhibit gender specific characteristic, due to naturalist biology.

To further contextualize my study, I will now briefly discuss the social constructionist theory, in relation to gender.

2.4 The social constructionist of theory: Doing gender

Whenever humans interact with one another, "active construction" occurs within them regarding these interactions, and are usually governed by societal norms and standards, resulting from culture (Lindsey, 2015). The concept of sex and gender must therefore be found in the meanings people make and assign to them; thus, gender is "performed" rather than exists naturally. Within the school context, what is appropriate and inappropriate pertaining to gender is due to the interactions of teachers, learners, and all other school stake holders. These interactions then result in the norms, standards and expectations concerning gender within that sphere and can be described as social constructionism (Lindsey, 2015). If a schooling environment is shrouded in and promotes a gender binary heteronormative culture, then it is less likely to be embrace and accept non-heteronormative learners (Fernandes, 2017). Thus, social constructionist theory relates to the symbolic interaction theory in the following way:

According to Lindsey (2015) schools that perpetuate a heteronormative culture (social constructionism) can lapse when teachers, learners, and all stakeholders of the school, within their interactions, consciously or implicitly agree on labelling genders, assigning gender roles, and perpetuating these social stereotypes and expectations (symbolic interaction). As a result, girls and boys judge and hold each other to these ideas of masculine and feminine norms (Fernandes, 2017). This type of adherence sustains gender binaries and solidifies the rigidity of gender stereotypes. Thus, highlighting differences between boys and girls can erode the "common ground" on which equal interactions status between the genders can be formed (Lindsey, 2015, p. 12).

Some scholars offer a critique on the social constructionist theory within the schooling context by stating that the theory itself must account for gender stereotypes that perpetuate these gender inequalities (Lindsey, 2015). Rather, they recommend that researchers to focus on strategies to dismantle these harmful stereotypes to enable and create an "all gender" inclusive schooling

environment (Bigler et al., 2013). As Judith Lorber (2005, p. 5) states, “this does not mean not *thinking* about gender, but recognizing gender complexity and how gender intersects with other statuses”.

How teachers make meaning of sexuality and gender does not occur in isolation. Their perceptions are often influenced and interconnected with many factors, sexuality and power being two of these dynamics. Teachers make meaning of such in a nuanced, complex, and fluid way. I will use Foucault’s (1980) theory to draw and situate my own study.

2.5 Foucault: sexuality and power

French philosopher, Michel Foucault is best known for his work on the philosophy of power. His critical studies on social institutions and the history of human sexuality constitute an invaluable resource for understanding the various ways in which power can be exercised and used as a form of social control (Fouchard, 2013). He attributes our gender and sexual identities to ‘those in power’ (political and social) as they dictate what is socially acceptable. In essence, power produces rather than represses sexualities (Foucault, 1980). By applying his theory to my study, a comparison can be drawn between teachers, as the individuals who hold the power, and their influence on the classroom environment. This is in reference to them perpetuating gender and sexual inequities or working towards an inclusive culture (Fouchard, 2013).

Foucault (1980) states that sexuality is a “thing of repression” dating from the Victorian era when political and social power was held by the regime. He says, “For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus, the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality” (Foucault, 1980, p. 3). He called for modern liberation of this repressed sexuality due to the dire need for “...promoting greater liberties concerning the expression of sexual identities” (Foucault, 1980, p. 10-11). Thus, he wanted to destroy the notion that individuals who did not fall within the heteronormative spectrum, were perceived as unnatural, evil, impure, or sick.

By relating Foucault’s theory of power and sexuality to my own study, a likeness is drawn between teachers’ constructions of gender and sex and *how* these perceptions could influence learners’ constructions of gender and sexuality. Scholars argue that Foucault’s theory can be described as the building blocks for a more modern post structuralism, which can be used as a framework to explore how teachers construct their understandings of gender identities.

2.6 Post Structuralism

In recent years, researchers and scholars have placed importance on poststructuralist ideas and theories to better understand gender and education (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2021). In particular, the importance of the poststructuralist feminist theoretical approach is its understanding of power, which I have explored in my section on Foucault's (1980) theory. For my study, I apply a poststructuralist feminist approach to teachers' constructions of gender and transgender as an example to show how the deconstruction of binary categories reveals ways power operates for both teachers and learners within a classroom environment. Butler (1990, p.40) identifies post structuralism as the rejection of "the claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions that implicitly operate to quell the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural signification".

Cannon, Lauve-Moon, and Buttell, (2015, p. 670) describe deconstruction as "a method that: (1) identifies ways in which binaries are operating; and (2) investigates the effects of how these binaries operate. The method of deconstruction shows these binaries (e.g., heterosexual/homosexual, white/black, man/woman, etc.) are inherently unstable because of the subjugation of the second term in order to define the first". For purposes of my study, deconstructions of gender and sexuality binaries are relevant, to understand how primary school teachers construct them and thus interact with learners.

Binaries are rife in curriculum texts, and teachers deliver these texts to learners in one of two ways: 'readerly' or 'writerly' (Paechter, 2001). When teachers treat a text as writerly, they interpret that text creatively, by making it their own and bringing in their personal lived experiences and views to it (Paechter, 2001). This is challenging as many curriculum texts pertaining to gender and sexuality hold hegemonic/heterosexual perceptions. Thus, teachers who hold this dominant view on the issue, are likely to deliver such interpretations to their learners too (Paechter, 2001). Foucault (1980) states that those yielding power, not only hold but also create the knowledge, which is seen as the only truth in societies. Therefore, curriculum history must be viewed in ways which account for dominant power and knowledge relations in schools and how these relations are used to silence and invisibilise learners that identify as gender and sexuality non-conforming.

Poststructuralist theory can also be applied to challenge essentialist notions of identity. Gender is a social construct based on each person's feelings and behaviour related to cultural expectations of a person's biological sex (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Children initially learn about gender and sexualities in their homes, from family members, through interpersonal relationships and community engagements and programmes (Salgam, 2014). This is re-enforced, when they go to school where they develop intellectual and social skills, social networks and learn about their gender and sexualities, which persists into adulthood. Social norms such as culture and religion promote gender stereotypes and roles that result in tension around sexuality (Bhana, 2014).

Like other identity development theories, there are multiple factors that contribute to one's gender identity. I think that even a brief understanding about how one forms their identity to the gender that they associate with, is a crucial element in comprehending how teachers make meaning about transgender individuals. Brill and Kenny (2016) stressed the importance of understanding gender and the gender spectrum as a route to championing transgender and non-binary teens. A theorist, Kohlberg (1966) proposed a cognitive developmental theory. This entailed a child's understanding of gender developing through three stages: gender labelling, gender stability, and gender constancy. Gender labelling takes place around two to three years of age as children build their vocabulary and begin the practice of assigning labels during this age (Kohlberg, 1966). Around four to five years of age, children begin to develop a sense of gender stability, which is the notion that gender does not change over time (Kohlberg, 1966). Gender constancy begins to develop around six to seven years of age. According to cognitive developmental theory, during these stages children begin to develop an understanding of gender that remains regardless of outward appearance (Erickson-Schroth, 2014). Further, Bandura (2001) theorized that children model the gender behaviour of others around them and are socialized to accept gender roles. Brill and Pepper (2008) further detailed this by theorizing that at approximately age 9-12, a child's identity continues to stabilize; some who have expressed gender variances reject this form of self-expression; stereotypically masculine or feminine forms of expression are often embraced; children who are transgender become uncomfortable with puberty-related body changes resulting in depression, self-neglect, and self-destructive behaviour (Cates, 2019). An understanding of the theoretical framework of identity development related to children and adolescents is crucial for teachers to meaningfully reach and teach transgender students in an inclusive manner.

Moreover, a study conducted by Bhana, (2014), highlighted that sexuality is culturally constructed and gendered. Additionally, the dominance of male power is a critical component of violence, due to the performance of hegemonic masculinity (Bhana, 2012). Accordingly,

Morrell et al. (2012) purport that domination and violence is promoted by male power. Within the South African context transphobia is indoctrinated by numerous cultural norms as articulated by a study conducted by Bhana (2014). The study highlighted those cultural norms dominate and create an environment where violence and intolerance of gender and sexual diversity is administered to non-traditional gendered individuals. This is due to transgender individuals being expected to conform to social constructions of traditional gender roles and expressions (Bateman, 2011).

Gender binaries cause and promote inequalities, and the use, abuse, and misuse of power, thus disadvantaging women and girls. However, people who are socialized by their community and gender ideologies about duties of girls and boys, limit them from seeing and embracing different techniques of doing things. Social expectations yield more power in shaping people's behaviour, with primary school teachers not being exempt from this category.

2.7 Sex, gender, and identity.

Butler (1990) focuses on the normative framework of heterosexuality as the heterosexual matrix, where ideal notions of men and women are socially constructed and reinforced by cultural and traditional norms. This dichotomous notion of gender empowers certain people whilst oppressing others. Society and schools constantly subject individuals to normative ideals of how to act and behave. However, Butler, (1990, p.25) considers this to be ethically wrong as "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be results". Butler (1990) therefore argues against the gender binary and opts to re-examine and 'trouble' this regime of heteronormativity so eliminates the violence and discrimination levelled against non-conforming gender identities, in particular LGBTQI individuals. She argues, "If gender hierarchy produces and consolidates gender, and if the gender hierarchy presupposes an operative notion of gender, then gender is what causes gender, and the formulation culminates in tautology" which emphasizes the social construction of gender (Butler, 1990, p.14). Butler thus defines gender as a cultural understanding of sex. Gender opposition produces gender norms and defames those who transgress gender norms.

Further, Butler (1990) highlights that individuals understand gender because of performativity. She aptly coins this as the theory of performativity and disagrees with the idea that there is an internal psychology to gender development. Rather, she states that people "perform" gender,

with gender norms being predetermined and “...constructed through social norms and rituals, with gender identities as cultural performances that retroactively construct the original materiality of sexuality: in essence, copies without originals” (Joy et al., 2015, p. 1742). Individuals then tend to categorize one’s gender according to naturalistic ideals, which are strongly intersected with cultural assumptions.

However, according to Butler, (1990), children will perform their own gender, when allowed to do so in unrestricted situations, where no social norms are imposed on them. This may lead to the denaturalization of gender, where an individual opts out of the rigid societal standards and expectations of the polarization of gender, allowing themselves to categorize gender in a whole new way (Butler, 1990). From this perspective, gender development is not linear but is in fact a dynamic and evolving process (Goodhand & Brown, 2016). However, this may become problematic when unwillingness to perform one’s gender ‘correctly’ results in stigma, discrimination, alienation, victimization, and violence. Case in point would be the bullying and murder of teens Brandon Teena, Mathew Shephard, and Gwen Araujo due to then identifying as transgender and not conforming to the gender expectations of society (Butler, 1993).

Goodhand and Brown (2016, p. 3) state that within schools, children learn through socio-cultural interactions with peers and adults what are considered to be acceptable behaviours (“boys play with trucks,” and “pink is for girls”) in relation to gender. Their insights about the popularity of various behaviours and what is supported in these social exchanges guide their interactions (Goodhand & Brown, 2016). So, learners who self-identify as transgender or non-conformative are often made to feel “abnormal” or “invisible” by their peers and teachers, due to their heterogenic beliefs and ideas about gender and sexuality (Goodhand & Brown, 2016). Within my own study, I attempted to show, through interviewing primary school teachers, that although many still hold their personal interpretations about transgender to those of societal standards, some feel empathetic to these individuals and recognize them within society. Butler’s (1990) theory of performativity was principal to my study as it demonstrated how societal preconceived notions of gender can lead to gender inequalities.

Within a broader social context, gender performativity is also strongly associated to gender relations. Normative gender that is linked to social and cultural beliefs, influences the constructions of masculinity and femininity, and contributes to transgender experiences of

marginalization, discrimination, and gender inequality (Sheerin & Linehan, 2018). This is explored further below.

2.8 Theories of Masculinities

Connell (1987) asserts that there is a lack of consideration and inclusivity of alternative forms of masculinities and femininities, thereby providing a rite of passage for hegemonic masculinities to dominate and be superior to others. In my own study, I investigate how identities which regress normative masculine and feminine performances are sometimes called to order at school, often in ways that incite violence towards gender non-conforming individuals.

Connell's (1995) theory of masculinities focuses on various forms of masculinities and their performance. Connell uses the term hegemonic masculinity in reference to culture and cultural practices becoming normalized, as this term reflects the way men are identified and how the spread of gender inequality is based on men's control over women and their power between other men (Jewkes et al., 2015). Connell's (1987) theory of multiple masculinities highlights the power hierarchies amongst masculinities with hegemonic masculinity being the most dominate form, situated at the top (Bartholomaeus et al., 2017). Connell (1987, p.184) states that hegemony entails "coercion and consent" where other patterns are subordinate rather than eradicated. These patterns she refers to are socially moulded through the intersections of class, race, and age. Connell (2002) relates subordinate masculinities to masculinities that are considered to be more feminine such as gay masculinities, which result in immense inequalities, violence and marginalization. As a result, transgender individuals who are usually described as individuals whose assigned gender at birth does not match their current gender identity (Galupo et al., 2017), are constantly being silenced and rejected as they do not fit the gender binary and norms of society. My study aims to uncover and explore how primary school teachers make meaning of transgender as there is a dearth of research in the field of transgender in schools which stems from the LGBTQI+ category in South Africa.

Schools are institutions where learners constantly execute their gender based on their given gender (Connell, 2002). School cultures, where gender binaries and hierarchies are deeply entrenched, leave little room for transgender and non-conforming gender learners to flourish, feel accepted and included (Connell, 2002). According to Ullman (2017, p. 7), an alarming

percentage of Australian learners reported that they experienced and witnessed a “schooling environment in which marginalizing (homophobic and transphobic) language was rife and where school staff did not respond with consistency.” In her research of 704 learners from all states and territories in Australia, Ullman (2017, p. 7) found that although 45% of learners had witnessed school-based physical harassment of classmates perceived to be sexuality and/or gender diverse, only 12% of young people who witnessed such physical harassment occurring in front of school staff, reported that these adults always intervened.

Within a local context, Francis (2017, p. 5) states that gender diverse learners “experience significant homophobia and transphobia in school environments.” In his study, all 18 LGBTQI+ learners had at one time experienced bullying, harassment, isolation and even violence from not only their peers, but their teachers as well (Francis, 2017). In another study conducted by Francis & Monakali (2021), demonstrated that in majority of South African schools, gender non -conforming education was focused almost exclusively on sexual diversity, exponentially excluding transgender identities and gender fluidity, when it came to the experiences of learners. The study reiterated how transgender and non- binary learners are perpetuated with feelings of inadequacy, non- representation, ostracization and bullying (Francis & Monakali, 2021). These alarming statistics and findings contribute to the assumption of a dual aspect to the South African schooling environment: an intolerance towards LGBTQI+ learners and a dominant heterosexist culture in many of our schools (Francis, 2017). Further, research indicates that school curricula are discriminatory towards non-conforming genders and thus function with enforced heterosexuality (Francis, 2017). When teaching about gender diversity and sexuality, teachers were found to feel uncomfortable and tended to ignore these topics, focusing on “compulsory sexuality” instead (Francis, 2017). Such findings suggest that there is a dire need for schools to create an enabling inclusive, safe, and equitable environment for gender diverse learners. Teachers often feel lost and overwhelmed and “lack content and pedagogical knowledge to teacher gender and sexuality diversity” (Francis, 2017, p.15). As such, teachers still in training and teaching need educational development policies where they are provided with the tools and skills to competently teach on gender and sexuality diversity (Francis, 2017).

Moreover, Francis (2014) documented a transgender teacher (Thatho) experience teaching in a rural school in the Free State province of South Africa. Here, Thatho tests the dominant essentialist expectations and norms of gender and identity via his own sexual agency, beliefs, and practices (Francis, 2014). He did this by ratifying a multitude of masculinities, not just

portraying a gender conforming heteronormative stance. By doing this, he is met with a multitude of resistance, ostracization and marginalization. Francis (2014) states possible reasons for this push back is due to the belief and subscription of “men must be men” and solely hegemonic in their behaviours, appearances, practices, and sexual orientation. This belief, specifically in rural schools in South Africa, can be linked to the prevailing African belief that situates men as superior, manly, strong, masculine and heterosexual (Francis, 2014). This idea will be discussed further in this research. Interesting to note, Thatho had a different experience when teaching in an urban school within the same province. Here, Thatho observed a different dynamic, in that he was afforded more acceptance and opportunity to be himself, without the censure and stigma that he experienced in the rural school (Francis, 2014). Francis (2014) suggested that urban schools allow a more supple expression of gender and sexuality.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter explored a range of theories that I drew on to explore how primary school teachers make meaning of transgender. In viewing how teachers make meaning of transgender identities and determining the factors that shape these perceptions, I have demonstrated how the school and society become amalgamated as conduits through which socio-cultural beliefs and values enter the school and contribute to gender inequalities. These dissimilarities exacerbate transgender learners’ risk of marginalization and even violence. The post structural feminist lens I used enabled me to display how shattering societal norms of gender polarization demonstrated how power operates in perpetuating compulsory heterosexism within South

African schools. Connell (1987; 1995; 2002) and Butler (1990) contributions made evident, that gender politics are widespread across global societies and entrenched in patriarchal and heteronormative systems. Regrettably, these systems use unequal power dynamics and a gender order to perpetrate gender discriminations and violence, apparent in the shared narratives of transgender identities and in relation to how transgender identities are conceptualized in school environments. In the next chapter, I will review literature on global and local teachers and their relation to transgender identities.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This research study aims to understand the intricacies of how educators, specifically primary school teachers within a school in KwaZulu-Natal, construct their understandings of gender, particularly transgender. Chapter two demonstrated how the relationship between Judith Butler's (1990) Queer theory and Raewyn Connell's (1995; 2005) theory of masculinity and gender illustrate that gender, as well as sexuality are not essentially or biologically constructed, but rather are conceived through social and cultural interactions. These expressions are embedded in patriarchal hegemonic norms which perpetuate the existing discrimination of non-conforming genders.

In this chapter, I connect with literature regarding how educators construct their understandings and personal beliefs about transgender individuals, as this has an impact on how these learners are interacted with and their performance in educational spaces. As this *meaning making* is multi-faceted, this literature review will continuously display the intersectionality between the polarisations of gender, the ways of understanding gender and sexuality, and gender and power in relation to culture and religion.

There is a dearth of research in South Africa regarding how primary school teachers construct their understandings of transgender, thus this literature review will focus primarily on international research. I will contribute to fill this chasm with research from my own study. This review will commence with a broad focus on literature from a global perspective and then the focus will narrow to a South African viewpoint.

3.2 Defining Transgender

Although many scholars argue that there is no one umbrella definition for the term transgender, it is necessary to put it into some perspective for purposes of this research study. As stated, gender is a social construct and people who identify with the sex that they were born with, are referred to as cisgender (Mangin, 2018). The prefix *cis-* developed out of the desire of some transgender community members and their allies to address the unstated privilege of 'man' meaning 'non-transgender man' and 'woman' meaning 'non-transgender woman' (Stryker,

2017). LGBTIQ+ advocates discourage the legalistic use of the term *cisgender* in an effort to avoid fostering another gender binary, *cisgender* vs. *transgender* choice (Stryker, 2017).

Transgender, or *trans* are broad terms used by many individuals whose gender expression or gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth (Erickson-Schroth, 2014). Stryker (2018, p. 1), summarizes an expanded understanding of gender as “Some people move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender in which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly defined or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to get away from the conventional expectations bound up with gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is *the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transition—that best characterizes the concept of ‘transgender’.” An individual’s internal identity as male, female or other is their *gender identity* (Stryker, 2017). *Gender expression* refers to the outward way a person communicates gender identity (Cates, 2019).

3.3 Different ways of understanding gender and transgender

How do we understand the differences between boys and girls especially when differences are assumed to be based on biology and sex-role socialisation rather than socially constructed? Society, in general, holds this belief and as such, teachers form part of society as they do not teach in isolation. They are individuals who come from different backgrounds with their own beliefs, values, principles, and cultures (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Thus, to better ascertain how teachers make meaning of transgendered individuals, we need to acknowledge the different *ways* in which gender is understood.

3.3.1 Sex and Gender: is it the same or different?

Although they are different concepts, sex and gender are often confused as one and the same. ‘Sex’ is a word which is a binary that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia and the related difference in procreative function (Mangin, 2018). This concept becomes problematic when individuals are born as intersex. According to Blackless et al. (2000) approximately 1.7% to 2% of people are intersex, meaning that their physical bodies do not conform to standard definitions of male and female. Herein lies the problem: what happens to those individuals that do not fall into either category?

Gender however is a matter of how one internally identifies and is a product of the interactions between the individual and society (Mangin, 2018). This can be further explained: “Gender is defined socially and culturally by the prescriptions and beliefs about the behaviour and emotions of *men* and *women*” (Lämsä & Sintonen, 2001, p.256). In other words, people’s reality of what is and what is not knowledge, stems from their interactions with others and their subjective experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. These can all be used to construct a social agreement within society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Gender from this perspective asserts that gender is not a trait or quality of an individual but rather the product of daily social practices and behaviours that emphasize *femininity* and *masculinity* (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This traditional definition, which entrenches a binary between masculine and feminine does not leave any category for intersex individuals to identify with. Hence, this social construction is defective and needs a change.

3.3.2 Gender Pronouns

Traditional gender pronouns like ‘she’ or ‘he’ have held considerable significance prior to ideas and the notions surrounding gender began to increase. These pronouns were steeped in gender conformity and heteronormativity, thereby excluding people who did not conform to these pre-conceived gender norms (Cates, 2019). LGBTQI+ activists have fought for the rights to be recognized. Figure 1 below provides expanded options for gender pronouns that do not emphasize fixed, stable gender binaries and identities.

Subject Pronoun	She	He	They	Ze
Object Pronoun	Her	Him	Them	Hir
Possessive Pronoun	Her/Hers	His	Their/Theirs	Hir/Hirs
Reflexive Pronoun	Herself	Himself	Themselves	Hirself

Figure 1: Gender-specific and gender-neutral pronouns. Adapted from The University of Michigan Spectrum Center, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/article/designated-pronouns>

3.3.3 Gender Identity Development

Like other identity development theories, multiple factors contribute to one’s gender identity. I think that even a brief understanding about how one forms their identity to the gender that they associate with, is a crucial element in comprehending how teachers make meaning about transgender individuals. Brill and Kenny (2016) stressed the importance of understanding gender and the gender spectrum as a route to championing transgender and non-binary teens.

One theorist, Kohlberg (1966) proposed a cognitive developmental theory that entailed a child's understanding of gender developing through three stages: gender labeling, gender stability and gender constancy. Gender labeling takes place around two to three years of age. During this stage, children are building their vocabulary and begin the practice of assigning labels (Kohlberg, 1966). Around four to five years of age, children begin to develop a sense of gender stability, which is the notion that gender does not change over time (Kohlberg, 1966). Gender constancy begins to develop around six to seven years of age. According to cognitive developmental theory, during this stage, children begin to develop an understanding of gender that continues regardless of outward appearance (Erickson-Schroth, 2014). Further, Bandura (2001) theorized that children model the gender behaviour of others around them and are socialized to accept gender roles. Brill and Pepper (2008) further detailed this by theorizing that between the ages of 9-12, a child's identity continues to stabilize; some who have expressed gender variances reject this form of self-expression; stereotypical masculine or feminine forms of expression are often embraced. Children who are transgender become uncomfortable with puberty-related body changes resulting in depression, self-neglect, and self-destructive behavior (Cates, 2019).

An understanding of the theoretical framework of identity development related to children and adolescents is crucial in the efforts of educators to meaningfully reach and teach transgender students. Having outlined various gender understandings and transgender identities, I will now discuss transphobia from an international perspective.

3.4 Transphobia in schools: A global quandary

According to Mulqueeny et al. (2020), the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015 (UN, 2019) is inclusive of sexual and gender minorities. These SDGs allowed for the inclusion of all members of society through the endorsement of the "leave no one behind" policy which forms part of the 2030 agenda (UN, 2019). Some of these SDGs included universal health coverage for all citizens including people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) (WHO, 2019). I think the aspects of *all* having equal access to services including health, is particularly important in this context, as the world is currently grappling with the global pandemic of COVID-19. Additionally, this goal addresses the aim to end AIDS and other non-communicable diseases including discrimination and stigma thereby ensuring their health and well-being within countries and health systems (UNAIDS 2019). Moreover, evidence exists on the global

acknowledgement of the SDGs and humanitarian organisations advocacy for the abolishment of violence, transphobia and other forms of discrimination levelled against transgender people (UNAIDS, 2016, 2019). Both for health and sexual well-being, ending the marginalisation of transgender people is vital. Education has a key role to play in this regard. However, despite such efforts, transphobia continues throughout many countries and schools.

Gender and sexuality are significant factors in the growth, development and learning of children, and play an important role in education (Kohlberg, 1966; Bandura, 2001; Singh & Jackson, 2012; Brill & Kenney, 2016). Schools often serve in contexts where students narrowly understand gender roles and expectations, which limits the gender expression of all youth, due to gender non-conforming individuals being vulnerable to harassment, abuse, violence and bullying (Rands, 2009; Ryan et al., 2013). Stereotypes and societal norms related to these factors are deeply ingrained in schools (Koza, 1994; Blaise, 2005; Singh & Jackson, 2012). As LGBTQ students have progressed in terms of disclosing their non-conforming genders and/or sexuality, patterns of discrimination and harassment toward these students have been identified and acknowledged in schools (Nixon, 2010; Kosciw et al., 2016). Shaped by heteronormativity and rigid gender expectations, LGBTQ youth in schools and society have been vulnerable to harassment (Taylor et al., 2011). In such hostile climates, LGBTQ youth are unlikely to learn and may avoid or leave schools (Cates, 2019). Indeed, many learn that discrimination against the LGBTQ community is acceptable (Haskell & Burtch, 2010), as transgender and gender non-conforming students experience ongoing acts of aggression in schools with little adult intervention (Kearns et al., 2017). Many transgender and gender-expansive children do not feel included in their classroom community and tragically, many of these children experience harassment or worse (Mangin, 2018). Students in this community experience higher rates of bullying, exclusion, violence and are at a greater risk for self-destructive behavior or suicide (McGuire et al., 2010; Nichols, 2012; Brill & Kenney, 2016). In addition to the often lengthy and uncertain process of coming out, gender minority youth must move through an already complicated developmental progression; adding social transition, name and pronoun changes, the pressure to pass (appearance matches gender identity), building community and navigating gender-segregated spaces (Erickson-Schroth, 2014). “The serious risk factors related to the developmental process for this vulnerable student population merit a careful examination of how gender issues are addressed by teachers and experienced by students in schools” (Cates, 2019, p. 22).

3.4.1 Bullying and Harassment

Cates (2019) states that there has been an increase in research concerning the educational experiences of LGBTQI+ youth within the last decade. Many findings from these studies revealed that sexual and gender minority students are often the victims of harassment and violence while at school (Wyatt et al., 2008; McGuire et al., 2010; Fraynd & Hernandez, 2014; Greytak & Kosciw, 2014). Bullying can take many forms ranging from verbal and emotional harassment to physical intimidation and violent physical attacks (Erickson-Schroth, 2014).

A study by Kosciw et al. (2016) that formed part of a school climate study by GLSEN (2018) posits that a hostile school climate has a negative impact on the educational outcomes and psychological well-being of LGBTQI+ students; gender minority students are particularly vulnerable. “The study found gender nonconforming students ($N=3,488$) who experienced higher levels harassment and discrimination due to their gender expression were more likely to miss school (59.6% vs. 20.8%); have lower GPAs (2.9 vs. 3.3); report they didn’t have plans to attend college or post-secondary education (9.5% vs. 5.4%); experience discipline problems (52.1% vs. 32.7%); have lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression (Kosciw et al., 2016, pg. 28). This study drew similar conclusions to other studies (McGuire et al., 2010; Greytak & Kosciw, 2014; Brill & Kenney, 2016), which suggested that as a result of sexual orientation and/or gender expression students are regularly called names, threatened, physically assaulted, harassed via electronics (text message or social media) and experience unwanted touching or sexual remarks. Many students choose not to report harassment or assault to school personnel because they feel doing so could make matters worse or they doubt appropriate intervention will take place (McGuire et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2016).

Although gender-based bullying and harassment in schools remains a concern, current research report improving conditions (Kosciw et al., 2016). Figure 2 below represents a decline in the frequency of victimization of gender minority students between 2001 and 2015. An increase in the availability of LGBTQI+ related resources and support may be attributed to this decline (McGuire et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2016).

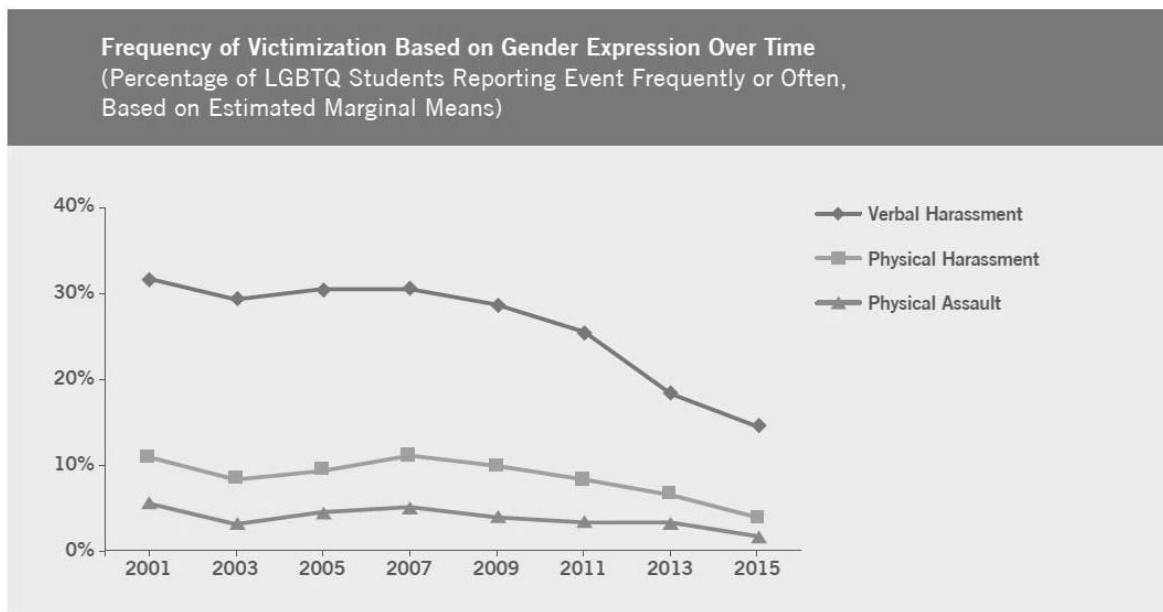


Figure 2. Frequency of victimization based on gender expression over time. Reprinted from *the 2015 National School Climate Survey*, by GLSEN, August 18, 2018, retrieved from <https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey> Copyright 2016 by GLSEN.

Moreover, within the United States, 0.6% of adults, 1.4 million people, identify as transgender (Herman et al., 2017 in Mangin, 2018). Herman et al. (2017) further determines that findings from their study showed that 13, 0.7% of teenagers (13-17 years old) or approximately 150 000 youth, identify as transgender. Therefore, schools in the United States with more than 143 children are almost certain to have at least one transgender child. As almost all public schools in America certainly have more than 143 learners, the number of transgender learners is substantial, thus issues of inequalities regarding such individuals must be addressed (Mangin, 2018). According to Goodhand & Brown (2016, p. 1), researchers found that approximately 90% of LGBTQ-identified students had experienced harassment at school, and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation. Accordingly, Mangin (2018) states the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that “54 percent of those who were out or perceived as transgender in K-12 were verbally harassed, nearly one-quarter (24%) were physically attacked and 13% were sexually assaulted in K-12 because of being transgender” (James et al., 2016, p. 9). These kinds of negative experiences put transgender students at risk for social exclusion, emotional distress, and disrupted learning (Kosciw et al., 2016).

A UK survey of 889 transgender participants aged over 18 years found that 63% were discriminated against in mental health services and 65% in general health services (McNeil et

al. 2012). Further, 90% of participants had been told that transgender people were not normal and 84% had thought of suicide, with 35% attempting it – reflecting findings from other research on increased risk of discrimination and suicide risks (Clements-Nolle, et al., 2006; Grossman & D’Augelli, 2007; Stieglitz, 2010). A USA survey found that transgender students were frequently managed with strategies designed for gay students, which had little or nothing to do with their identities or needs (McGuire et al., 2010). Other studies have similarly noted the lack of relevant sexual education (Clements-Nolle et al., 2001; Grossman & D’Augelli 2006; Rosario 2009). Beyond institutional mistreatment, international research also shows family rejection and (verbal and physical) abuse to be common for these students (Jones et al., 2016, p.158).

According to Jones et al. (2016), Australian studies of transgender and gender diverse people have mainly focused on adults. However, a recent Australian study of 3134 same-sex attracted students included 91 transgender and gender diverse students aged 14–21 (Jones & Hillier, 2013). Compared to cisgendered same sex attracted young people, transgender and gender diverse students were significantly more likely to have known their diverse identity earlier; disclosed this identity to people in their networks; and to have suffered discriminatory physical abuse. They were also significantly more likely to self-harm and attempt suicide. In contrast, such students were twice as likely to seek help or engage in activism as cisgender same sex attracted students (Jones et al., 2016).

In Bangladesh, the transgender community is commonly known as ‘*Hijra*’ (Orthy, 2018). This name is assigned to males who do not identify with the sex they were assigned to at birth and rather identify themselves as feminine. The term *Hijra* is a legal term given to the Trans community by the government of Bangladesh, in an effort to recognise these individuals and place them on par with other citizens so they may be allowed the same rights and privileges (Orthy, 2018). However, despite government’s efforts, the *Hijra* people are still denied basic human rights. “The Trans persons in Bangladesh still cannot imagine their right to get parental property as there exists misleading interpretation of religious rule regarding the distribution of property and adverse interest of their socially established co-sharers...” (Orthy, 2018, p. 8) From statistics, it appears that there are at least 10,000 *Hijra* in Bangladesh and they are being denied their rights in various sectors including education because of being a marginal sexual group which is inconsistent with the constitution. The few Trans individuals that do get to go

to school often have extremely negative experiences and find themselves victims of bullying (Orth, 2018).

In the South African context, Mulqueeny et al. (2020) reported that school-going transgender youth are misunderstood and experience stigma and non-acceptance in various spheres and contexts during their lifetime. Although the authors primarily contextualise this within the health sector, such stigma, misunderstanding, and non-acceptance, is experienced by transgender youth within the school context (Mulqueeny et al., 2020). Not only are transgender individuals susceptible to this but also must “navigate the complexities and challenges of transitioning between childhood and adulthood” (Mulqueeny et al., 2020. p 2).

Students who do not fit the gender constructs present in many schools are often at greater risk of encountering social and emotional hardships (Cates, 2019). As these concerns have emerged researchers have begun to explore how schools might better serve students who identify as transgender (Airton et al., 2016). Much of this inquiry highlights the central role of the teacher in creating a safe, positive, and impactful learning environment for gender minority students (Airton et al., 2016; Howard, 2016). Similarly, I explore how teachers’ constructions of sexual identities, transgender identities more specifically, pave the environment of teaching and learning. “Given that schools are by their very nature heteronormative sites where sexuality becomes the primary structure for organizing the experiences of teachers, learners and the school itself, the schooling space is often heterosexualised” (Ferfolja, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2012; Athanases & Larrabee 2003 *in* Msibi, 2015, p. 387), it is then crucial to explore the different ways of how schools perpetuate a heteronormative culture and thus uphold the status quo of transphobia.

3.5 The school climate: Agent or Disabler of Heteronormativity and Transphobia?

Kearns et al. (2017) state that in schools, boys and girls are divided into highly gendered cultural and social roles, therefore this gender binary, continues to enforce the identities of all youth in school, with the prescription of rigid gender roles, leaving very little room for fluidity. “Trans identities do not easily fit boy or girl categories; Trans stories are diverse and require a separation of gender and sexual orientation” (Wright-Maley et al., 2016, p .5). An Australian study carried out by Bartholomaeus, Riggs and Andrew (2017, p. 28) supports the ongoing research with the consensus that... “schools are generally not well equipped to include trans

and gender diverse students and have dominant gender discourses.” The culture of elementary schools has a significant impact on a child’s academic, social, and emotional wellbeing. However, Goodhand and Brown (2016) state research indicates that most schools in the US tend to perpetuate a heteronormative culture which denies silences and stigmatizes children who display any atypical gender behaviour and/or are perceived to be lesbian or gay. Additionally, Airton et al. (2016, pg. 2) elaborate... “61% of gender nonconforming children report feeling unsafe in U.S. primary schools versus 42% of the general population, and 1 in 8 reports engaging in some form of gender nonconforming behavior.”

3.5.1 Refusal of Admission

Internationally, all school have admission policies that mainly are fashioned to align with their constitutions and national school policies, making it illegal and unethical to refuse admission to any learner based on any form of discrimination (Jones, 2018). However, same sex schools are grey areas or loopholes in these policies and use biological sex as the most determining factor as to whether a child is accepted or rejected admission. Dr. Sarah O’Flynn, an English transgender scholar, supported Jones’s observation with her study of two females to male Trans pupils, Carol and Nathan, in a London girls’ school. She stated... “Girls’ schools are self-evidently for girls and being a recognizable pupil-subject meant constituting one’s gender as female. Thus, Carol’s right to be at this girls’ school was contested immediately by both pupils and staff. This often turned her into a spectacle: I got the comment, ‘Is that a boy or a girl?’ Students seem to feel that they can speak about her, to me, in front of her” (O’Flynn, 2016, p. 16).

3.5.2 Designated Girl/Boy Bathrooms

Spencer (2019, p. 1) states... “in February 2017, the Department of Education (North Carolina, USA) announced that under the Trump administration, the department would no longer enforce Obama-era protections for transgender students to use the restroom that aligns with their gender identities.” ‘Bathroom Bills’ such as these, that are not only relative to the US, are found in many schools across the globe (Smith, 2015). Such rules in schools are not only in danger of negating basic human equity rights, but also render trans learners invisible or inconsequential (Spencer, 2019). This type of accepted school policy reiterates the hegemonic culture of schools while reinforcing the very prominent gender binary, thus marginalizing transgendered learners.

3.5.3 The Implicit and Explicit Curriculum

As previously mentioned, children from the ages of about 3 or 4 are aware not only about what gender means, but of their own gender. By about the ages of 9 or 10, children can identify their personal sexual orientation and preferences (Brill & Pepper, 2008). However, despite these proven theories, not many studies focus on primary school children and their interaction. “From a review of the literature, it is evident that research and the curriculum does not adequately address elementary-age students, especially those who may be gender bending, transgender, or beginning to think about their own sexual orientation.” (O’ Flynn, 2016, p. 2). Consequently, parents, communities and other stakeholders believe that they are sending their children into an environment that is typically asexual; gender and sexuality free (O’ Flynn, 2016). Contradictory, interaction and play between primary school children in everyday school settings allow said children to understand that biological sex, gender and sexuality are intricately connected, and ... “through limit-setting by their teachers and peers, they quickly learn what is “normal” and how they should “perform” to fit in two, distinct binary groups of boys’ and girls’ (O’ Flynn, 2016, p. 1). Such typical behaviors then result in a heteronormative school environment and an ensuing curriculum. A paradigm of this is illustrated by Kappus (2015) when he states that majority of primary school in the U.S follow a gender normative curriculum. He states “For example, same-sex families are often *not* represented in the curriculum studied, in the literature read and even in the official forms used by schools (e.g., spaces for “father” and “mother”). The reality of Johnny having two moms or two dads is often not acknowledged resulting in these families frequently being disengaged and fearful their children will suffer consequences of bullying due to their non-traditional lifestyle” (Kappus, 2015, p. 2)

In Australia, data gathered across the nation from multiple schools indicates that the schooling experience for gender diverse learners has gotten worse, rather than better (Ullman, 2017). This being the case despite major campaigns advocating for equal rights and a more inclusive school culture for sexually diverse learners. Ullman (2017, p. 277) attributes this negative school experience, in part, to “... Australian media which positions fluidity of gender expression and transgender topics as too radical and inappropriate for the K-12 schooling context, consequently there is a dearth of content addressing gender diversity, fluidity and non-binary

gender expression within the Australian national curriculum.” Ullman further states that because the Australian curriculum falls painfully short when it comes to including topics on sexual diversity, many teachers have attitudes that portray uncertainty and fear when it comes to teaching about these topics.

In the United Kingdom, the government aimed to include transgender issues and diverse sexualities within the national curriculum by taking in the suggestion issued by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee. These committees proposed that such topics must be incorporated as part of Personal Social and Health Education [PSHE] (House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, 2016). The government concurred and further ruminated that transgender education must be taught in both primary and secondary schools, with primary school children (from as young as five) required to participate in the lessons (Morgan & Taylor, 2019). However, government’s tacit strides towards supporting transgender education came under scrutiny when a primary school in East Sussex planned to take part in a transgender equality initiative (Morgan & Taylor, 2019). This initiative caused a media storm, with cries of outrage from parents and communities, laying the blame of this “moral abomination” at the feet of the head teacher (Morgan & Taylor, 2019). Morgan and Taylor (2019, p. 3) explain this contradictory event by stating “The terminology of ‘gender identity’ is in common usage in the United Kingdom as diversity rhetoric to refer to transgender identities but retains the function of referring to *any* gender identity. As such the UK guidance’s lack of specificity leaves open to interpretation just *which* gender identities should be taught about at *which* stages of learning.” This explanation serves to display how ambiguous terms within curricula may cause regression of government’s efforts to normalize transgender education.

Within a South African context, Life Orientation or LO is taught from grade R through to grade 12. Here learners explore a range of life issues, including sexual education and diversity (Jacobs, 2011). However, according to Msibi (2015, p. 388) a 2012 study, ‘exploring grade 7-12 LO textbooks from four South African publishers found that there were inconsistencies and omissions in the representations of same-sex identities, with ‘gay’ identities at times presented, while ‘lesbian’ and ‘bisexual’ identities were being rarely ever presented. Transgender and intersex identities did not feature at all in the textbooks surveyed.’ This quote displays an excellent example of the silent curriculum at work quietening sexual diversity.

3.5.4 Teachers Attitudes

According to Bartholomaeus et al. (2017), there is some research that focuses on teachers' understandings and attitudes towards gender non-conforming individuals collectively, however, much of this research fails to discuss Trans or gender diverse students specifically. Thus, my research will contribute to the limited exploration of this topic, helping to fill in some gaps.

The same authors interestingly note that from studies that have been conducted on teachers' attitudes towards transgender individuals specifically, results indicate that "teachers and school counsellors and psychologists have been found to hold largely positive attitudes, although men's attitudes are typically less positive than are women's (Bartholomaeus et al., 2017, p 128). A US study, which conducted research across 246 schools, found that those teachers who have a more positive attitude towards transgendered learners were those who had previously interacted with transgender people, had self confidence in their abilities to meet the needs of such learners and most importantly, had participated in training regarding negative issues towards transgender youth (Walzer, 2015). However, although many teachers have a positive attitude towards transgender learners, many of them do not feel comfortable or even capable of working with Trans students (Bartholomaeus et al., 2017). To put into context, "a US study with over 1,000 elementary school teachers found that less than half (41%) of respondents said they would feel 'very comfortable' or 'somewhat comfortable' responding to questions from their students about transgender people" (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2012, p. 52). Kosciw et al. (2016) argued that the problem is that many teachers often do not recognize many of the heterosexist patterns within schools and, if confronted with these issues, are too fearful or ill equipped to face matters. This is reaffirmed by research carried out by Brant in his US study of teachers and transgender learners. He found that "participants were less confident in being able to identify harmful school practices (45% 'quite confident that [it] would be easy'), identify bias in teaching materials (35%), plan activities for current/future classroom to reduce prejudice (34%), analyses materials for stereotypes and prejudice (33%) or develop materials that dispel myths (22%)" (Brant, 2014, p. 26). With such a large portion of the teacher population suggesting that they lack confidence on how to deal with transgender issues, this reaffirms the notion that teachers need adequate training when it comes to gender diversity (Brant, 2014). This is imperative as teachers can serve as one of the biggest support bodies for transgender learners in the schooling context (Day et al., 2019).

On teachers in Canada, Kearns et al. (2017) support Kosciw et al. (2016) views on teachers being blind to the collusion of primary schools upholding a definite gender binary. Conversely, the authors further state that when teachers *are* aware of a genderism and sexism in their schools, they are reluctant to do anything about it as they feel ill equipped to even know where to start (Kearns et al., 2017). These types of responses then serve to indicate that a fundamental change in teacher education and training are required. Teachers require some sort of training and/or education if they wish to challenge the status quo (when it comes to gender) in their schools (Bellini, 2012).

By reviewing the international literature on how school climates may perpetuate intolerance to gender diverse students, I now go on to narrow the focus to a South African perspective.

3.6 A South African Perspective: Correlations of homo/transphobia, denunciation, and silence of gender diversity in schools

It cannot be said that South Africa has cut its teeth on bringing gender diversity equality to the forefront of all its various social systems. If anything, the process of equity, particularly in education, has been a slow and measured stride which is still ongoing even today. With the dawning of a new democratic South Africa, our constitution is considered one of the most progressive and equitable for all people living under our rainbow nation (Francis, 2017). This encapsulates, amongst other things, gender diversity in schools as Article 9(3) of South the African Constitution (1996) states:

No person shall be unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, or marital status.

However, in many schools across South Africa, gender diverse learners are marginalised, discriminated, bullied, and ignored (Beukes & Francis, 2020).

Keeping in alignment with international results, a South African study by Francis (2017) on experiences of LGBTQI+ learners at schools found that a majority of learners had negative experiences that were rife with bullying, name calling, ostracising and even physical violence. Further, the study's findings showed that while many of the perpetrators of homophobia and transphobia were fellow students, a substantial extent was also teachers, principals and school counsellors (Francis, 2017). This conundrum is in direct contradiction of the belief of many

scholars that place teachers in the forefront of dismantling heteronormativity and transphobia in schools (Ullman, 2017; Cates, 2019; Day et al., 2019; Francis, 2019). This then requires teachers to have comprehensive knowledge and understanding about gender diversity, education or re-education about sex and sexuality and the ability to identify their own prejudices and beliefs on such in order to place these aside (Cates, 2019; Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2020).

An important aspect of giving teachers tools to help model a gender diverse and acceptable school experience for non-heterosexual learners, is to be able to understand how teachers make meaning of such learners (Lees, 2016). As there seems to exist a major disparity in research on this topic, my study will aid in attempting to give some insight to this gap in research.

3.7 Associations of Heteronormativity and Transphobia in Schools

3.7.1 Intersectionality of Religion and Transphobia

A strong correlation exists between culture, religion, heteronormative beliefs, and transphobic attitudes in schools (Lees, 2016). In South Africa, with over 85% of South Africans identifying as Christian, many schools across the country then hold a somewhat Christian ethos (Hodgson, 2017). This ethos is mostly a legacy of Apartheid, colonialism, and missionary work (Lees, 2016). Traditional Christian ideology is peppered with beliefs of heteronormative sexualities being the only accepted orientation in the eyes of God, while any other sexualities are seen as sinful, wicked, and condemned (Bhana, 2012; Lees, 2016; Francis & Reygan 2016). In recent years, a need for the curriculum to encompass diverse sexualities was identified and thus the introduction of subjects such as Life Orientation (LO) was executed. This allowed learners, amongst other topics, the opportunity to learn about other sexualities other than heterosexuality (Jacobs, 2011). This caused much resistance from schools, parents, religious institutions, and other communities (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Furthermore, studies showed that many teachers felt that such topics did not belong in the classroom, nor did they feel comfortable teaching their learners about sexual diversity, as it went against their personal religious beliefs and values (Francis & Reygan, 2017). Findings from a 2012 study carried out by Bhana (2012) on high school teachers indicated teachers with orthodox Christian beliefs were opposed to teaching any other forms of sexuality, besides heterosexuality. One teacher was quoted as describing homosexuality as “Sodom and Gomorrah” in relation to the biblical context (Bhana, 2012, p.313). Another teacher, in Francis’s (2012, p. 9) study referenced homosexuality as

“God made Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve.” Other scholars, in their similar research, have also observed from their findings, dogmatic beliefs. These types of responses show how traditional religious beliefs, within the school culture, demoralize and portray sexually diverse learners as sinful and dirty.

3.7.2 Intersectionality of Culture and Transphobia

As a society, we largely function in a heteronormative fashion, where the gender binary is so rooted, thus feeding into gender norms and stereotypes (Javaid, 2018). As children are socialized in such societies, naturally they too feed into this polarization of gender. It is the normalization of heterosexuality through social structures, social practices, and social institutions that result in the school environment being heterosexist and not recognizing any other form of sexuality (Bhana, 2012). The stronghold of schools towards climates of patriarchy, gender stereotypes and heteronormativity not only silence gender diversity, but contribute to hate and violence against any individual that does not fall into the realm of heteronormativity (Francis & Reygan, 2017). Consequently, they innately reinforce harmful notions of traditional masculinities and gender inequalities. With phobias towards gender diversity being so rife in South African schools, particularly Black Township schools, these notions of traditional and cultural masculinities perpetuate heteronormativity (Msibi, 2015). The intersection of culture and sexuality are evident here, when many African students and teachers, believe being “gay” is seen as being “unblack” and goes against their culture (Francis, 2019). In the same vein, this belief is not solely held by the African community. In his study which explored types and qualities of forms of discrimination towards LGBT people among teachers in South Africa, Francis (2019, p. 190) a white Afrikaans teacher cited “white Afrikaner culture as a bulwark against sexual and gender diversity.” Such statements reiterate the notion of how sexuality is understood, not existing in a vacuum, but rather is irreplaceably interwoven with culture, religion, and personal beliefs.

Having discussed how culture and religious beliefs, in contexts of schools, are correlates of phobias towards sexual diversity, I will now go on to discussing beliefs, attitudes and actions of teachers.

3.8 Teachers and Gender Diverse Youth

Teachers are perhaps one of the most important stakeholders in the school community when it comes to supporting LGBTQI+ learners (Day et al., 2019). A study initiated by Day et al. (2019, p. 30) using a community-based sample of +300 gender diverse learners, found that these learners felt safer in schools where there were teachers who were supportive and encouraging to LGBTQI+ youth. The study also reported that these learners had fewer days missed in school when they had an ally in the form of an educator (Day et al., 2019). However, despite these positive findings, reports indicate that teachers in South Africa are not supportive of gender diverse youth and often contribute and collude to the school climate of compulsory heterosexism, bullying and marginalization of LGBTQI+ youth (Bhana 2012; Francis 2019; Francis & Reygan, 2017).

3.8.1 Delegitimization of LGBTQI+ learners

Bhana (2012) reports that, one-way teachers deal with gender diversity in their classrooms, is by ignoring or denying the existence of divergent sexualities. Teachers use the “head in sand” approach when confronted with non-heterosexism, which can leave gender diverse students feeling unworthy and delegitimized (Bhana, 2012). In her study using 25 teachers from 5 diverse schools within the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, Bhana (2012, p. 312-313) reported some teachers’ responses on non-conforming sexualities as the following:

“What your sexuality is all about has got nothing to do with me, I don’t need to know it, and I don’t need to see it ...”and “I don’t need to know it, I don’t need to see it”.

Bhana states that denial of diverse sexualities by teachers allows for “passing the buck” when it comes to such topics as an educational responsibility.

This notion of denial is further motioned by Francis (2019) when he observed teachers (from his research study) replacing the term homosexuality by the pronoun “it”. Francis believes that by doing this, teachers are silencing gender diverse learners and denying them their basic right to be recognized. Research conducted by Francis (2019, p. 186) on a sample of 25 teachers in the Free State resulted in the following:

AW (pseudonym given to a teacher) recounted the response of school management to the emergence of ‘it’ in school:

I've told our headmaster we must do something about it because at first, he said we must ignore it. There's not a lot of boys that are open about it at school but there's this gang of lesbian girls which is getting bigger. They are very popular and at first the headmaster said: 'No, let's just not pay a lot of attention to it because then we make it more popular like they want attention and then we focus on them. Let's see if it won't go away by itself'.

3.8.2 Teachers Fears, Misinformation and Lack of Support

Despite the generalization of South African teachers being largely unsupportive to gender diverse learners, it must be noted that there is a small body of teachers who are attuned to the plight of LGBTQI+ youth and recognize the inequality in schools (Lees, 2016). Further, Msibi (2015) analyzed the responses 661 pre-service teachers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on sexual diversity. His findings labelled these teachers as allies and proved to be a stride in the right direction towards teachers identifying the heteronormativity of schools and identifying the need for change, in order to allow for equality amongst all learners (Msibi, 2015). However, much more needs to be done.

Teachers themselves, do not teach in isolation i.e., they bring with them to the classroom, their own beliefs, morals, values, and prejudices, which can come across in *how* and *what* they teach (Bhana, 2012). Further, there is a vast misunderstanding of what it means to be non-heterosexual on the sexuality spectrum (Bhana, 2012; Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Francis, 2019). Francis's 2019 study showed how teacher participants merged sex, gender identity and sexual orientation and presumed gay boys were transgender or intersex. This clearly displays a potentially dangerous ignorance about these quite different terms. There is moreover a misconception amongst teachers that homosexuality is "contagious" (Bhana, 2012; Lees, 2016; Francis & Reygan, 2017). Lees (2016) states that some teachers hold the belief that if they teach about other sexualities besides heterosexuality, then this may spread to other learners and cause some of them to become gay or transgender. However, perhaps one of the most harmful sentiments amongst some teachers, according to Francis (2019), is the notion that gender diverse learners are that way due to abuse or stained relationships between learners and parents. The following quotes are some from Francis's (2019, p. 188) research that displays this theory succinctly:

“The one family that I do know, it’s two sisters and they are both lesbian because they don’t have a good role model in their father and their mother is also lesbian so it’s in their family. They have a father but he’s using alcohol and he doesn’t show any love to them so they hate men” and “Most of them [gay learners] come out of failed marriages: parents who are divorced or had different relationships, multi-relationships with other people and still in the marriage and a lot of those children, a few of them tend to go homosexual.”

Additionally, Francis (2017, p. 12) states ... “Another reason teacher’s avoided teaching about sexual diversity was the lack of support from school management and parents when teaching about sexual diversity.” In his 2012 research on how teachers view gender diverse individuals, Francis states that 11 teachers were of the opinion that no support from any school stake holders would be given should they implement gender and sexual diversity content into their LO lessons... “Many of the participants believed that they were “walking a [tightrope] on the teaching of sexuality and were under scrutiny by the school administration.” (Francis, 2012, p. 12 in Francis, 2017). Consistently, teachers further reported to be fearful of backlash from parents and religious societies (Lees, 2016).

Teachers also reported to feeling a lack of confidence, knowledge, and training when they had to deliver lessons on sexual and gender diversity (Bhana, 2012). On homosexuality, some teachers said that the Department of Education did not prepare them for it, some stated that it was not in the curriculum while others purposely left it out of their teaching (Bhana, 2012, p. 315). Further, Francis (2019) states that teachers are not professionally prepared to teach nor address questions from learners relating to sexual and gender diversity. There is a lack of pedagogical knowledge for pre-service and in-service teachers with regards to LGBTQI+ issues (Francis, 2019). This incorrect knowledge on sexual diversities is one of the factors that promotes intolerance and hate of diverse learners in schools. Only by first identifying, addressing, and correcting these unfitting assumptions, will gender diverse learners gain the equality that is their basic human right (Lees, 2016).

3.9 Interventions to Disrupting Sexual and Gender Prejudices

From the literature reviewed, there is evidence that there is a critical need for professional development of teachers to effectively deal with gender and sexual diversity in the classrooms.

Additionally, teachers need support from the Department of Education, parents, religious affiliation and the larger communities (Francis, 2019). Msibi (2015) suggests that due to the lack of gazetted policies with regards to gender and sexual diversity, schools should work to create their own, working within their existing policies. Msibi further recognizes the importance of introducing a module to training teachers, regarding how to teach and support gender diverse learners. Due to the lack of literature on LGBTQI+ individuals (and the absolute absence of literature on transgender issues) in the LO curriculum and textbooks, Francis (2017, 2019), Msibi (2012) and Potgieter and Reygan (2012) have projected an inclusive curriculum to address the silences, indiscernibility and challenging creations and depictions of LGBTQI+ individualities within the South African curriculum. Moreover, Francis (2019) suggests that teachers must look towards themselves and critically engage with their personal beliefs, attitudes and prejudices towards gender and sexual diverse learners. Only by doing this, will teachers recognize the cycle of heteronormativity and delegitimization that they may perpetuate, silencing and negating LGBTQI+ learners (Francis, 2019). A way to do this is to explore how teachers understand such individuals and what factors shape that said constructions. As there is a vast lack of such research, my research can be helpful to illuminate these human nuances of meaning making.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has put into perspective (internationally and locally) the ways in which societies comprehend gender and gender identities. Findings from literature strongly indicated that transgender identities are majorly constructed from a viewpoint of accepted societal norms, which include patriarchal, hegemonic, and firm gender binary notions. International and localized text display how transgender individuals continue to be ostracized ignored and even violently contravened, despite legislation and policies protecting them.

Further, the literature reviewed showed that schools and the classroom environment are hostile climates for transgendered learners as they have no respite from bullying, harassment, and sidelining in these spaces, which is meant to protect and nurture. In South African schools, narratives from researchers' position teachers as agents of transphobia who continue to uphold gender binaries and preserve the existing culture of compulsory heterosexism. This is done through the denial of sexual and gender diversities within the curriculum and placing dogmatic religious beliefs and traditional cultural beliefs as verification to silence gender diversity.

Compounding to this, teachers feel a lack of training and support from stake holders in relation to teaching issues around gender diversity. These issues need urgent addressing if we are to make our schools places of safety and recognition for *all* students.

I must reiterate that there is a scarcity of research on how South African teachers construct their knowledge regarding transgender individuals. The little research there is, majority of it focuses more on homosexuality and extraordinarily little on issues of transgender. Further, majority of the research focus on high school teachers' constructions. Thus, with my research, I believe, will supply a much-needed perspective that will contribute to breaching this dearth.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The research design of a study “is a strategy for addressing the research question, including specifications for enhancing the study’s integrity” (Polit & Beck, 2012:740). It assists in governing the researcher’s steps to achieve the aims and objectives of a study. As this study, aimed to determine primary school teachers’ construction of transgender identities, an empirical study using primary data from individual semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation was employed through a phenomenological approach to understand a phenomenon (transgender identities). Phenomenology, as a qualitative research method, was suitable for this study as researchers use it when they want to understand people’s understandings of a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012). Initially, as the researcher, I set out to utilize semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), however due to the Covid-19 pandemic, FGDs proved to be challenging, thus was excluded from my research design. I will explain my reason for this decision later in this chapter.

A review of literature was offered in the prior chapter, focused on how primary school teachers construct their understandings of the term transgender, narrowed down to South African teachers ‘perspective, relevant to my own research. Thus, as this study seeks to ascertain how teachers in a primary school construct transgender identity, careful consideration was taken in choosing the study method to achieve an accurate conclusion of their constructions. Hence, the layout of this chapter is as follows: Context of the study, research design, methodology (research instruments and sampling, collections of data and analysis of data), and attainment of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and lastly, limitations of my study.

4.2 Summary of the Research Approach

Figure 3: Summary of the research approach

Research Site	Research Design	Methodology, Instruments and Sampling	Participants	Duration of Interviews
Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu-Natal	<p>Research approach - Qualitative</p> <p>Epistemology: Interpretivist paradigm</p> <p>Analysis: Thematic</p>	<p>Methodology: Phenomenological study</p> <p>Research instruments/ methods: 30 Semi-structured individual interviews with teachers, using photo elicitation and vignettes.</p> <p>Sampling: Purposeful sampling</p>	<p>Participants: 30 Educators</p> <p>Gender: Male = 6 Race: African = 2 Indian = 1 White = 2 Coloured = 1</p> <p>Female = 24 Race: African = 6 Indian = 5 White = 12 Coloured = 1</p>	Individual interviews 30-45 min

4.2.1 Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research approach which “is a strategy for addressing the research question including specifications for enhancing the study’s integrity” Nyangu (2016, p. 42). Qualitative research aims to produce knowledge of human experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Just the context of human engagement alone (for this study: between teachers/teachersand teachers/learners) is qualitative research (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This type of interaction ensures that information is gathered via conversation in a particular environment, *then developing this information as some sort on interpretivism to make sense of reactions* and understandings of phenomenon (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Hence, I used qualitative research

design as it allowed for many different perspectives on what primary school teachers understood about gender, sex, and sexuality diverse individuals.

Qualitative research further allows for flexibility, for example sample size, types of discussions and types of questions put forward by the researcher (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This is especially well suited as interviewing humans with different understandings and perspectives allows the researcher to subtly change and adapt questions. This is relevant as this facilitates the researcher to simultaneously keep in mind the research objectives while allowing the interviewee to shape and lead the conversation to their own understandings and perspectives (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This was important to my study as it allowed me to gain a deep knowledge into how my participants made sense and perceived sexual diverse people.

Further, Nowell et al. (2017) state that qualitative research has a specific technique for conducting data, but it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure its rigour. As this type of research is one of the most prevalent used in social research, criticism comes into play regarding results yielded as some critics question the soundness of findings and imply these can be generalised (Cardano, 2020). According to Cardano (2020), to safeguard against such criticism, qualitative research must be rigorous. This will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

Having laid out the reasons for utilising a qualitative research design for my study, I will now discuss my chosen research paradigm.

4.2.2 An Interpretivist Paradigm

According to Thanh & Thanh (2015, p. 24) it is "theoretically understood that interpretive paradigm allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants." Further, many qualitative research studies include an interpretive paradigm to its focus by studying a phenomenon (in my study: transgender identities) within the participants' (primary school teachers) context (school) to make understanding of or interpret, a phenomenon (transgender) and the meanings that they make of it. The use of an interpretivist paradigm in a study allows for multiple perspectives and truths and this is especially important as people are different, thus have various "truths" and understandings (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

The interpretivist paradigm allowed me to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants as it is commonly used in the qualitative research. Interpretivist researchers believe that the participants' perspective includes their understandings of the outside world or phenomenon under study and that understanding is socially constructed

(Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Dean, 2018). “Interpretivists believe an understanding of the context in which any form of research is conducted is critical to the interpretation of data gathered” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, p. 25).

Additionally, I used the participants’ voices to construct and interpret their understanding from the gathered data. The use of this paradigm was relevant because the aim of this study was to understand how primary school learners make meaning of transgender identities.

4.2.3 A Phenomenological Study

According to Nulty et al. (2019, p. 4) “Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a form of phenomenological inquiry selected for its idiographic and explorative approach...The purpose of IPA is therefore to explore and understand, in detail, participants’ personal accounts and experiences.” Further, adopting a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to understand how things appear to participants, how they experience their own subjective realities, making it their own truths (Nulty et al., 2019). Moreover, a phenomenological study allows for harmonic understandings of a group of people as they experience a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This type of approach enables research to explore and comprehend participants own *understandings, perceptions, experiences and meaning of phenomenon*, in this case, transgender identities. A phenomenological approach further allows the researcher to “actively interpret participants’ narratives, deploying conceptual, psychological language to generate insights into the phenomena under examination” (Nulty, Winder & Lopresti, 2019, p. 5). By means of such a method, the researcher is facilitated to moving beyond just a retelling verbatim of a participant’s experience, but rather allowing the researcher to “to produce more abstract, theoretical understanding of the topic” (Nulty et al., 2019, p. 5).

For my study, the phenomenon I aimed to understand was primary school teachers ‘perspectives of what transgender identities meant to them, and any commonalities that existed between these various perceptions. Some of these were that this type of sexuality went against teachers ‘religious and moral beliefs. However, when it comes to homogenous beliefs in phenomenological studies. Daher et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of allowing for the individuality of every person, thus preparing for different views as well. This was evident in my research where two teachers expressed that they see nothing wrong with being transgender and it is that person’s right to be happy.

This phenomenological method was key to my study as the research objectives were to determine how teachers in a primary school construct transgender identity as well as determine the factors that shape primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities. As the methodology for this chapter has been explained, I will proceed to give a detailed account of the location and context of my study.

4.3 Location and Context of the Research Study

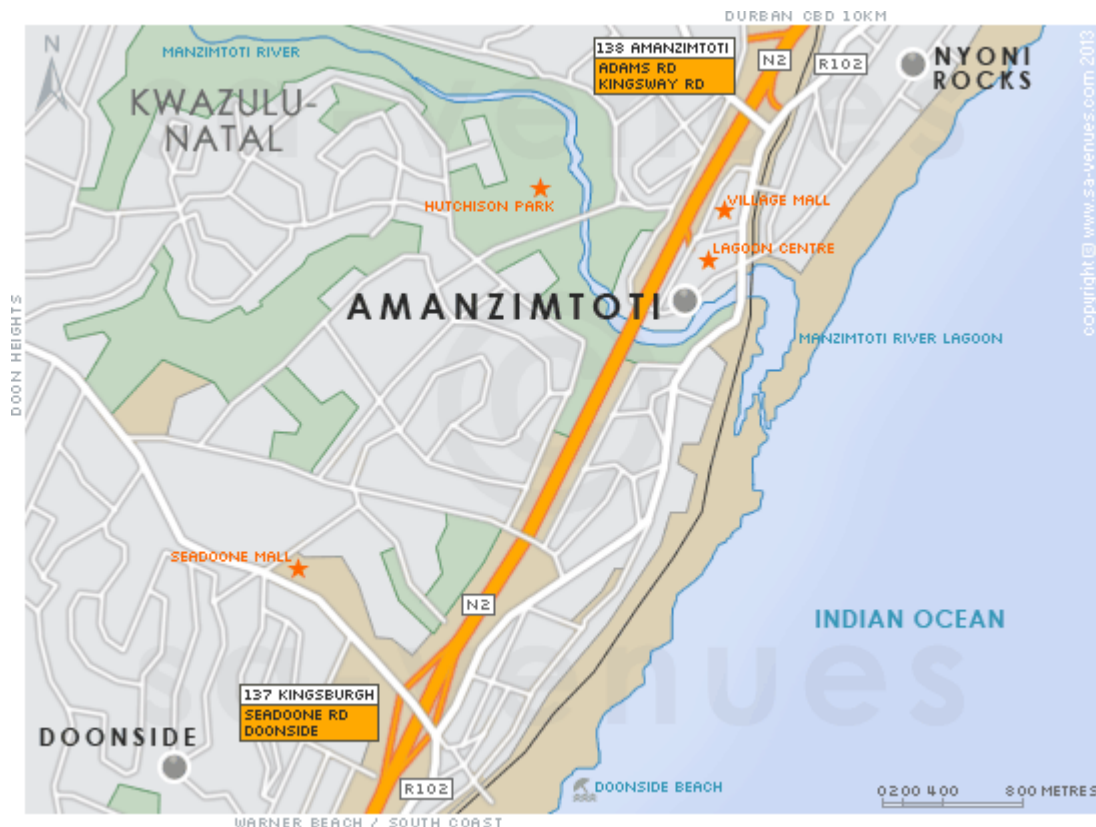


Figure 4: Aerial map of Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu-Natal: Study location

This study was conducted in the historical township of Amanzimtoti, a coastal town just south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Amanzimtoti was founded in 1928 and subsequently became a borough in 1952 (Raper, 2020). A few years later, the three areas of Amanzimtoti, Isipingo and Isipingo Rail were integrated into a single municipality, creating a racially diverse area. Amanzimtoti, named after the Amanzimtoti river, was given its name by King Shaka Zulu when he travelled through the area and drank out of the river, proclaiming it as “sweet waters.” Thus, the region was aptly named as the Zulu word for sweet waters (Raper, 2020).

According to Census (2011) the population of Amanzimtoti is just over 13 000 with roughly over 4, 500 households, the racial demographic being as 67% White, 22% African and 8%

Indian or Asian. The area has a relatively young population with majority of its residents being in the age categories between 25 to 54 years of age (Census, 2011). The population is made up of 52% female and 48% male, with English the main spoken language at 51%, followed by Afrikaans and Zulu, 31% and 14 % respectively (Census, 2011). Although seen as a tourist destination due to its warm Indian oceans, Amanzimtoti is in the midst of experiencing a great economic boom with the construction of KZN Automotive Supplier Park (ASP) which is intended to support original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in KZN and attract others to the region to support Toyota SA Motors, creating many job opportunities in the area (Raper, 2020).

Amanzimtoti has over seven primary schools, six pre-primaries and over five high schools (Raper, 2020). Most of these schools are ex Model C schools with two primary and high schools being Afrikaans medium schools. This study will be conducted at Ladybug Primary School in the historical township of Amanzimtoti. The school has an estimated learner population of 690, with 32 educators. The demise of apartheid resulted in many people relocating from rural areas to townships such as Umlazi in an endeavour to seek employment opportunities in its' neighbouring suburbs. Consequently, the teacher population at Lady Bug Primary School is varied in terms of race, culture, religion, and gender. This variation aided to ensure that data obtained was saturated and rich. The reason for choosing this school as a research site was because it was near to my place of residence, thus making it convenient for me to gain access. The school is over 40 years old and as all government schools in classification, Ladybug Primary School falls into the category of quintile 5. According to Nkosi (2018) this category of school is generally situated in an economically affluent neighbourhood with "fee-paying" parents. Subsequently, the school fee is set at R15 000 per annum, with approximately 16% of the learner population requiring a fee consensus or government aided school grant.

The majority of learners that attend Ladybug Primary School are from the surrounding areas of Amanzimtoti, namely Adams Mission, Kwamakhuta, Illovo and Umlazi. Prior to Covid-19, the school would run various fundraisers throughout the year in order to raise funds for a number of needs of the school. Some of these included raffle sheets bake sales and the year-end Christmas concert. Funds raised by such events went towards a number of causes, namely the Grade 7 farewell and purchasing new computers for the computer lab. Further, parents and private companies in the area routinely donate towards such requirements to the school. The school does not receive any feeding aid from the government and most of the learners are able to bring a sufficiently packed lunch as there is no tuck-shop on site. In the rare cases where

learners do not bring lunch, the teachers have an emergency supply of bread, butter and peanut butter and make sandwiches in such cases. The total number of learners at Ladybug Primary School is 686 learners, with over 90% of this being Black learners. Refer to Figure 5.

Research site	
Province	KwaZulu-Natal
District	Umlazi
Town	Amanzimtoti
Urban/Rural/Township	Urban
Total number of learners in terms of race and gender	653 Black African (327 males, 326 females) 10 Indian learners (6 males, 4 females) 16 Coloured learners (4 males, 12 females) 7 White learners (3 males, 4 females) Total: 686
Socio-economic and political context	Quintile 5

Figure 5: *Research Site: Ladybug Primary School*

Learners come from various backgrounds with diverse socio-economic households. Although majority of learners are first language Zulu speaking, many attend Ladybug Primary School to be better exposed to English.

The teacher population consists of a total of 35 educators, of which approximately 14 are government employed, while the rest are Student Governing Body (SGB) employed. The racial and gender demographics for educators are as follows:

- 11 Black African teachers (2 males, 9 females)
- 6 Indian teachers (1 male, 5 females)
- 16 White teachers (2 males, 14 females)
- 2 Coloured teachers (1 male, 1 female).

The school management consists of the principal (White female), vice principal (White male) and 3 heads of departments (all White females).

The school is adequately sized and consists of two teaching blocks, three floors each, one housing the Foundation Phase (grades R to 3) and the other accommodating the larger Senior Phase (grades 4 to 7). There is one grade R class, two grade 1 and 2 classes, four grade 3 classes and three grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 classes. Each class roughly accommodates between 28-34 learners. The school is very well resourced with a computer lab, large hall, two sick bay areas, two aftercare rooms, gender specific bathrooms on each floor and a separate administration wing (that includes a fully-fledged kitchen, staff room, offices, and foyer). Each classroom has a smart board and each educator, a PC. Further, the school has a separate computer lab for educators as well as a printing room. Ladybug Primary offers a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, some of which include soccer, cricket, netball, rugby, and swimming. Sporting facilities include a large swimming pool, cricket pitch, netball court and a large athletic field. Physical Education or PE is carried out by two coaches and educators only assist with after school sport specific to certain terms in the school year.

Although the school premises are well maintained by two maintenance men, the littering of school grounds due to learners was a concern for the management and thus, the tuck- shop was closed and is now only available during large school events. During my time spent conducting my research, I was met with a diverse group of teachers, who mostly were welcoming and eager to be part of my research. Therefore, this site was optimal for my research as it allowed me access to a diverse group of accommodating educators in order to understand their perceptions and understandings of gender diverse individuals. I will now discuss the steps and procedures that I undertook to ensure my desired participants and research objectives.

4.4 Sample Recruiting

Sampling includes making decisions about which people, settings, and events to analyse. According to Gentles et al. (2015, p. 1781) qualitative sampling is “the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives.” By selecting a diverse group of primary school teachers (diversity in terms of gender, race, age, religion, and backgrounds) I have ensured that my set objectives of understanding the perceptions (and factors that shape these perceptions) of primary school teachers towards transgender identities. For this study I used the dual method of convenient and purposive sampling.

Etikan et al. (2016) explain convenient sampling as non-random or non-probability sampling as the researcher chooses certain participants from a target population due to several reasons. Some of these include easy accessibility for the researcher, availability of the participants, geographical location, and willingness of participation (Etikan et al., 2016). In the specific case of my research, I started with convenient sampling of participants as the research site was close to my home and the school had more than my required quota of participants, which was 30 educators. Further, I recruited participants based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

However, as I spent time at the school and interacted with the educators, my sampling method shifted towards purposive sampling. My interactions and tentative questioning with the teachers regarding transgender identities revealed that some individuals had a better general knowledge or even *some* sort of knowledge on the term and topic, while other conversations revealed that some teachers were not familiar with the term at all. Hence, I recruited mostly teachers who were both willing and has some sort of familiarity with non-conforming gender identities. I established this familiarity regarding transgender identities by holding very informal conversations about the topic with possible participants. In these conversations, I asked teachers about what they thought the term transgender means, or how they interpret the term. Some teachers thought it meant the same as being a transvestite, while others considered a transgender person to be gay or lesbian. I attempted to interview teachers who had a more informed perception of the term transgender. Purposive sampling allows for the purposive choosing of information-rich participants to provide the most appropriate, relevant information on the phenomenon (transgender) being studied (Palinkas, et al., 2015). Within purposive sampling, the researcher can select the participants who would be best capable to deliver rich, comprehensive data (Cohen et al., 2011). A sample of thirty teachers that was purposively recruited in my study was important to my research as it allowed me to gain perspectives on the various understandings and factors that shaped these perceptions, regarding transgender identities, of a diverse group of primary school teachers.

After gaining written consent from the school principal to conduct my research, I gathered all 35 teachers in the school hall and explained the topic, nature, and ethical considerations of my specific research study. I then proceeded to verbally enquire as to who was willing to be a participant in the study and handed out participant consent forms to all 35 educators.

Although my wish was to have an even number of participants with regards to gender, race and religion, I had no choice as majority of the teacher population was white and female. Further,

I had no control over those teachers who did not wish to be part of the study, as participation was voluntary and consensual. After about a week of me coming to the school, 22 consent forms from some of the teachers were returned to me. After talking to those teachers who initially accepted the consent forms and had not returned them to me, 8 said that they either lost them or forgot to return them and thus returned them within a few days after. Five of the teachers declined being part of the study citing reasons such as being too old to understand anything about transgender, not comfortable being recorded, while some stated they would only do the interviews if no other teachers came forward. Subsequently, I recruited 30 teachers for my study, this number of participants being sufficient in order to gain rich and insightful data (Etikan et al., 2016).

When conducting the interviews, the recording times varied quite differently. I can only explain this by stating that some teachers had more ideas, opinions, and perceptions about the topic. In these instances, teachers spoke more than others, despite me attempting to use prompt questioning for those participants who spoke less.

Further to note, although the ages of the participants were further varied, I did not note any data to suggest any findings highlighted significant differences in views regarding diverse gender identities and age of participants .

4.5 Data Collection

Research method refers to the equipment used “to get the data that you’re going to analyse” (Hofstee, 2018, p. 115). The research questions necessitated the use of more than one method to ensure the retrieval of broadened and heightened data. Initially, during my proposal stage of my research, I had planned on utilising two methods in order to collect data: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). However, my plans had to change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I had to set aside FGDs due to the pandemic protocols that called for social distancing, quarantine, and strict lockdown protocols. I did attempt to work around these necessary limitations however, attempting to get groups of teachers together for interviews via platforms such as Zoom or WhatsApp calls proved challenging. Reasons for this were logistical, timing, availability of participants and data issues. Consequently, for this study, I embarked on acquiring primary data that was data collected by myself via interviews with participants (Hofstee, 2018). This encompassed 30 semi-structured interviews, (mostly face to face and some telephonically) including photo elicitation and vignettes.

4.5.1 Conducting the Interviews.

In order to collect data or *information* from people on a certain topic, dialogue is necessary (Newcomer et al., 2015). Similarly, semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are not only an appropriate approach, but vital instrument in qualitative research (Newcomer et al., 2015). According to Morgan (2017, p. 91), during such interviews, “...participants are encouraged to explore the issues raised by the questions and talk about whatever they considered to be significant.... intended to promote an expanded engagement with certain themes, fluidity of narrative process and the deeper revelation of research participants’ views, values, understandings and interpretations of the issues in question; and potentially participant empowerment in the process.”

As per protocol and ethical consideration, all participants signed consent forms voluntarily and willingly before conducting interviews (see Appendix D). All participants were further re-informed (although such was stated on the consent form) that our interaction was to be recorded using a recording app on a cellular phone. I ensured that I carved out some time prior, to draft an interview schedule (see Appendix E). This is most necessary before attempting any data acquisition in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to “create the agenda for the interview guide, the outline of planned topics, and questions to be addressed, arrayed in their tentative order.” (Newcomer et al., 2015, p. 5).

Using Newcomer et al. (2015) model as a guide, I carefully drafted, looked over and edited my interview schedule ensuring that enough time was given to my interviewees between questions, for feedback and interaction. Further, I also conducted a “pilot run” with a few of my Masters colleagues to get feedback and iron out any noticeable problems with the interview questions. Interviews were conducted in each participant’s classroom, always at a time of their convenience, which was usually during their free period or after school. For these interviews, strict Covid-19 protocols were adhered to, which included sanitizing my and the participant’s hands on entering the classroom, wearing a face mask throughout the interview, and sitting at least 2 metres apart whilst conducting the interview. Although I had spent a few weeks with my participants prior to interviews and we had established a somewhat comfortable relationship, I did notice that some teachers were slightly nervous or anxious about the process. To ease any such discomfort, I employed an “ice- breaker” (Newcomer et al., 2015) technique of asking the teachers general questions before recording- such as how they were, how were they and their families dealing with the Covid-19 virus and any funny anecdote about their day. Further, I reiterated my guarantee of participant confidentiality. By doing this, much of the anxiety and nervousness on both the participants and my part, was alleviated.

As a researcher, I was aware of the often-present unequal power dynamics between researcher and participant, where the researcher is sometimes perceived as having more knowledge on the research topic and thus superior to the participant (Nguyen et al., 2018). Also known as the *Hawthorne Effect*, some participants exhibit behavioural changes when being interviewed, as they are nervous about being recorded, part of a research study or want to please the researcher by getting all the questions “correct” (Nguyen et al., 2018). This type of behaviour is counterproductive to the research objectives and results in poor quality data as participants feel that they cannot be themselves and give their true and honest opinions and thoughts on the research topic (Nguyen et al, 2018). To reduce this, I ensured my participants were fully aware

that my questions were only directed to gain their very honest thoughts and opinions on transgender identities and that their responses were important and significant to my researcher. Lastly, I ensured that all my participants were aware that there was no “correct” answer or response to any of my questions. I further ensured that my manner was friendly, open, and always professional.

4.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Unlike surveys or closed-ended questions, SSIs allow the researcher to have a one-on-one conversation with a participant and uses a combination of both open and closed-ended questions, often complemented by *why* or *how* enquiries (Newcomer et al., 2015). According to Kallio et al. (2016, pp. 4-5), “One of the main advantages is that the semi-structured interview method has been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant, enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participant’s responses and allowing space for participants’ individual verbal expressions.” For me to ascertain *how*, *what*, and *why* primary school teachers perceived identities that were gender, sex and sexuality diverse, SSIs were indeed appropriate.

I chose to employ semi-structured interviews as this approach allowed me to be adaptable in my interview process, with regards to questioning participants. For example, during our conversations, some participants would give me their opinions on a certain question that I had either not asked or would answer a question that was further down my interview schedule. By using a SSI method, I could modify my questions to allow for a smoother transition and flow of the interview rapport (Newcomer et al., 2015). Further, during the first few interviews, I noted that some of the participants failed to volunteer information about some questions either because of the way it was phrased or due to lack of understanding of the question. Feedback from these early interviews allowed me to reassess my interview schedule, tweaking it for small areas of improvement which prevented me from having to re-interview participants. Further these one-on-one, face to face interviews allowed me to delve deep into teachers’ opinions and understandings of transgender identities, producing thorough information which was a true reflection of these teachers’ perceptions.

In total, I conducted 30 interviews, 27 of them face to face and 3 telephonically. The face-to-face interviews mostly conducted after school and in the teachers’ classrooms. The venue of the interview is worth noting as to obtain rich and true data, participants must feel comfortable and at ease in the space which they are being interviewed (Nguyen et al., 2018).

4.5.3 Telephonic Semi-structured Interviews

The duration of conducting the interviews was approximately over a 2-and-a-half-month period and near the end of this time frame, the government issued a Level 5 national lockdown, whereby South African residents could not leave their homes, except for emergency purposes and food runs. As per this protocol, schools were immediately shut down and learners and teachers had to embark on the daunting and unparalleled task of home teaching and learning (Madhi et al., 2020). Due to this, my last remaining interviews had to be conducted telephonically. Prior to the interviews, I sent my participants the photos and vignettes (that I had used for all the other interviews) via WhatsApp images. I further called them to explain each of these and answer any questions they may have had. I allowed for a day between these messages and the actual interviews, ensuring my participants has sufficient time to look at the images. These telephonic conversations were recorded using a recording app on a cellular phone and all interviews were transcribed verbatim by me later. Figure 6 shows the 30 teacher participants. Aliases were used to protect each teacher's identity and confidentiality.

No.	Teacher participants	Race	Sex	Age	Grade taught	Duration of interview
1	Mrs. B.	White	F	33	3	00:14:02
2	Jemma	White	F	28	2	00:15:05
3	Miss Bee	African	F	42	2	00:14:57
4	Chloe	White	F	37	2	00:18:06
5	Sibongile	African	F	34	2	00:12:04
6	Mrs. R	Indian	F	27	1	00:15:59
7	Mrs. Zee	White	F	28	1	00:11:49
8	Debbie	White	F	52	1	00:24:19
9	Ally	White	F	41	6	00:23:22
10	Zama	African	F	41	6	00:18:13
11	Dr X	Indian	M	32	6	00:14:41
12	Mr. P	Coloured	M	33	7	00:14:01
13	Gabriella	African	F	26	5	00:14:37
14	Amanda	African	F	39	4	00:14:45
15	Mary	White	F	36	R	00:17:28
16	Gerald	White	M	52	6,7	00:27:59
17	Cassandra	White	F	44	5,6,7	00:19:22
18	Ntombi	African	F	54	5	00:14:47
19	Grace	White	F	44	5	00:21:22
20	Vee	Coloured	F	36	4,5,6,7	00:16:09
21	Duncan	White	M	32	R-7	00:18:02
22	Siya	African	M	27	R-7	00:20:28

23	Somebody	White	F	44	7	00:18:32
24	Phoebe	Indian	F	46	5	00:25:52
25	Cassanova	African	M	37	5	00:25:14
26	Promise	African	F	25	1,2,3	00:19:19
27	Stephanie	Indian	F	26	4	00:11:12
28	Cola	Indian	F	26	3	00:13:56
29	Tiffany	Coloured	F	25	1	00:11:49
30	Caitlin	Coloured	F	26	7	00:20:10

Figure 6: *Teacher's (participants) profiles for semi-structured interviews*

4.5.4 The Use of Photo-elicitation and Vignettes

The use of photo-elicitation and vignettes in qualitative research has gained both momentum and popularity in the last decade (Richard & Lahman, 2015). The utilization of photos is described as a method to aid the researcher in capturing participants' feelings, opinions, thoughts, and the way they organize their understandings and perceptions with regards to a certain topic (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Pictures allow the researcher to gain a deeper information from participants as sometimes uses of photos allow participants a more potent and truthful reaction to whatever is presented in the photos (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Photo-elicitation further aids the researcher by allowing participants to make connections to the research topic, by lending tangible visuals to otherwise abstract or ambiguous topics. I subsequently used photographs of well-known transgender individuals and celebrities to allow my participants to make that deeper connection and generate a fuller understanding. After looking at the images, many of the teachers were able to gain a better understanding of transgender individuals and were more confident when answering questions. The photos assisted participants in feeling almost like "experts" on the topic of transgender identities, thus breaching the power gap between researcher and participant (Bates et al., 2017).

Appendix F depicts the images that I employed simultaneously with the semi-structured questions. These images, along with my questions, opened a comfortable and interactive space where my participants were able to give deep, honest, and real opinions, thoughts and perceptions of transgender identities. The use of open-ended questions further aided in this process. I asked questions such as "What do you think when you see these pictures?" and "What do you think has taken place with these people?" which allowed my participants to deliver their own understandings and interpretations according to their individual socializations (Bates et al., 2017).

For further facilitation and rapport of teacher's understandings of the term transgender, I additionally used vignettes in my data collection methods (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020). According to Sampson and Johannessen (2020), vignettes have become quite a popular tool for researchers in social studies. Sampson and Johannessen (2020, p. 54) say vignettes "...can broadly be described as a written description of a (frequently fictitious) event which relates to the central topic of study". Vignettes are used as another form of stimulus or clues that allow those being interviewed to connect with the topic (Rizvi, 2019).

Appendix F shows the vignette I utilised in conjunction with photo-elicitation and questions. My vignette was simple, showing a picture of the famous transgender female teenager, Jazz Jennings. I explained to my participants that Jazz and her parents decided to start her gender transformation at age 9, while recording her journey and sharing it with the world via the social platform YouTube. I then asked follow-up questions such as "What are your thoughts on this?" and "If you were a parent to a child in this situation, what would you have done?" the use of vignettes paved a way for me to receive a deeper understanding, feelings and thoughts of teachers 'perceptions of transgender individuals'.

Vignettes "provided for a richer interview than would have been possible with a face-to-face interview in the more limited time frame [available]" (Stacey & Vincent, 2011, p. 622). Use of such approaches further assist the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the values held by participants, their opinions, and thoughts as well as their perceived social norms (Stacey & Vincent, 2011). Vignettes are useful tools when researchers are attempting to seed out participants' true representations and/or behaviours towards a specific field of study (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020) and in the case of my research topic, teachers' perceptions and factors that influence their understandings of gender diverse people. According to O'Dell, Crafter, de Abreu and Cline (2012, p. 708), these techniques have "been identified as a potential strength in research... and are interested in understanding the multiple voices with which participants may engage in dialogue." Having discussed my reasons for utilizing photo- elicitation and vignettes within my interview processes, I will now move on to explain steps taken to analyse my data within my study.

4.6 Data Analysis

After data collection, the following stage in the research process is data analysis. Data analysis is imperative as it helps in making sense of the information from the point of view of the participants. Hence, "the researcher develops the instruments for analysis, making decisions

about coding, theming, and decontextualizing data” (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). A six-step data analysis approach was followed: “organizing and preparing the data for analysis, reading through all the data, coding of the data, description of the setting or people and categories or themes for analysis, presenting the results of the analysis and interpretation of the results for analysis” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 196). A thematic analysis was employed, as it is a flexible method to find themes and patterns in the data collected (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The data analysis was checked, verified, and discussed with the supervisor and academic peers regularly.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the first step in data analysis is to review the *purpose* of your research and take a closer look at your objectives, followed by the questions asked in your data collection methods. It is imperative that the researcher is familiar with and constantly interacting with the data collected from the various methods used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using this approach, I ensured that all interviews carried out were recorded via a cellular phone app and then transcribed by myself verbatim. Once all the data was transcribed, the interview recordings were replayed various times to cross-reference and determine the accuracy of the transcriptions. Additionally, during the data collection process, I documented brief observation regarding general aspects such as mood of my participants, body language, facial expressions, and gestures. These types of records assist researchers in obtaining a more meaningful retrospective account which will benefit in the process of identifying themes and patterns within the data (Mason, 2017). During the initial stage of reading through the transcriptions, I further made a separate memo of sorts where I captured my reflections, ideas, and hunches. Merriam & Tisdell (2015), state this is a concrete way of allowing the researcher to identify tentative themes and be able to pursue ideas further that emerge from the initial interaction of the researcher and transcriptions. By doing this I become more familiar with the data, which is imperative to any commendable analysis.

As the data analysis was thematic in nature, themes had to be identified. Morgan (2017, p. 93) describes this process as “a categorizing strategy for qualitative data – a means to move from a broad reading of the data towards discovering patterns and developing themes.” Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 176) state “the practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to your research questions. These answers are also called categories or themes or findings.” To identify themes or categories in data, data must first be organized into similar, recurrent, and relevant portions, known as coding (Morgan, 2017). These emergent codes thus structure the rest of your analysis process.

During the process of analysis, I was able to assess how existing patriarchal hegemonic norms and standards perpetuate discrimination of gender, sex and sexuality diverse individuals. I applied the relationship between Judith Butler's (1990) Queer theory and Raewyn Connell's (1995; 2005) theory of masculinity and gender in my data analysis process. These theories assisted in exposing gender, as well as sexuality as not essentially or biologically constructed, but rather are conceived through social and cultural interactions (Butler, 1990).

My study set out to examine how primary school teachers construct their understandings and personal beliefs about transgender individuals as well as the factors that shape these perceptions. This has an evocative influence on how such learners are interacted with and perform in educational spaces (Airton et al., 2016). Research shows that globally and within a South African context, learners who are sex, gender, and sexuality diverse are prone to bullying, harassment, mental and emotional trauma (Cates, 2019; Mulqueeny et al., 2020). Cultivating a safe, non-prejudiced and inclusive teaching and learning environment is central to combating such prejudices against gender non-conforming learners (Airton et al., 2016; Howard, 2016), and teachers are a critical component of this need. Thus, how teachers' construct their understandings of sexual identities, transgender identities more specifically, must be considered as teachers themselves, pave the environment of teaching and learning (Cates, 2019). I will now discuss how I established trustworthiness throughout my study.

4.7 Validity, Reliability and Rigour of the Study

Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 209) state "All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields because practitioners intervene in people's lives." To ensure an ethically rigorous study, the quality criteria used in this study were credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity (Yanow, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These are explained below:

A qualitative research study ensures a study's credibility by establishing the different strategies that may help to improve the quality of research. Those strategies include triangulation, reflexivity and more (Anney, 2014). Triangulation is explained as collecting data in different ways on the same topic as to gain a deeper and richer understanding of that topic (Henry, 2015). I obtained triangulations by asking the questions during the face-to-face interviews in a variety of different ways, to ensure verification of the participants' responses. Further, the use of

vignettes and photos during the interviews further provided to the element of credibility (Tarrow, 2019). Credibility focuses on establishing the trustworthiness value by incorporating the inherent nature of the situation or circumstance under study by involving different information(data) gathering methods to validate the data collected and the interpretations thereof (Groat & Wang, 2013). In the context of this study, credibility was reached by constant member checking and the use of understanding-level language. Interviews were conducted in English, as all the participants spoke the language fluently.

Dependability involves participants surveying the outcomes and the comprehension and references of the investigation to guarantee the data collected is correct and that they all support the transcribed data (Cohen et al., 2011). It includes reliability by taking into interpretation “apparent instabilities arising because different realities caused by the use of instrumental shifts stemming from developing insights on the part of the investigator as instrument of research” (Groat & Wang, 2013, p.132). In this study, dependability was achieved by using thematic analysis to manually identify themes and patterns, code, and analysis the transcripts (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To further ensure validity and dependability of the study, I met with each participant separately after the analysis of my data to discuss major findings or themes. I additionally presented each participant with their transcribed interview, so they were able to look over this, ensuring no fabrication of data was within (Groat & Wang, 2013). Of course, as mentioned previously, all participants were briefed about the nature, need and process of the study and signed consent before any interviews had taken place (Morgan, 2017). Participants were made explicitly aware that participation was a wholly voluntary act, and should they feel uncomfortable or feel the study was harmful in any way, they had the option to retract themselves from the study at any given time, with no concern of negative consequences (Morgan, 2017).

Confirmability refers to the findings or results of an inquiry that can be set up by different researchers as it is “concerned with founding that data and understandings of the findings are not creations of the inquirer’s mind but are clearly resulting from the data” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). Confirmability is about ensuring the investigators’ objectivity, which will be attained through triangulation and reflexivity (Groat & Wang, 2013). As such, during the analysis process of data, I ensured that my opinions, feelings, and perceptions were excluded from the process. Confirmability was further accomplished through recordings of all interviews, via a cellular phone app. The interviews were later transcribed by me, verbatim and presented to the participants for fact checking and confirming transcripts (Morgan, 2017). The

use of a reflexive and triangulation of all the data collected through the collection instruments is imperative here as it allows for excellence and openness of the study (Anney, 2014).

According to Palaganas et al. (2017, p. 427) reflexivity is a method of reflection whereby investigators identify, observe, and know how their “social background, setting and expectations affect their research practice”. The researcher commits to share reflectivity learning purposes, to enhance theory building and to ensure credibility and conformability of the study’s findings. It is important to the trustworthiness of the study that the researcher remains separate from the research and consequent findings (Palaganas et al., 2017). Similarly, I had to make a concerted effort to set aside my own beliefs and moral principles when analyzing my data, as these personal opinions would subtract from the trustworthiness of the study’s findings (Palaganas et al., 2017). For example, coming from an orthodox Muslim background and from my *personal* experience as Islam does not condone the act of changing one’s gender. However, as the researcher, I took a neutral stance of the topic as to ensure trustworthiness of the study, thus establishing reflexivity in the process.

It must be noted that when I was initially introduced to the teacher participants, specifically as a teacher myself and masters’ student, I did notice some level of intimidation on my participants’ part. This speaks to the concept of a power imbalance between researcher and participants where participants may see the researcher as an expert on the topic and thus may feel inferior to the researcher in knowledge (Nguyen et al., 2018). To ensure a degree of reflexivity, this imbalance of power must be recognized by the researcher and steps must be taken for it to be neutralized (Newcomer et al., 2015). I accomplished this by reiterating to my interviewees that there was no correct or even incorrect opinion, answer or thoughts to the questions posed. All feedback and perceptions were significant to the study. Further, I chatted to each participant beforehand, to establish a trustful and open comradery and relationship. In this way, I felt participants were prone to be more honest and confident in their responses (Nguyen et al., 2018).

Reflexivity is further obtained when the researcher acknowledges that some participants may choose their responses in a way that they may feel is what the researcher wants to hear or align responses to what they perceive as the researcher’s stance on the topic (Nguyen et al., 2018). This was evident when some of the participants initially labelled the concept of transgender immoral and sinful, according to their religious beliefs. However, with more probing and further questioning, almost all the participants changed their opinions to the consensus that

they were not fit to judge such individuals. Further, many of the participants stated that although their religions may not condone the concept of transgender, they were obligated by these same religious beliefs to not pass judgment as such. This involvement during the analysis stage further lends a degree of reflexivity to the research due to the building of trust between the researcher and participants (Nguyen et al., 2018). A reflexive journal was kept ensuring daily reflexivity within the process of data collection, what was learnt and from the experiences at the study site. As mentioned previously, a memo was further kept during my initial interaction with the data analysis process, allowing me to identify tentative themes and reoccurring patterns. This memo lent further aspect of reflexivity to my study as I constantly and critically engaged with the data, identifying any personal biases toward the analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I will now proceed to discuss the ethical considerations of the study.

4.8 Ethics in the Research Process

Ethical considerations are intrinsic to empirical research and thus make that research truly credible (von Unger, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 245) expand on this thought by stating “To a large extent, the validity and reliability of a study depend upon the ethics of the investigator. “Therefore, as the researcher, I ensured that all ethical considerations were reflected during my study. These will be discussed as follows: consent, anonymity, and participant autonomy.

This research study only commenced once ethical clearance from all stakeholders was received. As this study is part of a bigger study, *Learning from the learner*, ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee in the University of KwaZulu-Natal had been received. The next step was to receive ethical clearance from the Department of Education, which was granted in May 2020 (see Appendix B). Thereafter, I met with the principal of the research school, explained the nature of my research as well as reassuring the principal about issues pertaining to confidentiality and anonymity. I further presented a letter of permission to conduct the study in the school to the principal, which was signed and dated by the principal (see Appendix C).

According to von Unger (2016), the cornerstone of ethical practice qualitative research is informed consent. Thus, consent forms were issued to all 35 teachers in the school (see Appendix D). After addressing all teaching staff members about the nature of my research, 22 teachers returned consent forms. Upon following up with the rest who had not returned forms, a further eight (8) produced the signed consent forms. As previously stated within the data

collection process of the study, participant interaction was largely based on availability of teachers. All participants were properly informed about the ethical consideration of the study, in alignment with the concept of “Do no Harm” in qualitative research (von Unger, 2016). This relates to the principal of non-maleficence, further explained by von Unger (2016, p. 93) where a key purpose of the researcher is to ensure that no harm or damage came to any of the participants at any stage of the research process. He states “... damage that can arise in the context of social research results from lack of data protection and violation of the private sphere of the interview partners. Confidentiality and procedures for anonymizing the data are therefore important measures to take.” I ensured that all participants were protected by use of pseudonyms and anonymity.

All data collected was kept in a locked safe at my place of residence and was only accessible to myself, supervisor, and participants. Participants were further afforded confidentiality by assigned aliases (which were chosen by each teacher themselves) and the school’s identity was secured by use of a pseudonym. According to Morgan (2017, p. 99), pseudonyms are necessary “in order to protect the identities, personal information and confidentiality of all the participants.” However, it must be noted that two of my teacher participants chose *not* to have aliases, but rather be interviewed using their actual names. Throughout the interview process, I constantly reminded participants of their safety and confidentiality, hoping to create a feeling of trust and ease for every teacher. Further, I informed all the interviewees that if they felt any sense of trauma, unease or discomfort whilst participating in the study, they were afforded the option to discuss these feelings with the onsite school counsellor.

Participants were constantly notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time, with no ill-intentioned repercussions. All participants were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary, with no monetary benefits to involvement in the study. These concepts were clearly stated by me during my initial talk on the study, as well as in the teacher participant consent forms. I attempted to create a haven for the participants, choosing to conduct interviews in each participant’s classroom, at a time of their convenience. By doing this, I established a feeling of ease and trust between myself and the teachers.

It must be stated that although every ethical consideration was adhered to throughout the study that my desired sample size was achieved. I did however face challenges that affected my research. These limitations and my strides taken to offset them will be discussed below.

4.9 Limitations in the Study

Perhaps the biggest challenge of my study was the Covid-19 pandemic. No person anticipated this and therefore, not many people were prepared for it and knew the catastrophic changes that it would bring to our lives. When the president announced our initial level 5 lockdown, the country anticipated it only lasting two weeks', however, it lasted over 4 months. Subsequently, all schools were closed from approximately March 2020 to August 2020, making data collection a very real and nearly impossible task. I had only visited the school in late January of 2020 (when the new school year had started) to introduce myself and gain consent from the principal and teacher participants. Further, I could not start any data collection as I was awaiting ethical clearance from the Department of Education and the UKZN Research Ethics Committee. Due to these delays, I was only able to observe the teachers and attempt to strike up a tentative relationship with my participants. Once I had received all the necessary clearances, we were in the thick of the alert level 5 lockdown, making access to the participants extremely challenging. I overcame this major limitation by attempting to conduct some interviews over WhatsApp video call, Zoom and even telephonic calls. However, due to the short time of interaction between me and the participants, not many teachers felt comfortable to conduct these interviews in this manner. Subsequently, I conducted only 3 interviews in this way. Teachers were eventually allowed to return to school in June 2020 in order to prepare schoolwork for learners, who only returned in August 2020. During these months when no learners were present at the school, it allowed me to conduct my remaining 27 face-to-face interviews.

Further the Covid-19 pandemic put a major strain of both teachers and learners, with regards to navigating a scary and unprecedented curriculum, and finding time and the tools to complete the school year effectively (van Bruwaene et al., 2020). Consequent to this, the entire school population was overworked and stressed trying to achieve this whilst simultaneously having to constantly remind them to social distance, always sanitize and secure their face masks (van Bruwaene et al., 2020). As a result of these challenges, I was unable to execute my planned FGD's. I attempted to counteract the above-mentioned obstacles by trying to organize teachers into groups and interviewing them via Zoom or WhatsApp video call. However, many participants were reluctant to do interviews in this manner, citing lack of knowledge on how to use these media platforms, lack of data and no time as reasons to decline the FGD's. Nevertheless, the 30 individual interviews provided the study with sufficient rich and deep data.

Another challenging aspect of my study was attempting to carve out enough time to conduct the interviews that suited both me and my participants. Due to the school breaks being so short (around 20 minutes) this was not nearly enough time to conduct an entire interview. Further, I attempted to interview teachers in their admin periods (normally a 40–50-minute period allocated to teachers to do administration or marking) but teachers were reluctant to give up that period. I attempted to overcome this challenge by conducting many of the face-to-face interviews after the school day. This allowed the teachers to be more *present* during the interview process, due to having less disturbances and a quiet place to converse.

Lastly, a researcher is in both the primary investigator *and* individual entity in any qualitative research study, thus his or her subjectivity in interpretations of data under the area of study must be recognized as a limitation (Nguyen, et al., 2018). As researchers are also human with their own sets of beliefs, morals, values, opinions, and perceptions, these may manifest as biases or prejudices in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2018).. However, studies show that these biases have a negative impact of the study when they are not recognized or ignored (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, my subjectivity is recognized through the process of reflexivity, previously discussed in the chapter.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter encompassed the study's research design and methodology in detail. As the main objective was to determine primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities and the factors that shape these constructions, a qualitative design within an interpretive paradigm utilizing a phenomenological study approach was suitable. The location and context of the research study were explained. The sample recruiting process, which was namely purposive sampling were outlined and justified. My choice for utilising semi-structured interviews combined with photo-elicitation and vignettes as my primary data collection techniques were discussed. The process of data analysis using thematic analysing whereby grouping data into categories and themes was discoursed. I then proceeded to explain how I obtained trustworthiness in the study, recognising reflexivity in my research process. Lastly, I conferred the limitations of my study and strides taken to overcome these. The next chapter will discuss the analysis of data in detail.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four outlined the methodology strategies utilized in this research study. This chapter presents the analysis of data that emerged from the verified post interview transcripts or source documents. Due to the extent of the findings of this study, data analysis will be represented over three chapters (chapters 5, 6, & 7). The findings are presented in the way of common themes which are indicative of how schoolteachers at Ladybug Primary School perceive transgender identities and the factors that shape these perceptions. All analyses drew upon Judith Butler (1990, 1993) to understand the theory of performativity that demonstrate how concepts of gender interweaves with cultural and social descriptors, that limit individuals to a gender binary. Such binaries perpetuate the notions of hegemonic masculinities and socially held ideals of femininity which may lead to unequal power relations within the educational sphere (Smith & Paine, 2016). These analyses were further informed by Connell's (1995) theory of masculinities which focuses on various forms of masculinities and their performance, which reinforces a socially accepted idea of gender binary. This chapter aims to understand primary school teachers' perceptions of transgender identities and how these formed perceptions are strongly influenced by their socially and culturally held values, morals and beliefs, and their personal meaning making of gender, sex, and sexuality diverse individuals. This chapter analysis will display the intersection of gender binary, compulsive heteronormativity, and power dynamics as well as teachers' observations of teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. Lastly, teachers' recognition and empathy towards sexually diverse learners will be explored. The major themes and sub-themes of the study are represented below:

MAJOR THEMES	SUB-THEMES
5.2 Teachers' understanding of sex, gender, and transgender identities	5.2.1 Sex and gender 5.2.2 Transgender identities 5.2.3 Reasons that individuals identify as transgender
5.3 Gender binary and power dynamics: <i>I think when a boy does it, when he is a feminine and he displays feminine personalities or traits or whatever, I think that he is teased, he's judged, he's laughed at, fingers are pointed and um, he's labelled as well. So, I think that it's more difficult for a boy than it is for a girl.</i>	
5.4 Teachers' observations and interactions with sexually non-conforming learners	5.4.1 Teachers' perceptions on heterosexual learners' interactions with gender diverse learners
5.5 Recognition, acceptance, and empathy of transgender individuals... <i>they realized that they were not what they were born as, and they wanted their own identity and I think that's the choice they wanted to make and it's a choice that I agree with</i>	

Figure 7: Summary of major themes and sub-themes of the study.

5.2 Teachers Understanding of Sex, Gender, and Transgender Identities

5.2.1 Sex and gender

According to Lips (2020, p. 7), sex and gender are not interchange concepts but rather sex is used to “to refer to a person’s biological maleness or femaleness (sex organs, i.e., penis or vagina) and gender to non-physiological aspects of being male or female-the cultural expectations and roles for femininity and masculinity.” This definite distinction between these terms is central as it justifies the theory that differences in behavior, experiences, and expectations between the gender binary of male-female, it not inevitably and naturally as a result of biology (Paechter et al., 2021). Rather, these ideas are powered from our cultural and social beliefs and practices and thus our identifications of biological sex variations are apt to be molded by our culture’s notions of gender (Butler, 1993). Fundamentally, an individual’s

gender identity can be different to his or her biological sex assigned at birth (Fisher et al., 2016). Additionally, Fisher et al. (2016, p. 2) “Gender identity refers to a fundamental sense of belonging and self-identification to one gender and to the extent to which a person experiences being like others of one’s gender: male, female, or an alternative gender.” This theory of gender as fluid and diverse from biological sex principally conflicted with most of the participants’ understandings of the two terms. When asked what they understood about the terms sex and gender, here were some responses:

Stephanie [26 yr. old Indian female, grade 4 teacher]: *I think it's like more or less the same.*

Promise [25 yr. old African female, FP teacher]: *For me, I feel like gender. OK, well, generally you would say gender means a person with a vagina and a person with the penis. That's how we classify genders. You're female because you have a vagina, you're male because you have a penis.*

Duncan [32yr. old White male, grade R-7 teacher]: *Umm whether you're male or female. Your sexuality. Yeah.*

Mr P [33 yr. old Coloured male, grade 7 teacher]: *Gender means whatever body part you have or parts you have that determines whether you male or female and with that you get something called gender roles and according to your gender your roles are determined by that as well so.*

Vee [36 yr. old Coloured female, SP teacher]: *Exactly the same. Sex and gender to me is the same thing.*

These examples of responses reinforce the overlapping understandings and interchangeability of sex and gender meaning the same that society seems to hold at large (Lips, 2020). Sex and gender are seen as one and the same, and thus must be attributed to male-female differences, which perpetuates the outdated theory of essentialism and naturalism (Greene, 2020). The notion that males and females are different due to biology and must have “feminine” and “masculine” roles, are reinforced by Mr. P.s responses. This traditional belief is embedded in the binary of male and female only, thus excluding any individual that does not identify with either category (Mangin, 2018). This is reinforced by the majority of teachers’ comments when asked if they believe that there are any other sexes besides male and female:

Researcher: **Do you think there are any other genders except male and female?**

Miss Bee [42yr. old African female, grade 2 teacher]: *No. Either you have that, you've got a vagina or penis.*

Doctor X [32 yr. old Indian male, grade 6 teacher]: *No there's only, you have to be either or you can't be in between.*

Tiffany [25 yr. old Coloured female, grade 1 teacher]: *No. Because for me it's just male female there's no other-*

The above excerpts do not give recognition to any other genders outside the heteronormative sphere, reinforcing the gender binary and negating gender diversity, upholding sex, and gender to an essentialist view. Butler (1990) argues against this view, stating that gender is not natural, but rather is performed repetitively and constructively, by our socialization and cultural practices. Skewes et al. (2018, p. 18) further lend credence to this theory by stating “Moreover, theorists and researchers have proposed that essentialist thinking in general serves to justify existing social inequalities, rather than merely describing it neutrally. Contrary to the goals of gender equality advocates who put forward gender essentialist arguments, existing research provides reasons to anticipate that gender essentialist characterizations of the sexes will be associated with weaker endorsement of the desirability and feasibility of achieving greater gender equality in traditionally feminine and masculine roles.”

In contrast to the above responses, some participants viewed gender as the following:

Phoebe [46 yr. old Indian female, grade 5 teacher]: *Okay so you're supposed to act in a specific way, that's your...gender....*

Casanova [35 yr. old African male, grade 5 teacher]: *Umm, well I'd say it's what we are born with. So basically, we get it at birth. Umm, and then it later translates to what society teaches us to be. Like the role that if you're born as a boy, what you would follow into. So, the roles are determined by the society at large. Yes ma'am, and then we all fall into that tract.*

Debbie [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *I think it's quite fluid... But I also think that it's not even about a sex thing, it's more like we really are told to believe that we are a certain person and we must do a certain thing.*

Siya [27yr. old African male, grade R-7 teacher]: *So, I'd say gender means, gender is actually a label to tell the truth. It's actually like because to say that you are a male, you can dress like a male full on, cut your hair, do everything, people will say that you are a male.*

The above participants understanding of sex and gender lends credence to Butler's (1990) theory of performativity. These participants viewed sex and gender as two separate entities, further identifying that gender is a learned and social construct that is not determined by the biological sex we are assigned to at birth. Rather, the participants have a tentative understanding that gender is *performed* as people fall into assigned roles that is dictated by society at large and is considered social norms (Greene, 2020).

5.2.2 Transgender identities

Transgender can be understood as a shared category of individuality that involves a remarkably varied range of male and female bodied gender variant people and sexualities (Lemma, 2018). Transgender is thus an umbrella term that designates individuals whose gender identity or expression does not align the gender they were born with. Simply put, Lemma (2018, p. 1092) likens the term to a "sense of a movement across a socially imposed boundary from a "given" starting place to a place that is felt to be of one's choosing". When conducting the few initial interviews, some teachers were not familiar with the term or had some confusion regarding the term transgender. After showing them pictures of well-known transgender individuals (such as Wandile from the local programme *Generations* and Bruce Jenner from *Keeping up with the Kardashians* - Appendix F), they then could make a connection. A few of the participants concurred somewhat with Lemma's definition as can be seen in the following extracts:

Researcher: **What does the term transgender mean to you?**

Debbie [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *okay I would what I understand if you came to me and said "I'm a transgender woman" I would think that you had been born with boy parts with a penis but the whole time when you had the penis you were feeling more like you identified with females...I'm not 100 percent sure that it's got only to do with sex. I think it's got to do with a whole lot more. Like what you identify with in the world.*

Grace [44 yr. old White female, grade 5 teacher]: *Because they are born a certain way, but they want to be a different way and they're wanting to be in a different way is like I always think about heart and mind. Some people are hearts, and some people are minds. It's tough if all of you inside want to be something different and you have to be something else.*

Interestingly, in comparison to Lemma's (2018) definition on the term transgender, majority of participants described their understandings of transgender in a considerably basic gender dichotomy, i.e., going from male to female or vice-versa. This type of perception is exclusionary, in that they side-line a significant number of individuals within the transgender community that prefer to exist in between, or outside the binary altogether (Lemma, 2018). Further, this way of understanding transgender identities reduces the complex "intersection of socio-cultural processes and individual psychodynamics" (Lemma, 2018, p. 1092). The following responses indicate this simplification:

Chloe [37yr. old White female, grade 2 teacher]: *For me it's like someone who can change their body a lot if you want with my own 2 changes from now if you are a female the change to male- but the changing, some transition of some sort...*

Ally [41 yr. old White female, grade 6 teacher]: *I must say I find it sometimes difficult myself to fully understand that I'm very not clued up about it all I know it's going from one boy to a girl or a girl to a boy male to female or female to male.*

Stephanie [26yr. old Indian female, grade 4 teacher]: *You saying that you were born a specific gender, but you changed yourself, like had a sex change?*

Miss Bee [42 yr. old African female, grade 2 teacher]: *Transgender, isn't it changing from one sex to another? If you a man, you changed to be a female, if you a female you changed to be a male.*

The above understandings of transgender identities align with the predominant belief that many primary school teachers see it as simply transitioning from one gender to another, perpetuating the gender binary. Primary school teachers see girls and boys as perfect "opposites" to one another, thus having a considerably basic perception of what it means to be a transgender individual (Smith & Payne, 2016).

5.2.3 Reasons why individuals identify as transgender

When questioned as to *why* they think individuals identify as transgender, teachers cited the following reasons: 1. due to either traumatic events that may have occurred in their lives, 2. unconventional upbringings, or, 3. because of a hormonal/chemical imbalance or mental illness. Here were some of the responses:

Stephanie [26 yr. old Indian female, grade 4 teacher]: *They have a chemical imbalance and it tells them that, you know why I can't behave or in this way, like I can't be a female.*

Jemma [28 yr. old White female, grade 2 teacher]: *Chemicals. And some people have a different sort of a chemical. Then you're attracted to different sexes or whatnot.*

Zama [41 yr. old African female, grade 6 teacher]: *No, I understand that maybe you decided because it maybe by choice or they may be hormonal imbalances in your body that force you to want to be another sex. So, you've had to convert.*

According to Fisher et al. (2016), although hormone secretion has an undeniable part to play in the biological birth assigned *sex* of a person during embryonic development it cannot be solely responsible for how an individual identifies himself to a specific gender. Rather, an individual's sense of gender identity is primarily developed from result of socialisation, learned and practised behaviours, social norms, and expectations and a "fundamental sense of belonging and self-identification to one gender and to the extent to which a person experiences being like others of one's gender: male, female, or an alternative gender" (Fisher et al., 2016, p 2). Also, according to Van Vollenhoven and Els (2013, p. 270) "in general there is no significant difference between the mental health of heterosexual people and the mental health of LGBT people. Since homosexuality is not a disease or a disorder, there is nothing to be cured. It is rather misconceptions, social stigma, and prejudice..." These descriptions of gender identity indicate that the above teacher's perceptions that a chemical or hormone imbalance, or mental illness in one's brain would dictate a person identifying as transgender, as unfounded.

Further, interviewees cited possible reasons as to why an individual would identify as transgender because of an unconventional upbringing. When asked why transgender identify as such, teachers responded as follows:

Mrs B [33 yr. old White female, grade 3 teacher]: *Well, I think it could be 'cause of a childhood, something went wrong where he was born as a boy but the mother always like, how can I say? Like, she bought dolls instead of cars, she dressed more pinkie or she was more soft to him so eventually like he might just as well be a girl or the other way around. That's why you can be a lesbian 'cause you're like more- you're a woman but you have man- you cut your hair like a man you have boy clothes you wear underpants. 'Cause maybe your dad made you do all that hard labour as a child. I do know someone like that.*

Zama [41 yr. old African female, grade 6 teacher]: *These people that maybe things could have been done differently in their childhood to maybe pay attention to what they are because sometimes really it is caused by the hormones or some imbalances like some people are born with an extra one. Some people are born with blind are born blind even though I'm not saying they are deformed but it's one of the irregularities of our bodies.*

Amanda [39 yr. old African female, grade 4 teacher]: *I feel that maybe some people would be born as a male and then maybe grow among women maybe most of the siblings are females and then they will just grow to adapt the environment and act like females because they're playing together and maybe they maybe the male they're just a child who automatically thinks that he is female because he's playing games dressing up and doing all of those sort of things*

According to Restivo (2006, p. 1), There is no support for the idea that any behaviour will 'cause' sexual preference to move one direction or another... Sexual preference seems to be determined independently of actions or experiences." In other words, it is highly unlikely that boys who are exposed or raised either constantly or exclusively to/by girls, who are dressed more 'femininely' or play with 'feminine' toys in early childhood will grow up to identify as gay or transgender (Fausto-Sterling, 2019), as the responses above suggest. Further, Fausto-Sterling (2019) states that: such social habits and behaviours have extraordinarily little or no impact on a person's gender identity development.

Some participants stated that traumatic life occurrences could be the 'cause' of an individual identifying as transgender. These citations are found below:

Sibongile [34 yr. old female, grade 2 teacher]: *most of the people if you follow their stories, most of them they fall under the transgender thing because of their history... Or of their upbringing. Most of them maybe they grew up in a very abusive household they just realized no I don't wanna be in a relationship with a man I'd rather be a guy that's in love with another guy because of what they see that's happening at home and in the society around them. So, yes, it's a trauma thing and they fear if they do go in another relationship, they've gonna go through that same thing.*

Vee [36 yr. old Coloured female, SP teacher]: *Maybe it's got to do with self-esteem or bullying maybe comes in when like Caster Semenya, she's got male features so maybe she just gets to a point where she says "I look like a man anyway I might as well go 100%"*

According to Scheer et al. (2020), sex, sexuality and gender diversity cannot be causally linked to trauma but rather, such individuals experience potentially traumatic events because of their sexual and gender non-conformity. "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals disproportionately face exposure to potentially traumatic events - adverse experiences that may have a traumatizing effect - and experience shame as a common consequence." (Scheer et al., 2020, p. 1). Further, the authors state that shame, because of a major traumatic event, has a definite negative impact on both the physical and physiological health of the person who has experienced the trauma (Scheer et al., 2020). Often those individuals who are gender, sex, and sexuality diverse are given less attention after such an event as compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Scheer et al., 2020). Additionally, Livingston, Berke, Ruben, Matza and Shipherd (2019) state that stigmatisation, ostracization and marginalisation of gender non-conforming individuals have a direct and negative effect on the emotional and psyche of such people, resulting in trauma. These substantiated theories negate the ideas that traumatic life events could possibly contribute to an individual identifying as transgender, which some participants hold to be true.

5.3 The Gender Binary and Power Dynamics

In all societies and spaces, including schools, power hierarchies are firmly ingrained which donate to gender inequality, often leading to gender violence and discrimination (Francis et al., 2019). These consequences are attributed to unbalanced power relations established in the gender binary which emanates from stereotypes and societal norms (Francis et al., 2019). These

stereotypes lend credence to the gender binary which tends to outlay women, placing them as maternal figures who are susceptible to vulnerability as compared to the more powerful and dominant male counterparts (Sullivan, 2019). This resounds with Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity emphasizing the influence of hegemonic masculinity around additional types of masculinities and femininities. The responses of the following participants echoed these sentiments:

Researcher: Who do you think is more labelled a girl who acts like a boy or a boy who acts like a girl?

Tiffany [25 yr. old Coloured female, grade 1 teacher]: *A boy who acts like a girl...I think because from when the child is learning how to talk and walk they thought they are thought that they must be Men They Can't Be Boys first and play and do what they want to do and must be, when first man can't cry you know and I know personally my brother-in-law tells his son this.*

Mary [36 yr. old White female, grade R teacher]: *A boy who acts like a girl. Girls who act like boys are considered independent which is currently the rage, so if you are acting like a boy, it is often... People often dismiss it or excuse it... Whereas a boy, because of the stereotype in society that boys have to be macho and strong the second they show any weakness they are considered the weak member of the pack. Therefore, they are judged and bullied and it's just horrible.*

Debbie [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *The expectation is that a boy is big and strong and tough and loud and stinky and whatever. It's not but it's not really that expectation for women. Women can be strong they can be a bit rough without people going "oh she's a lesbian" ...but boys, no.*

When asked the same question, Grace [44 yr. old White female, grade 5 teacher] replied in a similar manner:

Grace: *Definitely a boy who acts like a girl. It's a man's world. It's definitely a man's world where a lot of times the male sex is, we are inferior to them... he is the man of the house and he says what comes and what goes. Okay, no times have changed but still it's a man's world. It's um- especially the jokes that are made it upsets me a lot because um, without men knowing it its "stop whining like a girl" and "stop being like*

that, do you sit and pee?” or “do you stand and pee?”. Without knowing it, it’s degrading a woman. You can’t do that cause you not strong enough. So, I think that’s why.

Mrs R [27 yr. old Indian female, grade 1 teacher]: *Definitely a boy. Boys are less tolerant. Typical example, my husband he would laugh at somebody who is gay, like my relative that I said to you. When my relative approached him to greet him, when he gave him a hug and kissed him on the cheek and my husband was appalled by it. He was like “why is this gay person touching me?”*

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Mrs R: *I think it's the way they are brought up, their upbringing.*

Noteworthy to these responses is the inflexion of power dynamics entrenched in the gender binary. Due to this are the patriarchal societal and cultural principles and ideas which impact teachers’ interpretation of what it means to be a boy and a girl. Mary and Grace’s responses branch from the stereotype of men being the stronger and superior sex, thus are heads of household, decision makers and have the final say (Sullivan, 2019). Further, the excerpts expose the recognition that ‘society’ expects men to be masculine and ‘manly’ dictating that they act in a certain manner that displays machoism. Tiffany’s response about her brother-in-law expecting her nephew not to cry because its unmanly, shows a cyclic learned behaviour of not only performed gender, but a reinstated perception of a gender binary too (Elischberger et al., 2016). Participants felt that if male children displayed any qualities that portrayed them as “soft” or “girly”, that boy would be more susceptible to bullying and discrimination as compared to a girl who was more “tomboyish”. Cassandra’s and Siya’s response indicate this notion below:

Cassandra [44yr. old White female, grade 5, 6 & 7 teacher]: *I know a case in a local school where there's a boy and he's in grade eight and he's been terribly ostracized and bullied and his life has been made hell because of the fact that he is feminine and he's feminine in his ways and is also not afraid to you know the others all know that he is more he's probably gay from the way from what I've heard*

Siya [27 yr. old African male, grade R-7 teacher]: *A boy who acts like a girl because once you (a boy) start showing emotion, they see you as a little wimp. So now once you're a little wimp that's already, already they're belittling you first of all. Once they*

belittle you that makes them rise higher than you in their head. Once they feel that they higher than you they're gonna carry on bullying you because they feel they have power over you. Now if you put in the scenario of a boy that's more feminine then the other boys already by your character, by your attitude, they already see you as someone that's smaller than them. So now firstly they gonna get called names. Secondly, you're gonna get labelled, and third you're gonna get called a wimp or whatever word they can find in the universe because you are not as manly as they think they are.

Interestingly, Siya's response depicts the possible reasons that effeminate boys are bullied and ostracised more compared to masculine girls, was due to a sense of a loss of masculinity and power. A boy, separating himself from society's ideals of what it is to be a man and be masculine, upset social dominant norms of men being more powerful and superior over women (Anderson, 2018), thus leaving that male more open to violence and ridicule. The participants' responses indicate that society is less accepting of gender and sexual diversity, especially more so of males who are portrayed as effeminate, gay or transgender (Anderson, 2018) supporting a hegemonic form of masculinity which is erected as central and advantaged (Connell, 1995).

Having discussed the power relations around the gender binary, I will now move on to discuss how teachers perceive sexually diverse learners.

5.4 Teachers' Observations and Interactions with Sexually Non-conforming Learners

According to Kolbert et al. (2015, p. 248) "The adults in LGBT students' lives, both parents and teachers, are likely to have first-hand knowledge regarding the experiences of sexually-diverse youth in terms of their day-to-day functioning. In particular, teachers may have a unique perspective of LGBT students' peer relationships in the school setting, where children and adolescents spend much of their lives." Teachers spend majority of the day interacting face-to-face with learners, giving them a first-hand view of the intricacies and complexities of both teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions (Cates, 2019). When asked if teachers were able to identify gender, sex and sexuality diverse learners in primary school, most participants answered in the affirmative. Participants stated that through their experience of teaching and observations of learners, they were able to "pick up" on learners who *they* perceived as to not identifying within a heteronormative category. Their responses were as follows:

Researcher: In your years of interacting with learners, you as an educator; are you able to pick up learners that are – to use your word- “different” than the others?

Cassandra [44 yr. old White female, grade 5,6, & 7 teacher]: *You can pick them up some of them from very young my first year of teaching I taught in Grade four and I could pick up straight away the little boy. I still remember his name a little boy in my class and he was the most wonderful little boy he was beautiful, but he definitely had those feminine characteristics and everything the way he acted the way he spoke, so you do, and I think it's more prevalent than we actually lead ourselves to believe.*

Cola [26 yr. old Indian female, grade 3 teacher]: *I have definitely seen it before, where you would find boys, especially speaking like girls...like in their tone and ... they wanna be more like girls. But with girls, I've never noticed them trying to be a boy or acting like a boy in class. But with boys, yes definitely, they display very feminine qualities, without even being aware of it.*

Ally [41 yr. old White female, grade 6 teacher]: *Yes, their mannerisms, the way they interact with the children and especially like if you say there are sports activities if there are civvies days or going on an outing just different things like that yes but you can, you can pick up different things just the way they interact with you as a teacher with the children you can you can usually pick it up.*

The above teachers' responses indicate that teachers, by their own admissions, are indeed able to identify children who *they* perceive to be gender, sex, and sexually diverse, even at primary school level. Whether these perceptions are correct or not, the central reality is that teachers are not gender and sexuality blind, but rather have a keen sense of awareness of learners who are different to their seemingly heterosexual peers (Meyer, 2015). Similarly, a Pennsylvania study conducted by Kolbert et al. (2015) using a sample of over 200 teachers indicated that a significant portion of the teaching staff were not only aware of learners who identified to be non-normative in their sexual identities, but further showed positive support of these students. Likewise, when participants of Lady Bug Primary school were presented with a vignette (see Appendix F), these were some of the responses:

Researcher: Okay so you've noticed that Thandi, a girl in your class, has many characteristics of a boy. She dresses like a boy when it's civvies day and when it's P.E.

time she enjoys doing the “boys” sports. During break times she only plays with the boys. She is more comfortable with the boys. One day she comes to you after school and she confides in you that she's actually a boy, she wants to be a boy. She's born in the wrong body. She's not comfortable being a girl and she really likes or has a crush on Nosipho, who is another girl in your class. She's scared because she doesn't understand these feelings and she can't take it to her parents because she's worried about how her parents would react and she does not know what to do. What would your reaction be?

Promise [25 yr. old African female, grade 1,2 &3 teacher]: *As a teacher, I wouldn't have a problem with that, because at the end of the day, she trusts me and that's how she feels about herself, that there's no there's nothing wrong with feeling. From my perspective, I feel like there's nothing wrong with feeling that way. But as a teacher for me, I don't know. I don't feel like I'll be able to encourage the feeling or discourage it. So what I would do is I would tell her that I understand how I feel, how she feels about herself. Maybe she should do a little bit of research on maybe how she was just saying to me, just hop on Google how she feels and maybe that will be like articles or stories or even YouTube. Then she can watch and maybe comprehend how she feels and maybe make a decision at the end what she would like to be or what she would like to do. But I feel like if I got involved, I might be in trouble. Firstly, with the school and with the parents. Yeah. You know, it's a, it's a sticky situation, basically, because you do not want to overstep.*

Interesting to note about Promise's response is that she indicates supportiveness in this case of Thandi coming to her and possibly identifying as transgender. Promise wants to be encouraging and supportive to Thandi, however, she does not want to “overstep” her role as the teacher here, because she is concerned about possible backlash from the school management and parents. This strongly links to findings in Smith and Payne's (2016) study that highlighted that although teachers were aware of the presence of transgender learners, they were reluctant to make it known to management as well as parents for fear of inciting panic, backlash, and concerns about their job security (Smith & Payne, 2016). Further, Promise's reluctance and uncertainty about the degree of her intervention with Thandi as her teacher, indicates a gap in knowledge about school policy with regards to gender, sex, and sexuality diverse learners. This will be discussed more in detail later in the chapter. When the same vignette was posed to

Stephanie [26 yr. old Indian female, grade 4 teacher], her response further validated the statement above:

Stephanie: *Because I don't know, as an educator how I would handle a situation in the class, because when it comes to other to management and parents, I don't know if I tell the child something and the parents disagree or agree, and management disagrees or agrees. So, I need to know professionally how to handle that certain situation.*

Some participant responses reiterated their “investment in binary gender categories as the only gender possibilities.” (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 35). Teachers themselves were so ingrained in their beliefs that the only possible genders being boys or girls, they were unable to visualise or understand any other gender possibilities beyond the gender binary. When presented with a similar vignette as above (except the child seeking advice was a male instead of female) this was Dr X’s response:

Dr X [32 yr. old Indian male, grade 6 teacher]: *I would firstly advise him to maybe try do everything that a male sex would do see if that fits the profile...*

Responses such as Dr X.’s denounce the real legitimacy of transgender learners, rendering them invisible which further marginalises and perpetuates gender non-conforming inequality and positions heteronormativity as the only legitimate sexuality in schools (Kolbert et al., 2015).

Additionally, some participants felt that primary school children were still too “young” or “immature” to explore their sexual identities or desires. When presented with the same vignette about Thandi, a participant named “Somebody” responded as follows:

Somebody [44 yr. old White female, grade 7 teacher]: *One thing I would say, which I would say to anyone “Now’s not the time to start. You might have feelings for that person, now’s not the time to act out on it. You’re too young too. Got nothing to do with thinking you’re a boy and got a crush on someone.” I’d say to a boy who had a crush on a girl “No, don’t. Not at primary school level.”*

The above excerpt suggests a concurrence with the notion of Van Leent (2017) that suggests that teachers may believe that children at primary school level are not developed enough in terms of maturity to fully comprehend nor explore their sexualities. Further, the study by Smith and Payne (2016) suggested that primary school teachers held the belief that acknowledging

and legitimising curiosities and explorations about gender and sexuality could potentially cause harm to children who were otherwise “have not yet been tainted by sexual awareness or sexual knowledge (Smith & Payne, 2016, p. 35). Teachers felt that as adults who held a degree of influence over these young and impressionable children, they were obligated by their duty as such to preserve this “childhood innocence” by dismissing children curiosity and labelling it age-inappropriate (Van Leent, 2017). Primary school teachers have such steadfast belief in these misconceptions that place children as innocent and devoid of sexuality construction can be attributed to their own normative gender expectations and assumptions (Simpson, 2020). Having discussed teachers’ observations and interactions with sexually non-conforming learners, I will now proceed to discuss teachers’ perceptions of their observations on learners’ interactions with gender diverse learners.

5.4.1 Teachers’ perceptions on heterosexual learners’ interactions with gender diverse learners.

Although bullying in general is a widespread concern in all schools, globally and locally, learners who identify as LGBTQI+ appear to be at a greater risk for bullying and victimization from their peers (Kolbert et al., 2015; Francis, 2019). In the study by Kolbert et al. (2015), it was report that teachers were not only able to observe the attitudes and behaviors of the relationships between their learners but were also able to perceive a higher incident of verbal and physical bullying towards learners who were gender non-conforming. Similarly, most teacher participants at Ladybug Primary School stated that they were able to observe other learners’ interactions with those learners that they suspected were gender, sex, and sexuality diverse. These were some of the responses:

Researcher: Do you think that their peers pick up on that and treat them differently?

Ally [41 yr. old White female, grade 6 teacher]: *Yes, but they usually goes to the negative more towards the teasing part imitating their mannerisms or the way they say things they are children that are accepting of it but they are in the minority more often it goes toward the negative teasing and bullying and stuff so yes.*

Researcher: Now do you think their peers and classmates are also able to pick up the-

Phoebe [47 yr. old Indian female, grade 5 teacher]: *Yes definitely.*

Researcher: How in general do these peers react to the “different” learners? How do they see them?

Phoebe: *Teasing, mocking, judgemental, whispers behind their hand kinda thing, um not accepting, umm bullying almost and I can, you know I’ve got two children who are old enough and my daughter has picked up or she’ll come and say to me “Mom this boy acts in this particular manner.” Or my son will say to me “Mom this guy is like, I think this guy is gay” or whatever and I think definitely they’re able to pick it up.*

Casanova [35 yr. old African male, grade 5 teacher]: *Yes ma’am, and that’s the sad thing. Once they have picked it up, they start mocking them. They’ll be doing like gestures such as think that they are playing for the other team. Just anything to make them feel really uncomfortable.*

Ally, Phoebe and Casanova’s responses indicate that teachers can observe interactions between heterosexual learners and learners who may be sex and gender diverse. Further, some teachers perceived boys to be the more predominant perpetrators of this kind of bullying:

Vee [36 yr. old Coloured female, SP teacher]: *There was a boy last year that was very feminine. The girls accepted him so he would sit with the girls he would be with them at break, he would talk to them. They would talk about the same things even their conversations would be about fashion or about you know, girly things. And the boys completely distanced themselves from him. He wasn’t welcome in their group projects, at break. Even name calling, there would be a bit of name calling. So, I think boys, when it comes to gender, there’s a little bit more mean tendencies. And I think the girls are a bit more accepting of it.*

Grace [44 yr. old White female, grade 5 teacher]: *Some boys get upset because their friends call them gay. Um, it’s not really the lesbian thing where I am yet. In the higher grades up, um ja some of the girls will talk but the girls, I don’t know the girls are different. It’s mostly boys that, can you call it bully, bully their friends by calling them gay and things like that. So yes, they definitely see it. Especially sometimes a boy just likes to look after himself, you know, clean, like cream on the hands and making sure*

after P.E. the hair is nice and everything is nice and whatever. Then ja sometimes they get labelled as “you’re gay”.

Vee and Grace’s responses indicate that like teachers, learners too have a firm belief in a gendered dichotomy that places boys as figures that are superior in strength, intellect, power, and significance compared to girls. These learned ideals and beliefs are further ingrained by subtle or implicit school cultures that uphold heteronormativity whilst simultaneously perpetuation harmful masculinities that dictate boys to behave as macho, strong, and manly (Anderson, 2018; Francis et al., 2019; Sullivan, 2019). When boys display any other qualities different to these cultural and societal norms, they are viewed as weak or “sissies”, due to their conceived loss of male power and dominance (Francis et al., 2019). Consequently, this type of behaviour is more frowned upon compared to girls who behave like “tomboys” and display “masculine qualities”, indicating boys are less tolerant and accepting in these cases (Sullivan, 2019). This notion could explain why the above teachers observed boys as the main perpetrators of bullying.

Additionally, responses indicated that the teachers perceived these interactions to be uncomfortable and potentially physically, verbally, and emotionally harmful to those learners who are seeming gender and sexually non-normative. When questioned on how the teachers at Ladybug Primary School dealt with and intervened in such situations, the participants responded as follows:

Casanova: I have to sort of remind the class that’s not how we should be addressing such matters. If you have an issue with something you try to talk with that person and find out as opposed to making fun about it because we really don’t know what has propelled that person or driven them in that direction.

Ally: You have to unfortunately speak with the class about it let’s talk about people how would you feel if this happened to you. You almost have to have a little life skills lesson about respecting people respecting how they feel what they look like to you have to bring almost like a life skills lesson the way they look the way they act and you have to talk to the whole class about it definitely don’t leave it at all you have to deal with it.

Ally and Casanova’s responses show that teachers at Ladybug primary school did intervene with regards to issues of victimisation and harassment towards gender diverse learners. This indicates a positive shift of teachers becoming aware of such issues relating to discrimination

of gender and sexuality diverse learners and disrupting the silencing of issues that these learners experience at schools. Homophobic and transphobic bullying can be especially prevalent in schools where teachers choose to ignore reports on such (Kolbert et al., 2015). A study by Goodenow et al. (2006) that was conducted across numerous schools in the state of Massachusetts (United States of America) found that learners (who identified within a sexual minority category) reported to feeling more threatened in schools where they did not have the support of or feel comfortable reporting incidences of harassment and bullying to teachers. Further, the study revealed that these learners reported to have made multiple suicide attempts to cope with the situation (Goodenow et al., 2006). Thus reveals the dire need for not only positive but *effective* teacher intervention regarding harassment and bullying of gender, sex, and sexuality diverse learners in schools. While efforts have been made by teachers and school stakeholders to assuage these forms of bullying, these interventions may be insufficient in tackling the problem at large (Kolbert et al., 2015). Similarly, in the case of Ladybug Primary School, although Casanova and Ally's responses show that the bullying was not ignored or silenced, their methods of address may prove to be ineffective. This is reiterated when Kolbert et al. (2015, p. 250) state "A national survey was distributed to teachers to gauge their perceptions and practices regarding school bullying prevention, it revealed that 86.3% of respondents indicated that their only bullying intervention included "serious talks" with both parties of the incident..." the authors go on to say that this type of intervention proved insufficient as incidents of bullying picked up again a short time after (Kolbert, et al., 2015). This reiterates a more aggressive and comprehensive form of anti-bullying interventions in schools, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Having discussed both teacher and learner perspectives of gender diverse learners, I will now explore how teachers initiate the recognition of transgender individuals.

5.5 Recognition, Acceptance and Empathy of Transgender Individuals

Although several teachers at Ladybug Primary school felt compelled, by either their religious or cultural beliefs, to reject transgender identities, some participants were accepting and empathetic. Here are some of the responses:

Researcher: When you think about the term transgender, what are your feelings and thought on people who identify as such?

Somebody [44 yr. old White female, grade 7 teacher]: *I think it's just how they were born, it's in their make-up. I don't believe someone chooses it because you wouldn't choose to be judged so harshly and the world does judge harshly. So, I don't believe like when people say they've chosen it I don't believe that. I believe that it's just in their DNA make up. That, that is something happened while they were forming after conception and that is how they are born and I don't think it's fair to judge them on that, but people do.*

Mrs Z [28 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *I don't have a problem with that at all... it's their life it's their bodies. It's up to you. It's got nothing to do with me. Someone does it, well I opinion like why that beautiful man changing in a woman or why that beautiful women changing in a man. But yeah it's up to them.*

Mr P [33 yr. old Coloured male, grade 7 teacher]: *I have no negative thoughts or feelings about it. I think if someone decides or if they are homosexual for example that's their decision. I don't have any opinions if they decided that, that's what they've decided, transgender is for them. It's whatever they've decided. It's their own journey. It's whatever they've decided so.*

The responses above indicate that participants are more accepting of transgender identities as they believe that people have autonomy over their own decisions and bodies, thus should be allowed to do what they will, without negative repercussions from society. Additionally, participants hold a perception that being counter-normative and transgender is not a decision or option for some people to 'choose' to become transgender, but rather something they 'have' to embark on, to feel content and fulfilled (Pyne, 2016).

Some participants were sympathetic to the struggles of transgender individuals when trying to fit in with a society that measures heterosexual sexualities as the standards of normalcy. Debbie's [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher] response shows this:

Debbie: *I think, specifically in South Africa in my age group with the kind of Calvinistic standards that we are subjected to. We were literally brainwashed into believing that people had a place and a box to fit in. Whether it be your colour, your gender, your age, and that was literally torture to us.*

The above extract shows that some teachers are aware of how their socialisations placed people into designated “boxes” and these restrictions dictated how people were expected to behave and take up their role that they were designated to. This resonates with society’s perseverance of a gender binary, which further propagates for heterosexism as the only legitimate sexuality (Elischberger, 2016). This requirement has a marginalization effect on gender, sex and sexuality diverse people, making it more difficult for them to gain acknowledgement and acceptance in society (Sullivan, 2019). However, Debbie’s response of society’s expected behaviour being torture, indicates she recognises that this was not acceptable and thus needs to change, making means for flexibility in counter genders and sexualities (Francis, 2019).

Participants further recognised that transgender individuals need and deserve acceptance from society, whether by society respecting their physical changes or accepting their decisions to be who they want to be, thus gaining fulfilment in their lives:

Phoebe [47 yr. old Indian female, grade 5 teacher]: *Transgender, it means basically being comfortable with who you are. Wanting to be who you are and being given the permission by society to be whoever it is that you wanna be. So, whether it’s umm, it’s umm, body transformation, whether it’s acceptance. Umm I think that we should be liberal enough and open minded enough to allow for these transformations to happen.*

Further, participants recognised the battle that transgender individuals endure when they are not accepted or are disrespected when they are refused to their simple right to be addressed by the pronouns which they choose:

Debbie: *I think it’s it must be very difficult. So if you say to me how would you feel if your son said to me “I don’t want to be your son, want to be your daughter” I would feel sad for him only, not only, but the one reason I feel very sad as I think it’s very difficult to live in this world and navigate what you’re going to be heading through. And I think if I was in the company of a transgender person to be very honest I would feel uncomfortable only because I would be worried that I was going to say something to hurt their feelings because I know I from what I’ve read. So a person who’s born a boy but identifies as a girl wants to be called she. And so I would be worried that I would say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing but actually that’s silly because I’m sure if I just said “look I’m sorry if you didn’t tell me” they’d be okay with it.*

Debbie's response demonstrates her willingness to learn about gender pronouns that transgender individuals feel more comfortable with. This shows her want to be more accommodating and accepting of transgender people and their needs. According to Cates (2019), traditional gender pronouns such as 'he' or 'she' hold considerable significance within LGBTQI+ communities as when used correctly, indicate acceptance and respect of those individuals who identify within that community. Although using these pronouns in the way a transgender person wishes to be addressed may seem an insignificant gesture, it indicates an initiation of recognition and acceptance (Cates, 2019). Having discussed the slow but steady acceptance of transgender identities by teachers, I will now discuss how teachers view sex and sexuality education in the next analysis chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter exemplified findings on how primary school teachers constructed their perceptions and understandings of transgender identities, as well as the factors that have shaped their views. Most teachers perceived sex and gender to be interchangeable, thus one in the same concept. Teachers' perceptions fell in line with the essentialist way of viewing sex and gender, which denies the constructivist view – those states individuals perform gender, in their everyday lives through social, personal, and interpersonal interactions. Additionally, teachers were only able to identify two genders- male and female, perpetuating the gender binary which delegitimises transgender identities. This belief in a gender dichotomy further facilitates a hegemonic and patriarchal society, which places boys and girls into fixed boxes and roles, resulting in an imbalance of power. This inequity of positioned boys who were more effeminate at higher risks to bullying and harassment as they were seen as losing their masculinities and power that society deems macho men to have. Findings of this study further showed that primary school teachers understanding of transgender identities were mainly aligned within a gender binary where their understandings of transgendered individuals were simplified as having transitioned from the one sex to the other. Teachers also sighted that transgendered people were that way potentially due to a chemical/hormonal imbalance in the brain, an unconventional upbringing, or a traumatic incident. Thereafter, teacher's personal observation with gender normative learners and their observations of learner-learner interactions were explored. Findings from this study showed that although teachers may not personally accept transgender identities, they recognised and held empathy for such learners. Teachers

additionally recognised that gender, sex, and sexuality diverse learners were more prone to bullying and harassment from heterosexual learners.

CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five initiated the first part of the analysis section and discussed primary school teachers' understanding of the term transgender. Findings detailed that many of these understandings were constructed with the intersectionality of teachers' backgrounds, namely their social, moral and value systems and beliefs (Butler, 1993). These perceptions were deeply intertwined within a gender binary, notions of patriarchal masculinity and power dynamics between the perceived dichotomous genders. Chapter five further detailed how teachers understood interactions between themselves and learners, as well as the social dynamics between learners themselves and sex, gender, and sexually diverse learners. Such interactions were often reported to have been fought with undercurrents of intolerance and harassment. Chapter Five concluded with teachers' recognition and empathy of gender and sexuality diverse learners.

This chapter will present the findings of the study that aimed to understand primary school teachers' perceptions of transgender identities and how these formed perceptions are strongly influenced by their religious affiliations, cultural beliefs and their personal meaning making of gender, sex, and sexuality diverse individuals.

6.2 Impact of Religious and Cultural Beliefs on Teachers' Perceptions of Transgender

Although public awareness and discernibility of sex, sexuality and gender diversity has intensified in recent periods, transgender people remain subject to substantial prejudice and persecution (Campbell et al., 2019). Today, most societies have a prevalent adverse mind-set towards transgender individuals as such societies are governed by socially accepted norms, attitudes, behaviours, and ideological and belief systems that generally do not accept or recognise transgender people (Campbell et al., 2019). Specifically, religion is seen as one of the more dominant social ideologies that perpetuates a damaging attitude towards transgender individuals (Campbell et al., 2019). Majority of the teacher participants of this study affiliate themselves with a religion, thus their attitudes towards transgender individuals in relation to their religious beliefs, will be discussed in detail.

6.2.1 Christianity and transgender individualities

When asked to which religions they affiliate themselves to, 29 out of the 30 teacher participants answered that they were Christian. According to Census (2011) nearly 80% of South Africa's population identifies as belonging to some denomination of the Christian faith, thus Christianity is assuredly foregrounded here. When questioned further about their personal perceptions of Christianity and the acceptance of transgender individuals, the responses were as follows:

Researcher: Do you think Christianity, the Christian belief, accepts this type of gender?

Promise [25 yr. old African female, grade 1, 2, 3 teacher]: *No. I don't think they do, because, for example, the church that I go to would not acknowledge that they would chase them away.*

Gerald [52 yr. old White male, grade 6 & 7 teacher]: *...God decided if you were gonna be a girl or a boy and from a religious side you are born a boy or you are born a girl.... I believe that if you are born who you are you must accept who you are and live according to who you are. You cannot go and change God's will to fit what your desires are.*

When asked the same question about Christianity accepting transgender individuals, Mrs. B [33 yr. old White female, grade 3 teacher] responded as follows:

Mrs. B: *-No.*

Researcher: No? Why not?

Mrs. B: *'cause according to, 'cause I'm a Christian I'm not shy to say it, it's wrong in God's eyes*

Researcher: Okay...

Mrs. B: *Um... a man should be with a woman and versa vice. You're not supposed to do that it's, in Gods eyes, wrong. So, because I'm a Christian its wrong.*

Ntombi [54 yr. old African female, grade 5 teacher]: *In the Bible there is no place where God mentioned somebody who was a girl change to be a boy and then God also says in the Bible that if you change yourself it's not allowed it's not allowed because God created you as you are so he knows God knows why he created you as a girl and God knows how or why he created you as a boy.*

Religions such as Christianity are traditionally encompassed by teachings that promote peace, tolerance, and love and thus such teachings should advocate for “intergroup pro-sociality” that treats all individuals equally and with respect (Campbell et al., 2019, p. 23). However, the above responses indicate a paradoxical view of Christianity regarding tolerance and acceptance of transgender individuals. These responses concur with the suggestion that the people who affiliate themselves to the religion may have and promote more negative and non-accepting attitude towards transgender people than their counterparts who do not affiliate themselves with one definite religion (Shariff et al., 2016). Reasons for the possible link between teachings of religions (such as Christianity) and transprejudice (of those affiliated with it), can be attributed to the view that the concept of transgender is a direct violation of their religious values and belief systems (Campbell et al., 2019). Further, according to Campbell et al. (2019, p. 23), “most Abrahamic religions contain dogmas in which their respective deity creates mankind with individuals who are perfectly entrenched in the gender binary (Christianity’s Adam and Eve), and thus religions might be instilling cisgender normativity into individuals who ascribe to their doctrines.” This statement indicates that the religious views above may be harmful to gender, sex, and sexuality diverse individuals as these views uphold heteronormativity as acceptable and perpetuate the gender binary. However, some participants who similarly identified themselves as Christians responded in this way:

Researcher: **Okay. Do you think Christianity accepts transgender people?**

Miss Bee [42 yr. old African female, grade 2 teacher]: *No*

Researcher: **Why?**

Miss Bee: *Because, okay, one - Christians are hypocrites like whatever it’s good for them and convenient for them they will accept it. But then if they got this thing that if you're a certain eh..., you practice a sexuality, they think that you are a devil worshiper or whatever, and they always go back to the Bible saying “God created Adam and Eve,*

not Adam and Steve” kind of a thing. So, for me the Hypocrites, I accept them as they are, there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s not my call to judge them...

Jemma [28 yr. old White female, grade 2 teacher]: *Yeah, I’m actually not sure because everybody I think takes Christianity a different way. You have what I call your public actions or else like us, we believe in the Lord. And I mean, technically, the Lord loves all his creations and things like that. So I’m actually not quite sure. I mean, I would be accepting of a transgender person. I think my family would be.*

The responses from Miss Bee and Jemma indicate that there is evidence of shift in some teachers ‘personal interpretations of the traditional teachings of Christianity and attitudes towards transgender people. Although these participants understand that Christianity typically does not accept this type of gender, they interpret their *own* religious beliefs and practices to be more accepting and understanding. This is likened to religious autonomy, where individuals chose to interpret their beliefs and practices in a way that is more inclusive and accepting (Berger, 2018). Similarly, individuals understanding and interpreting their religious beliefs depend upon how strictly or leniently they *practice* their religion is known as *religiosity* i.e., “the degree to which people are involved in their religion or integrate religion into their daily lives” (Campbell et al., 2019, p. 23). Mr. P’s response demonstrates this theory effectively:

Researcher: I asked if your religion (Christianity) accepts transgender and I’m asking you why. So, you are saying according to the bible it’s basically wrong...

Mr P [33 yr. old Coloured male, grade 7 teacher]: *Yes*

Mr P: *According to how strict you are with your religion*

Researcher: **Yes...**

Mr P: *Obviously determines your leniency when you do encounter homosexuality*

Mr P: *So, if you’re really strict you will draw the line and it will be black and white.*

Mr P: *If you are I think more liberal you would accept anyone who may differ from what the bible says.*

Debbie [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *Because I think religion is based on keeping people very, keeping people in little boxes and everybody has their own place in the world. That’s how religion is sort of made up and when people are not fitting into that box I think religion finds it very difficult to almost put some kind of control on if you look - I don’t know it a lot of religions but if you look at Christian*

rules and laws, there's definite ideas of how you're supposed to be. But I do think it is changing. I think there's a lot of shift towards being far more open to understanding that not everybody's the same and it's okay.

The above excerpts demonstrate how religions, in this instance specifically Christianity, and its teachings can perpetuate an attitude of transphobia, unacceptance and intolerance for those who abide by its traditional teachings and core values. However, some of the participants' responses indicate a gradual shift towards an adoption of religious autonomy and religiosity.

6.2.2 African Cultural beliefs and transgender identities

It was found that majority of participants that portrayed a negative attitude towards transgendered people were those who not only articulated belonging to an Abrahamic religion, but those who upheld their views and beliefs according to their cultural belief ideologies. As participants who spoke about their cultural beliefs with regards to transgender identities predominantly associated belonging to an African culture, this culture will be discussed.

The link between African cultural and traditional beliefs and the fusion with Christianity is indisputable (Isaac, 2015). Christianity was brought to the African continent, and specifically, South Africa, by missionaries dating back to the 1700's when there was movement amongst the missionaries attempting to evangelise people of colour (Elphick, 2012). In Lesotho, Isaac (2015) states that when missionaries brought the ideology of Christianity and attempted to convert the Basotho people, they were met with opposition as the missionaries believed that in order for the indigenous people to become "true Christians", they had to denounce their traditional and cultural beliefs and practices, which missionaries believed to be affiliated with paganism. Their attempts soon proved to be unsuccessful as "after a decade of their missionary work they had only converted 393 people out of 80,000 Basotho population in total in 1843 and only 13,733 converts out of the total population of 200, 000." (Isaac, 2012, p. 158).

People from the African continent were slowly becoming aware of the importance of traditional and cultural practices and recognised the need merge these beliefs and practices with that of predominant Christian teachings and ideologies, and as such, syncretism was born-a blending of Christianity and African Traditional religion and cultures (Isaacs, 2015). This amalgamation is further described as African Christianity (Mokhoathi, 2017). "It is a form of Christianity that draws from both the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion for some ethico-spiritual

principles...Christianity connects them to God while African traditional practices provide a lasting bond with their ancestors.” (Mokhoathi, 2017, p. 266).

According to Msibi (2012), many individuals who have a strong African traditional and cultural belief core system, considered gender, sex, and sexuality diverse people to be ungodly, going against their ancestral teachings and simply put, un-African. Further, Stobie (2014) stated that in general, the Zulu culture found such individuals to be possessed by demons, indicating that they are satanic. Similarly, the following participants (who identified themselves as Zulu) responses seemed to concur with Msibi’s (2012) and Stobie’s (2014) theory:

Researcher: **Do you think African cultural and traditional norms accept these types of gender? Transgender and homosexuality?**

Amanda [39 yr. old African female, grade 4 teacher]: *...most of them are not because most people will come out and say they are gay they will be definitely discriminated among the community because people would just say maybe you're evil you need prayer and all sorts of things.*

Casanova [35 yr. old African male, grade 5 teacher]: *In the Zulu culture it has not been accepted yet. So, it depicts what, okay I'll just use the umbrella body for all the Zulu, Xhosas, Sotho's. So, we call them the Nguni, who believe strongly in our ancestors. It gives the notion that you will not be accepted in the Nguni culture when you choose to live your life like that.*

The above responses bring focus to how strongly the belief of ancestors plays a major role in African traditional and cultural norms and thus attitudes towards gender non-conforming individuals. Persons who identify as belonging to the LGBTQI+ community are in direct violation of ancestral beliefs and teachings, thus are cursed with demons and are cast aside (Okeke et al., 2017). These teachings and beliefs tend to delegitimize individuals that do not identify within the heteronormative category, perpetuating an attitude of intolerance and non-acceptance of such people. Additionally, Stobie (2014) states that this is more especially rife within the Zulu community as their leaders explicitly call for the delegitimization of such individuals. The late Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini (who held the honorific of father and rightful leader of the Zulu Nation), referenced Zulu traditional norms and Christian teachings regarding homosexuality. He explicitly stated that homosexual people “are rotten no matter who they are” and “angels desert people who do such things” (Miya, 2012, p. 2). This example

of public non-acceptance of gender and sexual diversity by influential leaders further disseminates African cultural beliefs, practices, and norms of delegitimising this community, thus perpetuating a cycle of hate and intolerance (Stobie, 2014). Further, these attitudes and behaviours oppose individuals' basic human rights in that they impinge on the freedom of gender and sexuality expression, moreover, contesting the South African Constitution (Stobie, 2014). Participants were also of the view that within African cultural norms and traditions, there was a definite gender binary that designated specific roles to men and women, from their form of dress to their roles in society. The following responses indicate this:

Ntombi [54 yr. old African female, grade 5 teacher]: *In the Zulu culture this thing is not allowed at all they don't like it's a boy it's a boy a girl it's a girl. let me give you another example the other people they used to say they don't want the girls to wear-- Pants, because they want the girls to wear dresses or skirts or whatever they will hit you if you are wearing the pants.*

Sibongile [34 yr. old female, grade 2 teacher]: *You know they're doing something that they're not supposed to be doing so I think I'm still stuck in that cultural thing that you need to be male if you are male and if you are a woman you need to be married to a man.*

Siya [27 yr. old African male, grade R-7 teacher]: *Well because what we, well the cultural people, I would say the African people, the black people as we are called. We are more aligned to what we know which is male and female. So, with that we take our information from the elders because the elders know what happens and what steps are to be taken. So, with that happening, these types of things are not accepted.*

The excerpts show that the participants' interpretations of African cultural norms and traditions are gendered, and that men hold more importance and power, thus are seen as superior over women (Amadiume, 2015). This reinforces a patriarchal society, where women are viewed as more vulnerable thus must be protected and taken care of, while men are portrayed as the head of the family and so they demand obedience and respect (Amadiume, 2015). The following responses further support this notion:

Casanova [35 yr. old African male, grade 5 teacher]: *Say for instance if you give birth to a boy child it is expected that that boy child will one day hold the family. Meaning that they will take the family name forward for future generations. If at a later stage he*

then changes and decides to become gay, it goes off towards someone. It means then that the name is lost.

Promise [25 yr. old African female, grade 1, 2 &3 teacher]: *Because if you were born a male and you want to be female, then they see that as being wrong because males are supposed to be the head of the family. Not if you gave birth to a male and suddenly, they want to be female, then I won't have anyone to inherit whatever I have. Then in a few years, there won't be a leader of the family. So, they really are against that because they want males to be firm and strong.*

Likewise, Siya's response below indicates that it is the man's responsibility to ensure the family lineage is passed on, particularly through the surname.

Siya [27 yr. old African male, grade R-7 teacher]: *With African culture the male is the one that's meant to grow the surname. So, when you come across as a bisexual, a gay person then they don't know which side you're gonna go. Then maybe you when you get married, you're gonna take the other person's surname or they gonna take yours, kinda thing.*

The above responses indicate that leading patriarchal customary masculinities are endorsed and honour the structure of heteronormativity, particularly regarding heterosexual marriage and the God-given right of the husband to pass on his surname, thus preserving his familial and ancestral heritage (Amadiume, 2015). Gender non-conforming individuals are seen as a threat to not only this right, but to the conservation of traditional African cultures and core beliefs (Stobie, 2014). The fear that gender, sex, and sexual diversity threatens age-old African culture is what maintains a cycle of transphobia and denouncement, particularly in the Zulu community (Msibi, 2012). This needs to change and Bhana (2012) supports this ideal by stating that although culture is a governing instrument for African societies, a shift is needed to align with South Africa's new democracy and constitution. A few participants (although unknowingly) seem to be in a supporting view. The following excerpts demonstrate this:

Siya [27 yr. old African male, grade R-7 teacher]: *I wouldn't say they're not accepted now. But then as time went by things started changing as we know there's a whole lot of African gay people. And they are out there about it. They not hiding behind closed doors or they not tryna hide what sexuality they are... as I said, day and age came*

about and then more and more families started to accept that this is our child at the end of the day.

Amanda [39 yr. old African female, grade 4 teacher]: *...and now because to maybe because of TV because they see these things that they are real and they're happening some famous people like Somizi you see a man getting married to a man so they've just realized that it's just reality and people are actually really out there and there's nothing really wrong with that so they're becoming slowly more accepting towards it.*

Amanda and Siya's responses indicate that there is evidence of a tentative shift in traditional African culture and norms to include gender and sexually diverse individuals. As culture cannot be viewed as fixed or stagnant, but rather fluid, this evolution is necessary to ensure that all societies in our country uphold their beliefs, cultures, and practices in alignment to our inclusive democracy and constitution (Bhana, 2012).

6.3 Conclusion

Teachers felt that their religious beliefs and cultural practices denounced transgender identities thus they could not accept such identities. Teachers perceived as accepting transgender identities as direct disobedience from their religious and cultural beliefs and practices, thus were religiously and morally bound by their religious beliefs and practices to be unaccepting. However, some participants displayed an understanding of culture and religiosity to be a fluid concept, changing with the times and consequently identifying a need to accept and bring into the fold, people of all sex, gender, and sexuality spectrums.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This part of the analysis section details the findings from the study regarding the different perceptions that were held by the teachers at Ladybug Primary School regarding the issue of sex and sexuality education in the national school curriculum. The participants' responses were varied; with some holding the view of such education would compromise the innocence of the learners (Smith & Payne, 2016), while others saw the need to educate their learners on such matters. These participants perceived education as the central tool towards prompting a schooling environment and culture that was more tolerant and accepting of sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners (Francis, 2019; Simpson 2020). Further, this chapter will include the need for teacher development and further education on matters relating to classroom management and school inclusivity of gender non- conforming learners.

7.2 Teachers Perceptions of Sex and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum

“Internationally, and in South Africa, there has been a growing appeal for the inclusion of counter-normative issues in the sexuality education curriculum. Despite this growing call and public shifts in attitudes, research underscores the curricular neglect or exclusion of gender and sexuality diversity” (Francis, 2019, p. 407). Similarly, some teachers at Ladybug Primary School identify a need for change, most participants' responses indicate that the culture of the school is still entrenched in dominant heteronormativity. Most teachers held some resistance when asked about their opinions of incorporating non-conforming sex and sexuality education into the existing Life Skills curriculum, citing learners' young age and inappropriateness of the subject as reasons to their opposing stance on the matter. The extracts below demonstrate this:

Researcher: What are your thoughts on the curriculum? In terms of teaching primary school children about sex and sexuality education?

Mrs B [33yr.old White female, grade 3 teacher]: *No, definitely not. I don't think at a primary age you should have any sex related to talk in the classroom. 'Cause they are so young you should 'cause they grow up so quickly and what they see on TV but keep it to a minimum of what you say. I won't like having a talk to my eight or nine-year-olds that I've got here in class about what actually sex is.*

Mary [36 yr. old White female, grade R teacher]: *no, not at all. And I don't think it should be introduced.*

Researcher: Why not?

Mary: *Because I think it's a parent's responsibility to teach younger children about this thing, not teachers.*

Researcher: So, currently as the curriculum stands, let's say at grade 7 level which is now Life Orientation not Life Skills. From grade R to 6 is Life Skills. There is no education for learners about sex and sexuality. When I'm talking about the different types of sexualities. So gay, lesbian, etc. Am I correct in saying that?

Somebody [44 yr. old White female, grade 7 teacher]: Yes, that is correct.

Researcher: Okay what is your opinion on that? Do you think children should be exposed to different types of sexualities?

Somebody: *No, I think they're too young. I don't think their minds are developed enough to be able to cope with that amount of information.*

Researcher: Ok, then when do you think learners should start being exposed to this type of education?

Somebody: *Definitely more high school I would say. I would say primary school they're too, they're, yeah. I don't think their brains can cope with it. And not meaning judgemental whatever but I think they'll find that very difficult to cope with as an education system. It's not the normal. It is rarer than anything else, so I think it's too much information for them at this age. That's my personal opinion.*

Tiffany [25 yr. old Coloured female, grade 1 teacher]: *I don't agree with it because they still very immature so in a sense of what happens on the playground when we just have that life orientation lesson, "let's see what miss is talking about" because that's how the Foundation Phase thinks, they go out and they practice. So, I don't think it should start from Grade R or not so in-depth.*

Gabriella [26 yr. old African female, grade 5 teacher]: *I think it's, can be introduced but not very early, you know in the grade and not to be touched so deeply...because they still young, so we don't want them to kind of like try now and look deep or much*

deeper of who they are and then they start getting wrong signals about who they are and having wrong signals about other people. And cause them to get confused as well as and also now playing detective with trying to figure out who is who.

The teachers' responses indicate that they perceive primary school learners as "far too young" to be exposed to sex and sexuality education. Further, Tiffany's response shows that she believes that exposing Foundation Phase learners to sex and sexuality education may "invite" learners to try and experiment with what they have learned about on the playground. Somebody's response shows that she perceives that at primary school level, children identifying as sex and gender non-conforming is not the norm, but rather quite "rare." A study conducted by Smith and Payne (2016) on various K-12 (South African Equivalent to Grade to 12) across America showed that resistance to sex and sexuality education was most intense in elementary schools (primary schools). Teachers from this study perceived primary school children as too young, innocent, or unaware of issues of sex, gender, and sexuality, thus felt compelled by adult duty to protect and preserve this "childhood innocence" (Smith & Payne, 2016). Somebody felt that children at primary school did not need to be educated on sex and sexuality because these learners lacked the maturity to deal with such issues and because it was rare for children to be gender and sexuality diverse at such a young age. These thoughts seem to reflect not only a belief in preserving childhood innocence, but additionally, her stock in normatively gendered elucidations of learners and the conservation of a gendered dichotomy (Smith & Payne, 2016; Francis, 2019). Further, Tiffany's response resonates with the authors findings where teachers perceived this knowledge as a threat to heterosexual learners. Teachers held the belief that transgender individuals were hypersexual and teaching children about these identities would open their curiosities and encourage them to explore what they have learned about in the classrooms (Simpson, 2020).

Unlike the previous participants, some teachers did feel a need to incorporate sex and sexuality education in the primary school curriculum but felt unsure about the correct grade to initiate this. They all recognised a need for a form of structured education on sex, gender and sexuality diversity but were torn on the appropriate grade to implement it. Here are some of their responses:

Ally [41 yr. old White female, grade 6 teacher]: *I definitely think that our curriculum doesn't cater or even make children more aware of sexual preferences and sexual*

genders. So, I think most kids learn that outside of school on social media, which is not, not always the best.

Researcher: Ok, then do you think introducing such topics in the curriculum would benefit the learners?

Ally: Yes, I think so.

Researcher: Ok, at which grades then?

Ally: I'll definitely say definitely from about grade 5, 6 or 7 you definitely I would say be more aware of it and it will be more of a positive more of that thought.

Vee [36 yr. old Coloured female, SP teacher]: I would say from about grade 6. At grade 6 you're starting to hit puberty so you should be aware of your body and the changes that your body's going to go through. So, in grade 4 and 5 you're not really sure is this normal? And in grade 6 and 7 you will mentally as well, you have the, should have the capacity. The mental capacity to be able to differentiate between normal and not normal. So, I think from grade 6 would be a good point to start.

Ally and Vee's responses show a tentative desire for sex and sexuality education to be integrated within the primary school Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculum, albeit at the grade which they deem appropriate. Their collective opinion was that learners from about grade 5 up wards were better equipped mentally and with maturity to be able to comprehend issues surrounding sex, gender, and sexuality. Although these participants' opinions are considered as they are necessary to this research, Smith & Payne (2016) argue against this perception where children are viewed as sexually innocent, and that boundary places them into the category of "children" which is separate and different from "adults." Teachers and parents alike believe that young children lack sexual awareness and sexual maturity, thus are inherently innocent, and this innocence must be preserved for as long as possible (McGinn et al., 2016).

Contrary to the above responses, some participants felt strongly that this type of education should be implemented across all grades in primary school. Although these teachers held strongly to their belief that gender, sex and sexuality education was essential to the learners' curriculum, they all agreed that the introduction of this concept had to be carefully and appropriately implemented. Here were some of the teachers' responses:

Promise [25 yr. old African female, grade 1, 2 & 3 teacher]: *I feel like it's wrong that they should be taught, they should be able to differentiate between different sexualities and they should be well aware from a very young age... But I think not too much, just a little bit. Not like something huge because they're still young.*

Debbie [52 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *I think if you are having general discussions, you're sitting on the floor with the children and you're discussing different things and you can, we could veer around discussions more on that. I think at this level it would be more on that you don't have to be a boy; you don't have to be a girl. If he likes to play with the pink Barbie that's not a problem, everybody can play with the pink Barbie. It doesn't mean anything and perhaps also, having discussions about when you do offer them activities saying everybody must have a chance to play with this, everybody must have a turn to play with this. So you're not actually labelling that this is for the boys and this is for the girls. And also not only giving them the choice to go and find what they want to play with because often they do veer towards it because it's the expectation but actually giving them something and saying "try this, you might like it" even though it's not really, whatever, the toy that they want to play with. I do that in my classroom. There's sometimes when they have free play, they're allowed choice and other times everybody moves around and plays with each thing after they have a turn and if they say "I don't know what to do with this" then I say "Make a plan, use your imagination!"*

Similarly, other teacher participants thought that gender, sex and sexuality education should be introduced in all grades at primary school as they perceived that this was a way to teach and educate other learners to become more accepting and understanding of sex and gender diverse children.

Stephanie [26 yr. old Indian female, grade 4 teacher]: *Yes, it should be included. When they introducing the whole thing about gender and sex and about the sexual reproductive organs and all of that, they should include it. So that means you include everybody in the class, as you said, because maybe there's a child that's experiencing something within themselves. So, if it's introduced, they probably feel it's OK for me to discuss this or speak about it openly.*

Phoebe [47 yr. old Indian female, grade 5 teacher]: *I think we need to start introducing gay rights. That it's okay for a boy to have feminine feelings or to want to dress as a girl whatever. I think that the more educated the people are, um like we do with AIDS. We didn't accept AIDS patients; we didn't accept it. Now that we teach it, I think people are more accepting of it. So, I think if it's given the same amount of attention and it's introduced then perhaps that will change the new way of thinking.*

Some teachers further cited that children should not be protected or hidden away from such matters, as they are exposed to gender and sex diversity on social media, television and even their own families and communities. Rather, educating learners would aid in the lowering the rate of harassment and bullying of gender and sexuality diverse learners:

Promise: *But, you know, from when they are small, you comprehend because the end of the day, they do watch TV, they have that cell phones, they are exposed to the things that maybe in their families to people. So, yes, it should be taught.*

Amanda [39 yr. old African female, grade 4 teacher]: *Of course, I do, I think I feel children should be educated about these things because most of the time they are exposed to these things in society they see these things on TV. This one time a child asks me mam, why is a guy kissing a guy and he was only in grade four as well so I had to explain to him what is happening. So if we as teachers at school are teaching the children they are nothing wrong with these people maybe they are trapped in someone's body or trapped as a boy while they are girl so I think the Society in the children as they grow up they will learn to accept them all because if someone in my class was a boy and she was acting like a girl I think it will be funny for them and they will definitely look at them differently but if the children are taught that there's nothing wrong with these children then they would become more accepting.*

Casanova [35 yr. old African male, grade 5 teacher]: *I think because of the influence of the media as I have alluded to earlier, it would be wise to sort of introduce such matters to the learner because already they are bombarded with these people, with these figures who are forever in their faces. And they will ask questions: "isn't so and so a man? Why is he acting in this manner?" So then therefore it would be beneficial for them to introduce many systems to try and educate them. So by doing so we know that we won't*

be troubling on anyone's rights but we would try to find a common ground so there would be no making fun of the people who are different. Yes, ma'am.

Additionally, teachers felt that rather than shying away from this relevant topic, children should be correctly educated about it to avoid harmful fallacies surrounding gender and sexuality, that may contribute to sex and gender diverse individuals being treated unequally (Simpson, 2020). Teachers identified the dangers of “keeping silent” or avoiding gender and sexuality education and stated that such topics were relevant today as they were being experienced by society, in the world, and in our schools, as seen in Dr X's response:

Dr X [32 yr. old Indian male, grade 6 teacher]: *I think Life Skills as a lesson is there so that children are exposed to life lessons to deal with things that are happening in the world this issue of transgender as one of the hot topics at the moment, so I think it should definitely be part of the curriculum. I mean the whole concept of sex and intercourse and all of that is gender, male, female genders, male-dominated, female-dominated, discrimination and all of that.*

Further, some participants indicated that silencing issues surrounding gender, sex and sexuality diversity was harmful to those young people who were struggling with being accepted and lack of support from educators could potentially be fatal to such learners:

Promise: *You do not want someone at the end of the day to commit suicide because in a way, they were nor given support, or accepted. And who knows?*

Gerald [52 yr. old White male, grade 6 & 7 teacher]: *What I said it is an anti-thing they try to push it away to the side but I think they have to bring it in also in the curriculum to to-to train to educate our learners to deal with situations because they are going to come over to situations one more is not I wish it doesn't as my personal point of view, but if you keep it on the side we lose maybe kids they could have been who they are when they were born but now no one helps and they don't understand what is happening to them so I don't think don't think no we're not focusing on these things enough and we should.*

Promise and Gerald's responses resonate and lend credence to authors Goodenow et al (2006) whose American study on sexual minority learners revealed that they were more likely to be bullied and harassed in school and reported thoughts and attempts of suicide more frequently

than any other learners (Goodenow et al., 2006). These learners felt that they did not have an adult at school whom they could confide in and trust, thus felt hopeless and powerless.

The above responses from teachers at Ladybug Primary School varied in terms of their opinions of whether gender, sex and sexuality education should be incorporated within the existing Life Skills curriculum. For those teachers who agreed with its implementation, their opinions were fragmented on agreement of which grade level and age group they deemed appropriate for such education. According to Smith and Payne (2016, p. 36), “Gender and sexuality are relevant to how children experience school, and they are topics to be discussed in the school setting.” The authors further state that sexuality is a natural and *already* existing part of all elementary (primary) school children’s (from Grade R to 7) lives, thus should be discussed openly (Smith & Payne, 2016). In this way, the explicit and implicit school culture of heteronormativity, homophobia, gender and sexual hierarchies and hegemonies can be disrupted, and inclusivity can slowly be implemented (Francis, 2019; Simpson, 2020). Despite a difference in opinion on the incorporation of gender, sex, and sexuality education in the curriculum, almost all the teacher participants stated that a need for training and workshops on how to effectively interact and manage counter-normative sexualities in the classroom.

7.3 Teachers Need for Support and Training when Managing Non-conforming Sexual Identities in the Classroom.

When presented with the vignette about Thandi (Appendix F), most participants admitted that they felt out of their depth of how to deal with a situation of a counter–normative gender and sexuality learner seeking advice and counsel from them:

Zama [41 yr. old African female, grade 6 teacher]: *My reaction would still be that you need to talk to a family person, ok who can be able to help you because you do need some kind of counselling in a way. Because I think this is not something that a person who is not qualified to understand behaviour I don't think as a teacher I'm qualified to say the right thing, so I think I might try to come to her and say the wrong thing...*

Dr X [32 yr. old Indian male, grade 6 teacher]: *... I'm gonna have to test the waters here so if that doesn't work out we'll have to go further into it, but I don't have experience with that so I can't give him/her advice on how to handle the situation... I don't know, I might just overstep or say something wrong yes, but I guess that there would be steps to follow to handle the situation.*

Vee [36 yr. old Coloured female, SP teacher]: *To be honest my immediate reaction would be that I'm not qualified to do this, but teachers are placed in a very difficult drill where they have to be often both parent and teacher.*

The teachers' responses of Ladybug Primary school above show that they feel an inadequacy in themselves as teachers when presented with a situation in which they need to advise and guide a gender and sexually diverse learner. Dr X and Zama's responses indicate that they are not qualified or trained as teachers to be able to give the "right" advice to learners like Thandi and might do more harm in the situation. According to Smith and Payne (2016) and Francis (2019), teachers internationally and locally, are ill-equipped when it comes to dealing with gender, sex, and sexually diverse learners. Moreover, teachers have extraordinarily little ability to help and guide such learners due to their own pedagogies and beliefs that place heteronormativity and the gender binary as the "norm" in schools (Sullivan, 2019). When teachers were asked if they had received any training, modules, or courses on management of gender and sex diverse learners in college or university, all 30 participants replied that they had not. When questioned further about the implementation of workshops or courses made available to them through the management of Ladybug Primary School, majority of participants answered in the negative. Grace's response, which is similar to the other 29 participants' responses, sums this up effectively:

Researcher: When you were training to become a teacher - when you attend teacher training, college, university, varsity whatever it was. Did you have a module or course where you were taught how to deal with such issues? Did you have any support from wherever you trained at?

Grace [44 yr. old White female, grade 5 teacher]: *No.*

Researcher: Nothing at all?

Grace: *Nothing.*

Researcher: And any of the other schools you've taught at? Nothing at this school?

Grace: *No. Basically bullying and molesting and things like that but never to do with LGBTQI+.*

In America, teachers similarly feel inadequate when confronted with issues on LGBTQI+. According to Jennings and Sherwin (2008) in the study by Smith and Payne (2016, p. 38) “Unfortunately, LGBTQ identities are often absent from teacher education curriculum, and when they are addressed, instructors often rely on deficit discourses that focus the need for change on the youth themselves instead of on structural inequalities that create the need for therapeutic intervention or anti-bullying programs”. The authors further state, that although some teachers recognise a need for courses that equip them with the necessary tools, these courses are often centred around ways in which to help those divergent learners find their way back to the “most insidious forms of heterosexism” and not on multicultural education” (Gorski et al., 2013, p. 238).

In South Africa, there is a legitimate concern about how teachers are trained when it comes to teaching learners about gender, sex, and sexual diversity (Francis, 2019). In his study, Francis (2019) cites that a study conducted by (Johnson, 2014) reported that in three South African teacher-training programmes, issues pertaining to LGB topics were purposefully left out of the curriculum (Johnson, 2014; Francis, 2019). “As a result, pre-service teachers are ‘ill-prepared’ to teach about gender and sexuality diversity.” (Francis, 2019, p. 13). Further, in-service teachers felt uncomfortable and inadequately prepared when questioned on teacher sex and sexuality diversity to learners (Francis, 2019). Drawing on the findings of these studies, it is clear to see that there is a need for both pre-and in-service teachers to be given the opportunity to learn and develop skills that deal with gender, sex, and sexuality diversity (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2019). Teachers at Ladybug Primary school seemed to echo these sentiments:

Researcher: So that would be your recommendation? In other words, what do you think is needed in the school to give more support to the teachers? What would be beneficial to them when it comes to issues like dealing with and managing learners such as Thandi?

Vee: I think workshops are the best place to start.... For all the teachers, I would say. Maybe not so much for junior primary. More for senior primary and maybe one specific teacher in junior primary. One teacher that you know is open to things like this so that if there is a case like a 6-year-old that has started this then there's at least somebody there that the child can speak to.

Mrs. Zee [28 yr. old White female, grade 1 teacher]: *Mm, maybe some sort of training. I'm just more on talking underneath each other and asking them like the question you ask me, how are you going to address it or how are you going to handle it and what is your response going to be for that girl that wants to be the boy, whatever you said. To more talk about it in a group like the foundation phase and also in the foundation phase talk to the intermediate phase. And ask them how is their reaction and you can think about your own reaction, think maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm right, let's rather do this as a school. Be a unit when it comes to some, well very serious things like this. Because this is really serious things yeah.*

Vee and Mrs. Zee's responses show that teachers recognise and accept that they need support in terms of by training and workshops. They feel that they are not prepared enough to manage and respond to sex and gender diverse learners, in the way that would benefit these learners. Internationally, Cates (2019) states that research within some states in the United States of America had begun exploring how individual schools and teachers might better serve diverse students. Findings reveal that a multicultural educational approach is needed, and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), have emerged to inform teacher training and practice (Cates, 2019). Vavrus (2008, p. 49) defines CRT as "an educational reform that challenges schooling norms which are primarily centred around meeting the needs of white, middle-class, cisgender students." Through purposeful recognition and inclusion of the perspectives of diverse students, Vavrus (2008, p. 49) proposes that CRT provides, "mainstream knowledge through different techniques, but it also involves transforming the actual perspectives, knowledge base, and approaches of a conventional classroom's curriculum and instruction."

In South Africa, Francis (2019, p. 13) states "Both pre-and in-service teachers require opportunities to reflect on and trouble their own positionalities with respect to gender and sexuality diversity so as to address how power, difference and discourse operate at both the level of teaching and learning and more broadly within society".

7.4 Conclusion

Although some participants were opposed to teaching primary school learners about gender, sex and sexuality education, some teachers felt that by such discourses, a way would be paved to aid in the eradication of verbal and/or physical harassment of gender and sex counter

normative learners. Lastly, most participants felt that they were not adequately trained nor prepared, to manage and interact with diverse learners in the classroom, thus recognising the need for interventions such as training and workshops. In the following and closing chapter, I present a brief overview of my study and findings. The chapter will further discuss recommendations that may aid teachers to better interact with and manage gender diverse learners.

CHAPTER EIGHT- CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter one, South Africa has one of the world's most progressive and inclusive constitutions, seemingly assuring that our democracy is one entrenched in the principles of fairness and equality for all its citizens. In particular, our policies and advocacy for rights of gender, sex and sexuality diverse individuals is trendsetting (Galston, 2018). Within our educational sphere, our policies dictate that no learner shall be discriminated against based on their ethnicity, sex, race, ability, and sexual orientation. However, despite this, learners who identify out of the orientation of heteronormativity, are harassed, bullied, marginalized, and largely misunderstood by their peers and teachers. As such, this study set out to examine the understandings of primary school teachers' perceptions of transgender individuals.

I commence this chapter by providing a brief overview of Chapters one to seven in this dissertation. Thereafter, the findings of the study will be presented in the form of themes that relates to how primary school teachers understand and perceive transgender identities. The findings will display the intersection of gender binary, compulsive heteronormativity, power dynamics and issues of age and maturity in relation to sex, sexuality, culture, and religion. This chapter will conclude with the recommendations based on the findings that emanated from this study.

8.2 Overview of chapters

Chapter One outlined how misconceptions and unfounded beliefs of primary school teachers on transgender identities had a negative impact on those with whom they interacted with, particularly learners who identified as sex, gender, and sexually diverse. This probed into the need for such research as there is an alarming dearth of research on primary school teachers' perceptions on transgender identities, more so in South Africa. Next, the background of the study was presented by exhibiting briefly upon the theories that informed this study, alongside literature from a broad global perspective that was narrowed down to a national perspective. I provided a background of the study as well as the rationale. An outline of the aims and objectives were offered, followed by the key research question and sub questions. Next, an explanation of the context of the study was shown, followed by a description on the research methodology that I employed. Finally, the concluding paragraph presented an overview of all chapters to follow.

Chapter Two displayed the key theoretical concepts and perspectives that shaped the framework for my study, which was informed by a feminist lens. Foucault's (1980) theory highlighted the intersectionality of sexuality and power, while Butler's (1990, 1993) to understand queer theory as it allows for the deconstruction of gender and sex, and Connell (1995) provided insight into understanding gender relational theory and theory of masculinities. These frameworks assisted in understanding how primary teachers' constructions of gender identities are embedded in the social and cultural norms espoused in society.

Chapter Three presented a connection of literature (internationally and nationally) on how various societies understand gender and transgender identities. These perceptions were found to be deeply shrouded within socially accepted notions of heteronormativity, dogmatic beliefs, patriarchy, and firm gender binary notions. The literature provided a reference point for the emergence of themes and sub-themes of the findings of this study.

Chapter Four gave a detailed account of the research design and methodology that this study applied. The chapter commenced by displaying a tabulated summary of the research approach, which was trailed by a detailed description of each aspect within the table. This was the nature of this study, namely the qualitative research design, interpretivist paradigm and phenomenological methodology were detailed to the main objective, which was to determine primary school teachers' construction of transgender identities, and the factors that shape these constructions. Next the location and context of this study was presented, followed by the process of sample recruiting. Thereafter, a detailed account of the data collection instruments used (semi-structured individual interviews) was discussed. A table depicting teacher participants' profiles was provided as well as the motivation and need for the use of photo-elicitation and vignettes in the interviews. Next, the process of data analysis was provided as well as the trustworthiness of the study, referenced by the validity, reliability, and rigour of the study. The chapter concluded by illustrating the ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

Chapter Five was the commencing of the data analysis section, which was divided into three chapters i.e.: chapters five, six and seven. Chapter five concentrated on how primary school teachers made meaning of the term transgender. Findings indicated that teachers' perceptions of transgender identities and individuals were intertwined and influenced by their personal socialisation, morals, value, and belief systems. Most of these understandings were deeply

entrenched within a gender dichotomy, traditional patriarchy, and struggles of power between the only perceived legitimate sexes of male and female. The chapter displayed teachers' observations of interactions between themselves and learners, as well as the dynamics between learner and learner interaction. Lastly, teachers' recognition and empathy towards sex, gender, and sexually diverse individuals was probed.

Chapter Six continued with findings from the study that displayed how primary school teachers perceived transgender individuals in relation to their religious and cultural belief systems. As most of the participants affiliated themselves to the Christian religion, their beliefs on the teachings and practices of Christianity in relation to sex, gender, and sexually diverse individuals was explored. Teachers perceived transgender as abhorrent and unacceptable from their religious point of views, however some participants stated that there was a need for religious principles and practices to evolve, to recognise and accept transgender individuals. This chapter further discussed the influence of cultural practices and beliefs of teachers towards transgender identities.

Chapter Seven concluded the analysis section of the study by displaying findings of the different beliefs and perceptions of teachers in relation to primary schools' sex and sexuality education curriculum. Here, teachers' views were fragmented, as some were for such education whilst others perceived teaching young learners about sex and sexuality as robbing learners of their childhood innocence.

8.3 Main findings of this study

8.3.1 Teachers Understanding of Sex, Gender, and Transgender Identities

8.3.1.1 Sex and gender

Lips (2020) states that sex and gender are not interchangeable, but rather, sex refers to one's biological sex organs while gender is constructed through social interactions and accepted social and cultural norms regarding roles that display femininity and masculinity. This notion is further supported by Butler (1990, 1993) theory of performativity which states gender is learned and performed, rather than biologically inherent. By contrast, most participants viewed sex and gender as one in the same, with no discernible difference between the two, whilst being unable to identify any other gender besides male and female. The participants' inability to differentiate between sex and gender perpetuates the harmful view of essentialism, which does not allow for fluidity of gender thus negating individuals who identify outside of the constraints

of heteronormativity (Greene, 2020). Additionally, participants' understandings of sex and gender to be exclusively male and female, lends credence to the gender binary, reinforcing stereotypical masculine and feminine roles and expected behaviors (Mangin, 2018). These social norms and expectation mirrored in the participants' responses, tend to exclude individuals who identify as sex, gender, and sexuality diverse.

8.3.1.2 Transgender identities

The term transgender is broad one and can be described as an umbrella term for individuals who do not align their gender identity and expression with that of their birth assigned biological sex (Lips, 2020). When asked what the term transgender means to them, some teachers were not sure or had a vague understanding of the term. To help them understand better, they were shown photos of well knowns transgender individuals (such as Wandile from the local programme *Generations* and Bruce Jenner from *Keeping up with the Kardashians*) and thus were able to make meaning of the term. Findings displayed participants' responses primarily as understanding transgender individuals as having either been born male and changing to a female, and vice-versa (whether surgically or cosmetically). This perception simplifies transgender as a gender dichotomy whilst delegitimising individuals who do not wish to reduce their identities to constraints of such a binary (Lemma, 2018). Findings here indicate that primary school teachers perceive transgender as a simply and effortless transition from one gender to another, further perpetuating the gender binary and denouncing the legitimisation of all the ways a person may identify as transgender (Lemma, 2018).

8.3.1.3 Reasons why individuals identify as transgender

Findings explained that participants cited that they perceived reasons for individuals identifying as transgender as one of the following: 1. due to either traumatic events that may have occurred in their lives, 2. unconventional upbringings, or, 3. because of a hormonal/chemical imbalance or mental illness. Participants, who believed that a person may "become" transgender or homosexual due to a traumatic life event, are unfounded in these beliefs according to Scheer et al. (2020). The authors state that in contrast, many individuals who belong to the LGBTQI+ community are more likely to be traumatised and harassed because of the sexual identities (Scheer et al., 2020). Further, participants who cited unconventional upbringing as reasons for people to become sex and gender non- conforming were misinformed in their perceptions. Fausto-Sterling (2019) and Restivo (2006) concur with

the notion that certain behaviours (such as masculinity in girls and femininity in boys) cannot lead to a person identifying as gay or transgender, as such identities have very little to do with social behaviours. Similarly, authors Fisher et al. (2016) delegitimized participants' understandings of transgender identities because of a hormone or chemical imbalance, by stating that these identities are not an illness or imbalance in one's brain, but rather a sense of identity that such factors have no impact on. The teachers' response here seemed to be aligned with many social myths and misconceptions, stigmas, and prejudices that are held by societies at globally and nationally (Fisher et al., 2016).

8.3.2 The Gender Binary and Power Dynamics

Findings from the study noted that most participants considered boys who acted like girls more at risk of bullying and harassment when compared to girls who displayed more masculine qualities. These findings reinstate that similarly to all social environments, the school climate and culture is one that is entrenched in deep uneven power dynamics that are established from the gender binary (Francis et al., 2019). These binary places woman as the vulnerable sex, needing protection and guidance from their male counterparts. Such notions are further credited by Connell's (1987) theory of traditional masculinity highlighting the influence of hegemonic masculinity on additional types of masculinities and femininities. Teachers perceived boys who were effeminate to be likely more bullied compared to "tomboy" girls. According to Anderson (2018), a possible explanation for this perception could be because individuals often view effeminate qualities in boys as a negation of masculinity, thus reducing the "macho" nature of men. Participants' responses seemed to mirror Anderson's (2018) theory, further fuelling a school environment that is intolerant to sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners.

8.3.3 Teachers' Observations and Interactions with Sexually Non-conforming Learners

Findings from the study displayed those teachers, by their own admission, were able to identify learners who they perceived as sex, gender, and sexuality diverse, from as early on as primary school level. This displayed a strong indication that primary school teachers are not gender and sexuality unsighted and can recognise and empathise with such learners. Findings from participants' responses at Ladybug Primary School indicated that some teachers not only were aware of diverse learners but were in support of these learners. Teachers stated that they would aid sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners by listening, counselling (to the best of their abilities), and advise learners within their capacities as teachers. However, a common theme

from participants was the fear of overstepping in their aid of the learners, as they were worried about possible backlash from the school's management and parents for involving themselves in matters which they considered delicate. Interestingly, other participants stated that although they were sympathetic to the struggles of sex and gender diverse learners, they were dismissive of these learners' feelings and concerns, holding the belief that primary school children were not at the required maturity level to properly appreciate and explore their sexual identities (Van Leent, 2017). Further, participants were deeply invested within their beliefs of gender occurring within a binary, they were unable to perceive any other genders and sexualities outside of it, thus negating the feelings and struggles of sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners (Smith & Payne, 2016).

8.3.3.1 Teachers' perceptions on heterosexual learners' interactions with gender diverse learners.

Although bullying and harassment is widespread in schools (both internationally and locally), learners who belonged to the LGBTQI+ community were found to be at a higher risk of being on the receiving end of this victimization, particularly by their peers (Kolbert et al., 2015; Francis, 2019). Similarly, findings from the study indicated that teachers were able to observe similarly interactions between learners who were cisgender, and sex, gender, and sexuality diverse. Participants stated that they observed gender and sex diverse learners being teased, called derogatory names, and being ignored by their peers. Further, responses from participants cited boys being the primary perpetrators of such victimizations. This may be attributed to the implicit gender binary culture of the school, where learners, (similarly to teachers), prescribe to the belief that boys are to be manly and strong, whilst girls are expected to behave in softer, more feminine ways (Anderson, 2018; Francis et al., 2019; Sullivan, 2019). These beliefs then pit learners against each other, in that, when boys behave in effeminate ways, this is seen as a negation of manliness and is repugnant to those who prescribe to the cultural and societal norms of manly behaviour (Francis et al., 2019). Teacher participants were in concurrence that these issues had to be dealt with and addressed, and many cited having stern talks with the learners was the best way to address the issues of bullying and harassment. However, these forms of address prove to be ineffective, thus a need for more aggressive forms of anti-bullying interventions are greatly required (Kolbert et al., 2015).

8.3.4 Recognition, Acceptance and Empathy of Transgender Individuals

The study found that there was a definite shift in attitudes towards transgender individuals, and participants recognised their struggles, need and perhaps, most importantly, their basic human right to be accepted and recognised. Teachers understood that transgender individuals had the basic right to sovereignty over their bodies and sexual identities, without having to be ostracised by societies that do not support and accept them (Pyne, 2016). Participants correspondingly recognised the unfairness of societies that placed individuals in certain roles and expected behaviours, which largely coincided with their assigned birth genders, further acknowledging the necessity for a more inclusive shift in social standards and norms (Francis, 2019).

8.3.5 Impact of Religious and Cultural Beliefs on Teachers' Perceptions of Transgender

From this research, findings showed that teachers' perceptions of transgender identities were strongly influenced and moulded by their religious and cultural belief systems. As almost all participants affiliated themselves with the religion of Christianity, the findings were specific to this religion. Similarly, participants identified as belonging to the African culture, thus findings were detailed to this cultural sphere.

8.3.5.1 Christianity and transgender individualities

Comprehensively, findings of the study show that participants viewed transgender identities as a direct abhorrent to the teachings and beliefs of Christianity. Participants believed God created only two genders, male and female, thus any other gender was viewed as sinful and illegitimate in the context of Christian beliefs and teachings (Campbell et al., 2019). Explanations for this phenomenon are given by Campbell et al. (2019), who state that most Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity, have beliefs and practices which are informed by a dichotomous view of gender, hence perpetuating a culture of heteronormativity as the only acceptable sexuality. Consequently, Christian teachings, beliefs, and practices can disseminate a mindset of transphobia, unacceptance, and intolerance for those who abide by its traditional teachings and core values (Campbell et al., 2019). Some participants however, revealed that although they may practice the teachings of Christianity, they chose to practice religious autonomy, i.e.: they chose to interpret their religious beliefs in a way that was more accommodating to sex, gender, and sexuality diverse individuals (Berger, 2018).

8.3.5.2 African Cultural beliefs and transgender identities

There is a sure link between African cultural beliefs and teachings, with that of Christianity, and this fusion serves to normalize heteronormativity, exclusively (Bhana, 2012; Isaac, 2015). Individuals who possess a strong inclination towards traditional African cultural practices and beliefs, seemingly view transgender identities as ungodly, un-African, and against traditional ancestral beliefs (Msibi, 2012). Comprehensively, participants concurred with traditional African Cultural view regarding transgender identities. Findings from teachers' responses show that participants thought that members from the LGBTQI+ community were un-African, riddled with demons, unholy, and were expressively rejected by their ancestors. Such perceptions denounce transgender identities as legitimate identities, further propagating a cyclic pattern of unacceptance and transphobia (Stobie, 2014). Further, participants' interpretations of African cultural norms and traditions were found to be steeped within the gender binary, placing women inferior to men in aspects such as power, independence, and social expectations and roles (Amadiume, 2015).

8.3.6 Teachers Perceptions of Sex and Sexuality Education in the Curriculum

Within an international and South African context, there has been a pressing call to include sex, gender, and sexuality diversity education within the existing school curricular, as majority of the curricular are structured towards heterosexuality and heteronormativity (Francis, 2019).

Comprehensively, within the context of this theme, participants at Ladybug Primary School were found to be apprehensive about teaching learners about sexual diversity and preferred to teach Life Skills and Life Orientation lessons within the bounds of the current curriculum. They justified their opinions on the matter by stating that they thought children at primary school level were not mature enough to be exposed to issues surrounding gender and sexual diversity. Further, teachers cited that such education was inappropriate, and the responsibility to teach it fell unto parents. Participants likewise felt that primary school learners were innocent and unaware of issues pertaining to gender and sexuality. This notion was supported by Smith & Payne (2016), where the authors confirm that primary school teachers felt a compulsion to protect learners from topics such as sex and gender, to preserve childhood innocence.

By contrast, some participants felt that such education should be introduced to all grades at primary school level, as children were constantly exposed to topics of sex and gender via television and social media. These teachers felt that to educate learners, in an appropriate

manner that was in keeping with their comprehension levels, would aid in creating a schooling environment that was more accepting and tolerant to sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners. In this way, instances of homophobic and transphobic bullying and victimisation could be greatly reduced (Francis, 2019; Simpson 2020).

8.3.7 Teachers Need for Support and Training when Managing Non-conforming Sexual Identities in the Classroom

When asked if they felt that they were adequately trained with skills and knowledge to manage gender and sexually diverse identities within the classroom, all participants answered in the negative. Responses indicated that teachers felt that they were not properly trained (in pre-service and in-service) when it came to helping and guiding diverse learners. Participants' feelings on inadequate training are supported by Francis (2019), when he states that South African teachers are ill-equipped when faced with issues of sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners. Further, some teachers established that their own perceptions and beliefs regarding transgender and gender diverse identities made it difficult to teach learners about such matters, without bringing these personal opinions and beliefs into their pedagogies. Only through comprehensive teacher training and workshops, will these limitations be overcome (Francis, 2019; Sullivan, 2019).

8.4 Recommendations

This study found that primary school teachers mostly perceived gender and sex diversity through a lens of a gender binary and heteronormativity, thus delegitimizing transgender identities and other identities that are not bound by heteronormative norms. These perceptions filter into the schooling environment and tend to have a negative effect on gender non-conforming learners. Additionally, all teacher participants felt that they were not adequately skilled and trained to manage issues of sex and gender diversity in the classroom. This, therefore, reinforces the fundamental need for all investors of education, i.e.: teachers, parents, and learners, to be given support and information regarding sex, gender, and sexuality diverse individuals. In this way, a tentative climate of acceptance and tolerance can be fostered towards such learners within the schooling environment (Francis, 2019). To take steps to achieve these goals, I propose the following recommendations:

8.4.1 A multicultural educational approach is needed

Multicultural education can be defined as a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students, while inclusive of diversity in race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity, are the core principles of this approach (Cates, 2019). Although built on many dimensions, for this study, I will expound on the specific principle of empowering school culture.

8.4.1.1 Empowering school culture

Empowering school culture approaches school reorganisation holistically. An assessment of the school as a social structure and developing reforms that point it toward greater opportunity for all students is the fundamental nature of this dimension of multicultural education (Cates, 2019). This requires an examination of the school as a system with shared values and norms, and in this study, it was found that the school culture at Ladybug Primary School was embedded within heteronormativity. Cates (2019) states that teachers are key instruments when it comes to their role in influencing school culture, thus have the power to change existing school cultures (that may be exclusionary), to those that are more accommodating to learners who are sex and gender diverse. However, teachers cannot seek improvement on their own, therefore this intervention necessitates the collaborative decision making of teachers, parents, and other school personnel. Only through this collective effort from all educational stakeholders, will reform occur in such a way that will allow diverse learners to experience equity and empowerment (Cates, 2019).

8.4.1.2 Teacher preparation and supportive school practices

Teachers hold a key role in creating classroom environments that acknowledge and include sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners (Kolbert et al., 2015). However, this study's findings indicate the teachers often feel adrift and inadequate when it comes to assisting and guiding such learners. Participants reported to having no training in either pre or post service, with regards to managing diverse learners in the classroom. Additionally, some teachers revealed that they found it difficult to separate their personal religious and cultural beliefs when teaching sex and sexuality education, and these beliefs were often entwined with unacceptance and intolerance of sex and gender diversity. Further, most school sex and sexuality curricular internationally and within South Africa tend to exclude LGBTQI+ identities, additionally denying teachers the skills and tools to effectively address issues of gender and sexuality diversity (Johnson, 2014; Smith & Payne, 2016; Francis, 2019). Participants also added that

when schools did offer support workshops, topics discussed were geared towards bullying and sexual assault, and not towards issues surrounding LGBTQI+ identities. All participants from this study stated that they felt a definite and dire need for workshops and support regarding such issues, so that they were well prepared for providing support and guidance to sex, gender, and sexuality diverse learners. The participants' sentiments are reinforced when Francis (2019) and Bhana (2012) state that pre and post service teachers must be given ample opportunities to develop skills that allow them to manage diverse learners, be it through university modules or workshops.

Support can be offered to teachers through culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) (Cates, 2019). CRT is described conscious education reform, which concentrates on identifying those factors in schools (whether implicit or explicit) that foster a compulsory heteronormative school environment and culture (Cates, 2019). Only when teachers start trying to consciously recognise these factors, will the disruption of heterosexual norms and standards in schools begin (Vavrus, 2008). This reform can be achieved by school management allowing teachers to involve themselves in workshops and training courses which focus on arming teachers with alternative techniques and perspectives that include and recognise diverse learners (Vavrus, 2008). Similarly, CRP training is learner- centered and aids teachers to develop their skills that allow them to consider learner empathy, whilst placing importance on strengths and experience that sex and gender diverse learners bring to the school environment (Cates, 2019). Such interventions can certainly support and assist teachers towards managing diverse learners.

To foster a holistic and inclusive change in South African schools, Bhana, Crewe & Aggleton (2019) explain the existing sex and sexuality education and recommend the following:

Excellent valued sex and sexuality education for *learners* specifically, is imperative when attempting to extend safe expression and agency for those who are gender and trans non-conforming, as well as any other learner. By initiating such a curriculum, Bhana et al (2019, pg. 2) state that all learners will gain a healthy and “vital resource to provide young people with knowledge and information to address sexual and reproductive health and to prevent adverse social, health and educational outcomes.”

The existing curriculum, which is Life Orientation in our national schools, fails to address and teach all spheres of sex, sexuality, and gender diversity. The subject of LO has proved to be ineffective in this endeavor as it focuses more on “on disease, sexual danger, rigid

categorisations of gender – all preventing the understanding and elaboration of gender and sexual identities” (Bhana et al, 2019, pg. 3). Consequently, the potential positive impact of LO on learners towards superior sex, sexuality, and gender diversity education, is diminished and wasted. LO education is taught in a way that places girls as being innocent and pure, and susceptible to becoming victims of male desire and sexuality (Bhana et al, 2019). This inaccurate teaching leads to the notion that emphasizes “sexuality education as a domain of danger and power with little consideration being given to sexualities that encompass desire, pleasure, queer experiences, curiosity and excitement. Most education interventions continue to emphasise ‘risk’ over ‘desire’ and ‘shame’ over ‘pleasure’. Thus, they run the risk of speaking to no-one: not to the adults who have failed to escape these constraints, nor to the young people whose bodies and experiences tell them differently.” (Bhana et al, 2019, pg. 3). The authors thus recommend opening sexuality education to be revised, where the interest and desires of learners are forefront and considered. The authors call for a total revision of the existing curriculum that is more aligned with these goals (Bhana et al, 2019).

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter offered a description of the main findings of the study, while simultaneously demonstrating how primary school teachers construct their understandings of transgender identities. The study showed how these constructions were strongly influenced by teachers' social, religious, moral, and cultural belief systems and practices. The intersectionality of these beliefs systems coupled with an investment in the gender binary and compulsive heterosexuality, show that these constructions tend to denounce transgender identities. The study's worth lies in the vigorous commitment of all educational stakeholders. There is a need for a multicultural educational approach which allows for the inclusivity of all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identities. For change to be evident, schools need to mobilise towards an empowering school culture, which requires the involvement of parents, learners, and teachers. Here, all stakeholders need to critically look at the school's culture to identify the factors that binds the schooling environment to heterosexuality, to the exclusion of learners who do not conform to these norms and standards. The last recommendation calls for further support of teachers who opine that they are ill-equipped to manage and assist learners who identify as gender, and sexually diverse. These recommendations offer an interventional strategy in which teachers and other stakeholders are able to create and facilitate an inclusive schooling environment that is tolerant, and safe for gender and sexual non-conforming learners.

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APPENDIX A - Ethical Clearance: University of KwaZulu-Natal



23 June 2020

Mrs Fatima Al Sayed (215055533)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Al Sayed,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001368/2020

Project title: Understanding teachers construction of transgender: Perspectives from primary school teachers in KwaZulu- Natal.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 16 June 2020 to our letter of 09 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 23 June 2021

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

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

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

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B - Ethical Clearance: Department of Education



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Tel: 033 392 1063/51

Ref.: 2/4/8/4098


Mrs Fatima Al Sayed
371 Ipahla Road
Athlone Park
AMANZIMTOTI
DURBAN

Dear Mrs Al Sayed

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSGENDER: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SUBURB OF AMANZIMTOTI WITHIN KWAZULU-NATAL"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 09 March 2020 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 09 March 2020

...Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation
Through a Revolutionary Education for all...

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 228 Pietermaritzburg Street • Ex-NED Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel.: +27 33 3921063 • Fax.: +27 033 3921203 • Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzneducation.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE...Twitter: @DBE_KZN...Instagram: kzn_education...Youtube: kzndoe

APPENDIX C – Informed Consent: Principal

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN YOUR SCHOOL.



The Principal
Doon Heights Primary School
66 Longacres Drive, Doon Heights
Kingsburgh
4126

Dear Mrs. J. Kruger
February 2020

03

Permission to conduct a research study in the school.

I, Fatima Al Sayed (Student number 215055533) am a Master's (Gender Education) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am optimistically requesting permission to conduct a research study at Doon Heights Primary. The aim of this study is to examine how teachers construct meaning to gender identities, in particular transgender at a primary school, as bullying, discrimination, and violence stem from these notions.

My supervisor, Professor Deevia Bhana is the principal investigator in the investigation, which is part of a larger research project titled, **learning from the learners**, which seeks to explore how boys and girls in schools in KwaZulu-Natal learn about and “perform” gender and sexuality. My research project forms part of this project.

This study is expected to enrol 30 teacher participants on a voluntary basis. I will utilize interviews as a method for data collection. Please further note that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which calls for social distancing, interviews may have to be conducted telephonically, via WhatsApp video call and Zoom conference call. I intend to conduct the investigation once ethical clearance is obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I will ensure that teaching and learning time is not disrupted when conducting this research study.

The school along with the participants will be anonymous and all data collected confidential. For this reason, the authentic names of the interviewees will be kept confidential. Participants will also be allowed to exit from the study at any time if they feel uncomfortable, with no consequences whatsoever. However, there will be limits of confidentiality in cases where the well-being of learners is affected. This will be disclosed in the consent forms handed out to participants.

For further information, please contact the Higher Research Degrees Edgewood office.

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Fatima Al Sayed
Bhana



Project Leader: Prof. Deevia



Tel: (031) 260 2603

Email: 215055533@stu.ukzn.ac.za


Email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

Principal's informed consent reply slip

I, Janine Kruger (full name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I grant permission to the learners and teachers participating in the research project, and give permission for the school to be used as a research site.

The times and dates of the research will be at the sole discretion of the principal.

I understand that the learners, teachers and the school are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time.


Signature of Principal

2020.02.03
Date

DOON HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 35
WINKLESPRUIT 4145
PHONE: 031 903 2361
FAX: 031 903 7012
E MAIL: doonheights@mweb.co.za

APPENDIX D - Informed Consent: Participants

Teachers Consent form



Informed Consent Letter to Teachers.

This is a formal invitation to you to take part in the exploration venture (research project) titled: **“Understanding teachers’ construction of transgender: Perspectives from primary school teachers in KwaZulu- Natal.”**

My supervisor is Professor Deevia Bhana.

The study is part of a larger research project, **learning from the learners**, which seeks to explore how boys and girls in schools in KwaZulu-Natal learn about and “perform” gender and sexuality. My research project forms part of this project.

I am writing to request your permission to lead an investigation on primary school educators and their understanding of the term transgender and transgendered people. As the researcher, I will ask you questions and record your answers, so that I may later be able to transcribe the interview. The project will involve focus group discussions which means being put into a group with other teachers. Here, questions will be asked, views, thoughts and opinions will be shared, in a group setting. I as the researcher will offer each participant respect, confidentiality, and anonymity when it comes to the final publication of the research. Please further note that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which calls for social distancing, interviews may have to be conducted telephonically, via WhatsApp video call and Zoom conference call. Please rest assured that ALL information shared will be strictly confidential and treated with respect. All members in the school and the name of the school will be made anonymous and pseudonyms will be given. Participants are allowed to pull out of the project during or after information assortment, without consequence.

Whilst every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group, there will be limits of confidentiality. Participants will be informed that should there be a disclosure/s which indicates that their well-being/other learners’ is being compromised or at risk, the researcher will seek their consent in addressing the matter.

For further information, please contact the Higher Research Degrees Edgewood office.

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Project Leader: Prof. Deevia Bhana

Email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: (031) 260 2603

[REDACTED]

Researcher: Fatima Al Sayed

Email: 215055533@stu.ukzn.ac.za

[REDACTED]

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project,
and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES /NO

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX E – Semi- structured Individual Interview Schedule

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SHOW PHOTOS. EXPLAIN THEM

1. What do you think took place with these people?
2. Have you ever heard the acronym LGBTQI? CAN YOU EXPLAIN EACH ONE? (If not, explain to them and then say we will be focusing on the T)
3. What do you think gender is?
4. What do you think the term sex means?
5. Do you think there are any other genders besides male and female or boy and girl?
6. What do you understand about the term transgender?
7. Why do you think people do this?
8. What are your feelings, thoughts and /or opinions about transgender?
9. Do you personally know anyone who is transgender?
10. Does your religion and culture accept this form of gender? Explain?

VIGNETTE

You have noticed that Thandi from your class has many characteristics of a boy. She dresses like a boy and enjoys playing soccer. She comes to you after school and confides in you that she wants to be a boy and she has a crush on Nosihpo. She is scared, and does not know what to do... (See Appendix F for full vignette)

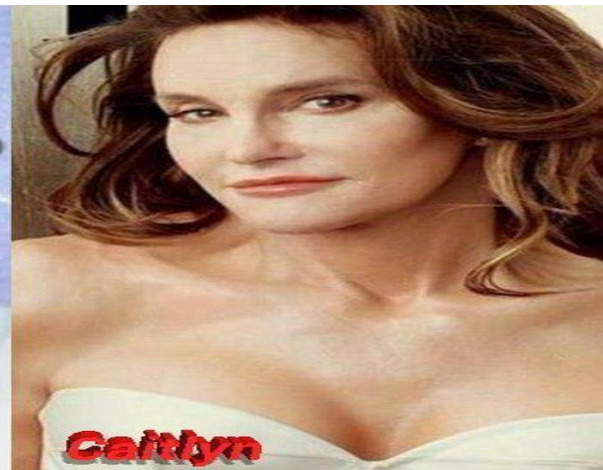
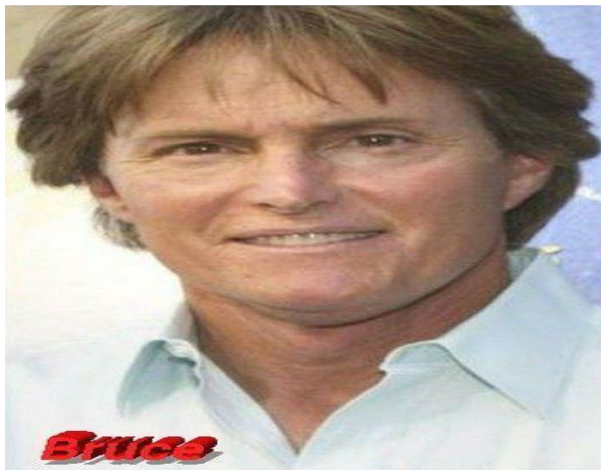
- 10.1 What will your reactions be?
- 10.2 Who do you think is labelled more, a boy to act like a girl or a girl to act like a boy? Why?
- 10.3 Do you think that your training when you attended teacher training colleges, University, varsity, etc. adequately prepared you to handle such situations?
- 10.4 What are your thoughts on the curriculum in terms of sex and sexuality education, especially to primary school learners?
11. Do you think this school is inclusive and accommodating when it comes to non-normative sexualities? If not, what would you recommend be done to make it so?

APPENDIX F - PHOTO ELICITATION AND VIGNETTES



Chi Mhende: An actress playing a transgender woman, Wandile, in the soap opera, *Generations*, on SABC1.

<https://mediagirlchronicles.wordpress.com/2016/02/26/generations-the-legacy-2016-storylines/>



Transgender woman: Caitlyn Jenner (Previously Bruce Jenner) from the American television programme: *Keeping up with the Kardashians* and *I am Cait*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A52FWgqCARI>

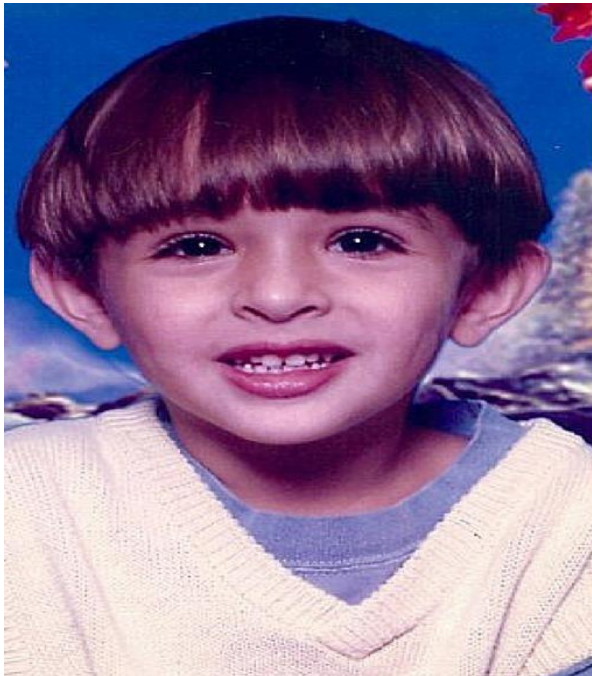


Example of transgender male advocate

Laverne Cox- American actress and LGBT



Jenna Talackova, a Canadian supermodel, and TV personality who initially rose to notoriety when she joined the Miss Universe Canadian pageant last 2012, only to be consequently excluded (disqualified) after somebody recognized her as transgender.



Transgender teenager Jazz Jennings (14), a model, YouTube personality and LGBTQ spokesperson. Jazz began her transition at 6 years old.

<https://www.lolwot.com/10-most-famous-transgender-women-you-should-know/>

VIGNETTE

You've noticed that Thandi, a girl in your class, has many characteristics of a boy. She dresses like a boy when its civvies day and when it's P.E. time she enjoys doing the “boys” sports. During break times she only plays with the boys. She is more comfortable with the boys. One day she comes to you after school and she confides in you that she's a boy, she wants to be a boy. She's born in the wrong body. She's not comfortable being a girl and she really likes or has a crush on Nosipho, who is another girl in your class. She's scared because she doesn't understand these feelings and she can't take it to her parents because she's worried about how her parents would react and she does not know what to do. What would your reaction be?

APPENDIX G – TURN-IT-IN ORIGINALITY REPORT

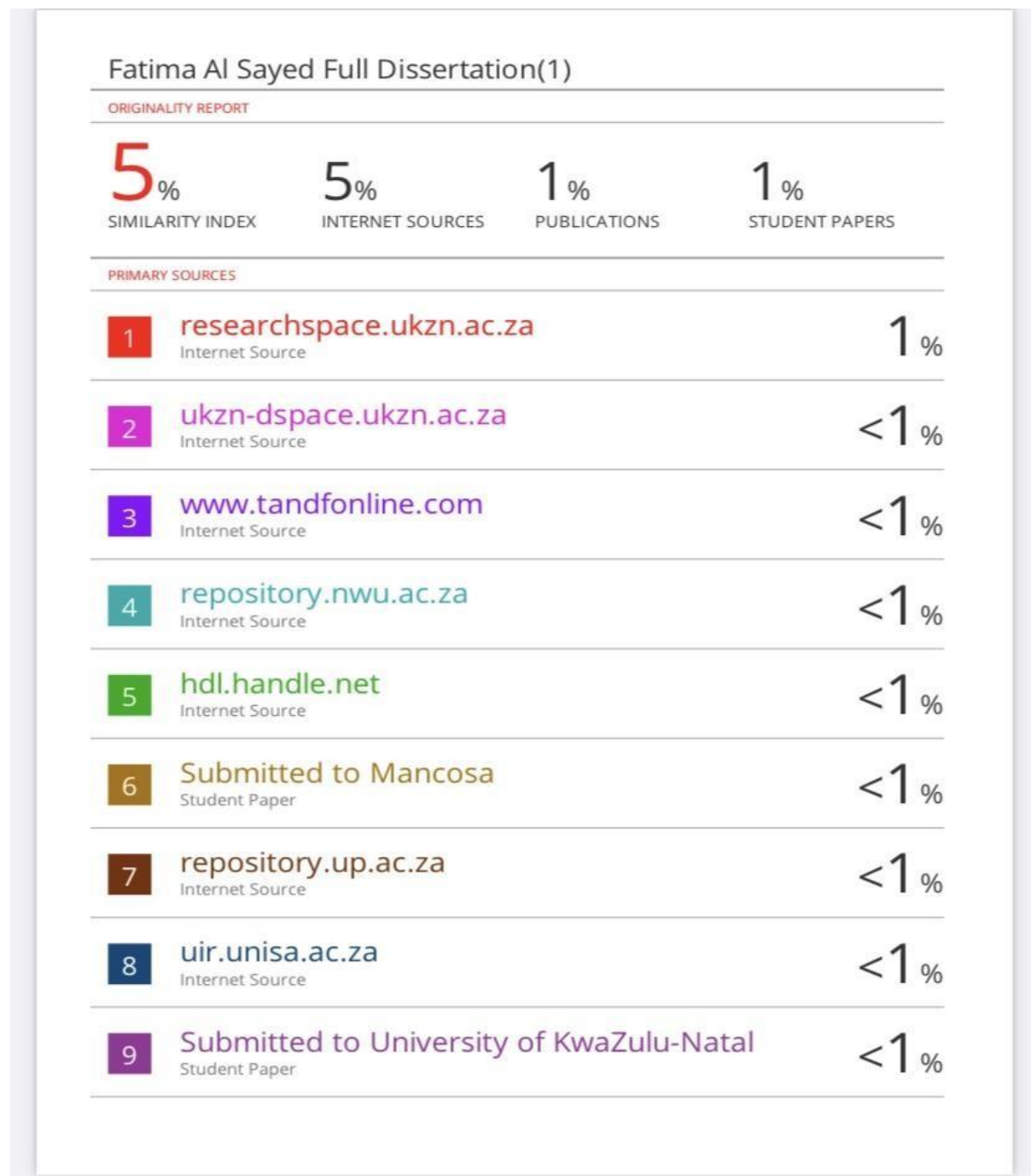
Submission date: 06-Aug-2021 08:37PM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1628507368

File name: Fatima_AI_Sayed_full_dissertation_1.docx (5.08M)

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APPENDIX H - EDITING CERTIFICATE



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Understanding Teachers' Construction of Transgender:

Perspectives from Primary School Teachers within KwaZulu-Natal

By Fatima Al Sayed

To Whom it May Concern

This letter is to confirm that editing of the above titled dissertation was
undertaken independently by

Myra E. Boyes

Myra E. Boyes

Treasurer

South African National Society

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