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Spaces of Discrimination and Multiple Identities: Experiences of Black Homosexual Mineworkers

by

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I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandparents, Mr Lekgolo Bethuel Maake and Mrs Julia Mankaleme Maake. I know you are looking upon me from the other side.
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Wow, this was a journey! I would like to first acknowledge and appreciate, above all, God and my ancestors for guiding me and leading the way throughout this journey. It was not an easy road, but my faith kept the fire burning.

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Abstract

This study explores black homosexual male mineworkers’ construction and management of multiple identities in spaces of discrimination. A feminist epistemology was adopted in investigating how black homosexual male mineworkers construct their (homo)sexual identities and how they manage them within private and public spaces. Discrimination against homosexual individuals manifests in multiple ways within different spaces, which affects how participants construct their (homo)sexual identities. Most of the available studies tend to study LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other) people as a coherent group. However, the reality is that the experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals differ as a result of their different social statuses, and this has been a neglected reality in studies that focus on the effects of discrimination against sexual minority identities in South Africa. This study attempts to fill this gap in knowledge by using an intersectional framework to study the unique experiences of the participants. Black homosexual men are marginalised and silenced by the stigma attached to their sexual identities, which highlights the need to bring their voices to the fore. Thus, the study explores how identity markers such as race, religion, gender and sexuality collectively inform their experiences of identity construction and management in spaces that are characterised by discrimination. In-depth interviews were conducted with five participants who are formally employed in the mining industry, so as to capture their experiences. This study opens up dialogue on black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination in a country that upholds a democratic constitution which explicitly promotes equality for all. This dissertation also highlights the struggles of constructing triple identities and living multiple lives to navigate heteronormative spaces, which is a direct consequence of discrimination and fear.
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Chapter 1. Discrimination against black homosexual mineworkers

1.1 Introduction

The South African mining industry has for many years been a space dominated by men, and even today the industry still hires more men than women. Benya (2016) asserts that ‘[m]ines imagine the body and life of a man, the workplace practices, the division of labour, dress, language, interactions, skill, ideologies and, the distribution of power favours men’. While the mining industry is dominated by a hegemonic masculine occupational culture (Benya 2009), not all men enjoy the same amount of power and privilege, since the heteronormative nature of the workplace privileges heterosexual hegemonic masculinities over other subordinated masculinities1 (Drydakis 2015). Heterosexual men enjoy more power within mining workplaces, while men who identify as homosexual2 are disempowered and marginalised (Connell 2005; Rahman and Jackson 2010). Homosexual men are vulnerable to discrimination in masculine and heteronormative workplaces (Ozeren, Ucar and Duygulu 2016; Reingardë 2007; Willis 2012). The current study is concerned with exploring how black homosexual male mineworkers experience discrimination, and how they construct their (homo)sexual identities in different spaces of discrimination.

In 1994, when South Africa became a democracy, all apartheid policies that perpetuated any kind of discrimination were abolished. Legislation was introduced that afforded protection from discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability and sexual identity. The same-sex compound system in the mining industry was abolished, and efforts have been made by mining companies to provide family accommodation (Marais and Venter 2006). Specific laws were developed to address discrimination in the workplace, including discrimination based on sexual identity. One of the acts that were developed to address discrimination was the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, which is mainly concerned with redressing the

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1 The term ‘subordinated masculinities’ refers to types of masculinities that do not meet certain characteristics considered relevant to reach hegemonic masculinity. They rank below hegemonic masculinity and are differentiated by class, race, social position, sexuality etc. (Connell 2005).
2 In this study the term ‘homosexual’ refers to individuals who are sexually attracted to same-sex partners and is used interchangeably with the term ‘gay’. The definition is provided in Chapter Two.
inequalities of apartheid, by enforcing the right to equality in workplaces and eliminating any form of unfair discrimination in employment practices.

Despite the progressive Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 and inclusive policies, heteronormative and patriarchal arguments continue to be used to perpetuate homophobia and silence alternative sexualities (Reygan and Lynette 2014). The general state of homophobia and intolerance of homosexuals in South Africa is considered a contributing factor to the discrimination against homosexuals in spaces dominated by the heteronormative discourse. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other (LGBTIQ+) people continue to face discrimination in their communities, their homes, their schools and in the labour market (Francis and Msibi 2011; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Thomas 2013; Van Zyl 2015; Vincent and Howell 2014). Research indicates that many LGBTIQ+ people in South Africa are rejected by their communities and families because of their sexual identities. Incidents of physical violence and hate crimes against sexual minorities have been reported in many South African communities, instilling fear in the LGBTIQ+ community (Hlongwane 2016; Naidoo and Karels 2012; Thomas 2013). The hate and violence is usually justified through religion and cultural traditions, since many African traditions believe that homosexuality is a Western import, which disrupts the order of nature as intended by God (Epprecht 2013; Gevisser and Cameron 1995; Ibrahim 2015; Steyn and Van Zyl, 2009). This has led to many LGBTIQ+ people hiding their homosexual identities and adopting heterosexual identities to avoid discrimination and violence (Mulaudzi 2018; Thomas 2013). They are burdened with the task of adopting different sexual identities in various spaces of their lives.

The current study explores black homosexual mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination in a democratic South Africa. Specifically, I sought to find out how black homosexual male mineworkers experience discrimination in different spaces based on their sexual identity. In achieving this, I consider geographical, social and workplace spaces, to develop an understanding of the impact that these spaces and the discrimination prevalent in them have had on the construction and management of homosexual mineworkers’ sexual identities. Intersectionality is used as a framework to explore their experiences, and I consider some of the identity markers that collectively inform their experiences. Through intersectionality, we

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3 In the context of this study, the concept of ‘black’ is used to refer to black African people, as defined in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003.
learn, for example, that black homosexual men who occupy high-paying positions in big corporations, such as executive managers, might have different experiences from black homosexual men who are employed in low-paying positions (Mawambi 2014; Mitra and Doctor 2016). This study employs a feminist epistemology in bringing to the fore the voices of black homosexual men, who are not only oppressed because of their sexual identity, but disadvantaged by their class, race and occupational positions, which shows how discrimination operates in different spheres of their lives. Connell’s (2005) theory of masculinities is adopted and linked with intersectionality to develop a nuanced understanding of the inequalities that exist between heterosexual and non-heterosexual masculinities in the mining industry (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion). There is not much literature that focuses on discrimination against black homosexual male mineworkers and how it shapes the construction and management of their sexual identities. This has created a gap in the literature, hence the current study’s focus on this important yet under-researched issue.

In researching the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers, a qualitative research approach is followed and in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of five participants who were identified through personal networks. A detailed description of the research process is provided in Chapter Four. In the following section, I provide an overview of the South African mining industry as a space of work, and the ways in which the context informed the exploration and performance of sexual identities.

### 1.2 A historical overview of men and sexuality in the South African mining industry

Employment in South Africa was historically structured by the capitalist exploitation of black people during the apartheid political system (Martin and Durrheim 2006). The apartheid workplace regime was highly influenced by colonialist labour regimes, work practices and racial structures of power (Von Holdt 2003; Wolpe 1995). The workplace was a site of racial sovereignty, reinforced by racial segregation, and further reinforced by racist discourses and practices, where the distribution of labour, income, skills and power was defined by race (Buhlungu and Webster 2006). The division of labour according to race was particularly achieved through the reservation of skilled and management jobs for white people, and less skilled jobs for black people (Seekings and Nattrass 2005).
The mining industry in South Africa during apartheid was white-owned, and mass production was highly dependent on black migrant labour (Van Onselen 1982). As was the norm in any industry, black mineworkers were recruited from the rural areas and signed to contracts that relocated them from their families into the mines (Callinicos 1981; Harrison and Zack 2012). They were employed on fixed-term contracts, and they were required to leave and go back to the homelands after their contract ended or when they became sick (Callinicos 1981). The employment contracts lasted from four months to two years (Moodie and Ndatshe 1994). The compound system in the South African mines was developed to maintain control of migrant workers and to ensure a continued supply of cheap black migrant labour. In the mining compounds, there were approximately 15 to 50 men occupying one room, under the strict surveillance of mine police (Moodie and Ndatshe 1994). Black migrant mineworkers spent a lot of time in the male-only compounds, since they were only allowed to visit their families twice a year (Callinicos 1981).

1.2.1 Mine marriages between male mineworkers

Migrant mineworkers’ pattern of sexuality was merely a part of the many cultural expressions that were heavily guided by the social environment of the mines (Harries 1994). During the early 20th century, the practice of mine marriages emerged. It originated among the Mozambican migrant mineworkers, who worked more frequently in the mines and for longer periods (Harries 1994). In 1907, journalists, missionaries and compound officials reported that *bukhontxana*, a term used to refer to mine marriages in Shangaan, was a growing practice in the mining compounds, and that it was spreading rapidly to other ethnic groups (Harries 1994). Young boys in southern Mozambique were expected to work at a very young age. As migrant labour became a pivotal feature of family income, young boys were recruited to wage labour in the mines by older men (Harries 1994). They looked up to older, more experienced men as role models.

The practice of *bukhontxana* provided young mineworkers with a sense of emotional and financial security in an environment that was harsh, adult and very masculine. The older men taught their young partners, who were considered the ‘wives’ in the relationship, survival strategies in the mines and the expectations of a ‘real man’ (Harries 1994). *Bukhontxana* was not just a product of enforced celibacy, because the partners were bound by strong ties of affection. Some of the informants in Harries’ (1994) study recalled the loving and strong ties of affection that the mine husbands developed for their mine wives. They shared deep
emotions, which sometimes resulted in suicides, killings and beatings if the boy broke off the marriage with their husband to be with another man (Harries 1994). The mine marriages were strictly intergenerational and paternal in nature, as the young boys would refer to their husbands as ‘father’, while the husbands referred to their wives as ‘my child’.

1.2.2 Gender and sexuality on the mines

Gender relations in the mines were closely tied to power, because they resembled the social ordering of marriages in the rural areas, as they were represented by male domination and female subordination. In the compounds, young ‘wives’ took over the domestic duties, which were considered strictly female in the rural areas (Harries 1994). They were expected to wash dishes and iron their older partner’s clothes, clean his shoes and fetch water. In return, the older ‘husbands’ were expected to take care of their young ‘wives’ financially and use their power to protect them (Harries 1994; Moodie, Ndatshe and Sibuyi 1988). When they had parties, the mine wives masked their masculinity by portraying markers of femininity. For example, they wore false breasts made of cloth, tight jackets and female perfumes, and they also danced for the older men in suggestive ways. The older men displayed their power and generosity by paying for the boy’s food and drinks (Harries 1994). Paying for the parties and giving gifts reinforced the older men’s masculine identity, which was emphasised when compared to the feminine identity displayed by the mine wives.

The sexual activities between the men seldom included anal penetration, since they preferred mostly ‘thigh sex’, where satisfaction was derived from penetrating the young boys between their thighs. While it was generally known that mineworkers engaged in sexual intercourse with each other, they preferred to conceal their sexual activities. They kept their sexual activities discreet (Moodie et al. 1988). This is because Christian missionaries, who preached intolerance of sexual activities between men, frowned upon the sexual practice, and it was also viewed as a disgrace by some ethnic groups back home, such as the Mpondo people (Moodie et al. 1988). For example, in 1906 Swiss missionaries in the Transvaal Missionary Association viewed homosexual activities on the mines as unnatural, and they called on the government to condemn the practice (Harries 1994). As a result, most of the mineworkers never admitted openly to engaging in sexual activities with other men outside the mines.

While some men remained in the urban areas living homosexual lives instead of returning to their rural homes for marriage (Gevisser 1994), most of the same-sex relationships ended at
the mines. One of the senior men interviewed in Moodie et al.’s (1988) study indicated that he dated a young Sotho boy, whom he loved and treated well; however, the relationship ended when both of them went home, and they never contacted each other again (Moodie et al. 1988). The concealment and discreetness of same-sex intercourse outside the compound was a way of managing the prevalent stigma attached to such intercourse and enjoying the benefits of being known as heterosexual by their communities and family members. It should be borne in mind that the study focused exclusively on the experiences of oppressed black migrant mineworkers, who were housed in highly regulated mining compounds during the period. It was necessary to provide a historical overview, since the current study looks at the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers in post-apartheid South Africa, with more freedoms, more tolerance and abolition of the compound system. It is important to consider how the freedoms of black homosexual male mineworkers in post-apartheid South Africa are limited by the persisting discrimination in society.

1.3 Problem statement

Efforts have been made in South Africa to address different forms of discrimination. However, success in creating a society that celebrates diversity and embraces equality can be observed in more visible diversity categories, such as gender and race. Due to the lack of acceptance and tolerance on a social level, many homosexual people in South Africa continue to experience discrimination in different spaces that they live in. Sexual minority⁴ individuals continue to be invisible and silenced in various spaces of their lives due to the stigma attached to a homosexual identity (Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana, 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014). The topic of sexual identity remains taboo in some South African communities. This is a result of the dominant heteronormative principles held by many South Africans, who are not accepting of sexualities that diverge from the heterosexual norm (Msibi 2011, 2012).

Due to the heteronormative nature of South African society, sexual minorities experience discrimination in silence and usually find themselves in situations where they have to devise strategies to protect themselves from society. Fear and experiences of discrimination affect how black homosexual men manage their homo(sexual) identities, and this leads to many of them hiding their (homo)sexual identities and developing strategies to manage them in different spaces.

⁴ The concept ‘sexual minority’, and the abbreviation ‘LGBTIQ+’, are used interchangeably in this study to refer to individuals whose sexual identities do not conform to the heteronormative definitions of sexuality.
heteronormative spaces. A significant body of research on discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people in South African communities and workplaces has developed (Hlongwane 2016; Mawambi 2014; Msibi 2009; Mulaudzi 2018; Naidoo and Karels 2012; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Thomas 2013). However, limited research is available on the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers in these spaces. Studies on the South African mining industry post-1994 have predominantly focused on issues surrounding race discrimination (Moraka and Jansen van Rensburg 2015), gender discrimination (Benya 2009; Mxhakaza 2010), living conditions (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu 2011; Crush 1994; Marais 2018; Pelders and Nelson 2018), trade unionism (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu 2011) and mineworker strikes (Alexander et al. 2012). Black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination in their workplaces and other social spaces have generally been neglected by researchers in the democratic South Africa. This has left a knowledge gap on the construction and management of black homosexual male mineworkers’ sexual identities in different spheres of their lives. This study attempts to fill this gap, by exploring black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination and considering how these affect their lifestyle. It is important to consider black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination, because they affect how they construct and manage their (homo)sexual identities in different spaces of discrimination. This study further brings to the forefront the silenced voices of black homosexual male mineworkers, who experience challenges in different spaces, characterised by intolerance and discrimination. It makes a contribution to the body of knowledge on discrimination against black homosexual male workers and the construction of homo(sexual) identities in different contexts. This is achieved through the use of a qualitative research method in collecting data, through in-depth interviews with participants in mines located in the provinces of North West and Mpumalanga.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

It was established in the problem statement that discrimination against homosexual people in South Africa is a persisting issue, and based on this, a research question was formulated that aims to explore black mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination and their implications for how they live their lives and construct their identities. The research question for this study is “How do black homosexual male mineworkers construct and manage their (homo)sexual identities in different spaces of discrimination?” This study attempts to answer the research question by developing an understanding of the experiences of sexual identity construction in
spaces of discrimination, the difficulties associated with identifying as homosexual in these spaces, the strategies employed by black homosexual male mineworkers to manoeuvre their way around the discrimination, and the factors that inform their experiences. Four sub-questions were formulated to effectively answer the research question, namely the following:

1. What are the challenges that black homosexual male mineworkers face in different spaces of discrimination?

2. What are the behaviours and attitudes that black homosexual male mineworkers believe constitute discrimination based on sexual identity, and why?

3. How do identity markers such as gender, race, religion and sexuality inform black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination?

4. What are some of the strategies that black homosexual male mineworkers use to manage their sexual identities within different spaces of discrimination?

1.5 Outline of chapters

Chapter Two starts by presenting the history of South African legislation on homosexuality. A review of available literature on discrimination and violence and the challenges of constructing (homo)sexual identities in various spaces is given.

Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework of the study. Intersectionality and the theory of masculinities were adopted for this study. A link is established between the two theories, and a justification is given of the need to merge the two theories.

Chapter Four outlines the study’s research design and methodology. The study follows a feminist epistemology, which is discussed in this chapter. The chapter also explains the qualitative research methodology and the in-depth data collection method that was used in this study. A description of the sampling method and the instrument that was used to collect the data is also provided in this chapter.

In chapter Five, narratives of participants’ lives growing up in rural spaces, as derived from the interviews, are presented. The chapter provides detailed descriptions of participants’ experiences of growing up with a homosexual identity in their communities, and their experiences at school.
Chapter Six provides a detailed analysis of the data collected. It was found that participants often adopt and manage three main identities in their lives, and consequently live multiple lives based on their contexts. This forms the crux of the chapter, and literature is considered in analysing the data. It is thus concluded whether the findings support the available literature on discrimination based on sexual identity or whether they offer an alternative perspective.

The concluding chapter emphasises the key empirical findings of the study, and it provides recommendations for future research. The research question is also answered in this chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

The chapter started by introducing the study. This was followed by a critical discussion of the problem statement, which established that discrimination against homosexual workers is a problem in South Africa, and that it demands attention from researchers. The lack of research on experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers has led to a knowledge gap in the field, and this study attempts to fill this identified gap, by using an intersectional framework to consider how different spaces and identities inform the unique experiences of participants. The research aims and objectives were also discussed in this chapter, and a research question was formulated, with four sub-questions to assist in answering the research question effectively. The chapter ends with a brief outline of the subsequent chapters.
Chapter 2. Discrimination against sexual minorities in geographical and social spaces

2.1 Introduction

Various spaces of discrimination were mentioned in the introduction chapter, and they will be unpacked in this chapter. Particular social spaces may be dominated by heteronormative expectations that individuals are socialised into and that they accept as the only way of forming romantic relationships. Researchers from various social science disciplines have conducted research on heteronormativity (heteronormativity denotes that heterosexuality is the only true form of sexuality, with no other possibilities) and discrimination against sexual minorities in diverse spaces, and they have provided a wealth of knowledge on the implications of heteronormativity for sexual minority identities in certain geographical and social spaces (Barefoot et al. 2015; Butterfield 2018; Colgan and Rumens 2015; Reingarde 2010; Surveysarn 2016; Martinsson et al. 2007; Van Zyl, 2015). It is evident that context matters in understanding the experiences of sexual minorities. Intersectional differences shape experiences of sexual minorities in different milieus in a variety of ways.

This chapter starts with a detailed discussion of South African legislation on discrimination based on sexual identity during and after apartheid. The concept of heteronormativity and the implications that it has for sexual minority identities are discussed. Following this is an exploration of literature on discrimination against sexual minorities in rural areas. The challenges and the implications of discrimination for sexual minorities are discussed in this section. The issue of hate crimes and their implications for (homo)sexual identities in different spaces are considered. The last section of the chapter comprises an examination of literature on discrimination against LGBTIQ+ workers in various workplaces. Specific attention is given to this space due to the study’s focus on the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers, considering that they spend more time in their spaces of employment. This is not to say that other spaces are less important, since experiences in different spaces cannot be separated. Available literature on workplace discrimination based on sexual identity will be reviewed in this chapter. Both international and South African research will be discussed, and

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5An abbreviation for ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other’.
significant themes that arise from the literature will be highlighted. Lastly, a discussion of passing as a coping strategy used by sexual minorities in spaces of discrimination is provided.

2.2 The history of South African legislation on discrimination based on sexual identity

This section of the literature review focuses on South African legislation on discrimination against people based on their sexual identity. The historical background of sexual minority struggles and movements during apartheid is provided. This is followed by a discussion of the changes that took place in South African legislation post-1994, when South Africa became a democracy, and the initiatives taken by the South African government to address discrimination against citizens on grounds of their sexual identity. The section considers the ineffectiveness of legislation in addressing discrimination against sexual minorities in South Africa.

2.2.1 Legislation on homosexuality during apartheid South Africa

Discrimination based on sexual identity is a persisting issue in particular social settings and institutions (Msibi 2009, 2012; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Reingarde 2007; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Thomas 2013; Yarbrough, 2004). This is despite efforts made by countries such as the United Kingdom (Colgan et al. 2008), the United States of America (Mennicke and Cutler-Seeber 2016) and South Africa (Msibi 2009) to eliminate discrimination based on sexual identity in various spaces, including households, educational institutions, social communities and places of work. Homosexuality in South Africa was not accepted under the apartheid government. The government emphasised and highly valued heterosexual marriage, reproduction and family life (Brown 2014). Sexual minority groups were not protected by the apartheid social and legal systems (Ilyayambwa 2012). Homosexual men, lesbian women and transsexuals were condemned and excluded, because their sexual identity differed from the acceptable heterosexual identity. Their sexual inclinations were considered unnatural, and they were punishable by law, especially in the fields of criminal, civil and family law (Ilyayambwa 2012).

The discriminatory legislation against homosexuals triggered the establishment of gay and lesbian organisations in South Africa. Initially, these organisations predominantly consisted of white urban middle-class homosexual South Africans (Gevisser 1994). However, the most politically active and influential homosexual organisation was the Gay and Lesbian
Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), which was established by a homosexual black anti-apartheid activist, Simon Nkoli. The organisation was a place where black homosexuals could participate as equals and receive services that were specifically relevant to their circumstances (Gevisser 1994). Nkoli believed that the fight against racism and homophobia cannot be separated. He argued that ‘I cannot be free as a black man if I am not free as a gay man’ (De Ru 2013: 227). Hence the organisation’s commitment to a democratic future that is not racist, sexist or discriminatory. The fight for homosexual rights became part of the broader struggle against oppression and the apartheid government (DeVos 1996). The gay and lesbian movements led to the African National Congress (ANC) formally recognising gay and lesbian rights and agreeing to the inclusion of prohibition of discrimination based on sexual identity in the Bill of Rights (Brown 2014; De Ru 2013).

2.2.2 Legislation on homosexuality in post-apartheid South Africa

In 1996 South Africa became the first country in Africa to explicitly include protection against discrimination based on sexual identity in its progressive constitution (De Vos 1996; Ilyayambwa 2012; Van Zyl 2015). The inclusion of protection of sexual identity in the constitution of South Africa represents the success and the liberation of gay men, lesbian women and transsexuals in South Africa (De Vos 1996). It does not represent the position of most South Africans, who do not support acknowledgement of homosexual rights (Ilyayambwa 2012). South Africa is one of the countries that have adopted the International Labour Organization (ILO) legal provisions prohibiting any form of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people. It remains one of the few countries in Africa that has legislation and policies in place to prohibit discrimination against people based on their sexual identity in the workplace (Olney and Musabayana 2016). This is a result of South Africa’s efforts to redress historical inequalities and promote a free and just society.

According to South Africa’s Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 section 1(4), discrimination means ‘any act or omission, including a policy, law, rule, practice, condition or situation which directly or indirectly imposes burdens, obligations or disadvantage on, or withholds benefits, opportunities or advantages from any person on one or more of the prohibited grounds’. The prohibited grounds include discrimination based on sexual identity. Sexual identity has to do with who people are sexually attracted to and have the potential to form romantic relationships with (Hyde and DeLamater 2008). Homosexuality is therefore a sexual attraction towards people of the same sex (Hyde and DeLamater 2008).
Discrimination based on sexual identity in the workplace occurs in a situation where an employee is treated in a less favourable manner compared to other colleagues due to reasons related to their perceived or actual sexuality (Chung 2001; Drydakis 2015; Tebelo and Odeku 2014).

South Africa’s Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 prohibits harassment and discrimination that is directly or indirectly practised against employees in any employment policy or practice on the grounds of race, gender, pregnancy, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, sexual identity, disability, religion, marital status and others (Venter and Levy 2011). While South African law prohibits discrimination based on sexual identity and emphasises equality, the freedoms of LGBTIQ+ people in democratic South Africa continue to be limited by their sexual identity. Tebelo and Odeku (2014) argue that LGBTIQ+ employees in South Africa are treated as exceptions to the democratic laws and conventions that are incorporated in section 9(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and section 6(1) of the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998, which both prohibit any form of unfair discrimination based on sexual identity. This exposes the negative consequences that stereotypes held by society regarding one’s sexual identity can have on the stereotyped individual. A common stereotype about sexuality is the belief that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is therefore the norm (Hyde and DeLamater 2008). This is commonly referred to as heteronormativity.

2.3 Implications of heteronormativity for LGBTIQ+ people

Heteronormativity is a ‘sociocultural system that assumes the existence of only two sexes/genders and views human sexual relations between a man and a woman as being natural and normal, with no other possibilities’ (Tamale 2011: 640). In this light, heterosexuality is portrayed as the only good and desirable sexuality, leading to a rejection of sexualities that fall outside the heterosexual norm. Within heteronormativity, gender is constructed in a way that constantly distinguishes two categories, and people are forced to belong to one of the categories. Men and women are expected to perceive themselves as the opposite of the other sex (Martinsson et al. 2007). The definition of both sexes requires that those who are named ‘man’ should desire a ‘woman’, and that those who are named ‘woman’ should desire a ‘man’ (Martinsson et al. 2007).
Alternative sexualities that deviate from the heteronormative constructions of gender categories are perceived as unnatural, strange and undesirable. Those who refuse to conform to the heteronormatively defined gender roles are condemned and excluded for being different (Suriyasarn 2016). It is therefore clear that heteronormativity gives heterosexuality privilege and power over other sexualities, undermining their existence. Hence, homosexuality is often viewed as “deviant” in society, and is likely to be rejected.

Heterosexual norms are maintained through socialisation in households, schools, religious institutions and workplaces (Martinsson et al. 2007). Research indicates that heteronormativity prevails in African societies, and that it continues to render homosexual identities vulnerable (Dlamini 2006; Eprecht 2013; Msibi, 2009; Vincent and Howell 2014). These norms are further approved and affirmed through rules and regulations (Suriyasarn 2016). According to Nel and Judge (2008), LGBTIQ+ people are punished through discrimination and exclusion in their communities. Discrimination directed towards LGBTIQ+ people is a continuation of the gender inequalities that are prevalent in society due to the heterosexual normative values, which strengthen the difference and expectations of feminine and masculine gender roles and actions (Suriyasarn 2016).

Heteronormativity within the workplace contributes significantly to the discrimination experienced by sexual minority employees and their decisions to disclose their sexualities in the workplace (Colgan and Rumens 2015; Reingardė 2010; Suriyasarn 2016; Van Zyl 2015). The heterosexual discourse remains dominant in the workplace, and it ultimately leads to the silencing, suppression and elimination of the subordinated discourse of homosexuality (Colgan et al. 2008; Reingardė 2010). Supporting this finding, Ozeren et al. (2016) explain that minority groups in the workplace are more likely to be vulnerable to silencing by heterosexual organisational members, who make up the majority, and as a result hold power in the workplace. For example, Ozeren et al. (2016) found that LGBTIQ+ employees are the most silenced in Turkish workplaces, and that they try to fit in with the heterosexual norm imposed on them by their working environment. Similarly, Van Zyl (2015) states that while South Africa has above-adequate legislative and policy frameworks in place to enforce gender equity and protect workers from discrimination, LGBTIQ+ people are confronted with cultures that are pervaded by coercive heteropatriarchal norms.

The above highlights the effects that a heteronormative culture can have on the implementation of legislation and policy in spaces that are dominated by traditional heteronormative beliefs.
about sexuality. While legislation in South Africa is in place to protect LGBTIQ+ employees from discrimination based on their sexual identity, the persisting heterosexual nature of the various spaces that sexual minorities live in makes it difficult for them to disclose their sexualities and to be recognised. This leads to a culture of silence among sexual minorities in these spaces of discrimination. Taking into consideration global studies on sexual minority discrimination in rural spaces, the following section focuses on how LGBTIQ+ people who reside in rural areas experience and cope with discrimination.

2.4 Discrimination against sexual minorities in rural spaces

It is argued by researchers that geographical location has inevitable implications for the development of (homo)sexual identities (Butterfield 2018; Casazza, Ludwig and Cohn 2015; Cohn and Hastings 2011; Hulko and Hovanes 2018; Msibi 2009; Rickard and Yancey 2018; Smuts 2011; Whiting, Boone and Cohn 2012; Wienke and Hill 2013; Yarbrough 2004). Comparisons have been made between rural and urban spaces regarding the level of discrimination and intolerance, and most studies have found that intolerance of and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals exist in both rural and urban areas (Casazza et al. 2015; Gottschalk and Newtown 2009; Swank, Frost and Fahs 2012; Wienke and Hill 2013). Previous studies have found that discrimination and violence against homosexual people is more intense in rural than in urban spaces (Casazza et al. 2015; Yarbrough 2008; Swank et al. 2012). This is mainly attributed to differences in the levels and application of heteronormativity, population density and levels of anonymity in the two spaces. It is generally argued that rural spaces are pervaded by cultures that place greater importance on traditional gender roles, conservatism, fundamental religiosity, heteronormative family structures and patriarchy (Barefoot et al. 2015; Butterfield 2018; Dwyer, Ball and Barker 2015; Msibi 2009; Rickard and Yancey 2018). A demand for conformity was observed in rural areas, which creates a challenge for sexual minorities, as they do not conform to the normative requirements of their rural communities. It has also been reported that rural communities tend to be more religious than urban communities, and the higher degree of religiosity in these communities has been linked to negative perceptions of homosexuality (Barefoot et al. 2015; Dillon and Savage 2006; Rickard and Yancey 2018). As a result of the fundamental religiosity within rural spaces, gender is strictly heteronormatively defined, and importance is placed on heterosexual relationships as the only correct form of companionship (Casazza et al. 2015; Msibi 2009).
Due to the heteronormativity embedded in rural cultures, sexual minorities residing in these spaces remain vulnerable to persisting discrimination. Diversity is not highly celebrated in rural spaces, and the lack of conformity from sexual minorities is used as a tool to initiate violence against them (Barefoot et al. 2015; Butterfield 2018). Numerous studies have reported higher levels of violence against and victimisation of sexual minorities in rural spaces than in urban spaces (Casazza et al. 2015; Gottschalk and Newtown 2009; Palmer, Kosciw and Bartkiewcz, 2012; Rickard and Yancey 2018; Yarbrough 2004). The violence usually occurs in the form of harassment, physical assault, property damage and homophobic statements. For example, participants in a quantitative study conducted by Palmer, Kosciw and Bartkiewicz (2012) in rural schools in America reported repeated experiences of victimisation and discrimination. Gottschalk and Newtown (2009) argue that violence in rural spaces is intense because rural spaces offer less anonymity, since they are relatively small compared to urban spaces, which are densely populated, with higher degrees of anonymity. This argument is supported by Butterfield (2018), who explored levels of discrimination in urban and rural areas in Croatia and found that hostility towards sexual minorities existed in both geographical locations, but was more intense in rural spaces, since community members knew each other and could easily identify homosexual members. The small size of rural populations made it extremely difficult for sexual minorities to hide their homosexual identities from homophobic members in the community, rendering them vulnerable to increased hostility and discrimination (Butterfield 2018). Yarbrough (2004) found that many homosexual adolescents who grow up in rural areas prefer to move to urban areas when they get older, in search of the anonymity that larger communities offer. Policing of sexuality is tightly embedded in rural cultures, and it is common for members in these communities to police their and other people’s sexualities (Barefoot et al. 2015; Dwyer et al. 2015; Msibi 2009). For example, in his qualitative study of rural men in KwaZulu-Natal, Msibi (2009) found that men from rural areas made explicit efforts to avoid looking like “gay men”. They dress, walk and talk in specific ways that are deemed to prove their heterosexual masculinity (Msibi 2009).

Exposure to higher levels of discrimination and victimisation and continued lack of tolerance affect the development of (homo)sexual identities in rural spaces. Barefoot et al. (2015) argue that rural LGBTIQ+ people are likely to bear the stress and negative impacts of being sexual minorities more than their urban counterparts. Rural sexual minorities struggle with balancing the traditional heteronormative gender role expectations with their sexual identities, since there is a sense of coercion to conform to social norms (Cohn and Hastings 2010). Due to fear of
physical harm, exclusion, rejection and persecution, many LGBTIQ+ people in rural spaces consciously conceal their homosexual identities from community members. They develop public sexual identities that are usually heterosexual to improve their quality of life, as well as for their safety (Rickard and Yancey 2018; Swank et al. 2012). This is a difficult task for them as they have to constantly manage and adjust their behaviour to align with the heteronormative requirements of the spaces they live in leading to feelings of isolation and detachment from their true selves (Croteau et al. 2008). The safety concern leads to them making efforts to remain invisible in their communities. This invisibility impacts on the development of their (homo)sexual identities, since rural spaces do not allow them to explore it fully without fear. Consequently it hinders social networking with other sexual minorities and the development of a positive self-esteem (Edwards 2005; Rickard and Yancey 2018). To highlight the degree and impacts of violence on sexual minorities, the following section provides a discussion of hate crimes perpetrated against LGBTIQ+ people in South Africa, and the implications of these hate crimes for their well-being.

2.5 Implications of hate crimes for sexual minority identities

Vincent and Howell (2014) argue that abnormality, Christian irreverence and “non-African” stereotypes are the strategies used in post-apartheid South Africa to illegitimise the idea of sexual equality. Abnormality is used in relation to children and child-rearing, associated with the non-procreational character of homosexual unions. Christian irreverence means that same-sex relationships are against existing religious relationships, and “non-African” stereotypes frame homosexuality as foreign to African culture (Vincent and Howell 2014). Homosexuality is a controversial subject in many religious traditions, and it has been subjected to several arguments against it (Minwalla et al. 2005). The Bible (the holy book of Christianity) and the Qur’an (the holy book of Islam), among others, contain scriptures that have been interpreted by some religious people to condemn homosexuality. Some of the homophobic interpretations are openly shared through religious teachings in various social spaces, including religious institutions, households and schools. The teachings portray homosexuality as unnatural and immoral (Barefoot et al. 2015; Vincent and Howell 2014). A common Christian Bible verse that people use to condemn homosexuality is Leviticus 20:13, which reads as follows: ‘If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them’. These scriptures are used by homophobic religious leaders to spread intolerance of homosexuality in different spaces, and
consequently incite violence, since their literal interpretation suggests that homosexual people do not deserve to live, and that they are destined to burn in hell (Dlamini 2006; Epprecht 2013; Ibrahim 2015; Msibi 2011; Vincent and Howell 2014). South Africa’s constitutional protection of sexual minorities has not been completely effective in preventing hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people. Violence against LGBTIQ+ people continues to be publicly sanctioned in South African communities, with religion used as justification (Francis and Msibi 2011; Mulauludzi 2018; Thomas 2013).

The high visibility of homosexual people, following the development of a democratic constitution that advocates for equal human rights irrespective of sexual identity, can explain the high rate of hate crimes against homosexuals in South Africa (Daniels et al. 2019; Msibi 2009). Effeminate gay men are seen as betraying the superiority of masculinity, while masculine lesbian women are seen as challenging male superiority. As a result, they are punished through curative rape, violent attacks, and even murder (Hlongwane 2016; Msibi 2009). There have been reports of sexual and physical violence against lesbian women in South Africa, and many of the cases occur in black rural and township areas and are instigated against black lesbian women (Hlongwane 2016; Mulauludzi 2018; Naidoo and Karels 2012). The violence is seen by perpetrators as a necessary measure to “convert” the sexual identities of lesbian women from homosexual to heterosexual (Thomas 2013).

Multiple cases of murder, corrective rape and physical attacks of lesbian women have been reported to the police, and many of them go unresolved, with few successful convictions (Hlongwane 2016; Naidoo and Karels 2012; Thomas 2013). This has also been the case for homosexual men, as they are also physically attacked and killed in different social spaces (Collison 2018; Davis, 2012). Some of the cases occur outside night clubs, bars and other public spaces (Wells and Polders 2006). Homosexual dating sites have been used by perpetrators, who use false profiles to identify homosexual men, arrange for meetings and attack or kill them (Collison 2018). The persistence of hate crimes in South Africa has created a challenge for sexual minorities, since they experience public and social networking sites as spaces of violence (Smuts 2011; Thomas 2013; Wilson 2017). The fear that develops from witnessing these incidents contributes to the silencing of sexual minorities, since it makes it

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6 Corrective rape in this context refers to a hate crime in which a lesbian woman is violently raped because of her sexual identity. The intention of the crime for the perpetrator is to ‘cure’ the victim of their ‘lesbianism’ and convert her to heterosexuality.
difficult for them to disclose their (homo)sexual identities and live their lives freely (Msibi 2009; Mulaudzi 2018; Thomas 2013; Wilson 2017). To protect themselves from the violence, they withhold information about their homosexual identities and adopt heterosexual identities in different spaces of discrimination (Daniels et al. 2019; Thomas 2013). This hinders full exploration of (homo)sexual identities, because their movement in various spaces is limited, and their access to supportive social networks is restricted by fear of becoming victims of hate crimes. Those that choose to live explicit homosexual lives have to take extra precautionary measures when manoeuvring spaces that could be harmful to their well-being (Mulaudzi 2018; Thomas 2013; Wilson 2017). Workplaces have also been experienced by LGBTIQ+ employees as unsafe spaces to live with explicit homosexual identities. I discuss this in the following section of this chapter.

2.6 Workplace discrimination and sexual minority workers

In this section, global and South African literature that focuses on workplace discrimination against LGBTIQ+ employees is reviewed. There is very little research that specifically looks at discrimination based on sexual identity in mining workplaces, and as a result, research that has been done in other workplaces will be considered in identifying the kind of discrimination that workers face in their work spaces. The literature suggests that masculine workplaces are antagonistic in nature towards LGBTIQ+ employees, and that LGBTIQ+ employees are invisible in these workplaces. The literature further suggests that LGBTIQ+ workers are silenced in heteronormative workplaces, and that they use ‘passing’ as a strategy to manage their sexual identities and avoid discrimination (Benjamin, Twala and Reygan 2015; Colgan et al. 2008; Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingardė 2007; Renders 2015; Suriyasarn 2016; Takács 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Willis 2012). These findings will be discussed in this section.

2.6.1 Global research on workplace discrimination based on sexual identity

International research indicates that discrimination against and exclusion of LGBTIQ+ workers is common in workplaces and in the labour market (Colgan et al. 2008; Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingardė 2007; Renders 2015; Suriyasarn 2016; Takács 2016; Willis 2012). It has been reported that LGBTIQ+ workers experience formal discrimination in the labour market and within their workplaces. Formal discrimination is concerned with dismissing someone or refusing them employment based on their sexual minority status (Bell et al. 2011). It includes
not considering LGBTIQ+ workers for promotion and salary increases and excluding them from workplace benefits, such as family responsibility leave (Bell et al. 2011; Ward 2008). Reports show that LGBTIQ+ workers also face informal discrimination in the workplace. This includes harassment, disregard for the LGBTIQ+ employee’s credibility in the workplace and a lack of respect and acceptance by colleagues and superiors (Bell et al. 2011; Ward 2008). This section starts by considering the discrimination that occurs during the hiring process in various workplaces.

**Discrimination in the hiring process**

Takács (2016) undertook a quantitative study in Hungary, Central Europe that focused on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ employees in Hungarian labour markets. He found that people who explicitly portray an LGBTIQ+ identity are likely to experience difficulty in gaining mere entry into the Hungarian labour markets. Supporting these findings is a study conducted in Greece by Drydakis (2009), who had similar findings. Applications of employment were sent to employers in response to advertised jobs, in order to test for discrimination in the hiring process. The findings show that homosexual men in Greece have poorer market hiring prospects compared to their heterosexual counterparts, since most of the job applications that stated the sexual identity of the applicant were not responded to, while calls for interviews were sent to the others (Drydakis 2009). Also supporting these findings, a similar experiment was done by Ahmed, Andersson and Hammarstedt (2013) in Sweden, where job applications were sent to approximately 4,000 employers in 10 different professions. The results show that homosexual male applicants were discriminated against mostly in occupations that were male-dominated, while lesbian applicants were discriminated against in occupations that were dominated by females (Ahmed et al. 2013).

Lee Badgett (2006) discovered that lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the United States of America (USA) experience employment discrimination in the labour market. This is supported by Tilcsik (2011), who conducted a large-scale audit study of discrimination directed towards homosexual men in the USA. About 1,769 fictitious CVs were sent to employers in seven states. It was discovered that in some of the states there was a high degree of discrimination against fictitious applicants who appeared to be homosexual. In addition, a national survey conducted in the USA found that 21% of LGBTIQ+ respondents had experienced unfair treatment by an employer in hiring, salary negotiations or promotion (Mallory and Sears 2011). Like the European and American studies above, Suriyasarn’s (2016) qualitative study on
discrimination against LGBTIQ+ workers in Thailand yielded similar findings. The study found that sexual identity served as a barrier to accessing employment, mainly in public institutions and big private companies. As such, many LGBTIQ+ workers occupied informal and low-paying jobs with no job security. Lesbian and transsexual participants reported that they were asked intrusive questions about their sexual identity in interviews, and most of them were denied jobs once their sexual identity was known (Suriyasarn 2016). Homosexual employees who were able to gain entry into the labour market were not spared discrimination, since they faced violence, harassment and hostility in their workplaces, a reality that is unpacked in the following subsection.

Violence, harassment and hostility in the workplace

Steffens, Niedlich and Ehrke (2016) conducted a study on discrimination based on sexual identity in Germany, and they found that homosexual men were the most discriminated against in German workplaces. They suffered physical and verbal attacks, and they were threatened, insulted and excluded by co-workers (Steffens et al. 2016). Homosexual men and lesbian women reported experiences of workplace harassment in workplaces in the USA (Mallory and Sears 2011). Similarly, in a quantitative study conducted in South Florida, USA, education professionals reported the highest prevalence of verbal and physical harassment against LGBTIQ+ employees (Sheridan et al. 2017). Hasenbush and Mallory (2013) conducted a qualitative study in Pennsylvania focusing on employment discrimination based on sexual identity, and they found that LGBTIQ+ law enforcement officers experienced verbal harassment characterised by name-calling and insensitive jokes about homosexuals in their workplaces. Suriyasarn (2016) discovered that LGBTIQ+ employees in Thailand experienced hostile workplaces characterised by insensitive jokes, gossip and intrusive questions about their private sexual lives. Lesbian workers complained about male colleagues who watched pornographic videos at work and made suggestive comments about lesbian sexual activities (Suriyasarn 2016). Research on South African workplaces has reported similar findings on workplace discrimination based on sexual identity. It was imperative to consider these studies, since the current study is conducted within a South African context.

2.6.2 South African research on workplace discrimination based on sexual identity

South African research indicates that LGBTIQ+ workers experience discrimination in terms of employment opportunities, dismissal or denial of training opportunities and promotion, and
refusal of employment and access to social security and spousal benefits (Benjamin, Twala and Reygan 2015; Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014). Discrimination does not only occur post-employment, but also occurs when LGBTIQ+ prospective employees try to obtain employment (Mawambi 2014). The heteronormative requirements of workplaces are evident in many things, including workers’ choice of clothes and body movement. They serve as barriers to obtaining employment for LGBTIQ+ employees who explicitly portray non-normative gender expressions (Olney and Musabayana 2016). Similar to the global research findings stated in the previous section, South African LGBTIQ+ workers have reported incidents of discrimination in the hiring process.

**Discrimination based on sexual identity in the hiring process**

Benjamin et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study in three South African provinces (Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal), which focused on the lived experience of workplace discrimination of lesbian, bisexual and gender-non-conforming women. They found that lesbian women who appear masculine and wear male clothes experienced difficulty in finding employment, due to their presentation, gender expression and visible sexual identity. Similarly, Mawambi (2014), who undertook a qualitative study in a Johannesburg black township called KwaThema, reported cases of black qualified LGBTIQ+ people being denied employment opportunities as a result of their sexual identity. The participants reported incidents where they were not hired due to stereotypical assumptions that were based on how they talked, dressed and handled themselves. They were asked uncomfortable questions about their sexual identities during interviews and the recruitment process, and they never made it past this process once their sexuality was known. One of the participants reported an incident where he was questioned about his clothes and told to stop behaving like a girl during an interview (Mawambi 2014). Even in cases where the participants were better qualified than their heterosexual counterparts, they were still denied employment. Other studies have reported experiences of discrimination in workplace practices. A detailed discussion of these incidents is provided in the following subsection.

**Discrimination in workplace practices**

LGBTIQ+ employees who are in relationships with same-sex partners reported a lack of access to some of the benefits that heterosexual married couples have, since rights to include their partners in company-related health insurance policies, medical leave guarantees, and other
spousal benefits are limited by their sexual identities (Benjamin et al. 2015; Mawambi 2014). In some cases, access to the benefits was hindered by a lack of disclosure, meaning that they could not expose their same-sex partner’s information (Mawambi 2014). Participants further reported biased employment practices, such as restriction of job duties and not being rewarded accordingly for completed tasks (Benjamin et al. 2015).

Another qualitative study on LGBTIQ+ employees in South Africa was conducted by Van Zyl (2015) in Cape Town, with participants who came from Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Durban. While most participants reported some form of discrimination in the workplace, a small number of the participants claimed that they had never experienced any form of discrimination in their workplaces. The gynaecology department at the military hospital studied was described as LGBTIQ+ friendly, which indicates that some South African workplaces are safe for LGBTIQ+ employees. Those who explicitly portrayed a homosexual identity were more vulnerable to discrimination than those who did not (Van Zyl 2015). Even participants who did not disclose their sexuality mentioned that they had experienced suffering, since they sometimes were party to homophobic comments, and they felt pressure to participate in order to avoid being noticed by their colleagues. This was problematic for them, because some of them reported the painful effects of listening to unpleasant jokes and entertaining them. Some of the participants reported differential treatment in the workplace. One lesbian participant who was diagnosed with cancer indicated that management treated her differently from a heterosexual female colleague who was also diagnosed with cancer. The heterosexual colleague was allowed sick leave whenever she did not feel well, and was treated with care, while the lesbian participant was forced to work even when she was not well, and she received negative treatment (Van Zyl 2015). This highlights the implications that a negatively perceived sexual minority identity can have in creating an unpleasant working environment for LGBTIQ+ employees. For some, the implications included being dismissed from work.

**Dismissal on the grounds of a known sexual identity**

Some studies have found that dismissal of LGBTIQ+ workers based on their sexual identity is a common practice in South African workplaces (Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016). Olney and Musabayana (2016) undertook a national qualitative study on discrimination based on sexual identity in South African workplaces, and they found that LGBTIQ+ workers are worked out of their jobs by employers or managers, who slowly build cases against them by picking up small mistakes that they make and creating a trail of evidence made up of
fabricated accusations. They take this route because they are aware that direct discrimination can get them into trouble with the law should the LGBTIQ+ employee take the matter further. By the time the LGBTIQ+ employee tries to report the matter to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) or seek legal advice, the opportunity is already lost to counter-responding to a collection of subtle and undermining actions reported by the employer (Olney and Musabayana 2016). Supporting this, participants in Mawambi’s (2014) study reported incidents where they were complimented for their work ethic by management and colleagues, but were immediately dismissed or forced to resign when their sexual identity became known. They indicated that they never reported the incidents to any authority, because they believed nothing would be done for them (Mawambi 2014). Some of the incidents that go unreported include harassment and violence perpetrated by colleagues in the workplace.

Harassment of and violence against LGBTIQ+ employees in the workplace

Some studies have found that LGBTIQ+ workers experience name-calling, blackmail, harassment, physical and sexual violence and physical intimidation from colleagues (Benjamin et al. 2015; Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Van Zyl 2015). Olney and Musabayana (2016) discovered that LGBTIQ+ workers felt unsafe in their workplaces since they reported personal or other colleagues’ experiences of sexual harassment and verbal homophobia accompanied by religious and cultural prejudices associated with LGBTIQ+ sexualities. Similarly, Van Zyl (2015) found that LGBTIQ+ workers experience sexual harassment, verbal homophobia, hostile treatment from their colleagues and exclusion. One participant who identified as a transgender woman reported an incident where her colleagues ostracised her and even submitted a petition that was meant to deny her use of the women’s toilets (Van Zyl 2015). Likewise, Mawambi (2014) discovered that LGBTIQ+ workers were not protected from harassment and violence from colleagues in their workplaces, and this led to the violence increasing, since it was known that there was no punishment for violating the rights of LGBTIQ+ workers. In incidents where participants reported the violence to management, they were accused of provoking their heterosexual colleagues (Mawambi 2014). This finding is supported by Olney and Musabayana’s (2016) study, where it was discovered that reporting incidents of discrimination was not a safe option, since it has negative repercussions for LGBTIQ+ workers. Reporting may expose the sexuality of LGBTIQ+ workers and lead to resentment from their colleagues. Some of the participants reported that
after they had laid a complaint with the human resources department, the perpetrators were given warnings; however, there was tension in the workplace, since other colleagues took the side of the perpetrator (Olney and Musabayana 2016). Tebelo and Odeku’s (2014) study that examines the legal position of discrimination on the grounds of sexual identity in South African workplaces found that LGBTIQ+ employees are often not aware of or have little clarity on the procedure that should be followed when they want to report harassment or violent behaviour in the workplace. This lack of explicit procedure is indicative of the little attention that is given to sexual diversity in workplaces.

While there is some literature on LGBTIQ+ workers’ experiences of workplace discrimination, little research that specifically focuses on homosexual men’s experiences of workplace discrimination in mining spaces has been done. Considering the experiences of homosexual men in mining workplaces allows for an understanding of the relationships of inequality and discrimination in heteropatriarchal and masculine workplaces.

### 2.6.3 Discrimination against LGBTIQ+ employees in masculine workplaces

Some workplaces are considered to be “masculine” or “feminine” based on the nature of the work performed, and they are consequently heterosexual, due to the dominant heteronormative discourse, which asserts division of work between the two gender categories (Wright 2008). For example, technical work, such as information technology, and blue-collar work, involving manual labour, are considered masculine, while occupations that include mostly caring work, such as nursing, cleaning or teaching, are considered feminine (Van Zyl 2015). Discrimination is likely to increase, especially towards gay men, in workplaces that are considered masculine or male-dominated (Ozeren et al. 2016).

Willis (2012) discovered that expressions of homophobia in masculine workplaces were overtly antagonistic in tone towards sexual minority identities. Reingardē (2007) found that Lithuanian working environments that are defined as “feminine” were perceived to be more gay-friendly than those that are defined as “masculine”. Male-dominated workplaces were found to be highly heteronormative, and a professional identity was commonly favoured where one’s homosexual identity is suppressed (Reingardē 2007). Adopting this type of professional identity contributes significantly to the silencing of homosexual men’s sexuality within male-dominated workplaces. Consequently, gay men must choose whether to disclose their sexual identities and suffer the consequences or to hide them and avoid possible discrimination.
Ozeren et al. (2016) discovered that gay men who were open about their sexual identity in hostile male-dominated workplaces experienced difficulties, since heterosexual men made the workplace uncomfortable for them, by, for example, commenting on their appearance, their bodies and their physical differences. Homosexual men make significant efforts to conform to the heterosexual norms that are forced on them by male-dominated workplaces, in order to avoid the negativity surrounding their sexuality (Ozeren et al. 2016). Supporting this finding, Willis (2012) found that homosexual men who worked in Australian male-dominated workplaces saw the need to act heterosexual, in order to fit in with the normative expectations of their heterosexual male colleagues. Acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people within hostile male-dominated workplaces is subject to the extent that they are able to adjust to the heteronormativity pervading the workplace (Ozeren et al. 2016). Hence homosexual men’s concern with how they present themselves in masculine or male-dominated workplaces.

The South African mining industry has consistently been a male-dominated space controlled by heterosexual masculinities (Harries 1994). Hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that occupies the powerful position in a particular order of gender relations (Connell 2005). Similar to Connell’s argument, African research shows that there is no single and homogeneous African masculinity, and that non-heterosexual masculinities are other forms of African masculinities (Ratele 2011). Sexuality plays a significant role in the construction of African masculinities, and the ruling idea of masculinity is that it is heterosexual. A “real man” is seen as a man who is sexually attracted to women (Ratele 2011). The mere reality of an existing homosexual African sexuality makes men who are sexually attracted to other men vulnerable to hate, fear and exclusion within the dominant heterosexual system (Ratele 2011).

Most African societies are organised to embrace the predominant patriarchal heterosexual masculinity (Ratele 2011). Homosexual men are treated as subordinate to heterosexual men, and this has been shown to be particularly evident in the South African mining industry. There is an unequal ordering of masculinities in the mining industry, and this has been highlighted by studies (Benya 2009; Callinicos 1981; Harries 1994; Van Onselen 1982), which show that a heterosexual masculinity has always been dominant in the workplace due to the normalised status of patriarchy and heterosexuality. The heterosexual hegemonic masculinity enjoys more power and dominance in the workplace, privileging heterosexual masculinities and marginalising non-heterosexual masculinities (Connell 2005). A detailed discussion of the
inequalities that are evident between heterosexual and non-heterosexual masculinities is provide in Chapter Three.

2.7 The silencing of homosexuals in spaces of discrimination

Foucault (1978) argues that sexuality and sexual activity are linked to power. He argues that sexuality is a social construct that is heavily controlled and policed by those who hold power in society (Foucault 1978). This is particularly evident in the silencing of non-heterosexual sexualities. Msibi (2011) argues that the control referred to by Foucault (1978) can be observed in many African countries that seek to continually silence same-sex desire. Enforcement of the heterosexual norm by members of society, especially those that hold power, is a form of social control in which people are ascribed sexuality and are expected to adhere to that particular sexuality. This control is maintained through the power to make laws that are meant to police people’s sexuality and punish those that engage in so-called deviant sexual acts. Fear of punishment leads to homosexual people avoiding engaging in same-sex relationships or hiding their same-sex desire (Msibi 2011). The invisibility, limited widespread protective legislation and open discrimination of LGBTIQ+ people places them at risk of silencing in spaces of discrimination (Barefoot et al. 2015; Bell et al. 2011; Rickard and Yancey 2018).

Accordingly, the heteronormative discourse creates a form of compulsory heterosexuality in different spaces, where every individual is expected to be attracted to the opposite sex (Rich, 1980). The power afforded to heterosexuality by society manifests in social spaces and places alternative sexualities in danger of rejection, since they are different from the normalised heterosexual identity. Homosexual people who live in highly heteronormative spaces carry the extra burden of constantly policing their own sexuality (Ward 2008). For example, in a qualitative study conducted on South African university campuses, Rothmann (2016) found that some homosexual academics choose to professionalise their sexual identities and are consequently silent about their sexual identities in their workplaces. He further explained that participants achieved this professionalisation by conforming to the heteronormative expectations evident in their workplaces (Rothmann 2016).

Studies show that sexual minorities are silenced and invisible in various spaces due to the heteronormative nature of those spaces (Barefoot et al. 2015; Butterfield 2018; Reingardè 2010; Rothmann 2017). Barefoot et al. (2015) conducted a study on the difficulties faced by rural lesbian women in the USA, and they found that heteronormativity and heightened
discrimination in rural spaces created a need for them to remain invisible. Similarly, a study by Thomas (2013) indicated that the increased discrimination expressed through hate crimes and corrective rape in South African townships continues to silence sexual minorities, since many of them live their homosexual lives behind closed doors and in fear. They are forced by the discrimination to conceal their sexualities, and even those that have disclosed their sexuality do not have complete freedom to speak out and challenge heteronormative expectations within their communities. In their study of rural and urban experiences of homosexual people, Wienke and Hill (2013) found that LGBTIQ+ activism is mostly practised in urban spaces, where there is more tolerance of sexual diversity.

International and local studies indicate that sexual minorities avoid disclosing their sexual identity in the workplace due to fear of discrimination and exclusion (Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingarde 2007; Renders 2015; Suriyasarn 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Van Zyl 2015). The silence is mainly a result of the dominant traditional heteronormative constructions of gender in the workplace. While disclosure of a homosexual identity in the workplace may be positive and affirming in terms of an employee’s personal identity, it might not be the most strategic decision in a workplace that is characterised by a homophobic culture (Olney and Musabayana 2016). It is a risk that can lead to higher degrees of workplace discrimination, loss of promotion opportunities and decreased positive regard by colleagues (Brenner, Lyons and Fassinger 2010). For example, Renders (2015) discovered that sexual minority employees in the North American mining industry are silent about their sexuality as a result of the industry’s homophobic culture. Lesbian participants in Olney and Musabayana’s (2016) study reported that disclosing their sexuality in the workplace places them at greater risk of sexual harassment, since there is a continued and common belief among South African men that lesbian women’s sexual identity can be corrected by their having consensual or non-consensual sexual intercourse with men.

As discussed, LGBTIQ+ workers face different kinds of discrimination at different levels of the employment cycle, and this contributes significantly to their decisions to disclose their sexuality in spaces of employment. For example, Ozeren et al. (2016) found that LGBTIQ+ workers in Turkey choose to remain silent about their sexual identity in the workplace due to fear of being treated in an unfair and unequal manner. All participants in this study believed that they would lose their jobs if their sexual identities were disclosed (Ozeren et al. 2016). Similarly, a study in Thailand found that in their early stages of employment, LGBTIQ+
workers hide their sexuality and only disclose it later in their career, when they feel a sense of job security (Suriyasarn 2016). Similarly, Olney and Musabayana (2016) found that most LGBTIQ+ workers in South Africa choose not to disclose their sexual or gender identity in the workplace due to fear of dismissal. Hence, a hidden sexual minority identity serves to protect LGBTIQ+ prospective employees from discrimination in the hiring process. While there is a general fear of discrimination portrayed in Olney and Musabayana’s (2016) study, LGBTIQ+ participants indicated that witnessing other LGBTIQ+ colleagues who displayed a visible sexual identity in the workplace helped with developing more favourable conditions for breaking the silence. A term used by Goffman (1963) to define this process of hiding one’s homosexual identity and adopting heterosexual identities to fit in is ‘passing’.

2.8 Passing as a coping strategy in spaces of discrimination

Passing can be an effective coping strategy in spaces where the homosexual identity is stigmatised and the tolerance of sexual diversity is limited. Goffman (1963) describes a stigma as an attribute that is extremely discrediting to its possessor. However, the attribute is not discrediting in itself, but is discrediting as a result of the categorisation of people in society and the normative expectations that society ascribes to a specific category of people (Goffman 1963). Certain attributes are made undesirable due to the negative meaning and stereotypes attached to them. Accordingly, homosexuality as a sexual identity does not discredit the possessor, but the negative stereotypes that describe homosexuality as morally wrong and as a threat to society lead to stigmatisation of the homosexual attribute, which then discredits the possessor in the eyes of society.

Goffman (1963) further asserts that it is not all undesirable attributes that are a problem, but those that are not in harmony with stereotypes that specify what certain types of people should be. As a result, those who deviate from the anticipated attributes or behaviours associated with their categories, namely those who are stereotyped, are ostracised, undermined, belittled and rejected by society. Heteronormativity limits sexuality to heterosexuality, and any sexuality that falls outside this category is rejected, as it challenges the stereotype that dictates who men and women should form sexual relationships with. Homosexual men are seen to deviate from the behaviours or attributes associated with the “men” category.

Discriminatory practices against homosexuals can even go to the extreme of violent attacks or murders perpetrated against homosexuals. The animosity or hate is justified by the perceived
danger that the homosexual individual supposedly represents. To avoid discrimination, the stigmatised homosexual individual will then engage in “passing”, as a form of stigma management strategy. Passing means that the stigmatised individual adopts a non-stigmatised identity in order to avoid the negative consequences that are attached to their stigma (Goffman 1963). With reference to homosexuality, passing involves the deliberate concealment of one’s homosexual identity (the discredited attribute) and the adoption of a heterosexual identity (the credited attribute), in order to avoid negative attention and to fit in (Van Zyl 2015). Researchers explain that homosexual people often adopt a false heterosexual identity and pass as heterosexual in different spaces of their lives, to avoid the negative consequences that may result if they were to expose their true homosexual identity (Barefoot et al. 2015; Jenkins 2013; Jolly 2011; Reingardė 2007; Takács 2016; Van Zyl 2015). Passing can be in the form of avoiding sharing details about one’s personal life, using gender-neutral language when referring to their romantic partners, creating a heterosexual life or even inventing a heterosexual partner (Reingardė 2007). For example, Wienke and Hill’s (2013) comparative study of rural and urban homosexuals reported passing as a common sexual identity management strategy among homosexuals in rural and urban spaces. Likewise, in a European study conducted in spaces of work, 59% of LGBT participants reported that they were forced by their highly heterosexual working environments to invent non-existent partners of the opposite sex, in order to maintain their heterosexual cover (Takács 2016). Due to the perceived lack of familial support and fear of rejection, Rickard and Yancey (2018) found that sexual minorities usually hide their homosexual identities from their family members and live completely heterosexual lives in their homes.

Goffman (1963) argues that due to the great rewards associated with being regarded as “normal”, most people who are in a position to pass as heterosexual will do so intentionally on some occasions. Homosexuals adopt passing as a defensive strategy of managing stigma (Mitra and Doctor 2016). They engage in three passing strategies, namely fabrication, concealment and discretion (Croteau, Anderson and VanderWal 2008). Fabrication has to do with deliberately giving information that is not true in order to create a false non-stigmatised identity (Croteau et al. 2008). Concealment includes actively preventing other people from finding out personal information that can potentially disclose the stigmatised homosexual identity. Lastly, discretion means that a homosexual individual distances himself or herself from conversations, contexts or tasks that could potentially lead to any sort of personal disclosure (Croteau et al. 2008).
Passing makes it reasonably easy for homosexuals to get along well with heterosexual people. However, it forces the individual to deny their true sexuality and live a dishonest life, which can have negative psychological implications for the individual (Hyde and DeLamater 2008). Consequently, Croteau et al. (2008) state that passing bears the risk of psychological strain, due to the requirement of being vigilant when fabricating an acceptable heterosexual identity and social isolation, potentially leading to career-related costs.

The decision to pass is based on a person’s observation of their social environment. Croteau et al. (2008) explain that individuals who possess stigmatised and concealed social identities are usually described as weighing the costs and benefits of revealing their identity or passing. A mixture of personal differences and interpersonal and environmental characteristics might pull LGBTIQ+ employees in more than one direction (Croteau et al. 2008). If a social environment is deemed unsafe, a homosexual individual may choose not to disclose their hidden sexual identity (Van Zyl 2015). LGBTIQ+ workers are likely to reveal their stigmatised identity when past experiences suggest mainly positive outcomes, and they are likely to pass or hide their sexuality when past disclosures were accompanied by negative consequences (Croteau et al. 2008). Understandably, then, LGBTIQ+ employees who perceive their workplaces as supportive tend to be more open about their sexual identity than those who do not (Olney and Musabayana 2016; Steffens et al. 2016).

Heteronormativity influences the process of disclosing a homosexual identity (Steffens et al. 2016). Presenting oneself as homosexual or exposing a non-conforming sexuality in a highly coercive heteronormative social environment may put a homosexual person in danger, since it is likely to be followed by rejection, ostracism or, in extreme cases, physical violence (Van Zyl 2015). For example, Reingardé (2007) refers to pilot surveys that were carried out in Europe among homosexual men, which indicated that they choose to hide their sexuality or adopt invented heterosexual lives to pass at work and at home, due to the dominant heterosexual culture and fear of exclusion.

Most people who pass live double lives. This is illustrated by the relations they have with those who know about their stigma and those who know about the conforming attribute (Goffman 1963). As a result, their behaviour will differ when interacting with each group, since they constantly have to be aware of what the situation allows. The group that is aware of the conforming attribute is not aware that a different biography of the individual exists, while those who know about the stigma know about both biographies. A double life consisting of those
who think they know the person and those who truly do is evident (Goffman 1963). This is also apparent in the lives of homosexuals who come out to their families and friends but pass at work.

It is argued that there are homosexuals who cope with workplace discrimination by pursuing a ‘double life’, meaning that they pass as completely heterosexual, with imaginary heterosexual partners, at work, and live their homosexual lives during evenings or when they are with their homosexual friends (Ozeren et al. 2016). They construct spaces in their personal and private lives that are LGBTIQ+-friendly, while in the workplace they conform to the heterosexual norm, in order to avoid facing discrimination or oppressive treatment that they would potentially experience within the workplace (Ozeren et al. 2016). Successful passing leads to sexual minority workers not reporting anti-gay incidents in the workplace, due to fear of possible disclosure of their homosexual identity (Brower 2015). Hence the argument that laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual identity at work may not always be effective for LGBTIQ+ employees, especially those who work in highly heteronormative workplaces. The heteronormative culture of the workplace makes it difficult, and to some extent impossible, for them to practise their rights and report discrimination.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter started by considering the history of legislation on discrimination based on sexual identity in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. This overview indicates that homosexuality is not foreign to the South African context. However, there have been struggles in terms of tolerance and acceptance, due to the widespread heteronormativity evident in society. It was established that discrimination against homosexuals in South Africa is a persisting issue, and that implementation of laws in favour of LGBTIQ+ people has not been enough to stop or prevent this discrimination. Homosexuals are still faced with the challenge of homophobia and exclusion. This is the case in diverse spaces, including homes, communities and workplaces. A gap was identified in the literature, as there is little literature on sexuality on the mines, especially on post-apartheid South African mines. Most of the available research on sexuality on the mines was done in the 1980s and 1990s and focused on the history of sexuality on the mines. Little attention has been given to the experiences of sexual minorities in post-apartheid South African mining workplaces.
Heteronormativity has negative implications for LGBTIQ+ people, and this is indicated by research which highlights the dilemmas that heteronormativity creates for sexual minorities in spaces of discrimination. Sexual minorities are discriminated against, due to the heteronormative constructions of gender, which portray homosexuality as unnatural and undesirable. Some LGBTIQ+ people are faced with the constant challenge of needing to pretend to be heterosexual and to adhere to the heterosexual norm, in order to avoid discrimination in the spaces that they live in. Geographical spaces were considered in understanding the effect that spaces have on sexual minority identities. The literature indicates that discrimination based on sexual identity exists in both rural and urban areas, but that it is more intense in rural spaces. Silence or a lack of disclosure was identified as LGBTIQ+ people’s coping strategy in heteronormative spaces. The prevalent hate crimes and violence towards sexual minorities in the South African context continue to silence homosexual people in different social spaces. The literature mentions that discrimination is a problem in many workplaces, and that most LGBTIQ+ workers conceal their sexual identity, to avoid unfair discrimination and to have access to opportunities that they would otherwise not have access to if their sexuality was known.

There is a lack of research on the experiences of sexual minorities in the mining industry, and therefore research that focused on experiences of LGBTIQ+ workers in other workplaces was considered. International studies have found that LGBTIQ+ workers face discrimination in their workplaces, and this is consistent with South African literature, which asserts the same. Both international and South African literature indicates that LGBTIQ+ workers are discriminated against by employers and colleagues. They are excluded in their workplaces, and they experience different kinds of violence. It was further established that masculine or male-dominated workplaces are highly heteronormative and patriarchal and have little tolerance for sexual minority identities. Heterosexual masculinity is dominant in these workplaces, and non-heterosexual masculinities are subordinated, as they are closely associated with femininity. The mining industry has always been a heterosexual and masculine space, hence the need to consider literature on the structure of masculinities and the inequalities that exist between the different masculinities in workplaces. To understand the origins of these inequalities further, a relevant theoretical framework had to be developed, and this required an analytical framework that would consider the identity markers that structure the inequalities and inform the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers. The theoretical and the analytical frameworks employed are described in detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 3. Intersectionality and the theory of masculinities

3.1 Introduction

Connell (1995, 1998, 2003, 2005) has written extensively on the construction of masculinities and relationships of dominance and subordination between masculinities. Her theory has been used by various scholars across the globe to understand masculinities in various contexts, extending a contextual understanding of masculinities (Elliott 2016; Hearn and Morrell 2012; Martin 2001; Messerschmidt 2012; Morrell 1998; Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger; 2012; Ratele 2005, 2013; Shields 2008). Some South African scholars, such as Ratele (2005, 2011, 2013) and Morrell (1994, 1998; Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger, 2012), have used the theory to understand masculinities in the South African context. Considering the South African context and the different identity markers of South African men, they were able to develop new concepts in defining the different African masculinities. This supports Connell’s argument that masculinities are not static, but that they change based on time and space (Connell 1998, 2005). Further, she considered different identity markers that inform the hierarchical ordering of masculinities and that have led to an intersectional understanding of masculinities (Connell 1998, 2003, 2005). Intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), debunks an understanding of power relationships and inequality based on single identities. She argues that our intersecting social identities, such as race, class and gender, position us in different ranks of power structures. The framework provides a fundamental understanding of persisting inequalities that exist in society, by not only considering intergroup but also intragroup differences (Crenshaw 1989, 1991).

Connell’s (1995, 1998, 2005) theory of masculinities and intersectionality form an important analytical lens through which the data was analysed. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical and the analytical frameworks and how they were helpful in developing an understanding of discrimination against black homosexual male mineworkers. The literature shows that homosexual men are treated as inferior to heterosexual men in their workplaces, and that masculine workplaces tend to be hostile towards homosexuals (Ozren et al. 2016; Reingardë 2007; Willis 2012). As such, Connell’s theory of masculinities, which focuses on the inequalities that exist between different masculinities, is useful in highlighting and providing an understanding of the inequalities that exist between men in the South African mining industry, and how they impact on the lives of subordinated homosexual mineworkers.
Exploring the experiences of homosexual men and how their sexual identity in conjunction with various other identities inform their experiences requires that an understanding of an intersectional framework be provided. A link between the theoretical and the analytical frameworks is established, in order to provide a coherent argument.

### 3.2 The theory of masculinities

In this study, the work of Raewyn Connell (2003, 2005) is used as a lens through which to understand the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers. Connell (2005) argues that gender intersects with race, class and nationality, or position in the global structure. This has significant implications for how masculinity is analysed. For example, Connell (2005) explains that white men’s masculinities are not only constructed in association with white women, but also in association with black men. Similarly, it would be difficult to understand the construction of working-class masculinities without acknowledging their class in addition to their gender politics. The interplay between gender, race and class led Connell (2005) to the argument that there is no single and fixed masculinity, but multiple and changing masculinities structured according to power relations between men and women and between men in different contexts.

Connell (2005: 78) argues that ‘there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men’. At any point in time, one type of masculinity is culturally exalted, rather than others, leading Connell to refer to this masculinity as a hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as ‘the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (Connell 2005: 77). Men who occupy a hegemonic masculinity assert a position of dominance, and they achieve this through acquiring the consent of women and other men who endorse and legitimise their hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1998, 2005). Men are able to position other men according to their subordinated, complicit and marginalised relationships. Homosexual men are usually stigmatised in society due to their rejected sexual identity, and this encourages the dominance of heterosexual men over homosexual men. Homosexual men are oppressed through different forms of discrimination and exclusion.
Connell 2005). Oppression places non-heterosexual masculinities at the lowest level of the
gender hierarchy among men, and this creates inequalities among different groups of men
(Connell 2005). Oppression resulting from the stigmatisation of non-heterosexual masculinity
hinders homosexual men from reaching the level of hegemonic masculinity.

South African scholars have used Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity to explain the
tension among men in South Africa, particularly black South African men. The concept was
first applied to the South African context by Morrell (1994, 1998), who used it to explain the
nature, the structure and the dynamics of male power. In his earliest work on African
masculinities, Morrell (1998) suggested not just one but three hegemonic masculinities. He
suggested that there was a “white” hegemonic masculinity, which was represented in the
economic and political power that resided in the white ruling class, an “African” rural-based
hegemonic masculinity, which was enforced through indigenous institutions, such as
customary law and chiefship, and a “black” hegemonic masculinity, which had developed in
the context of the urbanisation of black people and the expansion of culturally distinct
townships that were geographically separated (Morrell 1994, 1998). By doing this, Morrell
moved away from the idea that there is one ideal dominant hegemonic masculinity associated
with the gender order that ordered male power in society (Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger
2012). It is evident from the above that context was important in identifying these hegemonic
masculinities. One masculinity can be dominant in one context and not in another.

Later research that built on Connell’s theory shows that African masculinities are endless, and
that they are constructed based on identity markers such as values, gender, status, class
position, race, sexual identity and cultural traditions. Expanding on this view, Ratele (2011)
suggests that African men’s masculinities have also been attached to or defined according to
the use of their genitals. He states that “real” African men are regarded as men if they use their
penises to penetrate women’s vaginas. Men who penetrate other men or are penetrated by other
men are not viewed as “real” men (Ratele 2011). This highlights the power given to the
heterosexual African masculinity within the African context, making it a dominant or
hegemonic masculinity in relation to other men. Similar to Connell’s theory, African

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7 In this chapter the term ‘non-heterosexual masculinity’ is used instead of ‘homosexual masculinity’ to highlight
the heteronormative constructions of masculinity that define heterosexual masculinity as normative and excludes
masculinities that are not heterosexual from the norm.
heterosexual men have the power to position African homosexual men in subordinate and marginalised positions of the hierarchy, since they are not viewed as “real” African men.

Supporting this argument, Ratele (2013) critically analysed the concept of hegemonic cultural traditional masculinity, and he found that non-heterosexual masculinities are excluded in the use of the concept. Cultural traditions and notions of masculinity continually change and are deconstructed by individuals themselves. These notions are then passed down from generation to generation. As Ratele (2013) reminds us, not everyone has the power to pass on traditions, and those that have the power, such as traditional leaders, do so selectively. While there are hegemonic heteromasculine voices within African communities, cultural traditions are not exhausted by those dominant voices, and Ratele (2013) therefore asserts that homosexual black men have traditions, even though sexual traditionalism wants to erase them. Sexual traditionalism in contemporary South Africa, which is mostly controlled by heterosexual powerful men, continues to glorify heterosexuality and marginalise alternative sexualities (Ratele 2013). This is because non-heterosexual masculinities unsettle the dominant form of African traditional masculinity (Ratele 2013), disrupting the sexual and gender hierarchy, and specifically the patriarchal masculine order, which does not tolerate practices that challenge this entitlement of men who hold power (Ratele 2011). The studies by Ratele (2011, 2013) show that Connell’s theory of masculinities was helpful in analysing South African masculinities and showing the inequalities that exist between men, and specifically black men, in the South African context.

Ratele’s (2011, 2013) and Morrell’s (1994, 1998) studies highlight the construction of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa and the continuing conflict between hegemonic heterosexual masculinities and non-heterosexual masculinities. In line with Connell’s (2005) analysis, their research indicates that men who occupy hegemonic positions and hold power in different institutions have the power to position other South African men in subordinate positions and marginalise masculinities that threaten their position in the gender hierarchy. The theory was beneficial when analysing African masculinities in the mining industry, which is a masculine space dominated by heteropatriarchal beliefs. Inequalities between heterosexual and non-heterosexual masculinities have been reported to be evident in masculine workplaces, with the heterosexual masculinity being dominant, which highlights the privileged position of heterosexual men in these spaces (Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingarde 2007; Willis 2012). Inequalities have also been discovered in other social spaces, including rural communities,
schools and religious institutions (Dwyer et al. 2015; Vincent and Howell 2014; Yarbrough 2004). Since this study considered mining workplaces, it required a theory that would analyse the struggle between the two masculinities and show how inequalities occur in mine spaces. As such, Connell’s argument successfully achieved that.

3.3 Sexuality in spaces of discrimination: An intersectional framework

Most of the available literature on workplace discrimination in South Africa (Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014) tends to underplay the various social divisions that intersect and form different and unique challenges for members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and specifically homosexual men. Homosexual men are usually studied as one coherent group, without considering how various demographics, such as race, gender, class and status, work together in shaping homosexual workers’ unique experiences of discrimination in different social spaces. As stated in the introduction chapter, research on labour in the post-apartheid South African mining industry has neglected the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers, leaving a gap in knowledge. This study begins to provide a more nuanced understanding of black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences, by using an intersectional lens as an analytical tool to show how the multiple identities of black homosexual male mineworkers intersect and shape their experiences in various spaces.

The concept of ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to address what she termed ‘intersectional failures’. Crenshaw (1989) argues that there are different and intersecting axes of social division that influence how people experience discrimination, and that the reason we fail to address discrimination is that we do not take into consideration these intersections. For example, black women in the USA do not experience discrimination the same way as white women. While both groups of women possess the female identity and may experience discrimination based on their sex, black women’s experiences of sex discrimination are also informed by their race (Crenshaw 1989). Intersectionality has its roots in the US black feminist movement. American black feminist scholars such as hooks (1984) and Collins (1990) highlighted the triple oppression suffered by black American women, arguing that black American women suffer race, gender and class oppression simultaneously. However, intersectionality takes this a step further, by considering the power relations that are evident among the different types of oppression (Crenshaw 1989).
To understand and provide a comprehensive description of discrimination directed towards black homosexual male mineworkers in various contexts, an intersectional framework had to be adopted, because black homosexual male mineworkers experience layers of discrimination, as a result of the multiple and intersecting identities they possess. Coming from a feminist epistemological position, it was necessary to use intersectionality as an analytical tool, since it allows for an unrestricted and broadened exploration of the participants’ diverse identity markers and experiences. Intersections are explored through participants’ narratives as they occur, allowing them control in the process. Intersectionality entails a process of understanding and analysing the complexities that are evident in the world, in humans and in human existence (Collins and Bilge 2016). Events and conditions that are prevalent in the political and social life of humans are shaped by various factors in different and mutually influencing ways. In other words, the lives that people live, and the identities they adopt, are shaped by many factors in different and mutually influencing ways (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Intersections of different identities can create either oppression or opportunity for the people concerned. An intersection of identities that puts a person at an advantage offers open access to rewards, status and opportunities, which may not be available to other disadvantaged intersections (Shields 2008: 305). Social inequality, human lives and the arrangement of power in a particular society at a given time are understood as being structured by many axes of social division, or identities, be they race, class or gender, which intersect, work collectively and influence each other (Collins and Bilge 2016). Shields (2008: 302) further states that ‘an intersectional position may be disadvantaged relative to one group, but advantaged relative to another’. For instance, in the context of this study, black homosexual men are disadvantaged as a result of their stigmatised sexual and racial identities, but they enjoy privilege based on their male identity, since the mining industry hires more men than women. Consequently, black homosexual men may suffer a double oppression, as a result of both their sexual identities and their subordinated masculinities.

The intersectional approach helps us understand power relations in society more broadly. According to Ritzer (2011: 482), ‘[i]ntersectionality theory recognises the fundamental link between ideology and power that allows dominants to control subordinates by creating a politics in which difference becomes a conceptual tool for justifying arrangements of oppression. In social practice, dominants use differences among people to justify oppressive practices by translating difference into models of inferiority/superiority; people are socialised
to relate to difference not as a source of diversity, interest, and cultural wealth but evaluate it in terms of “better” or “worse”. The ideologies of power and domination operate by producing a mythical norm that people use to evaluate themselves and other people (Lorde 1984). This norm creates an internalised rejection of difference, which serves to make people belittle themselves, not accept people from different categories, and develop specific criteria within their own groups that are used to ostracise, marginalise and punish group members who fail to meet these criteria (Ritzer 2011). The intersecting identity markers that emphasise oppression or privilege create differences in the form and the intensity of people’s experiences of discrimination. People do not experience pure racism or sexism under intersectionality, but power relations of racism and sexism that acquire meaning in relation to one another (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Axes of social division, such as class, race, sexuality, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion and nationality, comprise interconnecting systems of power. Intersectional analyses require the questioning of inequalities that exist between women and between men and inequalities within subcategories of men and women (Rahman and Jackson 2010). Black homosexual male mineworkers possess multiple identities, which inform how they experience discrimination. Their sexuality in conjunction with their social background, their race, their culture, their religion, their gender, their class, their geographical location and their other identities puts them in a unique intersectional position and further informs their unique experiences of discrimination in various spaces.

Intersectionality is used as an analytical tool to find solutions to problems that people face in society (Collins and Bilge 2016). Solutions that might be useful in generally addressing the discrimination against LGBTIQ+ workers in various industries might not be efficient in addressing discrimination as specifically experienced by black homosexual male mineworkers, considering the differing contexts that they work in. This is due to the intersections that inform the unique experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers. Hence the need for an intersectional framework, in order to understand the complexity of the problem as a result of the various factors that shape the experiences of homosexual mineworkers.
3.4 Establishing a link between the theoretical and the analytical frameworks

The theoretical and the analytical frameworks complement each other, since intersectionality assists in exploring and interrogating the relationships of inequality that exist between heterosexual and non-heterosexual masculinities in the mining industry. It is only through merging the two that a comprehensive exploration of black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences could be developed. Using an intersectional framework allowed for an examination of the relationship between heterosexual and non-heterosexual masculinities, and it established an understanding of the continuing domination of heterosexual masculinities and the subordination of non-heterosexual masculinities. The different identity markers that both heterosexual and homosexual men possess determine their position in the masculinity hierarchy. While homosexual mineworkers may share the same racial and cultural traditions and religious identities as their heterosexual colleagues, their homosexual identity positions them at lower levels of the masculinity hierarchy and makes them vulnerable to subordination by black heterosexual men. The power relations of dominance and subordination allow heterosexual men to enforce heteronormativity in workplaces and police the sexuality of their colleagues (Reingardé 2007). Foucault’s (1978) argument on power and how sexual identities are policed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is evident in multiple spaces, including homes, religious institutions and households, challenging and illegitimising notions of sexual diversity. Growing up in rural spaces with strong religious and traditional backgrounds, black homosexual male mineworkers had to learn from an early age to police and regulate their behaviour, so that they are not seen to challenge the traditional heterosexual masculinity (Butterfield 2018; Casazza et al. 2015; Cohn and Hastings 2010; Dwyer et al. 2015; Yarbrough 2004). They internalised the heteronormative requirements and accepted the domination of heterosexual masculinities in heteronormative spaces (Reingardé 2007; Suriyasarn 2016. Their intersecting identities, which contradict the normalised arrangement of identity categories, position them as outsiders in their own communities and workplaces, exposing them to vulnerability.

Combining the frameworks allowed me to better understand the intersections of sexual identity, race, class, gender, occupation, culture, geographical location, cultural traditions and religious beliefs and how these intersections shape the construction of (homo)sexual identities in various geographical and social spaces. These are complex intersections, and they do not exist in the
same order in all spaces, which is why homosexual mineworkers have to adjust and twist the order of their identities, so that they can be in alignment with the heteronormative requirements of the space they are in at a particular time. Their non-heterosexual masculinity is not fixed to their sexual identity, but has many underlying factors that shape it as a subordinate masculinity. For example, not being able to bear children through sexual intercourse, whether one is homosexual or not, can be seen by other men as a weakness, allowing them to feel more powerful, since they can bear children “naturally” and grow their family name. Already, before even mentioning sexuality, homosexual mineworkers would be dominated as men who are unable to have children. But the domination extends further, as you bring in sexual, racial, class and other identities, pushing homosexual mineworkers to the lowest ranks of the masculinity hierarchy.

3.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to establish a theoretical framework and an analytical framework for the study. Connell’s theory of masculinities was chosen as the theoretical framework for the study, and intersectionality was chosen as the analytical framework. Most of the available literature on discrimination against LGBTIQ+ workers tend to underplay the various social divisions that work collectively in shaping LGBTIQ+ workers’ experiences of discrimination in different spheres of their lives. Intersectionality was identified as relevant and important for this study, since it considers the various social dimensions that shape the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers, and it begins to fill the gap in knowledge.

The theory of masculinities was also identified as relevant, since this study considers the performance and the relationships of masculinities in various spaces, especially in the mining workplace, as a masculine space. A link was established between the two frameworks, and it was shown that the theories complement each other. To comprehend the nature of the unequal treatment evident among different men in various spaces, one needs to understand how the different identities, which place men in certain positions in the masculinity hierarchy, influence and shape their experiences. Intersecting identities can create either oppression or opportunity for the people who possess them, since differences in society are used as sources of power, determining who should dominate and who should be dominated. Non-heterosexual masculinities are dominated by heterosexual masculinities in various spaces, and it is assumed that the inequalities emerge from conservative religious and cultural beliefs, which challenge sexual minority identities in South African society. Multiple and intersecting factors shaping
the construction of sexual identities and non-heterosexual masculinities were discussed, which indicate that black homosexual male mineworkers’ construction and performance of their sexual identities are informed by factors such as religion, sexual identity, gender, occupation, race, geographical location, cultural traditions and social background. After developing a theoretical framework and an analytical framework, it was imperative to select a research process that would guide the collection of narratives from the participants. In chapter 4 I discuss this process, which will explain how I went about researching the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers.
Chapter 4. Researching the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on establishing a theoretical framework that would assist in developing an understanding of how homosexual mineworkers construct and manage their (homo)sexual identities within different spaces. A theoretical framework and an analytical framework were identified, and a link between the two was established. This chapter seeks to outline the research design employed in exploring and achieving the research aims and objectives stated in chapter 1. The aims of this research were driven by a desire to bring to the fore the silenced voices of black homosexual male mineworkers, and this meant that the chosen research plan had to be able to achieve this goal. I had to choose a research methodology that would allow me to interact with participants and hear their stories from their own perspective. A feminist epistemology was adopted for this study, since it is concerned with producing knowledge that reflects the lived experience of research participants (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007). This formed the basis of the selected research design.

In outlining the research design, I start with a discussion of the epistemological position that was taken and how it informed the methodological choices made in the study. This is followed by an explanation of the research approach that was adopted in conducting the research. The relevance of the chosen research approach is discussed. A discussion of the chosen data collection and data analysis methods is provided. The sampling method and the procedure for selecting participants are explained. The trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations of the study are then discussed. The chapter ends with my reflections on the study and the relationships with the participants.

4.2 A feminist epistemology: Un-silencing homosexual mineworkers

This study was informed by a feminist epistemological approach. Any epistemology includes assumptions about the knower, the known and the process of knowing. It guides researchers in how to approach an understanding of particular issues (Sprague and Kobrynowicz 1999). Subordinated groups, such as women and homosexuals, are usually excluded in the production of knowledge and the portrayal of their social realities. Hence the interest of some feminist researchers in giving a voice to subordinated groups. A feminist epistemology aims to create
knowledge by first understanding the lived experience of women and other excluded and marginalised groups, and then analysing the social relations that determine it (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007).

The goal of a feminist methodology is to promote the emancipation and the empowerment of women and other marginalised segments of society. Feminist research findings are applied in service of achieving social change and justice for vulnerable and subordinated groups (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007). Since knowledge is grounded in experience, there is a need to acknowledge and consider the understandings that people generate in their daily lives. As researchers, ‘we also need to recognise the authority that comes from the experience of having studied something, having reflected on it, and paid attention to the reflections of others. That is, those who are scholars have to take responsibility for the authority of our experience’ (Sprague and Kobrynowicz 1999: 39).

Homosexual men in South African society occupy marginalised positions and remain silenced (Olney and Musabayana 2016; Thomas 2013). As a minority group, they are excluded, and their experiences are usually overlooked in social spaces. The men in this study indicated that they are silenced by the dominant heteronormative discourse in their communities and workplaces. They explained that homosexuality is something that is not spoken about in mining workplaces, and it is usually negatively perceived by heterosexual colleagues. Their stories remain largely hidden and unknown, creating a false perception that there are no homosexual men in the South African mining industry. Following a feminist epistemology, the current study attempts to give a voice to these homosexual men who work in the mining industry but are invisible due to fear and the negativity surrounding their sexuality. It provides black homosexual male mineworkers with an opportunity to tell their stories from their position. The goals of a feminist epistemological approach are closely tied to the methodological choices made in this study, which will be elaborated on in the following sections.

4.3 A qualitative approach to the experiences of homosexual mineworkers

The intersectional analytical framework employed in this study called for a research method that takes into account participants’ narratives of their experiences based on their unique social context and identity markers. The qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study, because it is primarily concerned with determining participants’ feelings and thoughts
regarding a particular issue or event in their lives (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole 2013). The aims of this study were achieved through participants explaining their feelings and thoughts about discrimination based on their (homo)sexual identity as they have experienced it in various spaces. In accordance with the qualitative approach, this brings to the fore black homosexual male mineworkers’ understandings and points of view about discrimination in their communities, their homes and their workplaces.

Intersectionality holds that people’s experiences of discrimination differ as a result of their multiple and different identity markers. One’s social context or natural setting also plays an important role, since people in different social contexts are unlikely to experience discrimination in the same way (Crenshaw 1991). Since the study adopted an intersectional framework, it required a research approach that considered the participants’ social context. In qualitative research, information is gathered by engaging in face-to-face interactions with participants and witnessing their behaviour and actions within their social context (Creswell 2009). This stresses the importance of social context for qualitative researchers in understanding the phenomenon under investigation. They seek to comprehend and describe events within the social context in which they occur (Babbie and Mouton 2001). As Babbie and Mouton (2001: 272) explain, ‘[i]t is only, so the qualitative researcher argues, if one understands events against the background of the whole context, and how such a context confers meaning to the events concerned, that one can truly claim to “understand” the events’. It was important to consider social context in this study, because the participants’ lives at home, within their communities and at work, together with their experiences, are shaped by the context in which they find themselves. The heteronormative culture evident in the communities they live in and their places of work has had significant negative implications for the construction and management of their identities, and it has affected how they identify themselves and live their lives at work, and how they describe their experiences in these spaces.

4.4 Sampling method and the selection of participants

Purposive sampling method was used to selects participants with particular biographical characteristics as determined by the study’s focus. With purposive sampling, the researcher purposefully selects participants based on specific criteria that is viewed as essential to acquire the desired data or knowledge (Babbie and Mouton 2011; Bless et al. 2013). Participants in this study had to be black, homosexual and employed in the mining industry and this excluded participants who did not meet these biographical characteristics. The stigma attached to
homosexuality requires that gay men hide their (homo)sexual identities, which makes it difficult to identify participants easily. Due to the sensitivity of the subject under study and the fear of being exposed, and possibly discriminated against, access to participants was limited. Discussing sexual identity is a sensitive issue for homosexual mineworkers, because South African society and mining workplaces are heteronormative, and homosexual mineworkers have resorted to silencing as a coping strategy, in order to avoid discrimination and exclusion. Given the sensitive nature of the study, it was difficult to recruit participants, and I had to rely on personal contacts to achieve this. Although the desired number of participants was not achieved, through personal networks I was able to access five participants who were willing to participate. The purposive sampling method was useful in finding participants, since homosexual men as a minority group experiencing similar challenges know each other and usually share the same support networks.

This study was initially concerned with exploring the experiences of black foreign migrant homosexual mineworkers. However, accessing black foreign migrant homosexual mineworkers proved to be a difficult task, since access was limited, and most of them did not feel comfortable discussing their personal lives and completely refused to participate. A decision was then made to change the sample of the study and the selection criteria. The focus of the study moved to the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers.

Keeping in mind the fact that studies by Harries (1994) and Moodie et al. (1988) on the experiences of black mineworkers in South Africa have focused on the history of black African men in mines during apartheid, it was imperative to include race in the selection criteria, in order to compare the experiences of black homosexual male mineworkers in post-apartheid South Africa with those of black men who engaged in same-sex relationships on the mines historically. Black men were historically confined to overcrowded same-sex mining compounds, with very limited freedoms, due to the racial tensions that existed between black people and white people (Harries 1994; Moodie et al. 1988). It was therefore crucial to consider the experiences of black men who have access to equal human rights in post-apartheid South Africa, and to explore what effects the current South African legislation that enforces equality has on the lives of black homosexual male mineworkers.

The participants that were selected identified exclusively as homosexual, and none of them identified as bisexual or any other sexuality. In terms of age, the study was not exclusive, and selection was not strict. However, most of the selected participants were relatively young
adults. The youngest participant was aged 26, and the oldest was aged 36. Participants were selected from different geographical areas and mines, since the study was interested in exploring the experiences of mineworkers from different spaces. The participants were originally from rural areas outside Gauteng, but they currently reside in small mining towns. Three of the five participants reside in North West, one in Brits and the other two in Rustenburg. Two participants reside in Mpumalanga, in the mining towns of Komatipoort and Delmas.

Ultimately, the sample for the study consisted of five black homosexual male mineworkers from five different mines in two provinces. They were given pseudonyms, which are used to refer to them in this study. The first participant was Philly, who is 32 years old and works on a platinum mine in Rustenburg. The second participant was Katlego, aged 28, who was born in North West but grew up in Gauteng. Katlego is employed on a platinum mine in Brits. The third participant was 26-year-old Sibusiso, who stays in Komatipoort and is employed on a coal mine. The fourth participant was Mthabisi, aged 30, who works on a platinum mine in Rustenburg. Lastly, I interviewed 36-year-old Temba, who stays in Delmas and works in an open-cast coal mine. The participants’ occupations ranged from sanitation helper to haul truck operator to safety officer to safety manager.

4.5 Collecting homosexual narratives

In order to gather participants’ narratives, one needs a data collection method that will be effective in doing so. As such, data was collected through a series of in-depth interviews, to fully capture the lived experience of the participants. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to ask participants questions with the aim of acquiring more knowledge concerning their opinions, views and beliefs about the phenomenon under study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout 2014). Data was obtained through direct face-to-face exchange of information with participants that were believed to possess or were expected to possess the investigated knowledge (Babbie and Mouton 2001; Greeff 2011). Participants in this study took me through a journey of their lives, where I learnt about the happiest moments in their lives and their most challenging moments, including how they manoeuvred their way through the struggles they experienced and continue to face in spaces characterised by discrimination.

In-depth interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to understand the deeper meanings that participants hold regarding specific phenomena, by asking participants to
provide detailed explanations and probing for clarity (Babbie and Mouton 2001; Greeff 2011). This method proved to be advantageous for this study, since I was able to grasp the deeper meanings that black homosexual male mineworkers ascribe to their experiences, and this contributed to the quality of the study. The interviews also explored what participants’ sexual identity means to them. An added advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide the researcher with an opportunity to observe the non-verbal reactions of the participants as they answer questions, and this serves as an extra source of data that can be used in data analysis and interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014).

In developing an interview guide (see Appendix A), literature on discrimination against sexual minorities in geographical and social spaces was considered. International and local literature was consulted, and based on the literature review, particular themes were identified, which were included in the guide. Given that the study adopted intersectionality as an analytical tool, the first section of the questionnaire included biographical questions, such as questions about sex, occupation, age and race, as these formed parts of the participants’ identities. It was important to ask these questions, since an intersectional framework requires that participants’ multiple identities be considered in establishing how these multiple identities inform black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences.

This study follows the narrative approach to data collection. Questions pertaining to participants’ background and history were also included, where participants were asked about their childhood, their lifestyle growing up in their community, and their own perceptions of how their histories influenced the kind of men they are today. Some of the questions in this section were aimed at establishing how participants understand and interpret their homosexual identity and how comfortable they are with their sexual identity.

The interviews further aimed to unpack participants’ understanding of workplace discrimination and behaviours that participants believed constitute this discrimination. This was crucial, because participants are from different backgrounds, and their interpretations and understandings of other people’s behaviour differed based on their own contexts, positions and experiences. An in-depth understanding of the participants’ challenges on the mines that they work in was important for this study, and it was imperative to use open-ended questions, in order to explore the difficulties that the participants face and the impact that these difficulties have on the participants’ lives at work and in the spaces outside their workplaces. Challenges were identified from the responses. The interviews provided information on how homosexual
mineworkers construct their masculinities on the mines and how they manage their sexual identity in their workplaces, which are highly masculine and heteronormative. The questions explored their relationships with heterosexual men, their behaviours and their perceptions about their masculinity.

All the interviews were conducted in the months of January, February and March 2019. The participants were asked if they were comfortable with the interviews being conducted in English, and all of them agreed. However, they were informed that they can use their home languages. Some participants used their home languages when they were unable to express themselves in English. African languages that were used were Setswana, Sepedi and isiZulu. This did not create any language barriers or challenges in translating the interviews, because I speak multiple languages, and I am fluent in all the languages that were used.

All the interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. My interview with Philly was conducted at a restaurant in a mall located in a small town where he was visiting his sister. The mall was convenient for both of us, since Philly did not feel comfortable being interviewed at his sister’s house. The remaining interviews were conducted at the participants’ residences, which were outside rooms and a rented house based in locations in the mining towns. The participants stay in Mpumalanga and North West, and I travelled to these provinces to meet with the participants.

The shortest interview lasted for 37 minutes, and the longest was 92 minutes. A recording application from my personal smartphone was used to record the interviews. Most of the participants expressed concern with being recorded, due to fear of their sexual identity being exposed and colleagues finding out personal information about them. After assuring them that the recordings would not be made available to other sources and that they would only be used for transcribing purposes, they agreed and signed the recording consent form (see Appendix B). In order to ensure confidentiality, all the recordings and the research files are stored on a protected computer on google drive with password protection.

4.6 Analysing the narratives

After successfully conducting and completing the interviews, all the interviews were transcribed by me. The transcribing process required careful attention to detail. As such, I had
to listen to the recordings multiple times and read the transcripts in order to make sure that I had captured the information as accurately as possible.

I adopted the thematic analysis method in processing the data. The thematic analysis method requires that the researcher identify and categorise themes or patterns according to similarities and differences emanating from participants’ narratives (Braun and Clarke 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six phases of analysis that the researcher can follow when using thematic analysis; these include familiarising yourself with the collected data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. After completing the transcription process, I gave myself ample time to read and re-read the transcribed interviews, to familiarise myself with the information and to start identifying responses that would answer the research sub-questions, and consequently the main research question. I identified similar responses and listed them under the relevant sub-questions. I also identified responses that were not consistent with the rest of the responses. Following this, I named and wrote down the themes that emerged from the participants’ narratives. I then described and analysed the themes in the findings chapters. One of the themes that emerged from the analyses was the participants’ experiences of growing up with a homosexual identity in rural areas. Other important themes were the construction and management of a (homo)sexual identity at home, with friends and at work, and the construction of multiple lives resulting from the adoption of different sexual identities in various spaces. In addition, the intersectional approach guided the analytical process, and I was acutely aware of the participants’ multiple identity markers, as well as instances where power came into play.

4.7 Strategies employed in ensuring trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the researcher needs to be able to convince the reader and the participants that the study’s findings are credible and that they make a worthy contribution to the existing body of knowledge (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014). Strategies that I used to ensure trustworthiness included taking notes during the interviews, peer debriefing, providing thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation, examining previous research findings on workplace discrimination and creating an audit trail.

In ensuring that the study was trustworthy, I first examined previous research that was done on discrimination against sexual minorities in various spaces. There is limited recent research that has been conducted on workplace discrimination on the South African mining industry. I
therefore considered research that was done on discrimination in other workplaces, in order to compare it with the mining industry. Both international and local research indicated that discrimination based on sexual identity is evident in different spaces, and my study took it further by exploring it in the mining industry. I read literature on gender and sexuality in mines and mining in South Africa, taking into consideration the gender and sexuality politics at the time.

During the interviews I took notes, and I used the same notebook in all the interviews. Some information that was not captured in the audio and non-verbal behaviours were written down for every interview. These notes proved to be an important resource in ensuring the credibility of the findings, since they were used together with the transcriptions of the interviews during the data analysis process.

4.8 Addressing ethical concerns

The research studied human subjects, and it was therefore important to consider research ethics that ensured the protection of participants’ rights at all times. Bless et al. (2013) argue that research ethics are important in social research, to ensure that researchers do not exercise their power in a way that undermines the human rights of the participants. Studying people’s sexuality requires that they disclose personal information about private aspects of their lives, and it was thus imperative to ensure that their privacy was respected and protected at all times throughout the study. Ryen (2016) indicates that participants have the right to be informed about the purpose of the study and why they are being researched, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Before participating in the study, the mineworkers were informed about the study objectives, and clarity on any information that they did not understand was provided. They were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix C) summarising the objectives of the study and the role they would have to play if they agreed to participate. All the participants were requested to sign informed consent forms (see Appendix D) indicating that they were well informed about the study and that they consented to participating voluntarily and being recorded. The option to withdraw from the study at any time was also provided. Ethical clearance was acquired from the University of Johannesburg’s faculty of humanities research ethics committee (see Appendix E).

Informed consent indicates that the participants trust the researcher with their information. The researcher therefore has an ethical duty to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality.
Confidentiality involves the protection of each participant’s identity (Ryen 2016: 32). Maintaining high levels of confidentiality was important for this study, since failing to do so might have put the homosexual mineworkers at risk of being harmed. The nature and the extent of hate crimes towards homosexuals in South Africa, as indicated in the literature review chapter, demanded that clear ethical guidelines be followed. Not all of the participants were completely open about their sexuality at work, at home and in other spheres of their lives, and it was therefore important to ensure that their identities were protected and not revealed. To address this concern, the mines in question were not identified, and all the interviews were conducted outside the mineworkers’ workplaces. The places where the interviews were conducted included the mineworkers’ places of residence and restaurants. No contact was made with the employer, and I did not visit the participants’ workplaces.

Access to the names, personal details, recordings and the notes that were used in collecting the data was limited to me only. All these materials are being kept safe and will be destroyed after the study has been completed and the dissertation has been graded and finalised. Arrangements were made for psychological services in cases where participants experienced psychological harm from the interviews. I made contact with OUT Well-being, an LGBTIQ+ health organisation, and I arranged with one of the psychologists to assist the participants with psychological counselling services. The psychologist agreed to accept referrals from me. However, no participant experienced psychological harm during the research process, and no referrals were made.

4.9 Reflections of the researcher

Since the study follows a feminist epistemology, it was important that I constantly reflect on myself and my relationship with the participants throughout the research process. Feminist researchers are primarily concerned with producing reflexive knowledge, the insider/outsider relationship, highlighting power dynamics, and keeping power differentials between researchers and the researched to a minimum (DeShong 2013). The researcher’s position in the research process has an influence on their interpretations of participants’ narratives, and they therefore have to constantly locate themselves in the process, in order to produce unbiased and valid research (Van Stapele 2014). They use reflexivity to constantly reflect on themselves and their relationship with the population that they study, in order to avoid production of research that is not valid and representative of the participants. Ali (2015) states that reflexivity can be
understood as the researcher’s way of understanding the “self” and the “other”, as a means of knowledge production.

I went into the research process with my own preconceived ideas and assumptions about homosexual men’s experiences of discrimination, which I had to reflect on throughout the research. I acknowledged that my understanding of discrimination in spaces such as the workplace is informed by my study and research of the phenomenon. I also acknowledged that my understanding and participants’ understanding of discrimination based on sexual identity may differ. I came across one participant, Philly, who believed that he was not discriminated against at work. However, based on my own understanding of discrimination in the workplace, I believed he was. Philly experienced a lot of name-calling and questioning about his sexuality. Colleagues would call him a stabane\(^8\) at work and even during meetings in front of people. They also often treated him like a woman. He explained that heterosexual men at work did not trust him with heavy objects, they would always want to help him carry them. For him these were jokes. The name-calling somehow came to be seen as normal by Philly. As a researcher who had read up on the issue of workplace discrimination based on sexual identity, I felt that Philly was ignorant of the discrimination, but I had to understand where he was coming from and not impose my own beliefs and make conclusions based on my own beliefs and understanding.

Participants were aware of my sexuality, and most of them indicated that they would not have participated in the study if I did not identify as homosexual. The fact that I am a homosexual black man and I share the same race, sexuality and languages as the participants led to good rapport between me and them. The participants felt comfortable expressing themselves, because they believed that as a homosexual man, I understood their position. They were able to share their stories with greater ease. They told me about personal aspects of their lives, even things that they wanted to remain between me and them, and I assured them that they could trust me with the information. That is how I was able to establish relationships of mutual trust with the participants, as it made them realise that their contribution to the study was beneficial. While this was an advantage, it also proved to be a challenge, because I had to constantly position myself simultaneously as an insider and an outsider. Although I shared the same sexual

\(^8\) *Stabane* is a derogatory Zulu word meaning ‘a homosexual person’. It is usually used in a negative way to attack or degrade homosexual men and women in most South African townships.
and racial identities and similar backgrounds as the participants, which qualified me as an insider, there were clear differences in terms of level of education, employment histories and openness about sexuality. I have never worked in a mine, and the participants’ context was not familiar to me. That was sufficient to position me as an outsider. Also, while the interviews were more like conversations between friends, I had to constantly remind myself of my position as a researcher and not become too intimate. I made sure that the research was professional, and I was careful about what I said to the participants, so that I did not influence their responses. I found it useful to be self-reflective and critical of myself and the role that I was playing in the research process. I ensured that the relationships were not too personal and that large parts of the conversations were centred on the phenomenon being studied.

I was surprised at the measures that some of the participants took to ensure that their sexuality remained a secret. As a homosexual man who is open about his sexuality, I found myself becoming emotional and distraught when participants explained how they manage their sexuality. The participants had to portray a heterosexual image in particular spaces, and some of them even went to the extent of having sex with girls, so as to maintain a heterosexual identity. Sibusiso explained to me that he would get into relationships with girls at work unwillingly and have sex with them to impress his heterosexual friends and colleagues, and sometimes to silence the girls, because he feared that they would be curious if he did not date them. I had strong feelings of disapproval about this, but I had to appreciate that the participants are in a context I have never found myself in. I acknowledged that their circumstances are not the same as mine, and that I have had the privilege of working in a corporate space, where I could be who I am without fear, and I could challenge anyone who discriminated against me. I am currently in an academic space, which allows me to be vocal about my sexual identity and stand against discrimination. I have never worked in a space that is highly masculine, heterosexual and patriarchal in nature, such as a mine, and I do not know how it feels to work in an environment like that. I had to consider the participants’ position when analysing their stories. Based on my reflection, and in the best interests of the study, I managed to take a neutral stance on the issue and eliminate my bias.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research process that was followed in the collection and analysis of data. A feminist epistemological approach was followed and formed the basis of the research design. A qualitative approach was effective in capturing the stories of the participants and
effectively answering the research question. Using the in-depth interview method allowed for
collection of rich data that provided an almost holistic picture of the participants’ lives, from
growing up as a homosexual black child to working in a mine. In-depth interviews were a good
source of data in the data collection process, since participants were asked questions about their
childhood, and their sexuality and their experiences of being homosexual mineworkers and
working in a South African mine were explored. This allowed me to acquire a deeper
understanding of how their past experiences informed the kind of choices they made growing
up, and the impact that their (homo)sexual identity had on their lives. Strategies that were
employed to ensure that the study was trustworthy were outlined. Ethical concerns were also
considered in this chapter, to address the issues of protecting participants and maintaining their
confidentiality. This chapter concluded with a discussion of my positionality as a researcher,
indicating the impact I had on the study and the participants, and what impact the study and the
participants had on me. Having described the research process, in the following chapter I will
present the findings of the study, by first introducing the participants and describing their lives
growing up with a homosexual identity.
Chapter 5. Growing up in heteronormative spaces: Narratives of black homosexual male mineworkers

5.1 Introduction

The narratives of black homosexual male mineworkers are at the centre of this dissertation, and it was imperative to use their past as a point of departure in analysing their narratives. I consider the spaces that the participants grew up in and the effects they had on the construction of their (homo)sexual identities. Four of the participants grew up in rural areas, and one of them grew up in a township. During the interviews they shared their experiences of growing up in heteronormative communities, which provided insight into how homosexual identities are shaped within these contexts.

This chapter introduces each of the five participants, and it then provides an overview of their lives growing up, paying attention to their past experiences and the challenges they have faced as a result of their sexual identities. Each participant’s story is presented individually, detailing their perceptions and views regarding their communities and how they shaped their adult lives and their decisions about their sexuality, in and outside their communities. Ultimately, this chapter shows how these individuals’ multiple identity markers intersect in shaping their experiences as homosexual men. Although there are some similarities between the participants’ experiences, there are also some differences, which illustrates the intricate nuances in the lived experience of black homosexual male mineworkers.

5.2 Sibusiso: ‘I like the lifestyle. I relate more to it, but […]’

Sibusiso is 26 years old, and he comes from a rural area of Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. He started working as an intern on a coal mine located in Delmas, Mpumalanga, and he was then promoted to a permanent position. He later moved to an open-pit coal mine in Komatipoort, Mpumalanga, where he is currently working. Sibusiso is in what he calls a “part-time” relationship, and he stays at a private residence outside the mine.

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9 A township in the South African context refers to a residential area located on the outskirts of a city, which was historically designated for black occupants by apartheid legislation. Townships are still predominantly occupied by black people.
He was raised by his maternal grandparents, since his mother was still in school when he was born. He stayed with his grandparents for most of his life, and he shares a special bond with them. His sexual identity is not known at home. When I asked him how open he has been about his sexuality with his family, he stated, ‘No, I am not out. No one in my family knows.’ He explained that he could not disclose his sexual identity to his grandparents, because they were traditional, and his grandfather was very strict. It is not only his family, but the general perception of society, that has hindered him from disclosing his sexuality. Growing up in a rural and traditional community significantly affected Sibusiso’s perceptions of his sexual identity and his lifestyle:

It was very hard, especially growing up in rural KZN, you know, because there’s always these old men, who are just rules, rules, rules, enforcement, enforcement, teaching us to hang with the guys, ‘Don’t do that’, ‘Don’t do that’, ‘Do this’. So it was very hard, because you grow up in an environment whereby from a young age you are particularly told that ‘You know what? You must just be this. Be this’, force, ‘Do that’, ‘Do that’, and yeah. It restricts you from living your life to the fullest. I mean, you want to do the stuff you want to do, when you want to do them, but there’s always those constraints in that environment, and it becomes very hard.

(Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

These constraints that Sibusiso speaks of are reinforced by the conservative nature of his community, hence his feelings of helplessness when it comes to claiming his own individuality and challenging the negative perceptions of homosexuality in his community. He realised from this that he could not live his life freely, since he believed that the community would never understand or accept him as a homosexual man. His fear of persecution from community members influenced his decision to hide his homosexual identity. This has not been a pleasant reality for him, as he explained the emotional and psychological struggles that come with having to comply with the demands of the community and compromise his true identity:

But it’s still very hard, because you sort of wish to bring your friend or boyfriend over, all my part-time boyfriends, and just make it official, but also you have to think about their side, how they feel about this whole thing. You have to always think about this thing of… sort of love half-heartedly. So, it’s not a real thing where I come from. Like how do you explain it to your parents, grandparents, siblings? Yeah. Like I would say in my current situation I like the lifestyle. I relate more to
it, but when I want to be it, I can’t, because I have to deal with the consequences of, you know, coming out and actually being shunned by certain people, if they are going to do that. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

While he aspires to live an open homosexual life, Sibusiso must constantly consider his family’s feelings and the negative outcomes that may result from him choosing to disclose his sexuality. He continues to weigh the consequences of disclosing his sexual identity to his family members, and he still believes he has a lot to lose. He explained that it would be easier for him to ignore what the community thinks of him if his family accepted his sexuality. However, Sibusiso was uncertain about and afraid of the reactions he would receive from his family if he were to disclose his homosexual identity. His fear of rejection stems from his belief that his family would not accept his (homo)sexual identity, due to their strong religious connections and their devotion to cultural traditions. He said, ‘It is hard when you don’t know whether your family will accept you or not. Like what is the point of coming out if your family is not going to accept you?’ He explained, ‘You need your family’s support when you come out. So, what is the point of coming out if you not going to get their support?’ This shows the significance of family support to him, since he feels that disclosing his sexuality would be in vein if it is going to cost him his relationships with his family.

Sibusiso started exploring his sexuality in his teenage years, and that is when he started to question his sexual identity. He described situations where he had sexual encounters with his male friends, and he explained that these encounters were the reason he started to question his sexuality:

So, as I was growing up, it led to the point where one guy comes to your house, and obviously there wouldn’t be anyone at the house. So, he just comes there, and we all knew he was a straight guy, but now I was a bit older and wiser. So, we are obviously friends, but we would know that we want to have sex, and we would try out the sex thing, but then obviously the guy came to you to have sex. Then I would have that thing where I would ask myself if I should look at myself as a gay person or not, and if I want to be top or I want to be bottom. Then we would start making love, and at that time we were teens. I tried to figure it out, and then I just knew that perhaps there’s another side of me, of which I probably didn’t want to accept. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)
Growing up in a heteronormative background led Sibusiso to an understanding of his sexuality as different. In engaging sexually with members of the same sex, he could realise that perhaps his sexual identity is different from the norm, and this emanated from his understanding of sexual intercourse as something that should take place between a man and a woman. Although he expressed uncertainty with accepting this ‘difference’ about himself, he did not feel bad about engaging in sexual intercourse with other boys. The sexual interactions allowed him the opportunity to discover what he likes to do sexually.

After completing his primary education in the rural areas, Sibusiso completed his secondary education at a boys-only boarding school. He described himself as a reserved teenager, although he was very active in sports and other extracurricular activities at school. In the excerpt below, he reflects on his experiences in a boys-only boarding school:

Yeah, a boys school. It was very hard, because, as I said… It was even hard in high school, because obviously I was in a boys school, and there was no way I could explore this girl thing anymore. So, at a boys school you just see guys and dicks. You see bums, you know. You see everything, basically, and it’s not like you going to hide it or whatever. It is in your face, and people would observe you and say perhaps you are not gay. So, the ones who were gay and went to the school experienced more difficulties. They basically did not last a week, because of the bullying from other boys. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

It is evident that Sibusiso, again, engaged in a critical observation of the space that he found himself in. He observed that the environment was not safe for learners who were openly homosexual, and this made him realise that he had to find ways of avoiding exposure of his sexual identity and possible bullying from fellow learners. It is worth noting how Sibusiso removes himself from the homosexual category by saying ‘the ones who were gay’, suggesting that his behaviour was not that of a homosexual person. He described homosexuals at his high school as boys who showed feminine qualities and had no interest in male sports or activities. He explained that he did not experience bullying, because he played sports with other boys and ‘did not attract attention to [himself]’. In the school context, it was safer to conform to the heteronormative constructions of the male gender than to go against them.

From the above, it is evident that with family, community and school experiences, Sibusiso always had to find or develop mechanisms to cope with the restrictions and the harsh realities
that homosexuals had to endure in the heteronormative spaces they found themselves in. This continued even when he went to study at university, which he described as a friendlier environment than the other contexts he had been in:

Even when I engaged in sexual encounters with boys at varsity, it was behind closed doors, and I mean you don’t want to associate yourself with being open and… Yeah… So yeah, in varsity that was it. You see everything, and everyone is so open, and people coming out. It’s acceptable, and you just a free spirit. You would take it as it comes, but you would be careful, because you have your family to think of, your aunties, your grandmothers, your uncles. And obviously when you go home, they go like ‘Oh, when are you getting married? Where is umakoti [your bride]?’ (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

While the university context was observed to be more open and less harsh for homosexuals, Sibusiso had to take into consideration his broader context, including the members of his extended family. It was possible that living an openly homosexual life at university might possibly lead to his family learning about his sexuality, and he did not want to take that risk. What is also evident from the quote is his family’s expectation that he will be in a heterosexual marriage, and his being afraid of disappointing them.

Throughout his life, Sibusiso was faced with the harsh reality of homosexual men becoming outcasts in their communities. Growing up in mostly heteronormative spaces shaped his life extensively, since all his decisions concerning his lifestyle were based on what is acceptable and what is not acceptable on a social level. The heteronormative restrictions and lack of tolerance observed in society led to him identifying differently in different spaces, all the while constructing multiple lives. This has been his reality for many years, and he continues to conform to the heteronormative requirements of society, while living his true life when no one is looking. He acknowledges that society’s negative perceptions of homosexuals are currently changing. However, he argues that there will always be what he calls ‘stoned traditionalists’, who will always perceive the homosexual community negatively and advocate for the exclusion of homosexuality in the mainstream understanding of sexuality.
5.3 Philly: ‘I am enjoying being a gay boy’

Philly is a 32-year-old homosexual man who grew up in a small rural village in Limpopo and works in an underground Platinum mine in Rustenburg. His highest qualification is Grade 12 and he has been working in the mine since 2017. He is not in a committed relationship and hopes to be in one soon. Philly knew from a young age that he was attracted to other boys, however, he was never open about it.

I have always known that I was gay. …When I was with others, I tried my best to be a normal boy so that they don’t get to understand what is in me. But on the other side I always knew what I am. (Philly, 4 January 2019)

Philly’s description of a “normal” boy is informed by heteronormative views held within his community. He explained that the members in his community would not be accepting of him if he came out, as they were intolerant of homosexuality. He said “no no no no. If you say you are a gay, they will perceive you in a negative way” and this was the reason why he kept his sexual identity a secret. He feared that they would ostracise him and treat him in a bad way. The fear of being ostracised can be explained through Goffman’s (1963) theory which describes how stigma instils fear in the person carrying the stigmatised identity, leading to them hiding that identity. From his own observation of the stigma towards homosexuality in his community, he realised that it was not a safe space to live an open homosexual life. He had questions about his sexuality; however, he did not perceive it negatively. Although his homosexual identity remains his secret, Philly explained that he has always been content with his sexuality.

I am enjoying being a gay boy. Even though it is my secret. I am content with being who I am. I sometimes ask myself why I had to be gay but as long as I enjoy this life and I respect myself I am happy (Philly, 4 January 2019).

Philly is religious and grew up in church where he interacted with members of the community. He explained that church teachings did not favour homosexuality and that was part of the reason he did not disclose his sexual identity to his family members. He stated “So, being a Christian, you know as kids we are taught at church about being a man, marriage, kids and particular scriptures that are used to rebuke homosexuality”. Due to his family’s religious beliefs, Philly believed that it would be a challenge for his family to accept him. Although
homosexuality was never explicitly mentioned when he went to church, conversations that occurred between church members about God’s condemnation of homosexuality led to him believing that his Christian family members would never accept his sexual identity. As a result, he was always very careful on how he behaved when he was at home.

They never knew, even at home no one knows what I am doing when I am outside. When I am at home, I am brother Philly (laughs), the normal boy they know. But when I am outside, I am that guy, I do my own thing. (Philly, 4 January 2019)

Again, he mentions being a “normal” boy, emphasising the internalisation of the heteronormative stereotype in society that homosexuality is not normal. As a coping strategy, Philly started living two lives from a young age, where at home he tried his best to portray heterosexual behaviour and lived his homosexual life outside the home, in hidden spaces. The adoption of a heterosexual identity to escape discrimination is similarly evident in Sibusiso’s experiences with heteronormative environments as well, highlighting the significance of context in shaping the lives and lifestyle decisions of homosexual men.

Philly did not like interacting with a lot of people, but he was very close to his mother. He explained that he spent a lot of time with her and they shared a strong bond. However, he never told her about his sexual identity. The close bond he shared with his mother was not sufficient for him to open up and tell his mother because he feared that she would tell others and he did not want everyone to know. The internalised fear of experiencing discrimination from people in the family and in the community, was great to the extent where he could not confide in the one person, he trusted the most.

He was teased at school. He had one friend who also identified as homosexual and the friendship helped in minimising the negative repercussions of the teasing since they shared a lot of information about their sexuality with each other and supported each other.

I had a friend who was also my classmate. We used to spend a lot of time together, but we were talking about this thing. Asking each other, “why do you look like you are gay” and we would answer “Yeah, I am”. He once told me that he’s got a boyfriend (laugh). Yeah, we were having fun, but hiding. (Philly, 4 January 2019)
Having a close homosexual friend who he could confide in, helped Philly a lot in dealing with the challenges of being homosexual in a rural and heteronormative community. He had someone to share his experiences and challenges with and did not feel too isolated.

Despite the challenges of growing up in a community that is not accepting of homosexuals, Philly still perceives his sexual identity positively and believes that the community’s attitudes are now changing, and people are becoming more accepting of homosexual people. Being a homosexual man to him means being content and happy with who you are, enjoying your life and respecting yourself. He still prefers not to disclose his sexuality and still finds it hard to live freely because he fears that the outcome might be the opposite of what he anticipates. His childhood has impacted on the kind of person he is now and the decisions he makes regarding the performance of his sexual identity in various spaces.

5.4 Katlego: ‘I struggled with accepting myself’

Katlego is 28 years of age. He was born in a rural village in North West and later moved to a suburb in Pretoria, Gauteng, with his parents, where he completed his secondary education. He holds a university degree and is employed on a platinum mine in Brits, North West. He started working there in 2011. Katlego is in a committed relationship, and he wishes that one day he will be able to introduce his ‘bae’\(^\text{10}\), as he calls him, to his family.

Unlike Philly and Sibusiso, Katlego experienced difficulties with understanding his sexual identity and accepting it. As he explains, ‘I struggled with accepting myself. It was a very long journey.’ The journey was characterised by mixed emotions and a lot of confusion. He went on to describe the efforts he made to suppress his homosexual identity. He explained that he dated girls to overcome his feelings for boys, but he was always very aware of the fact that it was not who he was. The struggle was mainly influenced by the fact that Katlego was very religious, and similar to Philly, his understanding emanating from the religious teachings was that homosexuality is wrong. He grew up in a Christian home, and religion was a big part of his family:

\begin{quote}
I struggled to be myself because of my Christianity, because I came from a Christian family. So, it was a thing of I was very active at church, and now I am
\end{quote}

\(^{10}\) ‘Bae’ is a colloquial term used to refer to a person’s romantic partner.
very distant from the things of the church. It is sort of a conflict of ‘What if they find out and chase me out of the church?’ So I keep my identity to myself and just be a member in good standing and be far from everything than being that way of the church. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

With the church being a heteronormative space, Katlego made a conscious decision to hide his sexuality from church members. He considered the heteronormative nature of the context and concluded that it was not a space that would allow him to be his genuine self. Withdrawing from active participation in church activities was a way of avoiding discrimination and exclusion by the church. This also shows some agency, since he did not want to be involved to the point where the church would have complete control over how he can express his (homo)sexual identity. Withdrawing allowed him to maintain some form of control over the expression of his (homo)sexual identity. Having grown up in a religious space, Katlego finds it hard to tell his family about his sexuality:

Like our parents, especially in our mother’s side, it is not easy to come out, you know. […] No, I am not out to my friends or my family. There is one reason that I am not out to my family. Because I want to be happy, be independent. Like I have my own place. Because if I look at my parents and my mom’s family, especially my dad’s family, they are not homophobic or that, but it’s a thing of having a generation of all those gay zones and make remarks and try to think what will happen if they find out or if I come out to them. I think I am at that point where I really do not care but I want to be happy. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

He is concerned about his own security and about suffering rejection from his family members should he disclose his sexual identity. He wants to ensure that he is settled and fully independent before he discloses his sexual identity to his family. Until he achieves that, he plans to continue hiding his homosexual identity. Unlike Sibusiso, Katlego is willing to disclose his sexuality and face rejection from family members, if he is independent enough and financially secure. This is not to suggest that he does not value his family as much as Sibusiso does, but that he is willing to prioritise his happiness rather than conform to the expectations of his family.
Having grown up in two different communities, rural and urban, Katlego described the two communities as different in their perceptions and their tolerance of homosexuality. He explains these differences as follows:

North West people are homophobic, and the government is not doing much to educate people. It is not every time that you can come out and say ‘I am gay’. They still think it is a demonic thing or maybe he has demons and can be cleansed, and they do not understand that it was actually something that you were born with. It is not something that you chose. In Gauteng, on the other side, let us say Pretoria, it is different, because here it is not like North West, where people know each other, like I can borrow sugar. Everybody closes their doors here. Like, you mind your own business. No one knows what is happening next door. Like, I do not know how to define my community at this stage. But I can say that Pretoria is more open to this idea than North West, of gays being around, because a lot of guys out there are being themselves, and yes, that is it. I just feel that North West is just homophobic, but I think it is because there are a lot of churches there. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

It is clear that growing up in a rural community space was not pleasant for him. This is demonstrated by his strong affirmation of North West as a homophobic space. Similar to Sibusiso and Philly, religion and close community ties are highlighted as the driving force behind the stigma associated with homosexuality and the hatred of homosexuals in the rural community Katlego grew up in. In contrast, he views the suburban spaces of Pretoria in a positive way, by stating that people are more accepting, since there are people who live their lives openly as homosexuals and hardly experience discrimination from community members. This is attributed to the anonymity afforded by urban spaces, since community ties in urban areas are not as strong as they are in rural communities, allowing sexual minorities to live their homosexual lives without community members prying into their personal business (Smuts 2011). The negativity surrounding homosexuality in Katlego’s surroundings influenced his adult life, since he continues to live a hidden homosexual life. He still hides his sexual identity and pretends to be heterosexual in specific spaces. He has observed the mining workplace to be heteronormative, and he is also not open about his sexual identity at work. This will be elaborated on in the following chapter.
5.5 Mthabisi: ‘Growing up I used to be teased for being gay’

Mthabisi is 30 years old and was born in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal. He is currently staying in Rustenburg, North West and works on a platinum mine. He started working there in 2013. He is in a committed relationship with a man. He and his siblings were raised by his unemployed mother, and they experienced hardships growing up. Due to a lack of funds, he was not able to continue his studies after Grade 12.

An important difference from the previous three narratives is that Mthabisi’s sexual identity is known by some of his close family members. Mthabisi is open about his sexuality to his mother and his siblings, mostly female siblings, and they have been supportive of him. He explains that his mother has always known that he is homosexual, and that that is the reason she has never had a problem with him identifying as homosexual:

Not the whole of my family, but I am out to my mother and some of my sisters, and not to any of my brothers, but I am sure they can see. [...] She was very supportive, I guess, because I am her child, because it does not matter what I do, so long as I am a loving and responsible child. That is all she needed. [...] She has been accepting from the beginning, and I guess it is because she watched me when growing up, and she could already see that there is already a possibility that I could be gay. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

Affirmation from family members, especially his mother, has meant a lot to Mthabisi, since he shared a close bond with her and relied on her a lot. However, that did not prevent or stop the discrimination that Mthabisi endured as a child. His childhood was characterised by bullying from people around him. He explained, ‘Growing up I used to be teased for being gay, so they used to tease me because I used to spend my time with girls, and they gave me a name because of that.’ The bullying emerged from the fact that he did not conform to the heteronormative gender construction of the male identity. It was used by community members as a form of social control, to unsettle his contentment with who he is and make him aware that there is something wrong with him. The bullying was mainly verbal, but it was used to attack his character:

Some would change my name to make it sound feminine, and luckily I had some people that supported me, and they used it positively. I was never comfortable
around boys, because we did not have much in common, so I was more comfortable with females. I used to get teased a lot, especially with other boys, because they used to call me ‘boy-girl’, and some of them would call me ‘Thabisile’, which is a girl’s name, and they would make fun of everything that I do. When I walk, they imitate my walk and call me Mrs Malaika or a model. Some of those things were hurtful. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

Mthabisi struggled to deal with the bullying, especially as a young child, since he was still trying to understand himself and his identity. The constant bullying created dilemmas for him, as he questioned many things about himself, and he experienced internal conflict regarding his sexual identity:

It definitely raised a lot of questions, and there were a lot of regrets on my side, and there were so many things I wished I would have changed. Firstly, I started wishing that I was born a girl. So I would go home find a little dress and dress myself in hiding and wish that if only I had been a girl. Sometimes because of confusion I would wish I was a boyish boy, like all the other boys, and I would wish I was interested in playing soccer and all other things that boys were interested in at the time. So that is how it affected me. My mind was in a confused state. On some days I will wish I was that boy who was very strong, and on some days, I would wish I was born a girl. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

Mthabisi experienced a difficult childhood as a result of his homosexual identity. The fact that he preferred having female friends to male friends and he engaged in childhood activities that were normatively female rendered him vulnerable to discrimination. This explains why his mother’s support was always important to him. He viewed his community as highly heteronormative. From the following observation it becomes clear that the discrimination emanated from the community’s general intolerance of homosexuality:

So, in the community that I grew up in we have been raised to believe that you are supposed to get educated and get married to a woman and have children. So already, by being gay, you are not going to fit into what the community has already said a successful person is going to be. So, if you are gay, you are considered to be an embarrassment, because you are not going to have children as it is expected of you, right? You become disrespected in the community. No one wants to be
associated with anything that pertains to your sexuality, because they say you are a man who is a woman, so they say. So, it makes life to be a bit complicated in the community. So gay people are kitted by costumes and put in different groups.

Similar to Sibusiso, Mthabisi also raises the issue of the power that communities have over the lives of individuals by highlighting the heteronormative rules that everyone is expected to conform to. For him this was made very clear from a young age, since he spent a lot of time with girls, and already he was bullied for associating with girls. He went on to explain the religious and traditionalist arguments against homosexuality in his community, including the perception that homosexuality is a choice and can be changed:

There are Christian groups who believed that you are cursed in the community and that you are going straight to hell and you should not be around any of their children, because you are a bad influence. Then you find people that are traditionalist, you know, that will tell you that you are gay, you have a disease, you need help, you need to be treated of that disease. It is something that you can lose. So, the community believes being gay you have brought it to yourself and it is something that they can change. It’s either through beating or through being discriminated or discarded from the entire community. They believe that will change your sexuality. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

Similar to the first three participants, religion and cultural traditions emerge as powerful driving forces behind the discrimination agenda in communities. Mthabisi expressed increased fear, which emanated from his having witnessed unpleasant incidents of violence and ill-treatment of homosexual men in his community:

I have experienced somebody being attacked for being gay. So it is not those closeted ones that are being attacked because it is under suspicion, but it is those confirmed cases where somebody dresses in female clothing. I have experienced a gay man being attacked. He was wearing a weave, and his weave was being pulled and him being told by the community that he is a curse. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

The violent reactions instilled fear in Mthabisi, to the point where being openly homosexual in the community was not an option for him, affecting how he behaved and interacted with other people. He realised that to avoid discrimination, and for his own safety, he had to comply with
society’s heteronormative expectations and behave in ways that a heterosexual man would. From observing the environment and the situation for homosexual people in the community, he started looking for strategies to avoid discrimination. He learnt to isolate himself from other people to avoid being noticed. He explained that he had to give up a lot of activities that he enjoyed doing, because they consistently betrayed his homosexual identity. He hardly spoke about his sexual identity with anyone, and he denied his homosexual identity whenever anyone asked him about it, because of the expected negative repercussions that came with identifying as homosexual. He started observing his behaviour, and he modified it to fit the heteronormative standards and spaces of his community:

So that started changing in my teenage years, when I realised that I am being teased because I walk like a female, I talk like a female, I spent most of my time with females. So I was like ‘How to change this that I am being teased for, so that I can be more acceptable?’ So instead of walking like a girl, I would change my walk to make it more masculine. Talking with hand gestures I would try to reduce that and talk with my hands in the pockets. And also spending time with girls a lot I would stay away from girls and be alone rather, so that I do not get teased about it. So, all that changed when I realised that I am being teased about it. And the teasing is the reason I changed all of that. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

The quote highlights the interplay that occurs between gender and sexuality, where people associate a male homosexual identity with femininity. Mthabisi had to adjust his behaviour so that it conformed to the gender stereotypes of a male identity. This is evident in his experiences of being teased for expressing himself through gestures and bodily conduct that are associated with the female gender. Community members identify homosexual men by observing their behaviour. Msibi (2009) states that discrimination is the community’s control mechanism, as it is able to direct the behaviour of homosexual men by instilling fear and shame in them. Mthabisi’s sexual identity remains his secret with his close family members and very close friends, and he is not willing to open up to his community, as he has experienced that people who openly identify as homosexual suffer discrimination and violence. When I asked if he would consider disclosing his sexual identity at some point in his life, he said, ‘I would never confirm it, because that would make my life even worse.’ This indicates that he is extremely fearful for his safety.
Trends of heteronormativity can be observed in the community’s enforcement of heterosexuality through the emphasis on Christian and African traditional values that portray homosexuality as unnatural. Similar to Sibusiso, Philly and Katlego, Mthabisi’s observation of his community and their traditional and religious beliefs made him aware of the extent to which South African societies value heterosexual marriages and resist alternative forms of sexuality. Within community spaces, Sibusiso demonstrates clear understanding of the perceptions regarding homosexuality and the negative consequences of choosing to live openly as a homosexual man. This is the reason he still decided to keep his sexual identity hidden, even with his family members’ acceptance and full support.

5.6 Temba: ‘I did not have to come out’

Temba is a 33-year-old homosexual man who grew up in Soweto, a big township in Gauteng. He currently resides in Delmas, Mpumalanga and works in an open-cast coal mine. His father passed on when he was very young, and he was raised by his single mother and his grandmother. In contrast to the other four participants, Temba explained that he did not have to tell his family members about his sexual identity:

They know. I did not have to come out to them. I think they concluded to themselves. [...] My grandmother she was the one who actually saw that I was gay, and she accepted me, and all of my siblings felt obliged to accept me. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

Temba has a younger brother who also identifies as homosexual. They both have always been freely homosexual in their home, and their family members have always supported them. While Temba never experienced challenges with his family, he experienced difficulties within his community. He explained the hardships of growing up as a homosexual boy in a township:

Growing up in Soweto Township being a young gay guy, it was a mess sometimes. [...] You would experience some harsh words like being a boy. According to them they feel like you are a boy who act like a girl, so they will call you names, etc. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

Like Mthabisi, Temba was teased and called names as a child because his behaviour was different from the normatively defined male gender role. What betrayed his sexual identity were his feminine qualities and his preference for female rather than male friends. As with
Mthabisi, this was not seen as normal by other people, and they started calling him names, so that he would feel bad and possibly change his behaviour:

Most of my friends when I was growing up they were girls, and… [laughs] I played mostly with girls than I did with guys. […] I did experience a lot of teasing because of that. They used to call me a girl, soft, those kinds of names. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

Since he was exposed to a lot of name-calling and he observed the high level of intolerance in the community, Temba realised that his community would never accept him as an open homosexual man. Community members understood homosexuality as something that is unnatural:

Homosexuality was not accepted within the community. […] I could feel that it was something that they will not accept, because if you were to say you were gay, they would have not accepted you. […] I think they did not understand it, and it goes against the norms, because if people did not understand something, they tend to view it somehow, even if they do not understand it.

Due to the lack of acceptance of homosexuality and the fear of discrimination, as is the case with the previous four participants, Temba had to learn ways to manage his sexual identity in the community. He found ways to navigate his way around community members’ negative perceptions of sexual minorities and still be able to be himself around his family. His sexuality remains his secret with his family and close friends:

I think I become [became] introverted, so to say. Actually, I learnt how to hide how I feel about my behaviour. […] I am open to people who are close to me, like close colleagues, and not to everyone. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

Being introverted, or reserved, was a strategy to avoid attracting attention and to stop the teasing. Temba adopted a similar coping mechanism to that of the other four participants. He hid his sexuality from community members and worked hard to suppress personal characteristics that he believed betrayed his sexuality. During the interview, I also observed that Temba was not completely comfortable with discussing his sexuality, as he gave very terse responses, and even after I probed, he did not want to disclose too many details. He merely laughed in response to some of the questions, instead of giving detailed responses. This
highlights his internalised need to hide most aspects of his sexual identity. However, Temba was positive about his sexuality. He explained that his sexuality does not feel foreign to him, that it feels normal, and that it is a significant part of who he is.

5.7 Connecting the narratives

The participants’ narratives were to a large extent similar, in terms of the challenges that they face in their communities. There were obvious differences, which makes each case unique. Heteronormative geographical and social spaces inhibited participants from fully exploring their sexual identities. While the familial spaces offered support to some of the participants, other social spaces, such as religious institutions and schools, served as barriers to the construction of an explicit homosexual identity. Mthabisi’s family and Temba’s family knew about their homosexual identities throughout their lives, and both men received ample support within their family structures. Familial support was important to the participants, since the participants who had not disclosed information about their sexual identities to family members, namely Philly, Sibusiso and Katlego, expressed difficulties in withholding the information from their family. They highlighted the importance of familial acceptance to them and the fear of losing the close family ties that they share with their family members should they disclose their sexual identities.

Previous studies have demonstrated that acceptance and tolerance of homosexual people on a social level is still very limited (Dlamini 2006; Msibi 2009; Mulaudzi 2018; Olney and Musabayana 2016, Tebelo and Odek 2014; Van Zyl 2015; Vincent and Howell 2014). This is evident in how participants in this study were treated by their communities. The findings in this study are consistent with studies by Butterfield (2018), Casazza et al. (2015), Hulkko and Hovanes (2018), Msibi (2009), Rickard and Yancey (2018), Whiting et al. (2012), Wienke and Hill (2013) and Yarbrough (2004), who argue that discrimination in rural spaces is more prevalent because of the high degree of religiosity and fundamental traditional values, which embrace heterosexuality and exclude minority sexualities from the “natural” discourse. Rural communities are relatively small, and participants in this study explained the challenges of living in small communities, where everything that one does can be observed and scrutinised by others.

Although Mthabisi and Temba were accepted by their families, they experienced the same challenges of exclusion and discrimination as the other participants. In line with Goffman’s
assertions, the stigma prevalent in the participants’ communities created an unsafe space for participants, leading them to construct their lifestyles in ways that did not contradict the heteronormative requirements of the society. Consistent with Foucault (1978), participants’ sexuality was policed by the powerful heteronormative structures of their communities, and they were also required to police their own sexuality, in order to avoid being identified as homosexual by those who were watching them. A positive observation from the participants’ narratives is that despite experiencing difficulties with living homosexual lives, they still perceive their sexual identities positively. It was only Katlego who explained that he had extreme difficulties with accepting himself, because of his religion. However, like the other four participants, he has learnt to accept himself and avoid spaces that put him under pressure. Participants do not ascribe the negativity attached to their sexual identity to themselves, and they do not blame themselves for how people perceive them. They are not entirely helpless, because they try to make the most of the aspects of their lives that they still have control over.

5.8 Conclusion

With the exception of Temba, the participants grew up in rural areas, and it is clear that cultural and religious backgrounds have had profound effects on the decisions that the participants have made regarding their sexual identities and their lifestyles. They indicated that the communities where they grew up were not accepting of homosexuals. Community members valued and embraced heterosexual marriage, and they viewed it as the only natural union. As a result, homosexuality was a taboo topic, and it was viewed by members of their communities as something that is not normal or natural. The stigma attached to homosexuality in participants’ communities led to them deciding to hide their sexualities. The participants grew up living in fear of persecution from community members, and hiding was a strategy used to protect themselves from the negative perceptions of their community members, and from possible physical harm.

Heteronormativity and high levels of homophobia prevailed in participants’ communities, and they have shaped the lives of participants in significant ways. This is particularly evident in the communities’ high regard for heterosexual marriage and their negative perceptions of homosexuals. These have had negative implications for participants’ everyday lives, since they have had to consider the heteronormative requirements of their communities in every decision they have made about their lives. Hence their decisions to live very private lives, to avoid being
exposed. Navigating heteronormative spaces posed a dilemma for participants, since this was done at the expense of their true character, and feelings of helplessness prevailed in their lives. They adopted ways to cope with the challenges of being homosexual men in a heteronormative society, which mostly entailed adopting different identities depending on the normative requirements of the context in which they found themselves, and consequently living multiple lives. They had to adopt heterosexual identities and neglect their homosexual identities in spaces such as schools, religious institutions and their homes and at work. The struggle with constructing multiple identities was not being able to develop a consistent solid identity and lifestyle. These difficulties that come with constructing different sexual identities and living multiple lives in different spaces are unpacked in the following chapter, which focuses on three spaces, namely the home, friendships and workplaces.
Chapter 6. Triple identities and multiple lives: Home, friendships and the workplace

6.1 Introduction

In chapter 5, the participants were introduced by way of discussing their upbringing in their respective communities. The structure of geographical contexts and society’s ability to make them “unfriendly” spaces for homosexual people were explained in the chapter. The chapter established that due to the lack of tolerance of homosexuality and the discrimination against homosexuals witnessed in rural communities, participants learnt to develop coping mechanisms to navigate these spaces. This included adopting heterosexual identities in rural spaces, to avoid experiencing discrimination. This chapter continues the discussion of the implications of space for identity construction, by considering the different identities that participants adopt in various social spaces. Goffman (1959) argues that people do not present an inherent or fixed self but a situationally desirable self, a self that they want others to recognise and honour. He argues that various versions of “the self” are performed as required by particular contexts or spaces. This can be a complex process, since an individual has to switch between multiple selves in different contexts. Participants’ narratives illustrate the complexities of social identities, since identities shift or change depending on the contexts or spaces that people find themselves in. Similarly, sexual identities are performed in different ways depending on the space or context that individuals find themselves in. The participants performed sexual identities that were in conflict with each other, and they dealt with the conflicting identities by rejecting the situationally undesirable identity and upholding the situationally desirable one, depending on the context.

In an attempt to make sense of the participants’ multiple identity markers in relation to their homosexual identities, the findings of this study will be presented considering three identities that the participants mainly adopted in different spaces of their lives, namely their identity at home, their identity within their friendships and their identity at work. The first identity that emerged from the narratives is the “heterosexual identity” that is performed at home. This is followed by what I refer to as the homosexual–heterosexual identity, which is performed in friendships, and the last identity is the professional identity, which is performed at work. Considering that workplace experiences of discrimination are also informed by other spheres of participants’ lives outside of the workplace, I look at how participants perform the different
identities and how these identities collectively inform their experiences of discrimination. The role that space plays in the performance of their different identities, real and fictitious, is also considered. Their lives at home, in friendships and at work, experiences and perceptions of these spaces and coping strategies that they adopt in navigating these spaces are then highlighted in this chapter.

6.2 The role of space in the construction of multiple lives

Different sexualities are associated with various behaviours, and participants explained that they find the task of managing identities within social spaces hard, because it is demanding, requiring them to constantly switch between conflicting identities according to the requirements of the varying contexts or roles. They choose to manage their true homosexual identity and embrace the heterosexual identity in some contexts of their lives:

When I am with my friends I am that kind of shy… When I am with them I keep quiet. I say as little as I can, but when I am with bae I am this bubble person. But it is the opposite 360 at home, of which I want to act this macho man guy which I do not know. Even the tone of my voice changes. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

It restricts you from living your life to the fullest. I mean you want to do the stuff you want to do, when you want to do them, but there’s always those constraints in that environment, and it becomes very hard. So, you are living that dreaded reality every day, where you have to constantly be aware of what you do, and which environments allows you to do whatever you want to do. I mean you can’t even tell a friend that they are hot, even if you want to, because that becomes suspicious. Basically, your outward appearance is fake, and your inward appearance, your thoughts, you’re… that’s the real thing. Basically, your world is inside out. Instead of you living your life, you are constrained within your life itself. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

Participants had to conform to the behaviours associated with the particular sexual identity that they perform at a particular time and in a particular space. This creates a dilemma for black homosexual male mineworkers, because they have to constantly construct and manage their different identities in different spaces, such as the home, friendships and the workplace. The findings are consistent with prior research, which has found that sexual minorities are burdened
with the task of managing their sexual identities and conforming to the heteronormative standards of spaces characterised by intolerance (Barefoot et al. 2015; Cohn and Hastings 2010; Colgan and Rumens 2015; Croteau et al. 2008; Reingardė 2010 Suriyasarn 2016; Van Zyl 2015). While conforming to the requirements of heterosexual spaces can save black homosexual male mineworkers from experiencing discrimination and exclusion and can spare them the pain of being viewed as an outcast or as a disappointment, it is emotionally taxing for them, and it drains them psychologically.

6.3  A heterosexual identity at home

The participants were raised by their biological parents, be it a single parent or both parents, except for Sibusiso, who spent most of his childhood with his grandparents. They explained that they have siblings, whom they spent most of their lives around. The participants did their best to maintain a hidden homosexual identity at home. In the following section I provide a discussion of participants’ reasons for hiding their homosexual identities from family members and passing as heterosexual. I also consider how they were able to keep their homosexual identities hidden throughout their lives.

6.3.1  Constructing and maintaining a heterosexual identity

While growing up, the participants made a conscious decision not to tell their families about their sexual identities, because they feared not being accepted. The participants are from Christian families, and they grew up regularly attending church. They come from families where family members were not vocal about their feelings regarding homosexuality. However, based on the reactions that they observed, the community’s traditional beliefs and their family’s commitment to their religious beliefs, participants believed that their families would never be happy with having sons who are romantically involved with other men. Philly explained that no one in his family knows about his sexuality. Similarly, Sibusiso also explained that growing up in a rural and traditional community made it difficult for him to disclose his sexuality to his family members, because he feared that they held similar perceptions to the other community members.

Sibusiso, Philly and Katlego are known to be heterosexual at home, and they generally portray a heterosexual identity when they are around their family members. They are heterosexual in the eyes of their parents and siblings. They are conscious of their behaviour when they are with
family members, and they always ensure that they do not behave in ways that will betray their homosexual identity. Katlego stated that he was ‘completely’ heterosexual at home, and that his behaviour resembled that of a heterosexual man. These three participants maintain an image of a heterosexual son and brother. They started adopting heterosexual identities at a young age, and it became an effective coping strategy in their lives as they grew up. Even Sibusiso, who believed that some of his family members would understand and accept him if he told them about his homosexual identity, still decided to keep his homosexual identity a secret, because he feared unfavourable outcomes:

My maternal grandparents love me a lot. I don’t think they would stop loving me because I am gay. I mean it could be a disappointment for them, but at the end I think they would make a decision to accept instead of rejecting me. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

While some support was anticipated, it was not sufficient for participants to open up to their families, because they feared disappointing them. To spare their families disappointment, it was safe for participants to continually perform a heterosexual identity at home. This had some negative implications for participants’ way of life, since they had to compromise their agency and succumb to the pressures of the contexts in which they found themselves. Temba and Mthabisi did not have to act heterosexual, since they were open about their sexual identities at home. However, this was not the case in spaces outside the home, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.2 Implications of passing as heterosexual for participants’ lifestyles

The participants did not have major concerns hiding their sexual identity while growing up, but it is now becoming a struggle, because they desire an open life, where they can live freely without fear of being discriminated against. Some of the participants are involved in romantic relationships and wish to introduce their same-sex partners to their families, but they are unable to do so because they fear rejection:

It’s still very hard, because you sort of wish to bring your friend or boyfriend over, all my part-time boyfriends, and just make it official, but also you have to think about their side, how they feel about this whole thing. You have to always think about this thing of… sort of love half-heartedly. So, it’s not a real thing where I
come from. Like how do you explain it to your parents, grandparents, siblings?
Yeah. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

It is difficult for participants to live fictitious heterosexual lives, because they cannot reach their full potential and make important life decisions freely. The fear of rejection from family members restricts them from living fulfilling lives. Sibusiso further explained that he finds it hard to fully commit to a relationship, because he is not open about his sexual identity to his family:

The thing is you can never make things permanent. Yeah, I guess if you open up and become this force that no one can mess with, then you can do whatever you like, but if you still holding back, it becomes very hard to even think like ‘You know what? I am going to be in a relationship with someone’, and then that means you must do what, you know, people in a relationship do, like hold hands, cuddle and be lovey-dovey [laughs]. But it’s very hard. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

The section illustrates the negative implications of passing as heterosexual in private and public spaces. In various studies implications have been reported that deter the development and construction of a solid (homo)sexual identity (Barefoot et al. 2015; Cohn and Hastings 2011; Edwards 2005; Rickard and Yancey 2018). It is obvious that it has not been an easy task for the participants to conceal their (homo)sexual identities in heteronormative spaces, since it has imposed restrictions on their lifestyles. It was important to highlight this identity, because participants’ experiences at work are also informed by their earlier life decisions. One cannot fully capture their experiences at work without considering forces outside their workplaces. Their experiences of discrimination based on their sexual identity are not solely determined by the working environment, but also by the broader context, including the different social spaces (family and community) that participants are exposed to. Living heterosexual lives at home, in private spaces, has an impact on how black homosexual male mineworkers construct their identities at work, in public spaces. The different backgrounds and social contexts of colleagues also have an impact on black homosexual male mineworkers’ perceptions of homosexuality, and they influence how they experience discrimination at work.
6.4 Homosexual–heterosexual identity (friendships)

Participants’ friendships at work and outside of work were categorised according to sexual identities. They had both heterosexual and homosexual friends. Their heterosexual friends only knew about their fictitious heterosexual identity, while their homosexual friends knew about both sexual identities. Some of the participants identified as bisexual to their homosexual friends:

Pretence, pretence. I mean you’ve been living this life for all your life. You know what’s acceptable to the other part, and you know what’s acceptable to the other part. When I mean acceptability, like, for instance, if you are with your family or straight friends, you do whatever they do, but particularly… But I would say my behaviour has been consistent with both groups. So yeah, it’s very hard to balance the two, because you like ‘Now I can go here, now I can go there’. So, I have to be careful, because once my straight friends see me with my out gay friend, who happens to be feminine and out, they will ask what I am doing with that one. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

OK, being gay does have an impact on friendships that I would have had rather. I prefer to be alone mostly rather, because it is very hard to trust someone. Not everybody is accepting of that lifestyle, and it is very difficult to be open to everybody. So I prefer my own space. Friendships that I have are mostly friendships that I started from childhood. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

Sibusiso and Mthabisi’s responses illustrate how they navigate their friendships, and it is evident that behaviour is important in maintaining a hidden homosexual identity. The participants have to constantly monitor how they behave and be careful about what they say, especially when they are with their heterosexual friends, since they are not aware of participants’ hidden sexual identity. Black homosexual male mineworkers respond to the societal heteronormative discourses by policing and monitoring their behaviour, so that they remain in harmony with what society expects to see. This shows that it is not just their sexual identity that changes, but also their personality and their behaviour. As with family and the workplace, participants carry the burden of living multiple lives in different contexts, a task that they find very challenging and frustrating.
Another strategy that participants use to maintain their hidden homosexual identity is to keep heterosexual friends and homosexual friends separate. Friends in the heterosexual category are not aware of friends in the homosexual category, since participants ensure that they are never in the same place at the same time:

I don’t mix my friends. They’ve never been mixed, and the ones who mixed were probably the ones who are in the closet, and obviously we all are playing the same game, and we all are winning, I think. So yeah. You would get a situation where your friends understand, the ones who are also in the closet. So yeah, you live your life, but it’s hard. You just wish you can just go and do as you please, without having to worry. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

Philly and Mthabisi explained that some of their heterosexual friends know about their sexuality. Philly has female heterosexual friends who know about his sexuality at work, but he indicated that he hardly speaks about his sexuality with them. Similarly, Mthabisi also explained that he has female heterosexual friends who know about his sexuality, but that they are friends that he grew up with and has known throughout his childhood. He was very reluctant to form friendships with other people, especially at work, because he did not want to explain himself to people. While they both have heterosexual friends, who know that they are homosexual, they still keep their homosexual identity a private matter, since they avoid situations that will require them to talk about it. Although their heterosexual friends know that they are homosexual, it is not easy for them to completely open up and discuss personal aspects of their lives with them. As a result, they still hold back various aspects of their (homo)sexual identity. In the following section I discuss an identity that black homosexual male mineworkers adopt in their workplaces in order to avoid discrimination and cope with the heteronormative nature of their workplaces.

6.5 Professional identity at work: Working in a ‘man’s’ world

Participants highlighted that they work with a lot of men, and that most of the men identify as heterosexual. Their heterosexual colleagues are from different provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, and some of them are from neighbouring countries, such as Lesotho. While their colleagues are from different backgrounds, their feelings regarding homosexuality are similar to the feelings shared by the communities in which the participants were raised. Their colleagues are mostly homophobic, and they associate a homosexual identity
with femininity. This section explores the participants’ construction of a professional identity at work and their experiences of discrimination against homosexual men in the mining industry. Participants did not experience explicit and direct discrimination at work, except for Philly, who experienced name-calling from heterosexual men who assumed that he was homosexual. The masculine nature of the mining industry and participants’ experiences of discrimination have inevitably impacted on how they have constructed their identities at work.

6.5.1 Workplace discrimination in South African mining workplaces

The participants described situations where they have experienced discrimination at work, and the effects that it has had on them:

They will say remarks that are jokes, but sometimes when you sit down and reflect on those jokes, they tend to work on you psychologically. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

I think around men they do not have nice things to say about homosexual man, or homosexuality in general. They condemn it, and they use the Bible for that. They do not want their children or sons to be homosexual. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

From the statements made by Katlego and Temba, it is evident that the discrimination was mostly verbal and indirect. Heterosexual men made intrusive jokes about homosexuals at work, and this was painful for the participants, as they could not object, since they are not open about their sexuality. This finding supports Msibi’s (2009) argument that homosexual people in South Africa still face discrimination, irrespective of the law, which protects the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. On a social level, discrimination based on sexual identity exists in the mining industry, in similar ways reported by earlier studies in other workplaces (Olney and Musabayana 2016; Reingardé 2007; Tebelo and Odeku 2014).

Participants did not report any cases of physical violence at the hands of heterosexual mineworkers, unlike the case in studies conducted in other South African workplaces (Benjamin et al. 2015; Mawambi 2014; Olney and Musabayana 2016). This is attributed to the fact that participants in this study were not open about their sexual identity and were generally passing as heterosexual. It could not be confirmed that they were homosexual, and hiding saved them from potential physical violence.
The participants did not report experiencing discrimination in the hiring process or workplace processes, as research has suggested by Benjamin et al. (2015); Drydakis (2009) and Takács (2016). This is also because they took measures to ensure that their sexual identities were not known, and to ensure their invisibility in their workplaces, by avoiding attracting attention to themselves. However, some of the participants reported witnessing these kinds of discrimination in their workplaces:

Well, there was one junior who was working in the mine, and that one is very openly gay. He was in my team, and he ended quitting his job because the HR people did not take his case very seriously, because whatever happens underground (the guys were touching him inappropriately, do anything inappropriately), and try to record what was happening, and went for disciplinary hearing. They said they could not use the evidence against those guys, because it was not done with their consent (they were not aware that they were being recorded). And the guy ended up leaving, and nothing was done. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

Katlego felt helpless in this situation. He explained that it was frustrating for him, since he knew that due process was not followed. However, he kept quiet and decided not to defend the colleague, since that would attract unwanted attention to himself. He highlighted the lack of support for LGBTIQ+ people and the lack of education on sexual diversity in his workplace. He explained that as the reason his colleague gave up so easily and resigned. The lack of support for LGBTIQ+ workers is also highlighted in an earlier study by Olney and Musabayana (2016). The similar findings are concerning, especially considering that South Africa prides itself on equal treatment of workers, irrespective of their sexual identities.

Tradition and religion were used by heterosexual mineworkers to illegitimise homosexuality and homosexual desire, and this was observed by participants in their workplaces. Some of the participants explained that black African older male mineworkers held strong traditional beliefs and values, which contributed to their negative perceptions of homosexuals:

Most of them are traditional men. Mostly they will disrespect me for being gay. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

It’s very hard, because… especially in mines. Most of the men in the mine tend to think you are targeting them when you are gay. It’s even harder when you see gay people living their lives freely, a life you can never really have in the mine. You
also get very traditionalist people in the mines, who would make stupid comments. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

A lot of people don’t want to be led by a gay person, especially men, because they are patriarchs. Men who are very closed-minded in their thinking would not agree to be led by a woman, and then here’s a gay man, who is associated with woman, not really seen as a man man man. They would never really accept that. I mean if you are traditional and engaged in cultural things and very strict at home, then you wouldn’t want to get to work and be controlled by a “half-man”. That is what they would think. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

The traditional view of a man as someone who is heterosexual made things difficult for the black homosexual male mineworkers, even the mineworkers who held leadership positions, namely Katlego and Sibusiso. While they were afforded power by their leadership positions, the dominant heteronormative traditional beliefs positioned them in subordinate positions to heterosexual men and restricted their agency at work. This goes back to Ratele’s (2011) argument that “real” men are considered those who engage in sexual intercourse with women, which affords heterosexual men power over homosexual men, whose masculinity is questioned due to their desire to engage in sexual intercourse with other men, instead of with women. Here, the implications of heteronormativity for homosexual men in the South African mining industry are highlighted. As per Reingarde’s (2007) argument, the homosexual discourse in the South African mining industry is being silenced and suppressed by the dominant heterosexual discourse. This is in line with Ozeren et al. (2016), who argue that sexual minority groups in workplaces are vulnerable to silencing by heterosexual colleagues, who make up the majority and hold power in the workplace. Participants in this study feel powerless, since their workplace is dominated by heterosexual men who hold strong heteronormative traditional beliefs and have no regard or respect for homosexual men.

Since the participants’ heterosexual colleagues associate homosexual men with women, they believed that homosexual mineworkers were not capable of doing heavy tasks. Katlego has a soft voice, and he indicated that there were men who would imitate him, by speaking in a feminine voice. This was also evident in the division of tasks, where heterosexual men decided which tasks homosexual men can and cannot handle:
Like when I have to carry something that is heavy, they come and help me carry, because they take me as a woman. They always help me. (Philly, 5 January 2019)

This further highlights the domination of heterosexual masculinity within the mining industry, and the implications it has for homosexual mineworkers. In line with Connell (2005), homosexual mineworkers in this study are not perceived as “real” men, and they are treated in ways that assert the domination of heterosexual masculinity and the subordination of non-heterosexual masculinity. Discriminating against homosexual men and likening homosexuality to femininity serves to protect the traditional patriarchal position of heterosexual men in the mining industry. This creates a challenge for the participants, since it places them in positions of vulnerability and disempowerment in their mining workplaces. The unequal ordering of masculinities, as highlighted by historical research (Callinicos 1981; Harries 1994; Van Onselen 1982) indicating the dominance of heterosexual masculinity in the mining industry, is still evident and effective.

Based on these narratives of discrimination, it is clear that as a masculine workplace, the South African mining industry can be considered an unsafe working environment for homosexual men. The participants’ unpleasant experiences of discrimination perpetrated by their heterosexual male colleagues are consistent with previous research (Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingardė 2007; Willis 2012), which indicates that discrimination based on sexual identity is prevalent in masculine or male-dominated workplaces. The level of hostility towards black homosexual male mineworkers is indicative of discrimination in masculine workplaces, as reported by these studies. It was not only heterosexual men who discriminated against homosexual mineworkers, but also heterosexual women working in the mines. Heterosexual women discriminated against homosexual men indirectly:

The discrimination is also not from men only. You get it also from women, and there are women who don’t want to associate themselves with a gay person and have a lot of anger and hate towards the gay person. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

Female colleagues would usually speak about how they would not want to have homosexual children, and what they would do to convert their children if they were homosexual. This is another level of discrimination informed by the powerful heteronormative discourse, which indicates the power imbalance evident in society, as observed by Foucault (1978). The comments made by female colleagues highlight again the notion of power as a control
mechanism practised through language. The language used by female colleagues when referring to homosexuality perpetuates the silencing and the passing of black homosexual male mineworkers in mining spaces. However, participants indicated that the discrimination was minimal among heterosexual women compared to their male counterparts, since women were not really direct in the way they practised the discrimination. Temba had female friends at work who knew about his sexuality, and he felt comfortable discussing his relationships with them. He felt that it was better to speak to female colleagues, since they understood his homosexual identity better than male colleagues, and they showed some support.

6.5.2 Constructing a professional (heterosexual) identity at work

The participants indicated that they are professionals at work. They defined a professional identity in heteronormative terms, by emphasising a dress code, hairstyles and behaviour aligned with heteronormative gender constructions. They emphasised performance of their occupational functions as more important than their sexual identities at work. This in line with participants in Rothmann (2017) who excluded their homosexual identities and emphasised their professional self as more important in their workplaces. Participants hardly spoke about their intimate relationships or their personal lives, and they mainly focused on activities that had to do with their work. Some of them even isolated themselves from other colleagues and kept interactions with them to a minimum:

I try to act as professional as I can. Even my haircut has to be of a man. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

You can’t be free at work. You can’t be. You just have to do your function, perform your job and leave. Whether you are gay or not, male or female, does not matter. Perform your job to the best of your ability and move on. (Sibusiso, 4 January 2019)

It makes me to be cautious of actually whom do I interact with. Since I am an introverted person, I just want to keep to myself most of the time, since I am a reserved person. Avoiding to actually get to form a conversation with those people. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

It is evident that participants avoided situations that would require them to talk about personal aspects of their lives. The narratives indicate that participants used professionalism to avoid
exposing themselves and potentially experiencing discrimination at work. Participants did not expose their homosexual identities, and they portrayed heterosexual identities during their interviews at the mines, except for one participant, who indicated that the sexuality of the interviewer created a comfortable space for him to express his true sexual identity:

Well, the lady did ask me if I was gay. Then I told her. She was very nice and free. She made me feel comfortable. It was because she wanted to see if I was going to be able to work in the mine as a gay man. She told me that there are many people in the mine same as [like] me, and that is why she was asking. So, she wanted to know if I was going to be able to get along with other colleagues, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual. Even the lady who was interviewing me was lesbian. So that is why she was comfortable asking me questions about my sexuality. (Philly, 5 January 2019)

The participants believed that they would never have been hired on the mines if they had exposed their homosexual identities during the interview and the hiring process. These are valid concerns, since previous research has also found that LGBTIQ+ people who are open about their sexuality are less likely to make it past the interview process (Benjamin et al. 2015; Mawambi 2014). Participants were aware of this. Hence their decisions not to disclose their sexual identities during the hiring process. To avoid questions about their sexual identities or assumptions that they may be homosexual, participants indicated that they acted heterosexual during the interviews:

No! No! I was straight as hell, straight as hell. I tried to be as straight as hell. My voice was very deep, even though I don’t know if that makes sense, because there are gay people with deep voices. You can imagine now you’re… you’re… one of your senior managers in that panel is a homophobe. I mean probably they would find it in their best interest not to consider you, or discredit you based on that small thing, and who dare questions the big guys? (Sibusiso, 4 January 2019)

I doubt that anybody discloses their sexuality. They will just see it themselves that this one is gay, maybe through the way they speak. For me it is because I have this macho thing that I always carry, and I always act normal, like interview normal. So, it was a process to get in. Once you are in it was fine. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)
The participants were never asked about their sexual identity throughout the interview and the hiring process, and they made it very clear that disclosing their sexual identity during the interview was not an option. In line with Goffman (1963), participants performed the socially acceptable attribute (heterosexuality) and hid their stigmatised attribute (homosexuality), in order to gain employment in mining workplaces.

Participants are relatively silent about their sexuality at work and do not express their true selves. As already stated, participants indicated that they identify as heterosexual at work, meaning that they live mainly heterosexual lives at work. They comply with the requirements of their workplaces, which are highly heteropatriarchal and masculine in nature. They indicated that observation of their working environments showed them that they are not friendly spaces for homosexual men, since most of their colleagues are heterosexual and do not perceive homosexuality positively. These findings correspond to Van Zyl’s (2015) argument that homosexual workers will not disclose their sexuality identity if they see that their workplace is not safe. The participants identify as homosexual to themselves but as heterosexual to colleagues. They further explained that they are “real” or “normal” men at work, subscribing to society’s construction of a “real” man as being a heterosexual man:

Around straight colleagues there is that fear of being discriminated against. I have to be a straight man, be a straight actor, for me to be accepted. (Mthabisi, 20 February 2019)

I have to act straight, so that I do not put attention or suspicion on myself. I feel like most of the times I have to pretend to be like them, like normal. Also, to be respected by them I have to act normal. (Temba, 10 March 2019)

I act normal, normal as in like a guy, my voice, tone twisted, the way I walk, [the way] I address them, the way I speak to them. When I look at myself, especially when a call comes from a girl or a gay guy, maybe such things as screaming at them, but I tend to tame myself, you know, such things. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

Internalisation of the heterosexual identity as “normal” highlights the dominance of the heterosexual discourse in participants’ workplaces, aligning with Connell’s (2005) argument that heteronormative spaces are infused with cultures that empower heterosexual men. Homosexual men carry the task of maintaining a heterosexual image on the mines. Identifying as heterosexual means that they have to behave in ways that are similar to their heterosexual
colleagues and suppress any sign of their homosexual identity. Homosexual mineworkers adopt a heterosexual masculinity at work and hide their non-heterosexual masculinity, which further indicates the marginalisation of the non-heterosexual masculinity in the South African mining industry. Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory explains this behaviour, since participants avoid the negative consequences of portraying a stigmatised masculinity by actively employing and performing a masculinity that is not stigmatised, since it offers more positive benefits. Non-heterosexual masculinities in this space are carefully constructed in ways that do not challenge and are in alignment with the dominant heterosexual masculinity and remain subordinated and invisible.

While the participants tried to maintain a heterosexual identity, some of their behaviours or lack of certain behaviours betrayed their homosexual identity, and colleagues would become suspicious and ask them about their sexual identity. They would counter the suspicions by engaging in uncomfortable behaviours or activities perceived as heterosexual:

> Some of these girls would ask why you not making any moves on them, and you see that person as a dear friend, while in their head it has already moved from the friendship to more. So, when you don’t come to the party, it becomes a red flag. So, she would end up being a default girlfriend, just to shut the person up, so that they don’t suspect and go tell other people, then the next thing there is a rumour that you might be gay. You wouldn’t want to be exposed to that discrimination in your life at work, since it will also affect your growth at work. (Sibusiso, 4 January 2019)

Engaging in heterosexual relationships proved to be a difficult task for participants, because they have to be people they are not. Adopting heterosexual identities at work was triggered by the level of discrimination that participants anticipated if they were to explicitly identify as homosexual.

As observed in the narratives, participants engaged in all three workplace passing strategies as identified by Croteau et al. (2008). They engaged in fabrication, since they presented themselves in a way that is false to their colleagues. They consciously decided to act heterosexual and to imitate heterosexual men, in order to be known as heterosexual. Some of them even fabricated fictitious heterosexual partners. They also engaged in concealment, where they hid personal aspects of their lives from colleagues, such as their homosexual relationships.
and friendships. Lastly, they engaged in discretion, where they consciously isolated themselves and avoided interactions with colleagues and strictly discussed tasks that related to their work only. That is how black homosexual male mineworkers are able to successfully manage their sexual identities in the heteronormative workplaces.

6.5.3 Suffering in silence

As alluded to in the previous section, some coping strategies that the homosexual mineworkers used included isolating themselves from heterosexual colleagues and being unwillingly reserved, so as to avoid being noticed. They also distanced themselves from homosexual colleagues who were visible, and they kept silent when heterosexual male colleagues spoke negatively about their homosexual colleagues. They feared that defending homosexual colleagues and speaking against negative perceptions of homosexual colleagues would draw attention to themselves:

Yeah, they do say comments, hurtful comments sometimes, and you like ‘Oh shit! Why are people saying these negative things?’ And you can’t even object to that or say anything. You just keep quiet. But now and then you would tell them not to say that. However, saying that sort of light up a candle on top of your head, because they would wonder why you not for them, and why you so understanding and defending these people. It’s always hurtful when such things are said, especially comments. Yeah. Because you don’t want to associate with homosexual men. (Sibusiso, 4 February 2019)

Fear of exposure played a significant role in silencing participants at work. They tried their best not to draw attention to themselves:

They just take it as if it’s something that is not really serious, and they make jokes about it, but I know sometimes it is serious. Like we sometimes have safety meetings, and they call me the stabane safety rep, and I just look at them and laugh, because I am trying to hide that thing, since I don’t want some of the people to know about me. Some of the jokes I take them seriously, and they sometimes hurt, but some of them I don’t take seriously. (Philly, 5 January 2019)

I will just keep quiet and allow them to say whatever, but obviously I would be hurt, because at the end you do not want to be seen as a person who exclude
themselves in conversations. So, I would rather not say anything, because I have a small heart, so small things hurt me more than big things. Even big things hurt me, but always the smallest things hurt me the most, because they can become a big seed. (Katlego, 26 January 2019)

Keeping quiet was hard for the participants, because some of the discriminatory words used by their heterosexual colleagues were hurtful, and they had to bear the hurtful words and suffer in silence. The heteropatriarchal and masculine nature of their workplaces, combined with their fear of discrimination, took away their agency, as they were not able to defend themselves and speak out or act against discrimination. This finding is in line with a number of studies, both international and South African, which have been conducted on sexual minorities in heteronormative workplaces, and which have found that LGBTIQ+ workers are generally silent about their sexual identities in their workplaces and that they suffer in silence due heteronormativity and to fear of discrimination (Ozeren et al. 2016; Reingardė 2007; Renders 2015; Rothmann, 2016; Suriyasarn 2016; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Van Zyl 2015). The participants in this study suffer the same challenges as many other LGBTIQ+ workers out there.

The participants are dominated by heterosexual male mineworkers in their mining workplaces. Access to privileges associated with being heterosexual in masculine workplaces gives heterosexual men power over homosexual men in mining workplaces, since their sexual identity is perceived as “normal” and is exalted at work. Homosexual mineworkers are disempowered in their workplaces, and this is evident in participants’ reports indicating their lack of access to space that allows them to be vocal against discrimination. While they have the right to equality and fair treatment at work, they still feel helpless, and they suffer in silence. Black homosexual male mineworkers are trapped into silence by their dominated and stigmatised homosexual identity. Their lives at work are controlled by the heteronormative discourse dominating their workplaces.

As indicated by Connell (2005), sexuality plays a role in the construction and ordering of masculinities. Heterosexual masculinity in South African society, and specifically in the mining industry, remains unchallenged, due to the dominant heteronormatively defined male gender role, which every male is expected to satisfy. The intolerance of non-heterosexual masculinities entrenched in spaces of discrimination, as stated in this study, is a continuation of the accepted and dominant position of the heterosexual masculinity. The domination of the heterosexual masculinity was observed not only in the homosexual mineworker participants’
narratives, but also in their reluctance to participate in the study and to talk about their sexuality or their experiences in different spaces. Many of the mineworkers who were approached refused to participate, even after being assured that their information would be kept confidential. The fear of discrimination in private and public spaces, especially in the mining workplace, renders non-heterosexual masculinity invisible, since black homosexual male mineworkers choose the safest alternative for their survival, namely conforming to the dominant heterosexual masculinity.

The heteronormative nature of spaces that participants lived in, and the explicit discrimination, hindered them from exploring their sexual identities freely, affecting the construction and development of (homo)sexual identities in these spaces. Being black and growing up in rural African communities influenced how participants perceived their lives. Participants grew up in communities where “real” men are seen as heterosexual, and this was continually enforced through religion and tradition, which were also used to perpetuate the intolerance or lack of acceptance of sexual minorities. Consistent with Butterfield (2018), Casazza et al. (2015), Gottschalk and Newtown (2009), Swank et al. (2012) and Wienke and Hill (2013), rural communities in this study also prove to be intolerant of homosexual identities, and their perceptions are mainly influenced by their fundamental religious beliefs. It is generally believed in the rural communities where participants live that homosexuality is not African or Christian, and this has affected how they live their lives as African, black and Christian men who also happen to be homosexual. Through intersectionality, I was able to identify that the racial, religious and traditional identities in conjunction with the participants’ homosexual identities uniquely shaped their experiences of discrimination throughout their lives. Crenshaw (1991) argues that our intersecting identities shape our experiences and can either empower or disempower us. In this context, the intersecting identities of the black homosexual male mineworkers are not arranged in the acceptable order stipulated by the powerful structures within the spaces they lived in, and this limited their agency. This was evident in their workplaces, since their colleagues were from similar backgrounds and held similar perceptions and values. Their masculinity is undermined and questioned by the societies they live in. They are seen as a disgrace to the black communities, and they are made to feel ashamed of being homosexual and Christian, limiting their commitment to their religiosity. The shame attributed to black homosexual male mineworkers is consistent with Vincent and Howell’s (2014) finding that religion is constantly used by South Africans to condemn homosexuals. Occupation did not play a significant role in how participants viewed or understood discrimination in their
mining workplaces, since they expressed similar views irrespective of their positions as part of management or the general workforce.

6.6 Conclusion

Participants’ narratives of their experiences indicate how heteronormativity in their homes, communities and workplaces manifested and impacted on their decisions to hide their sexualities and adopt heterosexual identities in those spaces. These contexts were experienced by participants as spaces of discrimination, since there was a general intolerance of sexual minorities, characterised by hate speech and verbal and sometimes physical violence. Discrimination was used to “correct” (homo)sexual identities, as they are perceived to be disrupting the natural order. The prevalent heteronormativity was enforced through religion and tradition, with a critical emphasis on the value of heterosexual marriage and childbearing. Black homosexual male mineworkers work in a space that is dominated by heterosexual men. The heterosexual masculinity is dominant in work spaces, and it places non-heterosexual masculinities in vulnerable and subordinate positions, where they are not acknowledged by colleagues, leading to increased silencing of homosexual identities. Silence proved to be an effective coping strategy for participants. However, it was accompanied by feelings of loneliness and distress, since participants were caught up in the struggle of constantly moving between multiple identities, creating fictitious lives and pretending to be people they are not. This had negative consequences on the lives of participants, because they found it very hard to maintain these multiple identities in various spaces and felt trapped, with no way out of this dilemma. They are unable to live their lives to the fullest and to be their true selves because of the many restrictions that exist in their different contexts and the circumstances that they find themselves in. This is the reality they have to face every day.

Although the participants shared racial and sexual identities and similar social backgrounds, they still had different experiences due to the different spaces they lived in. Their experiences in private spaces, especially the family, were different, since Mthabisi and Temba were open about their sexual identities to their families, and the other three participants were not. Power differentials were observed in the three spaces, structured by the intersecting identity markers that placed the black homosexual male mineworkers in disadvantaged positions compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Intersectionality allowed me to explore these differences in the narratives and show how they shaped participants’ understandings of their positions in their societies.
Chapter 7. Summary and concluding remarks

7.1 Introduction

This dissertation asserts that discrimination against sexual minorities in South Africa is a problem affecting homosexual men in various spaces of their lives. The literature indicates that legislation that supports and promotes equality in the current democratic South African context is insufficient in successfully eliminating discrimination based on sexual identity on a social level (Dlamini 2006; Msibi 2009; Olney and Musabayana 2014; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Van Zyl 2015). There are still strongly held heteronormative values, which hinder full acceptance and tolerance of non-heterosexual identities in various private and public spaces. Chapter 5 established that discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people is not an issue that is unique to South Africa, but is a global issue affecting sexual minorities in various spaces. The reported discrimination negatively affects the construction of (homo)sexual identities, since it unsettles the notion of sexual diversity, due to the heteronormative emphasis that only one sexuality is acceptable.

Sexuality in the mining industry was historically guided by the social environment of the mines, where mineworkers were confined to overcrowded and highly regulated same-sex compounds, which were divided according to different ethnic groups. Black mineworkers engaged in intergenerational mine marriages, which reflected the gender order in the rural areas characterised by male domination and female subordination. Although the mining space during the early 1900s allowed mineworkers to engage in same-sex sexual activities, there was some intolerance of these activities. Most of the mineworkers did not openly discuss their mine marriages when they went back to the rural areas, because of the stigma attached to same-sex partnerships. The mining industry has changed since the advent of democracy in South Africa. The industry has shown some efforts to reduce inequalities in the space. However, there has been limited focus on the state of sexuality in the South African mining industry post-1994, and it was imperative to consider the space, with the changes that have been implemented to end inequalities and discrimination. Black men’s experiences of sexuality in the mining industry are only reported in historical studies, and this is why the study focused on black homosexual experiences currently in the mining industry, to explore if sexuality has been a significant component of the transformation agenda.
Heteronormative notions of sexuality driven by religious beliefs and cultural traditions serve as barriers to the exploration and development of (homo)sexual identities in various spaces. Rural areas have been identified by various researchers as unsafe spaces for sexual minorities to live with visible homosexual identities. This lack of safety has been attributed to the fundamental religious beliefs held by people in rural communities and intolerance of a lack of conformity to heteronormative definitions of sexuality and gender. The persisting hate crimes and the lack of justice for victims in the South African context continue to intensify the struggles of LGBTIQ+ people, by increasing fear and silencing sexual minorities in different spaces. Research in workplaces has reported different kinds of discrimination endured by sexual minorities. The forms of discrimination in workplaces have included denial of employment based on a known homosexual identity, intimidation, physical and verbal harassment from colleagues, unfair dismissal and restricted access to company benefits. To avoid discrimination and to protect their well-being, LGBTIQ+ people have engaged in what Goffman (1963) termed ‘passing’, where they have adopted heterosexual identities and have managed their homosexual identities in spaces of discrimination. While passing has assisted sexual minorities with managing their sexual identities in heteronormative spaces, it has rendered (homo)sexual identities invisible, creating a false perception that they do not exist in spaces of discrimination. Although there is some literature on discrimination against sexual minorities in various spaces (Butterfield 2018; Casazza et al. 2015; Hulko and Hovanes 2018; Mawambi 2014; Msibi 2009; Olney and Musabayana 2016; Reingardė 2007; Renders 2015; Rickard and Yancey 2018; Tebelo and Odeku 2014; Whiting et al. 2012; Yarbrough 2004), there has been limited exploration of the topic in the mining industry. Black homosexual male mineworkers have hardly been studied as a subgroup of the LGBTIQ+ community, and this is why the current study attempted to fill this gap, by exclusively focusing on their experiences. Exploring their experiences contributes towards an understanding of their context.

In view of the masculine nature of the South African mining industry, I used Connell’s (1995, 1998, 2003, 2005) theory of masculinities to develop an understanding of the construction and performance of masculinities in the industry. The theory was useful in exposing inequalities that exist between masculinities in the mining space and unpacking the construction of non-heterosexual masculinities. Using the theory helped in developing an understanding of how heteronormativity and heterosexual male dominance in the mining space have shaped the construction of black homosexual male mineworkers’ masculinities. I was able to explore the heteronormative limitations that have inhibited black homosexual male mineworkers from
reaching the state of hegemonic masculinity in the mining space. A focus on the mining workplace complements literature that seeks to unpack the complex leading causes of discrimination directed towards homosexual men in masculine workplaces.

Five participants took part in the study, and through in-depth interviews their experiences were collected and analysed, to develop an understanding of the implications of discrimination for the construction and management of (homo)sexual identities in various spaces. The sensitivity of the study restricted access to participants, leading to a smaller sample than intended. Regardless of this, rich data was collected from the five participants, and from the analysis I was able to grasp the silenced and vulnerable position of black homosexual male mineworkers in different spaces.

In this study, particular emphasis was placed on the struggles of living and growing up in heteronormative spaces and working in a masculine space. The coping strategies adopted by black homosexual male mineworkers to deal with their fear of discrimination were also given particular attention. It was equally important to consider the participants’ understanding of discrimination based on sexual identity, and this was achieved by investigating the behaviours and attitudes that they believe constitute discrimination. Some of the identity markers that informed black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences in their rural homes, communities and workplaces were identified and discussed. Sexuality, masculinity, race, religion, cultural traditions and social background collectively informed black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination and the construction of their identities. Growing up in black rural communities that were traditional and excluded homosexuality from the “normal” discourse of sexuality created unfavourable conditions, which inhibited the participants from exploring their sexual identities with ease. These conditions negatively affected the construction of (homo)sexual identities in rural spaces, since the participants lived their lives in fear and generally chose to pass as heterosexual and live hidden homosexual lives. Ultimately, it was found that participants adopted three identities that helped them navigate multiple spaces of discrimination.

7.2 Towards an understanding of black homosexual male mineworkers’ lived experience

The research question stated in the introduction chapter was ‘How do black homosexual male mineworkers construct and manage their (homo)sexual identities in different spaces of
discrimination? Four sub-questions stated in chapter 1 were utilised in answering the main research question. The research findings in this study answered the four sub-questions. In the following paragraphs, I provide a discussion of the answers to the four sub-questions, and consequently the main research question.

Different spaces have influenced ways in which black homosexual male mineworkers experience and perform their (homo)sexual identities. To illustrate the importance of space in the lived experience of the participants, their realities in heteronormative spaces were analysed. The difficulties that participants face in spaces of discrimination included intolerance, negative perceptions regarding homosexuals and verbal attacks on sexual minorities. Rural spaces were characterised by fundamental religious beliefs and traditional values that perpetuated intolerance of and overt discrimination against homosexual people. The high levels of intolerance were a struggle for the participants, because they experienced and witnessed ostracisation of homosexual people in their communities, leading them to choosing to conceal their homosexual identities. Three of the five participants perceived their families as heteronormative and anticipated unpleasant consequences if they were to disclose their sexual identities in their homes. The participants struggled in their friendships, since they had both heterosexual and homosexual friendships, which they had to keep separate to maintain their hidden homosexual identities. According to the participants, their workplace was not deemed a safe space for them to be open about their homosexual identities, since there was a general lack of tolerance of homosexuality among their heterosexual colleagues. It was not easy for participants to disclose their sexual identities in their workplace, because they witnessed situations where heterosexual colleagues showed hostility towards sexual minorities, which instilled fear in the black homosexual male mineworkers and silenced them. The discrimination suffered by black homosexual male mineworkers in heteronormative spaces is indicative of the continuing trend of intolerance in South African society. Sexual diversity is not viewed by some members of society as something to celebrate, but is used to assert difference, by discrediting sexual minority identities and embracing heterosexual identities.

The participants believed that the negative words used by community members and colleagues about homosexuals, and their overall negative perceptions regarding homosexuals, constituted discrimination. The black homosexual male mineworkers argued that this is discrimination, because it was an attack on an important part of their identity, and it affected them psychologically and emotionally. The discrimination affected their lifestyles, as they had to
hide their sexual identities and pretend to be heterosexual, because they feared for their lives. Living and maintaining heterosexual lives in spaces of discrimination hinders them from questioning stereotypes about sexual minorities, and it limits their agency. One participant witnessed a colleague resigning from work because of his sexual identity, and he believed it constituted discrimination, because the colleague had reported concerns about his safety as a homosexual man at work, and he was persecuted further by management and his concerns were disregarded. The colleague did not feel protected at work, and he believed that taking the issue further was not going to help. Although the participant was a manager and could intervene, he chose not to do so, because his intentions could be questioned and his sexual identity exposed.

To cope with the overt discrimination, and for their own safety, the participants engaged in passing as a coping strategy. Passing involved adopting heterosexual identities and living explicit heterosexual lives in spaces of discrimination. Some of them engaged in relationships with women, while others developed fictitious heterosexual romantic partners. They could not be directly discriminated against, because their sexual identity was not known, and they denied being homosexual if there was any suspicion or questions about their sexual identity. The participants were also very silent about homosexual issues, they chose not to associate with men who portrayed an explicit homosexual identity in their communities or at work, and they avoided being too effeminate. As a result, they isolated themselves from other people, especially at work, to avoid discussions that would require them to talk about their romantic relationships and families. This is an unpleasant reality, because the participants are losing control over their own lives and lifestyles while trying to protect their well-being. Their agency is limited by fear, and their lives are constrained by the stigma attached to their sexual identities. Their right to freely express themselves and enjoy the privileges afforded to them by the Constitution of South Africa, which advocates for freedom of expression and equality, are being taken away by heteronormative structures, which seek to silence alternative sexualities.

Using an intersectional framework allowed me to dissect the intersections that existed between participants’ identities, providing an understanding of the lived experience of black homosexual male mineworkers. Identity markers that informed participants’ experiences of discrimination in addition to their sexual identity included race, religion, cultural tradition and social background. Participants’ narratives indicated that being homosexual, black and Christian can be a struggle. They grew up in black rural communities, where it was believed that homosexuality goes against African cultural traditions, and that black people therefore
cannot be homosexual. As black homosexual men, they were driven to hide their sexual identities within their communities, within their families and in the workplace, because they worked alongside many black male colleagues who also held very strong African cultural beliefs that opposed homosexuality. Religion was infused with cultural beliefs, and having grown up in Christian families, some of the participants experienced difficulty accepting their sexual identities, and they felt like outcasts in their churches. Some of them indicated that they are Christian but that they are not active in their churches, because of the negative perceptions regarding homosexuals in the Christian religion. Many of their colleagues were also Christian, and they explicitly used the religion to legitimise their lack of acceptance of homosexuality and their negative attitudes towards homosexuals. The findings of this dissertation confirm Simon Nkoli’s statement in De Ru (2013), when he explained that he could not be free as a black man if he was not free as a homosexual man. The freedom of black homosexual male mineworkers is in the hands of the powerful heteronormative structures of our society. This is no different from apartheid, since black homosexual male mineworkers’ lives in spaces of discrimination are similar to living in prison cells, where everything they do is observed and they are likely to face punishment should they break the rules.

7.3 Triple identities and living multiple lives

The study found that heteronormative spaces shape the construction and performance of (homo)sexual identities. The spaces that participants lived and worked in were characterised by discrimination against homosexual people, leading to the development of fear among the participants. A significant finding from this study was black homosexual male mineworkers’ construction of triple identities to cope with the intolerance of homosexuals in spaces of discrimination. They lived multiple lives, and this formed the crux of the study, because it highlighted the struggles of black homosexual male mineworkers in different spaces of their lives. Fear drove participants to construct and perform socially acceptable identities to avoid the stigma attached to homosexuality in heteronormative spaces. While adopting heterosexual identities was fruitful in protecting the participants’ well-being, it had negative implications for their lives and their understandings of who they are.

Living multiple lives meant that participants adopted multiple personas with different traits, as stipulated by the requirements of heteronormative spaces. This process of constantly moving back and forth between personas that contradicted each other prevented the black homosexual male mineworkers from living the fulfilled lives that they desired. Home and friendships are
spaces that are supposed to provide unconditional love, care and safety, but for the black homosexual male mineworkers in this study they were spaces of daily struggles for acceptance. Similarly, workplaces are supposed to be safe spaces, since people spend a lot of their time working, but participants in this study experienced their workplaces as antagonistic spaces seeking to erase them. The participants were generally unhappy in their workplaces, and this was expressed through their feelings of loneliness and isolation in spaces of work. They were alienated from their true sexual identities, their real lives and their true sense of self. Spaces to explore their true selves were constrained and bombarded with heteronormative rules, which they had to navigate with extreme care.

7.4 Limitations experienced in conducting the study

Initially a life history approach was chosen for the data collection process, and that required three or more in-depth interviews with each participant, lasting about 60 to 90 minutes each. This proved to be difficult, since access was limited, and most of the interviews were postponed a few times before the first interview. Due to the difficulty in accessing participants, the research method was changed to in-depth interviews, and I was able to secure at least a single interview with each participant. Consequently, the sample size was small, consisting of only five black homosexual male mineworkers. Some of the interviews were cancelled at the last minute, and the sensitivity of the subject under study was a limitation, since many of the people who were approached were not comfortable discussing private aspects of their lives with a researcher, especially considering that they would be recorded. Informing potential participants of the confidentiality of the study and assuring them that the information they provided would be treated with the strictest confidentiality was not sufficient to gain their trust and break the silence. This is because the black homosexual male mineworkers’ fear of exposure was too great, and they were not willing to risk being exposed. The mining workplace is an intimidating space, and the black homosexual male mineworkers have internalised silence and learnt to live with the heteronormative reality of the space, making it difficult for a researcher to access them and break the culture of silence in the industry.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

The study brought attention to a field of research that is neglected, especially in the South African context, and it has shown that discrimination against black homosexual male mineworkers is prevalent in mining workplaces. The study can be expanded on by broadening
the focus to include other sexual minorities in other masculine workplaces, such as the construction and manufacturing fields. Widening the scope of the study will allow for a larger sample size and a broader understanding of homosexual workers’ experiences in South African masculine or male-dominated workplaces, by comparing the experiences of homosexual men in different workplaces. From this, practical interventions can be developed, and recommendations can be made on how to make not just the mining industry, but most South African masculine workplaces, friendly and accommodating for homosexual men. This study also identified three identities adopted by homosexual mineworkers in various heteronormative spaces, and future research can expand on this phenomenon by paying specific attention to the construction of multiple sexual identities in other spaces of socialisation and considering the construction of non-heterosexual African masculinities in spaces dominated by men.

It is due to our multiple identities that we experience life differently, depending on space and context. At the same time, power operates in many different ways to shape our experiences. Adopting intersectionality to analyse the identity markers of black homosexual male mineworkers helped to develop my understanding of how power enforced by heteropatriarchal structures of society has structured the identities of the participants and shaped their experiences. It was important to use intersectionality in order to move away from the trend of studying experiences of LGBTIQ+ workers in a vacuum. I focused on the experiences of the gay category among LGBTIQ+ people, and I narrowed the gay category down to a subgroup, as distinguished by the unique identity markers of the group. This allowed me to acquire a nuanced understanding of black homosexual male mineworkers’ experiences. Their experiences were not overshadowed by other categories and subcategories of LGBTIQ+ people. While sexual minorities experience discrimination in similar ways, they have different social statuses, which distinguish them from each other and inform the lifestyle decisions that they make in their different contexts. Future studies that adopt the intersectional approach to study LGBTIQ+ workers’ experiences can acquire a special understanding of sexual minority struggles as informed by various identity markers and contexts. Nuanced understandings of not just intergroups but intragroups of the LGBTIQ+ community can be helpful in developing strategies that will assist different groups in various spaces of discrimination. This study has shown that the realities of LGBTIQ+ workers differ in various spaces and stages of their lives, and it is only when we consider the intersecting identity markers that uniquely shape their lived experience that we can produce research that is representative of the separate categories of LGBTIQ+ people.
7.6 Concluding remarks

While there were serious limitations in executing the study, the four objectives of the study were achieved, and the research question was answered. Limitations of the study were highlighted, and recommendations were made for future research. Based on the findings of the study, it is argued that discrimination against black homosexual male mineworkers is evident, and that it significantly shapes their lives and lifestyle decisions. It is also worth noting that working in a heteronormative and masculine workplace contributed significantly to the intensity of workplace discrimination in the mining industry and the silencing of the black homosexual male mineworkers in this study. While we live in a country that protects the rights of LGBTIQ+ people on a legislative level, intolerance is still very strong on the social level. This study is consistent with many studies, which have found that legislation is not enough to change the general negative perception of South Africans regarding homosexuality. Sexual minorities continue to experience challenges of intolerance and discrimination in heteronormative spaces.

Ideally, South Africa, as a democratic state, should protect homosexual mineworkers. However, mining companies also need to take responsibility in ensuring that their homosexual employees are able to report discrimination and get the support they need. This can start by the companies providing sexual diversity education to employees, to create a space for dialogue on issues of sexuality. Talking and acknowledging that there are sexually diverse people in the mining industry and other private and social spaces would be a good start to creating sexually inclusive environments and minimising the heteronormative bias in spaces of discrimination. Company policies should explicitly indicate how black homosexual male mineworkers are protected in their workplaces, and they should state procedures that they should follow when they experience discrimination. Management should be held accountable in enforcing these policies. Structures can be formed to offer support and address specifically issues of not just homosexual mineworkers, but LGBTIQ+ workers in general. There also needs to be more widespread education on sexual diversity, and more visible platforms for spreading knowledge about how every individual in their personal capacity can change the atmosphere of intolerance, by embracing sexual diversity and sharing the positive message of empathy and tolerance with people around them. Unless discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people in South Africa becomes a recognised national problem and people start to empathise with LGBTIQ+ people and
recognise the unpleasant effects the hate has on the lives of sexual minorities, we will not see the change we desire in our South African society.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

Interview guide: How do black homosexual mineworkers construct and manage their (homo)sexual identities in different spaces of discrimination?

1 Biographical questions

1.1 What is your name?
1.2 Which province are you from?
1.3 Where do you stay currently?
1.4 What is your sex?
1.5 What is your age?
1.6 What position do you hold at work?
1.7 What is your sexual identity?
1.8 What is your relationship status?
1.9 When did you start working in the mine?

2 Background questions

2.1 Tell me more about your childhood. How would you describe your childhood?
2.2 How would you classify your sexuality?
2.3 What does your sexual identity mean to you?
2.4 If you are out to your family or friends, how would you describe their feelings about your sexuality?
2.5 In your opinion, how are gay people perceived in the community you grew up in?
2.6 What impact did that have on you and your lifestyle growing up?
2.7 Can you describe the situation for gay people in your community?

3 What are the behaviours and attitudes that black homosexual mineworkers believe constitute discrimination based on sexual identity and why?

3.1 What is your understanding of discrimination based on your sexual identity?
3.2 What kind of behaviours do you find offensive from community members and colleagues at work?
3.3 How would you define your supervisor/manager’s attitude towards you or other gay workers?

4 What are some of the challenges that black homosexual mineworkers face in different spaces of discrimination?

4.1 How open are you about your sexuality at home, in your community and at work?
4.2 How would you describe conversations about gay people amongst community members, friends and colleagues at work?
4.3 If you are in a relationship, can you describe your colleagues’ reactions when you talk to them about your partner?
4.4 What kind of conversations do you have with your gay colleagues at work?
4.5 In which ways does your sexuality impact on your everyday life?
4.6 Tell me about a situation, if there is, where you experienced or witnessed any kind of violence against gay colleagues at work.

5 How do identity markers such as gender, race, religion and sexuality inform black homosexual mineworkers’ experiences of discrimination?

5.1 How do you feel as a gay black man at home and at work?
5.2 Can you describe your relationships with gay colleagues at work?
5.3 To what extent are you comfortable with an open homosexual life?

6 What are some of the strategies that black homosexual mineworkers use to manage their sexual identities within different spaces of discrimination?

6.1 Can you describe your interview for the position you are currently occupying?
6.2 What was the hiring process?
6.3 How would you describe your relationships with straight men in your community and at work?
6.4 How do you act around straight colleagues?
6.5 How do you feel about being a gay man working with straight men?
6.6 To what extent do you share information regarding your sexual identity with straight colleagues?
6.7 How do you behave around family and community members?
6.8 How do you describe yourself to other people in your community?
Appendix B: Recording consent form

Informed Consent Form

Informed consent for Recording of Interview

Spaces of Discrimination and Multiple Identities: Experiences of Black Homosexual Mineworkers

I, .................................................................................. (Full names of the participant) hereby agree to participate voluntarily in the study. I acknowledge that I will be interviewed and all the interviews will be audio recorded as part of an audit trail.

Signature of participant..................................................Date.................................
Appendix C: Information sheet

Information Sheet /Letter

Spaces of Discrimination and Multiple Identities: Experiences of Black Homosexual Mineworkers

Dear Participant

My name is Tshepo Maake, a Master's student at the University of Johannesburg, Department of Sociology. As part of my Master's degree requirements, I am currently doing a study on discrimination with a specific focus on the experiences of black homosexual mineworkers. The study seeks to explore how black homosexual mineworkers construct and manage their sexual identities in heteronormative spaces.

Participation in the study will require you to take part in at least two interviews that will be conducted over a period of three days, consecutively or periodically, depending on your availability. The interviews will be recorded and I will be taking notes during the interviews. The duration of a single interview will be 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews will take place in an area that is not in close proximity to your workplace and is convenient for you. The collected data will be kept safe and it will only be available to my supervisors, Prof Pragna Rugunanan and Ms Letitia Smuts, and me. The interviews will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and personal information unless you wish to use your real name.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and will not include any rewards or penalties. You can decline to participate in the study or withdraw participation at any time with no repercussions or penalties. The information collected will be used in completing the Masters' dissertation and for future publications.

Should you have any questions or require clarity on any aspects of the study, during or after the completion of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on my cellphone number: 0797225049 or via email: tbmaake@gmail.com

Supervisors’ contact details
Prof Pragna Rugunanan: prugunanan@uj.ac.za
Ms Letitia Smuts: lsmuts@uj.ac.za

Thank you for your participation

Kind regards
Tshepo Maake
Appendix D: Informed consent form

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Spaces of Discrimination and Multiple Identities: Experiences of Black Homosexual Mineworkers

I, ........................................................................................................... (Full names of the participant) hereby agree to participate voluntarily in the study. I acknowledge that I will be interviewed for 60 to 90 minutes. I understand that I will not be rewarded for participating in the study and I can withdraw from participating at any time without penalties or consequences. I understand that all the collected information will be kept safe and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity and personal information.

Signature of participant........................................Date..............................
Appendix E: Ethical clearance letter

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

12 August 2018

<table>
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<tr>
<td>REVIEW OUTCOME</td>
<td>Approved with Recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPLICANT</td>
<td>Maake T</td>
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<tr>
<td>TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT</td>
<td>Workplace Discrimination and Sexual Identity: Black Male Foreign Homosexual Mineworkers' Experiences in a South African Mine</td>
</tr>
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<td>DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
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<td>SUPERVISOR/S</td>
<td>Prof. P. Rugumanan and Ms I. Smuts</td>
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Dear Maake,

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and would like to confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities; University of Johannesburg. We have made some recommendations, set out below, for consideration in consultation with your supervisors.

The risks are to the participant with respect to potentially increasing being subjected to discrimination and job loss should information about their sexual identity become known. The applicant has made changes to the proposal which are sufficient, but there are a few small details that are required to the form and to the ICF. These are detailed below.

- Information sheet- needs to be more comprehensive in order for participants to make a fully informed choice about participation. To this end it needs to spell out the risks and benefits of participation in the research. It also requires more detail on the procedures, how the participant was chosen / selected and the offer for counselling / support needs to be included as well.
- The ethics form requires changes to acknowledge the risk to participants; these need to be selected:
  - Individuals who may be considered vulnerable (e.g. pregnant women; abused persons; victimised persons)
  - Examining potentially sensitive or contentious issues
Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof Grace Khunou
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