Spring 2022

Factors Driving Changing Community Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in Cato Manor, KwaZulu-Natal

Isabella van der Weide

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

Part of the African Languages and Societies Commons, African Studies Commons, Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons, Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons, and the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3491

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.
Factors Driving Changing Community Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in Cato Manor, KwaZulu-Natal

Isabella van der Weide

Advisor: Janine Hicks, University of KwaZulu-Natal

May 20, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permission</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>I HEREBY GRANT PERMISSION FOR WORLD LEARNING TO INCLUDE MY ISP IN ITS PERMANENT LIBRARY COLLECTION.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>I HEREBY GRANT PERMISSION FOR WORLD LEARNING TO RELEASE MY ISP IN ANY FORMAT TO INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS OR LIBRARIES IN THE HOST COUNTRY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES AS DETERMINED BY SIT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>I HEREBY GRANT PERMISSION FOR WORLD LEARNING TO PUBLISH MY ISP ON ITS WEBSITES AND IN ANY OF ITS DIGITAL/ELECTRONIC COLLECTIONS, AND TO REPRODUCE AND TRANSMIT MY ISP ELECTRONICALLY. I UNDERSTAND THAT WORLD LEARNING’S WEBSITES AND DIGITAL COLLECTIONS ARE AVAILABLE VIA THE INTERNET. I AGREE THAT WORLD LEARNING IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY UNAUTHORIZED USE OF MY ISP BY ANY THIRD PARTY WHO MIGHT ACCESS IT ON THE INTERNET OR OTHERWISE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Acknowledgements

Thank you to Janine Hicks, the advisor of this project, for her assistance in designing this study, and her invaluable advice on the organization and presentation of the data.

Thank you to Zed McGladdery for his advice throughout the data collection phase of the project, and his support in completing the written report.

Thank you to Nothando Mhlongo, whose work as a community liaison was absolutely essential to the success of this study.

Finally, thank you to all the people in Cato Manor who agreed to fill out a survey, have a conversation with a stranger, open their home as an interview site, or, in many cases, do all three.
II. Abstract

Acceptance of LGBTQ people is an important and encouraging area of social progress. As attitudes change in South Africa and across the world, it is important to understand the drivers of change and how that change is experienced within communities. Using both semi-structured interviews (n=19) and collection of survey data (n=30), this study interrogated the factors that formed and changed views on gay and lesbian people among respondents from a community in Cato Manor, a peri-urban area near Durban, South Africa. About half of all participants reported an opinion change. Interview participants who experienced opinion change most commonly reported the change to be triggered by having close personal gay or lesbian contacts. A culture of silence, traditional gender norms, and religion were found to form baseline opinions within the community, contributing a variety of ideas promoting both tolerance and intolerance. Knowledge of legal protections for gay and lesbian people and consistent exposure to information about LGBTQ people through television and LGBTQ community presence was found to normalize the existence of gay and lesbian people.
III. Frequently Used Terms

LGBTQ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer. An umbrella acronym that is intended to encompass a community of people whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity defy traditional expectations.

Contact Theory - the idea that prejudice against a minority group is greatly reduced through contact with members of that group
IV. Introduction

Over the past several decades, public opinion on LGBTQ people has been gradually improving in many countries worldwide (Flores 2019). Acceptance, particularly within the family, is an important protective factor for the physical and mental wellbeing of LGBTQ adolescents and young adults (Ryan et al. 2010). Some changes, like legislative progress, onscreen representation, and demographic trends in acceptance, are easy to measure, but the actual process by which views evolve and the agents involved in this change are more difficult to quantify, and correspondingly more difficult to find literature addressing. In South Africa as a whole, and specifically in Cato Manor, a peri-urban area near the city of Durban, trends in these easily measurable variables point tantalizingly toward a recent shift in opinion that provides an opportunity to study this process.

Three main questions guided this inquiry, first: do members of a community in Cato Manor feel that their opinions, and the opinions of their community have changed over the past several years? Understanding opinion change requires both that some amount of opinion change has happened, and that people recognize that change, either in their own personal history, or in the community around them. Second: what factors do community members identify as reasons for their change in opinion? If opinions have not changed, what factors have held opinions static? This gets to the “why” of opinion change. An opinion at rest tends to stay at rest, so if opinions are shifting, it is worth investigating what provided the push. The third question, informed by literature in the field, begins to hypothesize about those opinion-pushing agents: how does the effect of exposure to LGBTQ representation on television compare to the effect of exposure to in-person contact with LGBTQ people within this community? Or, broadly, how do agents of opinion change identified in the second question relate to each other?

I hope that my research, in addressing these questions, can help paint at least part of a clearer picture of the process of opinion change on LGBTQ topics at an individual and community level.
V. Context

In post-apartheid South Africa, significant legislative protections for LGBTQ people have followed from Section 9 of the constitution, which bans unfair discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation, among other categories (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 1996). Supported by this constitutional right, South Africa has passed, among others, the Employment Equality Act of 1998, banning employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, the Children’s Act of 2005, giving same-sex couples the right to adopt, and the Civil Union Act of 2006, allowing for same-sex marriage. These laws are important steps toward an inclusive and fair society, but they are not necessarily the indicators of broad social acceptance that, at first blush, they may seem to be.

A 32-question module on sexual orientation and gender identity was included on the 2016 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), a yearly survey carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council. The survey found that, in a geographically representative sample of more than 3000 adults, while most adults (nearly 2/3rds) supported keeping the current constitutional protections for LGBTQ people, a similar percentage (>60%) still agreed with statements like “I think gay men are disgusting” and “I think lesbians are disgusting” (Sutherland et al. 2016). Factors that correlated with acceptance in this study included being 20-24 years old, having high education and income levels, being moderately religious, and having a gay or lesbian friend or family member. The prospective study population, a peri-urban community near Durban, South Africa, exhibits an interesting variety of these characteristics. The population of eThekwini Ward 29, in which the community is located, has a median age of 25 years, an average household income of R14,600 (about half the average for all of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)), and 46.3% of the population has completed Matric or higher (compared to 39.31% for all of KZN) (Wazimap Profile: Ward 29 (59500029), eThekwini, KwaZulu-Natal.). While demographic information like this is readily available, it is understandably more difficult to find information on factors like level of religiousness or connections to LGBTQ family and friends.

One potential doorway that LGBTQ people have into homes in Cato Manor, for which data is available, is television. Some of the most popular programs on SABC1 primetime TV are soap operas, or “soapies” and dramas. Top shows include Uzalo, Generations: The Legacy, and Skeem Saam. In February 2022, Uzalo had more that 6.5 million viewers (“February 2022 Top TV
Programs” 2022). In the past few years, all these shows have featured gay characters. In eThekwini Ward 26, 68% of households have access to a TV. These factors, and the overall tide of increasing acceptance toward LGBTQ people, suggest that opinions on LGBTQ people among individuals in the prospective study population have likely been evolving over recent years.

VI. Literature Review

Demographic and social background, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggest that opinions on LGBTQ people within the study community in Cato Manor may have changed over the past several years. However, the mechanism for this potential change is more complicated to elucidate. Studies that examine this topic within other contexts or from other perspectives are helpful to understand what factors or sources of information might play a role in changing opinions within this community. One major theory of social change with respect to LGBTQ acceptance is contact theory, the idea that contact with members of a minority group increases social acceptance of those groups. While this concept is somewhat intuitive, it is not easy to collect empirical evidence to support. Dr. Daniel DellaPosta, studying contact theory in the US, approached the question using previously collected survey data from 2006-2010, but applying a new analytical framework (DellaPosta 2018). By tracking both contact with gay people and attitudes about gay people over time, DellaPosta was able to create a baseline, and then track the same respondent’s changing views. DellaPosta found that individuals who had contact with a gay or lesbian person were more likely to change their views in support of same-sex marriage.

Another study from the US separated out the impact of different kinds of contact, specifically differentiating between friendship and acquaintances. This research group found that, across three political issues of relevance to LGBTQ people: employment policy, marriage policy, and adoption policy, mathematically predicted support was significantly higher across all issues for those with one or more close gay or lesbian friends. The impact of having LGBTQ acquaintances, or having both friends and acquaintances was more complex, the effect of these conditions varied between by issue and by ideology (Kordsmeier, Tumlison, and Song 2019). These conditions sometimes improve and sometimes do not impact predicted support. The authors hypothesize that those who are more conservative may be hesitant to develop a friendship with
an LGBTQ acquaintance, or, even if they do interact positively with gay acquaintances, may interpret their gay acquaintances as not broadly representative of gay people.

While DellaPosta and Kordsmeier focus on in-person contact, with the growth of media and social media, there are also new ways to find contact. Through TV and digital creators, it is possible for a consumer of entertainment to form a one-sided relationship with a character or media personality, referred to as a parasocial relationship. Dr.’s Sabina Lissitsa and Nonna Kushnirovich studied how exposure to LGBTQ-related content was tied to attitudes about, and real-life contact with, LGBTQ people. The study, which took place in Israel, employed a mixed-methodology approach. Through a survey, Lissitsa and Kushnirovich found that greater exposure to LGBTQ-related media content correlated with more positive attitudes toward the LGBTQ community (Lissitsa and Kushnirovich 2020). This finding is supported by another study in the US, that also found media exposure to correspond with “liberal attitudes” about homosexuality, particularly in younger people (Ayoub and Garretson 2017). Lissitsa and Kushnirovich’s in-depth interviews provided context for this association; media exposure created a sense of humanization, even imagined interaction, with LGBTQ people.

Both of these studies focus mainly on social media, but a small qualitative study from the University of Johannesburg focused on television, specifically on South African soap operas (Brown 2020). Brown interviewed nine students with self-identified minority sexual identities about their experiences watching LGBTQ plots on “soapis” at home. While, in some contexts, these storylines were a way for family members to voice their disapproval of homosexuality, in others they provided an impetus to express acceptance. The voices of minority sexual identity students are incredibly valuable to understanding how TV shapes the social landscape of LGBTQ acceptance and rejection.

Even while contact with LGBTQ people may impact support for legislative policies, there is also evidence that the relationship between opinion and policy goes the other way as well. Ofosu et al. found that, following the legalization of same-sex marriage in the US in 2016 antigay bias declined at a steeper rate than it had prior to the 2016 ruling. While the effect was modest, this suggest that legal changes may inform the attitudes of citizens (Ofosu et al. 2019). This idea is particularly intriguing in the context of South Africa, which has strong legal protections for gay
and lesbian people that were likely introduced before the majority of citizens supported those policies.

**VII. Methods**

**Sampling**

Convenience and purposive sampling were employed in selecting participants for this study. Most participants were recruited through Nothando Mhlongo, a community contact in Cato Manor and an employee of the School for International Training (SIT). I recruited two additional participants. These members of the study community were personally familiar to me because, prior to the start of the study, I spent a month living in the study community. In total, there were 32 study participants: 30 survey respondents and 19 interviewees. 2 participants completed the interview only, 17 completed both the survey and the interview, and 13 completed the survey only. The sample population was limited to adults living in the study community who were proficient in English, the language in which the survey was written, and the interviews were carried out. The community of Cato Manor was chosen for this study both because of familiarity to the author, and because, anecdotal evidence collected prior to the design of the study suggested that opinions on LGBTQ people had improved in this community over the past several years. In order to gain a variety of viewpoints, adults of any age were able to participate in the study. Participants were purposively selected to represent a range of ages and to achieve a relatively even male/female split in the participant population. A couple of participants were purposively selected for their religious views, again with the hope of collecting a variety of perspectives. The age and gender demographics of the study population are specified in Table 1. As there was no control population, this study did not follow an experimental approach, but will rather sought to describe and interpret, in depth, the opinions and experiences of one community.
Table 1: Demographic breakdown of all study participants. Dashes indicate that no participants of that age and gender were included.

Practically, the study population was also be limited to those who were willing to be interviewed about their views on LGBTQ people. This requirement could reasonably be expected to limit the number of participants who are strongly anti-LGBTQ or disgusted by the idea of LGBTQ people. This may also drive away closeted LGBTQ people, through fear of any association with the topic. The sampling method, mainly though a single contact, also introduces bias by relying on social connections rather than selecting randomly. This means that the participant population was not representative of the population of Cato Manor and therefore findings of this study cannot be generalized the whole community of Cato Manor. Despite this drawback, this sampling method was by far the most practical and safest option.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a survey and through semi-structured interviews. I, the author, served as the interviewer and administered the survey to those participants who were also interviewed. Nothando Mhlongo briefed potential participants on what the study would entail prior to their involvement in the study. Ms. Mhlongo also handled the distribution and administration of surveys to those participants who participated in the survey only. Participants were compensated for their time in the amount of R20 for those who participated in the survey and R50 for those who participated in the interview. During the recruitment process, this was not generally highlighted, limiting the potential for survey participation motivated by monetary interest alone. Participants were informed of that they would be monetarily compensated as part of the informed consent process prior to any data collection.

The survey, copied in full in Appendix 1, was developed using questions from the 2016 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), questions adapted from a study on the influence on
LGBTQ-inclusive TV by Harry Yaojun Yan, and questions developed by the author (Sutherland et al. 2016; Yan 2019). A draft of the survey was piloted with two community members. Pilot testers included one very strong English speaker and one less-strong English speaker. Following the recommendations of pilot testers, the survey was edited to improve clarity and to customize the questions to the culture. The most significant change made as a result of this feedback was the separation of opinion questions about gay people from those about lesbians.

The survey was completed on paper and was designed to fit on to two double sided sheets of A4 paper. Prior to handing out the survey, I verbally explained the general purpose of the survey, that the data would be kept anonymous, and that participants are free to skip questions or stop the survey at any point. For those surveys distributed by Ms. Mhlongo, this responsibility was delegated to her. This information was also written in plain language at the top of the survey. The full survey consisted of 20 questions. Length was limited to allow participants to complete the survey in 5-10 minutes, prior to the start of the interview. Surveys were administered before the interview to limit any impact of the interview experience on survey responses. When I administered the survey, I told participants that if they did not understand a survey question they were welcome to ask me for clarification. When participants did ask for assistance, I simply read the text of the question aloud to them. Often this was sufficient explanation. While this practice introduced a difference between the conditions under which different participants took the survey, it was deemed worthwhile as a way to collect more accurate responses. After their completion, surveys were assigned a one- or two-letter identifier. No identifying information about survey participants was associated with recorded survey responses. Participants were instructed not to write their name anywhere on the survey.

An interview guide was developed and piloted with two community members. Some interview questions were be adapted from questions collated in a report on social acceptance of LGBTQ people worldwide by Dr. Andrew R. Flores, and others were developed using language borrowed from the 2016 SASAS (Flores 2019; Sutherland et al. 2016). Both pilot interviews addressed the topics important to the study and interview questions were found to be easy to understand. Given this result, and the general plan that interviews be only semi-structured, data collected in pilot interviews was deemed useable in the study. Through several interviews, the exact order and phrasing of questions was subtly refined. Specific questions about LGBTQ representation on
television were always asked after general questions about opinion and opinion change in order to limit suggestion bias. The typical structure of an interview, including all main questions and several typical follow-up questions is available in Appendix 2.

Interviews were carried out in person, on local properties most convenient to the interviewee. The location and timing of interviews was coordinated by Ms. Mhlongo. Interview settings ranged from totally private (a closed room) to semi-private (in a living room while other people were occasionally present in a connected kitchen). The interview settings were noted following each interview. During recruitment, the general purpose and topic of the interview was explained. Prior to starting the interview, participants were be asked if they were willing to be recorded. Once recording, I explained to participants how the information they provided would be used and reiterated that they were welcome to skip questions or stop the interview at any time. Participants were also informed that, if they decided after interviewing that they did not want any of the information they provided to be included, they could inform me before May 1, 2022 and the recording and transcript of their interview would be deleted. Finally, participants were asked if they were willing to be quoted in the final written product without their name attached to their comments. All interviewees said they were willing to be quoted.

After obtaining recorded verbal consent, I began the interview. Interviews were conducted as semi-structured conversations. An on-paper interview guide was not used during interviews. This meant that notes could not be taking during the interview process. This choice was made in response to the observation during the first few minutes of pilot interviews that the act of notetaking, given the distraction to the interviewer, conversational halt, and broken eye contact that it caused was not worth the recording of nonverbal responses that it enabled. Before concluding the recording, participants were asked if they would be willing to be contacted in the future, for collection of further information on their responses. Interview data was assigned an identifying number based on interview order during the data collection process. For the written report, a random number generator was used to assign an identifying letter to each interviewee.
Data Analysis

Survey responses were converted to numerical values, then entered into Microsoft Excel to enable graphing and statistical analysis. In the case of skipped questions or unclear answers (i.e. multiple answers checked for a question requiring only one answer, check marks outside of answer boxes), no data was collected for that particular question. Responses to questions on acceptance level were averaged and graphed using pie charts to visualize the distribution of responses. Averages were compared between demographic groups, but no statistically significant differences were found. Some of these differences are reported in the findings section, but with clear explanation that differences are not statistically significant.

Interview recordings were transcribed either completely or in part. Major themes that arose obviously during this interviewing process were added to a code book. As new themes arose, they were added as well to allow for concurrent transcription and coding. For speed, several of the later interviews were not transcribed in full. Rather, interview recordings were listened to and sections relating to established codes were transcribed for future reference. Particularly notable sections of these interviews were also transcribed, even if they did not fit an existing code. For analysis and writing, codes were be grouped, broadened, or deemed irrelevant to the guiding questions of this particular study. This resulted in the generation of fewer, more meaningful themes (Elliott 2018). An effort was made to not merely describe, but analyze, link, and contextualize, these broad themes to allow the reader to better understand and make meaning from the information provided (Eakin and Gladstone 2020).

VIII. Ethical Considerations

Throughout this study, careful attention was paid to the protection of vulnerable populations, informed consent of participants, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality. Vulnerable populations were not actively sought out as participants for this study, however there were three participants who disclosed LGBTQ identities. As part of the survey, participants were asked to self-identify their own sexual orientation. This question was placed on an inside page of the survey to decrease the chance that this information could be seen by someone glancing at a survey prior to submission. Participants were clearly informed that were able to skip any question. Participants
were not asked about their own sexual orientation during interviews, although many, gay and straight alike, chose to disclose this information.

In order to protect this these participants, and any closeted participants, it was be made clear to people recruited for the study that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities were welcome to participate. This was done to help to avoid any association of involvement in the study with being LGBTQ. Since most contact was established through Ms. Mhlongo, for all participants except the two that I recruited, I did not collect personal contact information. It was not deemed necessary to get back in contact with any participants, so no contact information was ever recorded alongside data. No contact information or identifying information was recorded for survey participants. In all written and recorded data, the participant was only identified by participant number, age, and gender. In this written product, efforts have been taken to ensure that no identifying information be included for any participant, with extra attention paid to those participants who disclosed LGBTQ identities.

Privacy was emphasized during the establishment of informed consent. Participants were told that they were free to withhold any information that they are not comfortable sharing.

The ability of the participant to skip any questions or prematurely halt participation in the study (both survey and interview) was clearly stated. Interview participants were also informed that they had the right to withdraw the data they provided from the study. During interviews, I paid close attention to participant body language. I engaged with ideas by asking follow-up questions and try to fully understand ideas expressed by the interviewee. I maintained a non-judgemental attitude toward interviewees regardless of whether their statements aligned or conflicted with my personal views. While there was never a scenario in which an interviewee became very uncomfortable, I was cautious of this possibility, and prepared to hold back follow-up questions, to avoid pressuring the interviewee into sharing information that they would rather keep private. Survey participants did not have the option to withdraw data after submitting the survey, as this data was completely anonymous, and so it would not have been possible to correlate data to the individual who may want to remove their data.

In order to maintain anonymity, all data was identified by number or letter, rather than by name. While I was unavoidably aware of the identities and names of interview participants, and could
have re-established contact through Ms. Mhlongo, the names and contact information of participants were never recorded with the data. In this written product, identifying details about like those about place of work, participation in activities with limited group size, and recent public life occurrences (weddings, funerals, etc.) were not included or were obfuscated.

Through all steps of the data collection and analysis process data was kept confidential. Surveys, once completed and returned to me, were stored in a folder at my residence. Data from surveys was transferred into an Excel spreadsheet for storage and analysis. I completed all data transfer from paper surveys to Excel. The raw data stored in an Excel spreadsheet was only ever seen by myself. Paper surveys were retained until the conclusion of the study. Interview data was recorded on a personal phone, which was kept with me at all times when not in my residence. Interview audio files were saved with only participant number, age, gender, and date, not name. To prevent data loss, audio files were also transferred to my laptop and to USB drive, which was kept secure, with my personal belongings. Interviews were transcribed for further analysis and stored in files only identified by participant number, age, and gender, not by name. All data stored digitally was stored on a password protected laptop.

**IX. Findings and Analysis**

Here, I present and discuss my findings from both survey and interview responses. Findings are grouped by topic. Findings about general opinions and opinion change are presented first, followed by a deeper inspection of several factors identified to be common opinion forming or opinion changing agents. Analysis is included under a separate heading within each topic. The data are organized into a total of nine sections, which are grouped by topic. The first section, General Opinions and Opinion Change, stands alone, providing general information about the opinions of survey participants, and about the limitations of the data, which are useful to understanding the following eight sections. These eight sections all represent sources of information or processes of learning information that interview participants reported were relevant to their opinions about LGBTQ people. The first grouping, consisting of sections two (Culture of Silence), three (Traditional Gender Roles), and four (Religion), examines “Exposure to Established Ideas”. The sources in these sections are those that have existed in the community espousing traditional ideas, for a long time. Ideas gathered from these sources are generally less
Factors Driving Changing Community Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians

accepting of LGBTQ people, although this is by no means uniformly true. The following two groupings focus on sources and processes through which individuals are exposed to more contemporary ideas. These ideas tend to disrupt traditional preconceptions, though, again, this cannot be assumed to be true in all cases. The groupings are split by the manner in which individuals are exposed to these ideas. The second grouping in entitled “Interactive Exposure to Contemporary Ideas” includes sections five (Personal Contact) and six (Active Questioning and Knowledge Seeking). Experiences within both of these categories expose the individual to ideas in a format that they must actively engage with. This active process is found to be cited often by those with specific stories of opinion change. The third and final grouping, “Passive Exposure to Contemporary Ideas” includes sections seven (Television), eight (Legal Re-norming), and nine (Community Contact). All three of these sources of information can communicate contemporary ideas in formats that do not demand engagement, but rather make ideas consistently present in the background. For some these ideas are latched on to and can become very personally important, for others, their power is in being mundane, normalizing.

1. General Opinions and Opinion Change

Findings

The vast majority of survey respondents indicated broadly accepting views about gay and lesbian people. Out of 30 individuals surveyed, 90% indicated (either agreed or strongly agreed) that they would accept a family member who came out as gay, and 80% indicated that they would accept a lesbian family member. 90% of individuals indicated that they thought a gay person should still be allowed to be part of their culture and traditions, and 80% indicated that they thought a lesbian person should be similarly included (Fig. 1). Notably, the fact that these two sets of percentages are exactly the same is a matter of chance and is not because all individuals had the same response to the question about familial acceptance as they did to the question about cultural acceptance.
Figure 1: Most survey respondents (n=30) reported that they would accept a gay or lesbian family member and that gay and lesbian people should be allowed to participate culturally. Opinions about gay and lesbian people, measured by both familial and culture acceptance, appear to be slightly more positive in the group of survey respondents who were also interviewed than among participants who only took part in the survey. While these differences are not statistically significant, they are helpful to understand possible biases in the interview participant sampling procedures.

46% (13 out of the 28 respondents who marked an answer) answered “Yes” to the question “Was there a time in your life when you felt differently about gay and lesbian people than you do now?”. It was noted that this question may have been difficult for some respondents to understand. Two interview participants who asked for assistance reading the question, voluntarily revealing their answer to the interviewer, marked an answer that was incongruous with what they later reported during the interview. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents (80%) found that “It was easy to understand” the survey questions, which suggests that comprehension issues did not majorly skew responses.
Analysis

These survey findings provide an important backdrop to the rest of the study and highlight relevant limitations of the work. First, levels of acceptance are remarkably high within this group as compared to the whole of South Africa. 2016 South African Social Attitudes Survey, upon which the questions summarized in Fig. 1 are based, found that 55.6% of South Africans would accept a family member who said they were gay or lesbian, and 51.7% thought “a gay person should be allowed to be part of their culture and tradition” (Sutherland et al. 2016). The report by Sutherland et al., and the data upon which it was based did not separately ask about familial acceptance of gay vs. lesbian people, a change added to my survey following piloting. The fact that a difference exists between the level of acceptance in the study population and that in South Africa as a whole is not surprising. Clearly, 30 study participants selected from one peri-urban area are not representative of all South Africans. It is plausible that Cato Manor is generally more accepting than more rural areas and that social opinions have shifted in the six years since the 2016 SASAS survey. The observation that most participants are generally accepting of gay and lesbian people does mean that, in interpreting the data, it is important to remember that viewpoints of less accepting individuals will likely not be present, or will be reported second-hand.

Due to the sampling method, the study population cannot be considered a representative sample even of the community within which the study was conducted. The finding that acceptance was somewhat higher among participants who participated in the interview and survey compared to those who participated in the survey alone suggests that the interview sampling conditions, which unavoidably selected for people willing to discuss LGBTQ issues with an American stranger may have selected for people who were more accepting of LGBTQ people.

In interpreting the following findings, it is also important to note that all questions addressing opinion change are limited to measuring self-perception of opinion change. Without going back in time, it is not possible to truly verify if a person’s opinion was indeed the same or different in the past.

The finding that 46% felt their opinions on gay and lesbian people had changed challenges the simple idea that social change happens all at once. Rather, the evidence suggests that opinions are formed by messages from a wealth of sources whose influence may ebb and flow over the
course of a person’s life. Importantly, while some of these factors may be instinctively associated with homophobic messaging, and others with LGBT-affirming messaging, most prove to be more complex than that. Still, for clarity, those sources generally providing older ideas will be discussed first, followed by sources that introduce new ideas, potentially challenging the old.

Exposure to Established Ideas

2. Culture of Silence

Findings

Two interview questions, one about the opinions of the people who raised the interviewee, and another about ideas around gay and lesbian people when the interviewee was growing up sometimes yielded the response that the existence of gay and lesbian people simply was not discussed. As Participant P, a 66-year-old woman put it: “No, it was never talked about, never ever.” (Participant P 2022, April 11). When asked about her opinions 10 years ago, Participant F, a 30-year-old woman responded that “Actually, first of all, I wasn’t thinking about this ten years ago.” (Participant O 2022, April 5). When Participant P noticed, as a young child, that a male family friend seemed to exhibit feminine behaviors, her mother shut down any questioning, saying that:

. . . in the evening, you know, my mother used to drink and he would behave like “mmm” [limp wrist gesture] and I didn't understand, and I once asked my mother “. . . is he, what is he really” and my mother, she just ignored, just ignored my ever asking. It was never spoken about. (Participant P 2022, April 11).

The observation of general reluctance to talk about gay and lesbian people or gender non-conforming behavior was also mentioned to extend to other topics that might be considered taboo, like menstruation and sex. Participant P added that “. . . it was like even growing up, like, girls, even our age they never spoke about periods” (Participant P 2022, April 11). Information about these topics only came from outside sources and Participant O noted: “your parents don’t even talk about sex until you see it on TV or in a life orientation book” (Participant O 2022, April 5).
This culture of silence does not seem to be the norm any longer, however. All of the reports of this blanket silence on gay and lesbian issues were focused in the past. Participant A, a 26-year-old man said that “Now it’s like a general thing, before people were too scared to talk about it” (Participant A 2022, April 18). Still, some, like Participant F, a 30-year-old man, think that the general cultural shift away from the idea that children should never question their guardians is not a positive one. He said “Some of this is not healthy for us. We have changed, we start getting rude more, we don't know our elders” (Participant F 2022, April 5).

Analysis

The idea of a culture of silence surrounding LGBTQ issues was also present in a 2018 study conducted in the Philippines, that noted that silence can tamp down acceptance, even when LGBTQ individuals are present and out in society (Angelo De Leon, Jintalan, and Far Eastern University, Philippines 2018). By pointedly not discussing a topic, the topic becomes present through its absence, as does the idea that that topic is off-limits, taboo, wrong. While some of the participants quoted above conveyed the idea that they were not allowed to talk, or, specifically, to ask questions about gay people, many also expressed that they were in complete ignorance about the existence of gay and lesbian people during their younger years. That total ignorance seemed to provide some respondents with an almost “clean slate” of opinion. If a person is unaware gay and lesbian people exist, they can’t have an opinion, but they also can’t be directly homophobic. Opinion change is an obvious axis upon which to measure how a person’s thoughts on LGBTQ issues develop, but educational growth, from ignorant to informed, is also important. There is a vast difference between someone who is friendly to LGBTQ people, but clueless, and someone who is an informed ally, perhaps even able to help educate others. Opinion change can also go hand-in-hand with increased education about LGBTQ topics.
3. Traditional Gender Roles

Findings

Even without explicit discussion of gay and lesbian people, cultural expectations can communicate an expected life path. When these life paths are gendered, they are generally quietly exclusive of the mere idea of being gay or lesbian. People who openly hold these identities strain against gendered life paths, often leading them to be singled out and judged.

Several participants recognized that there are differing cultural expectations of men and women. Participant G, a 29-year-old man mentioned specific day-to-day expectations, saying that “They have the different life expectancies of female and male people, that ‘this is how they should dress up, this is how they should walk’” (Participant G 2022, April 24). These expectations also extend to major life events, and in the past expectations were often forced on gay and lesbian people, as Participant B, a 36-year-old man expressed, saying:

“Most of them, the gay, lesbian, they, they wed – before, back then – they were forced to get married, they were forced to sleep with a man or with woman, to give a child, to get married in the family because they want to not to give that is he is gay, no they want to – you put a shame their family, like, they need – you are a man, you are a woman, you need to get married ...” (Participant B 2022, April 13)

The sense that the mere concept of a child being gay or lesbian can be rejected by the family was echoed by Participant D, a 37-year-old woman, who also suggested that these views are changing, saying that, “Especially us, African, our parents don’t believe in that, they will tell us that that’s a demon, whatever, but thank God, our new generation parent, they understand gays and lesbian” (Participant D 2022, April 15). Participant K, a 46-year-old woman also rejected the idea of gay and lesbian people as demonic or cursed. She said, “... you have to treat them like other people, must leave all this thing like ‘we don't want them’, ‘they are cursed’. There's nothing cursed there” (Participant K 2022, April 13).

Still, as the community becomes more accepting of gay and lesbian people, there are new strains as, instead of gay and lesbian people being forced into cultural molds, the culture now tries to reconfigure to fit gay and lesbian relationships. Participant D expressed some confusion about how the payment of the lobola, the bride price needed as part of a traditional marriage. She
Factors Driving Changing Community Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians  van der Weide

wondered, “Now, who’s going to pay lobola cause they both men? You’re trying to understand that, you’re trying to understand who’s the he and she on this relationship, but you find out they state themselves as he, both are he. . . . but that’s part of our life now, we have to adapt” (Participant D 2022, April 15). Interestingly, for this participant, the need for two people getting married to fit into male/female roles made it easy for her to understand what she explained as a relationship between two men, one of whom is very feminine. In her description, the line between a very feminine gay man and a person who would likely be best described as a transgender woman was very fluid.

Gendered expectations seem to be particularly stringent, or at least particularly obviously stringent, for men. Even minor deviations from expected behavior are noted, “even when a guy buy you flowers, something different to other men, it’s like maybe they are, they give you a love potion or something, you understand? It’s like ‘you’re acting different, maybe you’re stupid or something’, that’s how it is with us African people” (Participant D, 2022 April 15). More significant ways of acting different, of breaking expectations, are met with more significant social consequences. The very concept of being gay is in direct conflict with cultural expectations, as Participant R, a 29-year-old woman, explained:

“I'll take Zulu men for example: Zulu men are set to a certain standard where, um, Zulu men are strong, like being gay is a swear word, like . . . being a Zulu man means you are providing, you are protecting, you are you are strong, and most of the time you dominate over women. So it’s a culture rooted in very chauvinistic views, in my opinion. It’s rooted in oppressing women, or asserting your dominance over women, so you find a guy that’s gay who has no desires in women therefore will not feel the need to, um, dominate over a woman, so already you can’t be a man.” (Participant R 2022, April 13).

Even if a gay man fills the roles of providing, protecting, being strong, when the definition of manhood is essentialized as the domination of women, then culturally, a gay man “can’t be a man”.

Multiple participants, like Participant C, a 22-year-old woman, also specifically noted that “. . . men are weirdly affected by other people’s sexuality. They have a problem with a person being lesbian, they have a problem with a person being gay” (Participant C 2022, April 13). Participant
E, a 19-year-old man expressed a similar thought, that “. . . for guys, like, they hate gay people. I don't know why” (Participant E 2022, April 15).

The survey data also suggested in this direction. Although the difference was not significant, on average women agreed more strongly than men that they would accept a gay family member, and men agreed more strongly than women that they would accept a lesbian family member (Fig. 2). It is possible that, were a much larger data set collected, a significant pattern could emerge.

![Gendered Differences in Acceptance](image)

**Figure 2**: No significant difference was found between women and men in acceptance of theoretical gay and lesbian family members, however a slight preference against accepting a homosexual person of one’s own gender was observed.

While, for all participants, the simple existence of a gay person was generally not bothersome, many expressed discomfort about non-conforming gender expression. For them, a gay or lesbian person’s sexuality was not a problem, but certain dressing choices or mannerisms associated with some gay and lesbian people were frowned upon:

Participant F, male, 30: “. . . he's gay, he once was a man, he must act like a man if we wanna sit with him. When he go to his gay friends then change his ways. Don't perform for us” (Participant F 2022, April 5).

Participant O, female, 30: “I think I just am really uncomfortable around butches than femme” (Participant O 2022, April 5).
Participant Q, male, 45: “Some gay or lesbian, they, they act weird. Like they don’t act ah, straight” (Participant Q 2022, April 7).

Participant J, female, 52: “. . . you know some and you think, ay, but did you really have to dress like this, you know? Because for me it's no big deal, you don't even have to change how you look for me unless there’s a serious problem” (Participant J 2022, April 13)

Participant M, male, 30: “A lot of people like him [a masculine gay actor] better than other, other gays. Because other gays be like hey, they gonna scream when they see you ‘Hey boys, love you!’ like, what the hell? Now everybody lookin’ at me like that!” (Participant M 2022, April 15)

Two women specified that their discomfort or confusion about the feminine mannerisms of some gay men was related to their own experiences as women. To one, these mannerisms felt like an “impersonation of a woman, like it's . . . a drag thing. Like they say [exaggerated high voice] ‘oh ho’. Like, we don't talk like that” (Participant O 2022, April 5). Another said she used to wonder “Why do guys want to be a woman, it’s so hard to be a woman, why would they want that?” (Participant H 2022, April 15). Women particularly interpreted the actions of feminine gay men through the lens of their own life experiences with sexism. The resistance to, or confusion about, non-conforming gender expression is not solely rooted in a belief in traditional gender roles.

Participant R, a 29-year-old woman clearly identified the overall trend that, whatever their reasoning, people find certain gay people more acceptable than others. When asked about the opinions of the people who raised her, she replied, “It’s so weird because they pick and choose who they like. They have gay friends but they say “No, it’s ok to be gay but don’t be too gay”, and I’m like who are you to control a person’s – like, no” (Participant R 2022, April 13).

Analysis

Failure to conform to expected gender roles arose often as a reason for critique of gay and lesbian people. Even when deviation from traditional gender roles was not condemned outright, it was rarely understood as a legitimate or emotionally important practice. Nontraditional presentations of gender were seen as performative or unnecessary. This idea, that presentations of gender are a performance, is not entirely wrong. However, if this interpretation is accepted, it
must also be accepted that any expression of gender through clothing, demeanor, and social interaction, whether it conforms to traditional expectations or not, is a performance. Of course, this is difficult to see from inside of a culture, especially when most people in the culture perform gender in traditionally accepted ways. I suspect that the strictness of gendered expectations for men described by several respondents may contribute to the negative interpretations of non-conforming gender expression. Perhaps a feminine man is seen as denying his culture, or even shirking his masculine duties.

The opinions presented by different individuals in this section provide conflicting ideas on how the “ideal” gay or lesbian person ought to act. In order to successfully apply traditional marriage practices to a gay couple, one member of the couple must play the role of the woman, and in order to make it obvious who should be assigned this role, it is culturally helpful if one man on a gay relationship is more feminine. However, this exact behavior, a man acting feminine, is strongly resisted by many of the other interviewees. It is almost as if a gay man seeking acceptance within traditional structures cannot win. Perhaps, as is suggested in the discussion of Zulu masculinity, gender expression does not matter in comparison of the “failure” of a gay man to dominate women. A 2021 paper describes how difficult it is for gay people to gain acceptance by seeking to be the most acceptable type of gay man possible, a strategy that, especially when adopted as a strategy for group activism, is called acceptability politics. The study finds that LGB people who sought acceptance through acceptability were not as successful as they assumed they would be (Jones 2021).

Another interesting point present both in the qualitative data and, to a non-statistically-significant extent, in the quantitative data, was the idea that women may be more uncomfortable with lesbians or masculine women, while men are more uncomfortable with gay men or feminine men. This could be explained both by the idea that straight people are concerned about being approached romantically by someone of the same gender, and by the idea that a woman who dates women or a man who dates men is somehow betraying her or his gender. A deviation from this trend was the idea that gay men’s femininity can seem sexist, like a mockery of womanhood performed without an understanding of the sexism that women face.
4. Religion

Findings

Like traditional gender roles, religion is a major part of how many people see and understand the world. It can provide people with a roadmap for life and a set of expectations for how people ought to act. Here, in some cases religion was associated with homophobic views, while in others it was the moral underpinning for acceptance. The religious moral compass pointed in different directions for different people.

Within the survey population, there was a fairly even split between those who were very religious, somewhat religious, and not religious (Fig. 3). Of those 19 who identified with a religion, 17 were Christian (13 “Christian”, 3 “Catholic” or “Roman Catholic”, 1 “United Congregational Church of South Africa”), and 2 identified with “cultural” or “traditional” religion. No significant differences in responses to questions about LGBTQ acceptance were found between the very, somewhat, and not religious groups.

![Pie chart showing distribution of religiosity](image)

**Figure 3:** The survey population responses were relatively evenly split in response to the question “How religious would you say you are?”.

Younger people recognized that some homophobia was religiously driven, especially in older people. 19-year-old Participant I compared her own grandmother’s opinions on LGBTQ people to those of other people in the same generation, saying jokingly that her grandmother was
“unlike another old person who would be like ‘No. Satan.’” (Participant I 2022, April 7).
Participant L, a 19-year-old man agreed about the impact of religion on the views of older members of the community, “especially the old women, especially believe in all this religion stuff, they say ‘No’ so they think they don't take that, they don’t buy that gay thing” (Participant L 2022, April 11).

Interviewees also recognized how religiously motivated homophobia impacts gay people. Participant C, a 22-year-old woman, raised her eyebrows incredulously when asked if everyone at her school had shared her accepting attitude about lesbian classmates, responding, “No, it's – some people are very critical and judgmental of them especially religious ones” (Participant C 2022, April 13). Participant J said that some people might hide their sexuality because they “are ashamed. It’s also because it also goes with Christianity. Christianity says it's a sin” (Participant J 2022, April 13).

Some interviewees also recognized the importance of religion as a moral guide, like 30-year-old Participant O who noted that “if you don’t have a culture, you don’t believe in a religious belief, and you say you’re a spiritual person, then you let your spirit lead you anywhere” (Participant O 2022, April 5). In fact, many, many of those who mentioned their own religious beliefs or used words with religious connotations spoke about religion in the context of tolerance or acceptance. Some did not deny the idea that it is a sin to be gay or lesbian but were critical of the way that other religious people focused on this one sin, even suggesting that a focus on other people’s sins might be a way to avoid focusing on one’s own sins. Participant C preached that, “. . .they want to be gay? Let them be gay, even if it is against the Bible, because you’re swearing, something that you’re doing that’s against the Bible” (Participant C 2022, April 13). Participant G, who expressed strong religious beliefs nonetheless echoed this point, saying, “If they are sinning, I’m sure we also have our own sins” (Participant G 2022, April 24.)

While interviewees recognized that for some people, rejection of gay and lesbian people is based on the moral guidance of the Christian faith, for some of them, the opposite was true. These individuals specifically used religious language when expressing why they, or those close to them, are accepting of gay people. Participant M had admiration for his mother’s acceptance, saying, “My mom’s an angel. . . . My mom don’t care, she prays for everybody” (Participant M 2022, April 15). In discussing how she would encourage a family member who came out to her,
Participant H said while she might be concerned that this person would face teasing, she would tell them that “This is your life, God gave you this life to live it” (Participant H 2022, April 15). Participant K said that neither she nor the people who raised her would judge someone who was gay or lesbian because “. . . it’s a human being, you can’t discriminate him ’cause you know they, you’re not God. Only God knows why he’s acting like this, she’s acting like that” (Participant K 2022, April 13). Using biblical language, Participant N, a gay man, expressed emphatically that “Everyone in the measure of god is the same, regardless of who he fall in love with. . . . in the image of God, it’s the same thing” (Participant N 2022, April 18).

Analysis

The general finding that religion does not necessarily connotate homophobia is corroborated in the finding from the 2016 SASAS, which, using the same question to assess level of religious adherence, found that “moderately religious” people were the most tolerant group (Sutherland et al. 2016). In this section, the lack of interviewees intolerant to LGBTQ people makes it difficult to understand the specific moral motivations behind religious anti-LGBTQ views. Rather, those views are described, at times with a gently mocking tone, by interviewees who disagree with them. This may not be the most reliable source for information about intolerant religious people, but it has the advantage of also providing information about the interviewees. For some, not only was tolerance of LGBTQ people grounded in religion, but also disagreement with intolerant members of their own religion. Later in one of the interviews quoted above, one of the interviewees who pointed out that even if homosexuality is a sin, it is just one of many, referenced a bible verse to back up his point. He referenced a biblical metaphor for hypocrisy found, among other places in the Bible, in the Gospel of Matthew, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Mathew 7:3, NIV). Several of the interviewees who had faith-based reasons for accepting gay and lesbian people repeated the quoted phrases often throughout their interviews, as if they were mantras, perhaps ideas that are broadly used to view and understand life.
Interactive Exposure to Contemporary Ideas

5. Personal Contact

Findings

At no point during the interview process were interviewees directly asked if they knew anyone who was gay or lesbian, and yet time and time again, when asked about their opinions, interviewees brought up their gay and lesbian personal contacts. Childhood friends, classmates, cousins, aunts, neighbors – everyone knew someone who was gay or lesbian. Most people knew someone who was close to them. In the survey, 83% of respondents reported having at least one friend who was gay or lesbian. 20% had more than ten gay or lesbian friends (Fig. 4).

![Pie chart showing distribution of gay or lesbian friends](image)

Of the people you have met who are gay or lesbian, how many would you consider to be friends?

- 10+
- 6-10
- 2-5
- 1
- None
- I don't know

**Figure 4:** Most survey participants reported having at least one gay or lesbian friend.

For some people, having close gay and lesbian contacts was, and had always been something that was fairly unremarkable. Sometimes this was because the person had been present since childhood, as Participant C a 22-year-old woman expressed, “. . .we have a relative who has the longest of times I've been around, I’ve just at some point I didn't even know she was a girl, so I
think with that then, oh, it’s fine then, it’s normal” (Participant C 2022, April 13). Others, particularly younger people, just had a general understanding that, to them, being gay or having gay friends was unremarkable. 19-year-old Participant I said “: I don’t know, I feel like I’ve normalized it though, that’s the thing. My best friend is like, ya know, gay, yeah, it’s normal now” (Participant I 2022, April 7). Participant E, also 19-years-old was similarly blasé, saying, “I actually have friends [who are lesbian] so it doesn't really matter to me” (Participant E 2022, April 15).

Of course, not everyone felt this way. When interviewees did have specific stories about a change in opinion about gay and lesbian people, these stories mainly centered around the coming out of a friend or relative. For some people, learning that a friend or relative was gay or lesbian led to the understanding that gay and lesbian people are just people, and often friendly people, a that. Participant E, 19 years old, said “: I actually started thinking about it when I met my cousin, she’s lesbian you know what I mean, but I used to think she was a guy. . . . So I kind of noticed there that people can be gay and be funny” (Participant E 2022, April 15). Participant L, also 19 years old, reflected similarly, saying that “I used to think, yeah, I must keep a distance from them . . . and all that stuff, that they not normal, ‘till I realized that I was wrong because I made friends with them see how they are” (Participant L 2022, April 11). Even though he was a bit reluctant to interact with an old friend after learning that the friend was gay, 30-year-old Participant F reflected that, “I started saying okay, I can't say I hate him, he's tried and he's fighting with this . . . I'm not gonna say he's no more my friend” (Participant F 2022, April 5). Maybe he did not like this new information about his friend, but learning it made him realize that he was willing to tolerate it.

Others were able to describe in more detail the struggle to accept the coming out of a close friend or relative. Participant H, a 22-year-old had a very close friend who she had known for years as a young adult when he told her he was gay. She disclosed that:

“‘. . . at the time that I found out that he was gay like actually felt angry at myself because I thought he was a guy but I had to live with it because I loved him as my friend and I had to accept it because there was no difference for him he was still that same person that I met was before, so I had to accept it so there's nothing that has changed except that he’s gay, and I love him more than he’s a guy”’ (Participant H 2022, April 15).
Participant B, a 36-year-old gay man, was able to tell the story of slow acceptance from the perspective of the one being slowly accepted. When, as a teen, he came out to his father, he reported that:

“My dad was so angry, even chased me out into the streets saying ‘I don’t stay with a gay in the house, go.’ Then I picked my things, then I go. . . . Then my father start to accept, ok my child is gay, then life carry ons” (Participant B 2022, April 13).

I followed up, asking what he thought changed for his father. He replied, “I think it was loneliness at the house” (Participant B 2022, April 13).

Participant D, a 37-year-old woman, hypothesized about what makes the experience of having a child come out so impactful for parents, so much different from more general exposure to gay and lesbian people, saying:

“Sometimes it’s easy when you see something far, but when it’s here, it’s different. . . . They expected you gonna get married, you gonna get cows, but then now you are coming out as a lesbian. It’s not easy, to disappoint your parents that ‘No, mama, I won’t have any children, I won’t bring any grandchildren here.’ First, they will get disappointed, but eventually along the way, because they love, they will understand” (Participant D 2022, April 15).

When someone comes out, the expectations that their parents had for their life are suddenly, vastly different. New questions are introduced about how traditions, how traditional gender roles, will adapt. Still, Participant D suggests that parental love will prevail. When a person comes out, new ideas are introduced to the community, or perhaps just brought into the light when the culture of silence is fractured. When Participant O’s cousin came out, she said “a lot of were like ‘oh please, we know’, but you know, it was not spoken of” (Participant O 2022, April 5). Even if a Participant O’s cousin’s sexuality was common matter of quiet speculation, by coming out her cousin made it a topic that was actually spoken of.

**Analysis**

The finding that personal contact with a gay or lesbian person was a very significant factor driving opinion change among those who did experience opinion change is supported by the
concept of contact theory. Contact theory is the idea that prejudice against a minority group is greatly reduced through contact with members of that group (Kordsmeier, Tumlison, and Song 2019). While in this study, acceptance of gay and lesbian people is used as a broad umbrella to understand opinions, a 2019 study measured approval of different LGBT-related policies among those with and without personal contact with LGBTQ people. Those with LGBTQ contacts were more supportive of LGBTQ employment policies, same-sex marriage, and same-sex adoption. This suggests important political implications of the process of contact and acceptance described here.

It is also clear from the findings here that having a close gay or lesbian did not translate to immediate acceptance. Rather, in both detailed examples there was a lag, during which the “in-group” party had to work through feelings of anger, and understand what was at stake should that anger prove insurmountable. In both stories, acceptance was the requirement to maintain a relationship. Even to a friend who is angry at her friend, or a father at his son for being gay, the potential loss of a close relationship is a strong motivator toward acceptance. Love drives a hard bargain.

Beyond individual relationship, the practice of coming out pushes hard against traditional gender roles and the culture of silence. Suddenly, sexuality is claimed as something to be talked about, rather than just wondered about. By some estimations, in an ideal world, coming out would not be necessary, people could simply be themselves. Still, it is an undeniably vibrant and noticeable way to defy expectations. Making information about one’s own sexuality public, also makes people curious.

6. Active Questioning and Knowledge-Seeking

*Findings*

Unlike other sections, which discuss specific sources of information upon which opinions are formed, here I analyze findings and discuss an active process of questioning and seeking knowledge, which can be triggered by new information or experiences and though which opinions can be reformed. One interviewee described a moment when he started thinking about
gay and lesbian issues while witnessing a gay classmate being harassed by other students, saying:

“\textit{I was 13, I was 13 in high school, cause there was this guy that they were laughing at in high school. I can’t remember what he did, but there was this gay guy that they were laughing at in high school. . . . And I saw everyone was laughing at him . . . I went to the crowd. . . . That’s when I started thinking about it actually like. And then I started asking people what escalated this to, you know? ’Ah, yo, he wears tights, you know’. Like, that’s it? You’re crazy.’}” (Participant M 2022, April 15).

For Participant M, witnessing the homophobia of others made him think about his own beliefs, gave him a model of a person he did not want to be. Participant O also found that she was changed by new information, saying, “I wouldn’t be the woman I am today opposing my culture, opposing my parents’ rules, my religion, questioning who wrote the bible, if I didn’t have information, if I wasn’t reading. If I wasn’t exposed” (Participant O 2022, April 5). Specifically, Participant O mentioned that she started to question certain beliefs, for her, who wrote the Bible. The natural reaction to this curiosity is to seek out information. Others described this behavior as a reaction to their own curiosity about gay and lesbian people. Participant G sourced information from multiple places, saying, “For me it’s always about doing research first, so going online and talking to people” (Participant G 2022, April 24). Participant P tried asking questions of her gay and lesbian friends, but sometimes found it difficult to get answers. She said, “I wanted to ask questions but I had to be like really close to ask the questions . . . especially like, to friends who were gay and a lesbian. . . . I used to just ask questions, and they really didn’t want to, maybe because I asked them deep questions” (Participant P 2022, April 11). Participant D went online to get her deep questions answered for that very reason. She expressed that “I went to internet, that tells me a lot, and, cause I was so scared to ask [gay relative]”. She went on to explain what she wanted to know, “I wanted to find out how you guys have sex, how you guys, how did you know you had feelings for another man?” (Participant D 2022, April 15).
Analysis

The sources engaged with though the process of knowledge-seeking are unlike any others discussed in this study because they are actively found rather than simply encountered. These ways of getting information, seen here to include asking questions in confidence and searching the internet, provide a route for education on the knowledge-seeker’s own terms and in relative privacy. The internet emerges as an important tool to enable people to ask questions unfettered, without burdening gay and lesbian people with the responsibility of fielding personal questions from their friends. Privacy enables the knowledge-seeker to find information that might be considered even more taboo than general information about LGBTQ topics, questions about sex, about self-discovery. This is information that would not come up passively. This also provides a clue into what the actual process of learning about and understanding one’s own views on LGBTQ issues entails. In a culture that, though changing, generally discourages questioning, the process of questioning one’s ideology being curious about a generally unspoken topic is culturally subversive.

Passive Exposure to Contemporary Ideas

7. Television

Findings

The survey results found that television was a major source of media in the lives of many respondents. More than half reported watching TV every day, and no one reported never watching TV, or not having a TV (Fig. 5). TV gay and lesbian representation on TV was also reported to be fairly common, with more than half of respondents indicating that they “often” see gay or lesbian characters or people on TV.
In interviews, most interviewees also answered that the amount of LGBTQ representation on TV had increased over time. Several interviewees felt that the presence of gay and lesbian representation on TV is good for gay people. 19-year-old Participant L thought that “... gay people will take notes from them that, no, you shouldn't be scared of who you really are you should stand and no matter how challenges you face, you should face them don’t, don't take don't take it mind what people say about you ...” (Participant L 2022, April 11). Participant H added that TV representation could help give gay people a sense of future opportunities, even if life will be difficult. She said gay and lesbian people “... will see [on TV] that being lesbian or gay doesn’t mean that you won’t go forward in life, it means that you will have to work harder and try to let people see that you still a person, you can still be what you want” (Participant H 2022, April 15). This seemed to be accurate to what Participant B, a gay man, said he gets from seeing TV representation, saying, “They make me proud. ... Though the community don’t love us, there some people do love us and hire those gays from TV to play those roles” (Participant B 2022, April 13). In his response there is also a sense that the encouraging part of these shows is not simply that fictional gay characters have diverse futures, but rather that actual gay actors are getting jobs.

Straight interviewees also found representations of gay and lesbian people on TV to inspire self-acceptance beyond the realm of sexuality. When asked about the impact of gay and lesbian representation on TV, Participant M, a 30-year-old man, responded, “I think it only has impact when it comes to, you know, believing in yourself and doing what you want, not caring what
anybody thinks” (Participant M 2022, April 15). Participant R, a 29-year-old woman, discussed the message that she personally derives from RuPaul’s drag race, a favorite show of hers, saying, “It sort of subconsciously gave me permission to be myself, you know what I mean? And it's not, it's not in a sexuality standpoint per se, but it's just, like, in general, just be myself” (Participant R 2022, April 13).

As well as encouraging gay people, interviewees felt that gay and lesbian representation serves to educate people. For some, the intent to educate was clear in the volume of LGBTQ storylines on TV shows. When asked a follow-up question about why people are more comfortable with gay and lesbian issues, Participant D responded that she thought, “Knowledge, knowledge is key. Television, what TV does now they try to make us learn more. Even now you will never see a soap, a drama that will start and end without a gay or lesbian on it, you understand? They are trying to educate us more about it, that’s what make it easier” (Participant D 2022, 15).

Participant Q brought up TV in response to a question about how people learn about gay people, saying “I think like TV, they watch TV and see the shows maybe, which are talking about gays and lesbians, maybe they learn from that” (Participant Q 2022, April 7). Participant K added that TV shows may try to teach that masculine gay men exist as well as feminine gay men. She said that “I think now they are teaching us more about gays, cause even if you're watching a movie, there’s so much relationships of gays. Even a straight person, you can see he’s straight, and the next thing he's kissing a gay, and so I think more now they teaching us how to handle that situation” (Participant K 2022, April 13).

Television also arose as a potential route to the belief questioning that was discussed in an earlier section. In a discussion of the social impacts of gay and lesbian TV representation, Participant P said:

“I think because I – now they’re always seeing them, I think you just talked to yourself why you just have questions you just talk to yourself ‘I don’t like them, do I like them?’ You have questions and then it gives you time . . . you could just say “No, I don’t like them’, but deep down, when you’re by yourself just ask yourself ‘do I hate them?’ . . . and you’ll find answers” (Participant P 2022, April 11).
Participant A shared a similar sentiment, theorizing based upon his own experience that exposure to gay and lesbian people on TV could be a first stepping stone on the path to learning about and understanding real gay and lesbian people. He said:

“If something that you seen from far, right, and now you start seeing on TV, then you start seeing by your neighbor, you see, you start seeing a person that you grew up with start changing, and you start questioning ‘So is this thing real?’ like, you see? So those kind of things I think changed the way I feel about lesbian people and gay people” (Participant A 2022, April 18).

Even while acknowledging the educational value of TV representation, however, Participant O noted that increased representation can mean increased backlash. Discussing the introduction of a gay storyline into the popular soap opera “Generations” in the mid-2000s, she said, “. . . Generations was our lives, and so that educated a lot of people, but that’s when the gays and lesbians started – the violence started” (Participant O 2022, April 5). While all of the interviewees who mentioned violence against gay and lesbian people added that, to their knowledge, no targeted violence against gays or lesbians had occurred in Cato Manor, many still reported observing some level of verbal backlash to TV representation of gay and lesbian people. Participant O, still discussing the first gay storylines she saw on TV, remembered, “. . . my mama’s friend . . . would come to my house and complain about Generations” (Participant O 2022, April 5). Even now, Participant I reported that “People are always complaining, they say ‘ay, gays on TV what they doing?’ You see? They criticizing at all times” (Participant I 2022, April 7). Participant R reported that “Generally people feel like they're advertising being gay, so they have . . . more of a negative connotation, like ‘There’s so many gay people on TV, what are they trying to teach our children?’” (Participant R 2022, April 13). Even in their resistance to LGBTQ representation on TV, the general population of which Participant R speaks recognizes the educational power of television. Participant I said that her grandmother sometimes makes offhanded comments about gay or lesbian characters on TV, to which she or her brother respond with something like “No, you wouldn’t react like this if it was a boy or girl” (Participant I 2022, April 7).

Apart from these instances, many participants reported that TV representations of gay and lesbian people were not much of a topic of conversation. Participant N recalled that when he was still in the closet, he would avoid any potential conversation about gay or lesbian characters on
TV. He felt “scared, like let me just go and drink some water”, implying that he would find a way to leave the room (Participant N 2022, April 18). Now, though there is still minimal conversation about LGBTQ TV representation in his home, the reason is now that the existence a gay or lesbian character is not an occasion of note. 19-year-old Participant I described this particularly succinctly when asked if his family talks about gay and lesbian TV representation, saying, “we don’t really care” (Participant I 2022, April 7).

Analysis

A 2015 study of on gay teens found that one main way in which media representation impacted their lives was by making them feel stronger (Craig et al. 2015). This idea was echoed in the statements of many of those who thought that gay representation is important for gay people. An additional nuance to these findings that I suspect is somewhat context-dependent is the idea that having gay actors on TV may be more inspiring to gay adults than fictional gay representation. In an area rife with unemployment, the prospect of a job in which gay people are not only accepted but welcomed is hope-inspiring. One idea that was conspicuously absent, though it does appear in other texts discussing LGBTQ representation, was the concept that some representation can spread negative stereotypes about gay and lesbian people (Evans 2007). No respondent, gay or straight, expressed any concern about this.

The response by straight people that gay TV representation can provide inspiration for anyone to embrace who they truly are indicates that the yoke of cultural expectation does not rest solely on the shoulders of LGBTQ individuals. This idea of gay people as role models for self-acceptance and confidence also positively counteracts the idea mentioned elsewhere that gay and lesbian people are corrupting and their presence on TV might teach children the “wrong ideas”.

Among some people TV triggers conversation, TV can also give people a way to passively absorb content about gay and lesbian people without the same need to respond that there would be in real life. While no interviewees expressed that TV had had this effect on them personally, some suggested that the steady drip of difficult-to-avoid exposure may help wear down stubborn homophobia, or at least encourage introspection. This suggests that, like the coming out of a
close contact, television could trigger the pathway of belief-questioning and knowledge-seeking discussed earlier.

Finally, the lack of conversation about gay and lesbian characters or people on TV seems, at first blush, to be potentially negative. Is this not just a new “culture of silence”? I would argue not. This silence is not due to the topic being entirely foreign, but rather due to the topic being entirely normal, unremarkable. This could even be seen as a logical goal of this type of representation. Of course, some representation will mean a lot to the people who in some way relate to it or are inspired by it. However, a large volume of representation that means very little to most people means that the process of normalization is happening.

8. Legal Re-Norming

Findings

The large majority of survey respondents supported the rights of gay and lesbian people, with 79% of those responding (22/28) either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that “Gays and lesbians deserve the same human rights as all South Africans”. This data point alone, though, is not enough to answer the question: which came first, the rights or the acceptance? Interview responses shed some light on this. For some, there was a direct causative relationship between the acquisition of rights by gay and lesbian people and tolerance of gay and lesbian people. Participant F explained his own reasons for tolerating gay people, saying “cause now they have their own rights we started respecting them more, you see” (Participant F 2022, April 5). Participant M was even clearer in explaining that “Once the government says something goes, you gotta deal with it whether you like it or not” (Participant M 2022, April 15).

Others recognized the positive effect of legal protection on the lives of gay and lesbian people. Participant K noted that “I think it's the thing that they’ve got rights, the thing they’ve got rights, it's not like before they were hiding” (Participant K 2022, April 13). Rights make coming out easier, or even make it possible at all. In order to protect their livelihoods, legal protection against employment discrimination is essential to enabling gay and lesbian people to be out. Participant K noticed this, saying “. . . now they do come out 'cause they do get jobs now, they do have their TV shows, they do make up, they wear dresses, they’re fine now” (Participant K
Factors Driving Changing Community Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians

van der Weide

2022, April 13). The right to same-sex marriage is also empowering, as Participant B, a gay man, described:

“Now because we're living in 21st century we came out to show them yes, we are here, . . . and especially excited that our government give to us that OK now the same sex they can get married, it’s legal, so now we have that power, even we walk in the streets, so, at the end of the day, we can get married to each other” (Participant B 2022, April 13).

Analysis

Public opinion on an issue, particularly a social issue, can inform how a nation's legislature responds to that issue in law. Conversely, the legal framing of an issue can inform public opinion. The political climate in South Africa post-Apartheid enabled the creation of the remarkably liberal 1996 constitution, which includes protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Section 9, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996). These protections arguably did not reflect the opinions of the general population. Often legal change requires a wide base of social support, but in this case the legal change occurred prior to social shifts toward LGBTQ acceptance in South Africa. These results suggest that those legal changes actually influenced social change, giving people the awareness that, within the bounds of the law, they had no option but to tolerate gay and lesbian people, however begrudgingly. Thesis work from the University of Pretoria examining the relationship between law and social change in a South African context agrees with this concept, arguing that “the Constitution can function as a source of social change by being, essentially, a metaphorical social contract” (Steenekamp 2018).

As well as a direct connection between legal rights and improved opinions about gay and lesbian people, these data also suggest that gay people are aware of and empowered by their rights. The understanding that there is legal protection, though this protection does require enforcing, for gay and lesbian people seems to help provide the security needed for some people to come out. This, in turn, increases personal and community contact to gay and lesbian people, other established factors that improve opinions on gay and lesbian people.
9. Community Contact

Findings

All survey respondents, except three who marked “I don’t know”, had met at least two gay or lesbian people, and most had met more than ten (Fig. 6). This suggests a significant presence of openly gay and lesbian people within the Cato Manor community. Even without a close gay friend or relative, interview results suggest that casual exposure to gay and lesbian people is a factor associated with accepting attitudes.

![Pie chart showing how many people have met gay or lesbian individuals.](image)

**Figure 6**: Except for three who did not know how many gay people they had met, all respondents reported having met two or more gay or lesbian people.

Interestingly, some straight interviewees facilitated this type of contact between gay and straight people. Participant I, a 19-year-old, had her gay friend over to visit. She described how her grandmother, with whom she lives, reacted, saying, “I lived with her, she didn’t really like come face to face with the thing 'cause like I think February or something my best friend, . . . he’s gay, he like visited us here, [laughing] so she was so awkward” (Participant I 2022, April 7).

Participant P, a 66-year-old, remarked that, socially “gay and straight don't want to mingle”. So, when she goes to an event with a gay friend, she makes sure the group will be accepting, saying that “if I go with gay person I know that they are all going to be comfortable wherever we are going together, I know they will accept them” (Participant P 2022, April 11).
Despite some of these first interactions being a bit uncomfortable, many interviewees described being in the presence of gay and lesbian people with enough regularity that their presence did not seem odd. Sure, Participant M, notes “If it’s the first time you’ve seen a gay person, you’re gonna react differently. You see it three, four, five times, you get to understand it” (Participant M 2022, April 15). Many interviewees fell into that second category. When asked if his opinions on gay and lesbian people had changed over time, Participant K responded, “I won't say so, ‘cause some have grown – I grow them” (Participant K 2022, April 13). For her, the existence of gay people was normalized. Participants D and E expressed similar sentiments, that “It’s something that’s usual now, it’s not something that’s unusual” (Participant D 2022, April 15). Participant E specifically referenced his neighbors as a normalizing presence, saying, “I see lesbians all the time, there’s one staying up the road, one staying down the road, so it’s just gonna be normal to me” (Participant E 2022, April 15).

Analysis

The sheer number of gay and lesbian acquaintances reported by survey respondents suggests that, within Cato Manor, the incidence of openly gay and lesbian people is fairly high. Even one interview participant who generally expressed discomfort with the idea of interacting with gay and lesbian people said that she during the interview had met one or two gay or lesbian people. While the acquaintances counted in the survey did not all necessarily come from within the Cato Manor community, taken together, this evidence suggests that it is difficult to live in this community and not, at some point, encounter someone who is gay or lesbian. One study found that community contact can increase acceptance of LGBTQ people on certain issues, albeit to a lesser degree than personal contact, or friendship (Kordsmeier, Tumlison, and Song 2019). These results emphasize the normalization of being gay that comes from growing up with gay and lesbian. Here, there is a similar nonchalance about the idea of real people being gay or lesbian as there was about the idea of TV characters being gay or lesbian. As was considered there, perhaps this kind of nonchalance is actually the goal.
X. Conclusions

In South Africa, as in many countries around the world, acceptance for LGBTQ people is increasing. To understand the process behind how this change happens, it is useful to “zoom in” to a specific community. The study community in Cato Manor, located in eThekwini Ward 29, is relatively young, lower-income, and has a slightly higher-than-average education level. This demographic information, as well as general national trends suggested that opinion change on LGBTQ issues would be present in Cato Manor. The survey and interview results found that this was true for around half of participants. Those participants whose individual opinions had not changed nonetheless had valuable insights on what might lead to a communal shift in opinion on LGBTQ issues.

Many factors were identified to have an impact on opinions. Sources of established ideas, like a culture of silence, traditional gender roles, and religion, were found to form the original opinions of many of those who reported opinion change, while also being relevant to many participants whose opinions had remained constant. Importantly, ideas from these sources were interpreted differently by different people, and consequently ideas from similar sources had a hand in forming vastly different views. Specific, individual opinion change was often triggered by interactive exposure to contemporary ideas, like the coming out of a close personal contact. This exposure led some individuals to actively seek out information about gay and lesbian people. The process of seeking out information, although it was generally carried out privately, is nonetheless in opposition to concepts behind the culture of silence which discourages questioning. Passive exposure to contemporary ideas, such as through television, legal re-norming, and community contact were rarely mentioned as triggers of personal opinion change but were generally found to normalize the existence of gay and lesbian individuals. Many younger participants, as well as some older ones, found that the presence of these normalizing factors during their childhoods had caused them to form generally accepting opinions early on. While these insights, gained through in-depth conversations with members of one community, cannot be assumed to be generalizable, they nonetheless provide hints that may help elucidate the process behind the current international phenomenon of opinion change.
XI. Recommendations for Future Study.

- Certain results from this study suggest that there were interesting nuances in how individuals in Cato Manor understand what “causes” someone to be gay or lesbian. Many people thought that some gay and lesbian people were born that way, but others changed, or decided to be gay or lesbian later in life. While some dismissed the group who were not “born that way”, others spoke with compassion about women who may have faced abuse or rape by men and therefore chosen to date women. I would be interested to see a further investigation of what people believe to be the causes of gay and lesbian identities and how those beliefs impact opinions.

- A major limitation of this study was that neither interview nor survey questions asked about transgender people. Despite this, when asking about gender roles, the idea of transgender people often came up (though rarely named as such). I think there is very interesting research to be done in examining how people in Cato Manor understand transgender people, how, and if, they are differentiated from those who cross-dress, and from those who defy gender norms but still identify with their gender assigned at birth, and how gendered expectations impact opinions.
References


List of Primary Sources

Participant A, 26-year-old male, (2022, April 18), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant B, 36-year-old male, (2022, April 13), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant C, 22-year-old female, (2022, April 13), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant D, 37-year-old female, (2022, April 15), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant E, 19-year-old male, (2022, April 15), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant F, 30-year-old female, (2022, April 5), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant G, 29-year-old male, (2022, April 24), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant H, 22-year-old female, (2022, April 15), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant I, 19-year-old female, (2022, April 7), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant J, 52-year-old female, (2022, April 13), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant K, 46-year-old female, (2022, April 13), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant L, 19-year-old male, (2022, April 11), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)
Participant M, 30-year-old male, (2022, April 15), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant N, 30-year-old male, (2022, April 18), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant O, 30-year-old male, (2022, April 5), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant P, 66-year-old female, (2022, April 11), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant Q, 45-year-old male, (2022, April 7), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant R, 29-year-old female, (2022, April 13), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)

Participant S, 52-year-old female, (2022, April 24), Personal Interview. (I. van der Weide, Interviewer)
Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Below is the entire survey, as it was provided to survey participants. Due to differences in paper size and formatting, some questions are split over a page break in this appendix, which was not the case in the survey provided to participants.

Please also note that Question 16 seemed to be understood poorly by respondents. It was often left blank, or check marks were placed inappropriately. For these reasons, the results of Question 16 were not reported in this study, nor used to inform analysis. Future researchers seeking to ask a similar question would be advised to not use this question.

Sawubona!

Many South African people’s thinking about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people has changed a lot over the past several years. I want to learn about what people in Cato Manor think about gay and lesbian people. I also want to understand if people have changed their minds about gay and lesbian people, or if people think the same. This survey will ask you some questions about what you think about gay and lesbian people. By filling out the survey, you will help me learn about this topic.

The information you provide here will stay confidential and will not be connected to your name. No one will know you were the person who wrote these answers. Please do not write your name anywhere on this paper.

The information you provide will be used to write a paper that will be made available online.

If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, or you are not sure how to answer a question, you can skip over it. You may also stop answering questions at any point while taking the survey.

If, after completing the survey, you would like to talk more about the topics in this survey, please contact Isabella van der Weide at +27 76 326 0824.

To compensate you for the time you spend on this survey you will be given R20.

Please check this box to indicate that you understand.

☐ I understand the information above and am willing to fill out the survey.
1. Your age: __________  
2. Gender: __________ 
3. The highest level of education that you have completed: __________________________ 
4. Tick one: Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? 
   - Heterosexual or straight 
   - Gay or lesbian 
   - Bisexual 
   - Not Sure 
   - Other: _____________ 
   - I don’t understand the question 

5. How religious would you say you are? 
   - Not religious 
   - Somewhat religious 
   - Very religious 

6. If you consider yourself as belonging to a religion, what religion do you belong to? 
   _____________________________ 

7. Can you imagine yourself ever being in a romantic relationship with another person of the same sex? 
   - Definitely not 
   - Probably not 
   - Maybe 
   - Probably 
   - Definitely 

8. How often do you watch TV? 
   - Every day 
   - Most days 
   - Some days 
   - Rarely 
   - Never 
   - I do not have a TV. [Skip to question 11] 

9. How often do you see a gay or lesbian character or person on TV? 
   - Often 
   - Sometimes 
   - Never [Skip to question 11] 

10. What TV show(s) have you seen these characters or people on?
11. How many people have you met who are gay or lesbian?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>10+</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Of the people you have met who are gay or lesbian, how many would you consider to be friends?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>10+</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about gay men?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. If a family member said they were gay, I would accept it.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. A person who is gay should still be allowed to be part of my culture and traditions.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. If a family member said they were gay, I would tell them to hide it from others in the community to keep them from being hurt.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I keep well away from people I think are gay.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about lesbian women?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. If a family member said they were lesbian, I would accept it.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. A person who is lesbian should still be allowed to be part of my culture and traditions.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. If a family member said they were lesbian, I would tell them to hide it from others in the community to keep them from being hurt.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

a. Learners should be taught about gay and lesbian rights at school.  
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

b. Gays and lesbians deserve the same human rights as all South Africans.  
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

a. I accept gay men more than I used to.  
   - I accept them much more.
   - I accept them more.
   - It is the same.
   - I accept them less.
   - I accept them much less.

b. I accept lesbian women more than I used to.  
   - I accept them much more.
   - I accept them more.
   - It is the same.
   - I accept them less.
   - I accept them much less.

17. Now, I want you to think back in time. Was there a time in your life when you felt differently about gay and lesbian people than you do now?

   - Yes
   - No
   [Skip to question 20]

18. How long ago was the time in your life when you felt differently about gay and lesbian people?

   - 1-2 years ago
   - 3-5 years ago
   - 6-10 years ago
   - 11-20 years ago
   - More than 20 years ago
   - Not sure

19. Was there a particular experience that changed your mind about gay and lesbian people?
20. Tick one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It was easy to understand these questions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some questions were hard to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many questions were hard to understand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End.

Ngiyabonga!
Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Grey text indicates a question or line of questioning that was not asked of all interviewees.

Was there anything in the survey that you found interesting/that made you think hard/that you would like to speak more about?

If you were walking down the street and saw a woman who was dressing or acting more like a man, what would you think?

How about if you saw a man who was dressed or acting more like a woman?

Would you say that your opinions on this topic are similar to other people your age around here, or do you think you are different?

   If, “different”: What do other people think about gay and lesbian people? Why do you think that your opinions are different?

Have you always had the same opinions about gay and lesbian people that you do now?

   If opinion change: How long ago was it when your opinion was different? What changed for you? How did you feel about [opinion-changing experience]?

   If no change: Why do you think it has always been the same?

As applicable, regardless of original answer: When did you first learn about gay and lesbian people? How old were you when you met a gay or lesbian person for the first time?

Did the people who raised you have the same opinions about gay and lesbian people that you do?

   If “different”: What do you think made your opinions different from theirs?

If someone in your family, or someone who you loved told you they were gay or lesbian, how would you react?

Would you be scared for someone you loved who was gay or lesbian that they would get hurt or made fun of by other people in the community?

Do you think it is easier for gay and lesbian people to come out now than it used to be, or about the same? Why?

   What are the reasons that someone might not want to come out as gay or lesbian?

Now I have some questions about television. When you are watching TV, how often do you see gay or lesbian characters on people on TV?

Do you think there are more gay and lesbian people on TV than there used to be, or is it the same?

What do you think about seeing gays and lesbians on TV?
What do other people think about it?

If not already covered: Do you think that seeing gay and lesbian people on TV has an impact on people?

If you are watching TV with your family, and a gay or lesbian character comes up, how do people react?

Do you think that there is a difference between seeing a gay character on TV and seeing a gay kiss, seeing two men or two women kiss on TV?

Often asked earlier, especially if it came up naturally: When you were growing up, did you learn about gay and lesbian people in school, in LO courses?

Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing for learners to learn about gay and lesbian people in their LO courses? Why?

If you were designing a course, when do you think would be the best age for learners to start learning about gay and lesbian people?

Is there anything else that I didn’t ask about that you think “ooh that would have been interesting to talk about”?