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SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN SCHOOLS
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LGBTI*
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (*or part thereof)

SOGI
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

GENDER
The social attitudes, behaviour and roles given to men and women. Gender is different from sex because sex refers to biological differences between males and females

GENDER IDENTITY
An individual's ability to identify along a spectrum of gender that may or may not align to their biological sex

CISGENDER
When an individual's gender identity aligns with their biological sex as assigned at birth

TRANSGENDER
When an individual's gender identity differs from their biological sex as assigned at birth

GNC
Gender Non-Conforming – When an individual's gender identity does not conform to the conventional binary of male and female

SEX
Biologically female or male, as assigned at birth based upon dominant genital characteristics

INTERSEX
A variety of conditions where a person's anatomy does not fit the typical definition of male and female

CISCENTRIC
The prevalence of assumptions of cisgender as the "normal" or dominant gender categorisation, usually associated with discrimination or exclusion of transgender categorisations

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TRANSPHOBIA
Discrimination, fear, dislike of individuals on the basis of their gender identity not being cisgender

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
An individual's attraction for people of a particular gender(s)

LESBIAN
A woman who is attracted to other women

GAY
Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender. Although also used by lesbian woman, it is often used to describe men who are attracted to other men

BISEXUAL
Someone who is attracted to people of their own gender or people of the opposite gender

HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT
Someone who is attracted to people of the opposite gender

HETERONORMATIVE
The prevalence of assumptions of heterosexual as the "normal" or dominant sexual orientation, usually associated with discrimination or exclusion of other orientations (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual)

HOMOPHOBIA
Discrimination, fear, dislike of individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation not being heterosexual

Introduction

Prior to beginning, it is worth covering a number of key concepts that reoccur throughout this document and that form the basis for much of the discussions contain herein. Primarily, the distinction between "gender" and "sex" must be stressed, as well as the issues that arise when these terms are conflated. Sex refers to the biological designation given to individuals at birth, often based upon their dominant genitalia. Gender on the other hand, refers to the female or male (or somewhere thereabouts) identity with which an individual identifies. In cisgender people, sex and gender are aligned (one's internal identity is aligned with the sex associated with their genitalia). With transgender people, their gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth by virtue of their genitalia. With cisgender people, sex and gender would both be female or both be male. Thus, since society often presumes cisgender (ciscentricism) this means these terms are often incorrectly used interchangeably. This is an issue, as the convolution of these terms excludes those for whom they refer to distinct identities. Furthermore, using these terms as synonyms can be harmful to transgender people as it limits their ability to express their gender as being different from their sex. Further issues arise when these identities are incorrectly associated with sexual orientation, despite these being completely separate issues. Sexual orientation refers to the gender to which one is attracted, and is removed from the gender with which one identifies. Whilst sexual orientation is explicitly externally focused, gender is completely

internal. Given that the dominant identities in society are cisgender and heterosexual (dominant in power, if not necessarily number), identities that do not conform to these expectations are often the subject of discrimination and prejudice.

Internationally, the South African Constitution offers some of the most comprehensive protections against discrimination. The Bill of Rights "equality clause" protects against unfair discrimination (from the state or persons) on the grounds of "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth"[2]. However, these protections are not always upheld and rampant discrimination, abuse and prejudice continue to characterise many lives, particularly those of social minorities. One aspect of this discrimination is homophobia and transphobia – that is, discrimination based upon one's gender identity or sexual orientation where these are deemed "contradictory" to dominant and prevailing conceptions of heteronormativity and ciscentricism. Research has found these prejudices to be particularly prevalent amongst school going children, as these identities tend to manifest during this period amongst high societal pressures and expectations. It is suggested that these negative views may stem from ignorance or naivety of the intricacies of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) which is compounded by the proliferation of heteronormative and ciscentric teaching and social environments that at the very least, presume heterosexuality and cisgender, and at the very worst, actively discriminate or prejudice those outside of these "conventional" designations. This is further exacerbated by adult educators and education workers often neglecting these issues by not perceiving students as sexual beings with their own agency in order to exempt themselves from discussions of sexuality. In order to address these issues, a greater understanding of SOGI must be incorporated into the education environment. It must be noted that, although South Africans may appear conservative with regard to sexual identities outside of the conventional hegemony, the reality is that most South Africans are sexually conservative, regardless of the sexual orientation in question. In being conservative and anti-sex positive, many South Africans disregard that sex, sexual attraction and sexual development are normal and healthy psychological and physiological occurrences. Most South Africans are uncomfortable discussing sex generally, the conservatism of which is only exacerbated when discussing sexual orientations and gender identities that are "foreign" to the experiences of many people and against which many may have been socialised to discriminate.

This document presents the available literature on homophobia and transphobia in schools (domestically and internationally) as well as the South African legislative dispensations for addressing these issues. The document also makes recommendations for the aforementioned workshop and other possible interventions.

Executive Summary
- The South African constitution protects against discrimination on the basis of (among other things) sexual orientation and gender.
- Despite this, homophobia and transphobia continue to characterise the experiences of many LGBTI people.
- This is particularly true in schools and largely stems from ignorance and the proliferation of heteronormative and ciscentric environments, assumptions and norms, as well as the "desexualisation" of scholars that leads to the neglect of SOGI

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[2] Republic of South Africa, "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa," Chapter 2, Section 9.

curriculum and issues. This manifests primarily in homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination that originates from (and is targeted at) learners, educators and other staff.

RSA Constitutional and Legislative Framework

As mentioned above, the Constitution actively protects against discrimination on the basis of sex and gender (which encompasses a forward-thinking recognition that these concepts are not interchangeable) as well as sexual orientation[3]. South Africa was the fifth state globally to recognise same-sex marriage and various other provisions have been made to protect and enforce the rights of LGB people. The state also recognises the fluidity of gender (for example, transgender persons may access related healthcare provisions and may enter into proceedings to change their legal sex[4]). However, this formal recognition is not necessarily always accommodated in practice. Many LGBTI persons continue to face discrimination and obstacles in accessing legal protection, employment equality, healthcare provisions and so forth. Whilst the legislative framework may be present, there exists a disjuncture between that ideal and the practical reality for many LGBTI persons. Whilst South Africa has progressive and comprehensive protections in principle, it is a constant challenge to ensure that these principles are practised in reality. South Africa continues to exhibit a conservative, heteronormative and ciscentric social environment that, despite these legislative provisions, continues to complicity endorse a system of discrimination and exclusion of LGBTI people and their identities.

These legislative provisions obviously also extend to all participants within the education context: learners, staff etc. However, there are many obstacles to the realisation of this kind of equity of identity. First, given that LGBTI people tend to be within a social minority, the dominant environment (including in schools) tends to be heteronormative and ciscentric, and engagements and curriculum thus tend to base assumptions on students (and staff) being cisgender and heterosexual[5]. Secondly, although learner-teacher relationships and abuse are not unheard of, in the formal teaching environment adult educators and staff have a tendency to not regard students as sexual beings and thus neglect their sexual identities – they exclude the idea of adolescent sexuality completely. Third, pervasive conservative or bigoted perspectives may endure amongst staff themselves, particularly in religious contexts. These contexts may thus be explicitly hostile to LGBTI issues, individuals and considerations. Thus, although there may be national provisions to protect these identities, the constitution cannot control for individuals or individual school environments that may overshadow the advances made in legislature.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Republic of South Africa, *Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act 49 of 2003*.

[5] For example, a study by Potgieter and Reygan ("Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Citizenship: A Case Study as Represented in a Sample of South African Life Orientation Textbooks.") of South African Life Orientation Textbooks found that most textbooks presume heterosexuality when discussing sexuality and sexual orientation with only minimal recognition of gay male identities and practically no recognition of lesbian or bisexual identities. Furthermore, they found no representation of transgender or intersex identities at all. This perpetuates the isolation and invisibility of LGBTI learners (or staff) by denying them the representation that their heterosexual and cisgender peers have. This further stifles discussion and enlightenment around these identities and the discrimination and obstacles they may face.

Most often, these issues come to attention via the medium of bullying rather than through curriculum engagement. Numerous studies have found homophobic and transphobic bullying to be particularly prevalent amongst school-going children, including within the educational space. Furthermore, as addressed above, this bullying may also originate from adult educators or staff[6].

There are legislative provisions in place to deter bullying or discrimination, including those address above. As per the Department of Basic Education guidelines "Challenging Homophobic Bullying in Schools" "The Department of Basic Education's (2012) School Safety Framework points out that bullying can have legal consequences and in many cases provides grounds for charging and prosecuting the bully under our criminal and legal systems. For example, physical and sometimes verbal bullying could be prosecuted as assault and sexual bullying could be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act. If perpetrators are found guilty they would have criminal records and could face fines, jail time or correctional supervision"[7]. This is obviously in addition to the presumption that education spaces are privy to constitutional provisions and thus should actively be upholding the equity clause and the protection of all identities.

The Western Cape Education Department's "Safe Schools Programme" is designed to provide a comprehensive and holistic effort towards ensuring safety and security for learners at school. Working with local police and community organisations like neighborhood watches, SSP is designed to ensure students are protected from abuse and victimization within schools, and from crime or violence without. This system consists of a helpline to report various crimes like arson or burglaries, as well as crimes that may occur within the school environment from learners or staff like corporal punishment, abuse, sexual harassment or rape. Additionally, this helpline provides information lines related to alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and the like. This system is intended to support schools in providing a safe and successful education environment, for learners and staff[8]

Issues Related to SOGI in Schools
Conceptual and Theoretical Basis for Intervention/Concern
Adolescence, puberty and secondary school can be difficult and trying times for most learners, but LGBTI students often receive the dual burden of the "usual" stresses and anxieties, coupled with increased experiences of bullying, discrimination and personal awareness. As mentioned above, much of society (school environments included) presuppose heterosexuality and cisgender. Thus, there is cause for conflict when identifies do not conform to these dominant societal expectations and distinctions of gender and sexual orientation. These identities tend to be "othered" or actively excluded from discourse, both informally and formally within curriculum or policy directives. Schools are able to regulate and shape roles and behaviour within a heteronormative and ciscentric framework through curriculum, subject choices, dress and sports codes, and

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[6] See literature reviews in Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report"; UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*; Bhana, "Understanding and Addressing Homophobia in Schools: A View from Teachers"; Lansard, "Addressing Homophobic Bullying in the Education Sector - Global Perspectives"; Msibi, "Homophobia in South African Township and Rural Schools: Understanding the Nature and Scale of the Problem."

[7] Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools."

[8] Western Cape Government, "Safe Schools Programme"; Western Cape Education Department "Safe Schools Call Centre: Reporting of School Crime and Abuse Circular."

extra mural involvement whilst still abiding by national and departmental policy regulations. Given the dominance of this framework, it becomes very easy to restrict discussions or representations of gender and sexual diversity, which ultimately undermine the experiences of individuals within these identities and perpetuate systems that allow or even complicity encourage homophobic or transphobic bullying[9]. The prevalence of various "myths" around sexuality and gender that are often reductive of the identity spectrum, further perpetuate discriminatory and prejudiced approaches and handling of these identities. Thus, this paper accepts that homophobic and transphobic bullying tend to be less a function of individual prejudices, and are often merely a symptom of problematic societal and systematic dispensations[10]. By considering the hegemony of heterosexuality cisgenderism defining societal expectations and roles, "homophobia is positioned within the ambit of social psychology and is regarded as a manifestation of the systemic and institutionalised oppression of individuals who do not adhere to dominant heterosexist norms and ideologies[11].

Additionally, homophobic and transphobic bullying is not confined to only targeting LGBTI students and staff. Often individuals who ally themselves or merely present in a way that is deemed non-conforming to expected masculine/feminine and sexuality roles and behaviours (a female student who desires to wear pants for example) can also be the target of such bullying or discrimination. This could further deter advocacy by non-LGBTI persons, at the risk of their being "outed" and discriminated against, despite not being LGBTI themselves[12]. Furthermore, secondary discrimination can be experienced when these individuals seek recourse on a primary act of discrimination – for example, a student reporting homophobic bullying may experience homophobic discrimination from the authority to whom they are reporting.

These issues present a threat to both the safety and security of individuals, as well as their right to education and identity[13]. Bullying often leads to increased instances of absenteeism, truancy, isolation and reduced self-esteem, depression, self-harm, drug and alcohol abuse, reduced academic performance as well as unsafe sexual behaviours[14]. Furthermore, UNESCO reports how some LGBTI (or presumed to be LGBTI) students were actively deterred or prohibited from attending school in Nepal, India, Bangladesh and across Latin America[15]. In addition to the immediate detriments of prejudice (the actual acts of bullying or discrimination) the environment that creates such acts also perpetuates systematic exclusion and "othering" of these identities, either explicitly through homophobic acts or individual, or implicitly through a lack of recognition,

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[9] Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 14–16.

[10] Mostert, "Teachers' Perceptions of Homophobic Victimisation among Learners within Independent Secondary Schools," 1; UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 11.

[11] Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 11.

[12] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 16; Mostert, "Teachers' Perceptions of Homophobic Victimisation among Learners within Independent Secondary Schools," 8; Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools," 6.

[13] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 7; Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools," 6.

[14] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 22; Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 16.

[15] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 20.

accommodation or discussion of identities outside of the heteronormativity and ciscentricism. Even those schools or individuals not actively discriminating against LGBTI students or staff may be complicity excluding or neglecting these identities through "conventional" policies around dress, language, privacy, facilities, curriculum and so forth. It is worth emphasising that the acceptance of a heteronormative and ciscentric culture (if even "taken for granted") continues to be harmful to individuals who do not easily conform to the assumption and expectations contained therein.

Educators (or any adults in an educational space actually) can play a crucial role in challenging these frameworks, limiting instances of homophobia and promoting gender and sexual diversity amongst students. Teachers tend to be the only adult in classroom spaces, spend the most amount of time with students, and are instrumental in shaping behaviours, roles and expectations through their teaching, as well as their own example. Teachers can also advocate on behalf of learners, especially to other students or staff. Similarly, other adults in the educational space (administrators, security guards, cleaners, matrons etc.) could also play important roles in challenging heterosexism and homophobia and the like. A said in the Department of Basic Education guidelines "Challenging Homophobic Bullying in Schools" state "[regardless] of a teacher's attitudes to sexual and gender diversity, s/he has a responsibility to reduce violence and homophobic bullying in schools and to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all learners"[16].That being said, just as this position could be incredibly beneficial, these same positions and access can also have detrimental effects if adults are themselves the perpetrators of homophobic or transphobic discrimination. Students may follow from their example, or perceive their own discriminatory actions to be legitimised through the actions of the supposed "mature" figures in the classroom or school. Even implicitly, educators may perpetuate or condone homophobic behaviour if they are unsupportive, unapproachable, neglectful, or complicit in tolerating such acts under the guise of "ordinary" adolescent behaviour[17]. However, as mentioned above, adults may be deterred from sympathetically to LGBTI students and colleagues as the risk of being labelled LGBTI themselves, potentially risking their job or personal security[18]. It must be remembered though, that LGBTI educators and staff may also be privy to the same types of discrimination as learners, but are also as equally privy to the constitutional protections against such discrimination.

The UNESCO report Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying[19] reports statistics from dozens of international studies citing both the high prevalence of homophobic and transphobic bullying globally, as well as the detrimental effects of this bullying. Studies include reports of physical, verbal and sexual abuse; hate speech; rumour spreading, ridicule and isolation; name-calling and harassment; death threats and intimidation; denial of school access; and theft or destruction of personal belongings and so forth. The reports also discuss the effects of such experiences that include: perceptions of being unsafe; absenteeism, truancy and dropping-out; reduced academic performance and achievement; depression and anxiety; loss of confidence; withdrawal and social isolation; guilt; substance abuse; and even suicide, suicidal thoughts and self-harm. These cases range from less developed countries in Latin American, Asia and

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[16] Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools," 10.
[17] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 39.
[18] Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 16.
[19] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*.

Africa to supposedly "developed" countries in North America, Western Europe and the United Kingdom.

The report includes the following statistics on South Africa:

"In South Africa, lesbians and gays report experiencing high levels of verbal, sexual and physical abuse in school, mainly from other learners, but also from teachers and school principals. In a survey of those who had left school, 68% of gay men and 42% of lesbians reported that they had experienced hate speech at school and 10% had experienced sexual violence."

In a survey carried out about sexual violence and bullying in schools, ">50% of respondents had experienced bullying one or twice in the preceding month".

In 2011, the Gay and Lesbian Network conducted a survey of schools in Pietermaritzburg, in their literature review they address the following:
"A study commissioned by the Joint Working Group reported high levels of discrimination (verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and negative jokes) experienced by lesbians and gays in schools in KwaZulu Natal... The primary source of victimisation reported was learners themselves (65%) followed by educators (22%) and principals (9%)".
In their own study, GLN found that "male learners are more likely to be aggressive towards gays and lesbians than females. Females are also more tolerant of gays and lesbians than males" and that "the youngest group (15,0-15,11 and younger) showed significantly higher levels of negative feelings and thoughts towards gays and lesbians"[20]

In the Department of Basic Education's Challenging Homophobic Bullying in Schools, they report similar effects of bullying to the UNESCO report that include learners are likely to: "have higher levels of absenteeism and truancy; be less likely to enter higher/further education; be more likely to contemplate self-harm/suicide have low self-esteem; show signs of physical ill health; underachieve academically; leave school early; [and] engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as unprotected sex".

Furthermore, a number of qualitative surveys and studies have been conducted across South Africa of learners, educators and educational staff that point towards high prevalence of homophobic and transphobic attitudes and acts and towards the detrimental effects that these have on the victims thereof[21].

Various studies and interventions have reported how a more inclusive curriculum and education space can be used to challenge homophobic and transphobic bullying and increase awareness and acceptance of gender and sexual diversity. Progressive reform needs to be realised at all levels, from teacher training to school dress codes to curriculum mainstreaming to bullying policies. It is recommended to begin these process in early

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[20] Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 43–44.

[21] See literature reviews and discussion in Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools"; Msibi, "Homophobia in South African Township and Rural Schools: Understanding the Nature and Scale of the Problem"; Bhana, "Understanding and Addressing Homophobia in Schools: A View from Teachers"; Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report."

grades before attitudes and behaviours become fixed in order to challenge gender and group stereotypes and prevent homophobia and transphobia from become commonplace or implicitly tolerated[22]. Some interventions could include: reformed and gender-neutral spaces, procedures and dress codes; establishment of "safe spaces" to encourage inclusion; confidential and non-judgemental reporting measures to process complaints and instances of bullying/discrimination; reforming bullying/discrimination policies to be more sensitive to gender and sexual diversity; and curriculum reform[23]. Curriculum reform could explicitly address sensitisation to gender and sexual diversity through life orientation, health or sexual education, human rights and citizenship education or could more passively mainstream these identities through other subjects like languages (through literature), history, biology, social sciences or similar[24]. Potgieter and Reygan[25] found that, through a review of South African Life Orientation Textbooks, that gender diversity was very seldom addressed and often only in conjunction with discussions about HIV and AIDS, which could be further detrimental to discrimination against LGBTI persons, especially if this is students only exposure to these identities. Furthermore, they also argue that the lack of representation and discussion of LGBTI persons and issues contributing to their being "invisible", which undermines their identities and fails to affirm their positions in society as citizens. All curriculums and school procedures and policies should actively affirm and recognise a diversity of genders and sexualities of their students and staff in order to challenge prevailing social norms and deter and restrict instances of homophobia and transphobia.

Case Studies/Literature Review of Instances and Interventions
    i.   Internationally
   ii.   In South Africa
Triangle Project has conducted several interventions with schools over several years. Some of these are more structured interventions while others are ad hoc and respond to sudden needs and crises. [need to speak to Sharon, Heather and Sindi re schools interventions].

The Injabulo LGBTI anti-bullying project.
Injabulo was conceptualised by a Triangle Volunteer and funded through a small grant. The project chose a pilot school in Cape Town and had several targeted interventions. What became apparent very quickly was not only the great need for such an intervention but moreover, the real resistance which came not from learners but from educators. This resistance came first in the fact that the project title had to be changed because the principal of the school feared a backlash from the educators if a specifically LGBTI project was conducted a their school. The second way this reluctance became clear was through the workshop for educators at the school. Here, very hostile attitudes became clear towards LGBTI people ranging from the dismissive and insulting and

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[22] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 34; Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 46; Department of Basic Education, "Challenging Homophobic Bullying In Schools," 9.

[23] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 26–27, 33; Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 18–19.

[24] UNESCO, *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*, 33; Stephens, "Homophobia in Schools in Pietermaritzburg: Research Report," 18–19.

[25] Potgieter and Reygan, "Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Citizenship: A Case Study as Represented in a Sample of South African Life Orientation Textbooks," 39, 48.

reaching all the way to almost threatening. This is troubling because educators play a vital role in setting a tone and culture at their school and educators do not have to do much to show – by their implicit and explicit behaviour – what their attitudes truly are. Where this negative attitude is clear, it sends a message to learners that they will be able to act without sanction should they target LGBTI learners. It also does much to create the atmosphere in which this targeting may take place in the first instance.

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