Focus Group 1

[Participants are settling in. The last to arrive, Kiara, completes their informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Uhm, so thanks everyone for coming. Uh, this, yeah, that means a lot to me, that you want to participate, so I hope that it will mean something to you to. Uhm [activates voice-recorder] so, if you’re nervous about participating today, I think that’s perfectly understandable, [laugh]. Uhm, and there are a few things that we can do, uh, before we get into the main topics of discussion, just to like, you know, settle some nerves and stuff like that. Uhm, so the first one is, I just need to, yeah, uhm, clarify that these, uh, this, this session is being recorded. So I have a voice recorder here on the table, and I have a video camera there, and the recordings help me to later analyze what we discuss. Uhm, and if you're nervous about who sees or hears the recordings, you shouldn't be, [wind rattles windows] because they will stay between me and my supervisor. Only we will see them. And we will transcribe the recordings and when we finish transcribing the recordings, we delete them, permanently. Cool. And then, any information that identifies you, in the transcript, uhm, including your name, will be changed or replaced. So, no one will be able to tell it was you specifically who participated in this. Cool. Any questions or concerns about that? [All shake heads] …No? Okay cool, thanks, uhm, Kiara. Cool. Oh, great, and [gets up and retrieves name cards], just so that, uhm, it's easy for us to refer to one another. Here's a, a name tag for you, you can just, uh, keep it in front of you. And if you'd like to change your name, for whatever reason, here’s a marker, [laugh sigh]. Cool, uhm, I think, [gives name card to James] here you go. Uhm… Right. Okay, cool. No one needs to change their name or anything? [Laugh sigh], cool. Have I got your pronouns right?

**[Several]:** [Nods], mmm (=Kiara: [Laugh]).

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. Thank. Uhm, okay, so I think, like, I've already warmed my voice a bit. So I think that we should go around and just, you know, say a little something so that we can get to know each other a bit (=Kiara: [Laugh]) Yeah, icebreakers are awkward.

**=Amara:** Not the icebreakers

**=[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Yes, yeah, [laugh sigh], icebreakers

**Amara:** I haven't done these in so long, [laugh], I don’t have a thing.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh] Yeah, so it's, the topic is just, uhm, what do you usually do for fun, and has that changed during the pandemic? That's it. What do you usually do for fun? Has it changed during the pandemic? Maybe there’re some things you miss doing that you don't really get to do anymore, or maybe you’ve found something else that's cool for you to do because of lockdown. Okay, anyone can start.

**Lily:** Okay, I’ll start (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, hi everyone, I’m L-, you can see my name, but Lily is fine. Uhm, I usually like to jog. Uhm, that didn't really change much. Now I don't really [inaudible] anymore. So [inaudible], yeah. That’s it, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Cool, thanks.

**[Several]:** [Turn heads to Tenda, sitting next to Lily]; [Laughing]

**Kiara:** Might as well, [laugh sigh].

**Tenda:** Hey, she took what I was gonna say (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Hi, I’m Tenda. You can call me Tenda, it’s Tendani. Uhm, I gym as well, we usually go to the gym together actually. Uhm, during lockdown, hard lockdown, we just exercise at home, I guess, so there no things that [inaudible].

**James:** Hi everyone, I’m James. Uhm, my, basically, like, super special interest is, uh, theater and stage design and stuff. Last year the [inaudible] closed down during lockdown, and some of them [inaudible] which I suppose, but, ja I’m very into like, designing props and stages and all that kinda stuff, it’s what I do all day. So as like a substitute for that I started costume design during the pandemic, ja.

**Tyler:** Cool, very cool.

**Amara:** Hi, my name is Amara and I listen to a lot of music and watch a lot of Netflix and I have done more of those things.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Kiara:** Hi everyone, I’m Kiara, well, for me initially what I used to do for fun was crochet and do like, [sigh], like friendship bracelets, but I started smoking weed. So, (=Amara: Oh yeah, that’s fun) yeah, getting high, [laugh].

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Casey:** Hi, I'm Casey and during lockdown I actually was able to return to the things that I usually like doing. So, I've been dancing since I was like three years old, and being able to go home, I have a home studio ‘cause my mother is a teacher so I was actually able to continue my dancing, get my teacher’s qualifications in it. And, *yoh*, all of my painting supplies was back home, so I was able in lockdown to continue and make my masterpieces and now back in Cape Town, I’ve got nothing.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Okay (=Kiara: Yeah).Cool, thanks. Nice. Uhm, so-

**Tenda:** Isn’t it your turn?

**=[Several]:** [Indistinguishable agreement and laughter]

**=Tyler:** Oh, yeah!

**Tyler:** Yeah, uhm, so even though I am a student and an older student, I'm still in my 20s. So, I miss, [laugh sigh], going out to like events. Uhm, so COVID’s compromised that, but uhm, I have kind of invested more in things I like doing before going to events, like getting ready. And so I am kind of like practicing makeup art, like every weekend, yeah.

**Casey:** Would you ever do, uhm, special effects?

**Tyler:** Maybe.

**=Casey:** That can be pretty cool [indistinguishable unison]

**=James:** That’s very fun [indistinguishable unison]

**Tyler:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay, cool.

**Kiara:** I could be your canvas.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Oh, really? I’ve only ever done it all myself really, so, be careful, [laugh]. Okay, cool. Uhm, so, the things that I asked you to think about, uhm, to discuss today. Uhm, there are two, two things, mainly. Uh, the smaller thing is how would you describe your sexual and gender identity? Uhm, and [Kiara’s phone rings], and (=Kiara: Sorry), no problem, and the second one is, uhm, the main [Kiara turns off ringing] part of this discussion, which is, you know, what are some experiences of feeling sameness and difference with other people? And so, both of those things, they are quite personal. And they're also very open to interpretation [Kiara puts phone away]. Okay. So that means that, it means two things really. It means that there is no right or wrong answer. There's no way to answer, you know, an experience of sameness or difference in a wrong way. Okay. And it also means that, because it's so open to interpretation, that there are many different things we can hear. So, I'd like to hear from everyone, you know (=[Several]: [Nodding]). Yeah. Uhm, yeah, my role is not really an interviewer. So I'm not gonna be asking a series of questions, and then you all respond to *me*, you know. It's mainly a conversation amongst all of you, with each other. And so I'm actually going to be *less* involved than you are. Yeah. I kind of open a broad topic and then you, you kind of take it from there. Uhm, I will kind of jump in, if, if, you know, I think we need to, if I'd like someone to explain a little bit further about what they're saying. Uhm, if you don't do that yourself, asking someone to, you know, explain a bit further. Uhm, and if, if some stories go *way* off topic, [laugh sigh] (=[Several]: [Laughter]), I might just, you know, bring it back in. Uhm, and I might step in if, uhm, if it's really necessary to ensure that this space is safe, comfortable, and respectful for everyone. ‘Cause that's also something that, you know, we need to do when interacting with each other, right? Like, each one of us individually, is the expert on our own lives. No one else knows our life better than we do, in this room. Okay, cool. So you can give someone that benefit of the doubt, even if you ask them to explain themselves further, you know, you can kind of respect that they know better about themselves. Uhm, and also… uhm, you have the right to say that you're not comfortable discussing something, right? So if someone asks you something, and you say, “you know what, I'm not really keen to go into that”, that's fine. We can expect, uh, we can respect that and then just move on. Cool. Does anyone have any questions? (=Several]: [Nodding]).

**Kiara:** Wait, so just to clarify, the first part is, the identity?

**Tyler:** Yeah, so I’ll, I’ll help you through the parts of them (=Kiara: Okay). You know, you don't have to lead the whole discussion, [laugh sigh] (=Kiara: [Laugh]), but yes. Yeah. Is there anything else that you think we should, we should, like, say about the dynamic that we want? Or have I kind of covered most of it? (=Tenda: [Raises hand slightly]) Yeah?

**Tenda:** I just wanted to ask with regards to the different questions, we’re going to through to the first one, and then hear what everyone has to say about it, and then proceed to the next one?

**Tyler:** Yes, yeah. So-

**Tenda:** So we can read, right?

**Tyler:** Hey?

**Tenda:** We can read.

**Tyler:** You can?

**Tenda:** Read. Read.

**Tyler:** Read?

**Tenda:** Yeah, let's say we wrote it down.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay (=Tenda: What we wrote). Yeah, yes. If you, if you've written some of your thoughts, right, ‘cause I asked you to (=Kiara: Ja), to think about what you'd say, if you wrote them down, of course you can read, you know. Uhm, yeah, that's fine. Cool. Okay, no questions? (=Amara, Kiara, Lily: [Shaking heads]) (=Voices from others talking outside the room). Okay, so then, yeah, we can start with the, uhm, the first kind of thing, uhm, which – ooo, careful [retrieve name card which has fallen]. Which is, uhm, yeah. So how would you describe your identity, your gender identity, sexual orientation, your queerness, what does being queer, to you, mean? And anyone can start.

**Casey:** I will start, but I've, I’ve made some couple of notes. ‘Cause, *yoh*, when you, when you said, “how do you id-, how’s your queerness?”. I mean, I immediately thought, you know, comfortable, *comfortable* (=Kiara: [Laugh]). *Yoh*, uh-uh, I come from a very conservative c-, White Afrikaans community and, it was very much like, “you are this [gestures small gap between hands], you are this and you can’t be this [gestures wider gap], you're not allowed to go what you want to do”. So for me at the moment, it's very much like, whatever I'm comfortable with doing with this [gestures to body], doing with this [gestures to head], it's a me thing. Coloring my hair, getting tattoos, getting my piercings, that's, you know, maybe one part of it. But otherwise, it's very much just being with who I want to be when I want to be. And, I’m, if I had to, like, explain my identity, in the words of the community, I would be [gestures laying words out in sequence on the table] panromantic, asexual, transgender, non-binary. But I'm also polyamorous, so it's very much, I don't know anyone who's like me. And that's okay. It's very much, just, comfortable, like I'm going out, and I'm not looking at a person for who they are on the outside. I don't care about what you've got going on here [gestures over torso]. Really, I don’t, trust me, trust me, it's not important. I'm not feeling anything from how you are looking today. It's, it’s very much about the emotional sides of things for me [James, Tenda, Lily set fallen nametags upright]. And how people, I've got core values. There’s always like, you can learn to know a person, you can learn to agree with a person. But there are those things about you, that if the other person doesn't agree, uh-uh, it's not gonna work out. This can be something like discrimination, or if someone's a racist, uh-uh, I won't ever be friends with you. And I've got core values like that when it comes to relationships, as well, so I don't really go out and do the casual dating scene or whatever, like, I want to know the person before I'm with the person. So for me, I've always experienced when I'm with a girl, then she wants me to be, you know, *the figure*. And I've never been able to be in that situation. When I'm with a guy, he wants to be *the guy*. And it's very difficult ‘cause I've never found someone who we both can just be like, “can we just, you know, go with the waves, be who we are that day?”, ‘cause it's not, it's not, the dynamic is not going to be the same every single day. It's a fluid situation [window rattles]. And yeah, I, I think that's how I would very much describe where I'm at, in this moment. Very much, I don't care what you do with your life. Just [door opens, closes], just don't put my identity down ‘cause my identity, I'm very much I don't want a label. I don't want a label on my sexuality or my gender, I don't want it, but, I recognize that's, for some people, to have a label is to describe yourself (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I personally don't want to be just a bullet point list. I don't ever want to be an essay that someone wrote, I don't want to fit in an aut-, autobiography. I feel I am much more than that and will never be able to b-, be described. So I don't ever want to explain myself. But for some people, if you, if you're in a relationship, and I go to the person uhm, and it's like, “Okay but I'm asexual”, then you know, that's kind of the end of it, he, you know, they get it. But with other situations, if you don't explain that, then you're gonna, you're gonna hit [hand hits other hand repeatedly] some blocks, hey. But ja, that, I think that's how I would go about it, at this moment.

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable mumble and laughter]

**Tyler:** Does anyone else relate to what Casey has been saying?

**James:** I think like, I definitely relate to certain parts of that, especially with like how I describe my gender identity, and sexual id-, and all that kind of stuff (=Casey: Mmm), about just like how, it doesn't fit, and it’s, it’s more than what (=Casey: Mmm) you were taught you were. And like, it's also super difficult to describe in the language that we have these (=Casey: Ja), like just these, these titles, like yes, they, they bring some comfort to me personally, I’m sure they bring comfort to other people as well (=Casey: Mmm). But like, it's more than that (=Casey: It really is) [Tyler nods], it’s not just a word on a piece of paper, [laugh sigh].

**Casey:** Yeah, ‘cause like I use the word ‘non-binary’, but even that, it feels like an umbrella term (=James: [indistinguishable agreement]). It's got gender fluidity or whatever, and I feel like I'm fluid, but I wouldn't say ‘gender fluidity’. Because if you say that people are just like, “okay, so the one day you're this [gestures to left] and the other day you’re that [gestures to right],” but it's, no. (=James: Yeah, it’s a bigger spectrum than just two points). Yeah. And, like, I get that sometimes you're feeling more, you know, [air quotes] stereotypically feminine, other times you’re more [air quotes] stereotypically masculine. But at the end of the day, I am just going to do what I wanna do, whether that fits into your box of one gender or the other, deal with it.

**James:** Yeah, totally. And also, like,some people just like take like presentation as the gender (=[Several]: Mmm) [Tyler and Lily nod] so you end up wearing a dress but not being like super girly, then you're not a girl (=Casey: Yeah). But like, what if I wanna be a guy that wears dresses? Then what? (=Casey: Exactly) That’s still valid, although I’m still wearing a dress, I’m still a guy that day.

**Casey:** Yeah, you can be completely male, you can com-, present yourself completely male and wear makeup and dresses, like that's still completely valid.

**James:** Exactly. (=Casey: So-) But why is that not like, uhm, progressive, but when like a cis guy does it, then it’s like, “Oh my god, he’s breaking the binary” (=Casey: Exactly), like-

**Amara:** Yeah, like Harry Styles does, [laugh] (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Casey:** *Yoh,* I hate the term ‘breaking the binary’ because I don't want a binary, *punt* (=James: Yeah). *Einde verby.*

**Kiara:** Uhm, also just to add on the, the, other identities. I feel there’s, there’s, identities, there are set definitions of them [window rattles]. Uhm, just the other day I was going through, uhm, I forgot what the organization is called. But they produced, uhm, the queer-pedia pocket [indistinct], and I was just like (=Casey: Yeah), I'm going through the definitions like [gestures scrolling on phone], okay, I'm waiting for myself to identify here, I can't see anything. And so, uhm, I feel also when we try and educate people, it’s, it’s a bit, uhm, challenging, to – ‘cause I feel people should, like, should define themselves. And sometimes I feel as queer folks, we tend to label people, unknowingly. Just, just unknowingly.

**Casey:** I feel even in the community, in, you know, the queer community, if people think non-binary, they think androgynous [Several: Nodding]. They think like clean slate, but like, look at us [addressing Kiara], we are very different, you, [laughter], you know?

**Kiara:** Yeah, yeah. And also it's the, not being, [sigh], not being non-binary enough, you know, I, [laugh].

**James:** Non-binary is just [air quotes] trans-light.

**Kiara:** Yeah, should I (=Tenda: [indistinguishable]), should I go buy a binder to be valid? I don't know, ja.

**James:** And like, when people do try and like, establish those terms, like within the non-binary thing, just like get a specific, more specific point, then people label them as snowflakes and making up terms and stuff. And that's another thing that really annoys me because like, when I was much younger, then it was like “either you’re trans [gestures right] or you’re cis [gestures left], anything in between that, you’re being a [air quotes] special snowflake, and you're wanting attention”. I hate attention, okay, I work backstage [gestures behind them], I don’t like being on the stage (=[Several]: [Laughter]). I hate it, and yet here I am. I finally got to accept that, I’m non-binary. And that's okay, I'm not a special snowflake, I’m me.

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, nice.So I'm hearing that, like, there are limits with terms, right.

**Kiara:** And I also find that, I feel, terms can overlap. So, with me (=Tyler: Mmm), I identify as non-binary more on the demi-girl side. Uhm, and also, [sigh], I don’, ‘cause, I remember when I said I identify as a lesbian, they be like “Oh no, you’re non-binary so, you know, unpopular opinion, you can’t identify as a lesbian”. And I just feel, hmm, terms can [steepled fingers crossing each other] overlap, [indistinguishable] in my life, and so you have to be like, “Okay, fine homosexual, then if it suits, if, if, you know if it suits your definition”, uhm, but that's, I feel, how I identify, currently, would be non-binary, more the demi-girl, lesbian, homosexual, queer, yeah. And also, I could relate to what you said, I also grew up in a very conservative family specifically, we’re Jehovah’s Witnesses [Tenda and Lily move chairs closer], hmm. So, there was never an option to be queer, like queerness was never a thing. It wasn't, [sigh], so, [sigh], but I, I didn't understand myself for the longest time, right? So I’d give myself excuses for how I feel. So if I felt something for a girl, I'd be like, “No, you like yourself and you’re, you’re female, so obviously you’re gonna like another girl,” excuses, [laugh]. Because, uhm, I feel the, the option to be anything other than what's within the heteronormative was never afforded. And so, you can't, and also, I didn't have the vocabulary to describe myself, properly, ja.

**Lily:** [Gestures with open palms throughout]I resonate with that a lot, the, the feeling of trying to explain while I'm talking to someone, because, like, often people will just assume, “oh, you look straight, you don’t look queer”. And so that is, I don’t know it’s also been a weird thing for me. I didn't similarly have the vocabulary, ‘cause I just thought everyone just didn't care, if I like you, I like you [James nods], and then it’s, as I got older, like late high school, when people would be like, giving me weird looks ‘cause I'm making out with a girl. Yeah, I identified, ah, I identify as pansexual and I feel like, that for me, fits me nicely because I, I see it as kind of just liking who you like, without any restrictions, be it gender or sexuality or anything like that. I don't know, that gives me a sense of freedom, so, yeah, yeah.

**Tenda:** I’ll go (=Tyler: Sure). Uhm, I am a trans man. Uhm, I wrote my, I said in my, my queerness is grief. It's beautiful, and empowers character, because ever since I, okay, so, it has been a lifelong goal to come to Cape Town. So I'm, I‘m originally from Eastern Cape [lightly kicks table]. So sorry, [laugh]. And, I never really understood why I wanted to come to Cape Town, growing up, but later on, as I progressed through high school, I knew I wanted to come to Cape Town because I felt as if Cape Town would be that environment that would allow me to be me, [Amara looks at her nails] because, there's so much, there's so much diversity here, there's so many people, and there's just people being themselves and, growing up in a very Christian home, d-, in preach, and all, you're told [gestures narrow gaps between hands] what you can do, what you can't do. And this is your box, and if you're not that, you're a disappointment. And, I didn’t like the idea of being a disappointment. Yeah. So yeah, that’s that.

**Amara:** Yeah, so I'm like trans woman, and bisexual. And I like, really like those labels, like, they make me feel very, like, safe, I guess. And it's just like, I think that's part of how I see myself and like, relate to the world around me is through labels, because I struggle a lot with like, assigning characteristics to myself in terms of like [Tyler nods throughout], charismatic or like, smart or whatever, because that's like, not tangible. Like, identity group labels really helped me because I can like, like that’s objective and, like. I'm like, mixed race, I'm like, bi, trans, whatever, like, my main goal, you know, whatever, whatever, whatever. So it's like, that really helps me relate to like, the world around myself. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice. Okay, so I'm, I’m kind of hearing that it's, it’s really a personal, uh, way that you identify. You know, take a term and if it's, if it fits you, then cool, and if it doesn't fit you, then you can, you know, throw it off or, or, you know, put it to the, to the back, like, it's not so important. Is that, is that what you guys are hearing as well? [Amara and Lily nod] Yes?

**Casey:** I think it just, as you continue on it changes so much, *so* much. ‘Cause I'm thinking, grade seven, I was [gestures finger moving across the table as they use terms] bisexual. Later, I was like, wait a minute, that's maybe a bit, not including everyone, in my eyes. So I was like, okay, pansexual, then, then later, it's like, you're maybe not, you’re maybe not that sexual part, maybe that's not for me. Panromatic asexual. And it's just, you know, it's snowballing and it changes so much as you start to understand, ‘cause I think, these are also, there's a lot of terms, there are so many terms in this community. And it's when you hear something and see the definition, like okay, I relate, but you're not going to ha-, you're not like handed a dictionary when you're like five years old, like [gestures commanding to another] read it and tell me what you are. Yeah, it's, it's very, like you meet people who are like that and know the words, and, just snowballing until you get it right. Yeah.

**James:** That's another thing, like changing your labels and stuff, as if it were such a bad thing. You’re also growing, you’re also learning about the community and yourself as your grow, so like, it's okay to like, mix around labels as you learn, it’s okay.

**Kiara:** I think I can relate to that, because initially, I was omnisexual. And I was like, okay, maybe I'm pansexual and I was like, actually, it's fine, let me just stick to the homo, [laugh].

**Tenda:** [Slightly raises hand towards Kiara] What does omnisexual mean?

**Kiara:** Omnisexual? Omnisexual is, uhm, uhm, parallel I think, to pansexual. So it’s, uh, recognizing one's gender, recognizing, ja, everything about them, not, uhm. I feel like pansexual is more about the person themselves. And then with omnisexual it’s, it's more material, I guess, ‘cause you, you, you admire the gender, everything about the person physically, yeah.

**Tyler:** [Looks around between others] Right. Okay, so, uhm, that point that you had, Casey, about, uhm, your s-, uh, conception of yourself changing over time, and the terms that you have changing over time. That's, yeah, something that I can tell some of you relate to, but, uhm, what about any feelings of, of not changing over time? Do you, does anyone have that?

**Amara:** Yeah. I mean, there's a thing of like, when you have an identity and like everyone else is telling you, “that's not you and like, you shouldn't be that” and like everything, then it's kind of like, you put your feet down and you're like, [shrugs] “Whatever you say, doesn't matter. Like I'm gonna be this forever”. And it's like, it's weird because it's like, things are fluid and things do change and like, terms change, right? Like, you know, ‘gay’ didn't mean the same thing it meant, 20, 40 years ago, right? [Shrugging gestures] Like ‘trans’ definitely doesn't mean the same thing it meant, like, 40 years ago, right? Like, we didn't have terms back then. So it's like, it's ups and downs, right, ‘cause it's like, you wanna like, say “fuck you, like, this is me, this is who I am like, what you say can't change that”. And then it's like, and then you change and you feel bad about it? Like, what if I'm just giving it to society? Like, I don't know.

**Kiara:** I’m feeling (=Tenda: I-), oh, so sorry (=Tenda: No it’s okay you can go, [laugh sigh]). I’m feeling bad about change, I feel when I came into my non-binary self, it was a thing of okay so, if I'm non-binary, am I not feminist, am I not proud of my womanhood? [Laugh sigh], so, uhm, also just to add on the staying the same part, I feel, [sigh], I've always been me, but then just lacked vocabulary to describe it [Amara and Tyler nod]. Like, this is how I've always felt, just now I have, I'm able to describe myself and articulate myself better. Yeah.

**Tenda:** Actually adding onto that, uhm, I think I also just felt like me I just didn’t know. Because I know when I’m in the group chat, so like there’s trans groups that we’re in that are really helpful. Uhm, but it always made me insecure to know that there are some people that have known since they were five, since they were three, or whatever, that they are a boy, or a girl. And that made me, doubt mine [James and Amara nod], and think that I’m not valid, and yeah, I just that the, yeah, I just needed to get out of that mind, mind state, as well.

**James:** Yeah, [indistinguishable] the different stages of like where people actually allow themself to discover that after. I don't think there really should be something that like makes you a better trans person to be like, still known from a young age, but I know for some reason it does, like, it does get that way when you like see other people realize, like “Ah, why didn’t I realize that early? What, is there's something wrong with me, am I really trans?” All that kind of stuff. It’s awful, but like, it really shouldn't be part of the community. I think we actually have to like, try and make the community more inclusive of (=Casey: Yeah) its own community (=Casey: Yeah).

[**Several]:** [Laughter; nodding]

**Amara:** Yeah, the whole like, three-year-old trans person thing was like a huge thing for me, like, back in the day, you know, ‘cause like, it is so invalidating, right? ‘Cause that's like the public perception. Like that's, that's the most accepted kind of trans person, you know, it's like, “Oh, my God, they were like, born a boy and then actually, at the age of three, she was like, ‘Oh, my God, I love dresses and I love dolls and like’, and then, you know, she's trans”. And then everyone's like, “okay, that's fine. Sure, that's acceptable.” But then when (=James: [Indistinguishable]) you like, 15 or 18, 40, then it's like, “No, come, you should have realized, if you were this, you would have known, right?”. And it's like, even if you knew, sometimes people just don't have the vocabulary, like, how do we expect children to like, we don't tell them that this is an option, and then we expect them to just figure it out, I don’t think, it's ridiculous.

**James:** It’s like, I grew up in a household where like, we don't even talk about like, things [Lily and Tyler nod]. I didn't even know that homosexuality was a thing until I read it in a line in a book, and I thought it was a typo.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**James:** [inaudible], okay, that was the first introduction I had to any kind of queerness. [Inaudible]. But like, ja, my family, we just don't talk about that kind of stuff. It's off the table. Like, I think my dad made a joke about it the one day, you know, but like my sister said, “Maybe I'll just become a lesbian instead”, and he said, “If you do that, I’ll kick you out of this house”, [inaudible], so like okay, I’m gonna keep quiet [gestures shrinking into themselves].

**Kiara:** Uhm, on the, on families [laugh sigh]. So I live with two, uhm, a sister and a siblings. So my other sibling is very visibly masculine. So she dated a, a girl at the, at that time. And so my sister once said, “lesbianism is a cult”, [laugh sigh]. And then she said, my, ah, my sister is like trapped within the cult, that if she leaves, she’ll expose the secrets or something. And I think like, what secrets? (=[Several]: [Laughter], this is a, uhm, I feel it's a mis, miseducation, that most families have, also. Yeah.

**Casey:** Adding on all of that, uhm, even in my community, my parents were quite supportive. They weren’t openly supportive, but they would respect my decision. So as a child, they would always like take me to the toy store, and just put me at the entrance and say [gestures open arms] “go”. Even at clothing shops, it was just “go, get your things” where, “you can go whichever side you want”. So I was very grateful for that. So I think I always grew up knowing I wasn't cis-het. I didn't know what I was, and, and it was only, when, you know, you see a lot of YouTubers and you read about it, on Tumblr, Instagram, whatever. You see things and it's when you see other people living, in that space already, that you’re kind of like, “relatable”. So actually, it was kind of [addressing Kiara] you, when you came out, that I realized, and then I came out, at, following.

**Kiara:** Really?

**Casey:** Ja, ‘cause we’re.

**Kiara:** I, I don't recall. Did I come out to you?

**Casey:** Yeah.

**Kiara:** Awww.

**[Several]:** [Laughter].

**Kiara:** Thank you, [laugh].

**Tyler:** That's great…[Looks between others] Okay. Nice. Is there anything else that you want to say about your own identification, before we move on? Not that you can't talk about it later, of course you can, [laugh].

**Kiara:** Oh (=James: Uhm-), sorry (=James: Go ahead; Tyler: Yeah?).Just, just reminded when I, ‘cause I came out, I think in first year, right (=Casey: Yeah, [sits with arms akimbo]). So when I got to [university], I was really trying, hmm, convert myself, so I was very like men, men, men, you’re supposed to like men, men, men. And so, uhm, like, at res, they knew me for just being straight. And then it was a bit, I didn't, like, consciously realize, the, how, uhm, challenging sort of, it was to come out, to be like “Okay, actually, now there's this girl”, [laugh]. Yeah, I just recall that, so.

**Tyler:** So was that like, like negotiating this kind of, uh, assumed heterosexuality?

**Kiara:** Yeah, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay… James?

**James:** Uhm, my one is just, uh, ‘cause my boyfriend, he’s also trans, but he’s like, full, uhm, F, FTM. Uhm, so we’ve both like been in this sort of like community together [all lean in closer to James], I don’t really know a lot of other like, IRL trans friends. Like, there's a couple at university and there’s a few I know of and that’s about it. But he's like my main source of like, communication, and security, that kind of stuff. Uhm, and we obviously follow like a bunch of Instagrammers and all that kind of stuff. And there's this one person called River Queer on Instagram, and they, just, they, uhm, describe [Tyler moves voice recorder closer to James], they’ll often use labels but then actually just, ask myself, “what does my gender feel like, what does it taste like, what does it smell like?” And just like describing it in terms of like real world things that we can imagine. And like just create this long list of things. So like, my boyfriend, he decide, “No, my gender is a night full of stars, like when I look up at that, I feel ‘Yes, that's me’”. And like, my one personally, is like those abandoned mansions, just completely overgrown. That's how I feel (=Tyler: Mmm), I look at that and I relate to it, And I just find that that is, that's really interesting, ‘cause I've never met someone, asked them about that, and happened to see the response to either of us, or anyone else that I know (=Tyler: Mmm). And I find that really interesting, because it shows just how wide spectrum is, just how many possible, possibilities there are, that you can just like relate to. And it doesn't have to be like the vocabulary that we use today, just like sexualities and stuff, it’s more than that.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's really interesting, that gender is, you know, something a little bit more than dimensions of masculinity and femininity. Has anyone else felt something similar to what James has just described?

**Casey:** I'm just wondering about what does your gender smell like (=[Several]: [Laughter]). That's a very interesting question.

**Tenda:** That’s very insightful.

**Casey:** Like, I think I can take like what I feel and put an aesthetic to it, but, uh, I don't think that's generally like the gender or the sexuality part, it's just who I am, like, mine would probably have a lot of space things and stars and whatever... Yeah.

**James:** It’s more than an aesthetic but like once you find one or two things that like you really, really, really, really relate to on like a deeper level, then it will be much easier to start finding other things. Like I'm still very high on my list, I haven’t, I only have like one or two things, because I've only recently discovered [indistinguishable], but my boyfriend, he’s been doing this for like a full year already and he has an entire list on his phone, he see’s something and he's like, yes, that's my gender (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Casey:** It’s very interesting. I'm gonna go think about all that. But, ja, the other thing is, in, even in the transgender community, right. You know, there's people who are not on T or not getting surgery and you know, that's still completely valid, but in the community, it's, it feels a bit invalidating, if you just wanna stay in the body that you were and still be trans.

**James:** Yeah, it’s like people expect you to be trans enough to hate yourself.

**[Several]:** Mmm. Yeah.

**Tenda:** I actually recorded a video about that yesterday.

**[Several]:** Ooo.

**Tenda:** It was just interesting.

**Tyler:** Yeah, it seems to be tapping into that theme of like, there are good queers and bad queers.

**[Several]:** Mmm, yeah, [nodding].

**Tyler:** You know, there are people who aren’t queer enough.

**James:** I think it’s because, like, the [air quotes] good queers, they look at the [air quotes] bad queers, and they say “oh, you're embarrassing us, you’re making us look bad for the cis”-

**Amara:** Oh, that’s a whole thing [=Several: [animated agreement]

**Tyler:** Really?

**James:** Yeah.

**Kiara:** So, back in the day right, I used to watch this, uhm, like this YouTuber, Blair White (=[Several: [sounds of disapproval; gestures covering heads/looking away]; =James: I’m so glad you remember-)

**Tyler:** Who’s the name again?

**[Several]:** Blair White.

**Tyler:** Okay

**Kiara:** It’s, like-

**Amara:** She is terrible.

**Kiara:** Ja, and so there she’d talk about, how non-, non-binary identities just are embarrassing the trans community and then, like, I didn't realize at the time, but it, it would, like, made me feel bad, in my identity, to the consumption that I was having, yeah, at the time.

**James:** But do you-

**Casey:** But this community can also be-, it can break people as well, especially the discrimination against bisexual people (=James: Yes) [Amara gestures two peace signs], you know, who are actually, you know, if, if you're, you're female and you're dating a male, then you're actually bisexual, then the community, you know, there are people that go off on you and say [gestures pointing] “but you're actually straight, you’re actually straight”. And then, ja, there’s-

**James:** It’s like the pan and bi communities, like arguing ‘oh,bisexual is transphobic’. No it’s not.

**[Several]:** [indistinguishable overlaps]

**Casey:** And then there’s also people fighting aro/ace people, there are so many people fighting aro/ace people, saying (=James: Yeah) it's not a sexuality. You know, it's not a queer identity, so-

**James:** But you’re a minority, you guys are being oppressed and discriminated against. It involves the community.

**Casey:** Like you would think it's an inclusive community, but it isn’t. *Yoh,* it isn’t.

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable agreement].

**Amara:** Yeah, there’ so much like infighting, you know?

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable agreement]

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay, cool. I think this is a good entry point to move on to experiences of sameness and difference. So it can be, you know, with other queer people, or it can be with non-queer people. It can be with your family, your friends, colleagues, whoever. Uhm, yeah, and really open to interpretation. So, uhm, I think you (=Casey: Yeah), you mi-, you may have, like, many examples to think of, uhm, but if we can just roll with like, one example of your own, and then kind of, you know, roll on the conversation and then come back to other ones. So, yeah, and, and let's, let's try to be, like specific, you know, like, uhm, talk about like, one's particular [claps from another room] particular example (=Casey: Okay). Yeah.

**Casey:** Uhm, I’ll go first, uh, again (=Tyler: Sure). So it was really much, I've always just accepted the fact that in any conversation, I will be the person who goes “don’t relate”, and I'll never be with a person that “lol same” (=Kiara: [Laugh]). It's never happened, especially, you know, when talking about pure sexuality, ‘cause I'll be talking like to my bisexual, or my gay friends, or whatever, about their relationships, and whatever, their hookups and whatever. And they know they come talk to me, because you know, I'm very much an open person. Like, I don't feel embarrassment, talking about any of that sort of things. And s-, so whenever we're talking about sexual experiences, it's just me going “Ja... Ja, sure (=Kiara: [Laugh]). I know what you’re feeling”. ‘Cause, ja, sorry to bring it now back to the, the community situation, there was a very, there's a lot of discrimination with aro/ace people, uhm, ace people especially, about the ‘But have you tried it? (=[Several]: Mmm) Have you tried it? And like-

**James:** “You just haven’t met the right person yet”

**Casey:** Yeah, like, “But, but are you sure? Maybe you were just with the wrong person, you know, maybe it was a bad experience, need some good”, you know? That, it comes like, you know, I've had the experiences, I felt nothing. That's just how it is. And, and, you know, I, I feel that I was pressured to go out and find the experiences because of that, and, I kind of, now, looking back at it, relieved that it did happen, because I'm so much more sure about myself now. It was like, “Ja, that was my first and last experience. Thank you.” [Raise hands in surrender] (=Kiara: Yeah). But yeah, so sometimes with conversations, I just really cannot understand the emotions that they're talking about, because I've never ever experienced the emotions. And, ja, it, it does make me, uhm, very frustrated and saddened sometimes ‘cause it's a part of human being that I will never experience. But I've got other things going for me, so (=Several]: [Light laughter]), I'm not too worried about that.

**Kiara:** Uhm, just to, on, like the, the emo, like I guess it’s the sameness of it. With regards to the, the, the responses that you get, “have you tried it? Maybe you weren’t with the right person” is similar to like, my lesbian experience, they’ll be like, “have you, have you tried with a guy? How did you know? Do you have a girlfriend? Oh maybe you didn't meet the right guy,” and it’s, [laugh sigh], like, do you, do you, it's like people d-, I remember this one time, because I had a lot of people that I knew from high school who knew me to be straight, and so when I had to come out to them and be like actually I like girls, there’d be questions like, “Oh do have a girlfriend”. “No, I don’t have a girlfriend”. “Well how do you know that you, you like girls?” And I’m like: “How do you know that you like girls?”

[**Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Yeah, exactly (=Tenda: Totally dumb).Uhm, so is there, is there any one person or couple people in particular, that, uh, sort of pressured you to try, uh, stuff? Or is that, is it kind (=Casey: No, its more like-) of more a collection of people?

**Casey:** -you know, when you're talking in a group and it's like your close friends and you're all just talking about your experiences, it's very much me then, you know, everyone is trying things, everyone is experimenting and you know (=Tyler: Okay), sharing, uhm, with each other “Okay, no this was actually okay for me (=Tyler: Mmm). Maybe I'll try this weird kinky thing later” (=Tyler: Mmm). And then it's me just sitting there like, [Gestures covering head] “Oh, no, no, no, no. (=[Several]: [Laughter]), Why am I here?”

**Tyler:** Okay, so, so it’s more like you’re the odd one out in the group?

**Casey:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And it’s, and it's not like the group isn't inclusive or anything, like they're my best friends. They, they respect me, they trust, you know, who I am (=Tyler: Mmm). It's just in that one topic, I can’t relate.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. Okay. And Kiara that, that, uhm, thing that you talked about was quite similar, you know, like uhm, I think you said, a straight man was like, pressure-, or asking you (=Kiara: Yeah), “how do you know that you’re a lesbian?” (=Kiara: Yeah). Is that, is, is there one person that comes to mind?

**Kiara:** Yeah, there was this one guy from high school. But I blocked him, so (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Yeah, he was sort of the guy who thinks that lesbians exist for the pleasure of men, or something.

**[Several]:** Oh [indistinguishable disapproval; Lily and Casey cover their faces with a hand]

**Kiara:** I was like, this is not it for me. This is where our friendship ends.

**Tyler:** Lily you had a, a sigh, [laugh sigh].

**Lily:** Uh, yeah.

**Tyler:** What are you feeling?

**Lily:** I used to get that a lot, because, uhm, well, when I was younger, I was, I… well initially only dated guys, not because of any reason, I just happened to, not that I dated much, that’s not the point. Uhm, and then, when I, I had, I didn’t date this girl, I had a thing her, and it was like, I’m very, I’m very open about my life. And so, this guy comes up to me and he’s like, “Oh, so I heard you’re gay now”. My sister’s gay by the way, uhm, then, is like, “Oh, so is it, is it because of your sister and you're just trying to be like her?” And it was just a very weird thing. And then, I dated a guy afterwards. And then “oh so you’re straight again? Oh, you don't know what you want”. [Sigh], it’s, it's infuriating, having to explain yourself, but also, not wanting to give someone the satisfaction of seeing you frustrated. It’s, yeah, it's just something that I, I still sometimes battle with people back home, especially coming from a very small town, where everyone knows everyone and everyone's business. It’s just, yeah, it’s a bit much sometimes.

**Casey:** *Yoh,* I relate. I hate it that, you know, you're in situations, where you have to constantly explain and introduce yourself, over and over, “But what does it mean if your pronouns-”, you know? And, then, *yoh,* [grabs head] in conversations, right? It's, it's, I, I came out last year as non-binary, but it was only really this year now we are actually around people again, that it's very, coming apparent that it's difficult to jump into a conversation like “*yoh*, you just made me very frustrated, (=[Several]: [Laughter]), *yoh*, please.” And, you know, when, dealing with figures of authority, like your professors [James nods], or even like that, you don't want to get into it, but you really want to, yoh.

**Kiara:** Especially in the Science Faculty (=Casey: Oh, listen, [laugh]), they’re like, no transformation at all.

**Casey:** But like, a bit of astrophysics, it's a weird thing, like, you get tutors or whatever, you know, you know, people around our age, who are still like, okay, but the older, the way older generation, [gestures going over head] woo, goes over their heads.

**James:**I feel like I’ve had a very different experience, like, just at university because like, that's the first place where I was like, I came into it being out and everything to all of my professors and everything. Every single one of my tutors would dead-name and misgender me, purposefully, even though like I my sign my emails (=Casey: [Grabs face] It hurts so-) with my correct name and my pronouns, and everything, I go out of my way to do it, and they still dead-name me and (=Casey: It hurts so much) mis-, misgender me. And then, like my professors and stuff, they would actually like make an effort. Like they would change our name on the register for me without having to ask. And like, they would like try and like find out if, if I was like, really distressed or anything, because of my classmates and stuff, and like, I have had some really good experience with my actual lecturers, but none with my tutors yet, like this year I’m very lucky to have, like, only one tutor for one of the subjects this year, and they are actually non-binary. They're like *thee* non-binary person [indistinguishable]. But ja. It's just, it’s been a wild experience, and I did not expect that going into university. Because I also had this impression like, oh, ja, the older generation they’re going to be like completely against this, it's going to be the younger generation that's going to be more okay. But it's actually not. Like, we think that we are more progressive, that’s because we surround ourselves with progressive people.

**[Several]:** [indistinguishable approval and nodding].

**Casey:** And, I, I think it's even worse, like if you're around your friends and you know, they, they respect you and they do get it. But it's really, it takes effort. And, you know, [car beeping repeatedly outside] some of them, do not put in the effort (=James and Amara: Yeah). But I think one of the worst experiences, ja, is being purposefully misgendered and (=James: Yes) used your dead name. It's the worst.

**Kiara:** Because of, like, on the topic of friends putting in the effort. I have a, a friend, we’re very close, but she's used to like, use “sis, yes, sis”, and ([Several]: [indistinguishable agreement]) I was like, “can we not use ‘sis’?”. And she’s like “No, on Twitter, they use it all the time, regardless of gender,” (=Casey and Amara: Yeah!), and I was like, “But this is not Twitter”, [laugh].

**=[Several]** [indistinguishable agreement]; [Tenda and Amara gesture in animated frustration]

**Casey:** “Yass queen, yass queen”, that doesn’t work, you know (=Kiara: Mmm!). You know, you know, the terms where they just throw around like, you know, for some people ‘dude’ and ‘bro’ will not be okay. (=Kiara: Yeah!)

**Amara:** I’m not your ‘bro’, you don't know me. (=Kiara and Casey: Yeah!)

**James:** Like a lot of people [indistinguishable] gender neutral and stuff and if the person is okay with that, that's fine. Like if they specifically told you, “I’m not okay with this”, don’t use it. It’s not like it-

**=Kiara:** Some p-

**=Tenda:** It’s very weird that-

**Kiara:** Oh no, go.

**Tenda:** No, I was just gonna say it's very weird that you have to adjust to their comfort, because they’re used to saying this word, but they won’t adjust to yours. But you have to-

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable overlap]

**Kiara:** Someone even used it in an email to me, ‘sis’, and I was like, this is an email [=Several]: [Laughter]).

**James:** And you sent it? (=Kiara: Yeah, ‘cause-) That’s not even a slip of the tongue.

**Kiara:** Sorry?

**James:** It’s not even a slip of the tongue, they typed that out (=Kiara: Yeah), and pressed send.

**Kiara:** Yeah. And also I feel, my identity is very relational to the people that I engage with, with, uhm, for example, intimate partners, ‘cause I usually, [sigh], it's so weird [windows rattle loudly], because I've, I’ve recently been, like, [window rattles] I find it more difficult-

**Tyler:** Let me close that window. [rises to close window]

**Kiara:** Should I continue? (=Tyler: Continue, yes). I find it more difficult to come out as non-binary to my intimate partners than to general public because usually I’m dating, uhm, lesbian girls. And so, they’ll be like “so, if you're non-binary, what does that make me?” And I’m like, [Lily gestures emphatic frustration in agreement] “this is not about you”.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Casey:** You know, you know, on that topic – sorry, do you wanna say something?

**James:** Yeah, uhm, it's just that I find it really strange how, uhm, like [Tyler sits back down] people that are used to being like cis-het, or cis relationships, even if they’re like queer and stuff, they see non-binary people as a this threat to their queerness, and it’s like, no it’s not, you can still be whatever you want to, I'm just me.

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Casey:** But yeah, just, just on the pronoun thing again. It's very much, you feel like it's you that changed. You changed your pronoun. And it's, I don't know, but I’m very, felt selfish to ask other people to then change [Amara and James nod] because of something that I decided about myself. But ja, it will get better.

**Tyler:** I think it might be a little similar to what you were saying, Lily, when, uhm, you know, someone was asking you to, like, “Oh so, so you’re lesbian today,” and “Oh, you’re straight today,” and it's that thing of like, yeah, you, you kind of make someone else's idea of sexuality and gender uncomfortable for them (=Casey: Yeah). And then it's *your* problem. You have to explain it, you know, instead of well, it's their problem if they're uncomfortable.

**Amara:** Yeah, and then you have to comfort them and shit.

**[Several]:** [indistinguishable agreement]

**Casey:** It’s like, you're not the one who needs the comforting here.

**=Amara:** Like I feel shit generally

**=Tyler:** The focus is on the wrong person

=[**Several]:** [Indistinguishable agreement]

**James: ‘**Cause like they’ll, they’ll misgender you and then you’ll say like, you’ll correct them and they’ll be like “oh my god, I’m so sorry” (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable agreement]), and then you’ll say “it's okay” when it's really not, but like you can’t say anything else ‘cause they be like, “oh, I feel so bad,” [indistinguishable]

**=Amara:** Yeah, and then you're like, the angry tranny, [laugh sigh].

**=James:** Just correct it and move on, it’s okay, [laugh sigh]

**Tenda:** Lily will downright attack for me. And I'd be like, you know what, it's fine. (=[Several]: [Laughter]), just let it be.

**Tyler:** [Looks between others]…Is there any other kind of experience that you'd like to share? Maybe not, I think, uh, the difference one came out, came out a lot. You know, feeling different from people who don't understand your queerness. Uhm, what about feeling some sameness?

**James:** I have one, it’s kind of similar [indistinguishable] (=Tyler: Yeah). So, I, like I mentioned before, I have a couple of non-binary in my class and stuff, there's one in particular that’s in my actual like, modules and stuff. And she is a ‘she/they’ non-binary. Uhm, and everyone in my class respects their pronouns, perfectly. They'll always use ‘they’ or ‘she’ or whatever. And they’ll always use their chosen name and everything, but then it gets to me and I've not once been properly gendered or named (=Tyler: Really?) from the first time (=Tyler: Wow), and like no one corrects them or anything when they do it to me, but as soon as someone like, says like, ‘she’ to them like, they’ll be like “Oh my god, no, no, no, you have to use ‘they’ for this person because they’re non-binary” and then the person themselves is like “ No actually I’m, I’m cool with both” and, like, even as much as I can relate to them, I just get, it’s so strange (=Tyler: Yeah) like how this complete dissonance, disconnect with the class, with like who is valid and who is not (=Tyle: Mmm). It's like the idea of her is easier for them to accept (=Tyler: Okay) because she is, uhm, assigned-female-at-birth, non-binary, so it's easier for them I guess, whereas I like, question their beliefs too much, maybe. But it's just really strange because like, I’m literally in an art course, we're supposed to be like the weird fairy ones, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So yeah, that's just been a really w-, really weird situation.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Can you explain more why you think that invalidation happens, that difference in validation?

**James:** Uhm, I have no idea. And like, I've actually brought it up with certain people in my class, because like, there are a l-, there's a lot of queer people in my class and some of them have approached me about it and asked me about it, because, uhm, my name on the system isn’t my, my name because of my parents paying bills and I can’t have them look at my real name. Uhm, and I’ve like brought it up to them and stuff. And then they'd be like, “Oh my God, that’s so wrong, we need to fix this, how can we correct this?”. And then the next time I see them, they’re like “Hey dead-name. Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry. I’m used to what you’re called online”. Like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), thanks, yeah, you really help, [laugh sigh]. Maybe it’s not the system that’s just the problem, maybe it’s you too (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Kiara:** Uhm, I'm just wondering if sameness can relate to the presentation, I feel like (=Tyler: [Nods] Sure), when you, uhm, see yourself, when you're, in someone, they be like “Ah, same” maybe you, you feel like you relate. For me, it was with my identity. I've never, [clears throat], there's never any representation. I feel I struggled a lot because of that. Uhm, most of my identity was rooted in representation. I remember this one time, I was scrolling, back when I had Insta, and I saw this queer female. And I feel, [sigh], like it was with body image too and my queerness. So I've always felt that, uhm, okay, you can’t be lesbian because girls don't like fat girls, they have never seen a girl with a fat girl. And then when I saw her, she was like, “I'm queer, I'm fat. I'm just living my life,” was like “Ah, same, I want to be that way!”, ja. So I feel representation to me has been a very crucial part. I still struggle with (=Tyler: Mmm) it a bit, uhm, because I feel, there’s an aesthetic (=James & Tyler: Mmm), sometimes with, uhm, mostly lesbian relationships and it’s, like, I don't necessarily fit that aesthetic, because also it's like, “Okay, fine, if you're gonna be fat, at least have a small waist and a big butt and some boobs then okay, cool, we can work with that”. But then if you fall outside of that aesthetic, uhm, I feel there's a lot of invalidation, which I've also, sort of, uhm, imprinted on myself. Yeah.

**James:** Yeah, I think that’s a really big problem in the queer comm-, again, it's all, the good and bad queers. It’s like, the good queers will be like the White, skinny, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) super smart people and then they’ll look down on people that are, like say, Black, or Colour, Person of Colour, or anything, or slightly big or anything like that, like you don't put like the beautiful aesthetic of the European gay, so then you don't get to be gay, you don’t get to be shown in this community. Representation is so bad, like especially in movies and everything, like, uhm, Love Simon and everything, of course it’s about a cis White guy, I mean, God!

**Kiara:** Mmm. Yeah.

**Casey:** And after Love Simon comes Love Victor, which is just as bad. (=James: Yeah).

**Kiara:** And ‘The L-Word’ does not help.

**Amara:** Yeah.

**Kiara:** Have you watched it, the, The L-Word? It’s, it’s a lesbian show.

**Amara:** The new one’s a bit better.

**Kiara:** Yeah, the new one is a bit better, the old one was horrible.

**Amara:** Yeah.

**Casye:** I think the show that really like, wooo, relatable, was actually Sense8, for me (=[Several]: [indistinguishable agreement]) [Amara gestures emphatic agreement]. *Yoh,* Sense8. I think it was Sense8 that helped me realize I was polyamorous. But, uhm, my polyamory is very much, like, ‘cause there’s very much terms in there, like you’ve got a unicorn, or whatever. Me, for me, it's very much like you can h-, you can love multiple friends you can love multiple family. And if it comes to it, and you and your partner end up loving the same person, and you all just love each other, then why should, you know, the norms, validate that you three can’t be together? You know, so in my mind, if everybody is loving each other, why stop the love? (=James: Yeah). So say-

**James:** It’s like, I don’t understand people call like polyamorous people are like cheaters or whatever, like no, it’s consensual, that's the entire (=Casey: Yeah) point of it.

**Casey:** And, it's horrible, because there's not really a lot of polya-, you know, valid polyamory [James nods], ‘cause it's all about okay, this one guy with 28 wives (=James: Yeah), or whatever, you know? Just like harem situations. Uh-uh, it's, it’s not safe. Like there's only one show, it’s called You, Me and Her, which is a very good show, that represents it, but otherwise, nah, *yoh,* there’s, there’s no, no validation, nothing. So Sense8 was really the thing that like, “oh, this is me, this is me, I like this one.”

**=James and Tenda:** [indistinguishable overlap]

**Tenda:** Nah, I just want to ask where we can find Sense8.

**=Casey & Amara:** It’s on Netflix.

**Casey:** It’s on Netflix

**Tenda:** Is it a movie?

**Casey:** No, it's two seasons.

**Amara:** It's so good.

**Casey:** It's (=Tyler: Yes), it’s these-

**Tenda:** Because my attention is bad, I can only watch-.

**Casey:** Let me just tell you what it’s about. It's about eight people, right, who, you know, share emotions and share experiences in real time. So it's almost like they’re telepathically connected. So, so the one, the one is trans female, you know, the other one's gay, and it's just, it's like one’s in Africa, one’s in, uhm, Paris, you know, it’s just all over the world, very different experiences, and they're all, you know, understanding each other, it’s just beautiful.

**Amara:** Yeah, and the directors are both trans.

**Casey:** Yeah, yeah. And they actually got a trans actor (=Amara: Yeah), which is fantastic (=James: Yes), because, *yoh,* series that try to represent trans by not taking a trans actor, (=James: Yeah; Tenda gestures frustration in agreement), *yoh.*

**Amara:** It’s the Danish Girl for me.

**James:** They’ll take like, a male actor, cis-male actor and they’ll make him play a trans woman. Like, no, if you’re gonna play a trans woman, play it by a woman, because that's they are, they’re a woman.

**Casey:** There are really representations that ruined it, like J K Rowling's new book (=James: Oh my God), we're not even gonna get into that but (=Kiara: It’s fine, it’s fine). But, those things happen and it pisses me off so much, ‘cause I, I don't know if it's, you know, just from an ignorant standpoint of the author, or if they genuinely just did not care to put in the research (=James: Yeah). And, you know-

**Kiara:** I think it was purposefully done, though.

**Amara:** Yeah, she knows too much to b-

**Kiara:** ‘Cause she wrote an entire essay, and, she, she did it purposefully.

**Amara:** Like, she is an active campaigner against rights.

**Casey:** And it’s just celebrities that are continuing on, like, Sia’s movie (=James: Oh my God) that was so not, uh-uh.

**Kiara:** Let’s not go there, [laugh].

**Casey:** Let’s not go there. But it happens and, I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to enjoy, you know, anything else they produce in the same way again. Because it's very much, it's the author that's putting their heart and soul into their work, but then you know what else they do (=James: Mmm), and you're not sure if you can enjoy that one part of them. ‘Cause sure then, ja, she made a masterpiece, she made Harry Potter, but can enjoy that the same way ever again? I'm not sure.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmm…Does anyone else have, uhm, some experiences of feeling validated by representation? Like Kiara, you said, that Instagram person (=Kiara: Mmm), and, and you felt something, uhm, Casey, from Sense8. Uhm, anyone else [James and Amara raise hands] have that kind of – [to Amara] Yeah?

**Amara:** Euphoria makes me feel seen. (=Tyler: Yeah?). Like the character, Jules, played by a trans actress. And it's like, ‘cause with a lot of representation, it's all about like, the oppression and like, you know, like Pose is like, like, I don't relate to that at all. Like, I wasn’t born in the 80s (=Tyler: Mmm), in like America and like, oppressed by like, everyone, you know, like. But I went to high school and I like, take classes and like do shit, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), seeing people just exist [shrugging], is like really nice.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah totally.

**James:** Uhm, mine is actually a cartoon, [laugh]. Uhm, but it’s She-Ra and the Princesses of Power.

**Kiara:** Yes! Yes!

**James:** A non-binary icon of [indistinguishable] played by a non-binary person and I actually [indistinguishable] before the series started. Because, ja, just seeing a non-binary voice actor doing a non-binary character and doing it so well. And like in such a, a, like, easy and natural, uhm, like integration into the story and everything. It was just really, really cool. ‘Cause, like, often, if they have like a queer character, it will be a *thing* (=Tyler: Mmm, yeah); [Amara nods]*,* there will be like a special token character. And the thing with She-Ra is that, almost everyone's queer. So just having a non-binary, like, yep, even the villains and everything, they’re just, completely, like, yep.

**Casey:** I really feel She-Ra was, you know, the turning point, ‘cause like they've got, beautiful lesbian couples in there. I mean, the main character ended up in a lesbian couple and then Double Trouble, *yoh*, Double Trouble. But it's, it's a kids show (=James: Yeah). And it's like, you know, it, Voltron (=James: Ooff [grabs head]), ruined their queer representation (=James: [Indistinguishable]). So, it's very much like, you know, companies saying “we are going to put queer representation in” but it's very much queer-baiting, ‘cause they end up ruining it. Like Voltron after that queer-bait season, everyone was on top of them. And they tried to quickly fix that in the next season by putting like, a post in-screen where they're like, “Okay, this gay couples getting married”, but, *yoh*, it, this is what pisses of the community, so then when they did She-Ra, they did it right. And those are the things that the kids will now start growing up, and it shouldn't, and like you said, it shouldn't be like the main thing (=James: Yes). It just should be natural, ‘cause that's what we want to, we want to, we don't want a heteronormative community. We just want a normative community. Everybody is normal.

**Kiara:** And I feel also that people don't understand intersectionality, because, uhm, the, the person I saw Instagram, it was a, a White woman. And so, uhm, it, it becomes a thing of, I always go on about this with my friends, like, we have to, you know, see which identity is more valid, am I more valid Black or am I more valid queer? And like you have to choose because, uhm, there's situations whereby, say we’re in a protest, and then the protest is for Black lives, but then it's being led by a homophobe. And then it's like, “I don't wanna protest with you,” [Tenda gestures towards Kiara in agreement] but then say “Okay, so you do you not care about the Black lives?” and it’s like no, there’s no intersectionality. Ja.

**Tyler:** Tenda, you look like you related to that moment.

**Tenda:** Yeeaahh. (=[Several]: [Laughter]). It's just, it seems as though people think that other discrimination is better than (=[Several]: [indistinguishable agreement]), the next, which is infuriating. Especially, I believe with, okay, I just have, I don't have a lot of experience with anyone else, but I mean, m-, males in my culture (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, uhm, towards, uhm, homosexuals, just the queer community, and then, they become so angry when it comes to racism too (=Kiara: Mmhmm). And then it's like, but [gestures hands swapping in incongruity]? You know? Yeah.

=**Kiara and Amara:** [indistinguishable overlap].

**Amara:** Oh, sorry, it's just like complete blind spots. Like you don't (=Kiara: Yeah) notice it, you know? It’s so weird.

**Kiara:** ‘Cause like, I recently had a, I snapped. I had no idea about this one, but I recently snapped when they were having the protest, because I was, they were having this mentality that if you're not with us, you're against us. And, uhm, I was like, but then y'all don't feel the same about when we march for our queer rights. Y’all*,* ya’ll don’t, don't be crying as much when we march for our queer rights. But then you want me to be like, No, but then, you're Black and if you’re Black-,” ah, I'm a queer Black person. So incorporate me in your mandate, and then we can talk. Apart from that, just, like I can’t.

**Tenda:** Your queerness is with your Blackness.

**Kiara:** Ja, is also valid, ja… [Quiet for 8 seconds]. You know, I tried writing things down, I was like, “Okay, this feels like a psych essay”, [laugh].

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Amara:** Yeah, I didn't do my homework, I just- (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], I mean, there's, there’s not much homework to be doing, you’re just talking about your life, really.

**Amara:** Yeah, I figured I could wing it (=Tyler: Yeah!) I know about me.

**James:** You’re an expert on yourself, [laugh].

**Amara:** Well, that’s debatable.

**Tenda:** I think I struggled through something that I just saw that I wrote, is that I struggle to have, to be friends with cis-het males (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, because I feel as though I am not a real man (=Tyler: Okay), in their books. Uhm, I haven't gone to the mountain. I, I didn’t do typically, typical stuff that a man should go through (=Tyler: Mmm), to become that. And so yeah, I think that's the difference that I've felt in such spaces, yeah, I suppose as a type of thing, that just, that just feels safer for me.

**Kiara:** It’s, I feel I relate to having male friends, *yoh,* especially Black ones. It’s a, [sigh], I can only tolerate them to a certain extent because, they feel like, okay, no this person is progressive. But then when they say, a queerphobic thing, it’s like, okay now I can’t be friends with you. It’s a very, like very few of them actually put in the work to unlearn a lot of things that they have, uhm, they, a lot of queerphobia in their home. So yeah, I, I also can’t be friends... ‘Cause I also had a gay friend, and so we, we related on, or off the queer side, but then they never understood the female side of things. And it’s like, okay, I don’t know anymore, *yoh*, it’s fine.

**Lily:** I actually relate to that kind of friend situation, and I feel like, with cis-het guys specifically. Or, not just guys but also my friends [windows rattle], I feel often that I'm not, I don’t know, I'm not queer enough for the queer ones, but I'm also not heterosexual enough for the heterosexual ones [James and Tyler nod]. And it's just, I don't know, it's a very hard thing to navigate and also, it’s like, I don't know if it's a me projecting what I think (=Tyler: Mmm), or if it's them actually like putting that out there. And yeah, I don't, I don't know how to feel about that.

**James:** [Raises hand slightly]. And the whole thing with like intersex, it’s like, uhm, I mean, I’m non-binary but I lean more towards the masculine side, that's just how I feel inside. And then, like, when I’m walking s-, walking down the street and stuff, like I wouldn't be scared of like other men like passing the street, but then sometimes they'll approach me and they'll call me, because they'll read me as a female. And like, I've been attacked and stuff, meanwhile I was just like up the street before. And like this man came up to me screaming about like females and how there's no point of us in life, and all that kind of stuff. Like, “what can you do for me?” Like, threatened to rape me and all this stuff, and I’m like, bro, I'm not even a female so, who are you? [Laugh]. Yeah so I still carry a taser around. Because like I’m still being subjected to like this, uhm, the female, like, discriminatory things, even though like, I don't even identify as female. And like, it's really opened my eyes to just like how bad that is, with like, how, how badly men treat w-, women, even though like I’m not female, like I’ve still had to go through stuff like that, it’s awful.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's a really complex thing to have to deal with.

**James:** Yeah. ‘Cause like, the entire time, he’s just screaming about, like, all female things, like, uhm, giving birth and pregnancy and all this kind of stuff. I’m like, I have no intention of that, ever. That would make me so dysphoric-

**Tyler:** And this is like a random stranger?

**James:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Wow, okay.

**Tenda:** I, I think, uhm, first, testosterone, as much as observed that there's a social hierarchy, so, men are obviously ranked higher, and I think I just, I appreciate that, only because I'm a very protective person. And so now, when I'm, when I walk in the street, and I’m with my little sister, and they, they used to victim-, and they used to, you know, maybe want to touch her or call her names. And now I feel as though I’m able to, to do right by her, you know, so I guess I'm just thankful for that. Because I do see, what you’re [James] saying.

**James:** Yeah, that’s a thing that I think a lot of trans guys like see much better, it’s like, also my boyfriend is a trans guy, and like he fully advocates for like, all men are trash, even though he's a man, because like, he completely understands that and he was a victim of it himself long years before his transition.

**Amara:** Yeah, I relate a lot to what James said, but like, on the reverse. Like, back when I was presenting as male, I like, never really got harassed, like, everything was chilled. But now that I've started passing as female, I get harassed. And it's like, whenever I look nice, and like, have put effort in, and it's clear that I’m passing, people call me like, ma'am, and whatever. Then I get harassed. Like the other day, I was like, walking back home from therapy. And a guy approached me, and he was like, you know, like, the whole like, spiel, right? Like, he needed money for whatever, whatever. And I gave him like, 20, ‘cause I had, like, money on me, and he was like, “ooo, you pretty though, like, I would like to get you naked, I would like to massage you, ooo, you got a nice ass,” and I was like, “Okay, [gestures shrinking into herself] I'm gonna leave now. Enjoy the money” like… And it's like, it's just shitty. And you know, I also carry a taser, which like, makes me feel really safe and nice. Not that I'm ever going to use it on anyone (=James: But also-) But it's like, interesting how, like, how you're perceived is so important in how people interact with you and how, like, entitled people feel towards women and like, women's bodies and stuff.

**Tyler:** Mmm… Yeah. Has that (=James: [Inaudible]), uhm, sorry, has that, uhm, influenced you sometimes when you think about how to present, when you kind of like, almost, I don't know, almost, like debating, like, do I just want to be authentic or do I want to-

**Amara:** Yeah, no, I mean, it’s very much like do I wanna be harassed or do I wanna be misgendered? (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, what are we feeling today? [Laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** *Shoh.* Terrible. James?

**James:** Uhm, like, another thing with like the perception thing. Like, uhm, I try to dress like mostly like masc non-binary because I think that that balances out more feminine features that I haven’t been able to fix yet. Uhm, and, I’ll have a problem where like I’ll go through a public place like a mall or something, like the movies, and I’ll try to go to the bathroom, I’ll go to, like, the female bathroom first and they’ll be like “what are you doing in here? You’re not supposed to be here”, so I go to the male bathroom and they’re like “what are you doing here?” Like, “you’re a girl, go to the other side”. I’m like, “Okay, guess I'll just pee on the floor, then.” ([=Several]: [Laughter]). So I’ve literally been kicked out the bathrooms before because of that.

**Tenda:** Same, same.

**Tyler**: Oh, yeah?

**Tenda:** Especially at the airport (=Tyler: Really?). Yeah, yeah, especially with the ID (=Tyler: Oh), so, ja, it’s like, yeah.

**Amara:** It’s the look down and just walk, [laugh sigh]

**James:** Like I’m literally not going in there to hurt or look at anyone, I just want to go the bathroom, pee and then wash my hands and leave, okay. I'm not interested in your genitals (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Amara:** I have a small bladder, leave me alone (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Casey:** In my residency, I'm in a very new residence, it’s only opened this year but because of that, there isn't any system to help, you know, the first years. And it's very much, you know, it's people coming from so diverse places, conservative places, places that may not have had internet or any access to anything [Amara gets up to get more coffee]. And now suddenly, they're being thrown into all of this. Because, *yoh*, I was fortunate to be put in like the power of leadership in this residency, and I really want to do it right. So it's very much it, the other day, we had to call an emergency mental health talk because it was getting so bad with some of the first years. They were just disappearing because they weren't doing the workload or they weren't feeling validated. And, it got, it's getting quite intense. But we're trying to do right by them by like “yeah, this is my name, these are my pronouns” like make it a norm, because this is now like the new family. But in this new res, *yoh*, I've had experiences [Amara leaves room to go to kitchenette], I think it's one of the first residencies that is very much mixed gendered, and we're living like the neighbours are roommates. It's, it’s just everyone is there. So we really do have people walking from all parts of the world, you know, people, international students, wherever. And, *yoh*, th-, there are people who are just like blatantly flirting left and right. I'm having girls who are being harassed by people, you know, op-, in the opposite building from the fourth floor, screaming down at them, “can I have your number?”. And these situations happen and I'm, I'm now in a position where I need to be answering everyone in a administrative way. And everyone has my number. So the amount of blatant flirting or people just coming into my DMs. One of the security guards, right, ‘cause I have to be on good terms with them, is now constantly messaging me like, “do you want to go out for lunch? [Amara returns] Can we go?” mm-mm. It’s just so much harassment.

**James:** And those are the people you sort of like trust to protect us- (=Casey Yes! [overlap]) - like, oh ja, if you with your card, alone at night, like just call the security guard. And that’s who we’re talking-

**Casey:** I know! The security guard of all people. And it's very much, you know, you, you want the toxic people out of your life [Doors nudges ajar]. But if you work with them, you can't exactly just, so [door closes], I don't know if it’s just me, but I actually use my non-binary, uhm, as a defense mechanism. ‘Cause it's kind of a lot of time with especially, you know, the pure toxic male people, I could just go “*Yoh*, just so that you know, I'm not a female”, and a lot of the times they go on, but you get people who are persistent, you know, that believe all of this is just a sham, they can still get into your pants at the end of the day, you know.

**James:** What’s worse is that they actually fetishize. Like especially trans.

**Casey:** *Yoh!* It does happen. So, its, it’s really difficult, [laugh].

**Kiara:** Yeah, I feel like relate to that, because, [sigh], men, so I try and, because I'm, I’m straight-passing, and so I try to incorporate rainbow wherever I can. So, before I had my nails, I’d wear like, a rainbow on my hand but people don't really care when they, so, you get like harassed in very awkward situations. This one time I had to go with a student to go admit them to the psych ward, and the paramedic was flirting. And he, he actually took my numbers from the phone and wrote it on his glove (=[Several]: [indistinguishable disapproval]). I, [sigh], ja. And then he asked, just wrote on there: WhatsApp, OK. And I was just like, this is a very, [sigh], “can you not see the student? Can we not do this, at this moment?” But they actually, they don't care about that “Oh, so you, you're queer, or you’re not interested in, like, oh, I can change your mind”, uhm.

**Casey:** Ja, I've actually had to go like and put read receipts off because, they, they harass if you blue-tick them, if you don't answer immediately [James nods]. And even if you're like, you know, okay, maybe this person I can kind of deal with, you know, I can't just immediately leave the situation. And it's like, okay, you know, I've had a bad mental health day, I, you know, I'm very frustrated. I can't answer you right now, I'll come back to you in a couple of days, *yoh*, they go off on you.

**Kiara:** I have a long list of blocked people.

**[Several]:** [Laughter].

**Casey:** ‘Cause (=Kiara: Block, block), ‘cause even, if it's not the queer thing [door slips ajar], it's the mental health thing. It, there’s always something [door closes] that you're dealing with, that people don't understand. And, I, I personally feel the most exhausting thing is having to explain the same thing over and over, especially if it's to the same person (=James & Kiara: Mmm). And, you know, people, if you go to them and say, “I need a break”. Very valid, and they're going off on you, “Oh but, uh, do you not want to be friends with me anymore? Do you not want to converse with-

**James:** They take it so personally but it’s like, “No, I just need like a day. I just need a day. I don’t have energy for anything, not just you.” (=Casey: Yoh, [sigh])

**Tenda:** I, I know for sure I’ve learned quite a few things from my girlfriend Lily, and from coming to [university]. But there was a few things that I had to unlearn as well, but you know, (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), yeah. So, ja, I'm always open to hearing other people's side and to learn, you know, some things just can’t talk about [door squeaks ajar], whatever your intention was, doesn't matter, not as much as what that, yeah.

**Tyler:** Can you give us some examples of some things you've had to unlearn, relearn? (=Tenda: Uhm) [squeaking door]. This door is really annoying (=Several: [Laughter]), let me put a chair there.

**Tenda:** Uhm, it’s more to, towards my relationship with her. Uhm, it's [Tyler places a chair at the door], for example, let's say she wants to go outside or whatever [Tyler returns to seat]. And, uhm, I'm just scared for her, or something, and maybe I want to protect her. Sometimes she doesn't want me to tell her what to do or to offer anything, but she just wants to tell me that this is how she's feeling and, uhm, I've just had to, you know, just, to always want to be protect, and to think that, uhm, you know. And just listen. And, yeah, that was it.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, I see. Interesting. Is that - if you don't mind me asking - is that something that, uhm, you kind of associated with, with like coming into man-ness? That kind of protective thing?

**Tenda:** No.

**Tyler:** No, okay.

**Tenda:** No, (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) I’ve always been like this.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, I see. Okay, cool. Lily, do you have anything to say about that? [Laugh sigh]

**Lily:** [Laugh sigh], uhm.

**Tyler:** You don't have to.

**Lily:** No, not really, just that I, I have noticed him trying to, hold back more because I, I’ll have those days where I'm, just, say I want to go to like Main. And you have to go like past [inaudible] and whatever, and you know, I wanna be wearing, like it’s hot, I’m wearing shorts, and I like short things, it’s just, yeah. And, then he'll be like, you know – uh, before, not anymore – like, “isn’t it cold?” or whatever, just, not in a, the, trying to politely hint at, you know, you might encounter a situation that‘s going to make you uncomfortable on the way, and then that would make me upset even though I know that he had a good intention and whatever, it’s just that, yeah, but...

**Tyler:** I see. Okay. Sure, Uhm, that, that's a, a good example of us to ask if there are any experiences of sameness and difference with romantic partners that you'd like to share?

**Casey:** *Shoh,* [light laugh]. The thing about, I'm learning, I'm very respect someone who is open, you know, and open to change [claps from next room], but not, not, not like you’re forcing change on them (=[Several]: [Light laughing at applause]). But people like sensing in the way that they will listen, and they will accommodate. And, like I said earlier, my core values are still my core values. And I'm, I, I would say that some of them have changed when I came to Cape Town, ‘cause I did come from a conservative place. And there were some things in that community that I very much never agreed with. So I never got them, but they were the, the small things that built up. This is things like, you know, people are smoking and doing weed, people just want to, you know, go do hookups. I wouldn't say that I was constantly thinking, you know, those people invalid or anything, it was just, I would never be in that situation. But now, very much from the, the point where I'm standing now, you know, all of that is completely fine. It's completely fine. It was just having to get out of my community to not constantly [points repeatedly to their head] have it affecting me, to be able to look at it from an open point. But ja, on the, on the topic of romantic partners. So in first year, I, I had a few romantic partners. And it was very much, when I'm ever in a relationship, at that point, it was people who came like, from, you know, all boys schools or gir-, all girls schools, I had to deal with that a bit. Where, or people who just did not have any, you know, experiences at all [Video camera dies]. So I would like introduce them to you know, making out, you know, just simple things. And then people would, there are people who would really get into it. And me, that's really not important to me. The physical side of things is r-, it's, it’s like, hand holding, you're doing it to do, to feel closer to the person. Making out for me is exactly the same. It's not something like I don't feel euphoric about it, you know, it's not for me about the pleasure or whatever. So, when people, when I'm with people and they’re starting to learn the side of things, and obviously, they're learning about their own experiences in that position. And when it comes to them, that it's, the physical part is very, very important to them, that's when the relationship, you know, starts to diverge, ‘cause I will never feel that way. And I, I don't know if you've heard but there like the five love languages or whatever. And I'm very much a physical one like right at the bottom. Like, even gifts are for me better than that. I'm not a materialistic person, but if you, like make me something, or you just send me a card, like that will mean so much more than us, you know, banging it out on the floor, whatever, you know. So, when physical affection becomes very important for my romantic partners, you know, when it become, when it becomes a sexual thing as well, then, you know, I’ve, that's kind of where I really feel like, I need someone like me ‘cause otherwise, ‘cause I'm not gonna ask, you know, my partner to, you know, completely restrain from sexual activities for the rest of their lives, you know. So I will, I feel I will never be able to be with someone who is not asexual as well because of that reason. So, when we get into a relationship now, I'm very much on the fence about, okay, let me tell you about this aspect of me now, that and my polyamory, ‘cause it, it might get there at some point. And those two, you know, conditions are not met at the beginning, I don't even want to go into the relationship because it will end in hurt. So in first year, I was with this guy, and he just like, you know, I was also, I'm a very academic person, and me and my partners, it was always a thing of, when we work, we work, when we play, we play, and we can also work together. So, he was just like, you know, let's go to the library and study, and he was also an academic, so I thought it was fine. But no he would just drag me down there just to make out and after, like, 20 minutes, I'm sitting there like, “mmm-mmm, no, my guy,” and you know, I very much believe in communication, I very much try to explain calmly, because only so many times, before I just, you’ve just got to accept it’s not going to work. No matter how much you like the person, there are aspects, that if it doesn't agree, it's not gonna work. So, so, I have had to leave with people that I really, really felt a strong connection with. But in the long term, it's just gonna end in hurt

**Tyler:** I see…Mmm… Thanks for that.

**Kiara:** I feel like I can relate with the, the community of, uhm, the perception of what other people do. Because I, I was a baptized Jehovah's Witness, so I used to preach the word. And so, [laugh sigh], I, I would like, when I was becoming like, when I was coming out to myself, I had to really realize how much hurt I possibly could have caused to people with the, with the hate that I was preaching, because I would, there was this one scripture that I swore to myself that I will never recall again, that was just, uhm, just condemning, uhm, queer people. And that, really, also affected how I indoctrinated myself before coming out to myself. So I feel like I understand the, the community aspect of it, too. [Lull for 9 seconds]. I was, I was actually talking to a first year last night, so they were talking about how, ‘cause I was very nervous for the interview so I was, “help me”, yes, and so we were talk about significant experiences and what came up was that, I'm not sure if everyone had the same experience, but the most significant one would be coming out yourself, right? More than coming out to other people, ‘cause I feel for me, that was the most difficult one. Also being, uhm, because of my religion, because y-, I had to, like understand that if I actually accept who I am, I’ll have to let go of everything. I’ll have to let go of possibly my family. And so, that realization in itself sent me to a very dark place, for, ja

**Tyler:** And when you did kind of come out to yourself (=Kiara: Yes, ja-), and then, to others (=Kiara: Ja, I came out-), was that fear valid or was there more acceptance than you feared?

**Kiara:** I f-, actually, there was more acceptance. But then, I came out to, after I came out to my sister, it was like, “ah, screw everyone else, I don’t care” (=[Several]: [Laughter]), (=Tyler: Oh, okay).

**Casey:** You get the difficult one over.

**Kiara:** Yeah! I had, okay, because my sister, I came out to her last year, on the 10th of March, I remember ‘cause I typed a long essay, and then, at the time, I told her that I had a girlfriend because I didn’t want the “How do you know?”, you know? And it was just like, “I have a girlfriend, henceforth, uh, I like girls” and she like, “Did you talk to Jehovah?” And I was like, “I did actually, we, we spoke”, [laugh]. And then she said, “Oh, no, I still, I still love you.” But then also, I feel there’s the, the whole “No I still love you regardless” and it’s (=[Several]: [grumbling disapproval]), hey! [Laugh]. I have fixed feeling about that because like, I feel like it's not actually recognizing my queerness, it's just othering it. And it’s a huge part of who I am, it’s not just who I sleep with (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Yeah.

**Tenda:** Don’t you feel it, it makes, it makes it, a… weakness or uhm…

**Lily:** A negative aspect.

**Tenda:** Yeah, a negative aspect to you, (=Kiara: Sorry?) when someone says (=Tyler Come again?) Don't you feel as though it makes your queerness a negative aspect to you (=Tyler: Ah), when they say that they love you, *regardless?*

**Kiara:** Yes, yes, like it’s something wrong. You know, “oh, you killed that person. I love you regardless”.

**Amara:** Mmmm. And they think they’re so heroic, too.

[**Several]:** [Laughter].

**Tyler:** It’s kind of like the difference between acceptance and tolerance.

**[Several]:** [indistinguishable agreement].

**Amara:** Like, I don't want your tolerance.

**Tyler:** Yeah. What does anyone else feel about what Kiara said about coming out to yourself? Is this something that you relate to, or don’t relate to?

**Tenda:** I, I struggled a lot with that (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), [laugh]. Because, okay, from primary, I always, not always knew, but I think I had an idea that I was attracted to females, uhm, it, my first crush was a teacher, [laugh] (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Even got close to her daughter as a result (=[Several]: Ooo!). But, uhm, from then, I knew that was a part of me, but I tried to shut it down. And I dated a lot of guys, even when on to date a guy for a year, uhm, so, for so long I tried to shut it down, I tried to, just make it disappear. And maybe if I just keep on going on, then it will go away. I'll find this one person that’ll make me feel all these wonderful things that everyone feels. Uhm, so, yeah.

**Kiara:** On the, on the story of dating, of guys, when I got to [university], I was having a lot of, ‘cause there are a lot of females, and I’m like “ah I’m excited!”, and I'm like, “okay, I’m not supposed to be excited. Let's reverse here to the girls. And so, I, every week there’d be a different person. And I’d be like “okay now he's boring now, where’s the other guy?” And I'm like, “okay, eventually I'll try and find someone” and that caused more hurt than good. Ja.

**James:** When I first started realizing like, just questioning, like, “am I really like this, this and this?”, then I start associating that with like, “Oh, no, I'm feeling this way because I'm not female enough, (=Tyler: Oh) I’m not doing enough to be female.” So like, I would try and force myself to wear dresses and I'd cry about it (=Tyler: Ah). And I would say like, “what if I had a more feminine name?”, because like my dead name is actually, like, gender-neutral. But like I was like, “what if I was called Belinda, or something, something more feminine and flowery or whatever? And then like, I'd just put myself through all of this like tor, turmoil and everything and like, tried to like, uhm, do like cleavage shots, and all that kind of, like just like to force myself to be like female. And then like, it just wasn't working. I was getting so, so, depressed with myself. And that was just leading to more like self-hatred, because like, “I'm doing so much and I'm still not feeling feminine. What is wrong with me?”. And then like, I finally got to learn from him. I realized that “no, this isn't the fight I’m supposed to be fighting”. I went the other way and now I’m so much happier.

**Tenda:** Yeah, I can definitely relate to the dresses and, like, also myself. My mom would be like, “don’t you have a dress?” I’m like, okay, and then, and maybe try and wear the long ones, the very long ones. But then I’d feel so uncomfortable. I’d put on heels, but then I wouldn't make it out of a car to the church, I’d take off the heels of that. No, this is not it. But yeah, I accepted that I wasn't lesbian, but now, then I, I was so happy that I never came out, as lesbian. Because, then I feel as though, if I then came out again, as trans, people would tell me again that I'm confused. So, but now, as my family's seen me change, getting a beard, deep voice and everything, people become comfortable, and I was so proud, in, not being lesbian, [laugh sigh], being attracted to females. I’m struggling a bit with being unapologetically trans, so like, take it in your face, whatever you think, I'm just, I sometimes call my granny and I try to, maybe make my voice a more feminine so that, you know, she doesn't ask me questions. She doesn't, I don't creep people out, and all of that. So, I still think I'm getting there, I’m getting there, yeah.

**Kiara:** Just to say, just to add on that. So, this is me exposing my, my, my fanning, but watched one of your videos on YouTube, uhm, where you were talking about, like having baggy, like putting your pants, baggy and stuff (=Tenda: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah), yeah, that also had an impact, ja.

**Tenda:** Ja, just to make reference to what I did say. Uhm, my gran, I was raised by my granny, and so, for so long, she’d made me feel accepted for who I am. She’d tell me “ah, you were supposed to be a boy, uhm, when I look at you”, and then, when I started testosterone in, uhm, 2019, yeah, when I went back home in December, uhm, I had my pants down and she was, she said something very hurtful. She was like, uhm, “Pick up your pants,” uhm, “you'll, you'll never be the boy, you-” yeah, “you’ll, your parents didn’t give birth to you as a boy and you'll never be that,” (=Tyler: Wow) and, uhm, she said in a very public setting. Uh, yeah so… yeah so I was like, after so long you're making me feel bad, just that switch.

**Tyler:** Yeah, how does that switch happen? And why did it happen? *Shoh.* That must have been painful.

**James:** It’s like parents and guardians and stuff, they’re like “I love you for who you are,” but then you come out and they’re like, “Nope, never mind, I take it back.”

**Casey:** I remember I came out to my parents as, at that time, bisexual in grade seven. And it was only, uhm, like, three years later when I actually brought a girl home, they're like “oh… oh”. And I still remember when my mother told me, we sat in the car the next day and she was like, “so do you want to address the pink elephant in the room?” *Yoh!* That, that wasn't fun. But nah, school uniforms were, the ‘it’ for me. Because we very had like the, you know, the collar, the tied, and then the skirt, with those sh-, weird shoes. My high school at least we could wear pants if we wanted to. I could do with that, and my primary school was the full you know, Sailor Moon outfit. *Yoh*, I did not like, and there were no pants then. So that was just, *yoh,* uh-uh, that was not fun, but-

**James:** And also like, uhm, the girls got to wear pants, but they were the girl pants. There wasn't the [inaudible because talked over] (=Casey: Yes. Yes. It did not like, wasn't even the same) the boy pants, you’re selling them and everything but no, they decided to make an entire new range for the girls.

**Casey:** And, yeah, and then when I came to university, finally, I could wear my own clothes. And my friends were very accepting. So, I don't know, as time passed on, I began to feel more and more comfortable with, with my actual clothes, what I actually wanted to wear. And I didn’t, you know, my friends was so accepting and I wasn't around my parent, parents or any of the community that I usually struggled with. So, you know, I kind of didn't think about any of that, really, and the relation-, relationships or the relationships, and, but like, specifically on gender, it wasn't until like after the, the end-year exams, I was helping one of my friends pack up. And he was just like, okay, so one of our other friends came to me, uhm, because I was close with him, so everyone went to him for things about me. But why, just, just come to me, just talk to me, don’t even, be a man. And he's just like, “yeah they were asking me if you're trans and I don't know the answer”. And I’m like “I also don’t know the answer” (=[Several]: [Laughter]). So, that was like, like right before I went back to Gauteng and then yeah, I was in that community again, and then seeing again, how I had to change myself for that was what finally made me realize, “ooo, right then”. But I have a very interesting story about how I actually came out to my parents. Like, my, I, I knew they would be accepting so I just, you know, came out and said it and my father was like, “Okay, now can you please go do the hotdogs?” (=[Several]: [Laughter]). I was like “Okay, I’ll go make dinner father, [laugh], thanks for accepting me I guess”.

**Tyler:** Did it feel good, like an acceptance like, ‘okay, it’s not a big deal’, or was it like-

**Casey:** It would, it would’ve been, you know, the ideal situation had he started using my pronouns after that, but he, he's still not quite there. And my household is Afrikaans, so they/them is really not in the language. It's very much, *hulle*, which you know, is not very gender-neutral, it doesn't sound good, but it's what I got, it’s what I got to deal with in Afrikaans. And I feel that's very, uhm, more difficult to add into language, uhm, when you're saying *hulle* in, in, instead of *haar* *of* *hom.* But they/them, that, you know, you use that normally, sometimes. You don't know the gender of the baby when they're gonna being born, they, the- you know, it's normal. Of course, there's people who *purposefully* will go “she” or “him”, and you know. That’s just being *aspris* now, uh-uh.

**Kiara:** Or when people try and they’ll be like, “No, she's a they” and I'm like “well that defeats the purpose”

**Casey**: There! There! There! That language! “She’s a boy now”. Ah!

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Kiara:** I think with language, I took Gender Studies last year ‘cause was like, you know, I wanna understand gender. I still don’t know what I learnt in that course but (=[Several]: [Laughter]), when we're talking about language and gender and I came to realize that mo-, most, vernacular, there isn’t gender, we don't necessarily have gender. Yeah, I’m sure if, you realize like-

**Casey:** Like, like I did French for two years in high school. And you know, any of the languages that are, that even put genders to objects (=Tyler: Yeah). What? What is that? So, I'm very much feeling that, ja, we can be English-speakers here, which gives us an advantage over our, uhm, pronouns, but if we like were like French or Italian, you know, any of those languages. *Yoh*, I feel for those people ‘cause everything is gendered. Everything is a binary.

**Kiara: ‘**Cause I know with, with Xhosa, we don't have pronouns per se, so if you wanna say, uhm, “she said” you'd be like “*uthe”*, which is neutral, and then you have to specify, “*intomba ithe*” so, yeah, it’s very gender neutral.

**Tyler:** Okay. We are actually nearing the end of our session. So, is there anything that you wanted to share that you haven't shared yet? Now's your time, [laugh sigh]. Lily? Amara?... Okay. If you don't have anything, that's also fine, [laugh sigh].

**James:** Uhm, another sameness thing, like, uhm, just having a trans boyfriend. It has been a massive help because like, we’re going through, like the steps together, because he's one year older than me. So he’s one year ahead in the transition, basically. And like, he's just started T and he's just started like all of that stuff. And like, it's very exciting to like, actually be with him on that journey, but also to see and like prepare myself for it as well. And like, I know that I'm always [] he understands like what I’m going through, like. ‘Cause if you’re having dysphoria and stuff, it's very difficult to explain that to a person in a way that they’ll understand, but like to another trans person, they’re like “Oh, yeah, yeah, I know what you mean”. So it's, just, it's very helpful to have that kind of support system, I honesty don’t know if I’d be able to make it through, if I didn't have that kind of, uhm, outlet. Because I do have like, basically, every single one of my friends is queer, but like, they’re all, like either bisexual or ace or gay or whatever, yeah. And they wouldn’t understand that kind of [], where, like, yes, they support me and stuff in my queerness, but they won’t be able to understand that. And that's not any fault of their own, it’s just how it is.

**Kiara:** I feel like also with, with that, finding understanding within the community, like I feel most of, of people in the community, they like to other other identities. So they'll be like “LGBT and the others”. Like, okay, well, just because yours is included in the acronym, does not invalidate the others. Yeah, and you can't necessarily relate to everyone within the community, because we all-

**James** That entire movement where it was just LGB (=Amara: Oh). They refused to put the T in it.

**=Kiara:** Yeah that was.

**=Amara:** Yeah that was a fun month.

**Amara:** Like super-straights.

**Tyler:** Yehah, yeah.

**Casey:** Ah, super straight people, uh-uh.

**Kiara:** Can we not go there.

**[Several]:** [indistinguishable disapproval]

**Casey:** I, I feel in South Africa, specifically, you know, the resources for trans people aren't out there in the public. They're very hidden. So, I w, I actually joined, what's it, the [LGBTQIA+ university society] in hoping to get resources ‘cause I want to top surgery, but like, where do I go?

**James:** Go, go to [university clinic] actually, that's where I was when I needed to start therapy, my mom refused to give me therapy, so I went to [university clinic] as soon as I got to [university]. And then, I actually, like, I had my appointment with Groote Schuur hospital, everything was for free, they walk you through the entire process, it’s really great, it, you just got lost in the hospital, [laugh]. I really recommend it.

**Casey:** I need contact details.

**Tenda:** I had a similar experience. ‘Cause I went, yeah, I went in 2019. And I was struggling a lot with dysphoria. And then, the psychologist was like, “No, I can't help you. That's like out of my,” you know. And then I was okay, let me call Gender Dynamix, and then, Gender Dynamix lead me to a therapist and, you know, the whole process. But yeah, I didn’t have a toxic experience.

**Kiara:** Yeah, same, ‘cause I know-

**James:** It’s this whole entire gender floor and stuff at the psychiatry ward at Groote Schuur, it’s really great. It's like three main like psychiatrists that you see and they’re really good.

**Kiara: ‘**Cause the one in the, the, the one I went to, the Maths Department did not even understand anything as else outside the gender binary. He’s like “What’s, what’s asexual? How? Tell me”, and I was like “I’m supposed to be in therapy, not educating you” and then they, they still don't understand, some of them are not educated on it.

**Casey:** So one of my friends actually just came out of a clinic. And while he was there, he, he told me that he, there was a lot of the psychiatrists there that were like, you know, proficient in dealing with gender situations. So, I, I'm getting contact details, ‘cause what I was told, right, is, is that it would be easier if you were like diagnosed with gender dysphoria before you got the surgery (=James: Yeah). Yeah, obviously (=Tenda: Yeah, yeah).

**James:** You, I think you have to go through like a, just, psychiatric test to make sure you’re mentally stable, and you won’t sue the hospital about taking your tits, [laugh sigh].

**Tenda:** I actually got mine for free (=Casey: Ooo). At, uhm, I went to, Joburg (=James: Yes I heard about the place in Joburg) just general – yeah, on, and-

**Casey:** And you did that through Gender Dynamix?

**Tenda:** No. I actually, I actually reached out to the, the, the head surgeon there, uhm through email. And then yeah, I just, yeah. I, I think six weeks you came, she [gestures to Lily] came with me. And I was just hustling. I didn't know whether I was gonna get it or whether I was not. But I knew that I needed to get so I just went and found them.

**James:** But it’s ridiculous that like health insurance does not cover at all because it's considered cosmetic, where like that can literally save your life.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Amara:** Like both in terms of like mental health and also (=James: Yes) in terms of like passing (=James: Yeah, exactly) Like, passing privileges is such a thing, like, you could die if you don't have a surgery, like someone could kill you.

**Tyler:** Yeah, so thanks for sharing those resources with the group. Okay, cool. So then I think we can stop there. Uhm, so, how do you feel about this session? Is there any feedback you'd like to give me about how this has gone for you?

**Tenda:** It was very, I learned, I learned a lot, actually (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) ‘cause I love learning. I’m a person that likes to learn, so I wanted to just, I don't like to assume that I'm know everything (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I just believe that there is that thing in the queer community that because you're queer, you think you know everything (=Tyler: Yeah?). So yeah I think this was very informative for me.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I share that too, I’ve also learnt a lot from all of you. So thank you for your contributions. Anyone else, got any feedback?

**James**: It’s just nice tohave a place where you can openly talk about this stuff, and you just have more people who understand sort of, and have their own experience and all of that. But you don't always get that, with, uhm, with queer people, because like, we all come from diff-, completely different walks of life, stay in different areas, and all have completely different experiences, whereas where, whereas like, with my friend group, we all came together in primary school, through high school, had the same, uhm, discrimination to all of us, you know, we all have the same stories. So it’s very nice.

**Kiara:** Yeah, I feel so too because there aren’t many places to meet queer people, if you’re not in a club (=Amara**:** Yeah), making out with someone, [laugh]

**Casey:** Even, even with [LGBTQIA+ university society], right, ‘cause I went to the queer bar, I think it was last year, like right at the beginning of the year. Yeah. Even there, it's like, it's very much, you know, the gay and lesbians and-

**Tenda:** I actually met her [referring to Lily]

**[Several]:** Ooo!

**Casey:** Well, see, even, even in that space, it, it’s very much not, you know, it's inclusive, but it's very difficult to communicate.

**Amara:** Yeah, like, I was quite worried to be like the only trans person here today. So that was very nice (=[Several]:[Laughter]). But I wasn’t, like, at all. Like, I was quite apprehensive that it would just be like, a bunch of cis gay guys or something, and then it wasn’t.

**Several:** [Laughter]

**Kiara:** ‘Cause on that, there was a, this, I forgot, I forgot their name, but, a comedian was who like, “where do the quiet gays go? It’s not at a, at a party”.

**Amara:** Where *do* the quiet gays go? (=Several:[Laughter]) Please tell me.

**Several:** [Laughter]

**Lily:** Also, I honestly, when I first arrived, like this morning, I w-, I don't know, I found it very daunting, I don't know why, very, so I was just like standing outside, I don’t know, and then when like, everyone started talking, I was like well they’re pretty cool, and I really, I enjoyed it, and I did learn a lot as well, so.

**Tyler:** Good, ja, I'm glad that you kind of felt more comfortable (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]) as it, as it went on, yeah.

**Kiara:** I was also very nervous (=Tyler: Yeah?). But I also realized there were some people that I know, and like, “hah!” (=Several:[Laughter]). Not bragging, but ja, it was interesting.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool, anything else? Or are we good to go? [Laugh sigh]

**Kiara:** Is it ending? Ah!

**Several:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah! I mean, I can, did you want to, do you have anything more to say?

**Kiara:** [Laughing],it’s okay

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. So, uhm, yeah, then I guess I can actually turn this off now.

Amara

**Amara:** [Indistinguishable]

**Tyler:** Yeah

**Amara:** Uhm, chosen name, pseudonym, [laugh sigh], see this is why I know you know you’re trans, ‘cause it’s like, confusing.

**Tyler:** Right, yeah, [laugh sigh], that’s a good point actually.

**Amara:** Signature primary researcher. Oh, that’s you hey?

**Tyler:** Yes.

**Amara:** Uhm, and date. Oh two, oh four. That is not good handwriting (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) [Hands completed consent form over]

**Tyler:** That’s fine. Cool. Thank you. No questions?

**Amara:** Uhm, no (=Tyler: Okay), like, ‘cause I, as long as you don’t like, post the video.

**Tyler:** No, of course not.

**Amara:** Yeah, I knew you wouldn’t so-

**Tyler:** Yeah, no that will stay completely-

**Amara:** Uh, could I grab some water or something?

**Tyler:** I don't actually have any water but you can go to the, uh, the bathroom (=Amara: Mmm), or the kitchen downstairs might have some water from the tap?

**Amara:** You know what, I'll just power through.

**Tyler:** Are you sure?

**Amara:** Yes

**Tyler:** Yeah, sorry about that.

**Amara:** It’s okay

Tyler: [Laugh], okay

**Amara:** I like, I took my Ritalin this morning, and so I was hyper-focusing on playing chess and it ended up being two hours and then I was like, fuck, I have this thing to do, [laugh] (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). So I like, got ready and rushed here.

**Tyler:** Okay, so, so, yeah, you don't need, uh, like extra coffee this morning or anything?

**Amara:** I'm not allowed coffee anymore. It's terrible.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, I see.

**Amara**: A tragic life.

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yeah, that's hard (=Amara: Mmm). So how have you, uh, been since the last time you were here?

**Amara:** Uhm, not to get too personal, but like, really good. I got diagnosed with like, ADHD and bipolar and so now I'm medicated, which is… a vibe.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh. Hence, coffee not being a thing?

**Amara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Okay), ‘cause like, Ritalin is like, they’re both stimulants (=Tyler: Mmm). So if you have both in your brain, you're just like (=Tyler: Yeah), like more than usual.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh…Okay. And how was your experience of the focus group?

**Amara:** Um, it was really cool. It was nice to like, you know, talk to like, people who share the same experience as me. And like, we all like have respectful dialogue and shit. It was nice (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Cool. Uhm, is, how do you feel about the agreement in your group?

**Amara:** What agreement?

**Tyler:** Like, uh, what do you think your group tended to agree on?

**Amara:** Uhm, most of the standard, like, LGBTQ talking points, I guess, like (=Tyler: Okay), you know what I mean, like, don't be shitty to trans people, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Right. Right.

**Amara:** We really ask for so little, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, totally. Uhm, what about disagreement? Did you feel that there was any disagreement there?

**Amara:** Mmmm,I think there was some maybe identity clashes, in the sense (=Tyler: Okay) that like, like binary trans people and non-binary trans people, there's some like, conflict just based on how we exist in the world and how society treats us, right (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, also, in terms of like, a broader philosophy on gender, like, for example, non-binary people were like, just a lot of people have the opinion that like, uhm, you should default to they/them pronouns and then ask someone's pronouns (=Tyler: Mmm). And like, on a like, fuckin’, I don’t know, like, ideological and philosophical standpoint, I agree with that (=Tyler: Yeah). But at the same time, I get really happy when people just gender me correctly sommer like, out of the blue, right? (=Tyler: Yeah.) So it's like, it's kind of like conflict of what you want versus what you believe is better for like… people, I guess.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, totally. Did you feel that with any of the kind of non-binary trans participants in your group?

**Amara:** Uhm, not specifically.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool.

**Amara:** There's just always that kind of underlying… (=Tyler: Yeah) tension, I guess. Not tension, but like… (=Tyler: Mmhmm) slight… difference of approach, I guess (=Tyler: Mmhmm), would be a good way to describe it?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. I noticed some of your, uh, body language in the, in the focus group, you seemed to like, look away, look down, fidget a bit. I'm just wondering if you were comfortable?

**Amara:** I was comfortable, I just had undiagnosed ADHD (=Tyler: Oh, okay). So I was (=Tyler: Right), And I may have been in the middle of a manic episode. I've, haven’t been keeping track (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Right. Um, so you weren't, uhm, nervous about anything?

**Amara:** No, not anything in particular. I guess I was nervous about being around new people (=Tyler: Yeah). But like, that's, you know, pretty standard (=Tyler: Mmhmm, totally). Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), like nothing specifically about the people just that they were, new (=Tyler: Strangers, yes), you know? Yeah, exactly.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Completely. Uhm, you said that, uh, you had initial reservations about the group ‘cause you expected it might be you were the only trans person amongst some cis gays (=Amara: Yeah). So, if that had been the case, how do you think you would have felt in that group?

**Amara:** I think I would have felt kind of like an outsider, and I probably would have shut down more (=Tyler: Yeah?). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Why do you think that is?

**Amara:** I don't know, when a bunch of people are agreeing, you don't want to be like, “But actually, *me*” (=Tyler: Right) Like, my struggles kind of invalidate some of yours, you know? (=Tyler: Uh-huh) And it's like, some of the ways you interact with the world make me feel shitty and like, are kind of transphobic like, I don't know, cis gays are... Cis anyone is like, mad sh–(=Tyler: Yeah). I don't know. They don't mean to be but it's like (=Tyler: Yeah) you just *are* transphobic because you don't understand. It's like the same way that like, White people just *are* racist to a certain extent (=Tyler: Mmm), because that's how you're socialized (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, as much as you can work to like, unlearn that, it's like, you know, we grew up in a society and we like develop biases and these things are internalized in us. So it's like, you know, there's only a certain extent that you can stop that right? (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm) Like, you'll never truly be... I guess… you'll never truly be able to exist outside of the context you exist in, like grew up in, right? (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Like (=Tyler: Yeah), as far, as much as you can, you can't ever truly escape that.

**Tyler:** Right. Totally. So not just if, if those, uh, cis gay people, uh, were talking about things that didn't apply to you, and that were harmful to you (=Amara: Yeah), but also that it might, you th-, it might not have helped to push back because there's like a limit to what they can… see? Or understand?

**Amara:** Yeah, exactly. And like, you know, as well spoken, and as eloquent as you can be, if what you say is not jelling with someone's life experience, they're not gonna listen (=Tyler: Mmm), or at least, they're gonna have a harder time listening (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, I don't know, like, there's a lot of focus on genitals, like (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, like, as, you know, having a sleepover with my friend the other day (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ‘cause she was like, staying for a study thing. And then my date stood me up, so she was like, [sympathetically] “ah, I’ll, like, sleep over with you”. And she's like, this is lesbian. And then we were watching something, and then she was like “euw I almost saw a dick,” and I was like, “Okay, well, that made me feel shitty”. Like (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), you know, [sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). That's super invalidating. I obviously didn't say that (=Tyler: Yes. Yeah). But like…

**Tyler** I see what you mean (=Amara: Yeah). The kind of everyday little comments that people (=Amara: Yeah) don't think about.

**Amara:** Yeah, because like, as much as we are all one community, like, sexuality diversity and gender diversity are completely different experiences (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and sometimes they just don't mesh because at the same time, like, she has a right to not be attracted to dicks, right? Like (=Tyler: Yeah), like, it’d be shitty of me to be like, “No, you can't say that” (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, ‘cause that's her experience, right? That's her pushing back against what she's been taught (=Tyler: Mmm… Yeah. Yeah). So like (=Tyler: Totally), you, like there's no really winning.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Is that friend of yours, uhm, a cisgender queer person?

**Amara:** Cis lesbian, yeah.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. I see what you mean. Yeah. (=Amara: Yeah). Yeah. Okay (=Amara: Yeah), yeah, that's, I also, yeah, probably why sameness and difference is so complicated.

**Amara:** Yeah, like, you know, it'd be great to find a compromise, but in that situation, someone has to lose ground, right. (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) Because we can't have both, you know? (=Tyler: Mmmm). We can't have trans people like, wanting to be respected and also gay people wanting to be, I guess, express themselves. And vice versa, right (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, one side has to concede some ground otherwise, it's just gonna end up in a fight or like, festering underlying, like tensions, you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah... Okay. Uh, I'm wondering if you've, uh, experienced relating with, uh, a cis person in a way that is not so conflictual?

**Amara:** Confectual?

**Tyler:** Conflictual.

**Amara:** Oh, conflictual. Yeah, I mean, most of my friends are cis, like both my roommates are cis, like (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I'm, you know, I have cis friends (=Tyler: [Laugh], yeah), I don’t hate cis people, [laugh sigh]

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yeah. Yeah. I mean, not feeling like you have to, or someone has to, lose ground.

**Amara:** Yeah, I mean, but that's also along with like, bi and like straight people (=Tyler: Mmm). Which is weird, right? (=Tyler: Mmm). But it's like, there's not that, I guess, clash? Because those are two clashing identities, right? Like, for example, I guess, trans men and lesbians like (=Tyler: Mmm)… Or, wait, no trans men and gay men (=Tyler: Mmm), right? ‘Cause then (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it’s like “euw I don’t like vaginas” and then it’s like “that dude has a vagina, like, don't be mean to him”.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, exactly.

**Amara:** But it's like, yeah, and then at the same time, like, that's their lived experience, right? Like, people have told them their whole life that they have to like women and like vaginas and shit. But like (=Tyler: Mmmm), you know, it's powerful to be like, “No, I don't like that.” (=Tyler: Yeah). And then, you know, it comes into the whole thing of like, is it not, is it transphobic to not – are like genital preferences transphobic, right? (=Tyler: Mmmm.) And like, that's a whole fuckin’ debate on its own.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, totally. Really complicated (=Amara: Yeah). Yeah.

**Amara:** Existence is not easy.

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yeah.

**Amara:** Well, maybe for some people.

**Tyler:** Maybe, for some, seemingly.

**Amara:** I guess I'm just quirky.

**Tyler**: [Laugh]. Uhm, is there anyone in the group that you particularly felt a sameness with?

**Amara:** Uhm, the guy sitting over there (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I felt sameness with because like… opposite identities, but same, you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah, you're both trans (=Amara: Yeah) but he's a trans man.

**Amara:** Yeah, but we're both binary (=Tyler: Yeah), which is like… (=Tyler: Yeah). I guess, just in terms of like, yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And also like, access and medical interventions, like… you know, there’s a disconnect between some, I mean, just trans people and non-binary people in general, like (=Tyler: Mmm), people who seek medical intervention and people who don't, that's like a whole different experience, right?

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Great.

**Amara:** And like he obviously was on hormones and I’m on them so it’s like...

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you relate to each other than that kind of, uh, bodily transition.

**Amara:** Yeah, and in the sense of social transition (=Tyler: Yes), where like, non-binary people are non-binary, but like, if you were assigned female at birth, and you are continuing to present as feminine non-binary, as much as you have changed, the way society reacts to you hasn't changed (=Tyler: Yes). Whereas, like, soc–, the way society reacts to me has changed, drastically (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). And so it's like, like that is such an experience, that like (=Tyler: Yes), not a lot of people get, even like people who have trans-ed their gender (=Tyler: Mmm), you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, I think you and Tenda brought up, uh, passing and (=Amara: Mmm), and the relative, uh, privilege that he experiences now being, uh, man-passing (=Amara: Yeah). And, and the kind of experience of harassment that you get (=Amara: Yeah), now that you’re (=Amara: Yeah) more female-passing.

**Amara :** Mmmm. And the hotter I get, the worse it gets.

**Tyler:** Yeah! Which is–

**Amara:** But we stay climbing, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Amara:** Because honestly, I have a taser. I know basic self-defense, I’ll knock a bitch out (=Tyler: Hmm). That's not true. I'll get fuckin’ murdered but, we'll try.

**Tyler:** Yeah… Yeah. Is there anyone in the group that you've felt a difference with, in a significant way?

**Amara:** Not really. Not like, to the point where it would stand out to me, you know (=Tyler: Mmm).

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.Okay, cool. Uh, is there anything that you wanted to express, but you didn't?

**Amara:** Probably, I don't remember though (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). I remember having like times where I kind of bit my tongue, but I don't, like, remember what those were.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah…

**Amara:** Well, maybe not bit my tongue but just, couldn't find a chance to interject and then the conversation moved on, you know? (=Tyler: Okay.) More like that, yeah. Like, “bite my tongue” sounds like I didn't feel comfortable, which (=Tyler: Yeah), obviously I did.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool (=Amara: Yeah). Just checking.

**Amara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). No, it was chilled, it was really nice. This is the first research thing I've participated in, so (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Well, you know, online stuff, (=Tyler: Yes), [student research programme] stuff (=Tyler: Yeah). But that's, different.

**Tyler:** Yeah,that is different, [laugh sigh]. That's kind of an obligation for your course, right?

**Amara:** Yeah. Wait, what is this… for? Like, what, field?

**Tyler:** Uh, it's for my master's, dissertation. And it is in critical social psychology.

**Amara:** Sexy. We're doing [course] now (=Tyler Yeah). It's so interesting, I love it so much (=Tyler: In second year?). Uh, yeah.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. I tutored that last year.

**Amara:** Really? That's crazy (=Tyler: Yeah, mmhmm). Yeah, we doing like social identity theory, right now (=Tyler: Yes), which is, honestly, everything about it is so interesting (=Tyler: Yeah). It like totally like, because you can see how, it, like, like, you can see it in the world. Anyway, whatever (=Tyler: Yeah), that’s not the topic.

**Tyler:** Yeah. But that's fine, [laugh] (=Amara: Yeah), yeah. No, it's great. It's really a field that I love. Yeah. And I think, yeah, take [course] next year (=Amara: Yeah), in third year.

**Amara:** [Course], for sure.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah. Cool. Uhm, it might be a weird question, but how do you feel about your queerness now after having participated in the focus group?

**Amara:** Uhm… I don't know. I think better? More comfortable? Although that could be like other life changes as well (=Tyler: Mmm, yeah, you said). Like, for sure, it's been a wild month (=Tyler: Yeah) for me. But, you know, like, it was nice to just see that other people existed ‘cause sometimes, especially with like, I guess gender diverse people in general, you don't see that a lot (=Tyler: Mmm), because kind of the point is that you don't see it (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). For a lot of people.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. That kind of blending into like the, uh, cis-hetero patriarchy, is that–?

**Amara:** Yeah like, what's it called, again? I want to say ghosting, but I know, that's wrong – stealthing!

**Tyler:** Oh, yes. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Has that, uhm, I wonder, become a bigger, uh, issue for you during the pandemic, because obviously, we get to see fewer people in person also.

**Amara:** Yeah, I mean, I guess that's just been an issue in general for the pandemic like, yeah. It’s kinda fucked shit up (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But I got to transition in relative peace and safety, so I'm not super complaining (=Tyler: Yeah). Like I started hormones two days before the lockdown, so (=Tyler: Oh, wow, okay.), [laugh], that was fun, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Wow. Yeah. Sounds like (=Amara: Mmm, yeah), yeah, you've had to experience a lot (=Amara: Perfect timing, hey?). Yeah, wow, isolation (=Amara: Mmmm) while you’re making such a big move in your life, right?

**Amara:** It was nice though (=Tyler: Okay). Like I got to kind of miss out on a lot of the in-between stage, like, I don't fully pass, but it's like (=Tyler: Okay), like, you know, I got to go, I got to stay inside and not get misgendered everyday constantly (=Tyler: Mmmm) and like have to go to school and then go to like, boys’ bathroom, like, ugh, and the [university] boys’ bathrooms are terrible (=Tyler: Yes). Do, does [university] have, like, does campus have gender neutral bathrooms?

**Tyler:** I think it does.

**Amara:** Okay.

**Tyler:** I, yeah, I think it does

**Amara:** Because I've never seen any (=Tyler: Really?), and I don't want to hear like, [vice chancellor], talk about how (=Tyler: Yeah), like, Trans Lives Matter and then not do anything

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I haven't checked, obviously, in a long time since campus has been off limits for a while (=Amara: Yeah, for sure), but I think…

**Amara**

I mean, I was only there for a month (=Tyler: Yeah) so I didn't have a chance to check all the bathrooms, but.

**Tyler:** Right, yeah. I think in [building name] (=Amara: Mmm), that building.

**Amara:** Right (=Tyler: Yeah). I had most of my stuff in, I don't know what it's called, but it has like, you go down the steps. And then to the right there’s a lecture theatre, and to the left there’s like bathrooms… [Pause for 5 seconds] Yeah, doesn't matter. Not important, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah., I can’t, I can’t, [laugh]

**Amara:** Yeah. Anyway (=Tyler: Yeah), continue with your questions.

**Tyler:** [Laugh] I mean, I don't have that many–

**Amara:** [Laugh sigh], I feel like I’m derailing your whole–

**Tyler:** No, not at all. Uhm, I don't have that many left. Uhm, one that you can answer, honestly - not that you haven't been answering honestly, before (=Amara: Sure), uhm, is how do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer?

**Amara:** Uhm, I think you're pretty great. You like have this kind of safe energy (=Tyler: Okay). Like, calming, which I'm sure is something you have developed as a moderator as well, like, because that's like, an essential skill. But like, yeah, I mean, you're pretty great. Like (=Tyler: Cool), also, you know, if you were, like, straight and shit, it would be different (=Tyler: Yeah?), like. Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, you know, you have that thing, like fieldwork, like, you have access to the community more, as opposed to like, you know, like, if you went into a township or, for example, like you wouldn't have that access.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. So I'm an insider (=Amara: Yeah, exactly) to, to like, the queer community. Yeah. So, it kind of helps. Yeah.

**Amara:** An in-group observer, if you will.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, cool. Is there anything, uh, you think I can do to improve the focus group?

**Amara:** Uhm… I think it went pretty well. I think it could have been longer (=Tyler: Mmmm), honestly. Like, I think it could have been longer and maybe add an extra, like, focus question (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) for the length, you know (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Do you, do have any idea what kind of question?

**Amara:** I, ugh, I mean, it's your research project, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. [Laugh sigh]. Yeah. Okay.

**Amara:** I guess, but maybe something about like, interactions with society (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, I think that's always quite interesting because that's such a huge part of like, being any type of diverse, right? (=Tyler: Mmmm). It’s like, because, yeah, as much as we can talk about what it's like, within the queer community (=Tyler: Mmhmm), what matters more, because it's just bigger, is how you interact with the non-queer community (=Tyler: Yes), like the rest of the world (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, you know, in-fighting doesn't matter as much as out-fighting, right?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

**Amara:** Like in-fighting doesn’t accomplish anything.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's true. And it's, it's interesting, because obviously, yeah, as the, the question is really broad and open, uhm, the point is to see what comes up, you know, what do (=Amara: Yeah, no, for sure), what do participants kind of create for the discussion (=Amara: Yeah). Yeah. So, it's interesting that a lot of in group conflict was like a big theme in your groups’ talk.

**Amara:** Yeah. Because there is in-group conflict (=Tyler: Yeah!). It's essentially like, this is a weird analogy. But, like, you know, how, like, when the Europeans colonized Africa, or like, colonized wherever, they kind of just made borders (=Tyler: Mmm), where borders didn't exist, and like multiple different groups had to, were forced to co-exist. Like, that's kind of what the LGBT community is, right? (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like trans people and gay people don't have similarities (=Tyler: Mmm). Our similarity is that we are div, like gender, like we are, diverse in expression, right? Like, we don't conform to, I guess, gender standards, and also attraction standards (=Tyler: Mmmm). Like that's the sameness, but (=Tyler: Mmmm) it's fundamentally different experiences. And there's a lot of clash, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know, with the whole like, LGB Alliance, right (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Like it's, and we need to be one group (=Tyler: Yeah) because otherwise we're too small (=Tyler: Yeah). Like we need to be a coalition. But there's obviously in-fighting within that coalition because each group, as much as we have collective aims, we also have individual aims (=Tyler: Mmm) and sometimes those aims clash.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, yeah. And even within one group–

**Amara:** Yeah, and even within one group.

**Tyler:**  –like trans (=Amara: Yeah), you know, there's binary trans and non-binary trans (=Amara: Yeah). And even within that, there's (=Amara: Yeah), there’s still more

**Amara:** And then there's like, pan people and then like asexuals, which is like, opposite, though I think they gel quite well (=Tyler: Oh yeah?). Yeah, that was just a weird example that popped into my head (=Tyler: Uh-huh) But I feel like, you know, “I don't want to fuck”, “I want to fuck everyone”, okay, sick (=Tyler: [Laugh]), I guess we'll just be friends, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Cool. I think those are all the questions that I have (=Amara: Cool). Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experiences of sameness and difference?

**Amara:** Not really.

**Tyler**: No?

**Amara:** No.

**Tyler:** Cool. Nothing, uhm, that you'd like to change about your input to add to, or anything?

**Amara:** To be honest. I have like very few memories (=Tyler: Yeah) of the, the initial (=Tyler: Yeah) conversation.

**Tyler:** Okay, that's fine (=Amara: Yeah). Uhm, that's cool. So I will be in touch when I have transcribed the focus group and this interview (=Amara: Cool), so you can check the transcripts (=Amara: Yeah, that would be great). Yes. Yeah. And then also later on when the research report is ready (=Amara: Yeah) towards the end of the year

**Amara:** Yeah, will you send me a link or something?

**Tyler:** Yeah

**Amara:** I'm sure like, that's something you'll send to all the participants (=Tyler: Yes. Definitely). Yeah. Cool.

**Tyler:** If you're keen to–

**Amara:** I am very keen to (=Tyler: Okay). Social Science Research that like involves me? (=Tyler: Yeah) Oh my god.

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yeah. Yeah, okay. Cool. So then–

Casey

**Tyler:** I'll record it... Yeah. Okay. Uhm, cool. So, I guess we can start with the main question, which is: how did you feel about the focus group?

**Casey:** I really, really enjoyed it (=Tyler: Yeah). Like even afterward, I was speaking with some of the people. And it was just like, finally, it's not just the people that I live around. We were very different. Yoh, it was, it was so nice. It was so nice (=Tyler: Yeah?) ‘cause you, when you're walking on campus, or whatever you don't, you can’t, like pick people out who are similar to you in ways (=Tyler: Mmm) so being in, in a group where everyone is able to go “Yeah, same, I, I can relate to that”, that was very, very nice.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Great. So then, do you feel that there was a lot of agreement in the group?

**Casey:** I think there was (=Tyler: Uh-huh). I don't think there was a lot of disagreement (=Tyler: Okay). I mean, we all had opinions about certain things. Like, I, I feel some of us were very much like, we want, we want to shed labels entirely. And then other people, I think, felt more like, it, it's best to be able to describe what you're feeling (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But besides that, I can't think of anything that we specifically disagreed on or fought about. It was just… very much understanding from different experiences.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah….

**Casey:** Yeah. I can't think of a specific instance… (=Tyler: of?) of where we disagreed with something.

**Tyler:** Okay (=Casey: in that way). Interesting (=Casey: That was quite nice). Yeah. So, um, did you feel the same as anyone in significant ways? Most people?

**Casey:** I think, since most of the people who were there also had a different gender identity (=Tyler: Mmm) ... Ja, I think there was only one person who, who was cis (=Tyler: Mmhmm). That was quite nice. That was, that was very nice for me.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. It was quite a diverse collection of queer people. (=Casey: Yeah.) Yeah.

**Casey:** And they were all such stunning people, [laugh].

**Tyler**: Mmm, yeah. I agree, [laugh]. Um, so… I know that, uh, something that came up in, in the focus group that you said was that you often feel like, you're kind of the odd one out, and that, you know, uhm people don't really get you because of your ace orientation? So–

**Casey:** Mmm, I still, I still feel that is the main point (=Tyler: Mmm) where I haven't found someone who I can relate to that point (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I'm not, I'm not like upset about it, or anything, like I've accepted that there's just some things I'll never be able to feel or be able to relate with people, even with people in the queer community (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, that's just kind of my unique thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So maybe one day I'll meet another ace person, and I can go “Ja, it's relatable.” (=Tyler: Yeah.) But for now, nah, I haven't found anyone.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. So, did you feel different from the rest of the focus group members because of that?

**Casey:** No, not really, ‘cause I still value relationships, very importantly (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I just place the value on different things, different aspects, different love languages. So, (=Tyler: Yeah) at the end of the day, we all value a relationship as a big thing (=Tyler: Mmm). It's just the core values that make up a relationship, that foundation is different for everyone.

**Tyler:** Right, yes, yes, you did mention that in, in the focus group that, you kind of prioritize your core values, and, and getting to know the person holistically (=Casey: Mmm) as opposed to, you know, just, uhm, using identity terms, to (=Casey: Yeah), in that way.

**Casey:** So I never think that I'll be the person who just goes out, you know, casual dating or hookups, I guess (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I, I’d rather like, know the person and because I want to know that our values are on the same level. ‘Cause for me at this point, there's, like, I have had a lot of experiences of a lot of people. I'm kind of at the point where, you know, I'm looking for something that's solid and healthy for me, instead of just going out and looking for new experiences.

**Tyler:** Right. Yes. Okay. Yeah… Um, okay, but I think you also said, it makes sense that, uhm, being an ace person, I think that, you know, sexuality in a partner (=Casey: Mmm), if they are not ace, it might eventually be a deal breaker for you? (=Casey: Yeah) Yeah, so, uhm, how do you feel about that potential… limitation versus getting to know someone, regardless of that?

**Casey:** [Laugh], it's just very difficult overall (=Tyler: Yeah). So, in high school, I had a girlfriend for like two and a half years (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And she was very understanding of my ace personality. Like she wasn't, but it wasn't for her a deal breaker (=Tyler: Mmm). Mmm. So, she wasn't necessarily looking out for like, I want a partner (=Tyler: Right), who is also a sexual partner. So that was a very wonderful experience for me and the only reason why we really split apart is because I moved across the country (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and long distance didn't really work out. So we ended off on good terms, and we’re still very close friends now, but it's always a thing of now I've kind of got a standard for how a relationship might be, even with a person who might not be ace. (=Tyler: Okay) so, mmm. (=Tyler: Yeah.) So, I definitely feel that… maybe I will find someone who I can relate on emotional value as well, who also does not necessarily, you know, value sexuality that high. So, that's why I, it's, it’s very much I don't want to get into relationship before we talk about these things (=Tyler: Mmm). Because even with people you're not in a relationship with, you can talk to your friends about these things. And it's fine.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's true (=Casey: Mmm). Yeah. So is that encouraging then – it sounds like it would be encouraging that, you know, it's not necessarily a deal breaker, uhm… that, that one of you might be sexual, while you're really not?

**Casey:** I think it also helps that I'm polyamorous (=Tyler: Mmm), so, in the sense, if I end up with two partners, you know, then they can do whatever they want to do, and (=Tyler: Mmm) then I'll be fine. So I, I guess just always, if I think about you know, my, like, my very long future plan (=Tyler: Mmhmm), there would be me with like two people and we're just all loving on emotional level, and then, you know, they could, whatever (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, it's not a deal breaker, even when I'm with one person, it just depends on how much value they place (=Tyler: Mmhmm) on it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Ja, because I think I told you about some relationships that I've been in where it's just, you know, we get, we get off very good on an emotional level, but we enter the, the actual relationship, you know, introduce them to more of the sexual aspects uhm, little ones, like just making out or (=Tyler: Yeah.) hand holding and just snowballs.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm… (=Casey: But ja). Yeah. Okay. That's, that's really cool. So, uhm, how do you feel about your asexuality and polyamory together… like–?

**Casey:** I think, I think… they, they were quite nicely (=Tyler: Mmm), I would say. I think they're in a way, for me, it's complementary. (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, I'm not, I can imagine myself being only one person (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Not like, I'm necessarily going into a relationship going, “Okay. I know, I like you. But you know, maybe, maybe, you know”, it's, it's just, I am open to the idea of, if you feel like your relationship is missing something, or there’s, ‘cause it's all, for me, it's all about compatibility. And some puzzle pieces need a third piece to finish the puzzle. It's not like, you know, people who are gay will miss it, will go only for men (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you say, so, I will not only go for polyamory, I'm fine with monogamy.

**Tyler:** Okay. (=Casey: Mmm.) Okay. Yeah. Cool. Very cool. Um, so I’d just like to ask about what you, uh, expressed in the focus group (=Casey: Ja). Are you comfortable with everything that you've said? Or would you like to change or clarify anything?

**Casey:** I think everything I said I still stand with (=Tyler: Mmm) just some, after the focus group I realized that some of the things are now much more apparent (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). So I, ja, I only came out last year as non-binary and then lockdown happened (=Tyler: Mmm) so I didn't really experience the entire in-the-public how to deal with your pronoun situation, and of the focus group that same day, I went to a 21st birthday party, and then, I’m, I’m used to people in passing, you know, using she/her pronouns, and I'm very uncomfortable, like stepping in, like in a conversation that, you know, they're talking about me, but I'm not in the conversation (=Tyler: Mmm) to then just like, step in and go “Hey, so no” (=Tyler: Yeah). But after that entire night, like my one friend just sent me a message apologizing for misgendering me the entire night and yoh I cried (=Tyler: Really?!) I cried so bad. Ja. And yesterday (=Tyler: Hmm), since I'm the sub-warden here, I had a fire marshal talk with just some of the house com members (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And in the minutes of the meeting, they used my correct pronouns. And I was like, yoh it’s on an official document [grabbing face and smiling], ah, I’m so happy (=Tyler: That’s awesome). And I've been, I've been seriously thinking about taking, like my student calling and getting a new one (=Tyler: Mmm) with, uhm, my correct title and another picture, because that picture still had me like with long hair and everything (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). So, I would say that I'm, I'm now more keenly aware of it (=Tyler: Okay). And… it's, it's now an, not to, like, I've never been afraid of being out (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Like, I've been out, you know, with my, uhm, sexuality, since I came to Cape Town (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I went through the entire being out in high school thing. And when I came to Cape Town, you know, I wasn't, I wasn't gonna sit back. It was gonna be out there, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So… where was I going with this, [laugh sigh]?

**Tyler:** That you were not, uhm, entirely opposed or, uh, fearful about being out in public?

**Casey:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So now, now, since I'm in a bit of a leadership position (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I want to make a standard, I want to really make it a standard. And the people who are working with me on my team are very much for it as well. So now on official documents, and everything, your introduction, I'm getting it out there (=Tyler: Mmm), and it's just been slowly people coming aware of it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And then also, what is it, the Office of Inclusivity (=Tyler: Mmhmm) also stepped in and gave like the house a talk, and (=Tyler: Okay) that also helped I think.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. So, uhm, with your friend, uhm, who misgendered you that night, and then apologized to you (=Casey: Mmhmm), and with your, uh, your committee at res who used the correct pronouns on your minutes (=Casey: Mmm). Uhm, are those moments because you stepped in to tell them or just to correct them, or is it just you're noticing they're trying? So, I'm just trying to ask you about like (= Casey, Yeah) how, how did it (No, I didn’t–) change?

**Casey:** –step in at all (=Tyler: Oh, okay). I didn’t step in. So, it was always like, last year (=Tyler: Mmm), very with online with my friends, it would be one of my friends (=Tyler: Mmm), who was a very, very close person to me, he would always step in in the background without me noticing, and try and correct them (=Tyler: Mmm). So, this was now the first time I've really seen people self-realize it and then change themselves, I, ‘cause I, like I said (=Tyler: Yeah), I don't like stepping in (=Tyler: Yeah), it's, for me, it's very much a thing of you know, I changed my pronouns (=Tyler: Mmm). So it's a bit of a “Why should other people then change for me?” (=Tyler: Mmm) and I'm still getting to terms with that (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Yeah you did express that in the group that's it sometimes feels like it's almost you’re burdening?

**Casey:** Yeah a bit (=Tyler: Yeah. Uhm, or, ja) But like, I understand (=Tyler: Mmm), I understand, I, this is my face, I can't change my face (=Tyler: Mmm). And, you know, with your family members or people you've been close with for years, it's like, what, 20 years that people have been using these pronouns (=Tyler: Right), and now it's going to take a process (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I understand sometimes I misgender myself (=Tyler: Yeah), and then immediately after I’m like yoh that was disgusting, no (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But it's when you just speak very fastly, it's, it takes a while to almost reprogram how your brain thinks (=Tyler: Mmhmm), so I do understand it (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Okay, very cool... Um, so you said that you came out last year (=Casey: Yeah). You also mentioned in the focus group that Kiara was someone who gave you inspiration to come out?

**Casey:** Yeah, ‘cause I, I think it was just at the end of 2019 she joined the House Committee of our, uhm, residency and when you join the House Committee, you have to put like a profile up and then everyone can vote for you and I saw that she put, and they put pronouns there, and I was like “what?” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because I had been close with Kiara that entire year (=Tyler: Mmm) and they didn't tell me about this. That was how I found out (=Tyler: Oh, okay) and, I'm guessing, I'm guessing that’s how they also kind of came out (=Tyler: Okay). And it was seeing that and like Kiara is a very specific personality. She, she's very you know, out there and very bold (=Tyler: Mmm) and I am used to like just seeing uhm the non-binary be androgynous (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), you know, people on, on YouTube, where it’s just like, you know, I'm gonna have all the piercings here and just, I'm only going to wear like t-shirts and that's it and sneakers (=Tyler: Mmhmm) that androgynous vibe. So that was kind, with Kiara, it was very, very cool to see that it's in another way as well. And in high school, I knew another non-binary as well. And they were, what do you call it, a drag queen, drag king? (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I really, those were the two non-binary (=Tyler: Yeah) that I knew (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I was very out there. So that paired with the androgynous vibe, I somewhere fall in the middle.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, okay(=Casey: So ja, just–) so it was, it was, uhm, it was helpful to see someone like Kiara (=Casey: Mmm) who identifies as non-binary, but isn't necessarily androgynous, they are, like, more conventionally feminine presenting, but still (=Casey: Yeah). And that kind of helped you?

**Casey:** I would say, ja. (=Tyler:, Okay) Because I would say, if, like, I'm more comfortable with male pronouns and words surrounding male (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I'm not sure if that's because I now have a bad image of the feminine side. So, it's very much like, “Don't call me queen or woman or lady” because I feel like there's very much stereotypical things behind that (Tyler: Mmhmm). But, you know, call me King, dude, bro, whatever, I'm fine with that (Tyler: Mmhmm). So I'm not sure if it's just a bit of a, uhm, hate that I have for the, the feminine side, or if I actually just prefer the masculine side (Tyler: Mmm), because I do feel maybe I'll wake up once in a blue moon and feel incredibly feminine (Tyler: Mmhmm), then I'll wear the one dress I own, [laugh sigh], you know. But other days, I'll wake up incredibly masculine. And then I'll try to hide everything. I'll try to look incredibly male but mostly I fall in between (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I would say.

**Tyler:** Right, okay. Um, yeah. Okay... Uhm, uh, is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't end up saying?...

**Casey**: Mmm… I think I got everything out (=Tyler: Okay), at the end, yeah.

**Tyler**: You didn't leave the group thinking, “Oh, I could have said that, I should have said that”?.

**Casey:** No, that's why I went in with like, my notes. (=Tyler: [laugh]). [Laugh], I do, I'm very much of the opinion of, I am, like an open door, like (Tyler: Mmhmm), ask me anything, I will tell you anything, because I really feel that if there's even one person who gains something from my experiences then it was worth for me to go through it (Tyler: Mmm). So because of that I, you know, anyone who will listen, I will tell my story to (Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I kind of got it nailed down what I usually say, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, great. So, is there anything else that you would like to say about your experiences of sameness and difference?

**Casey:** Mmm… [pause for 4 seconds]

**Tyler:** If not, that's okay.

**Casey:** I thi– in high school, right? I dated a guy in like grade eight, like right at the beginning. And I was very open with him. Like, I was bisexual at the time telling him about it. And then like, a couple of months later, he broke it off and I couldn't understand why until he said, “No, I'm actually gay. (=Tyler: Oh!) And, [laugh] that, that is, that is for me the very most in, the interesting ones where you only realize your sexuality when you're with the opposite one (Tyler: Mmhmm). So, like, I'm not mad at him or anything, and I really must see that entire relationship as a, as a good experience as well. So, that does happen, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Okay (=Casey: Yeah), cool. Very cool. Um, so, how do you feel about me as the group facilitator and interviewer? Is there any feedback you can give? And please answer quite honestly.

**Casey:** I think you're very open (Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, I’ve, you, I don't think you really, you're, you’re very good at facilitating (=Tyler: Thank you), like, the questions you ask are very relevant, and we're able to build the questions on, of the the answers on very easily, to keep the topic flowing (Tyler: Mmhmm), but I do feel like… mmm, you, you, [laugh], you're, you're, you're very queer (Tyler: Mmhmm). You can see you’re queer. (=Tyler: Yes?) And it's a very nice and heart-warming queer.

**Tyler:** Is it?

**Casey:** Ja, you, you seem so open like (Tyler: Mmhmm), there's nothing, because of that I think we could all just freely talk about anything. Like it wasn't a demanding vibe. Like I feel if you were like sat there and you were writing, writing down everything (Tyler: Mmm), like that also gives a vibe of “oh, everything I say really am being recorded and (=Tyler: Yeah) he’s writing it down” So I definitely feel like taking the video and using the other thing, like, it, because then you feel a part of the conversation as well.

**Tyler:** Yes. Okay.

**Casey:** You did a, you did a good job [thumbs up].

**Tyler:** [Laugh] thank you very much (=Casey: [laugh]). Cool, yeah, that's good, I really wanted to know that, you know, I was helping facilitate the, the discussion (=Casey: Yeah). Uhm, so is there any feedback you can give me about something you think should be improved about the focus group?

**Casey:** Mmmm… Maybe we, just, a way because I really couldn't hear (=Tyler: Mmm) what, uhm, like James was saying (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, maybe if there's a way, like, maybe if people were sat out more spread, and they could take their masks off, because I feel she would be able to project her voice more then? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Their, their voice? (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Maybe that–

**Tyler:** Yeah, I also thought about that.

**Casey:** Mmm. But otherwise, I think it was great.

**Tyler:** Okay, thanks… So, um… then… it might be a little strange, the question, but, uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now, after participating? Is there any difference between before participating and afterwards?

**Casey:** I don't, I don't think so. I think my, my queerness is still the same, but (=Tyler: Mmm) I'm more attentive to it now. (=Tyler: Mmhmm). ‘Cause, yeah. I don't know if it's just the experiences that I've had in the res with the inclusivity over the last week, or from that talk, but like, it's good to know that there are that queer people also around, and it's quite saddening, that, you know, we won't be able to see them on campus every day, or (=Tyler: Ja). And it's very, ja, so it really much feels hidden away at the moment, but ja no, we (=Tyler: Mmhmm. Yeah, I would agree). We are, we are a rainbow nation, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, [laugh], yeah, totally. Okay. Um, cool. That's basically all of the questions that I have for you in this interview. Um–

**Casey:** Did you, were you able to transcribe everything, that was–?

**Tyler:** Not yet (=Casey, Okay). So, I haven't done that yet, uhm, but when I do, uhm, I will give you the opportunity to review the transcript, uhm.

**Casey:** Okay, ‘cause when they were talking about the resources I wasn't able to hear, correctly

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. (=Casey: Yeah, yeah, yeah). So if, if you would like me to go through the recording and give you some of that information, I can do that (=Casey: That would be great, please) without having to transcribe the full thing (=Casey: Mmmm). Okay, cool. Excellent, no problem.

**Casey:** Even if I don't, even I don't now, necessarily, go running to the place (=Tyler: Yeah) I would like, like, a list, my options (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I would like to know options.

**Tyler:** Okay. Excellent. Um… and on that note, do you still have the list of counseling services that I (=Casey: Yes, yes, I do have it) gave you at the end? Hey? (=Casey: It's, it's on my door). Okay. Cool. So you don’t need me to send you (=Casey: Permanently there), [Laugh], great, so you don't need me to send you another one. (=Casey: Mm-mm). Okay. (=Casey: Thank you). Is, are there any last things that you want to say about the focus group, your experience of, of talking with others, there?

**Casey:** Thank you for having us [gestures heart shape with hands].

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, you’re most welcome. Cool.

**Casey:** It was, it was a nice experience.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I'm really glad. I'm really glad it was. Yeah. Um, I will also be in contact with you about the final report. Um, so it is a very, very big document, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, it's a minor dissertation. So that is probably going to be only ready at the end of the year. Uh, so quite a while away, uhm. Yeah. Do you have any questions about that?

**Casey:** Nah,my, my dissertation is next year, I'll figure it out then, [laugh]

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Great. Then that's it.

**Casey:** I wish you the best of luck.

**Tyler:** Thank you very much Casey.

**Casey:** Pleasure.

**Tyler:** Cool. Okay, so let me stop recording.

James

**Tyler:** Your pseudonym’s James, right?

**James:** Mmhmm.

**Tyler:** Okay.

[James completes informed consent form]

**James**: [Inaudible]

**Tyler:** Huh?

**James:** [Inaudible]

**Tyler:** Yeah, I know [inaudible], [laugh sigh]. Cool, so no questions?

**James:** No.

**Tyler:** Okay great, so then I’ll just hit record. Uhm, so how have you been since the last time you were here?

**James:** Good, actually.It's, it’s been better, [sigh]

**Tyler:** Oh, yeah?

**James**: We just, we’ve started like university and everything. So it's all gone back into the schedule and everything and that's good for me, I think (=Tyler: Mmmm) Just, the working actually gives me energy whereas before, it's, I had nothing to motivate me to get up in the morning and (=Tyler: Completely) it did not help with my depression.

**Tyler:** Yes, yeah. Yeah, I totally get you.

**James**: It’s weird how working more gives me energy. (=Tyler: Yeah! Yeah) Like, I'm tired at the end of the day, but it's a different kind of tired [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** It is definitely, yeah. It's like you have a purpose, I guess (=James: Mmm, exactly), more of that. Yeah. Okay, cool. Good to hear, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so, we can get right into it. How did you feel about the focus group?

**James:** I really enjoyed it. It was very nice to just talk with people and like in that kind of open space, it (=Tyler: Mmm) was nice.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Okay, cool. Uhm, did you…? How do you feel about agreement in your group? [Pause] What kind of things do you think people, you guys, uh, you people tended to agree on?

**James:** Mmmm…uhm, we tended to agree on quite a bit like, I don't think there was any, like major differences of opinion, which was interesting (= Tyler: Mmm). Also I think it helped that a large majority of us weren't, uhm, cis (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, that was the reason we were in the group, basically (=Tyler: Mmm). So I think we all like had faced similar but different, uhm, discrimination and that kind of thing, like growing up and finding yourself (=Tyler: Mmm) in that kind of a community (=Tyler: Mmm). Whereas things like sexuality with like ‘gay’, or, or ‘bisexual’, and that kind of thing, that tends to have like a different route that you get to, to go to the community I guess (=Tyler: Mmhmm), if that makes sense.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Kind of, yeah. Could you explain a bit more what you mean, a different route?

**James:** Uhm, like there's a different way of discovering it, I guess (=Tyler: Yeah) with your sexuality versus your gender (=Tyler: Mmm). And there's a different type of people that you meet along the way to, like, encourage you to like find yourself and all that kind of thing (=Tyler: Yeah) and like, experiment and all that stuff.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah, I liked what you said about your boyfriend and, uh, going on a gender journey with him – ‘him’? (=James: Yes.) Yeah, that's really cool, [laugh sigh].

**James:** We actually recently did for, uhm, my university thing, uhm, I'm doing photography (=Tyler: Mmm). And then I did a shoot with him, uhm, exploring like, the contortion of the human body (=Tyler: Ooo) in order to like, blur the lines of gender and stuff (=Tyler: Mmm) because he's also autistic (=Tyler: Oh). And the way that he gets a stimulation, like self-regulation is to contort his body into different places (=Tyler: Mmm!) because the pressure really helps him (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, and then just, he gets in such strange positions, like, you look at the silhouette and you can’t tell it’s a human being at all (=Tyler: Wow) Like one of the positions, uhm, I couldn't help but see it as just a turkey with arms [laughs] (=Tyler: [Laughs]). I found that one very funny (=Tyler: Yeah) That was also a really good project, I think, just to like, play around with that kind of stuff and like, what really is a human being? (=Tyler: Yes) and what do they have to look like?

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, totally. And, and yeah, uhm, the appearance of body, I suppose (=James: Mmm), is also something in that project that you were looking at. And is also a thing that, uhm, is like an issue for gender for most people as well, right?

**James:** Mmm, I think like physical bodily appearance (=Tyler: Mmm), and like how the limits you can use to change that (=Tyler: Mmm) is definitely a really big factor in transitioning (=Tyler: Mmm). Because, yes, technology has come so far, but it's got *sooo* far to go (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like a lot of the surgeries and stuff I'm not comfortable getting (=Tyler: Mmhmm) at this state (=Tyler: Yeah), even if I was able to because I'm just not happy with the results that they produce yet (=Tyler: Mmm). And I want to see like, where we go a bit more, and then we consider getting it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because yes, I would like it, but I want better results than that, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, totally. Mmhmm. Uhm, another thing I think that you brought up… with gender, uhm, was, it seemed like you had experienced a lot of invalidation and threatening behavior from quite a few people. Uhm, you had mentioned for example, that, uh, some of your tutors and classmates will deliberately use a dead name and the wrong pronouns (=James: Yeah). Uhm, I think you also spoke about how a non-binary identity has been experienced as, uhm, or has been interpreted as like trans-light (=James: Mmm), or, uhm, a snowflake identity (=James: Yeah), or like, uhm, a threat to other people's queerness (=James: Mmm). Uhm, is there any person or people in particular who you were thinking of when you were talking about that kind of experience?

**James**: Uhm, Like the, the trans-light and all that kind of stuff, that's mostly just like online communities (=Tyler: Mmm) and stuff because when you're online, you're obviously much louder about your opinions (=Tyler: Right, yeah) So that's mostly that, but other things, like just blatant misgendering and all that kind of stuff (=Tyler: Mmm), that’s usually in person, which hurts even more to be honest (=Tyler: Yeah) and like, the one time I was in a lecture and my lecturer, uhm, they don’t know me like personally, they just teach a massive class (=Tyler: Mmm) and I always sit in like, right in the front row. And I was just like writing down notes and stuff. And then the lecturer called out “Can, can the guy in the guy in the red shirt” and that was me but like, I didn’t, I’ve never been referred to as like “the guy” (=Tyler: Yeah) in the red shirt so I was, I was like still writing, so I thought she was talking to someone else. And then someone right at the back of the lecture hall just called out, “Hey, gender-fuck (=Tyler: [gasp]), she’s talking to you”.

**Tyler**: What? (=James: Yeah) That's awful!

**James**: And no one did anything.

**Tyler:** Even the lecturer did nothing? (=James: [nods]) That's terrible (=James) Yeah. Wow. I can't believe that behavior is still just excused on campus–

**James**: And then still having to answer the question to an entire room of people after that, so that was, anxiety-inducing.

**Tyler:** That is…Wow (=James: Yeah). Wow…yeah, still a long way to go not just with technology but with, uhm people, I suppose

**James:** I think it’s also, just, that safety in a crowd sort of thing (=Tyler: Mmm). Like I don't know who exactly it was, I just know where it came from (=Tyler: Yes.) Uh, and also on that topic, uhm, one of the, the Stellenbosch like, uh, Instagram page, the meme page (=Tyler: Mmm), they recently did a discussion topic on whether, like, uhm, the difference between preference and prejudice (=Tyler: Okay) in dating, and it was meant to be about a racist thing about like, why you prefer a White girl (=Tyler: Right) or a Black girl (=Tyler: Yeah) because of the stereotypes and stuff. And then, uhm, they used like, just one example of a trans relationship (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And then everyone just latched on to that and just completely disregarded the main discussion (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and just focused in on that and how, trans people are lying to you if they don’t tell you that “Oh, I have a penis” (=Tyler: Mmm) on the very first date (=Tyler: Mmm), like [exasperated sigh]. And it's always like the, the cis men that like attack them because like, they feel like, “oh, you're gonna force me to be gay” (=Tyler: Yeah), or if “I wanted to date someone with a penis, I would have come out of the closet’ (=Tyler: Yeah), like, saying stuff like that and it was just, pretending like [exasperated sigh], we're, we’re not actually the gender that we identify as (=Tyler: Right), we're just lying for attention (=Tyler: Mmhmm) or something like that (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, yeah, that was just incredibly hurtful and triggering to read. I shouldn't have read it but like you know, when you start you just, you can’t stop. So yeah, that was just awful. And just to put that on like a public page and just give those people the platform to just voice these opinions and stuff (=Tyler: Yeah). And like, not a single trans person was involved in this discussion, I could tell (=Tyler: Yeah), from the, the answers that were being posted. Like it was all just these cis straight men (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, some of them even said, like, uhm, “yeah I'm a cis-gendered, straight White male, we're already off to a good start.” And then they would list their entire thing, like you think they start like that? Maybe they know they’re privileged (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), maybe they, they have some education, but no (laugh), they're just using it to like feel like a victim because (=Tyler: Yeah) oh yeah, you treat cis-straight men like this all the time (=Tyler: Oh, uh-huh). But you know, what, actually yes, it’s true, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Uh, yeah, proving a point, kind of. Yeah, *shoh*… So ,then it was kind of, uhm, as you said, it, it was good to feel that there were, uh, other members of the focus group, who were also not cis (=James: Yeah) Uhm, and so did you feel, uhm, sameness in, with anyone in particular, in the, in the focus group?

**James:** Uhm, I cannot remember the name, I’m sorry.

**Tyler:** That’s okay, you can describe them.

**James:** Uhm, the other non-binary person who was very into astrology with all of the tattoos on them.

**Tyler:** Oh okay, I think it was Casey (=James: Yes) maybe they were sitting over here [gestures]? (=James: Yes). Okay, yeah, why did you-? (=James: I, I felt very-)

**James:** Uhm, I think it's just their personality and like, the, the way that they like outwardly (=Tyler: Mmm), were willing to express one of these different things (=Tyler: Mmm) about their life and everything. I just felt like very connected to them not so, in our responses between each other, we made some very good conversation (=Tyler: Yes) Ja.

**Tyler:** Yes. Very true, [laugh]. Yeah. Cool. Is there anyone that you felt a kind of difference from?

**James:** Uhm…slightly to, the lady that was sitting over there [gestures] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I think it was just because like, we didn't engage much (=Tyler: Mmm) between the two of us (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I think that's mainly because like, we shared very different experiences (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like because she was there with, uhm, like, being perceived as like switching between straight and gay (=Tyler: Mmm) and all that kind of stuff. Like I've never really had that experience, because I've always dated, uhm, men or male-identifying people (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I've always identified that way. So I've never really had that switch over and then being discriminated because of that.

**Tyler:** Right, okay, I see. Yeah, Lily, had, uh, her queerness is more about sexuality (=James: Yes), right? Yeah. Okay. Mmm, I think she was also kind of a quieter participant (=James: Yeah, she was a little bit). Yeah, yeah, okay… Uhm, is there anything that you wanted to express in the group but you didn't?

**James:** No, I think I got most of it at some point or another (=Tyler: Okay). There wasn't anything that I really held back on purpose or anything like that.

**Tyler:** Well good? (=James: [laugh sigh]). Yeah, probably means you were comfortable enough to share what you did?

**James:** Definitely.

**Tyler:** Cool. Is there anything that you did share that you'd like to clarify or change? Edit, [laugh].. (=James: Not that I can remember) that you can remember that yeah (=James: Yeah, that’s the problem, [laugh]), that's fine. Yeah. Cool. Uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now after having participated?

**James:** I think I'm far more comfortable because, like I said before, like I hadn't really met a lot of non-binary people in person (=Tyler: Mmm), and just interacting with other non-binary people. That was very validating for me, because they'd also had like, similar experiences, they agreed with what I was saying and that kind of stuff really made me feel like “okay, yeah, this isn't just an individual thing, I'm not just confused (=Tyler: Yes), a lot of people experience this.” (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah) Because it really just does not get spoken about that often.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Yeah, so it was quite comforting (=James: Def-) to know, like, “Okay, I'm not alone.” (=James: Yes, exactly.) Yeah. So, yeah, you did relate to a few people in the focus group. Uhm, I wonder if you have experienced relating like that to other people in your life, friends, or… something like that?

**James**: I have my boyfriend, obviously (=Tyler: Yes) and that's definitely a relation to a certain degree (=Tyler: Mmm), but like, there is a sort of area where like, it does branch off, and I have to still learn that those differences still exist, even though like we have the basis of understanding (=Tyler: Mmm). Because like he experiences gender dysphoria, different, slightly different to me (=Tyler: Mmm), because of how he identifies and all that kind of stuff. So (=Tyler: Right), I can understand, like, on a base level, and then there's just a few extra levels where it branches off.

**Tyler:** Yeah… Yeah... So, uhm, your boyfriend is a, a trans man (=James: Yes), a binary trans man? (=James: Yes) Okay. And you are more a non-binary, but masc-leaning? (=James: Masc-leaning) Yes, okay. So that's kind of where the difference is in the branching?

**James**: Yes, that’s mostly with like, uhm, bodily dysphoria (=Tyler: Mmm) as well, because he has like physical dysphoria, mostly at the top, I have mostly the bottom. So that's, very different [laugh], like, especially with our planned transitions and all that kind of stuff.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay… Cool. Uhm, so how do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer? (=James: [laugh sigh]) You can answer pretty honestly, I can take it.

**James**: Yeah, it was actually pretty comfortable around you, so, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Uh-huh. Cool. Do you have any feedback about how you think focus group can be improved?

**James**: Hmmm… I think maybe just providing a few more questions to prepare us in the beginning. (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) Just like when you like sent out those two (=Tyler: Mmm), maybe just sending out like, maybe two or three more, just, like get more of an idea of like, where it's going to be going, the direct– but I guess that kind of depends on the flow of the group as well, so you can’t – it's really difficult (=Tyler: Yeah), like, I do wish that I had been able to, like, prepare certain things, like just get the wording and stuff right (=Tyler: Oh, okay) in my head and all that.

**Tyler:** Okay, I see. Do you have any examples that come to mind of questions I could have told you to think about?

**James:** Hmmm… like… things that like you did ask a very vague question about the sameness and difference and a lot did just fall into that, but it was like the discrimination that has happened against you (=Tyler: Mmm) and that kind of thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and certain people in your life, especially. (=Tyler: Yeah). Because like, I was just thinking more in a general sense (=Tyler: Okay) maybe, or like linked to direct people (=Tyler: Yeah) Yeah, so, I was, I was sort of more… out there with my preparedness (=Tyler: Right.) I wish I had been a little more focused, but that's it.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay. I see what you mean

**James:** And like I managed to adapt into the conversation, just like as it was flowing, but like if I had been the first person to answer I would not have been able to (=Tyler: Right) which is why I was grateful for the person that was there (=Tyler: Yeah), when they kept on going first, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, [laugh sigh]. Okay, cool. Yeah. Thank you. That's really helpful. Uhm… I think that that is kind of all of the questions that I have (=James: Cool, [laugh sigh]). Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experiences of sameness and difference that you didn't share then?

**James:** Uh, the thing is that I did go home and I did think about it more (=Tyler: Oh yeah?) and I did think of a couple of things and now I can’t remember, [laugh]. Uhm… hmm… [13-second pause]. No, I think I’m good.

**Tyler:** Nah? Okay (=James: Yeah). Any final thoughts on the group? [Laugh sigh]

**James**: No.

**Tyler:** No (=James: [laugh sigh]) okay, cool. Well then, that's it.

**James:** Okay, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Very quick interview, right? (=James: Short). Yeah, cool, then I will stop–

Kiara

**Tyler:**  –n, uh, last time you were here, and now?

**Kiara:** *Shoh.*

**Tyler:** Has it been really busy?

**Kiara:** Yes, it has, it has, and, with a lot of emotions (=Tyler: Uh-huh?). Yeah (=Tyler: Oh, okay). But, [sigh], I guess it's, it’s the pressure, ‘cause there's academia (=Tyler: Mmm) and I'm working and I'm trying to (=Tyler: Yep) plan for my birthday, it’s, it’s been a lot, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah). And the last time, there was, last week, there was a, a student that committed suicide, and so it was (=Tyler: Oh no, that’s awful), [sigh] emotionally draining, yeah.

**Tyler:** Wow, was it someone that you knew?

**Kiara:** No (=Tyler: Okay), no, but they were in the same class as, as people I knew (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). So I was just worried about them, too.

**Tyler:** Yeah. *Shoh*. Yeah, uh, as mental health, now, especially during, uh, (Kiara: Yeah) the pandemic, is a bit, uh, intense for a lot of people

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, wow. Okay.

**Kiara:** But I did contact Triangle as you know, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you did). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Uhm, was it to do with that or to do with the focus group?

**Kiara:** It was to do with that (=Tyler: Oh), yeah, it wasn’t, yeah (=Tyler: Okay), it was just, because I, I needed a, a new therapist, because my previous one, [sigh], was very sexist, and so (=Tyler: Oh, yeah), yeah, and victim-blaming, so I figured (=Tyler: Yeah), I should, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, which is quite wild for a therapist (=Kiara: Yeah), like, you would think that that is definitely not something (=Kiara: Yeah, [laugh]), someone should, [laugh sigh].

**Kiara:** I feel like we became too comfortable in a sense that, he… sort of took off, on, a fatherly role (=Tyler: Uh-huh) in just, removed from his work.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm, so less professional?

**Kiara:** Mmm, yeah (=Tyler: Right), very less professional (=Tyler: Okay). And I also wanted someone who I’m not going to teach about queerness, someone who understands a bit it, [laugh sigh], (=Tyler: Yeah, exactly), you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Mmhmm. Especially if you have things that you'd like to talk about–

**Kiara:** Yeah. I don't want to (=Tyler: –uh, in therapy) teach you first and then get into (=Tyler: Yeah, exactly) my feelings, [laugh]. Yeah (=Tyler: Ja). Oh, but… [clears throat; shows Tyler a tattoo of the word ‘queer’ on their wrist]

**Tyler:** Oh, you got a tattoo (=Kiara: [Laugh])! That's awesome, that's really cool.

**Kiara:** I figured, I’d get it here where it's visible, most of the time, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Oh okay, yeah, you were talking about wearing rainbow bands but (=Kiara: Yes) some people don't pick it up, [laugh sigh].

**Kiara:** Yeah, no, now, they, I hope they get the message now, [laugh]

**Tyler:** Yeah, I think that’s kind of obvious (=Kiara: [Laugh]). Yeah, that’s really cool (=Kiara: Thank you). Nice. Was that also recently?

**Kiara:** Yes (=Tyler: Okay), I got on Wednesday.

**Tyler:** Oh, cool!

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice, so it's quite fresh, [laugh sigh].

**Kiara:** Yes, [laugh sigh]. But they heal very quickly (=Tyler: Mmm). Yeah.

**Tyler:**  Yeah, nice (=Kiara: Thank you). Yeah. So how did you feel about participating in the group?

**Kiara:** It was really interesting (=Tyler: Mmm), in a sense that I, it brought to light some of the things that I, I’d never thought of. I'd like to think I'm very queer aware but there are a few things that, uhm, for instance what Tenda said about, manlihood. I, I never thought of it, like I knew, but I never thought it’d affect trans men (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, like. I mean, I always knew that, like, especially Xhosa men are hoteps but I never contextualized it, but (=Tyler: Yeah) ja, I, it was very eye-opening (=Tyler: Yeah), in a sense, you know (=Tyler: Yeah). And I, I realized there’s a, we have a, a lot of sameness. But there's something that I've been noticing a lot about, like South Africa, in Africa is, in my opinion, the most progressive in terms of queerness things but (=Tyler: Mmm) there's a lot of segregation within South Africa. Like there isn't a unified, uhm, sort of platform. And when there is unity, it's assertive, it's very policed, in the sense of like, certain people can come in, and some cannot (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I was actually talking about this with my therapist in the sense that, like (=Tyler: Mmm), I felt that, uhm, ‘cause I was a Jehovah's Witness (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And so I felt like, after I came out of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I came out of that door wanting to come into the queer door (=Tyler: Mmm), but then that doors also was closed (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and so I was left in some like empty space (=Tyler: Mmhmm), trying to figure out and apply my identity (=Tyler: Mmm), [laugh sigh]. I mean, I’m still there, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Kiara: Yeah). Yeah. Is that, uhm, that kind of gatekeeping, for (=Kiara: Yes), for uhm, queer space? Is that to do with what you said, I think you was saying like, there’s LGBT and the others (=Kiara: Yes), and you were “and the others” (=Kiara: Yes), whereas the LGBT was kind of (=Kiara: Yeah), keeping the gate, is that (=Kiara: Yeah)? Okay.

**Kiara:** And there's a, there’s always a certain aesthetic and a certain (=Tyler: Yep), [sigh], you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm) you’d think that our, we are, we are the most the most welcoming, but still not there (=Tyler: Mmm).

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah. Yeah. So, uhm… is there any, uh, sameness that you felt with other members of the group?

**Kiara:** I feel, it's, it's, with Casey (=Tyler: Mmm), we've known each other (=Tyler: Yeah) for the longest time, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, you’re friends–). We never really, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, kind of), we never really spoke of our queerness (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and, when they were talking about feeling like they were given sort of “this is who you’re supposed to be, this is how things go”, I felt that (=Tyler: Mmm). I felt the sameness in that ‘cause my sister, my sister raised me to be the perfect wife, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), clean, do this, do that and, with that, with, because we, when I came here, she wanted me to go preach (=Tyler: Yeah). And so she was like “No”, because [their phone vibrates] I also do crocheting, – sorry [turns off call] (=Tyler: Yeah, no problem). I also do crocheting (=Tyler: Yeah) and so she said “No you will start something” you know, she already had in her head a plan for me. And when I sort of deviated from that plan it was “Okay, you're on your own then. I can't help you.” I feel like I feel the same sameness with, with Casey that (=Tyler: Mmm), yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah, and, uh, please correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I remember you saying your sister identifies as lesbian?

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. But then there was something to do with your family and an idea that lesbianism is a cult?

**Kiara:** Yes. So I have two sisters (=Tyler: Okay). So the eldest is the, the Jehovah's Witness one (=Tyler: Okay). And then the, the only queerness I was exposed to was my middle sister’s one. And so–

**Tyler**: So your middle sister is the lesbian?

**Kiara:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay (=Kiara: [Laugh]). I see.

**Kiara:** And so everything she, like whenever she did a mistake, my sister would be like “No it's, its, the lifestyle.” (=Tyler: Oh, I see). Whenever she did something wrong (=Tyler: Okay), they’d be like “this is, it’s the lifestyle,” [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). It's like, well, it could be that she's just making mistakes (=Tyler: Yeah). But when she said that, I was like, “Ah, that's it for me” (=Tyler: Mmmm). That's it, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. Is there anyone in particular that you felt a difference from, in the group?

**Kiara:** [Pause for 9 seconds]. Not really, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Mmm. No, that’s fine.

**Kiara:** No, not really, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So then what do you think about agreement in your group?

**Kiara:** I felt there was… there was a lot of agreement (=Tyler: Yeah). I feel like we have shared experiences (=Tyler: Mmhmm), although they're not, uhm, entirely the same. But they, they have a lot of sameness, [laugh], which is odd, [laugh]. (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah that is odd). Yeah, but I didn’t think, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Because we tend to separate ourselves and think that we're so different (=Tyler: Yes), but then if we actually had a conversation, we would realize that we have a lot of similarities (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah. I don't think there was anyone who I felt different from (=Tyler: Uh-huh… Uh-huh). There was a lot of agreement.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Kiara: Yeah). Was there any disagreement that you felt in that, group?

**Kiara:** No, [laugh], no (=Tyler: Yeah), no there wasn’t.

**Tyler:** Cool. So, uhm, you actually said quite a few interesting things, uh (=Kiara: [Laugh]) in the focus group (=Kiara: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, I think you said, or you voiced frustration that, you know, people, uh, struggle with intersectionality (=Kiara: Mmm). And, uhm, you mentioned the example of, uh, some, Black people, Black men in particular (=Kiara: Mmm), who are anti-racist activists (=Kiara: Mmm), but who can be queerphobic, right? (=Kiara: Yeah.) Uhm, I wonder if you've experienced it the other way around, that there are some queer, activists who can be racially problematic?

**Kiara:** I, [laugh], you know, I wouldn't say they, I feel… I haven't experienced the other way around (=Tyler: Mmm). But then I’d say they, they have, uhm, underlying prejudice that they are not aware of (=Tyler: Mmm). Like they are not completely aware of (=Tyler: Mmm), because I, I had a friend, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It was interesting because I had just watched, uhm, Paris is Burning (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, so they were talking about like, because I had my hair, like braids, on for a while. And so, uhm, the, the person is White and they, they are very queer, uhm, and queer-friendly and they were like, uhm “I'm sure you hear his AIDS by now,” [laugh], and I was like (=Tyler: What?), “Come again?”, [laugh].

**Tyler:** What does that even mean?

**Kiara:** I have no idea, [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). I was so confused, and it’s so weird because it was like at the dining hall and there is a full table (=Tyler: Mmm). And they just said that and, everyone just went quiet, it was like, “I don’t know how to respond to that (=Tyler: Yeah) Okay. Thank you.” I don't know. So, it was very confusing. But I haven't had, the other way (=Tyler: Mmm), around, ja.

**Tyler**: Mmhmm. Okay.

**Kiara:** But I feel like, I haven't experienced it (=Tyler: Yeah), but I've witnessed it (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah. It was, [sigh], an example would be the, the, was it the Pride March, the Cape Town one? (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), When, uhm… it was, when lesbians in Khayelitsha, and like, most Cape Town places (=Tyle: Mmhmm), [inaudible] places were being killed (=Mmhmm). And they were marching, and Cape Town had a Pride (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And so, they had a fight, (=Tyler: Yes), [laugh], I actually had heard about it, but they, they had a, a fight and it was because, also, I feel, people, we don't listen to each other (=Tyler: Mmm) because the, the, the lesbians from Khayelitsha were saying that they feel not welcomed in the White spaces of Cape Town. And the people of Cape Town were like, “No, we’re very inclusive, we’re very inclusive” (=Tyler: Mmm). It's like, “you're not hearing us (=Tyler: Mmm), you’re, you‘re just defending yourself”(=Tyler: Yes). And it’s like, we can just have a conversation and try and meet each other halfway. Because they really, weren’t listening (=Tyler Yeah). So that was…

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay. So is that kind of thing that you have witnessed or heard about (=Kiara: Yeah), but not really experienced in a, in a real interaction?

**Kiara:** I feel like I haven't ex-, like, went out to expose myself (=Tyler: Okay) so that I experienced it.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Kiara: Yeah). Yeah. Okay. Right. And another thing that you brought up, and you have mentioned already, is that your Jehovah's Witness background (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and you also said something quite powerful about, uh, coming out to yourself, first (=Kiara: Yeah), right? Uhm, and that, you know, before you did so, you used to have some internalized homophobia, uhm, that you would also externalize (=Kiara: Yeah) onto others. Yeah. So, uh, how do you feel about accepting your queerness now?

**Kiara:** [Laugh sigh],I feel like I just want to scream from the rooftop at this point. I was telling my friend, I was just gonna have “homo” tattooed here (=Tyler: [Laugh]), so that people can know but, [laugh], I feel like I've come a long way (=Tyler: Yeah), a very long way. And in my, there are some students in my res that are like new first years, and I can see myself, like I was there at some point (=Tyler: Mmm). But there's, there's really nothing I could say to them. They have to be on their own journey (=Tyler: Mmm). But I feel like for me now, it's just… accepting, ‘cause I feel also with my, my, my queerness and accepting myself (=Tyler: Mmm), there were stages, where I feel like at some point, I wanted validation from other people, in the sense that, okay, if I'm with a girl, then I’m queer (=Tyler: Mmm), I’m very queer (=Tyler: Mmm). But if I, girl, if girls don’t like me, then my queerness is questionable (=Tyler: Mmm). But it's like, it's not dependent on everyone else, it’s on me, so (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), [laugh sigh]. And I feel, yeah, that's, that’s been, I've just came out of that phase now of (=Tyler: Mmm) not wanting to be validated by my experiences with other people (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, and I suppose another example is, uh, the aesthetic of non-binary (=Kiara: Yeah), right? (=Kiara: [Laugh]). Yeah.

**Kiara:** [Laugh sigh], I, I feel also I struggle, uhm, I'm sure I said this before, but I struggle with telling my, my romantic partners of my non-binary-ness because (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah, it's… (=Tyler: Mmhmm) it, because of, I wanted to be validated by other people (=Tyler: Yeah). And, uh, most of the time, people when they see me even when I'm really going to, uhm… to get my nails done or something, they'll be like, “ma’am, ma’am” (=Tyler: Yeah), and it's like, how do I start? (=Tyler: Yeah). Where do I begin? [Laugh] (=Tyler: Mmm). Do I say “No, call me, I’m non-binary”? And they’d be like, “wha-”, and then I’d have to go down the tangent of explaining (=Tyler: And explain, yeah) myself and it’s, yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I still sometimes don't feel… uhm, the identity belongs to me, (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah) [laugh sigh]. Like what am I supposed to do, get a binder? Yeah, I don’t know (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), [laugh], yeah.

**Tyler:** It must be, uh, quite frustrating (=Kiara: It is), and exasperating (=Kiara: Yeah). I think I heard a lot of sighing, [laugh sigh] (=Kiara: [Laugh]) in your group like, when you were about to say something (=Kiara: [Laugh]), like “Oh, this thing”. Yeah, so it must be quite uh, yeah, common, this kind of frustration.

**Kiara:** I feel so, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), I feel… Like we’ve, we’ve, there are so many standards that we try and, like with anything, with every identity, there’s, there’s the blueprint (=Tyler: Mmm) that's been created by, the community and we’re trying to, get to that (=Tyler: Yeah) and it’s like, I’m already outside (=Tyler: Yeah) the traditional norm, why would I want to, try and change myself to aspire to something else? (=Tyler: Mmm). Yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. So then, with the focus group, how do you feel about your queerness now, after participating in that group?

**Kiara:** I feel… that, uhm…[laugh], let me word this properly, I feel like everything that I, that I, that I thought I knew was sort of validated in the sense that, uhm, I always knew that there’s, there’s this imaginary segregation that we put amongst each other (=Tyler: Mmm) and that, I thought it, I thought   
I was reaching when I say that to myself, but then after the focus group, I realized that it's, it’s not reaching, you probably have, we always have something in common.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Kiara: it’s just, [laugh sigh]), it’s just you, other people have felt it as well.

**Kiara:** Sorry?

**Tyler:** Other people have (=Kiara: Oh! [Laugh]) felt it as well, right?

**Kiara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). ‘Cause then I know with, uhm, with Tenda and (=Tyler: Mmm) their partner, I've always seen them on campus (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) and I’ve always, I watch them ever, all the time. But it's always been like, “Okay, it's them”, I call the, I call it the Queer Association of [university]. There's a certain group of people (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), and I can't get into that group, so, (=Tyler: Huh), [laugh], yeah. Because there's always, when I went to, like queer events, like the [LGBTQIA+ university society] (=Tyler: Yes), there's always that, that sameness, that community, that clique, and I'm like, “Oh, I can't get into that” (=Tyler: Yeah). But, ja, I felt that (=Tyler: Yeah), is in my head sometimes, I just created. And it, it feels like [their phone rings], sorry (=Tyler: It’s okay), it’s an alarm. Yeah, I feel like… I feel, it's… if I tried, to just sort of break the barrier (=Tyler: Mmm), ja, and have conversations, we would get somewhere and stuff. I’m locking myself in my head (=Tyler: Mmm. Mmhmm), so yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Yeah. Uhm, I think it was said that, that, uh, the barrier with [LGBTQIA+ university society], for example, is, uhm, it's also like LGB?

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Primarily?

**Kiara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, okay). And emphasis on the G, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Tyler:** Yeah. That tends to be a thing.

**Kiara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I feel like, uhm, I, there aren't… many, uh, I don't know, I was watching this documentary that says, uhm, the erasure of lesbian bars (=Tyler: Mmm). There aren't many lesbian bars, uhm, (=Tyler: in Cape Town?) in Cape Town (=Tyler: Yeah). And, uhm, I forgot what the, the, the actual name of the place is called. But it has [inaudible] and that, but it’s the queer, the, the, the queer town of Cape Town, and it has a bar, most bars, but they all, they never just exclusionary lesbian bars. And I feel like also it comes from that, the, the term “lesbian” being policed so much (=Tyler: Mmm), when is, when you just say “gay”, people won't question but then if you say “lesbian”, they’ll be like “Oh, so if you're lesbian, how do you identify, are you, are you a woman? (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm) Do you, do you usually date trans women?”, like, there are a lot of, there's a lot of policing that goes into it, and also the sexualization of the term “lesbian” (=Tyler: Mmm) and so, [laugh sigh], I’m, I’m digressing, [laugh], but it’s-

**Tyler:** No, not at all, [laugh sigh].

**Kiara:** [Laugh], but, uhm, the, there's a lot of erasure of lesbians, and (=Tyler: Mmm) … you just end up now “Okay, I’m queer”, ‘cause (=Tyler: Mmm) yeah there are a lot of questioning that comes with lesbians (=Tyler: Yes). And there aren't many lesbian spaces, mostly they’ve, they have, they're segregated with men, and particularly, depending on where you are, it's black or white (=Tyler: Mmm). There's, ja, there’s nothing in between.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, I remember you, uh, seeming a little disappointed when the group ended (=Kiara: [Laugh]). Uhm, was there, was there more than you wanted to express?

**Kiara:** I feel, [laugh], I feel like it's, it’s being in the presence of queer people (=Tyler: Oh, okay), and knowing that if you say something, they'll understand you (=Tyler: Mmm). ‘Cause I, I mostly have, [sigh], I currently mostly have uh, cis-het friends (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And, I only have one close gay friend (=Tyler: Oh, okay). And it's, and it’s just like, just not having to explain myself (=Tyler: Mmm) and being in a space that, people understand. That's it’s not your, just with music, and (=Tyler: Yeah), alcohol, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah) which is what you get in clubs, just being in a quiet space (=Tyler: Okay). I feel like that's why I didn't want it to end, (=Tyler: Right, so it was the being in the space) because of the environment, it felt, accepting (=Tyler: Oh, okay), yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Like there isn’t a queer coffee shop that I can go to, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Right? Yeah. Yeah, it would be helpful (=Kiara: [Laugh]). Uhm, so is there anything that you wanted to express in the group but you didn't?

**Kiara:** Uhm…I guess it was, because I, initially I thought maybe we were going talk about like significant events that happened in our lives (=Tyler: Uh-huh) that contributed to our queerness (=Tyler; Uh-huh). Uhm, I wanted, the, [sigh], I wrote them down a while back (=Tyler: That’s okay) but like, yeah, there’ve been, I feel with me accepting my sexuality comes with accepting sex (=Tyler: Yeah). Because of, uh, for me, there was a lot of demonization of sex (=Tyler: Okay). And, uhm, that… so, [laugh sigh], okay where do I start (=Tyler: Mmm)? So, uhm, with growing up, with… okay, so at 14 I was raped, right? (=Tyler: Oh) And then that, just, I think, when that happened, it took away… well, a lot of pieces of me but also I tried to, I was actually watching Demi’s documentary and I was like, I relate, but then after that, you try and, uhm, try and take back the power, by– So I, after that happened, it was in grade, nine (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And when I moved to a different place in grade 10, I was like “Okay no, I’m gonna reclaim everything and make my own memories”. And so, I started teaching myself to like guys (=Tyler: Okay), and so that I can have sex with them (=Tyler: Mmm) and try and erase everything else that happened (=Tyler: Okay). And that also influenced, uhm, a lot when it comes to my coming out (=Tyler: Mmhmm).Uhm, ‘cause I was taught that this is, this is men, you’re supposed to like this (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and so it was very traumatizing in the sense that I would, force myself to have sex with these guys (=Tyler: Mmm), which would not help me whatsoever (=Tyler: Mmm), it would just add more trauma (=Tyler: Mmm). And after I was raped again, in first year (=Tyler: Ah), I went back into that dark place (=Tyler: Mmm). And, I tried again, to reclaim the power. I did, I did the same thing again (=Tyler: Mmm), trying to have sex with guys to try and erase everything (=Tyler: Okay). Which was the breaking point for me, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), it's just, I don't want to do this anymore (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I can't, regardless of, uhm, whatever happens, regardless if my sisters leave me, I just, I can't keep on (=Tyler: Yeah) doing this (=Tyler: Yeah), it’s not good for me. Uhm, I feel that was the tipping point of me trying to learn and accept myself because after, uhm, it always felt like my body and my sexuality was in the hands of men (=Tyler: Yeah). And I couldn't even bathe properly because I had to touch myself and its, [sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), with religion and masturbation. It's, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), it’s a lot that was placed on me (=Tyler: Wow). And it took a lot for me to sort of accept, uhm, that I have to try and build myself.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Wow. That sounds like a really hectic journey, you went through (=Kiara: [Laugh]), yeah.

**Kiara:** SoI went too deep? [Laugh]

**Tyler:** No! No, there’s noth- (=Kiara: [Laugh]), whatever, uh, you want to share is, is good. Uhm, yeah. Okay, yeah. And then there's also, I suppose at the same time that you were going through some of that, explaining away your attraction to women?

**Kiara:** Sorry?

**Tyler:** Explaining away your attraction (=Kiara: Yeah) to women, right?

**Kiara:** Yeah, I had to (=Tyler: Yeah). I would always, [sigh]… if, if people, if there was a guy, people would be like, “Oh, no, he's a good guy (=Tyler: Mmhmm). He does this and that.” I’m like, “Okay, cool. I'm supposed to let him, I’ll learn to like him” (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and then… yeah that was… very traumatizing (=Tyler: Yeah), to say the least.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. And have you, uh, spoken to any counselors or therapists about these (=Kiara: Yeah) experiences?

**Kiara:** Yeah, I did a lot of therapy, [laugh], (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), in first year (=Tyler: *Shoh*… Mmhmm). I feel like, that's the only reason why I was able to, uhm, sort of rebuild myself (=Tyler: Yeah), because of therapy (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). [Laugh sigh], ‘cause also, I thought when I, because I was living my life in uhm, “Okay this is, everything's fine” (=Tyler: Mmmm), you know, I have a routine, I, I, it’s conditioned, it’s habitual. But then when I came to [university], just everything was (=Tyler: Mmm) unraveling (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I had to address it so that I'm able to complete my studies, ‘cause that's also something that I'm here for (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm), so, [laugh sigh] yeah. Yeah, to be able to, because I, my studies are also, everything is linked. And so if one part is a mess, the other one is affected, too.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Kiara: Yeah). Yeah. Okay. *Shoh.* And so, uhm, I assume that you didn't share that kind of story because you felt it was too deep to share?

**Kiara:** No, I didn’t see an, an, like, (=Tyler: An opportunity?), yes, to get [laugh], no (=Tyler: Yeah, mmhmm, I see). But I feel also with, with rape, it's a, it's, yeah, its, it's interesting, ‘cause mostly the victim is the one who is shamed more than the rapist, and so, and also it's thinking of oh the reaction of people, and so, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), I feel, but more, me, uhm, being able to sort of rebuild from that is me being able to talk about it.

**Tyler:** Yes.

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, true. Yeah.

**Kiara:** [Laugh sigh], and it was weird because with that, I have a, a history of abuse. I was in this thing with this girl, the one that my therapist sort of, uhm, s-, uhm, victim-shamed me for (=Tyler: Okay). She had an altercation, and she, [sigh] she threw a water bottle at me, and (=Tyler: Wow), [laugh sigh; sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). It was, I've always, it was a thing of, I've always felt safe in the presence of girls (=Tyler: Uh-huh), but I don't feel safe anymore (=Tyler: Mmm), and, it’s (=Tyler: Mmhmm), yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** And then your therapist said it was your fault, that happened?

**Kiara:** Yah. He said that maybe I lead her on or something and it's like, uhm, I don't think that's where this is supposed to be going (=Tyler: No), [laugh].

**Tyler:** No, I don’t think that’s very helpful at all (=Kiara: Yah), especially for someone who's experienced other trauma, you know?

**Kiara:** And it's weird because he was the one who, uhm, I spoke to from the beginning (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, he knows my journey, and he was saying this now I was like, I don't understand (=Tyler: Yeah). And I, I felt maybe, [sigh], I've always wanted a female therapist (=Tyler: Mmm). If, if they’re a queer female therapist that’s a bonus but if they’re female then (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, because I also don't want to again explain myself (=Tyler: Yeah), and have this convers-, yeah

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay. *Shoh.* Okay (=Kiara: [Laugh]). So you're feeling in much better space these days (=Kiara: Definitely), generally, about your own queerness?

**Kiara:** Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). Very much so (=Tyler: Okay). I'm very comfortable with it now.

**Tyler:** Yeah, and you have a healthier approach to your own sexuality?

‘

**Kiara:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, not just orientation but being a sexual (=Kiara: Yeah) being?

**Kiara:** Yeah, being a sexual being, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, well, that's good. Yeah, that's great.

**Kiara**: Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). It's been a long way (=Tyler: Mmm, I’m sure), [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Wow. *Shoh.* Okay. Uhm, then I have a question, uh, that, please answer honestly, [laugh sigh] (=Kiara: Okay). Uhm, what do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Kiara:** Oh my word (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), do I even have words? Uh, I feel, [laugh sigh] … uh, you’re very good at it (=Tyler: Okay) to say the least. You’re very, calm and accepting and welcoming. Like, there’s, I feel like there's nothing I can say that will be like, you’ll be like [big gasp], [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah, and (=Tyler: Cool), I feel comfortable talking to you (=Tyler: Good). Yeah, it was a very positive experience.

**Tyler**: Okay, I'm glad, yeah (=Kiara: [Laugh sigh]. Uh, do you have any feedback for how you think the focus group can be improved?

**Kiara:** [Pause for 3 seconds.] This is a very biased feedback.

**Tyler:** No, it’s fine.

**Kiara:** Can the time be longer? No, I’m kidding, [laugh].

**Tyler:** The time? No, yeah (=Kiara: [Laugh]), you’re not the only one who said that actually (=Kiara: [Laugh]). Other people have told me it could have been longer.

**Kiara:** [Laugh], yeah, just have, breakfast, tea, and eat, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah, a whole day). [Laugh], yeah (=Tyler: Yeah. So-). Uh, I was wondering, would we be able to get access to their research, or?

**Tyler:** Yeah! (=Kiara: Okay). Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I was gonna tell you that at the end of this (=Kiara: Oh, okay). Uhm, yeah I will be in contact with you, uhm, firstly, when I finish transcribing the focus group and this interview, and I can show you the transcripts just to make sure that everything is fine, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but then, yeah, the research report will probably be ready, uh, the end of the year. So it's a very long project, [laugh]. Uhm, yeah, but I will definitely be in touch with everyone who participated in case you'd like to read it.

**Kiara:** Oh, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay.

**Kiara:** Oh also, there was, I forgot, I forgot his name. But he also did a research on queer, queerness and South African schools. But he, he sent me an email with his research, uhm, but he was in, in UJ, I think, or UP (=Tyler: Okay). But then just like, he's, the struggle of getting participants from, he was just basically trying to understand the experiences of queer people in, in schools (=Tyler: Mmm), but most of the people, most of the principals of the schools declined to take part in, in his study (=Tyler: Yeah). And only one school in Sandton, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah) agreed, yes.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Yeah… Okay. Uhm, I think, that… I, yeah, I think I don't have any more questions. So, uhm, do you have anything else that you would like to share about, uh (=Kiara: [Laugh]), the focus group, how you felt about it or, about your experiences of sameness and difference?

**Kiara:** Uhm, not that I can think of.

**Tyler:** You sure? [Laugh sigh].

**Kiara:** [Laugh], yes.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Then, we're finished.

**Kiara:** Okay, thank you.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Cool.

**Lily**

**Tyler:** -a full half-hour, so it’s fine, [laugh sigh]

**Lily:** Okay, that’s fine.

**Tyler:** Your pseudonym is Lily, right?

**Lily:** Yes. [Complete form]. Okay, done with this one.

**Tyler:** No questions about anything in there?

**Lily:** No, I’m fine. Well, I didn’t really read it, I kind of skimmed it (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). And, I don’t have the time, I have to sign it anyway, so (=Tyler: Yeah), it’s, it’s whatever. [Fanning face with hands]

**Tyler:** Uh-huh. I don’t think it’s much different from the last one.

**Lily:** Lily, I did read that one, so, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool, great, [Lily fans face with hands] so then I can just turn this on, [laugh sigh]. Shame are you hot? (=Lily: I am) Did you run?

**Lily:** Yeah. ‘Cause my uber wouldn’t come to the gate, so I just ran. It stopped me here [direction behind Tyler], and I had to come around.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, that’s so annoying, [laugh]. Yeah, okay, so how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Lily:** [Sigh], I've been… good, I guess. Mostly busy, school is, yoh, a lot right now but (=Tyler: Mmmm).. good, decent for the most part (=Tyler: Okay), so (=Tyler: That’s good), [laugh sigh], yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice, [laugh sigh], yeah, things are quite busy right now, with, with university, right? (=Lily: Yeah). Yeah, yeah. Okay, [laugh sigh] (=Lily: [Sigh]). Yeah, so how did you experience the focus group?

**Lily:** Honestly (=Tyler: Mmm), I really, I enjoyed it. I think it was the first time, I think in my life, that I've been in a place where it was just a really free space where you could just say whatever and, even if people didn't necessarily understand, no one was judging, it was just like “Oh, alright, cool,” it was just, speaking and being listened to (=Tyler: Mmm), and being allowed to feel and think how you think without it stepping on anyone's toes. It was just, (=Tyler: Mmm) it was really freeing.

**Tyler:** Okay (=Lily: Yeah). Great (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). Yeah, I remember you saying that you felt a little bit like the focus group was daunting, in (=Lily: Ja) the beginning. But you got more comfortable, uh, as people started talking and stuff. Uh, so what felt daunting about it in the beginning?

**Lily:** I don't know. I just… when, ‘cause I arrived like one of the third last or something like that, and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) so people were already sitting in all, groupy, and so it was just like, I don't know and it just, I felt like, you know, when it's your first day of school, and then you’re the new kid, that's kind of how it felt (=Tyler: Oh, okay), I was like “I don't know what to say”, like (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah, I don’t know.

**Tyler:** Okay, I see. Cool (=Lily: Yeah). Yeah. Cool. Okay. Uhm, what do you feel about agreement in the group?

**Lily:** What do you mean by that?

**Tyler:** Uhm, what do you think your group tended to agree about?

**Lily:** Oh, okay. Uhm…

**Tyler:** That you can remember.

**Lily:** [Laugh], I would think, yeah, I think that we agreed a lot on how people should be given the room to transform and re-transform themselves many times (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So like, the concept of coming out shouldn't be something that's like, restricted at all, because you, you came out as gay, you have to be gay if you’re – people should be allowed to evolve (=Tyler: Mmm), and I’ve always felt that so that really (=Tyler: Yeah) resonated with me.

**Tyler:** Okay, nice (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). What about disagreement? Was there anything you felt there was disagreement about?

**Lily:** Uhm, no, actually, I don't, I don’t, I can’t recall anything, and I didn't feel (=Tyler: Mmm) anything personally (=Tyler: Mmm). It was just a lot of “Oh, I didn't know that. Oh, I never thought of it like that,” moments.

**Tyler:** Right. Yeah. Okay. Does any moment like that stuck out to you?

**Lily:** Uhm… I can’t remember the specific thing that they said (=Tyler: Mmm), but James was speaking about how, yes, they, uhm, have, they describe their gender as, tasting like something (=Tyler: Mmm) and smelling like something. And I was like, on first hearing it, I was like this “That is so weird” (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). And then when they explained it more, I was like, “Huh! Okay,” and I actually tried to, like (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), like, a few days after (=Tyler: Mmmm) tried to think of like something, but I, I couldn't come up with anything. I don't think I'm fully, I don't know, I don’t think, maybe I don't understand it properly yet (=Tyler: Okay). I can't see like the outside world and be like, “Oh, this describes me”, like (=Tyler: Uh-huh) I don’t know (=Tyler: Yeah), maybe I'm just not in touch with myself enough.

**Tyler:** Maybe, or maybe it's also… like, like an individual thing. Maybe it fits you to describe yourself like that. Maybe it doesn't (=Lily: Yeah). Yeah. Okay. Uhm, is there… is there anyone in particular that you felt sameness with?

**Lily:** I think I felt a lot of sameness with Kiara.

**Tyler:** Oh, yeah?

**Lily:** Yeah, I think largely because they spoke about having first come out as gay and (=Tyler: Mmm) they, their basically family background (=Tyler: Mmhmm) is very similar to mine, I also grew up very in a religious, Christian family, and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) we didn't talk about things like that, they didn't have the space to think and feel those things. And also with them saying how, when they first started liking girls they didn’t understand it, they tried to explain it away (=Tyler: Mmm), and I found myself in those same positions too (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And so I think I resonated a lot with them because of that.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Okay, yeah. So, explaining it away to yourself.

**Lily:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh.

**Lily:** Because that's like, we, we don't do that (=Tyler: Yeah). That's, that's not okay. That's movie things. This is real life (=Tyler: Mmm). This is South Africa. We don't do that (=Tyler: Mmm), so, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay. And is there anyone that you felt a difference from in a significant way?

**Lily:** Uhm… I would say, I think their name is Casey, Casey? (=Tyler: Mmhmm, Casey). Yeah, I felt very different from them just in that they’re very, expressive and (=Tyler: Uh-huh) knowledgeable about so many things. And I'm just like, I don't know, like information overload, I guess (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And so I couldn't really find much to click on (=Tyler: Okay), with them. I think I felt the biggest disconnect with (=Tyler: Mmm), them, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). Interesting. Yeah. That is interesting…Mmhmm. Mmm! Uhm… so I think you, you brought up, uhm, you know, certain frustrations, at having to explain yourself to other people, right (=Lily: Yeah), especially like people who are not queer, so straight people, cis people, uhm, explaining your sexuality to people and how that uhm, is like a, a burdensome thing that's put on you(=Lily: Yeah), a lot, right? Uhm, but obviously, in the focus group, we are explaining ourselves. So how did it feel to explain yourself in that way in the focus group?

**Lily:** I think in that setting, it was very… it felt free. I can't think of a better word (=Tyler: Mmm). Honestly it was just, I don't know, it felt safe (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It felt like, ‘cause also, as I was speaking, I was also like, thinking, so I, I guess… learned about myself as I was explaining myself (=Tyler: Mmm), which I don't think I've ever had that experience before (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Because it's not that thing of like, “Oh, I have to ex-, I have to be the spokesperson for queerness” (=Tyler: Yeah). Because we're all queer and (=Tyler: Mmm) so I can just speak as *me* and what *I* think and what *I* feel and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) I think that was just so great (=Tyler: Yeah), like I, I don't know, if I could do it again, I would (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Honestly.

**Tyler:** That's great. That's really cool to hear (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). Yeah. So it’s not like explaining yourself where someone else is trying to put you in a… a box (=Lily: Yeah). It’s just, being free to, to say how it is for you (=Lily: Exactly). Yeah. Okay. Cool. Is there anything that you, uh, wanted to say, but didn't get to say?

**Lily:** Uhm… yeah, there was one thing (=Tyler: Okay), actually, I, not that I didn't get to say it (=Tyler: Mmm), I think I opted not to say it (=Tyler: Okay), just because I didn't wanna, you know, step on anyone's toes or anything (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, but there’s just this thing where, okay, so I identity as pan (=Tyler Mmhmm). And so I always, okay not always, but often, have, like, bi people saying to me, like, “Oh, but that's like practically the same, what’s the difference (=Tyler: Mmm) oh, you’re just trying to be different” (=Tyler: Mmm). It, I don't know, it, it always felt really suffocating to have to, like justify that. Like, it's not the same (=Tyler: Mmm), but also, why does it, [sigh], not why does it matter but (=Tyler: Mmm), why are you busy trying to scrutinize (=Tyler: Mmm) my sexuality? And (=Tyler: Mmm) then also it's like, “Oh, so you’re transphobic?” No! I, I like, [sigh] (=Tyler: Mmm), it’s so much, because I am dating a trans guy. And I know that’s like what racist people say, “Oh but I have Black friends” (=Tyler: Yeah), but that’s not even like, it's just… it's not a transphobic thing. And I don't think that a person's sexuality should, like, be used as, I don’t know, something to discriminate against other people (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), if that makes sense.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. That's an example of I think, to justify yourself to another queer person (=Lily: Yeah) Yeah. (=Lily: Exactly). That must be very frustrating. So, and, and those people, uh, have told you that pansexuality is a more transphobic, identity?

**Lily:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Why? How does that make sense to them?

**Lily:** Make it make sense. I don't get it either, I feel like if we’re going to call sexualities transphobic, let's start with bi people, if, if you as a bi person are going to tell – not you [gesture to me] (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah (=Tyler: Uhm). But like… it just, I like all people. I don't care (=Tyler: Right). I feel like that's pretty open (=Tyler: Mmmm), I don't know about you so (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it's just, ja, man (=Tyler Yeah). I think *people* just, (=Tyler: Okay), ja.

**Tyler:** Ja, I see. So, you, you said that you, uh, were worried you might step on someone's toes by saying that?

**Lily:** Ja, because, [sigh], I don't know, I’ve, I think I've just conditioned myself to be, I guess hyper-conscious of things like that because (=Tyler: Mmm) people are sensitive in different ways. And so, maybe me saying that could be triggering in some way to someone and I don't want to do that (=Tyler: Mmm). So I’d rather just, you know?

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm (=Lily: It’s, ja). And was that worry that you might trigger someone a, a kind of blanket worry, or was it about a specific person in the group?

**Lily:** Uhm… I think, mmm, I won’t say it’s, maybe like a specific two (=Tyler: Okay). Like, mostly, I'll say it, weirdly again, James and Casey just because, James was more reserved (=Tyler: Mmm) and so I didn't wanna like, come in an attacky way (=Tyler: Yeah). And then Casey’s very, outspoken (=Tyler: Yeah). I'm not trying to be having a debate about, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), so I just, you know, it’s fine (=Tyler: Mmhmm). ‘Cause I'm pretty in the middle of the two pers-, like I can be outspoken, but I don't necessarily want to (=Tyler: Yeah), especially in a group setting with people that I don't know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), because I can come off very mean, and I don't want that, so (=Tyler: Right. Yeah.) Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. I see. Interesting. Yeah. Because, uh, to me James and Casey, they, they were quite, uh, vocal (=Lily: Yeah), but also, uhm, seemed to have sort of unconventional queer identities as well, (=Lily: Yeah), yeah. Mmm. Okay, cool (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, then, is there anything about what you said that you'd like to change? Or clarify or add to? (=Lily: Uhm…) That you can think of?

**Lily:** I mean, I don't think so. The only thing that didn't say that I wanted to say was what I just said now (=Tyler: Mmm). So, otherwise I think… I think I’m, cool, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. And, uhm, it might be a weird question (=Lily: [Laugh]), but how do you feel about your queerness, now, after participating in the focus group?

**Lily:** I think I feel, more secure in it. And that, I don't *need* to, like if I were to get into a situation what I just described, I, I don't think I would feel the need to explain myself, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you don't have to get it (=Tyler: Yeah). This is me and you can take it or you can leave it and that's your business (=Tyler: Mmm). And, so, yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I felt good about that.

**Tyler:** And being in the group helped you come to that (=Lily: Yeah) realization?

**Lily:** I think seeing so many different types of queerness was like, and everyone was just so, comfortable in their skin. And that was just, really cool, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it's really comforting to see that in other queer people. Yeah, okay, nice (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). So, uhm, and this one you can answer really honestly, how do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer?

**Lily:** I think you’re great (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Honestly (=Tyler: Okay). Like, I think especially, I think you facilitated things in a really, you made the space open and free, we can, when things seem to like, derail, you brought us back (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I think you were great (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh]). That was, yeah, actually that day when I got home, I wanted to, like, you were so great (=Tyler: Really?) but then I didn't want to, like, overstep and like, texting you about things that aren't (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, so I thought, let me just (=Tyler: Okay), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. It's really weird navigating like researcher boundaries, it’s (=Lily: Exactly, you know), yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, but that's cool. I'm really glad that you, yeah, felt that was a good space. Yeah. Do you have any, uh, feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Lily:** Uhm…Maybe like a little more time? Not that I had anything more to say (=Tyler: Mmm), per se. But just, rather having timing if they feel “oo, we gotta” (=Tyler: Mmm), not that, yeah, I think, yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh, you mean, like more time, like a longer session?

**Lily:** Yeah, like a longer session (=Tyler: Yeah), just in that, even if it ends at the same time, but just to, I don’t know, not feel the rush to close up.

**Tyler:** Oh, did you feel (=Lily: That was–) that it was a slight rush to close up?

**Lily:** Not really, I felt, *I* didn't (=Tyler: Okay) I felt like the conversations were talked out (=Tyler: Yeah). But I got the sense also that some people were still (=Tyler: Yeah) keen to speak (=Tyler: Yeah), and so yeah, that's about it.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Mmhmm. I suppose that, I, I don't know if it's common, but it's just something to think about with like a, a really open topic (=Lily: Yeah). Because it’s open, then there's so much to, say. Yeah. Okay. That's cool (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, do you have anything else that you wanna say about the experience or about your experiences of sameness and difference?

**Lily:** Uhm… No not really, I don’t think, but I do think that the, from the focus group, that I did find more sameness to people that were different from me (=Tyler: Okay) than expected (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). And that was cool, so (=Tyler: Mmhmm. Yeah?), yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh, can you tell me (=Lily: And I want–) a little bit more about that?

**Lily:** Okay. So, I think I felt...Okay, I'm gonna just be, on a stereotypical level, like a physiological level (=Tyler: Okay). The person I expected to feel the most sameness with was Kiara (=Tyler: Mmm), just because they're also Black and femme-bodied (=Tyler: Mmm). But then, I found myself relating a lot to James as well (=Tyler: Hmm), and I was like, “Huh (=Tyler: Hmm), that's interesting”. And I forgot the, the lady's name, what was her name again? (=Tyler: Uh, Amara). Yes! (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). Yes, with her as well, uhm, and I really, like, I don't know, it was, [sigh]. It was heart-warming as well to just feel like, “Okay, I guess–” because we always say “oh we’re different but (=Tyler: Mmmm)s we’re all the same inside and” (=Tyler: Mmm) but I genuinely felt, especially, I have to say, James, very (=Tyler: Really?) Yeah! (=Tyler: Okay). Just, I just, I don't know, I felt like, I'm, in another life, we could have been from, birds of a feather (=Tyler: Oh, okay), you know (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Really cool. Is there something like in particular that James was saying that that made you resonate with her, them?

**Lily:** I think it was just their ability to just constantly evolve, basically how they explained that (=Tyler: Mmm) and, not being bound by anything (=Tyler: Mmm). And I think of… their way, I want to get to (=Tyler: Mmm), so, yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Awesome. Yeah. Yeah, I'm really glad that it was a meaningful encounter for you (=Lily: Yes). Yeah.

**Lily:** Thank you for that, actually (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], you're most welcome), [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, it's kind of thing that I would hope for, in my research. Yeah. Okay. I am actually out of questions (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]). So, is there any last thoughts that you have?

**Lily:** Uhm… no.

**Tyler:** Cool. Okay. Thanks very much, Lily. Uhm, so do you have the counseling services form that I gave you last time?

**Lily:** Yes, I do still have it.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Because if you didn't, or if you need, if you lose it, you can always email me and I can send it back to you, uh, digitally. Uhm, and then I will be in contact when I have transcribed the focus group recording and this recording so you can just see if there’s any problem with, you know, anything that, uhm, I transcribe, [laugh sigh], which there shouldn't be (=Lily: [Laugh sigh]), and then towards the end of year, uh, about the final report, in case you would like to read it.

**Lily:** Okay.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Lily:** Sure.

**Tyler:** Cool. Any questions about anything?

**Lily:** Uhm…, no.

**Tyler:** Cool, okay.

Tenda

[Tenda stands at table completing informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Great. Thank you. No questions?

**Tenda**: No

**Tyler:** Cool, [laugh sigh], then, then, you can take a seat, uhm, cool, and then I can just switch this [voice-recorder] on.

**Tyler:** Yes. Okay, cool.

**Tenda:** Can I put this here? [Keys and phone in hand, gesturing to table]

**Tyler:** Yeah sure, go ahead. There’s no problem. Cool, [laugh]. So how have you been since last you were here?

**Tenda:** I've been, I’ve been good (=Tyler: Uh-huh). I’ve been good. It, it's been two weeks, right?

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Tenda:** Yeah, yeah I’ve been good. A little, just, just school has been happening, nothing much other than that (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Yeah, but I’ve been good.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Uhm, sorry, can I ask you a favor? I have, uh, medical masks that are actually a lot easier to hear in the recording than (=Tenda: Is it?) the cloth mask (=Tenda: Cool). So, uhm, yeah (=Tenda: Give me a moment, [laugh sigh]). It’s, it’s quite strange to, uhm, the difference isn’t bad here, like I can hear you (=Tenda: Mmm) in person, but when I–

**Tenda:** Also, they, it’s easier to breathe in them.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Cool, thanks… Yeah, so you've been good, but just busy?

**Tenda:** Just busy (=Tyler: Yeah), just busy.

**Tyler:**  It is that time, things get a bit hectic… Cool.

**Tenda:** You’ve been good though? (=Tyler: Yeah! Thanks) I feel wrong not to ask people (=Tyler: Hey?), I don’t like not asking people even though it's an interview, but, yeah, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, no, that's good. Actually. Yeah. It's like you asked me, uh, what do I do for fun?

**Tenda:** Yeah, [laugh], (=Tyler: last time)

**Tyler:** Yeah, that’s cool. I appreciate that, [laugh]. Uhm, yeah, good. Also just really busy (=Tenda: Mmmm). Yeah.

**Tenda:** So you’ve been running interviews all day?

**Tyler:** Uh no, uh, yeah. Yeah, actually. Yeah. There, uh, before you and Lily there were, two others who were in your group (=Tenda: Ah, okay). Yeah, yeah. And then there's one more after you and then it's done for today (=Tenda: Wow, that’s). And then another focus group tomorrow. Yeah, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so how was your experience of the focus group?

**Tenda:** Yeah, as I said, I, I do think I learned quite a bit (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, I was able to, because I do surround myself with queer people. But I don't think I’ve been surrounded a lot by non-binary folks (=Tyler: Okay). So, I, I was able to just, you know, listen, and not always just talk and educate, I just (=Tyler: Mmmm), ja, it was good to just listen.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Tenda: Yeah), yeah. Yeah, you did say that you, you like to learn, unlearn, relearn and (=Tenda: Yeah), and that you had learned from the focus group. So what kind of things did you learn from some of the participants, some of the non-binary participants maybe?

**Tenda:** Uhm… specifically, with just, how difficult it is for them, because society doesn't know much about them, right (=Tyler: Mmm). And they, society likes to box people (=Tyler: Mmm), and because they're not in that box, it's very hard for them. With us trans people, uhm, trans men, trans women (=Tyler: Mmm), we are still in a box (=Tyler: Mmm), so it's easier for us to, get into society and be accepted (=Tyler: Mmm). But then with non-binary people it’s just like a, it's just like a “what are you doing? Are you confused?” (=Tyler: Yeah) kind of thing (=Tyler: Yeah), so I got to see their challenges (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah. Just in general (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** I see. Okay, cool. Yeah, because as a, a binary trans person (=Tenda: Mmm), there's still that box of ‘man’ or ‘woman’ (=Tenda: Mmm) that you’re kind of in, right? (=Tenda: Yeah) Okay, I see, from society’s eyes, kind of thing? (=Tenda: Yeah) Okay.

**Tenda:** Still.

**Tyler:** Yeah

.

**Tenda:** Still, society still has to come a way, hey.

**Tyler:** Well, yeah. Yeah.

**Tenda:** [Gesturing to face mask]Why does yours not move? I’m so sorry.

**Tyler:** Oh, you can actually bend this (=Tenda: Oh). It has a wire in it, and you can bend it to your nose.

**Tenda:** Okay, cool (=Tyler: Yeah), we’ll see, [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yeah. Uhm, cool. So, uh, what do you think your group tended to agree about?

**Tenda:** Uhm, our group tended to agree about the, that society being a bit backwards (=Tyler: Mmm). And that queer people are also a part of the problem (=Tyler: Oh, yeah). Yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, that we as queer people, or not *we* specifically (=Tyler: Mmm) in that group but just queer people in general, have also got a lot of unlearning to do and accepting of everyone in the community (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, totally. Mmhmm. What about disagreement in the group? Did you feel any disagreement?

**Tenda:** Uhm… I can't think of anything right now (=Tyler: That’s fine). It would probably be just something small (=Tyler: Mmm) but I really can’t think of anything that I was like, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), [laugh sigh]. I can’t think of anything (=Tyler: Yeah). I probably would have asked a question (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Yeah, I don’t, I don’t think so (=Tyler: Yeah). Because I do, I do think that everyone does have their own views and, and if it isn't imposing on mine then (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, I don’t usually (=Tyler: Mmmm) feel like a need to talk or to say anything, you know? Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, so even though everyone has their own views and stuff (=Tenda: Mmm), is there any participant in particular that you felt sameness with?

**Tenda:** Sameness?

**Tyler:** Mmm!

**Tenda:**  Uhm, I’d… I forgot their name.

**Tyler:** ‘kay, can you describe them?

**Tenda:** They were sitting right next, next to me.

**Tyler:** Oh, James.

**Tenda:** Yeah, James (=Tyler: Mmhmm), yeah.

**Tyler:**  A non-binary participant? (=Tenda: Yeah) Yes, okay.

**Tenda:** Just, just in, in personality.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay.

**Tenda:** Just the calmness and, yeah, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). I just, I just liked them, I ju-, I liked them, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I think you're both kind of quiet people, kind of?

**Tenda:** Yeah (=Tyler:But, but you), you can say that.But when we talk, we talk, but (=Tyler: Yes) we, yeah. I think, I think, we, had the same energies.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay (=Tenda: [laugh]), yeah, interesting. So it’s just your energies as people, not necessarily about your kind of queerness or something, right?

**Tenda:** Yes (=Tyler: Okay). And, something that they said in terms of just dysphoria and (=Tyler: Mmm) how to navigate the dysphoria and how (=Tyler: Mmm) they feel that they, their partner has been made for them. And you know, so I resonated with (=Tyler: Yeah) the things that they said (=Tyler: Yeah), in terms of relationships, in terms of themselves, and yeah (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah that is quite interesting, ‘cause obviously, Lily has been, uh, supportive with you as well.

**Tenda:** Yes (=Tyler: Yeah), since I started testosterone, and before, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, lovely. Okay (=Tenda: So), cool. Is there anyone in the group that you feel to kind of difference from?

**Tenda:** Uhm…In difference, in what context?

**Tyler:** I don't know (=Tenda: [Laugh]), it’s, it's just like the, the, the topic (=Tenda: [Laugh]) of the focus group, “sameness and difference” (=Tenda: [Laugh]). Is there a difference that you felt, in a significant way, from, within the group?

**Tenda:** I wouldn't, [sigh], I just felt uneasy (=Tyler: Okay). I think it's, the word is uneasy (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, it's just, when I like to get into a room, I just like to just observe and just get energies, I use that word a lot, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But, uhm, I just felt uneasy around uhm… Casey (=Tyler: Yes, Casey. Okay), so I just didn't feel as welcomed, uhm (=Tyler: Right). But as soon as they started talking, you know, I was starting to break down, you know, uhm, as humans, I’m at fault, [laugh sigh]. I come in, and I just try and look at people and make a mental note about them (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and, yeah, initially. But, yeah, as time went by, I was able to listen to them, and (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that is, quite a very natural thing for people to do (=Tenda: Mmhmm). Uhm, so what kind of initial impressions did you get about Casey?

**Tenda:** Uhm, just unwelcoming, you know (=Tyler: Oh, yeah)? Just unwelcoming, just, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm). I think just that.

**Tyler:** Interesting (=Tenda: [Laugh]), yeah. But then, she was quite a, an outspoken person, I think.

**Tenda:** Yeah, they were (=Tyler: Yeah), they were.

**Tyler:** Ah, “they”, sorry (=Tenda: Yeah), thank you, [laugh] (=Tenda: Mmm). Yeah. Uhm… Cool, yeah. Uh, is there anything, that, you wanted to say in the group that you didn't?

**Tenda:** You see, I'm a very forgetful person, so (=Tyler: Mmm) sometimes I would say, but I’d see that I'm doing it the same time as someone else (=Tyler: Oh, okay). So I'd be like, “No, you can go ahead” (=Tyler: Oh, yeah, yeah), and I’d forget what I wanted to say. So then I'll just, you know, move on with it (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but I do think at some point, I came around to say everything that I wanted to say (=Tyler: Mmm), back at the end, when I was like, I've learned a lot from this (=Tyler: Mmm), you know? So, uh, but yeah, I, I did want the trans woman that was sitting here (=Tyler: Mmhmm, Amara) to just engage a little more. I just, uhm, didn't know how to include her (=Tyler: Yeah) in it, you know, but I wanted to, for her to feel a bit more comfortable (=Tyler: Yeah) so I could just listen to her as well. But, no, yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), yeah. So, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah.

**Tenda:** So I think that's my regret, not having a question, or having anything to interact with her more on (=Tyler: Okay), yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah. Uh, was it because, uh, she was a quieter participant? Or was it also because she was also a binary trans person?

**Tenda:** Sorry?

**Tyler:** Also because she was a binary trans person in the room?

**Tenda:** Are you asking me why I wanted to (=Tyler: Yeah) get… just uhm…

**Tyler:** Or just because she was a quiet person?

**Tenda:** No, no, no – that. Because she was a quiet person (=Tyler: Yeah), but also because I haven't encountered a lot of trans women (=Tyler: Oh, okay), so I’ve encountered *a lot* of trans men, so (=Tyler: Mmm), I do interact with trans women virtually (=Tyler: Mmm) but I wanted you know, this (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), yeah, just that platform, you know, on a personal level.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Tenda: Yeah), yeah. I see. Okay. Yeah. Uhm, I did have an interview earlier with Ama-, Amara and she said that she was, uh, kind of not in the best mental space (=Tenda: Mmm) in the last two weeks (=Tenda: Mmm), so I think that might have been why she wasn't so (=Tenda: Oh, okay), talkative.

**Tenda:** That would make sense (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). She did seem a bit discordant at times (=Tyler: Mmm. Yeah), just in the space, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Uhm, okay–

**Tenda:** I hope she feels better (=Tyler: Yeah), Hopefully, she feels better.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uhm, there were some things that you said in the focus group that I found really interesting. Uhm, I think you said that, uhm, you struggle with a lot of, uh, cis-hetero men as friends, especially, uh, people from your community and background (=Tenda: Mmm). Uhm, like, for example, that, uhm, you know, [sigh], you haven't been through the same kind of rites of passage (=Tenda: Mmhmm) uhm, for a young man, uhm, as them. Is there any particular interaction that comes to your mind where you felt that like, difference?

**Tenda:** Uhm, uhm, actually, just last year (=Tyler: Oh, yeah), uhm. So I was friends with Lily’s cousin (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, and he also happened to do some art for me as well so, uhm, in many of my encounters with him, he’d disrespect me and say, things like, uhm, “u-weak,” uhm, “you’re weak,” (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm. I’ll say ‘u-cherry”, translated to “you’re such a girl” (=Tyler: Uh), uhm, you know, and, whenever I'd bring it up, he'd be like, “Nah, you know, in mountain area”, mountain, where we go for our thingies, these conversations I had, I shouldn't take things deep, you know? Uhm, so that would sort of come for my identity. Obviously, I'm feeling, I’m, I’m dysphoric (=Tyler: Mmm), you know. You're telling me that I’m such a girl (=Tyler: Mmm). And then you proceed to come for an insecurity (=Tyler: Mmm), that I haven't experienced experiences that I *should* (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, uh, so yeah that (=Tyler: Yeah), that one resonates a lot with me, uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And then just little ones from you know, strangers (=Tyler: Yeah) which I wouldn’t remember, but (=Tyler: Yeah), just because that person was close to me (=Tyler: Yeah). So it, played in my head (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** And sort of using that, uh, journey to the mountain as a thing of like, “Oh, well, you should’ve been there, you would have known if you were there” (=Tenda: Yeah), that kind of thing? And using that to, kind of (=Tenda: Yeah), yeah invalidate you (=Tenda: Definitely). *Shoh.*

**Tenda:** Yeah, definitely.

**Tyler:** Okay. Uhm, and, and you also mentioned some frustrations with, uh, certain, uh, straight men, or cis-hetero men (=Tenda: Mmm). Uhm, Black men in particular (=Tenda: Mmm), who are anti-racist in their activism, but who can also be transphobic and homophobic, right? (=Tenda: Yeah). Uhm, I wonder if you've also experienced it the other way around, where there are queer activists who are obviously anti-transphobic and anti-homophobic, but have racist problematics?

**Tenda:** Weirdly enough, not… (=Tyler: Mmm?) Ah, you mean queer people, right? (=Tyler: Yeah). No (=Tyler: Mmhmm?) I just I, I think in that context, I would like to say that queer people are not, I haven’t encountered any (=Tyler: Okay) racist queer person (=Tyler: Yeah), racist towards me, you know, I haven't, or, yeah, even on, on social media. I was gonna say, maybe, I've seen something on social media (=Tyler: Yeah) which I haven’t (=Tyler: Yeah). So, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. It feels interesting for me to like, think about different, uh, social identities and, and, uhm, yeah, like different levels of discrimination against (=Tenda: Yeah) other people. It's very interesting, yeah.

**Tenda:** Yeah. It is, I think it's probably because queer people know the struggle that we face (=Tyler: Mmm). So, it'd be weird, if you just turn around, and, you know, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), I guess queer people are just smarter, [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh], maybe, [laugh sigh]. Yeah (=Tenda: So yeah). Uhm,I wonder, uh, this might be a strange question, [laugh sigh], but uhm, how you feel about your queerness, uhm, after participating in the focus group?

**Tenda:** Uhm, usually (=Tyler: Uh-huh), uhm, I’m very uneasy to be in a… femme-bodied space (=Tyler: Mmm) I think, to be surrounded by a lot of, yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, so I usually, it, it, it, but that's something that I need to tackle on myself, it's just an insecurity (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I, I, I’d feel less of, or I think I'd be mistaken because I used to be misgendered so much (=Tyler: Mmmm) I’d feel, because I'm in this space then, people will misgender me (=Tyler: Mmm) because, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I forget the question because I just went on, [laugh], [inaudible]

**Tyler:** Uhm, how do you feel about your queerness after having (=Tenda: Oh, after that) participated?

**Tenda:** Uhm, but I, I felt, I felt as though queer people were great, I know, you know, just listening to everyone. It's just it just made me feel as though queer people are, are just the cream of the crop and, they, they’re always just willing to learn (=Tyler: Mmm) and willing to, to dissect problems (Tyler: Yeah), uhm. About myself, I, I just felt proud to be queer, you know, to be surrounded in such a space (=Tyler: Mmm), surrounded by such community (=Tyler: Mmm) and, community like that is willing to learn so, that, that was good (=Tyler: Mmm), that was, yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice, yeah, that's really cool to hear, [laugh sigh], yeah. Uhm, so then another – Oh, I did ask you… about if you'd like to say anything that you didn't get to say?

**Tenda:** Yeah, no (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I didn’t, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Uhm, cool. Then, uh, another thing that, uh, and please answer quite honestly, but, uh, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer here?

**Tenda:** Definitely, uhm, Lily and I were walking back that same day, and we were saying that we're both a bit uneasy when we arrived. But then when we were greeted by you, we're able to just, you know, calm down a bit, so I, I definitely – also with the eye contact, uhm, when we we’re in the space, the focus, focus group (=Tyler: Mmm), you were able to just look at people and just tell, with your eyes, tell them that it's, you know, it's okay to talk, are, are you okay? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) but without asking if you’re okay, so I think that was very comforting (=Tyler: Okay), so yeah, thank, thank you (=Tyler: Cool), I’m very grateful.

**Tyler:** Thanks back to you (=Tenda: [Laugh]). Uhm, is there any feedback you have for how I could improve the focus group?

**Tenda:** Uhm, I don’t think so, yeah I don't think so (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah. It's just, I don’t think it’s a thing on your side, though, uhm, with, James (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, I think people weren't able, weren't able to hear them (=Tyler: Yes). So just, just that (=Tyler: Yeah). It, it wasn’t, a, you know, it was just a, maybe a closer type thing.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. I think they had a, a softer voice and also the mask thing (=Tenda: Yeah, yeah), so, they had quite a thick, uh, cloth mask on (=Tenda: Yeah, [laugh]). Okay. Yeah. Cool (=Tenda: I think that was it). And then I actually have a question from Casey, for you, actually (=Tenda: Okay). Uhm, I had her focus, I had a follow up interview recently. And she actually really appreciated what you were saying about, uh, resources for, uhm, trans healthcare. Uhm, and I believe you were talking about Gender Dynamix helping you (=Tenda: Mmhmm). Uhm, but that you also went to a hospital in Johannesburg (=Tenda: Mmhmm) for top surgery. Uhm, if you're comfortable (=Tenda: Mmhmm), uhm, would you mind, uh, providing me some of the details so that I can pass them on to Casey, for people to contact? Or is that, if you're, if you're comfortable doing that?

**Tenda:** No, no, uhm, I'm more than willing to (=Tyler: Okay), just share information. Uhm…[sigh], the thing is, you know, it's a private hospital, it’s a private, uhm, public hospital,

**Tyler:** Private hospital?

**Tenda:** Public (=Tyler: Public hospital?), public hospital. So it's really, uh, it's not an appointment over the phone (=Tyler: Mmm). It's a more of a, I can tell you all the details to get it, so you have to go there (=Tyler: Yeah). You have to wake up and you have to stand in a line (=Tyler: Yeah). So, uhm, the only possible way that I could help them is to give them a link to You, a, YouTube video that I did post, in case they don't want to reach out to me that they can watch that, I went into detail on what you should bring, what you should do, uhm, where you should go in the building.

**Tyler:** Okay (=Tenda: So), that's excellent (=Tenda: Yeah, so, so) Yeah. Uhm, yeah. So, you can send me the link (=Tenda: Yeah), uhm, on WhatsApp, but it doesn't have to be now, it can be afterwards (=Tenda: Okay, sure), and then I can forward that onto Casey. That's awesome. And really cool that you made that kind of video (=Tenda: Thanks). Yeah. Yeah. That's really helpful.

**Tenda:** Yeah, yeah, I, I actually, just, two trans men had surgery just this past week.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Tenda:** It's pretty, it’s pretty cool to, to see people (=Tyler: Okay) so happy, you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Tenda: And very grateful). Had, had a surgery at the same place?

**Tenda:** Yeah, the same place.

**Tyler:** Okay. And they, they found out how to do that through your video?

**Tenda:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Awesome. Nice, that must feel great, that you’re kinda helping people

**Tenda:** It does, it does, because then you know, they always say it's like a, a weight lifted off their shoulders (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah) and, yeah, and a lot of people don't know that there is just that one that is free (=Tyler: Mmmm). Everyone knows about this 25-year-long list and, if you can just make that happen then (=Tyler: Yeah) for free. You just pay for your stay, you know, which is 100 Rand (=Tyler; Yeah), so, compared to (=Tyler: Mmm), like 50K, 70K, yeah so.

**Tyler:** Yeah, exactly. Wow. *Shoh.* Okay, thanks, Tenda. Uhm, do you have anything else that you'd like to share, about your experiences or about the focus group?

**Tenda:** No, I don’t (=Tyler: No?) think so, no, I think I’ve said my bit, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Okay, cool), everything that’s on my mind.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Well, thanks very much. I do appreciate your contribution.

**Tenda:** Thank you for having us.

**Tyler:** Yeah, you're most welcome. I'm really glad that you had a good time.

**Tenda:** It was a good learning space.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

Focus Group 2

[The last to arrive, Sage, completes an informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Uhm, I wonder if you would like to change your [Luca’s] mask, for a medical one, if it’s, if we have difficulty hearing you. I don’t know, do you think they’re better?

**Sage:** Yeah, can I?

**Tyler:** Would you like to? Yeah, sure.

[Sage accompanies Tyler to get a medical face mask]

**Nick:** [indistinguishable]

**Tyler:** Uh, you don’t have to. I think I, I, I heard you fine.

**Luca:** I mean, can you hear me fine?

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Luca:** Cool. There we go.

**Tyler:** Uh [giving mask to Sage], here you go, [laugh sigh].

[Tyler and Sage return to sit around the table. Sage returns to completing informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Uh, so yeah, you [to Nick] haven’t met most of your, your, uhm, classmates?

**Nick:** No.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Nick:** No.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** It’s really weird, hey (=Tyler: Yeah), it’s really weird (=Tyler: Mmm). [Nick twitches leg throughout]. And like, I found last year, at [university] the gender curriculum starts in second semester of first year, uhm so, at least with my first semester classes I’d met some people the few weeks I was there, I’d met some people in my classes. But, when gender studies started, it’s not like there were people I’d recognize their name from the first semester because everyone was new. And we were talking about like really, really, inherently personal, inhe-, like, [indistinguishable] deeply, deeply intimate, personal stuff about yourself, with like, people who you have clue what they look like let alone, you know, who they are (=Tyler: Yes). It’s a really interesting experience. (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) ‘Cause people talk about really personal stuff, when you discuss stuff (=Tyler: Yeah), about gender studies (=Tyler: Yeah). And it’s like, [indistinguishable] to strangers

**Tyler:** Yeah. It’s really strange [Sage hands over consent form]. Cool, thank you, Sage. No questions?

**Sage:** No.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool, so thank you all for coming. Uhm, [gets up, places Sage’s form on a counter behind him] it means a lot to me, and I hope it will mean something to you, [laugh sigh], to participate. Uhm, you might, [sits back down] uh, feel – sorry, hold on, uhm [activates voice recorder], okay, you might feel a little nervous about participating today, so that’s fine, uh, and it's understandable. Uhm, there are a few things that we can do to, like, calm those nerves a bit. Uhm, so that's, like, a lot from me clarifying things first. Uhm, one thing to clarify, which you probably saw on your consent form, is that this, uh, session is being recorded. So I have a voice recorder here and a video camera over there. Uhm, you don't need to worry about the footage and who gets to see it, because it's just between me and my supervisor. Uhm, when the group is over, we re-, we transcribe the recording. And when we finish transcribing it, then we delete the recordings, permanently. So there'll be no way to link it back to you, ‘cause we also change your identifying information, like your name, uh, on the transcript. Okay. Cool. Any questions about that? The recordings stuff? [All shake heads] ... Cool. Okay. Uhm, so I think, before I clarify more things, uhm, you should, uh, probably warm up your voices and talk to each other a little bit. So we have a, a, like, quick icebreaker thing, uhm, which is, what do you usually do for fun? What do you usually do in your spare time? And has that changed during the pandemic? (=Jamie: Yeah). So that's, that's the question. Anyone can start, [laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** Uhm, okay, I guess I’ll go. Uhm, I (=Tyler: Oh) actually only-

**Tyler:** Sorry, hold on, [laugh sigh] (=Jamie: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, yeah, so here are some nametags [hands them out], so that you know wh-, how to refer to one another (=Jamie: That’s mine there). Okay. That’s yours (=Jamie: Thank you). Cool. Jamie, you can, you can continue.

**Jamie:** Uhm, the thing that I miss out on is completely new to the pandemic, uhm, and I crochet a lot now. I didn't know how to do that before the pandemic, I couldn't do knitting, I couldn’t do crocheting or do anything like that, couldn't use my brain [Tyler moves chair back slightly and puts clipboard on his lap]. And then last year I was like, I, for my mental health, I need to do something that is real and like has a real tangible outcome (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause all of my classes were completely online, and we're not even doing Zoom, anything, it was all just words on a screen. And I was sending words on the screen to nowhere and like, like everything was fake (=Tyler: Mmm) .So I was like need to do something that's real, [laugh sigh], I learnt how to crochet and I now just crochet constantly, I’ve got like wool and stuff in my bag [laughing], with me, the beanie I’m busy making in my bag, just in case I have like five seconds with nothing to do (=Tyler: Cool), crocheting.

**Tyler:** Nice. Yeah, I get that. Lots of life is virtual now, [laugh sigh], so, you need like-

**Jamie:** Insomnia is real. And I was, at first I was just baking to like, have something with a real outcome, but there's only so many times you can make malva pudding in the week without it starting to look a little bad, [laugh]

**Tyler**: Yeah… Cool…

**Nick:** Uhm… [Tyler nods to Nick] Okay, uhm, I generally just like, chill and watch Netflix or something. It hasn’t really changed (=Tyler: [Laugh]). I don’t really, I like being by myself (=Tyler: Mmm). And ja, that’s it, generally, no, nothing’s changed, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Nice. Do you have any, like, favorite shows at the moment, or?

**Nick:** No, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). I literally watch anything so.

**Tyler:** Anything? (=Nick: Ja). Cool…

**Sage:** Uhm, [raise hand slightly] I’ll go next. Uhm, I think what has changed is that, like I’m very outdoors person. So I go hiking, I do running and swimming, all of those things. Which I'm still allowed to do (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh]). I think one thing that has changed is I started volunteering for, uhm, the wolf project. They a shelter for dogs and puppies [Luca and Jamie nod], uhm, so I’ve started doing that a bit more, so I do it usually over a weekend, uhm, sometimes during the week. Uhm, but I think that’s probably the only thing that’s changed (=Tyler: That’s cool). Yeah, it’s, uh, kind of ironic because I'm actually very scared of dogs (=[Several]: [Laughter]). But it's helping me get over that fear.

**Tyler:** Oh nice. Cool.

**Luca:** I had a fear of dogs for most of my life. But like [inaudible] (=Jamie: That’s what happened to me) And I raised a pup and no more fear.

**Jamie:** That’s what happened to me as well, I was so scared of dogs. When I f-, when I was a kid I would fake throwing a tantrum, if we were on a walk somewhere (=Luca: Mmm) and there was a big dog coming my way. I would fake throwing a tantrum so that like one of my parents would like, pick me and be like “what are you upset about?”. I wouldn't, I wouldn’t actually be upset, I‘d just pretend to throw a tantrum so that someone would pick me up before the dog walked past, [laugh]. I was such a weird kid, and then my, my mom was like “we need to get this child a dog, this is ridiculous”. And we got a puppy, and I was scared of her for like three weeks and then I was fine, [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], nice.

**Luca:** So uhm, most of my homies are, my [gestures towards chest] hobbies, like, just, just me with myself, whether it be writing, or like video games or reading or anything of the sort. Uhm, obviously, like, going out with friends just died because well [shrugs], you can't do that, there’s a pandemic. But, I mean, as it got easier, there was, some normality came back, uhm. The one thing that did change was that, so like, I'd walk my dog on a regular basis, but I started doing it more, because it was an excuse (=Jamie: Mmm) to just get out. I’d go take him to parks or I’d go even longer, I’d just, [inaudible], because it was an excuse to get outside and breathe fresh air for once (=Tyler: Yeah). But uhm, yeah, no.

**Tyler:** Cool. Nice. Yeah, I also enjoying reading, uhm, and hiking, [laugh sigh]. Uh, and, like, I live close to like a park where lots of people take their dogs. So I don't have a dog in my apartment, but I grew up with them, and I miss dogs, [laugh sigh]. So yeah [helicopter flying over], I sometimes go to that, to that park just to see all the dogs playing with each other. It’s really cool, yeah. And I also like to, uhm, well, I started investing more during lockdown, because I can't go to events, uhm, in like, the stuff that I enjoyed, like preparing to go to an event, which was makeup. So I've like, been doing makeup art a lot more during COVID. Yeah… Cool. Okay, so that was just, you know, warming up our voices a little bit. Uhm, and… like, the way that this group works, actually, uhm, is that we are going to have, well, you are going to have, a group discussion amongst each other, uhm, about those two general things that I asked you think about. So, the one is, how would you describe the way you identify, right? How would you describe the queer or LGBTQ+, whatever terms you have for yourself? Uhm, and the other one is, what experiences of sameness and difference do you have, with other people that [points to head] stick to your, stick out in your mind, you know? Uhm, and both of those questions are quite personal. And they're also very open to interpretation, right? So, that means two things. It means there's no right or wrong answer, for sameness and difference, uhm, or identifying the way you identify. There's no right or wrong. Yeah. It also means because it’s so open, that there are probably a lot of stories we can hear. There are a lot of things we can say, so we want to hear from everyone, equally. Cool. Uhm, yeah, so, my role here, I'm not like an interviewer. Like, I have a series of questions, and I ask every one of you individually, and you all talk to me, you know? Uhm, you're actually going to be talking to each other, more than talking to me. Uhm, I will be less involved than you are. Uhm, sometimes, you know, I will ask some questions like, “Can you tell me a bit more about that thing?”. Uhm, or if the conversation goes way off topic, [laugh sigh], then I’ll like, you know [helicopter flies over], try and bring us back. Uhm, and, and maybe if, uhm, if I need to, I will, uhm, step in to make sure that it's like a, a comfortable space, and safe for everyone, and respectful, that kind of thing. But yeah, uhm, you should also, you know, ask each other if you want to know more about what someone’s saying, uhm, that kind of thing. Uhm, but also engaging in a way that, that respects each other. So it's like, you know, everyone here, uhm, is an expert on your own lives, right? No one else here knows you better than you do, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so, you know, we can regard each other like that. And also like, if, if you feel uncomfortable talking about something and, someone asks you to tell you a bit more, then you can say “you know, I'm not really comfortable talking about that”. And then we can all accept that and move on. Cool? Anyone have any questions about everything I've just said? [All shake heads] … No? Okay, is there anything else you, you wanna add, to the way you think we should, like, engage with each other? [All shake heads] ... Or is it, sounds good?... [All nod] Okay, cool. So then, like the first topic is, you know, how would you describe the way you identify? Anyone can start.

**Luca:** [Taps knee]So, for the longest time, I identified as gay. Uhm… yeah. It didn’t work out for long, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, well when I first came out, it was a weird, as I, I'm sure, y-, y'all can imagine, it's that weird grey area [gestures shaking space in front of him], where you actually don’t know what’s going on, you, all these feelings are suddenly coming out with you, [inaudible] a sense of ‘other’. When you're not in an environment, that's, that's not, not necessarily queer-, but not necessarily not queer-friendly, but just not informed, about queerness.

**Jamie:** Not like explicitly affirming of queerness.

**Luca:** [Reaches out in confirmation]Exactly, it’s just more about, “we don't know, so we don't really care”, kind of situation. So, after dealing with of that, I finally, completely said to myself I’m gay. That's it, that's what we're gonna roll with the rest of my life [clap]. But, s-, I soon found out that sexuality is so much more varied and fluid than that. Next thing you know, last year, after a few experiences, and a lot soul searching, and back-and-forth-ing, uhm, I think I found, not ‘safety’, but also, uhm, not ‘familiarity’. But I felt, when I started thinking myself, thinking of myself as ‘queer’, instead of specifically ‘gay’, it, I don’t know, something clicked [gestures to head]. Because, I don't like labels. I don't like people who use labels, like labels - let me get this right. [Claps several times] People must choose how they identify themselves for themselves; it’s not for me to decide. And if they find safety in labels, that's good for them. I don't like labels for myself, because I feel like I'm restricting myself. I'm no longer ‘me’, I’m ‘that’ [gestures pinning down]. So ‘queer’, it’s like a, it's like a little cheat code (=[Several]: [Laughter]), it’s a little, because it's a label, and it’s not a label. It’s so broad, you can't define exactly what it is [gestures pinning down], but at the same time, it gets the point across. So, yeah, I identify as ‘queer’.

**Jamie:** [Window rattles slightly] That's an important thing with labels, is like, if a label means, makes you feel good and secure and at home in yourself, brilliant, use it. If it doesn't, even if it only technically applies, [Luca leans forward in his seat] like technically apply it to like, the logistics of your identity, you don't have to use it if it doesn't feel good to you. And I think that's a big mistake I made as a young queer person spending too much time on the internet, where like, Jesus Christ, think of any label you can think of, I’ve probably felt like I should use at some point in time [Nick nods], and I just kept using them, even though they didn't feel right. And then I finally felt like some labels that did feel right, and I was like, oh my God, I've been wasting so much time here, [laugh]. Uhm, but for me, it's a bit, I guess, complicated, because there's two layers of that, there is gender stuff, and there is (=A child outside: Mommy!).

**Several:** [Laughter].

**Jamie:** There’s gender stuff and then there is [child makes noise outside] sexuality stuff. Uhm… from, an, actually I think from a gender point of view it's maybe simpler, even though that's newer to me [Tyler leans forward in their seat]. But I broadly identify with, uhm, the terms ‘non-binary’ and ‘genderqueer’. I identify more so with ‘genderqueer’; it feels more at home for me. Uhm, and I identify as a trans person. It's actually pretty simple for me, that way, if you try to explain the nitty gritty of how your gender feels to other people, it gets very complicated, because I think it's like the most personal thing [child outside runs down the hall]. I don’t know, I think no two people really experience it the same way. Uhm, so it's a little bit more hard to explain but, I guess, words wise, it's quite easy for me. And then, uhm, from a sexuality point of view, uhm, when I came out I identified as bisexual. It is not the case any longer, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, I came out to my family with that term, and I don't use it at all anymore. Uhm, I was also coming out of having dated a boy. And I ended that relationship ‘cause I was like, women? [Cocks head, raises brow] (=[Several]: [Laugher]) Women? And I was like, “sorry, dude, I can't do this. Sorry, this is not gonna work”. So I was trying to sort of ease into that, I think and, I identify somewhat with the term ‘lesbian’, somewhat with the term ‘queer’. There are lesbians who have an issue with non-binary people using the word ‘lesbian’ [Tyler writes something]. Uhm, that's interesting, I find that to be a very in-, interesting part of the discourse because I think gender nonconformity and transness are an inherent part of being queer for a lot of people. Uhm, but yeah, sexuality, a little more complicated because I have a gender identity that doesn't fit into the binary system so there’s less language for me to use [Tyler nods]. Uhm, but yeah, that’s pretty much it. I sort of don't, also don't restrict myself with a really rigid label (=Luca: Mmm), because I don't know the people I might meet and I don't know the experiences I might have, and I don't want to stop myself from wanting to be romantically involved with somebody because I think it doesn't fit my label, how I identify, pretty much.

**Nick:** Okay, uhm, it’s, I relate a lot like [towards Luca], uhm, with the whole, not really, like, feeling comfortable with labels, and that whole situation. So, uhm, I identify myself more ‘gay’ than anything else, but it's like, such a complicated situation because, questioning, like, I don’t know, what I know, like express myself in that way. But, ja, like, it’s so complicated. Ja. I don’t really…

**Sage:** Uhm,my experience was a little bit different to everyone’s. Uhm, I, probably at the age of nine, realized that I was attracted to females (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but given the fact that I grew up in a Muslim household. Very staunch parents, uhm. Of a certain age, you’re expected to get married to a man, you’re expected to do the [air quotes] female things. Uhm, so I think the biggest battle for me was trying to steer away from that. I think I only really dealt with the fact that I was attracted to women when I was about 15. Uhm, so from like, my, beginning of my teen years, uhm, I've always felt like having to portray the fact that I’m, “Oh, I like this boy, I like that boy”. Uhm, especially with the group of friends that I hung out with. Uhm, and then, I think when I came out, uh, I came out as bisexual. So I was like, no, I, I think the environment I grew up in as was very restricting, in that, if you were homosexual, or you were into the same sex, you were seen as a freak in the community [Jamie and Nick nod]. And, for me, I was very scared to have that, sort of title. Uhm, so I would be, “No, I’m bisexual, yes I’m attracted to girls, but I’ll still end up with a guy, I’ll still get married to a guy” [Jamie nods]. And when he reached my matriculant year, like matriculated and everything, and I was like, “no, done with this”. I identify as lesbian, uhm, it’s always been the case with me. I've always had forced relationships with guys, whereas it, it's more natural for me to be best friends with them, especially because I’m, uh, a little bit more into the, I think, [air quotes] socially acceptable, men, like, things, like being interested in cars, being interested in sports and all of that. So, I just got along better with guys. Uhm, and I think when I accepted the fact that I'm lesbian and I'm into women, it's not even a thing if I meet a nice guy, it’s, there's never going to ever be that attraction for me. Uhm, and it's not to say that, I mean, physical attraction is there to women, but for me, it was more getting to know you as a personal mind, and that’s what will get me hooked, like. And yeah, I think, uhm, probably different from everyone else.

**Jamie:** I actually relate to you a lot [Nick nods]. I relate a lot when you said there was a lot of pressure to, if you are a queer person, you know you’re a queer person, but especially if there's a part of you that knows you can't really pretend that you're not, entirely, there is pr-, a lot of pressure to perform attraction to men as well, anyway, if you're raised and socialized as a woman. Uhm, which kind of plays into the idea of like compulsory heterosexuality (=Luca: Yeah) and I think that that's why I use the label ‘bisexual’, because I'm not attracted to men, but I use the label ‘bisexual’ because my community and my family or people who are maybe not as accepting would go, “okay, like, they think, you know, they're like, attracted to girls, but it's fine, like they’ll end up with a husband at the end of the day.” And I think that that's something that a lot of my family still hang on to, even though they know like that's not gonna happen. That's not how it's gonna turn out. But like, for, for example, like my mother, every time I make a new friend, and not even if they are a boy, but if they have a masculine name, my mom will assume that they're a boy and get like, really excited, and she’ll be like, “oh my God, you have to invite him over all time. Ah, he's so nice”. I could have like a really, really kak friend, and if my mom thinks they're a boy, she'll be like, “Oh my god, I love that boy, he must come over all the time”. And she, what she's, like, hoping is that suddenly I'm gonna change my mind and fall in love with him, and like, have I nice little heterosexual life and (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and not be this like awkward thing for her to have to, like address. Uhm, but I, yeah, I actually really related to a lot of stuff that you said, with, that.

**Sage:** I think, like, most parents do hold on to that (=Jamie: Mmm). I think the one thing that has changed is my mom's kind of just given up, uhm, ‘cause I actually got married to a girl [Jamie nods]. Uhm, so yeah, she’s just actually given up on, on hoping that, uhm, with that Muslim son, I’ll change my mind, so, ja.

**Luca:** I wanted to ask about the ring [gestures ring finger]

**Sage:** Oh, yeah, I’m actually married.

**Tyler & Luca:** Congratulations.

**Sage:** Yeah, thanks, so, I’m married to, like, someone that identifies as non-binary and [Jamie nods], just, yeah, so it's a little bit (=Tyler: Mmm), yeah, it’s a, it’s, you know, the fear of [inaudible] is, like, I think [inaudible] to marriage, the fear of, you know, she could meet someone else, like just completely meet a guy or, and I think in, because she's also like, from a Muslim household, there’s always that, you know, “you need to be in line with religion” and all of that. So, there was always that constant fear, uhm, but yeah, it’s, it’s, I think it's gone a bit so.

**Jamie:** There's a, like, I think that fear comes from a society that tends to value attraction to men, very highly, [inaudible] that people who are socialized as women, definitely values the attraction to masculinity really, really highly [Nick nods], and I think in a way that's kind of damaging, uhm, for a lot of, for a lot of, uhm, queer people. My mother, my mother, still to this day, talks about the boyfriend I had in grade eight (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]). He was, he was, it was a terrible relationship, and he was like, he moved to another country halfway through. So, I didn't really have a boyfriend, I had someone irritating texting me every five minutes. And I was like, “God, why is he talking to me again?” the whole time - didn't think, mind you, didn’t think, like, maybe most people aren't irritated every time their boyfriend texts them (=[Several]: Mmm; =Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, I was like “God, I wish he’d shut up, Jesus”, and I just didn't, didn't [inaudible] until years later. And my mother still talks about him non-stop and pretends she doesn't know I'm dating, uhm, a friend of mine. She pretends, she pretends she doesn't know, even though like she comes over and we like cuddle and watch movies the whole time. And my mother's like “no, nothing happening there”, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmm).

**=Tyler:** Uhm-

**=Luca:** Have-

**Tyler**: Okay.

**Luca:** Have you ever met someone who practices, uh, your faith, but with an open, but like, with an openness or an acceptance of queer people? Bes-

**Sage:** Yeah, yeah.

**Luca:** Let me rephrase my question. But uhm, like a religious figure?

**Sage:** Mmm… I haven't actually met anyone. I've heard of someone [Luca nods] that stays in the area that I grew up in, which is Wynberg. Uhm, he’s actually like a, a faithful imam (=Luca: Mmm), that’s in the area. And he openly marries gay people or queer people, he’s, he’s very open to it. Uhm, it’s, it's caused, from what I’ve read, uhm, it's caused a bit of a rift in the community (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, ‘cause that area, when I grew up in the area, it was, there's a lot of, every person’s neighbor, who’s Muslim (=Luca: Mmm). So, because it's a very strong community, uhm, that type of behavior is still, being unacceptable (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, and because of that, he’s actually shunned in the community. No one wants to go to mosque when he’s there, and he’s leading the prayer, ja, it’s, it’s, ja (=Tyler: *Shoh*). Uhm, but I think, I think there’s probably a lot more religious speakers that are open to it. It's just a case of them having that fear of “I'm going to lose my followers if I come out about this (=Tyler: Mmm) and I openly say that I support this” (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, I mean, even my mom, she's pretty open-minded, but because my stepdad has been raised in this very, [gestures fist coming down] “no, you will marry a man, you will stay at home and look after him and cook for him and clean his clothes and do everything that he wants. You are there to serve him” (=Luca: Mmm). So me, taking a different path, uhm, it's caused like some tension on their relationship. So she's also in a space where she's kind of just gotta, agree with him and sweep me sort of under the rug and just be like. I mean, I think the biggest thing for me was the fact that she didn't want to come to wedding, just on, her, well, her reasoning was, she didn't want to cause an argument in the house (=Jamie: Mmm). So she just didn't like, come to my wedding at all, versus my spouse’s family, her mom was there, all of her brothers, as religious as they are, they were there. So, I think the dynamics are a little bit different (=Luca: Mmm), but it’s also, it depends on your surroundings, who you’re partnered with, I guess, and, so, yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh, Nick, I saw you nodding when Jamie and Luca were talking about like, you know, how like ‘queer’ is like a, an open label, you know. Uhm, so do you, like, agree or, or, do you relate to what they were saying? Is that something you feel for your own identity? Or is your identity like, uhm, more like, a, a secure place like, like ‘lesbian’ might be for Sage?

**Nick:** It’s so, uhm… [looking upwards] I don’t know how to like, word something, uhm, sorry (=Tyler: That’s okay). [Makes eye contact with Tyler] Uhm, I struggle a lot with, like my own identity, and like, with the, the whole sexuality situation, and like the whole situation, so I feel like, I relate to ‘queer’ more, but I feel more comfortable in that label. But I wanna like queer but I can’t, because I feel like so comfortable in it, in having a label instead of just having an open, free (=Jamie: You can kind of) be yourself [crosses arms].

**Jamie:** You can kind of have the best of both worlds, I think I think there's definitely space to use the language that makes you feel good in different times in different spaces. You can use, you know, more open-ended language when that suits you and that feels good for you. And you can use more sort of neat, tiny, closed-up language when that feels safe and secure for you. That's definitely something that I do.

**Nick:** [Twitches foot] I feel like, it’s, it's like more socially acceptable to have like a, a label instead of just being like this, this person who isn't in, like, in line with, like… like having ‘queer’, or just like not really labeling yourself. So it's, it’s like, this, you, I need a label in some sense, you know? (Tyler:Uh-huh, uh-huh). Ja.

**Jamie:** It's definitely comforting to have like, almost hyper-specific language to explain exactly how you fit into the world of people (=Nick: [Nods] Yeah). I think there's definitely something comforting about that.

**Luca:** Like you were saying, we’re queer but we're the only people out there on the internet, or very queer in an online space, just, where, if you don't have a very specific label, [clap] (=Jamie: Mmm), and very specific set way of identifying yourself, well then you are a freak of nature (=Tyler: Mmm).

**Jamie:** Yeah, there was, there's a lot of like, really, really toxic - I think it still exists in some places today – there was a lot of really, uh, I guess toxic cultures, specifically toxic queer cultures, online, when I was in my early teens, trying to find my place in the world. Uhm, and I don't think that micro-labelling is inherently bad for you, but I think the pressure to conform to using hyper-specific labels (=Tyler: Mmm), is definitely not healthy (=Tyler: Mmm). I think you should do that when that works for you, when it feels like home, when it feels secure, when a label makes you feel, uhm, comfortable here, I’m at home here. Uhm, but yeah like I said earlier, just using lots and lots of hyper-specific labels, that were not true, actually, they didn't apply to my experience at the end of the day (=Tyler: Mmm), but they also were not helping me come to terms with my queerness, and they were not helping me explain my queerness to other people. So I was (=Tyler: Yeah) against that a lot, actually.

**Tyler:** Mmm, yeah. Nice, okay [Looks at clipboard]. Uhm, Luca, you said that when you were starting to identify, uhm, you were talking about being in an environment that wasn't really like pro-queer or very, very positive. Can you be more specific about that environment? Is it, is it like, a specific [Sounds of others outside the room] community that you grew up in? Was it your family? Is it…?

**Luca:** [Taps knees] Uhm, so there’s family [gestures left] and then there’s school [gestures right], right? The school that I went to was like this independent, uh, private school that was set up, like just after apartheid ended so like, I think it was ‘97. So it, like, it’s whole [opens hands above head] shtick, was this open, liberal, progressive kind of school, right? [Gestures clashing] Then it was bought out by Curro, which is a Afrikaans-run, private school company. So there’s this, there, over the years where it started, the change started happening, there was this weird dynamic of like this conservative Afrikaans very Christian grannies like flooding in, and then going up against the school’s more progressive foundations. So it, it made for this very interesting environment where queerness was accepted, but it just wasn't talked about, for the longest time. But I’ll get to that in a second. Family has like an interesting experience with queerness, because, I have heard my mom talk about my family, some family members, in a way that is almost like, it's like coded that they’re queer but she doesn't s-, like she doesn't have the language [Nick and Jamie nod] (=Jamie: Mmm) to say that (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Or she’s been brought up in a certain way that it just doesn’t register to her, but when I hear it I’m like “no that person’s queer”.

**Jamie:** Or even they know that that person's queer [Luca opens palm towards Jamie in agreement] but they won’t say it out loud.

**Luca:** Yes, yes. So, but, I think I've been very fortunate with my parents specifically. Uhm, my father had a very interesting experience a queer person in his life prior to me coming into the picture. So he… uhm, he's very open to it, but once again, raised in a conservative household, conscripted into the army during apartheid, and all that. So he's, obviously has a lot of barriers to actually talk about it. But, when I came out to him, it was like, he said to me, [Shrugging] “Oh, I didn't notice. Anyway,” and then just went, we just went about our day. And then my mom, when I came out to my mom, she was just like, “oh, I was just waiting for you to say”, so (=Tyler: Mmm), I'm really, I consider myself very privileged to have parents that, that were completely okay with it from the get-go (=Tyler: Mmm). It was, there was always that awkward, uhm, s-, uh, space because they didn't really know how to talk about. But, yeah I’ve have gotten on fine with them. There was no [inaudible] drifts in our relationship just because I was queer. I mean, there was a whole thing about running up against, me, uh, running up against traditional masculinity, with my father, you know. [Hand hitting other perpendicularly] “You’ve gotta play sports, duh-duh-duh-duh-duh, duh-duh-duh-duh-duh,” I can’t do that, I can’t. Uhm, so, so no, my family, good. My immediate family, great. As soon as you move out from that. So, my mother's Coloured. And her family is very Christian, very old school, for the most part, especially older generation. Yeah, like we di-, don’t talk about that shit. That's, that's just not a topic you have with the aunties. Uhm, so they are whole a different beast, but like my immediate family, good. School, I was outed, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm?!), in class, during the discussion about queer or gay rights, which is not meant to be a discussion, but hey, something. Uhm, but, mmm… my teachers didn't really care, ‘cause I mean, it, it happened in such a way that like, suddenly the whole school knew (=Tyler: Mmm), right? And my friend group at the time, just like just practically, like, threw me out. Like, just rejected me completely (=Tyler: Oh). Uhm, but that was, I mean, long story, I mean, sorry, it was a long time ago. It’s what, it is what it is. But uhm… sorry, I lost my train of thought, I’ve going on for a long time, so (=Tyler: That’s alright). Uhm, so no-no-no, it's, school was good, at the end of the day. Uh, I made new friends, people, people that were accepting of my queerness and wanted to actually like, learn about it. Uhm, and then at the end of it, like at the end of all this, I started, uhm, my school’s first, like, queer organization, like in the vein of [LGBTIQA+ university society]. Uhm [inaudible overlap with Jamie], we called it Pride, because our mascot was a lion, so, [shrugs] (=Nick & Jamie [Laugh]) So, ja. Uhm, so to answer your question, to quickly wrap this up (=Tyler: Mmm), it originally was an environment that didn't really have the language to talk about queerness, so it wasn’t, it wasn’t spoken about, it was [inaudible]. But then over time, me coming out, me forcing my way into it, allowed me to have a, a say, or stake in influencing into changing it for the better. Uhm, now, I still have a friend at school and she says, she, she was telling me, this, this is quite interesting. Her friend came out as transgender (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And then a few weeks later, my mom gets a newsletter from Curro saying that they want all schools to recognize transgender individuals, like it's a directive from head office, which is quite interesting. I just never expected this company (=Tyler: Mmm) to come in, and then suddenly, do this sort of thing. It was this weird shift that's happened. So, yeah.

[Nick continues twitching leg]

**Jamie:** I identify with so much of what you said. I also I went to a school, which, their whole shtick, they're whole like ad campaign was like, “we’re such a safe space [Tyler nods], 21st century school”. I want to be careful with how I phrase things [inaudible], [laugh], because this, because it’s, it's messy, with that school. Uhm, it, definitely bought out by Curro, but it had the same thing of like, uhm, super, super liberal, super open-minded ideals, but in reality, it was a different story (=Luca: Mmm [nods]). Uhm, and like, if you were visibly in a minority, you would get used to make the school look good. Uhm, but when you actually needed help with issues, you didn't get it. [Loud sounds from others outside] And when you actually needed safety from, from like, you know, homophobia or like, just, you know, broadly issues that affect queer people, you didn't get that, and you were told you're ungrateful for complaining about anything at all, because it's so much better here. If you were at another school, you would be beat up for being gay, and things like that, and that was very much the narrative. Uhm, like it was open at my school, you didn't, like, it wasn't a case of like you would be openly bullied (=Tyler: Mmm), but there was a lot of exclusion (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and it would definitely, it was really noticeable to me ‘cause I had friends in grades above and grades below me, the whole way through high school. Uhm, so I noticed that like some grades, that year would be better or worse for queer people, depending on how many queer people were in it (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and I was in a grade with not very many queer people. And there was very blatant exclusion and it was very blatantly, like, uhm… I wonder how to, how to how to describe it. There was definitely a thing of like, if you were visibly queer, you, you know, you weren’t included in the social scene, and people didn't like you (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and the only time people would talk to you would be if they were nosy about someone they thought was queer. So every time like somebody in my school would come back from school holiday and say, maybe they've cut all of their hair short, and they stopped wearing dresses, and they’ve started wearing like very masculine clothes, then girls who I knew hated me, I knew they wanted nothing to do with them, and their boyfriend said like homophobic shit about me in classes, then they would come and be like, “Hey Jamie, do you know so-and-so? What's going on there?” and like, they actually only want to interact with you when it's to be nosy about other people (=Tyler: Mmm), and not actually ever wanting to respect their, you know, their experience or identity, [inaudible]

**Luca:** Like a queer whisperer.

**Jamie:** Yeah, that was literally it, they would not talk to me the whole year, the whole year round, and then one person would start looking a little bit queer, and they’d be like, “What’s going on there?” and, like, “I don't know, actually. Funnily enough, I don't know who they are. You’ll have to ask them, it's not your business, or my business”. Uhm, and also, I guess, kind of, family wise, also, some similar, similarities for me. Uhm, I don't have a family that’s like, explicitly homophobic, exactly so, but it's very traditional. It’s also a family in which, like, femininity is very prescriptive in a burdensome way, not in a like, the fun side of femininity isn't really a thing in my family. It's the tasks you have to take on (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the burdens you have to take on, as a woman are like a big part of how my family works. Uhm, so there’s like, I guess complicated stuff there on sexuality and on gender. It’s definitely a family where like, they don't talk about it if somebody is queer (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, and like, there are quite a lot of people in my family, in my opinion, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, but there's like a thing, that they don't tell you about it. And if you're a kid (=Luca: Mmm), they definitely don’t tell you about it. And like, one of my mom's cousins, who I'm very close with, is a lesbian. And she's been like, they're not actually married, but like socially, they might as well be married, like effectively married to her partner for like, maybe 35, 40 years now. And they will not say that she's a lesbian out loud. Nobody will, and they love her, and they love her partner, and her and her partner, they live in Spain, they come down and they visit and they stay together. [Tyler puts down pen, checks voice recorder] And even my like very homophobic grandmother loves them, loves talking to them, loves spending time with them. But nobody will say, “oh, they're gay” (=Luca & Tyler: Mmm). And so growing up, I had no frame of reference that that was even a thing I could be (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I didn't know that like, I, I vaguely knew gay people existed. But I thought that was something men could do. That was actually my only, my only example I've ever seen is a man and so I didn't know that was the thing I could do. And like, again, it’s adjacent to like compulsory heterosexuality, you just don't say anything about it. Uhm, I had, I think that was something I struggled with a lot, was having no frame of reference for queer adults (=Tyler: Mmm). There was nobody in, until, until I became closer with that cousin of my mom’s. There's no frame of reference for me to – it was actually, play, plays into that sameness and difference (=Tyler: Mmm) – there was no example of sameness for me in adult form, I only know, I only knew people my age and younger, who had a queer experience of the world (=Tyler: Mmm). And I had like a really hard time trying to understand how my adulthood could look. Uhm, because I had no example of that. Uhm, yeah, my, my dad is like, it's kind of interesting ‘cause he, in his own words, was incredibly homophobic, in his youth. He admits to that, and I think he tries to like over-compensate a little bit. Uhm, before I came out, I remember I had a conversation my dad and my brother, and my dad was saying, like, “Oh, you know, I used to be so homoph-, so homophobic, but now I'm so okay with it that it's weird”. And he was like, really trying to prove that he's like, cool (=Tyler: Mmm), and then he's not, uhm, but I think he actually does struggle with it a little bit. But he's, I think, [inaudible], he has kept that to himself. He didn't make it a problem for queer people in this life. Uhm, my mother was more, I guess, blatantly, more, she was more vocal about the ways that she struggled with it. But it was like, it was not a thing of being like, explicitly not accepting, where it was like, not being explicitly positive about it. And I know that she felt a lot of shame surrounding having a queer child (=Tyler: Mmm). And she w-, and she won't admit to that. And I said, like “I know that you were ashamed of it. And it's okay. I know why you were ashamed. I was ashamed of myself as well. Like, how am I supposed to expect you to feel differently than I feel, when you're, you know, effectively in the same environment regarding that?”. And she won’t admit that, but I know that she was, and I know that, she didn't, she thought my brother was going to be the queer kid, not me. So she would say things in front of me that she wouldn't say in front of him. And she said to a friend of hers when I was maybe eight or nine, she said, “Oh I never want to have a gay child”. Uhm, and her friend was like, “What? You can't say that”, and was like, “No, not because I have an issue with gay people, just because it's such a hard life. And because my child would have a terrible life if they were gay”. Uhm, and like, that's very much the kind of narrative, like if you're gay, you're fucked, basically (=Tyler: Mmm; [Sage nods]). Like, you're gonna have a horrible life, and there's gonna be no love for you in your life. And it's, it’s just gonna be scary and horrible and bad, and peop-, people are gonna treat you badly and like, that's it. That’s the punchline for her. I think that's where that shame came from for her, like, “Ah, I couldn't prevent my child having a difficult life,” like.

**Tyler:** Yeah. *Shoh.* Thanks for that Jamie. That was a lot (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Yeah, hectic, *yoh*. Uh, Nick, could you relate to anything that Jamie was saying about school? ‘Cause you seem to like, nod a lot.

**Nick:** I think so, in some sense, because, I grew up in the, this, well for first section of my life I grew up in like a small town in the Free State, so super, like, conversative and, closed-mind, and, I didn’t even know what ‘gay’ was before I moved to Cape Town, I didn’t know what a lesbian was (=Tyler: Wow). So, it was like, I couldn’t, but, yeah, and, uhm, like, I was bullied for the majority of my time in school (=Tyler: Mmm), because of being like different and, like, just acting different or like being different (=Tyler: Mmm) and, like, also moving here, it’s like a, my, my mind opened up to like, different, uhm, like, viewpoints and stuff like that. But like, moving into a different school didn't change anything. I’ll still be like the weird kid or, uhm, different, so, ja. Not a really progressive school on my end, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). Very Afrikaans-

**Jamie:** So many schools in Cape Town use the sort of label of being progressive, as like a performance, and then in reality, they, they do jack shit (=Luca: Mmm). They do like absolutely nothing, and they have to have that image of being progressive, so that people wanna send their kids that there but they do absolutely nothing for their (=Luca: [Indistinct]), like for the kids in their school or schools.

**Luca:** I feel like it’s a blanket statement for most schools (=Jamie: Mmm), in South Africa. Johannesburg, same story. Ja (=Jamie: Ja).

**Jamie:** It’s, *yoh*, it’s bad. When I say a lot, it thought I was like just my school, that my school was the exception but the more people I talk to, when we’re in different schools, the more I realize it's a really common experience in private schools in Cape Town.

**Luca:** Esp-, especially former Model C schools (=Jamie: Mmm). Those are like nightmares (=Jamie: Ja). For various reasons.

**Tyler:** Sage, do you relate to what people have been saying about school experiences?

**Sage:** Uhm, I think mine was different. But I’ve, I [gestures towards Nick] went to public school so it was, slightly different. I think, uhm, when, ja, when I came out, which was grade ten. Uhm, yeah, the kids were, the kids were pretty open to it, I guess. Like, it, [clears throat], sorry, there, there was, like this whole, because I came out “Oh, I’m bisexual”, ‘cause at the time I wasn't comfortable and confident with using the label ‘lesbian’. Uhm, so I came out as bisexual, and, uhm, I looked slightly different than I do now, my hair was much longer, it was like (=Tyler: Mmm), down, so I looked very feminine and because of that and because of coming out as bisexual, as someone that's attracted to both, like, males and females, uhm, or men and women, uh, the guys sort of sexualized it a lot (=Tyler: Mmmm), in a way [All nod] that “Oh, can we get a piece of?”, (=Tyler: Mmm) everywhere I went, it was “could we get a piece of?” And, I mean, at the time, I, I kind of just shrugged it off because I had to deal with a lot internally [Jamie nods], so I wasn't really paying attention, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm) to what was happening around me, uhm. But in terms of like, the kids on the school, very different. I think, ‘cause a lot of the kids that I was in class with, uhm, come from very sort of tough backgrounds [Tyler nods], so they each have their own sort of issues to deal with (=Tyler: Mmm) So, in that sense, my class specifically, we were quite close as a class. Uhm, in terms of sameness, there was no, like, there was no one that I could speak to that was having a, a similar experience to myself (=Tyler: Mmm) [Jamie nods]. Uhm, but just in terms of like, having issues and having to deal with certain struggles, I could connect with my whole class basically [Tyler and Jamie nod]. Uhm, I think I've only ever had like a, a run-in with one of the educators (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, who was vice principal. Uhm, told me, and I quote, “please keep your gayness under wraps (=Tyler: Wow), it’s influencing the rest of the classes” [Jamie raises brow, shakes head]. Yeah (=Tyler: *Shoh*), uhm, at the time, I didn't know that that was something I could actually go to the school board about (=Tyler: Mmm), and say that I’m, I’m being like subject to some sort of a prejudice over here (=Tyler: Mmm), and discrimination. And, so, I kind of shrugged it off, but I think now if I look back, on particularly that teacher, uhm, I don’t know if it’s, you know, just a background where he’s from or a community, but he would sort of single me out every change he got, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), whether it was to publicly shame me in (=Tyler: *Shoh*) front of my, like, classmates or in front of the other learners, uhm. But I think he was the, he was the only one, uh, every other teacher I had, really accepting, very open, uhm, s-, ja. So, my experience was a little, a little more positive, uhm, aside from just that one guy, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Interesting [sounds from others outside], it sounds like there's some similarity that you've all felt, in the sense that, you know, you've all kind of felt like, alone (=Luca: Mmm), in your, in your background, like not really having other queer people to, you know, uhm, set an example, [inaudible], for, you know, how to handle the thing (=Jamie: Mmm) [Sounds from others outside]. Yeah? Interesting. Okay, so-

**Jamie:** I think it’s interesting how much overlap there is (=Tyler: Hmm?) I think it’s interesting how much overlap there is. ‘Cause I know, like, being a queer person if you’re from a different background or a have completely different experience, (=Tyler: Mmm), but I find it really interesting that like, everybody else who’s said something, I’ve like so strongly related to (=Tyler: Mmm) at least one part of what they’ve said.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah, yeah. That's why I'm asking sameness and difference (=Jamie: Mmm) [Nick nods], here. Yeah. So we've obviously talked about that kind of thing, as we've been, like, you know, describing how we identify and where, where we come from, and our backgrounds and stuff. So, yeah, we can keep that going. What other experiences of sameness of difference do you have, that you'd like to share?

**Jamie:** I have something I’d like to share (=Tyler: Mmm). So, uhm, this is more in the realm of… ah, or I had a similar experience with the, sort of, sexuality, it’s more in the realm of gender stuff. Uhm, and as I struggle with my gender for years without knowing what I was, ‘cause I couldn't even think out loud to myself [Tyler nods]. I couldn't even let myself think a fully formed sentence about like, I feel weird about my gender. Uhm, so I, and I had no resources for that, I had resources for talking about queerness, a little bit, and they were bad resources that I wouldn't, I wouldn't wish on anybody (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), but I had some frame of reference, and by that point, I knew some other queer people. Uhm, and I had no, but I had no way of thinking about gender, nothing at all. I knew one trans person. I really didn't relate to his experience in any way. Uhm, and he was very sweet and helpful, I'm still friends with him today, but like, I didn't, I didn't relate to any part of his experience, so I didn't think like that could be me [Tyler writes something]. Uhm, and I, when would this have been? I would have been in grade eleven, I think (=Tyler: Mmhmm), when I met a friend of mine, uhm, and I had never met a, I'd never met another person who was non-binary before. Uhm, and by that point, I was starting to let myself think about it. And interestingly, I was using they/them pronouns, like I had to fill in a survey or something, and they’d say, what pronouns do you use? I would say, like, ‘they/them’ or I would say ‘she/they’ sometimes, and I didn't think about what that meant for my identity, I was just like, “Oh, I was just using that. But it doesn't mean anything. I'm like, I'm a woman, surely”, (=Tyler: Mmm) uhm, which I find quite interesting in hindsight. Uhm, but I met this friend of mine when I was in grade eleven. And I’d never met somebody who was non-binary before and I’d certainly never met somebody who was really, openly non-binary, and they're like, super open with their family and their family are very supportive. And I met them and we became like, super, super close friends really quickly, ‘cause that's an experience I have with sameness. When you've never met somebody like you before in your life, that first person you meet who understands what it's like to be you (=Tyler: Mmm) and you're like, “oh, my God (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I'm not crazy. I’m at home now” (=Tyler: Mmm). It has, like, for me an experience of making me feel so, it made me feel so at home in myself, just to see somebody who knows exactly what I mean when I explain something about my gender. Uhm, for me, that like experience of sameness, is one of the most, I think, impactful experiences of my life, regarding gender, where I’ve met people who’ve have had a massive impact since then. [Child talking outside] That first person I met who was like me, no matter how, like maybe in the future, we'll have an argument and we won’t be friends anymore, no matter what, like they still had one of the most important impactful roles in my life that another, that like a peer has ever had on me. ‘Cause for the first time ever, I could look at someone and recognize that sameness between each other and feel some sense of, it's okay, I can let myself explore this, I can let myself be who I am. And I can say out loud, like to other people, things about my experience and have them meet that with joy and meet that with positivity. Like even let myself share with my friends like, this is a part of my experience (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and that was huge for me, and only after that point did I start like letting myself express my gender differently and dressing differently, uhm, and styling my hair differently and things like that. And that was a massive experience of like that experience of sameness having a huge impact on my quality of life.

[Pause for 6 seconds; Tyler looks to other participants]

**Luca to Nick:** Why are you looking at me? (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Sage:** Uhm, I think for, for me, my, my first experience of like sameness with, [child talking outside] like, me identifying as a lesbian was quite late, uhm, in my years. It, I think my, my first experience was roughly 2015. Uhm, and what had happened was the, my partner at the time, uhm, very, very much loved the nightlife [Tyler puts away clipboard]. So, she was always in clubs, and naturally I’d tag along with her, uhm. Not really my scene, but I would go in any case. And, I remember I, I was sitting in the corner in one of the clubs, and someone approached me saying that they, they'd seen me on Facebook, uhm, we're actually Facebook friends and I was like, “Oh, okay, cool”. Uhm, and then she was like, “yeah, you know, you should actually come around to this place, and this is the details, I’ll send you the rest, like, on Facebook”. Uhm, anyway, I went, it's an event called The Closet, it’s for like females only. Uhm, so I went, I checked it out and, I immediately felt at home, ‘cause everyone that I spoke to had some, like, if not exactly the same experience, had so much similarities in their experience, in what they were feeling, in how they identify. Uhm, and that sort of circle became home to me so, it would happen once a month. I’d go and it was only after being exposed to that that I became confident in how I identify and [doors opens; closes], uhm, then, like people would ask me “Oh, like, what are you?” and I’m like, “well I’m a lesbian and I’m quite proud of it. And this is who I am, I'm not going to change it”. Uhm, and I think, after having that sort of experience, knowing that I'm not alone, it's, it’s something that many people are facing and experiencing (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). Uhm, at that point, I was like, yeah, I'm, I’m just done with, you know, trying to be what my family wants me to be [Luca nods] (=Tyler: Mmm), trying to please parents, being ashamed of, of the way that I turned, turned out (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and I think at, at one point, my, my mom's family actually tried to have an intervention with me because my younger cousin, uhm, she's also come out much earlier than me, at a, at a much younger age, but she's come out as lesbian as well. And it's this thing of “Ja, you influenced her because she looked up to you, and, you know, you babysat her, so somehow you must have, like,” uh (=Tyler: Mmm), which is ridiculous-

**Jamie:** [Indistinguishable overlap] think it’s contagious.

**Sage:** Yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), [laugh sigh]. It’s, it’s quite ridiculous. Uhm, but yeah, I think, at that point, I was like, you know, I'm, I’m confident, I'm comfortable. Uhm, and I think, I mean, even today, I still, like, get the occasional remark here and there from people. And I just smile at them, laugh it off, and continue, because, I mean, that doesn't have an effect on me anymore. You know, if you are small-minded (=Tyler: Mmm) and you can't comprehend things, because of whatever it is, that's, that's actually sad for you (=Tyler: Mmm). Ja.

**Jamie:** It's interesting to me how many experiences of sameness that I talk to people about, kind of in their core, have the idea of home. Uhm, and I've noticed that, I’ve noticed that with myself, that the, the experiences of the sameness made me feel, like more at home in such a like, intense way than I had ever felt before in my life. And when I started talking to other queer people about that, I noticed that so many of them had that same sort of idea of experiences of sameness allowing them, if not to feel at home, but giving them, giving them a home or giving them some sort of sense of a home (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, and things like that. I find that really, really interesting. Uhm.

**Luca:** Uhm…I've never really had a figure in my life that I could look to, a, specifically a queer, masculine figure (=Tyler & Jamie: Mmm). Uhm, ‘cause I, I never really got along with boys. Especially straight men, throughout my whole life. Up until now even, it's just like, [gestures shooing] no, go away (=[Several]: [Laughter]). But, uhm, ‘cause I mean, even at school, I was like, the only queer kid who came out, and then the one person who I knew was queer, he was, he was a, he was a [inaudible]. Uhm, he was an asshole. He was that, he was that gay and mean stereotype (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Gay and mean, right? Gay, bitchy and mean. Urgh, and he was my director in one of the plays that I did, that, that was an experience. Anyway, [inaudible], uhm, so, growing up with only really the internet as an outlet for queerness, uh, YouTube (=Jamie: Mmm) [Nick nods] became a safe space for me. Specifically two YouTubers, uhm, uh, Abigail from Philosophy Tube (=Jamie: Yes), and Natalie from ContraPoints (=Jamie: Yeah). So, before Abigail came out as trans, she was like my only real example of positive queer masculinity. When she, before she came out as trans, she came out as bi, and I was like, “Wow, this person, this is, this is who I want to be, the, the, and this is, this is how I always imagined a, uhm, male-bodied queer individual would be.” Then she came out as trans and I didn't actually feel there was a, there was a, there was much to take away from that. Obviously, I registered that, she has always – I don’t know how to, I don’t know how to say this (=Tyler: Mmm) without stepping on people's toes (=Tyler: Mmm). But uhm, I never, the, the idea of a role model never went away after she came out, like this person is still the person that I wanted to be. So, and then on top of that, I never really had male friends that were queer (=Tyler: Mmm), until I met my, my current roommate in first year, last year. And we hit it off (=Tyler: Mmm). It was just, like, we suddenly became friends. And everything was, and, well okay, confession time, he was my [inaudible] crush for the longest time. I shot myself in the foot and took French because he was taking French (=Jamie: [Laugh]), and I speak this much of the language [gestures a pinch]. So, that was an experience, don’t do that [=[Several]: [Laughter](. Uhm, but, now roommates, now we’re best of friends, it all works out. It's just that, as much as I had queer friends who were [taps knee several times] women, or you know, female-bodied individuals, they couldn't relate to the certain specificities of what it means to be a queer man (=Tyler: Mmm), in a [inaudible] space and not talk about it. So there were certain things that I never really articulate properly with them, but when I'm talking to my roommate about it, he’s like my only male queer friend, everything just clicks [Jamie nods], everything just [finger clicks]. Everybody understands, we both on the same page-

**Jamie:** You understand yourself better for it, I think (=Luca: Exactly), when you can bounce, bounce back on someone who has that sameness (=Luca: Exactly), then, you really understand yourself better as a person, a lot.

**Luca:** So like, what [pointing to Jamie] you were saying about all of us sharing our stories, about being queer (=Jamie: Mmm), there’s lots of that sameness, there’s levels to it (=Jamie: Exactly; =Tyler: Mmm). So, ja.

**Tyler:** Hmm.

**Jamie:** It’s so interesting.

**Nick:** Uhm, so,I relate to the YouTube situation [looking at Luca] because, uhm, even though I have a gay brother, he wasn’t really a big influence in my life until more recently. Uhm, uhm, well, uhm, what was I going to say? Uhm, yeah, YouTube was a major, major role in my life, it was like, my, my safe space (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like, it was like a place to go escape and just feel like someone was there. Like, instead of just like, being in my own head all the time, like, uhm, I get to question everything [inaudible]. Like, Joe, I used to watch Joey Graceffa a lot. He was a very, he was a very expressive, like a queer person (=Luca: Mmm), and he was like, my icon, he was like the person who I wanted to be (=Tyler: Mmm), like everything I wanted to be for myself (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and like, that was like, the biggest influence in my life to where I am now, I think, like even though I have a gay brother, he wasn’t really there until recently, as I said (=Tyler: Mmm), so, ja.

**Jamie:** I think it’s so interesting, the YouTube stuff. There’s also, like. Abigail, *yoh* her coming out video made me cry (=Luca: [indistinguishable agreement]). I do not cry, I do not cry. I was sobbing, I was sobbing. *Yoh*. I nearly died, [laugh].

**Luca:** As a performer, that whole video was complete and utter perfection, [grabs face] (=Jamie: It was beautiful). It’s so amazing. [inaudible].

**Jamie:** Yeah, I was like, like talk about an experience of sameness, like she was explaining things about the trans experience, and I was like, “Oh, that's me (=Tyler: Mmm). Oh!”. And like, I know, I, when I watched that video, I knew I was trans by then. I, like, that wasn’t a problem, and I was like, “that's what I feel, sometimes,” (=Luca: Mmm) or, it blew my mind. But also, speaking about YouTube and like, God, I spent way too much of my youth sitting, watching, like any, any scrap of representation [Nick nods], I could dig out of YouTube, I watched every molecule. But I actually realized I was queer from a YouTube video (=Nick: [Laugh sigh]). Which is hysterical, and it was ridiculous actually that that happened because like, the signs were there, they were really there. But, uhm, I was, God, I don’t even know how old I was, but I watched some, some, uh, lesbian comedians did like a BuzzFeed video (=Luca: Mmm). And I'd never seen like, I'd never seen like, a butch woman before. Which is insane (=Luca: Mmm), actually, I’d just never seen one. And the one of them is very butch. And they did this like, sort of, they were making jokes about being a lesbian, and jokes about this and that, like, why was I watching that, for starters? Like, [laughingly] that should have been the sign, actually, that anything with lesbian in the title [laughing], it was like, “got to go, have to watch that”. And I was watching it and they were talking about their lives and joking about their lives, and I was like, “I wanna be you guys (=Tyler: Mmm). Shit, like, hang on,” and then I did some soul searching and I was like, “wow, okay,” and then like, every video with the two of them in it, I was like, [clapping] “gonna find it, gotta find it, gotta watch it like twenty times”. [Laugh sigh], like, it's so much that, like trying to find role models online as well. When you don't have one in your real life (=Luca: Mmm). You're trying to find almost like queer parents on the internet in a weird way. (=Luca: Yes), like an adult, an adult who you can look up to, online and there were like a lot of, a lot of, uhm, YouTubers who I definitely did that with.

**Luca:** ‘Cause I mean, it’s [inaudible] that adults know everything. They know how exactly to live your life, and everything like that, but you never felt, you never found someone who’s queer as an adult, so you just grabbed onto whatever you can, wherever you can, to get that little bit of-

**Jamie:** To get that little bit of like reassurance that it's gonna be okay (=Luca: Ja), as well.

**Luca:** Like if they made it okay, I can too.

**Jamie:** Yeah, that’s exactly it. And something that was interesting to me now, is as an adult looking back on their life, and realizing how many adult influences I had in my life that were queer and just didn’t say so (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, and it breaks my heart a little bit because often there are older people who couldn't be out (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and for example, the principal of my primary school, who I was really, really close with, and my family has known her since before I was in school even, ‘cause they were all part of like an organization together, like I literally knew her my entire life. Uhm, and she was a lesbian. She died very recently, a, a month or two back. She was a lesbian and like, no one would say anything. And she was in charge of the school, so if, the, the fear was that if someone said something (=Luca: Mmm), parents would pull their kids out (=Tyler: Mmm). And like, I, I remember when I, when I learned that she was a lesbian, I remember thinking, in the moment, I think it was quite selfish, like “God, I wish I had known that as a child, like I would have saved so much wasted time of like, having an issue with myself, and would’ve saved so much time of like, trying to find my place in the world if I had just seen somebody be queer and being like, ‘okay, that's me’”, I would have recognized that sameness (=Tyler: Mmm). And I was like, “ah, I wish she would have said something”, but she couldn’t have said something, people, people would have pulled their kids out of the school. Like the early 2000s were not the, you know, the best place (=Luca: Mmm) [inaudible] for queer people. Uhm, and she passed away very recently, and there was a, a memorial for, uhm, for her, and an ex-partner, who she remained friends with in true lesbian fashion, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, and like they went together also for decades, and like they had dogs together. Their dogs are the reason I was scared of dogs as a child, ‘cause one of their dogs snorted in my face when I was a baby (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), and I was like, “I am never looking at a dog ever again, thank you”. But, uhm, one of her, one of her ex-partners wa-, spoke at memorial. And she was like in tears. And she was sharing stories about their life together and about how they met and things like that. And no one acknowledged their relationship at all (=Tyler: Mmm), and no one acknowledge the reason that like she was the only person who cried at that memorial (=Tyler: Mmm), and like, no one acknowledged any part of the role they had in each other's lives. And they were like, they were lovers, they were partners (=Tyler: Mmm), they were life partners for a long time (=Tyler: Mmm). And even after she had died, nobody can say anything. Uhm, and I could see her partner grappling with wanting to talk about the grief of losing somebody that she loved, and she couldn't say anything. Even like, even after the fact. And like, that for me, I was like, I was, that was, I think what was the most sad for me actually about that thing, was like, I want you, I so badly want you, like older queer people to be able to talk about that love when your, like, your loved one dies. And she couldn't, she had to say nothing (=Tyler: *Shoh*). And that's like, *oof*…

**Tyler:** Sage, do you have, uh, anything you relate to? Uhm, uh, in the conversation about queer YouTube, or queer media, is that anything that you relate to? [Resets a nametag’s position]

**Sage:** Uhm, [sigh], to be honest, YouTube was, like, not a big part of my life at all. Uhm, I think for the most part, I used mainly for exercise shows and stuff. Uhm, [window rattles slightly] but I think because I am already social with a lot of queer people, uhm, there was, there was no like explicit need for me to go to YouTube and to go to queer media and all this stuff. Uhm, I think, yeah, I think grow-, growing up in the household that I did, uhm, there was a lot that wasn't available to us. Uhm, internet was like this, if we had it, it was like this, “wow! (=Tyler: Mmm) We have internet!” (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, I think for the most part of my childhood, like we didn't have that, we had minimal access to a computer or to anything, I think up until I was 18, I did not have a cell phone (=Tyler: Mmm). I only got a cell phone at the age of 18, which was gifted to me by my grandmother (=Tyler & Luca: Mmm). So, my access to YouTube or to any social platform was limited. And I think because of that, I didn't feel a need to actually turn to YouTube for anything. Uhm, it was more just, you know, speaking to people that I could relate to and [Luca nods], I think, uhm, like there isn't an older figure that I can look up to at the moment, uhm. Because, yeah, I think, I mean, I, I do know that there is, like we do have like a gay uncle (=Tyler: Mmm), like distant family. Uhm, but my mom doesn't really know her family, so before, I didn’t, like, and my dad's not in the picture, so his family's off the cards as well. Uhm, so yeah, it's, it’s mainly just me relying on the people that I’ve surrounded myself with, and taking in their experiences and, uhm, a lot of them have very positive relationships with their parents (=Tyler: Mmm). And I think, yeah, like, just going to, you know, their place and, and being around the families (=Jamie: Mmm), it’s very different, uhm, compared to where I come from. And, yeah, like I, I always, took sort of comfort in that (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, that's why I’ve got quite good relationships with, uhm, certain people, uhm, and their families and you know, I can, I can go over and not be scared about it (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, just-

**Jamie:** That was big thing for me as well, is havingfriends, or I’ve, I'm, like, very fortunate now, that my family are accepting. Uhm, they’re, we don't have conversations about that, they're like, “we're okay with it, we're not gonna talk about it”. Uhm, and that was a big thing for me as well, is having friends who had like super supportive parents, and just like going and spending time with their family. It was a really healing thing for me, I think [Tyler nods]. Uhm, really like, really comforting, and my friend, who, uhm, was the first person that I met who is like me, uhm, their family are like so supportive, and like, super supportive of their transition and super supportive of all that stuff. Like they really are, like the poster family, I guess (=Tyler: Mmm), for like, being a good parent to your queer and trans kids (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, like, I remember the first time I went over there being so shocked that their parents used my pronouns, without even asking them to (=Tyler: Hmm). And I was like, “wow, like, this is insane for me, like, I can't even picture an adult doing that”, uhm, for the time was maybe like 16, 17. And like having that experience any time with like, a really positive family was so like, made, made me feel so much more like comfortable within myself and safe and good. It made me feel good to like go back to my family, which still needs some time, [laugh sigh].

**Sage:** Yeah. I think that, also like, I relate to, like that and, and, like I've mentioned, uhm, going to my friends and their parents being like, all supportive and stuff. But one of the, one of the, [laugh sigh], occurrences that, one of the experiences that I’ve had was where my, my mom's brother, uhm, one of his ex-girlfriends that was quite close with our family, uhm, her son’s actually, you know, come out as gay. And this is a woman that I grew up around, uhm, with her son, and we kind of always knew that he was gay, ‘cause he was very different, uhm, in terms of like [air quotes] what was expected of a boy or man. And, you know, just seeing how proud she is of him, and her participating in every single Pride event, in every event where he goes for fun, uhm, you know he’s very into drag as well. And her just supporting. And then I look at my family, and I'm like, this is a woman that was basically family, and she's so accepting, and then I’m like, why, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), why can’t my family just accept that? And, yeah, it’s, I think, the, the sadness was that I could never bring home my friends and have them feel that way (=Tyler: Uh-huh) [Jamie nods]. Uhm, and that's why like, on the odd occasion that I do visit my mom, which is whenever she needs something, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, like, I'll, I’ll go and, you know, uhm, my wife would come with me and they’re okay, like they, they do full-on conversation (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but she'll never speak about anything related to the two of us being together. If I’m there, it’s like, I’m there, and I'm a single person that is there. And my wife is a single person that is there, but we’re not together (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, it's, I think it's, it's not the best environment because I've got two younger brothers. And… I mean, to put it blunt, they are little assholes, (=[Several]: [Laughter]) actually. Because my, the one that’s younger he’s about 18. Uhm, he's just recently started dating and he's, he's fine with, you know, my identity and he’s very supportive. But there's certain things that he would say, and I’m like “dude, I actually wanna smack you right now, but it's cool”. Uhm, and then my younger brother, I swear, it's like the influence of my stepfather and his family, is so toxic to this little guy because he's nine, and I can hear racial slurs coming out of his mouth. Which is, which is shocking, because he’s so [bang outside the room], I mean, you shouldn't even be bothered by colour at that point. And I can hear homophobia coming out of his mouth, [window rattles] I’m just like, wow, guy. It's, it's, yeah, it's, it's quite sad. And he’s so small, which is like, it's, it’s quite concerning because what happens when he grows up and he becomes one of those bigoted people? (=Tyler: Mmm) Because he doesn't have- (=Jamie: It starts when they’re kids). Yeah, that's the thing. And, I mean, it's weird that it's, it’s happening with him. And it hasn't happened with my other brother, because he's, like, here and there he'll say things, but he corrects himself. Uhm, whereas the younger one, he’s just like, he, he made this stupid remark yesterday, ‘cause he's actually sleeping over by us this weekend. But he made this stupid remark where, we were playing I Spy, which is something we do in the car just to keep him quiet, (=[Several]: [Laughter]) and then, like keep him entertained so that he doesn’t perform. And I was, I was, like, “I spy something white that's in the car”. And he's like, “Oh, me”. I'm like, “what do you mean, you?”. He’s like “no, I’m White”, and I’m like “well, racially, you're not, but you shouldn’t even be worried about that right now.” (=Tyler: Mmm) He’s like, “No, but look at my skin, I’m White”, and I’m like “No, I’m talking about something else. You're not White, you are a person (=Tyler: Mmm), you are a human being” (=Tyler: Mmm). And, like, often I hear him say, “Oh no did you see that Black boy?” or “did you see that-?” and I’m like, and I’ve told my mom, like, “Mom, you can’t let this go on (=Tyler: Mmm), like you need to do something, like, the homophobia, the, the racism. Like, you need to put a stop to it. This is not a good space for him to be in (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I fear for him, because, he’s so young and times are changing. It's, you know, it's a progressive world that we live in [window rattles]. So, I wouldn't want him to get bullied because of what he's saying (=Tyler: Mmm). Ja.

**Tyler:** Interesting. Woah, [laugh sigh as name tags are blown off the table]. I do have some Prestik, if that will help. Uhm,

**Jamie:** I also have a, with my brother, I have one older brother and I have, kind of similar, but kind of very, [laughter as name tags fly off again], [Tyler attaches Prestik to nametags and presses them onto table] very different kind of weird experience of watching my brother – he's much, much older than I am – watching him develop bigoted beliefs as an adult. And it's quite alarming to witness. He, as like a full-on adult, somehow sort of got sucked into the allure of… I believe, I honestly, cons, like, very conservative social media and started reading books that say terrible things (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And he won’t, he’ll be like “oh, no, I just like that they're controversial. I don't agree with what they say (=Luca: Ooo, there we go) necessarily.” But ooo is that a red flag for me. And like, he, I actually didn't come out to my brother, I got outed to him by my mom, which is a fun little activity my mom likes to do every year or two, is out me to a random family member [Luca raises hand and nods to indicate ‘me too’]. Uhm, five seconds after I came out to my mother, I said, “Don’t, you can't go telling people, they need to hear it from me when I'm ready to talk to them”. And she had an argument with me about it. She was like, “but why? But people deserve to know!” (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]). She does not get the concept of waiting until I'm ready to, to, tell people about it. But like my brother was like the last person in my immediate family to hear about it for a reason, [laugh sigh]. And like he's getting more and more conservative, I won’t say like conservatism is the issue, but more and more bigoted, over time, and I'm like watching that train go. And I'm like, [sharp inhale], I don't like where it's going (=Tyler: Mmm), I don't like where it's going, it’s really not ideal. Uhm, and he is, I think, very cautious about what he says around me ‘cause he knows I’ll shout at him (=Tyler: Mmm), if he says something. But he says like, quite alarmingly transphobic things every now and then. Uhm, and like, in, you know, my situation, my family know about my queerness, but they don't know about my gender identity. ‘Cause I just don't think it would be, a, a, ‘cause I still live with my parents, I don't think it'd be a great environment to bring it up now. I’ll bring it up, now, and be like, “by the way, this is what's up” and then leave, and let them think about it. And then I'll come back and be like, “questions? (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]) Concerns? No? Okay, goodbye.” And, than rather be in the house and have to hear every thought my mother has on, on the topic. Uhm, so like, looking into the future, like I don't think my, I don't think my brother’s gonna take that one brilliantly, when we do that conversation. Uhm [window rattles], it's interesting and it’s like, it's almost, with him, almost like watching a child as well, ‘cause he can be very immature. He's like, 31 now, but he's very, very emotionally immature. He's not very empathetic. And it’s also like watching, and it's a product of his environment, I also wanna be like “who is in charge of your environment?” so we can make this environment better. It's like, “oh shit, you're in charge of environment, there's nothing I can do”, [laugh].

**Luca:** [To Nick]: How do you navigate that's sort of thing with your brother? Because you're the only one here who has like, a queer sibling.

**Nick:** What do you mean, like?

**Luca:** How does [video recorder dies] it work out? Because obviously, like, I don't understand sibling relationships at all, because I’m an only child. So, then I suppose the question is, what is it like having a queer sibling?

**Nick:** Mmm. At the beginning, when, when I used to live still in the Free State, I didn’t know my brother was queer at all, like, I had no idea. And when we moved to Capet Town, like, I found out, my sister was, we were talking and I was like, “Oh my God, that can’t be a thing. It cannot be a thing.” ‘Cause I had like small mind syndrome – small town syndrome – and shit like that, and then, like I got older, and now I'm like, it's really, it’s really comforting (=Luca: Mmm), really nice have to like, someone who’s in the community so that you have like someone to fall back on and talk to, or, like, whose lived experiences, so that you have like your brother there, to like help you, to, to be, like, in the. Like, we're very different. Like, I'm more like to myself, he's a bit more expressive about like [inaudible], about certain subjects. I’m like more to myself and really shy and scared to talk to people. He’s pretty much like “just go, just go do it”. And uhm, ja, it’s very, it’s, it’s super nice, to have like, a queer or gay brother. It’s promising.

**Tyler:** And your, your parents?

**Nick:** Well that’s, they don’t, they don’t, they don’t take note of us being gay, or, they’re just like, okay. You g-, like, if I bring a boyfriend over it’s like, “ja, so, that’s your friend, right?” (=Tyler: Oh, really?; =Jamie: Mmm). Ja, (=Tyler: Okay), just don’t, like, take note of it, so just, like, never talk about it. So it’s a bit of a sensitive topic in the house.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay.

**Jamie:** It’s interesting to me because my family is also like that, but they're, I think they maybe like to think that they're a bit more accepting than they are in reality. But they do the same thing. Uhm, like, I'm, when I have people come over, who are clearly, *clearly* there is something going on there. And like, I am a, aff-, very affectionate with my friends anyway. And like, when I have friendships, they are usually very, very close. But you can tell there’s a difference. You can tell, like (=Luca: Mmhmm), you don't cuddle your friends like that, like really (=Luca: Yeah). And my mom will be like “oh that’s your friend!”. And I'll be like… (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). “you know, that's not what it is, like you know that's not what's going on”, [laugh sigh]. But they like, will not at all. If I have a boy who comes over, it's only ever going to be a friend and my mom's like, “Oooo” (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Not in a million years, hey, [laugh].

**Nick:** Ja… I don’t think, I don’t think there’s any like, like, situation like that. I don’t know, like, they don’t, they don’t, they don’t wanna see it, they don’t wanna [inaudible] it, like, [inaudible]. Or anything like that so-

**Jamie:** Pretend it’s not happening.

**Nick:** Ja, pretend it’s not happening or just like, don’t do it in the house, all that, out of respect. It’s such a weird situation because I didn't have to come out to my, my mom, she already knew, because like, you just know. And like, didn’t really have to come out to anyone, because, it’s there, like, [inaudible], just there. So, you know, deal with it. But, through, from, from when my brother was in the house to now, it’s, she’s, she’s progressed a lot more in like accepting. Like, when my brother first, was like, he didn't really like come out or anything but when my brother was first open about it, he didn’t really, you know, that whole situation. Uhm, I think she was more conserved, and now it’s like, “okay, well, [inaudible], you do you”, you know what I mean? Ja.

**Tyler:** Interesting: Yeah. There is one thing you said a while back at the beginning, uh, Jamie, which I think is interesting to explore. It's kind uhm, also something you [addressing Luca] were saying, like levels of sameness and difference within, like the queer community. Uhm, you said that, uhm, there are some lesbians who don't approve of (=Jamie: Yes) or don't agree with, uh, people who are non-binary calling themselves lesbian as well.

**Jamie:** There are a couple of toxic lesbian discourses, which I feel personally victimized by (=Tyler: Oh, really?) A couple. Uhm, there are a lot of very transphobic lesbians. I, I don't think more than in any other group of people, I don’t think lesbians are inherently transphobic, but I do think that… they're a little bit more comfortable to talk about it sometimes. Uhm, I think some people feel protected by their level of marginalization (=Luca: Mmm). And they think that it's okay for them to say, like, really offensive things about other marginalized groups. Uhm, I think some people feel more comfortable saying offensive things that they know are offensive, because they have a layer of marginalization, which (=Tyler: Mmm) they feel protects them. Uhm, and so, there's a lev-, level of that and then there’s a level where it’s a sort of ongoing discourse about whether the people who are non-binary can identify with the term ‘lesbian’, because there are lesbians who feel that the term ‘lesbian’ is exclusively for women (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, I disagree with that. Uhm, and I think that that perspective ignores a lot of lesbian history. Uhm, because if you look back historically, maybe we used different language at the time, if you look back at historical, lesbian figures, a lot of them we can't, you know, we can't really say, “Oh, they would be non-binary today”, but a lot of them had trans experiences and a lot of them had an experience, which inherently involved elements of performing certain varieties of masculinity, uhm, and things like that, I think to say that the term ‘lesbian’ is only for women is ignoring, like, thousands and thousands of really important lesbian figures in history. Uhm, and, yeah, and like terms like, like ‘butch’ which are inherent parts of lesbianism, those are inherently gender-nonconforming. And if you have a label that is inherently gender-nonconforming, there are gonna be people whose gender identities are also nonconforming. It’s part of the game, [laugh sigh], I guess. Uhm, so for me, it just doesn't make sense. That is, you know, there are people who are upset with the fact that people like me sometimes use the term ‘lesbian’ to describe themselves. Uhm, yeah.

**Luca:** So, where’s the line between identifying as gender-nonconforming and just… is this gender-nonconforming? [raises beautified fingernails] (=Jamie: So-; =Tyler: Mmm) Right? But like see, I-

**Jamie:** You define it for yourself, I think.

**Luca:** That's the thing, right? I don't know where I stand personally, for when it comes to they/them pronouns. I (=Jamie: Mmm) thought about it, uhm, identifying as he/they for a while, but I don't know where exactly, like, because…[sigh], when we talk about femininity and we talk about masculinity, and we talk about like, uhm… like, the markers that mark you or code you as feminine (=Jamie: Mmm) or masculine, not as very under, or informed by traditional ideas of that, (=Jamie: Yes), right? So then, undoing a lot of that brings up or reveals a lot about masculinity and femininity that you don’t usually consider as masculine or feminine. So then, at what point does it no longer become masculinity and no longer become femininity when it, it then transfers over to this grey area of gender-nonconforming or non-, non-binary, kind of space?

**Jamie:** I think that's a really personal thing. I think it's a, not personal, I think it's really individual thing. Like for some people, doing something that other people might perceive to be either masculine or feminine, it might, maybe isn’t that for yourself. Uhm, so maybe for you, I’m not saying it’s the case, but maybe for you painting your nails doesn't feel with gender-nonconforming at all, and it doesn't feel like you're doing something feminine. But for other people, they might still perceive you as that.

**Luca:** I’ll say, I’ll say, that it's definitely one thing that I do myself and to code myself as queer.

**=Jamie**: Mmm, that’s definitely part of it as well, that’s definitely-

**=Nick:** It’s definitely the one that, if I’m out like, I mean I’ve got my ears pierced [inaudible], and I have to be much more ambitious ideas than these tiny little studs than are currently in (=Tyler & Jamie: [Laugh sigh]), but when they come out, you’ll see a different side. But like, I don’t consider doing that as, for myself, as being, as being okay to now identify as gender non-conforming, or change around my pronouns. It’s just that, I can do it, it’s another way to express myself (=Tyler: Mmm), as myself.

**Jamie:** There’s also, a difference between, like you can be gender-nonconforming and be, for example, a cis man, you're still gender-nonconforming. Gender-nonconformity, doesn't necessarily and often doesn't correlate to your actual gender identity (=Luca: Mmm). That's, I suppose part of it. Uh, I think for probably most people that are gender-nonconforming, it doesn't necessarily correlate in any way to their ultimate gender identity. For me, it does (=Luca: Okay) ‘cause part of how I experience gender and part of how I perform gender is informed by, I guess, breaking the gender rules both of masculinity and of femininity. That's something that brings me joy (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, but it's different for different people. And I think it's, it's, I mean you to get, you to make that line for yourself (=Tyler: Mmm), you get to say, like, “Am I doing this because it makes me-?”, I mean, ultimately, you’re doing things because they make you feel good, and they make you feel more comfortable about yourself whereas self-expression, maybe that feels a gender-nonconforming to you, and maybe that feels, like you might have, you know, a genderqueer experience, like your gender might also be something else. That can be the case, but I don't think it's the case for everybody (=Luca: Okay). Like, you get to sort of say, if it makes you feel good, it makes you feel good. And you get to decide what that means for you.

**Tyler:** Sage, do you relate to what I was asking Jamie about, especially with your, your spouse, is that an issue that she experiences, like being non-binary and lesbian?

**Sage:** Uhm, I think for her, she, she feed recently like, tied a label to herself, or, or, like she tried to tie the ‘lesbian’ to herself, and then, we actually had a discussion about it. And then she was like, “but actually, I, I feel that I'm non-binary, because, like, I don't want to confine myself to ‘lesbian’” (=Tyler: Mmm), because, I mean, I'm, I’m the first, like, yeah, I’m the first lesbian that she’s been with, like before that, she’s been with like men and, you know, heterosexual men, and, uhm. So, like, at first, it, it was a little, a little bit of a blurred line. Because in, I think, in the environment that I previously associated myself with, they were very restricting on what's accepted under ‘gay’. So you were either a gay man, you were either a lesbian or you were heterosexual. And there was no in-between. So, being in that environment, it was like, “okay, you need to be lesbian or you just need to be heterosexual, it’s, it’s that or the other”. Uhm, but I think, once I took myself out of that space, uhm, I was able to understand people and their queerness, and, you know, understand that gender is fluid. And, ja, like, you cannot box an individual just because you're comfortable with labeling yourself as that. Uhm, and yeah, so I think over time, you know, the, the understanding of herself, it, it progressed a little bit. Uhm, I think she's still, she's still trying to become a little more comfortable with herself, uhm, and (=Jamie: It takes time). Yeah, it does, it does take some time. And I think, uhm, because, her sort of coming out, it's, it's not like, super fresh, but it is still, compared to, if we compare to my journey, from, you know, it's been years and years. Uhm, and for her, it’s still pretty, still, pretty recent. So, I try to be more understanding of that, and, you know, allow her to figure out, you know, what she feels for herself and what she’s comfortable with, and, if that's applying a label, then it’s applying a label, if it's not, then it's not. Uhm, yeah, so I, I think we just try to be supportive of each other. And, that support is, you know, it comes my way as well. Uhm, because I identify as lesbian, uhm, but many people try to label me as ‘butch lesbian’. And that's just not who I am. Uhm, you know, I, I think it comes from the fact that my hair is quite short, and I wear guys’ clothing, and it's, for me, my identity, and, you know, my, like, who I am, it’s, it's got nothing to do with me feeling like I need to dress like a guy to prove this message [inaudible]. It's just I, I dress for the fact that I'm comfortable. And in terms of like my hair as well, I’m comfortable, l always (=Tyler: Yeah), I think and that's what many people don't understand, ‘cause, like that the people that I was surrounded by, they’re like, “well you dress like this, and you look like this, so you must be this” (=Tyler: Mmm) And I’m like, no (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I dress like this because I'm comfortable like that (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). And, I am who I am, and (=Jamie: That’s r-) it’s not for you to determine, it’s for me.

**Jamie:** That's really interesting to me, because it’s something I’ve felt, uhm, both when I started identifying as non-binary and when I started identifying with the term ‘lesbian’, which I’m still iffy on. Uhm, but, I, I had those experiences kind of overlapping in a sort of same period of time, and I definitely felt pressure – I think, mostly internally but it also comes from somewhere – to perform a very specific kind of, like, female masculinity (=Tyler: Mmm), and to perform a specific kind of butchness, and felt that maybe pressure to perform a certain way. So I, I dressed in a way that I actually enjoyed dressing for a while, because I felt like, “oh, I'm supposed to enjoy this and this is how I'm supposed to want to dress”. And like that wasn't actually quite right. So there's like, pressure of gender roles externally to the community and the world at large, and then there's also a weird kind of pressure with, within the community of queerness and within the community of transness that there is still a kind of queer gender norm (=Tyler: Yeah) that you’re supposed to conform to as well.

**Tyler:** Yeah.I am hearing today that there's a lot of, like, uh, struggling with, uh, obligation of some kind (=Jamie: Mmm), a ‘supposed to-ness’ to, like, you're *supposed to* do that, or (=Luca: Mmm), you’re sup-, you know, you *need* to think about this, you *need* to do that, whether it's you know, from the beginning of like, people assume you’re straight from default, or, yeah, then you *have* to use a certain identity label and you *have* to present in a certain way if you use that label. Yeah. And then the other side being just do what feels like you, uh-

**=Jamie:** It’s weird that you have to learn to do that.

**=Tyler:** -and what feels like home. Yeah!

**Jamie:** It’s weird that you have to learn that to do that. It should, like, feel, be the default, you should do what makes me feel good (=Tyler: Yeah), provided you’re not harming any people (=Luca: Mmm; =Tyler: Yeah), you should do what feels right for you (=Tyler: Yeah). And that's, I think, just not really that normalized in our culture, you’re s-, (=Tyler: Mmm) supposed to do something, all the time.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah. It is, it is a weird thing that, yeah, you kind of have to learn it, over time. Very strange.

**Jamie:** And I think as queer people, you have to learn that often as an adult (=Tyler: Mmm). And I think for… people with a more heteronormative experience of the world, they get to learn that a little bit more young (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, they get, well, I think they learn it a little bit less intimately, often, but they learn things like doing what makes you feel comfortable and like finding yourself and I, I think often they get to do that a little younger than a lot of queer people get to do (=Tyler: Mmm). Whereas they get to have that as part of like, the sort of tumultuous mess of like puberty in high school, they get to do it all in one go and then sort of be done. And they’ve sort of worked themselves out and they're okay. I think often for queer people that happens a little bit later. Uhm, and I think for some, for some people it can be traumatic, as well, to have that experience of like creating yourself (=Tyler: Mmhmmm), again (=Tyler: Yeah), like a second time.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Totally. Yeah, so anyway, we are kind of, uhm, nearing the end of the session. Is there anything that you, uh, still want to share? Now is your time, if you have any particular experience or something you want to talk about?

**Jamie:** I have a question.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Jamie:** I wonder how other queer people feel about reclamation of slurs (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, because, there are a couple, this is a very odd thing to say, there are a couple of slurs that I really like. They really feel like home to me (=Tyler: Mmm), and they really feel good to me to use for myself. And I won’t use them for other people, because that’s, I don't know how they feel about that word (=Tyler: Yeah). But they feel really good to me to use for myself and I identify really strongly with some of them, for example, like, I don't want to upset people (=Tyler: Mmm) by saying, but I kind of have to say it to explain it (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, I identify really strongly with the word ‘dyke’ (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and, and much more strongly than I do with the word ‘lesbian’, for example. And I know something about it seems to carry more of how I feel, than I guess more neutral, descriptive words do. But, I know that a lot of people have different perspectives on how they feel about using those words for yourself, and sort of using them in general, reclamation in general. So I kind of wonder like, what other people feel about using things that are historically, and are still today, slurs, for themselves, or just in general, so.

**Luca:** Well,I mean, like ‘queer’ (=Jamie: Yeah; =Tyler: Mmhmm), is a reclaimed slur.

**Jamie:** Like that's been very broadly reclaimed, so.

**Luca:** Yeah.The older generation is still very iffy about it (=Jamie: Mmm), whether they use, people in particular are queer or are straight, heterosexual. Like my parents don’t use ‘queer,’ as much like I'm telling them, it's fine, it's, it’s okay, it's alright. But they still have that connotation that ‘queer’ is negative. That's them. But even older generations of queer people, some people that even I’ve accounted like, at university are still very iffy about the word ‘queer’ (=Tyler: Mmm; =Jamie: Yeah). But, I don't know, it has become like a blanket term. Now, trigger warning (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, the F-slur is a favorite of mine (=Jamie: Mmm), in, in queer circles, where, I [inaudible], I mean, we say it, we say it [inaudible], we say it in a group to people we talk about, and we don’t, talk about, and we don't mean it in a malicious way at all. It's, it's a term of endearment.

**Jamie:** There’s something about taking it for yourself and using amongst yourselves, like we've taken that power. Like, it's us now.

**Luca:** Like, my roommate and I will call us that, like if we, if we’re, if we’re like having an argument, we’ll straight up call each other the F-slur and it just be like, “okay, and?”. Or, even, I recently watched the, the film, okay now I just need to watch, Moffie (=Jamie & Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, yeah, yeah, no, [laugh sigh], I can’t, I feel completely different about that word (=Tyler: Mmm). If someone were to say that to me, I would immediately, I would immediately seize up, because I, I really think I’m being hate-crimed (=Tyler & Jamie: Mmm), for being called that (=Tyler: Mmm). But uhm,

**Jamie:** They carry different contexts, also with language (=Luca: Yes), they carry different contexts and they mean different things to you, I think.

**Luca:** How Afrikaans was used as a tool of oppression during apartheid, carries that same connotation with the word.

**Jamie:** It’sinteresting to me as well, ‘cause I also, I feel, I, I don't generally tend to say it because people look at me and assume I'm a woman, and then they feel uncomfortable about me saying that slur, so I take into account how other people would perceive me (=Luca: Mmm), and I think about the slurs that I, that I might use. But like, some of my friends have, like called me that jokingly, occasionally, I’d be like, “oh, that actually feels good. And that feels like a part of me, that feels like a part of my history. And it feels like a part of who I am”. But in, in other languages, I feel like “oh” (=Luca: Yeah), uhm, and it's like specific languages, languages that are prevalent in my history, in my like, family history and stuff like that, I feel very different about them. I feel like in English, I'm like, “Oh, I feel okay to take that on. I feel okay to like ‘this is mine now’. Like, ‘you can't use that against me anymore’. I have, [laugh sigh] stealing it from, stealing it from the queer oppressor, uhm.

**Luca:** Like there’s circles to it. Like, I have a group of straight friends, uhm, straight boys. They're like, the only men who are straight who I’m friends with. And it's like, you know, it’s that whole “the boys” kind of group. And it's something that I can identify with because they're incredibly progressive and accepting and everything, but there's still like, heterosexual or at least they code themselves as that (=Jamie: Yeah). Uhm, and when we, like, we all like, do things together, and we'll shade appr-, we’ll refer to things as, “ah, that's pretty gay”. But we won't, like we, [indistinguishable] ‘gay’ but the damaging aspect of that. And we won't use it outside of our specific context (=Jamie: Mmm). Like, I'm very confident that either one of us will not go out with a different group that doesn't understand the historical use and abuse of it that way (=Jamie: That is actually causes harm), and then use it that way (=Jamie: Yeah). But when it’s with us, when it’s closed off and it’s in that context, then it will be fine. It’s-

**Jamie:** And you also all know each other and don’t have a, you have the context of a relationship with each other in which you understand what you believe about, about the world.

**Luca:** Exactly.

**Jamie:** It’s so interesting.

**Tyler:** Nick, Sage, how do you feel about, uh, using slurs like that?

**Sage:** I feel quite, quite similar to both Luca and Jamie. Uhm, in the sense that if you like, when I was younger and, you know, slurs were thrown my way and I would take immediate offence to it because I was uncomfortable with myself. But I think as I, I got a bit older, and I got a bit more comfortable, now if a slur’s thrown my way, I’ll be like, ja. So, all, like, I think, yeah, very much, if you accept the word and you're comfortable with the word, you take away the power. So the people that think they're going to damage you and, and affect your, your mental and emotional state by using those words, they're actually really wrong. Uhm, so I think the, the one word which I have to agree with Luca, which is ‘moffie’, I still feel very strongly against that word. Only because I still see it being used in my mom's household to describe my brothers when they feel, like, the need to cry about something that's affecting them. Or they feel the need to talk about their feelings and then it would be, “Oh, are you a moffie because you want to talk about your feelings?” (=Luca: Mmm). And for me, I, I get very upset, that's why I can, I think at most I spend two hours by my parents and then I have to go. It’s, it feels like I'm suffocating in that space.

**Jamie:** I also have that same [inaudible] as well. It’s not my immediate family but in my like extended family, it’s still used a lot. Uhm, and they won’t use other slurs because I think it's been less normalized to them and they feel much less casual, you say them, and you know that there is fire on your tongue in a way. But ‘moffie’ gets thrown around like all the time. Uhm, and so I also have that, I have that sort of like “urh!”, sort of, for a second little bit of like a jolt, and I think it’s partly the context of Afrikaans, uhm, also the way that it gets used very casually. Uhm, in a way it does connote the way that they, you know, are disrespectful of queer people.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

[All turn to Nick]

**Several:** [Laughter]

**Nick:** Uhm, so, ja, I agree with everyone and like I, [inaudible], I relate to a lot of what you’re saying, but, uhm, I don’t really, I, in general, I don't use slurs. So, it’s, every time I say it, it just feels gross to me, it feels a bit weird, but there’s nothing I can like, you, I haven’t used it, like regaining it and feeling that power, like, ah, [indistinguishable] (=Tyler: Yeah) you used to call me those and now I’m using it to like empower myself, but it just feels a little gross to me. And I barely, I don’t really use slurs in any context. So, it’s like, I, I would, like I understand, but I don’t necessarily use them, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. It, it might be something like, uh, terms you use to identify yourself as. It’s like, if it feels like home, then you can use it, and if it feels ehh, then don't use it. And it's, yeah (=Luca: Mmm) kind of up to everyone, I suppose. Yeah, unless they do harm to other people, [laugh sigh]

**Jamie:** That's, I think that's the thing is, sometimes you don't know if somebody might have like a traumatic association with that word, in particular. Uhm, I think uhm, it was, when I was doing the first gender studies course last year, my tutor told a story, and they speak like a million languages. And they told the story about being with a group of friends going to watch an orchestra, uhm, playing and they were hopping between languages. And they were hopping from like English and Flemish and German and Dutch and they were like hopping languages the whole time. Uhm, and they were sitting the audience waiting, oh, it was at the end of the, at the end of the concert, and we're sitting there talking about the music, uhm, and I forget, I think it's in Flemish, the word for oboe, is *Fagott*, and they jumped from Flemish to English sort of mid-phrase, and they said, “Oh, my God, wasn't that faggot so beautiful?” And then like everyone around them like (=Luca: Oh!) all these like old people in the theatre were like, “huh? What the hell's going on?” And they told the story, uh, it was over WhatsApp, they told the story in a voice-note. Uhm, and then they deleted it very quickly after sending it and I was like, that was like, I was like, that's odd, like it was, you know, a sweet funny story. And we were talking about slurs that felt appropriate (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and they said, like, “sorry, I actually changed my mind about saying that, because I don't know the, the context and the weight that that word holds for other people (=Tyler: Yeah) in this class” (=Luca: Mmm). And somebody, you know, most of you probably hear that word a lot and, you know, it’s undisturbed. For some people, they might hear that and have really very traumatic memories associated with that. And that, I was kind of like [inaudible], and I was like, changed how I thought about that a little bit as well (=Tyler: Yeah). Even if you mean it with a good intention, you can still hurt people.

**Tyler:** Yeah…. That’s true… Cool. So then, uh, I'm gonna have to stop that now, ‘cause we're actually a little bit over time even. Uhm, [laugh sigh], yeah, um, is there anything that you're like taking away from participating today? Like, how has this been for you? Any thoughts?

**Luca:** I miss talking to queer people (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Jamie:** Talking (=Luca: Yeah) to straight people is miserable

**Luca:** Ah (=[Several]: [Laughter]) barbarians

**Nick:** Insightful.

**Luca:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah? (=Jamie: Yeah)

**Jamie:** I felt like I understand myself better a little bit (=Tyler: That’s cool). It's like, I know, I have that experience usually when I talk to other queer people about this sort of stuff. But it's been a long, a long kind of, and so it's nice to have these sorts of discussions again (=Tyler: Yeah)

**Nick:** Talking to strangers, it’s (=Jamie: Yeah) a different situation (=Jamie: Yeah), ‘cause with friends, like, they already know situations, with strangers, you can just like express yourself in any way you wanna (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Jamie:** You can, you can express yourself in a completely different way ‘cause like chances are we're not gonna see each other again, and so you can sometimes share things that you wouldn't share with people you do know.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sage:** Uhm**,** I think it's, it’s opened up a lot for me (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Uhm, just taking everyone's experiences and thoughts. Uhm, I think my, my few friends that I associate with, uhm, are very similar to me. So, seeing similarities but also a lot of differences come in there just based on everyone’s experience. It's been very, uh, refreshing.

**Tyler:** Yeah.Great. I had hoped or something like that, [laugh sigh]. Even a small degree of it (=Luca: Mmm). Yeah. Okay, cool. So I'm gonna stop this one.

Jamie

[Jamie completes informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Okay, so it’s all good?

**Jamie:** All good.

**Tyler:** No questions? [Jamie shakes head]. I can start recording?

**Jamie:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. So, how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Jamie:** Ah, I’ve been alright (=Tyler: Uh-huh), busy, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, it's really busy (=Jamie: Yeah), for, for lots of uni students, right now.

**Jamie:** Yes, very, very busy (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Every time I see a friend, like “How was your week?” and they're always like, “Ahhhh…” (=Tyler: [Laugh]), [laugh], and they stare off into the distance (=Tyler: [Laugh]) for a very long time (=Tyler: Yeah), [laugh]. Okay.

**Tyler:** Yeah, totally. Okay. Uhm, but good, otherwise?

**Jamie:** Yeah, good.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool.

**Jamie:** It's obviously stressful, but it's not like, unmanageable, so (=Tyler: Okay, that's good), that's important, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, so then we can get right into discussing the focus group. So how did you feel about it in general?

**Jamie:** Uhm, I was very nervous before (=Tyler: Okay), uhm, because I don't always read other people the best, or read other situations the best and it's not like a thing where that's always the problem (=Tyler: Uh-huh) but like sometimes. Uhm, so I'm always very nervous that I'll like mis-read a situation, and then like, overshare. And then, when I'm nervous, I overshare, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Oh, okay), as a response to being nervous, and then afterwards, I'll be nervous that I overshared (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and then I'll overshare again because I’m nervous again (=Tyler: Oh, wow, okay), [laugh sigh]. So, I was a little bit nervous about that. Uhm, but I actually enjoyed it. I thought it was cool. Uhm, it was nice, you know, interacting with, other people on those topics (=Tyler: Uh-huh), uhm, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, did you feel like you had that kind of nervous oversharing?

**Jamie:** Yeah, a little bit, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Oh, okay (=Jamie: [Laugh]), [laugh sigh]. Yeah, I think, I also do think some of the other participants were quieter (=Jamie: Mmm). Yeah, yeah. Uhm, so did you feel a sameness with anyone in particular?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… Uhm, I don’t know, I think we all had very different experiences (=Tyler: Mmm) of like self and of the universe (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but I, did find it interesting that there were little pockets of sa-, sameness with everybody (=Tyler: Yeah) and there were little things in each other's experiences (=Tyler: Yeah) that were, you know, more, samey (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, with everyone's different experiences (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, there was nobody where I was like, “Oh, like, this is me” (=Tyler: Right). But that's quite, I think, quite a rare (=Tyler: Yes) experience to have.

**Tyler:** Was that, that sense of “home”?

**Jamie:** Yeah and that, that sense where, like, there's a wholeness to how same you are (=Tyler: Uh-huh). I think that's quite, that's quite, rare (=Tyler: Right). Uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), for me at least, but I think for other people I’ve spoken to about it, it’s quite rare to like, meet someone and immediately be like, “Oh my God, you know exactly (=Tyler: Yeah) what it feels like to be a person like me” (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), but yeah that just-

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. There were dimensions of relating, I (=Jamie: Yeah) remember you telling other participants that you relate to what they’d just said (=Jamie: Mmhmm), you know? Uhm, yeah, but of course, a limit to, uhm, the extent to which you can relate, I suppose (=Jamie: Yes). Yeah.

**Jamie:** Because we all have different identities and experiences, and, like, (=Tyler: Yeah) lives, there is, always going to be like, some limit to it.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. So did you feel a, a difference in a significant way from anyone?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… That's interesting, I hadn't actually thought about that. Uhm, I remember feeling very surprised, I’ve forgotten everybody’s names (=Tyler: It’s okay), but the person who was sitting to my right (=Tyler: Mmm), I was feeling very surprised that she was married (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Because she looked my age or younger (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And I don’t really like, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), not that many people, not that many people my age are married and those who are married, they're straight couples getting married (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), I don’t really. Uhm, I was very surprised that, that really, really surprised me. Actually, so, I saw my friend, uhm, afternoon after, and she was like “Oh, how was that thing you did?” I was like, “There was like, a kid, she was so, so small and so young and she was married,” [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). And then immediately my friend was like, “Wait, maybe I know her. I know someone who’s our age and, queer and married.” And, I was like (=Tyler: Mmm), “No, sure, no”, it turned out to be somebody else that they thought was the same person (=Tyler: Oh, okay), but...

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Jamie: [Laugh]). I think Sage is actually in the, the age bracket – do you remember the, the survey that I sent out before focus group? Yeah. Uhm, she’s in the age bracket that is just above, yours is like 18 to 24, was that bracket (=Jamie: Really?), I think and she's that 25 to 34. So I don't know her actual age (=Jamie: Mmm). But, yeah (=Jamie: She looks very-), still relatively young.

**Jamie:** Still r-, definitely still relatively young, like (=Tyler: Yeah) she looks very, very, young (=Tyler: Yes) and I was like, quite taken aback (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but like, I wouldn’t say there’s like a specific person or I felt very othered from (=Tyler: Mmm), like we all shared like pretty significant bits of like, you know, what it means to be us as a person, so (=Tyler: Yeah), there's nobody where I was like, “Oh, I am so not like you”.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. I wonder, uhm, did you feel there was any disagreement in, in your group or between you and other people?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… not in any way more than just people experience things differently (=Tyer: Uh-huh). And people ex-, can experience an identical experience or nearly identical experience in the world,

can have different, outcomes, or to your life it can feel different for different people, I don’t think there was any like, significant disagreement (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm) on anything (=Tyler: Yeah). Just like different experiences of the same thing sometimes.

**Tyler.** Mmm. And what kind of things do you think your group tended to agree on?

**Jamie:** Hmmm, like, like, a lot of us have overlap, in certain experiences… like we talked about, like schools (=Tyler Mmm) and stuff like that (=Tyler: Mmm), and myself, and the two on my left (=Tyler: Mmhmm), all like, “Oh, yeah, Cape Town schools,” and we like, really, really knew that specific culture (=Tyler: Yeah) we were talking about there. Uhm, so that was something that I felt like, we really, really like, like really knew exactly what we all were talking about (=Tyler: Mmm) with that (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, other than that I’m not really sure (=Tyler: Yeah), there’s not a lot that I remember now, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** That's fine, it was a while ago (=Jamie: Yeah). Uhm, and I think the three of you also, uh, tended to relate, uhm, on YouTube representation (=Jamie: Oh, yeah) of queer people (=Jamie: Yes)? Yeah. Uhm, could you remind me, uhm, who those figures in particular were?

**Jamie:** Uhm, he [gesture to Luca’s seat] spoke about two figures, I forgot who one, one he spoke about was Philosophy Tube, who recently, like in the last two months, uhm, came out as a trans woman (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, in, like, a really, really beautiful video (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like if you have, if you have a hole in your heart for something like trans positivity (=Tyler: Yeah), that video will make you feel a bit better (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, and so he spoke about her and one other person, I don't remember. But they're, I mean, they're sort of the classics of, you know, queer youth seeking (=Tyler: Yeah), seeking affirmation on YouTube. And there's, uhm, Jamie, I think it’s, I think it was Jeremy Boucher, I think (=Tyler: Uh-huh), uhm, and he, also talks about trans stuff. And there's Ash Hardell, who talks about all sorts of stuff. It's very, like educational (=Tyler: Mmmm). Uhm, there's all sorts of people, a lot of them are sort of forgotten about (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, they’re sort of more a space to go when you don’t know people in real life (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, at least in my experience (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, but yeah there’s quite a lot of them who have quite a large following of like, my age group of p-, of queer people (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and that was like what, where they were looking (=Tyler: Okay) when they were like, looking for adults to look up to.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, yeah, yeah. It's interesting that you kind of all shared that, uh, experience. Yeah, the three of you, at least.

**Jamie:** I think it's quite common (=Tyler: Yeah?), I think it’s quite common, and I think it’s quite common that people have overlapped as to who they were watching (=Tyler: Mmmm). Uhm, like, I can talk to somebody who has completely different tastes with what they enjoy, and we'll still, often, if we're both queer, find, like one or two YouTube personalities that we were both watching as like 14-year-olds, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, cool. Uhm, so I know that, you, uh, feel that you might have overshared, [laugh sigh]. But, uhm, was there anything that you wanted to express in the group, but you didn't?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… I don’t think so.

**Tyler:** Mmm. Either, like, a response to someone else, or an experience of sameness or difference that you didn't get to talk about?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… I'm not sure. I don't think so. I know that I did want to talk about, uhm, about the like, slurs reclamation (=Tyler: Yes), but we did talk about that a bit at the end (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and I went into this, experience thinking like, I would like the opportunity to ask the other people in the group how they feel about that (=Tyler: Yes). But, I mean other than that, I'm not really sure (=Tyler: Mmm), I was just taking a second with was coming up in a moment more the things that I was ex-, like, maybe not expecting to say, or like, you know, things that I was wanting to say (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, so I'm really sure, I don't think so.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay. Uhm, so why did you to bring up that question of slurs, out of interest?

**Jamie:** Uhm, it's very complicated. And it's very… it, you know, the discourse that is happening around that conversation is often being very heavily dominated by individuals who I feel are not the point of that conversation (=Tyler: Okay). So people will be talking about slurs and people to whom those slurs do not apply are giving their five cents worth (=Tyler: Right) and that is often dominating the conversation (=Tyler: Okay). And whether they think it's not harmful for, you know, a community discussion that has to be had? (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and I'm always interested to know, how other people in my community feel about certain language (=Tyler: Yeah), also based on their experiences, so, people talking about how like slurs in Afrikaans feel different than slurs in English (=Tyler: Right) and stuff like that, and that’s stuff that I'm very interested in (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Kind of also from an academic point of view, but also just like, as a person (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, it interests me to know how my community feels about things (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so that also informs how I behave around myself. And you know, if I know that some other people, if I can gauge the level of discomfort other people may have with a term, I might not use it, obviously not to describe them (=Tyler: Mmm), unless I know that they’re like explicitly okay with that, but I might not use it around them to talk about myself (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, if I know that it makes them feel uncomfortable or, you know, whatever.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Uhm, so, do you have a specific example of some of those problematic people, uh, who use, uh, slur as a debate, but as a slur that doesn't apply to them? Have you experienced, uh, a particular interaction? Uhm.

**Jamie:** [Sigh].

**Tyler:** What kind of people say this stuff?

**Jamie:** Lots of people… Like in, in now that we’re, that we’re in a world where slurs are being reclaimed (=Tyler: Uh-huh), there are lots of people who are supposed to not apply who are now like jealous that they can't say those words, or maybe not jealous, but they, they want to be able to say those words, and you see that with White people and the N word all the time (=Tyler: Right). Like “Ah, but-but-but, I just want to say it” For what? (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And that that same thing is the case in my experience with queer people (=Tyler: Okay), uhm… and people who are not necessarily, they're not wanting to sell it out of like, so that they can call me a dyke (=Tyler: Mmm), but they're just wanting to be able to say it. Uhm, and it was like, quite common in my high school, like I very regularly had to have discussions with people and be like “You, just because you heard me use a word to describe myself doesn't mean you can use that word to describe me” (=Tyler: Right) in the sense that you can, uhm (=Tyler: Yes), and I think often not out of a place of hate but like, maybe they don’t want to feel left out, and, I don’t know, I don’t know how other people feel about it.

**Tyler:** Okay, so for example, like, uhm, a gay person using the D slur (=Jamie: Mmm) for, uhm, lesbian, uh, or female-bodied, uh, queer people? Uhm, is that one of the examples?

**Jamie:** That's a very complicated one (=Tyler: Okay), I don't have like a solid opinion on it, I think it really depends on what your experience in the world is like (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I don't think there is like a blanket, like this applies to people who are X (=Tyler: Yes, yes), and this applies to people who are Y. I definitely think that there are a lot of gay men who misuse the word (=Tyler: Okay) to be harmful (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, and I also think that, you know, there's a lot of misogyny in the community (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I think that there are, there is a sort of, there, there are definitely gay men who… for them, it's just part of that misogyny and often they don't recognize that they have that misogyny (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, and they use slurs that are specifically usually targeted towards women. Uhm, and, you know, that forms part of that issue. And I think, you know, for them, that's not the case. But there are other scenarios in which I think isn't inappropriate (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and I think it really depends on that person's experience, uhm, what their life is like, and who their friends are, and that type of thing that will differ from like a whole community (=Tyler: Yeah) to like a [inaudible].

**Tyler** Yeah. Yeah, agreed. Uhm, but my point was just, uh, trying to ask, uhm, about who used that word that you use to describe yourself, but, you know, they, are not in the same position (=Jamie: Mmm). Yeah. So yeah.

**Jamie:** Yeah, I think that's the thing, is that, people can use a word and you, you know that they're not using it because they love you or out of a place of goodness (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, like, you know, that ultimately the core reason they’re wanting to use that word is not a place of goodness, I think that kind of might be the line for me in my heart (=Tyler: Yeah). But you don't always know how that person feels. So it's kind of a complicated thing. I don't think it'll ever be uncomplicated (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, but I do f-, I do feel like sometimes with some, with one person, I’ll feel like that was completely fine and with, with a different person like, actually, that didn't sit right with me (=Tyler: Mmm). And it depends on you know, obviously how well we know each other, but it depends on, uhm, the space they take up in the world (=Tyler: Yeah). Uh, and can also be like, you know, part of privilege thing (=Tyler: Mmm) is, if that person is very clearly, in the world (=Tyler: Mmm), sitting much higher than you and is using that language to you, it's a very different power dynamic that's going on there (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), than if it's somebody who's like, more or less in the same…

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. It sounds a little similar to me about something that you brought up in the focus group. Uhm, like, for example, uhm, maybe a, an example is like TERF lesbians, (=Jamie: Mmm), Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist, uhm, for example. Uhm, but I think, the point was, uh, some people, use, are unafraid to use, uhm, bigoted language, uhm, by virtue of their belonging to a marginalized group (=Jamie: Yes) of some kind, right? Uhm, but, I want to know, uhm, is there anyone specific that you are, that you have experienced that from your life?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… that I've experienced that, uhm, you know, trying to use slurs that don't belong to them, kind of thing? (=Tyler: Mmm). Oh, uhm, quite a few people (=Tyler: Okay), I guess they’re like, a few people from high school or not, I don't interact with any of them anymore (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, my mother has a hard time understanding that she can’t say slurs (=Tyler: Okay), and she’s like “No, no, I know, it's bad”, and I’m like “It (=Tyler: Mmm), it should not come out of your mouth (=Tyler: Yeah)”. And she has a hard time understanding that (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, like, that's, ja, that's like an ongoing conversation in my family (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, where she, like, won't know a slur (=Tyler: Mmm) and I’ll say, “I don't want to tell you, because I know that you're immediately going to say it out loud (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, and then it's going to be in your vocabulary and it's not for you to say” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and she’s like “But, but, not, that, I just want to know so that can understand this one Facebook post” or whatever (=Tyler: Mmm). And then my dad will go tell her (=Tyler: Mmm). And then I'll be like, “Eh, you can't say that either (=Tyler: Mmhmm),unless there's something you want to tell me?” [Laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Uhm, like that, that's not how that works (=Tyler: Uh-huh), [laugh]. So, yeah that’s like, an ongoing situation with my family. It's different because they're not using that, those words to talk about people (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, and they're not using those words to refer to me or to (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, other people but, ja (=Tyler: Yeah). Uh, besides that, it's generally not been people who are, like, closely involved in my life, or you know, friends on the peripheral of my social circle (=Tyler: Okay), uhm, who I don't really know anymore.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay (=Jamie: So), so not anyone who really knows you very well, basically?

**Jamie:** Usually not, no, because my friends tend to have the same, you know, more or less the same experience that I do with slurs, (=Tyler: Mmm), so (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it’s, yeah, it's quite rare for me that a friend will use a slur, and I'm like, “Oooh, (=Tyler: Yeah), that wasn’t okay” (=Tyler: Yeah) because I don't know where we stand with each other, and we have those conversations with each other so that we know where we stand with each other.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. And, to go back to, uhm, your mom, uhm, it's, it sounded from the focus group that she has, uh, quite a contradictory relationship with, uhm, acknowledging your queerness, because (=Jamie: It’s very contradictory, [laugh sigh]), yeah, because there's on the one point there’s like a, a denial, uhm, in the sense that she’ll still bring up that one boyfriend you had an eighth grade. And she'll like kind of insinuate that there's a romantic thing going on between you and your friends who happen to be male (=Jamie: Yeah) but won't acknowledge that there definitely is a romantic connection between you and your partner (Jamie: Ja). Uhm, but at the same time, uh, she will out you to other family members (=Jamie: [Laugh])? So it's like, acknowledging, but not acknowledging, and they're both wrong, [laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** Yeah, she's, [sigh], listen, I'm very grateful (=Tyler: Uh-huh), things could be worse. She's interesting (=Tyler: Yeah), she's a very complicated person. Uhm, and she doesn't understand lots of things about the world (=Tyler: Okay) very well. Uhm, I don't think she does any of those things out of a desire to be harmful (=Tyler: Mmm) or malicious (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I also think that she doesn't, she doesn't know that she carries negative feelings about my queerness within herself (=Tyler: Oh). And she likes to brag that she doesn't, she goes, “You know, I was never ashamed of you, hey.” And she’s, like, likes to brag about that stuff, which I know is not true (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, and like, maybe it's good that way, like maybe I don't want her to carry that guilt, ‘cause it's not (=Tyler: Yeah) going to make the relationship better (=Tyler: Yeah) and it's not gonna make her acceptance of anything better (=Tyler: Uh-huh), like it’s not going to help anything. Uhm, but, yeah, she is quite contradictory (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), it’s been a running theme with her as a person, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Oh, okay). She's just like that (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but, urgh, ja (=Tyler: Yeah), very, very supportive in, I think a way that's quite common for like suburban, Southern Suburbs, White moms (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, that they're, like, supportive, because they’re, it's just not in them to be like, outright blatantly homophobic (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but, that doesn't necessarily extend it to being affirming (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, I think it's, maybe the sort of (=Tyler: Yeah) general picture with that.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. And I wonder like, uhm, how would you kind of compare the way your mother would like, brag that she's never, you know, been, uh, problematic or had a problem with your queerness (=Jamie: Mmhmm) compared to, I think you said that your dad, uhm, would say, you know, he's come a long way and he's not homophobic anymore and make a point of it? (=Jamie: Mmm) Uhm.

**Jamie:** That actually, that's interesting and, I hadn’t thought about that much before (=Tyler: Mmm). It's interesting to me because that conversation with my dad and he said, “You know, I used to be so homophobic and I’m not anymore,” (=Tyler: Mmm) that conversation was many years ago (=Tyler: Okay), before I knew I was queer (=Tyler: Oh). Uhm, I was, quite young (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I'm not sure how old, like I was old enough to understand homophobia as a concept and I was old enough to understand that my dad was like, kind of trying to overcompensate in that conversation (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I think it may have been at a time when my mother felt my brother was queer.

**Tyler:** Oh, right, you said so, yes

**Jamie:** Uhm, she only really understands stereotypes and not a lot beyond that, and like, my brother took slightly too long to get dressed whenever we'd go out for dinner so she was like, “I know what this means” (=Tyler: [Laugh], okay), uhm [Laugh], “definitely gay ‘cause he takes too long to like, pick his outfits”.

**Tyler:** That’s a strange stereotype, I’ve (=Jamie: [Laugh]) never heard that before, [laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** And she was like, “He’s too into fashion, he just can’t be heterosexual” (=Tyler: Oh, okay). But he’s not really into fashion, he's just picky. So like, I think, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, I think my dad may have had that conversation with us because of my brother, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), because my mother would have said to my dad, like, I think Pierre is gay (=Tyler: Mmm), and he’s not, he’s getting married to a woman (=Tyler: Yeah), and he’s like… not exactly… He's not homophobic, but he's not exactly, like brilliant (=Tyler: Yes), so.

**Tyler:** Yes. You did mention he (=Jamie: He’s-) tends to be a more problematic member of your family these days (=Jamie: Yes) yeah.

**Jamie:** Uhm, he used to not be, but (=Tyler: Mmm) we'll see how that goes (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Yeah, I think, yeah, I haven't really thought about my conversation with my dad (=Tyler: Mmm) in the context of like, putting it side by side with (=Tyler: Mmm) how my mother interacts, uhm but actually, I do think that is interesting, uhm. Especially considering that like, my dad, definitely the most okay, I think, in my family with my queerness. And he's the most like today, I think the most like socially aware of them (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but like, we don't really talk… about it (=Tyler: Mmm). But that's not specific to my queerness (=Tyler: Okay) so it's not like we're, it’s not like we’re uncomfortable to talk about my queerness (=Tyler: Yeah), it’s, we don't talk about things like that generally (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, it’s not as though we talk about, like, the fact that money is made up or (=Tyler: Yeah), we’ll talk about making things, we'll talk about things in the universe, not really like, us and our stuff. Uhm, so it is different. But that is interesting. It makes me want to have a conversation with him (=Tyler: Oh) about my queerness and see how that would go, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), and see what he would say.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Jamie: [Laugh]), yeah. Uhm, and I, I also have like one more question about, like, a specific example of who (=Jamie: Yeah) has maybe said some of the things that you brought up, like, uhm, I think you, you know, said that you were exploring identity labels, when you were like, a, uh, new to coming out as, as a queer person. Uhm, and then there was like, an online culture, where there is like a, a hyper-identification of like (=Jamie: Ah), really specific, uhm, queer labels. And you said that, you know, there isn't an, inherent, inherently anything wrong with anyone, uhm, using those labels to describe themself (=Jamie: Mmm). But there, you did experience a problem with the pressure to use those labels (=Jamie: Yes) and to stick to them, right? (=Jamie: Yes). So, is there anyone, uh, in particular that, uh, you can remember, give, like, you know, giving you that pressure, or (=Jamie: Oh) communicating that to you?

**Jamie:** That’s interesting cause I think, how I experienced that pressure’s, in gen-, just being the culture of the community that I was interacting with (=Tyler: Okay). But (=Tyler: The online culture?), yes, online culture (=Tyler: Okay), at the time I had very few queer friends. Uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), well that's actually not true, I had very few friends who knew they were queer yet. My entire friend group from my childhood (=Tyler: Yeah), there’s not a single straight one left (=Tyler: Oh, wow, [laugh]). Well, I was gonna say one of them but actually, we were not friends when we were young, we knew each other but we were not really (=Tyler: Ah) friends until high school, but he's the only one left, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah). It's funny that they like, they flock together (=Tyler: Yeah) before they even know, I find that so, it’s very funny to me.

**Tyler:** That’s really interesting.

**Jamie:** Uhm, but, they're, okay, I will say there is, there was like a discourse (=Tyler: Mmm) that was happening. And there were two sides of this discourse, and, regarding micro labeling, and there were the people who, who were saying, like, “Use the label, rather than the label that feels good or right, use the label that has hyper, specifically, completely accurate to what you're experiencing what the world is like (=Tyler: Mmm) and then stick to that label and use that label to describe yourself to other people so that they know *exactly* what your situation is, and *exactly* like, who you want to date, and who you want to have sex with, and how you feel about your gender,” all in like one very long complicated word that actually nobody knows the meaning of without Googling, and even Google, you might have some trouble (=Tyler: Yeah). And then on the flip side of that, though, people say “micro labeling is inherently damaging (=Tyler: Mmm) and it's inherently bad, you shouldn't be so specific with your labels”. Uhm, and like, I don't think either of those, as with anything when there's like two very opposing options, I don't think either of them are right (=Tyler: Mmm). I think there was a lot of damage that was done by that discourse more so than like, like, labelling specifically (=Tyler: Yes). But in the midst of that discourse, there was a lot of like, people would say, like, if you explain it to them, people would say, “Oh, no, you're not this thing, you're actually that thing” (=Tyler: Right) and you're expected to use that language.

**Tyler:** Right, mmm, like an imposition.

**Jamie:** Yes. And actually, now that I think about it, there was a person I knew…. I was in like a youth group. It wasn't a religious thing, uhm it was like a philosophy club thing. But it was like (=Tyler: Okay) the youth group of philosophy club thing (=Tyler: Yeah). It was weird, uhm, I shouldn't have gone (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), [laugh sigh], but, uhm, the leader of that group was, I think, also very heavily ingrained in like internet queer culture, and very much wanted to be part of it (=Tyler: Mmm). But I think wasn't really so much actually. Uhm, she was the kind of, uhm… uhm, the kind of straight woman who

like fetishizes queer men, all the time (=Tyler: Mmm) as a hobby, basically (=Tyler: Okay), like that seemed to be her like one interest in life. Uhm, and she was the, you kind of know the type, she was like, that type of person. And she was actually sweet, like, she meant well, she was helpful to me when I didn't really have like a reference point in life. But like, that was problematic. And (=Tyler: Mmm) when I came out to her, at the time I was identifying as bisexual (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, and I said, “Oh, hey, you know, by the way, I think I'm bisexual.” And she was like, “Oh, that's okay.” And then told me why I was wrong, that I was not bisexual, and I was actually some other like, obscure, micro-label, like, I can’t remember what it was, some little, like, obscure sexuality that like, I've never heard of before or since then (=Tyler: Mmmm). And like, apparently, that was then applicable to my life. And I was like, “Okay, I guess you're right.” Like, adult on the scene who's obviously the authority here (=Tyler: Mmmm), [laugh]. Like, “okay then” (=Tyler: Yeah). I identified as bisexual for like, two weeks (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), because she was like, “by the way (=Tyler: Yeah) not actually that.” Like, yeah, she was definitely, I hadn't thought about that before now but she was definitely like, an individual who (=Tyler: Uh-huh) prescribed that culture quite heavily (=Tyler: Interesting) onto the kids she was in charge of.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Jamie: Uhm), despite also being a straight woman?

**Jamie:** She wanted to be queer very badly (=Tyler: Okay), which is okay (=Tyler: Uh-huh), that's fine. I don't believe she was (=Tyler: Okay). She was the sort of person who like, she, uh, she used micro labelling to find a way to put herself into a community where she didn't belong (=Tyler: Ohhh). So she was like, cisgender and only attracted to men (=Tyler: Okay). But she would find some like, obscure thing that means she's actually queer so that she could be a part of the community (=Tyler: Right), which I, yeah, I think it just comes out of wanting to have a place and like wanting to have a community (=Tyler: Mmm). I don't, yeah, I don't think it comes out of anywhere bad (=Tyler: Yes) but sometimes it didn’t have the best repercussions.

**Tyler:** *Shoh,* Interesting. But then the, uh, internet community is basically strangers, right? You didn't (=Jamie: Yeah), you weren't friends with any (=Jamie: Uhm), people?

**Jamie:** I had a couple… there were like a couple of people who I would say I was (=Tyler: Oh okay) friends with. Uhm, but we didn't really talk about that stuff together (=Tyler: Mmhmm). We talked about like nerdy stuff. We talked about like Doctor Who and (=Tyler: Oh, okay, [laugh]), like, we didn't really talk (=Tyler: Yeah), we didn't really talk like, queer theory.

**Tyler:** Right (=Jamie: with each other), so I remember that discourse of like, micro labeling versus, uhm, [laugh].

**Jamie:** Yeah, that discourse, more, was happening, not with people I knew, but that was the culture of the community I was existing in (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm (=Tyler: Okay), you know, it was people I was interacting with just not on like a one-on-one (=Tyler: Yeah), one-on-one basis.

**Tyler:** I see. Okay, cool. Thanks for clarifying that. Uhm, so this might be a weird question. But, uhm, after participating in the focus group, how did you feel about your queerness?

**Jamie:** Hmmm… Uhm… I'm not sure (=Tyler: Mmm), probably about the same, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, [laugh] (=Jamie: Uhm, maybe it’s like). That's valid, [laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** It’s like, you know, it’s an ongoing experience (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, and it's an ongoing like the language that’s, that I use to talk about my experience is an ongoing thing and uhm, I’m, you know, I'm sure I’ll use different language throughout life and (=Tyler: Mmm) I’m sure I’ll experiences things differently throughout my life (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and it’s like, an ongoing thing for me like, right now that's interesting to me because my partner-ish – it's complicated (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], okay), I don’t know what’s going on there – but like my partner-ish, when we met, was identifying as a woman. Uhm, and when we met, they had never met a non-binary person before. And they were with me and they were like, “Oh, I didn't know that was a thing”. And then like halfway through, we like, took, like a break last year during the lockdown, uhm, like halfway through last year, they were like, “I think I’ve had a gender identity crisis, help”, [laugh] (=Tyler: Oh). And I was like, “Oh, sorry, what was that my fault? (=Tyler: Yeah), [laugh], sorry”, [laugh], and so like, they're still like in the midst of exploring that and, part of what they're exploring is, if they feel like they might be a man or not. And like (=Tyler: Oh), that's like, that has impact f-, on the language I use to describe myself in some ways (=Tyler: Oh yes?) because I don’t want to use language that talks about who I’m attracted to that is not affirming of who my partner is (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, and that is not inclusive of who my partner is (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So yeah, that's like some ongoing… (=Tyler: Yes, yes) stuff (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and like, that was like, kind of resurfaced, basically the same time as the focus group, So I do feel somewhat differently. But I think more because of personal life (=Tyler: Yes, yeah) than because of the focus group.

**Tyler:** So for example, you don't want to use a term like “lesbian” to describe yourself if, uhm, you know, your partner isn't female-identified?

**Jamie:** Uhm, I don't want use the word “lesbian” to describe myself if it is, if that language would make my partner feel affirmed (=Tyler: Right), uhm (=Tyler: Yes). I, yeah, I don't think that, I, I have complicated feelings about the word “lesbian” (=Tyler: Yeah, so said so, mmhmm), uhm. And, yeah, so like, I'm not hugely attached to it, but like, I have a very lesbian-adjacent experience of life (=Tyler: Mmm). And sometimes it's easier to say that than it is to say other things (Tyler: Right). Uhm, sort of like, yeah, it's not that I, and it’s also not for me about womanhood, and, but it's about like, how that feels to them and how that feels (=Tyler: Yes), and how that feels for their gender, like, that's important (=Tyler: Yeah). And I know that historically, like, I’ve felt uncomfortable about languages people have used to label their sexuality, while they were with me (=Tyler: Yes). So, like, because I have had that experience, I know that it's important to be, uhm, I know that it, it's important for me to make sure that my partner feels (=Tyler: Yes) good about the language I use to describe our relationship.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that makes complete sense, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so, how do you feel about me as the moderator-interviewer?

**Jamie:** Oh, you seem cool.

**Tyler:** Okay, (=Jamie: [Laugh]), thanks, [laugh sigh].

**Jamie:** Uhm, yeah feel you, like, lead it well and like, steered the ship quite well, I don’t, I didn't feel, I didn't feel like I had to be nervous or, like, who is the strange person I’m talking to? (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. Thanks for that (=Jamie [Laugh]). Uhm. do you have any feedback for how I can improve the focus group?

**Jamie:** Uhm, I don’t think so (=Tyler: Oh, okay), unless there are any outcomes you were looking for that you didn't get, but-

**Tyler:** No, that's not the case at all, yeah.

**Jamie:** But, no I didn't think so. I thought it was good. I thought it was, useful, I thought we had like good conversations about important things.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Okay, cool. So the, that is, uh, those are all the questions that I have for this interview. Except, this is now, uh, I guess the final, uh, offering is, you know, do you have any other thoughts, comments, questions, uhm, on the experience on the focus group, or on your experiences of sameness and difference that you wanna, offer?

**Jamie:** Uhm… Hmmm… I’m not sure that I do. I thought it was an interesting experience, I’m glad I did it (=Tyler: Mmm). It was… I f-, yeah, I felt like it was good, it was good for me to go and do, and I felt like it was, you know, nice to have those conversations with people, I’m not having those sorts of conversations with people that much anymore these days, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, yeah, I thought it was good, uhm... I’m not sure that I have any…(=Tyler: Okay), I’m not sure that I have any issues so that’s about it.

**Tyler:** Okay, that's cool. That's fine. Yeah, I'm glad that you thought it was a, a, a decent experience. Yeah (=Jamie: Yeah).

**Jamie:** A worthwhile experience.

**Tyler:** Worthwhile, yeah. That's great. I'm glad that you felt that way. Cool. So, then we are done, actually (=Jamie: Okay, cool), so I can't stop rec-.

Luca

[Luca complete informed consent form].

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. No questions?

**Luca:** No. Yeah. [Inaudible]

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Uh, could I ask you to change your mask to one of these medical ones there? (=Luca: Okay). Yeah, I can hear you fine but the funny thing is, on the recording there’s a big difference between the cloth (=Luca: Oh, shit) mask and the medical mask, yeah (=Luca: Sorry, I didn’t know). That’s okay, I also didn’t know until I watched it back, uhm-

**Luca:** But can you at least make out-?

**Tyler:** Yes, I can hear you, it’s just a little muffled (=Luca: Okay), but I can hear exactly what you’re saying. Yeah, if I listen very carefully, [laugh sigh].

**Luca:** So, what were you doing between now and the last time we spoke?

**Tyler:** Uhm, I have been having more focus groups (=Luca: Yeah), uhm, and follow-up interviews as well (=Luca: Okay), yes. [Luca’s medical mask band snaps] And working. [Laugh sigh], you can use another one.

**Luca:** I’m sorry.

**Tyler:** That’s okay, you’re fine. You can just leave it there, [laugh sigh]. [Luca gets another mask, steps away to replace it]. [Laugh sigh], they are disposable so, maybe.

**Luca:** Is it this way, the right way?

**Tyler:** Yes (=Luca: Okay) And you can pinch the nose wire.

**Luca:** Oh, ja, we had to use these during [inaudible]. We were getting one each day (=Tyler: Oh okay). It was nice, they’re easy to breathe.

**Tyler:** Yeah, exactly. [Inaudible], obviously.

**Luca:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay, so do you have any questions? Then I can start recording.

**Luca:** No, no questions.

**Tyler:** Cool. Uhm, so, then what have you been up to since the last time you were here?

**Luca:** Uhm, slaving away at university (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah?). Uhm, ja, just kinda, trying to, you know, keep my head down and get through it. I'm fully, putting all my theory, like, aside because we have a performance coming up (=Tyler: Okay). In fact, we have three performances coming up (=Tyler: Oh, wow) all in the same week, probably on the same day (=Tyler: Wow), which is what you expect from, uhm, the work, line of work that I'm going into (=Tyler: Yeah). And then the industry as well. It's just what it is (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, yeah. And you can't complain, because that… for instance, if you were filming (=Tyler: Mmhmm), everybody that has been, that is part of the film, be it the line producer, the set designer, the stenographer, the camera crew, the lighting, everybody has been brought in and you can’t now throw a tantrum and (=Tyler: Mmm) be like, “No, this doesn't really fit in. It's too much.” Guess what? It's too much for everybody (=Tyler: Yeah). Get with the program (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, that being said, I'm definitely prioritizing that because, you can catch up theory, you can’t catch up a performance (=Tyler: Right). Ja.

**Tyler:** Right. Still, it must be quite stressful.

**Luca:** Yes (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). Yes. I'm not, I'm trying my best not to show it

**Tyler**: Okay. Yeah. The uni life, I guess (=Luca: Yes, ja). Yeah.

**Luca:** You've been there, done that, got the t-shirt (=Tyler: And still am, [laugh sigh]). Ja, postgrad (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh])

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Well, cool, [laugh sigh]. I’m glad that you are above water, uhm (=Luca: Somehow). Somehow, yeah. So, we can get right into the discussion about the focus group. How did you feel about it, in general?

**Luca:** I really enjoyed it (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) It was, uhm… it was interesting (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm…I’m trying to find a word that’s, that's, that’s better. It’s, it wasn't, it wasn't so far as to say it was enlightening (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But it, it was not, [sigh], “eye-opening” seems almost, almost too much of an exaggeration, as well, but you get the idea (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm-

**Tyler:** You learned something from being there?

**Luca:** Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). About how people themselves interact with being queer in their own socio-cultural background (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Yeah. That's, that's the big takeaway, I suppose.

**Tyler:** Okay. Did anything in particular, strike you as something new to learn or consider? Was there any moment that (=Luca: Uhm), uhm, is a good example of what you just described? (=Luca: Ooff) [Laugh sigh], that comes to mind. If it doesn't come to mind, that's fine.

**Luca:** Uhm, I think how… I can’t remember her name, but the woman that sat here (=Tyler: Mmm, Sage). Yes… She spoke about, uhm, specifically how her faith (=Tyler: Mmhmm), Islam works with, works with how she, uhm, rationalizes being queer within that framework (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And what was interesting was when I asked her, uhm (=Tyler: Yes), were there any religious figures, Imams, in, in her community that she knows of and she said, “Yes, they are”. And it's something that doesn't really, ‘cause I'm not exposed to that community (=Tyler: Uh-huh), that faith, that worldview (=Tyler: Uh-huh). So I don't know much outside what I was brought up in that space (=Tyler: Okay). So it was interesting to hear, uhm, a religious figure in that faith, that was, that was openly officiating queer marriages (=Tyler: Uh-huh). It just made me feel very happy (=Tyler: Yeah). But it was also, it also... It reminds me of, you know, the, the, the Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie quote about dangers of a single story? (=Tyler: Yes). And that's exactly what it did for me. It, it, it showed me that my singular view, although I, like, I try my best to believe, well, at the end of the day, let me get this right (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). At the end of the day, no set group is a monolith (=Tyler: Yeah). But it's still very interesting to hear that being, not “proven”… But, yeah, proven (=Tyler: Yes), right? (=Tyler: Yeah). So that, that, that was interesting, in particular.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. You can put like a, an actual example of individual people (=Luca: Yes) to, to that thing of not being a singular narrative of like, Islamic faith, for example. Yeah. Yeah. Cool. So, uhm, was there anyone in the group that you felt a, a sameness with… in a significant way?

**Luca:** Mmm. Like I said in the focus group, I still think I have it pretty easy. I still think I *had* it pretty easy (=Tyler: Okay), when it came to growing up as queer (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, all three of the other people seem to have struggled a lot more with the people that they grew up with (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and being queer (=Tyler: Mmm). Whereas I had a fairly smooth transition. I went to school that was, that was progressive enough to not really care about it (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, uh, my parents completely accepted me. Uh, ja, it was just (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ja, I mean, even though I was outed to my family (=Tyler: Yeah), it wasn't really a, it wasn't really, it wasn't traumatic. It was, it felt like a breach of privacy as it can only ever feel (=Tyler: Yes). And I definitely felt that I was wronged in a way, but not so much in a way that it affected me (=Tyler: Okay), to a large degree.

**Tyler:** Okay. Right. So there's an element of difference, uh, between you and the, uh, other participants, because they sort of had it a little bit worse with their family situation (=Luca: Yeah) than you did? (=Luca: Yes). Okay. But then you were also outed at school, weren't you?

**Luca:** Ja, uhm…

**Tyler:** It seemed to me that it was, uh, a little difficult to revisit that memory, uhm. But you can, [laugh sigh], correct me if I'm wrong. Uhm, you also said that, you know, afterwards, you kind of established a, a gay or queer society at your school. Uhm, and now even, uh, you tell us that your school, like sends open communications that, you know, uh, the, that trans students should be respected (=Luca: Yes)? Right. So, uhm, yeah, what do you make of that whole experience?

**Luca:** Uhm… specifically about the email, I don’t know the backstory around it (=Tyler: Okay) what exactly, uhm, pushed the, uhm, [school name] to do that. Uh, ‘cause I doubt they’d do it on their own accord (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… so I can't tell you about that exactly. But like you say, I was able to, uhm, get the, uhm, build the foundations of a functioning… The thing was, it was this, this is a little caveat, it wasn't, I pitched it to the principal and my facilitator, duh-duh-duh-duh, as a, exclusively queer society (=Tyler: Mmm). Cool, everybody can join. It, it was my vision that everybody would join, because everybody should be, uh, should be supportive of queer rights at the end of the day (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But what had happened was, and I suppose in some ways, this was a good thing. But it made me uncomfortable for – I'll tell you in a second – is that, when I got the feedback, I was told that, “Look, it's a great idea. But we want you to expand the scope of what you're trying to achieve. We want it to be a quote-unquote ‘diversity organization’ was the language that they used (=Tyler: Okay). So basically, they wanted me to advocate for marginalized groups across the spectrum (=Tyler: Okay), whether it be, uhm, uh, women from, suffering from gender-based violence to queer people, and, across the spectrum, to, to that I would even talk about things like xenophobia (=Tyler: Uh-huh), and so forth. So it became, it, the, the mandate stretched (=Tyler: Mmm), which I was uncomfortable with the fact that they wouldn't allow a purely queer organization (=Tyler: Mmm). But at the same time, I saw their logic, but it gave me very rainbow nation vibes (=Tyler: Yes). You understand what I mean? (=Tyler: Yes). Ja. It's like…

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Luca:** I don't know how to really describe it because, ja, I put that to bed because like, the, I got what I wanted (=Tyler: Yes). Now I needed to move on, and get the ground, and hit the ground running (=Tyler: Mmhmm, Mmmhmm). So ja (=Tyler: Yeah), so the thing was, as much as the memory of me being outed at school, I find it's very, it’s very faded (=Tyler: Okay). It’s almost fragmented and I don't know, I haven't really, interrogated why, but I (=Tyler: Okay), I think it's my own brain just trying to put it away (=Tyler: Mmm) for my own health (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), uhm. But at the end of the day, whether it was as bad as it sounded, as when I put it in the focus group, it worked out fine, so (=Tyler: Uh-huh).

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay. Yeah, cool, [laugh sigh]. Thanks for that. Yeah. Uhm, yeah, I'm glad to have, uh, kind of dealt with it, uhm. And there are things to show for, uh, being out even at school with like, your organization. And yeah, that is a strange kind of mandate that was given (=Luca: Mmm), uhm, because it's almost like a compromise from their end, like, giving you what you want, but then you can’t actually name it as a queer, uh, group (=Luca: Ja). Uhm, at the same time, you know, other marginalized, uh, students do need that kind of support. But, yeah, it's interesting that it took you to bring up your queer society in order for them to consider that support for everyone else also (=Luca: Yes), yeah, mmm.

**Luca:** And it just, it seems odd, because, well, you know, [university] has over 20,000 students give or take (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and we have a different organization for almost everything under the sun (=Tyler: Yeah), as it should be (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So that every group in somewhat way or the other has some representation or at least feels some sense of community on campus (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). But my school is small (=Tyler: Yeah). In my Matric year there was only 19 of us, (=Tyler: Yeah), right? So (=Tyler: Right) the whole idea to have an organization that just, was supposed to, I suppose the idea of having one kind of fits that bill (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But, yeah, like you say, the compromise was uncomfortable (=Tyler: Mmm). But at the end of the day, it achieved what I wanted to a greater extent (=Tyler: Yeah), as opposed to a lesser extent (=Tyler: Yeah). So I was like, “Okay. I'll take it and run with it.”

**Tyler:** Sure, sure. Yeah. ‘Cause, uh, yeah, obviously, different kinds of marginalized groups have very specific issues (=Luca: Mmm) to deal with, right, that could get lost if everyone's lumped together.

**Luca:** Yeah, so a one, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't actually get the job done.

**Tyler:** Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, so, do you, what do you think of the, uhm, agreement dynamics in your focus group? What do you think your group tended to agree on? (=Luca: [Laugh]) Anything that comes to mind, [laugh sigh].

**Luca:** Oh, ja, that's a good question (=Tyler: Mmm). I haven't, I haven’t thought about it in a while, I'm sorry.

**Tyler:** No, that's okay. I know, it has been a while. If nothing comes to mind, that's also fine.

**Luca:** Uhm, why, do you have any like particular instances that-?

**Tyler:** No, uhm, it's something that I ask most people, uh, everyone actually, in, in a follow up (=Luca: Okay). Uhm, yeah.

**Luca:** Mmm. Can I get back to you on that one?

**Tyler:** Sure. It might be easier to ask if there, is there any disagreement that comes to mind?

**Luca:** There wasn't really much of a disagreement, and I can't tell if it was because we actually didn’t disagree on anything (=Tyler: Mmm). Or it was a… not of lack of engagement, but a reluctance to actually, engage in that way (=Tyler: Right), in an almost argumentative sense (=Tyler: Mmm) without coming across as, uhm, belligerently argumentative (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I mean, I've been told that I can’t, I can’t, sometimes, I can't watch my tone (=Tyler: Mmm). And I, and I mean things in a completely, compl-, not complacent, but in a, uhm, in a positive way (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But when it comes out of my mouth, it doesn't sound that way (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So I was just trying my best to (=Tyler: Yes), like, keep myself, grounded in a sense? (Tyler: Yeah, yeah). And, but uhm… not to say that I did, that, not to say that I did hear anything that jumped out and I was like “Woah (=Tyler: Yeah), let's, let’s dial it back a bit (=Tyler: Mmm)” No, so, nothing that, nothing that popped up, immediately (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I did, uhm, hear in general, not just you, but the whole group was kind of sensitive to, uhm, potential misinterpretations (=Luca: Yes). Uh, yeah. So, yeah, very careful to choose your words carefully.

**Luca:** We are being recorded.

**Tyler:** Uh, well, yes, [laugh sigh].

**Luca:** Posterity.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], yes, but also anonymized in a way (=Luca: Mmm). So, yeah. Uhm, yeah. Is there anything that you wanted to express in the group that you didn't?

**Luca:** Mmm…

**Tyler:** Perhaps it was a response to someone else? Or perhaps it was one of your experiences of sameness and difference that you didn't get to talk about?

**Luca:** No I think, uhm, I remember at the time, very distinctly (=Tyler: Mmm), I was, I saw that we only had like, half an hour left. I was saying to myself, “No, can this go on for even longer?” (=Tyler: Really?) Yes! (=Tyler: Okay) I was really enjoying it (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Ja, uhm, I'm sad that I didn’t sign up for something like this earlier (=Tyler: Uh-huh) I’ve been getting all these emails last year, I’m like, no, no (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, yeah, to get back to your question, uhm. Wait, what was, what was the question? Sorry.

**Tyler:** Uh, was there anything that you wanted to express that you didn't?

**Luca:** Uhm… no, for the most part, I think I got most of my two cents out on the table (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uh, ja, I think f-, I also think for the most part that, uhm, nothing I said was too, left field (=Tyler: Mmm) or too out of the box. Everybody seemed to understand a fair amount where we’re coming from, which is, uhm, something that, that, well, it didn't shock me. But, it didn't take me aback. It just, it was a bit of a, it was a bit of a surprise. But then again, we, there's that idea of sameness, that we're all on the, fairly on the same page when it comes to certain issues (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or certain things we've experienced in our life, that we could have that (=Tyler: Mmm) understanding.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. It’s interesting to see that, uh, people who obviously lead, lead their individual lives (=Luca: Mmhmm) and have, differences there can also relate across that (=Luca: Mmm), right? Yeah. Uhm, I think one of the interesting things that you brought up, uhm, was a question to Jamie. Uhm, you were asking them about a, a line, I suppose, at which you can be gender nonconforming enough to assume a non-binary identity (=Luca: Yes). And you brought up sort of a, a gendered expression that's nonconforming, like your nails (=Luca: Mmm), uhm, which look very good, by the way, [laugh sigh] (=Luca: Thank you). Uhm, and you asked, you know, does this count and I think the conclusion that that part of the discussion came to was that it is an individual choice. Uhm, whether you choose to, A, you know, express yourself in a non-conforming way, and B, to claim a non-binary identity, and whether those two are related. Uhm, what do you think about that conversation now?

**Luca:** So, funny enough, last night, I was talking with the boys (=Tyler: Uh-huh). That group of, uhm, (=Tyler: Yeah), fairly heterosexually coded men that I have as friends (Tyler: Okay), to put that in a very clinical way (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh sigh]), [laugh sigh]. Uhm, and my one friend, who is, uh, who is straight (=Tyler: Uh-huh), he was asking – Is he straight? (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) That's the real question, ladies and gentlemen (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh sigh]), uhm. But… he was asking, he was asking me about what do I feel about non – what do you call pronouns that aren't, that aren't, “he”, “thei-”, “he”, “she” and “them” or, like separate from those?

**Tyler:** Oh, I, I don't know if there's, there probably is a term, uhm.

**Luca:** ‘Cause I was saying non-standard pronouns and (=Tyler: Yes) that sounds fairly neutral enough to get across the board, so (=Tyler: Yes), I'm gonna go with that.

**Tyler:** Like “ze” (=Luca: Yes), I think, yes.

**Luca:** I've only met one person (=Tyler: Yeah). And this, and it wasn't even in South Africa. I was in New York at the time (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I went on a tour of New York University. And this person introduced me, introduced… (=Tyler: [Laugh]) That's a good question. Themselves? (=Tyler: Sure). Let's go with that. Uhm… and, and they introduced themselves with these, with these pronouns that didn't fit into that into, into… into the standard set that we all know (=Tyler: Mmm). And, uhm, [laugh sigh], I remember very clearly, my dad was sitting next to me (=Tyler; Mmm), like chuckled and I kind of stepped on his foot (=Tyler: Right), because we we're sitting in the front row, and I’m like, “Really? Are you going to do this now? (=Tyler: Yeah) Really?” And that's, like, my dad's pretty progressive, coming from where he came from (=Tyler: Yeah). So I was like, “Okay, cool, I’ll let this one slide”. Anyway, long story short, it was, shocking, in a way, to hear that they were pronouns outside, “he, she, and they” (=Tyler: Uh-huh), and even then I barely knew anything. I didn't know anybody who would by “they/them” pronouns (=Tyler: Oh wow). Now, I know all the people. I even consider it for myself, so here we go. Uhm, so we were talking about this last night. And… I brought up that conversation from the focus group (=Tyler; Yeah). And once again, all three of us, we all came to the conclusion that, once again, at the end of the day, it is up to the person to decide. And even if you're bothered by non-standard pronouns, the chances of you coming across a person who has those pronouns are so slim, to the, it won't even affect your life (=Tyler: Mmm). So why waste time, you know… reacting to it? (=Tyler: Yes). It's just a way for someone to express themselves (=Tyler: True). And my one other friend was saying, at the end of the day, how you express yourself is a deeply personal thing (=Tyler: Mmm). And for that to be disrespected in any what way, hurts a lot (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and is seen, and is felt as an attack. And I'm like, “Yes, keep going” [clap] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And uhm, and after he said that I'm like, “Exactly, that is what it is at the end of the day” (=Tyler: Yeah), so… to go on from that conversation, I don't think my view has changed that much (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But… how one pers-, they, there, there is, once again, there's no one-size-fits-all (=Tyler: Yes). It all comes down to the person, which… look, I did a course in philosophy so (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) excuse me if this is a gaff (=Tyler: Okay). I feel like it's a very postmodern view (=Tyler: Uh-huh), to have, to have each person have their own reality or their own, not their own reality, but their own idea of themselves, that there's no, universal idea that a group of people can be, uhm, can espouse to, or can identify as (=Tyler: Mmm), that each person is, guess what, an individual (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So, ja. I guess that's where that, that friction and tension comes between, uhm, my generation, our generation, our generations, I’ll lead with that, because the lines blur (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, versus generations from long before (=Tyler: Mmm) that have that very set, it’s or that, that’s it. Where, you and I, and people of our generation, we deal in that gray area? In fact, the world is that gray area.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's, that's a very important point to bring up. Uhm, and I think it's, uh, one of the ways that sameness and difference can manifest (=Luca: Mmm) because, if, uh, terms that you use to describe yourself, whether they're an identity label, like queer, or non-binary, whatever, or a pronoun, uhm, you know, there is like a sameness in a group belonging, but also a difference being an, an individual (=Luca: Mmm), and, and an individual choice and how that individual makes meaning of, of those things. Yeah. And it's, it’s, yeah, interesting that you sort of bring up you know, people might, uhm, feel like it affects their lives in some way when someone is asking them to use non-standard pronouns. Uhm, where, to me at least, it's almost like well, if you have to remember someone's name, it's just as simple as that (=Luca: Mmm). You just have to remember their pronouns as well, [laugh sigh]. Yeah. Uhm. Yeah. Uhm… okay. How do you feel about your queerness now, after having, uh, [laugh sigh] participated in the focus group? It might be a strange question, but yeah.

**Luca:** Mmm, I don't think it has changed that much (=Tyler: Uh-huh) at all. Quite frankly, it's hard to think about your own identity when you're, when you're busy (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… which actually brings up an interesting point on privilege (=Tyler: Okay). That, it is a privilege in some what way or the other, to be able to sit down, put aside your daily life and actually think about, uhm, who you are as a person (=Tyler: Mmm). Which is not to say that most of those, most of those experiences and, uhm, events that shaped you as a person don't happen with you just sitting down and thinking, it happens on the fly, on the move, in your daily life. But I think for someone to, be able to, to get down to the tee of who they are, or at least who they think they are (=Tyler: Mmm) is somewhat, they're definitely given, they've been given space in their life to do so (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I feel like that is, that's a very minor. It's very, it’s very eso-, not esoteric, but it's very, it’s a very particular discussion for another time. But uhm, yeah, I don't think I've changed that much (=Tyler: Mmhmm), really (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm… I can't tell you what exactly defines my queerness (=Tyler: Yeah) as it is (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm… ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm). No, it, I don't think it has, I don’t think my idea of who I am as a queer person has changed (= Tyler: Yeah), or shifted (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Uhm, what about the feeling of who you are? Not so much the idea (=Luca: Mmm), uhm, but what did it feel like at the end of the focus group?

**Luca:** Itfelt affirming (=Tyler: Okay) to be around other queer people and speak about experiences that only we can talk about (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and not have straight people argue over you (=Tyler: Mmm), for you, against other straight people (=Tyler: Mmhmm). You know what I mean, right? It, it, there's something, something has gone wrong (=Tyler: Yeah), when a straight person decides to, decides to tell you to pipe it down so they can defend you over something that doesn't concern them. But they're doing it to like, to like, uhm, uh… to win an argument (=Tyler: Yes) against another straight person, like woah-woah-woah-woah-woah (=Tyler: Yeah). So, uhm, how do I feel, has, has the feeling of being a queer person changed? So yes it was affirming (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, it was also, brought back that sense of community (=Tyler: Mmhmm), especially outside of (=Tyler: Mmm) social, social media, because (=Tyler: Mmhmm) that's a cesspool, is it not? (=Tyler: Right). I mean, funny enough, uhm, Nick and I know each other.

**Tyler:** Yes, I was going to ask you about that. How do you know each other, [laugh sigh]? (=Luca: [Laugh sigh]) If you want to get into that?

**Luca:** [Laugh], take your best guess.

**Tyler:** Uh… I don’t, uh, social media? That? (=Luca: Yes, mmm). Okay.

**Luca:** Grindr.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay.

**Luca:** Yeah, that, that, that place.

**Tyler:** Yes that place (=Luca: Mmm).

**Luca:** It's funny, because we, we, he asked me, uh, “did you, have you seen, have you seen Tyler on Grindr?” (=Tyler: [Laugh]) Yes. Yes. I have (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Ja. Uhm.

**Tyler:** Ja. So, it, it was just, uh, seeing each other's profile, or?

**Luca:** No so we, we spoke for a while (=Tyler: Oh, okay). We traded numbers (=Tyler: Okay), and then we spoke for a bit longer. Uhm, and then we kind of like stopped talking, because, I don't know, it just, you know, life moves on (=Tyler: Uh-huh). If, if you have no real connection to a person, it's just easy to forget their existence (=Tyler: Right). And then when he walked in, I turned around, and (=Tyler: Yeah) we looked at each other, it was like “Woah, (=Tyler: Yeah), what is this? This is too, the world is too small.” (=Tyler: Yeah) Uhm-

**Tyler:** How did that feel, seeing him there?

**Luca:**  It was jarring at first (=Tyler: Okay) because I don't like to, uhm, yeah, it just felt like two different parts of my life that should there [gestures separate spaces] (=Tyler: Mmm) coming together like this [gestures meshing together] (=Tyler: Yes). Like, for instance, it wasn't, it wasn't, it wasn't nearly as jarring as when, uhm, this one, uh, guy that I hooked up with… who, who, [laugh] who goes, who goes [university campus], he’s a master's student (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, a few, like two weeks ago, I'm sitting, I’m sitting with my friends and we're talking about, I don't know what but we were talking about something, but then suddenly this guy walks up and I’m like “Woah, what’s this? What is happening? This is (=Tyler: Yeah) this is too much”. And like the funny thing was, we haven't spoken for weeks. And then he comes up to me and hugs me and I'm like, “What is happening? (=Tyler: Uh-huh)”. Ja, it wasn't that bad (=Tyler: Okay). But it was approaching those levels very quickly (=Tyler: Right). Ja. Which is funny, because I also know his brother.

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Luca:** Same way.

**Tyler:** Oh, uh, Nick’s brother?

**Luca:** Yes (=Tyler: Oh). The same way (=Tyler: Okay), which is very interesting, because at the time I didn't know they were brothers (=Tyler: Right). So then I get a message. Jeff (=Tyler: Okay). From him, his brother (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, shortly after the focus group and he like, “Oh, you met my brother,” and then all the pieces started coming together (=Tyler: Oh, wow), it was like, “woah…”

**Tyler:** Wow. Okay. (=Luca: Ja, that was-) Interesting (=Luca: that was something). And Jeff is someone that you also similarly just chatted to and then nothing came of it?

**Luca:** Ja, nothing came of it. But, there was, it was heading in, in that direction. So there was definitely me taking a step back and like taking stock, do I just forget the situation ever happened and move on with my life? Do I just cut off communication with everybody? Because it was getting, it was, it was turning into a fantasy [inaudible] novel, very quickly (=Tyler: Oh, really?). Yes. Ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm), which is funny, because – Was it the day after or was it that very day? It was, it was shortly afterwards, I found myself in town with my friends on Long Stre-, not Long Street, Kloof Street. And then I get a message from Nick, “I’m at the Pink Panther. Do you want to join?” I’m like, “Mmm, sure, who’s there with you?” “My brother”, and it was like “I'm sorry, what? Come again?” (=Tyler: Yeah). Ja. And then I went there, which was… an experience (=Tyler: Okay). I don't, like I said in the focus group, me and gay clubs, we don't mix (=Tyler: Right). I feel like, this is weird to say, but I don't feel like I'm, I’m gay enough to go to a club like that. Like it's just, it’s *so* camp. It’s so over the top, and I understand that it does it for people and I’m like, “Cool. That's you. You do you, be the best you can be.” But um, for me, it's just (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it's a lot (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It's, it's a lot and, uhm… ja, seeing them there, [laugh], both there (=Tyler: Yeah). And there’s, I can see the resemblance (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And that's when the [clap], the, the gears started turning and I was like “Wow, what did, what situation did I find myself in?” (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]) And then I fled the scene and went home.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay, [laugh sigh]. Right (=Luca: Ja), ja. (=Luca: That is something). And speaking of worlds colliding, did it, how did it feel to see me, my profile?

**Luca:** We’ve, we’ve never spoken before (=Tyler: Sure). Yeah, but to see your profile. I've seen you before. Funny enough, I've seen you before on Grindr, before I knew of the focus group, before I attended this (=Tyler: Mmm), before everything. So when I looked on Grindr, after the focus group and I saw your profile I’m like “Ahhh, (=Tyler: Okay), okay, (=Tyler: Right) cool” (=Tyler: [Laugh]). [Laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. It is a, a strange thing also for me to navigate because, uh, yeah, there's like a, a researcher, sort of, impartiality, but I'm also a human (=Luca: Yes), uh, you know, uhm, and I am within, you know, the queer circles. And that's how I'm starting this, uh, research, so (=Luca: Mmm), yeah. Yeah, interesting.

**Luca:** And you, and you know how those circles tend to move around, so.

**Tyler:** Yes.

**Luca:** Ja.

**Tyler:** Ja, ja, [laugh] (=Luca: Mmm). Yeah, strange world.

**Luca:** It really is.

**Tyler:** Mmm. Uhm, I wanted to also ask, uhm, I think Jamie was asking about slurs, and, and you said, you know, the, the F slur is, uh, something that you use in a reclaimed way, uhm, for yourself and within your close friends group, you also use that (=Luca: Mmm), uhm, but that you have a, a problem with the Afrikaans version (=Luca: Uh-huh), the M slur, uhm, because it, you've often experienced it used in derogatory ways (=Luca: Ah, yeah). Uhm, okay, so have you experienced the F slur also used in a derogatory way in your life?

**Luca:** Once or twice (=Tyler: Okay), uhm… But they were just, they were by like, these, by like small-time school bullies that absolutely mean nothing to me (=Tyler: Oh, okay). Really like… if I today, if today, I met them, I’d be like, “say it again. I mean, it is an accurate representation, I am a fag (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], right). What do you, what are you trying to do? (=Tyler: Yeah) Come back to me when you’ve got a better joke” (=Tyler: Yeah, exactly), kind of situation (=Tyler: Uh-huh), so-

**Tyler:** But the M one?

**Luca:** I think it's assoc-, I think it's, I think it’s because, I think it is be-, one of the reasons it is because that is an Afrikaans word (=Tyler: Okay). And I don't know. My relationship with the Afrikaans language is... Is, I wouldn't say so far as to say interesting (=Tyler: Mmm). But maybe subjectively interesting, at least for me (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm… which, okay, let's, let's try lay this out (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Afrikaans, right. The language of apartheid (=Tyler: Uh-huh), for the most part, it was brought, it is a language that was used by a regime, a police state (=Tyler: Uh-huh), to oppress, uhm, the people that it… that it, uhm, that, uh, consisted, consisted as part of the state whether they were part of the actual state or not (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, so there's that history, to understand, there’s the fact that my parents both speak Afrikaans, my mom being a Coloured woman, my dad having an Afrikaans father. So I have Afrikaans heritage, but it's so far down the line that I've basically just, kicked it out (=Tyler: Mmm), for the most part. So maybe there's an element of, because of, maybe because of that heritage there’s an element of shame. But I feel like, that's getting to very, I feel like that's just reaching for a reason at that point (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I think it's because of the historical, uhm, the historical, I want to say characteristics, of the language (=Tyler: Mmm), and how it was used as a weapon (=Tyler: Right), uhm, have, has given me a very, stand-offish (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, attitude towards it (=Tyler: Okay). And also, like, like, I was saying, both of my parents speak fluently, but they didn't, they didn't ever teach me. They said, when asked about it, they said they never felt they needed to teach me a second language, so that, that second language being Afrikaans (=Tyler: Right). So, ja (=Tyler: Mmm), so there's that. And I think because of that, uhm, there's that, that reluctance to use the word, use the word moffie (=Tyler: Mmhmm) in the same way I would use the F slur.

**Tyler:** Right. Okay. (=Luca: So, yeah) Ja. Yeah. Cool (=Luca: If that made any sense) No, it did! It did, yeah, and thanks for, for clarifying. Uhm, I have, uh, questions also about, uh, me. So how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Luca:** Hmm, I thought that you were going to ask more questions (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, or… that you would... stop, not stop people, but almost, not limit, not, but, uhm, moderate, yeah, that's, that's a word (=Tyler: Okay). Moderate people, uhm, more, but not in a, not in a, in an exclusive way, but just maybe bring the conversations back. But I think… I think I like how it went (=Tyler: Okay), for the most part, ‘cause you, you basically, you would get it going, and then you will just let it happen (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And you would let the branches, just go in whatever direction they went (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I don't remember any particular point where it was that so far removed (=Tyler: Okay), from what the topic was that you *really* needed to (=Tyler: Uh-huh). So yeah, uh (=Tyler Okay), nah I don’t have any qualms.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], okay, cool. That's good. Thanks. Uhm, and do you have any feedback for how you think I can improve the focus group?

**Luca:** Mmm… As long as, this is, it's not, it’s really your fault (=Tyler: Yeah) at all, I mean, there was, there was four people (=Tyler: Yes), uhm.

**Tyler:** It was the smallest group I've had.

**Luca:** How big are your usual groups?

**Tyler:** Six (=Luca: Ah, uhm). Yeah. It makes a difference.

**Luca:** Yeah, I can imagine (=Tyler: Mmm), I mean two more people to relate to (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, also, [laugh], uh, so… I’m not White (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I’m mixed race, but hello, hi [displays forearm]. So, I definitely... have been, was born with and raised with and still experience White privilege (=Tyler: Right) for myself, because people don't take a look at me, uhm, and say, “Oh no that person’s mixed race” (=Tyler: Right). Or, “that person's Coloured” (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or so forth. What's funny, is that people keep telling me this, to this day. It happened a few weeks ago, when, uhm, uh, my, I was talking to my friend, and my one friend pulls me over and says to me… he says to me, uhm, “Why didn't you correct the lecturer that one day?” I'm like, “Why would I need to, why would I need to correct the lecturer?” And he was like, “Uhm, he called you White boy,” I’m like… It isn't so much of a problem that it, it doesn't affect me in such a way that I was going to make a, a stink out of it (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm. And I said to him, “Tshepo, look, at the end of the day, uh, he can't tell” (=Tyler: Mmmm). And he's like, “Ja, but, uhm, what did you say your mom was?” My mom's Coloured. And he, then he, he says to me, this is what, everybody keeps saying to me. “You know what it is?” I’m like, “What is it Tshepo?” He’s like “It's the hair”. And I'm like (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), “Okay, if you see it, good on you, I don't, we move” (=Tyler: Okay). So what I was getting at after that long anecdote is that, well there was, there was three White people. And there was Sage (=Tyler: Oh), so it just, it felt like, it was the first thing that I picked up (=Tyler: Yeah). I think, I think, as a South African (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and our dramatic and interesting relationship with race (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, it's very easy for us to notice that very quickly (=Tyler: Yes). It doesn't, it didn't, it's not so far as to say that it, uhm, bothered me or it sent off alarm bells, but it's something that I noticed, it’s something that I'm constantly aware of (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), and the implications of what that means of what is being said in the room, what can be said by people that aren't part of that group (=Tyler: Yes), and so forth (=Tyler: Yes). So, uhm… Ja, I was hoping… for… a greater diversity in that aspect (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). Because, the only place that I really, I mean, I do get that, I do get those, I get, uhm, people, uh, queer people of color in my friend groups and also now in Rainbow. But, uhm, even in Rainbow, after, because the elections last year were such a sham, that the com was basically appointed by the previous com (=Tyler: Oh yes, mmm), we were disappointed. So, uhm, even then it just some, it’s just something that pops out at me that the com was like, it had, like two White people (=Tyler: Uh-huh) last year, and now half of the com is White (=Tyler: Mmm). So, it's just this, it’s this weird shift, because I, I mean, it really is, the only reason it happened was because of a lack of, uhm, participation by our members to elect the next com (=Tyler: Yes) which I can’t blame them for because societies were basically defunct last year (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So, uhm, yeah, I was just hoping for more experience, more, uhm, views and experiences from, from, in that, kind of (=Tyler: Yes, yes), ja.

**Tyler:** Which, which is fair. Uhm, and I, I do want these focus groups to be as diverse as possible, uhm, it just so happened that because your focus group was quite small, uhm, that that wasn't there. But you know, I have even had a focus group with six participants and they’re, with no one being White. Uhm, so, uh, when you see the, the final report, which will be at the end of the year, if you'd like to see it (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, yeah, that is definitely something that I also look out for in the focus group to see what is said, based on those kind of dimensions of the people participating. Uhm, and you’ll also see, uhm, the different compositions of the focus groups (=Luca: Mmm), like across the whole study. Yeah.

**Luca:** So then I have a question (=Tyler: Mmhmm?). Uhm, so then how do you as a White person (=Tyler: Mmm) navigate that, as a position of authority, when talking? Because at the end of the day, you are (=Luca: Right), whether, as much as you remove yourself from it (=Tyler: Yes), you can correct me if you feel that (=Tyler: Mmm) in any way that you, if you disagree with what I say. Uhm, but the way I see it is that whether, how much you remove yourself from this or not, your presence will forever be felt and forever be in the, in the space (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So then, in a group of, in your, in a focus group where there aren't any – Also, can, I would just like to acknowledge that this is fully two White people (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) having this conversation (=Tyler: Yeah) urgh. But, ja, so how do you navigate that with a group of people of color?

**Tyler:** Mmm, I think, what you mentioned about how I’m, uh, set up the focus group, you know, I, I let participants lead the discussion (=Luca: Mmm). Uhm, and I also ask people for their, uh, ex-, their interpretations and meanings and experiences, and, uhm, I try my best not to impose anything, but also to learn from every single participant. Uhm, so I try to put myself in a space of, uh, curiosity, and, and, uh, yeah, not so much like an intellectual authority as a researcher (=Luca: Mmm), uhm, but also, to pay attention to what is not said, uhm, in individual interviews with me, in the focus groups where I'm the moderator. Uhm, and even that question, when I asked, “what did you think of me as a moderator?” pay attention to what is said and what's not said, and, and think (=Luca: It's like-) and think about my positionality, and how that might affect it.

**Luca:** It's like jazz, it's about the notes that aren't played.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. So I also do a lot of reflection, it's, it's a standard, uhm, practice for a researcher or psychol-, uh, psychology professional of any kind to just reflect the whole time that you're doing any kind of research with other people to see, you know, how does who you are (=Luca: Mmm) affect, with, uh, how do you think it might affect what's going on? Ja, so I think, I don't know, that’s the best we can do, [laugh sigh].

**Luca:** Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, it's not like any of us can change our characteristics. It's just to, to be aware of what it might be doing in, in a situation.

**Luca:** Yeah. I mean, I ask, I asked for two reasons, because it was generally curious (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, and also, because it's something that I have to navigate myself. Uhm, even though I'm not White, I'm seen as such, and I definitely benefit from the color of my skin (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so when, tonight (=Tyler: Mmhmm), we are doing, [LGBTQIA+ university society] is doing a showing of Moffie (=Tyler: Yes), uh, with the support of our members. Because we had an event, but, yoh, admin, admin these days at the university is so shit (=Tyler: Yeah). So we had to cancel that, we’re having the movie night now, I'll keep this short. And, uhm, I have to do the discussion afterwards, I have to lead the discussion about the film because I raised the point of, you can’t watch this film, and then leave all those emotions that it draws up in the air and let out, and let people just go away with it. We need to at least, not so much as clarify, but let's talk about it (=Tyler: Mmm). Let us actually, uhm, you know…

**Tyler:** Debrief?

**Luca:** Yeah, debrief, that’s a good word (=Tyler: Yes), debrief what this film is about (=Tyler: Mmm) and discuss why we felt certain ways, what we felt about the film (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because it's, have

you watched the film?

**Tyler:** I haven't.

**Luca:** Oh, it is, it's an, it is an experience to watch (=Tyler: Yeah. Yeah, mmhmm). It’s deeply disturbing in so many ways.

**Tyler:** Yeah. One of the reasons I haven't watched it yet (=Luca: Yes). Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The, the, it's really complex to navigate. So, I will say that this is definitely the start of the kind of research that I want to do. Even, you know, at the end with the final report, it's still just the, the beginning (=Luca: Mmm). Yeah, mmhmm (=Luca: Okay). Yeah. So I don't have any other questions. Uhm, is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience of the focus group or any experience of sameness and difference?

**Luca:** Uhm… funny enough, I think I felt the most… Like, I’ve, ja, let's go with that (=Tyler: Okay). I think I felt the most difference with, uhm… with Jamie (=Tyler: Uh-huh)… with them (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I don't know why, I can't pinpoint. But like, when I s-, when I like picture it in my head there’s something that tells me that, particularly them, I felt the most difference with (=Tyler: Okay). Maybe it was because of their experience of queerness, or the fact that their gender identity, differs in that much of a way. Uhm, and it's not to say that I haven't interacted with – they, they were, they’re trans, right?

**Tyler:** Uh, yes. non-binary, trans.

**Luca:** Yes, yes, I remember now. So, and it's not to say that I haven't interacted with, uhm, transgender people (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It's just that, actually, I don’t, I can’t really pinpoint why (=Tyler: Hmmm). Uhm… (=Tyler: Hmmm), ja, it's also interesting how… how, uh, for instance... I kept picking up on Nick’s anxiety…very clear from the moment, from the get go (=Tyler: Yes, yes). And I'm not trying to, I'm not trying to criticize him in any what way (=Tyler: Yes). I mean, I get intense social anxiety myself (=Tyler: Yes), in a not comfortable situation. I was comfortable (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I, I obviously empathize a lot with him. Uhm, but it also, I felt that, I really wanted him to say more (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), because it felt like, betw-, because it, it constantly felt like Jamie and I were talking the most (=Tyler: Mmm). And there was definitely a point where I was like, “Mmm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I should shut up now” (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], right). Ja, but (=Tyler: Ja) then again, I can't force people to talk (=Tyler: Yes, true) and if they, if people aren't going to talk, well, uh, here I go (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm).

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Nick did say to me, uh, after the focus group and in his follow-up interview that he's quite shy, uhm, and, yeah, had, had a bit of social anxiety. Uhm, at the same time, he didn't feel like he need to add more, uhm, or had more to add, I suppose.

**Luca:** Yeah, so when we, if, if people don't feel that they want to add more, then (=Tyler: Ja) that's it at the end of the day (=Tyler; Yeah). I just, I was hoping, like I said, I wish it could have gone on for another hour (=Tyler: Yeah) then maybe we could have, rang out some more ideas, more (=Tyler: Mmhmm), deeply (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. But (=Luca: That was it), I am really, yeah, appreciating the utility of the group, uhm, just for, for participants, uhm, to discuss things. Yeah., mmhmm. (=Luca: I get that, yeah) Yeah, yeah. Okay, so,that's all that I have. Is that all that you have?

**Luca:** Mmmm. Ja, for the most part. Yes, yes, I’d say so.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Thanks. So then I can stop there.

Nick

**Tyler:** Thanks. So how long have you been since I last saw you?

**Nick:** I've been, I've been pretty good, just stressed, with (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?), uni and everything, but everything else is pretty, been pretty good.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah, it is a stressful time, uh, at university for lots of students (=Nick Yeah), [laugh sigh].

**Nick:** Ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, so we can get right into it. Uh, how (=Nick: Okay) did you feel about the focus group?

**Nick:** Oh, I was really cool. I really, it was, it was really insightful to, learn about other people's experiences, within like, different, like viewpoints of the whole situation, you know what I mean? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Really insightful (=Tyler: Mmhmm), really awesome.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. So what kind of insights did you learn? Can you give me like an example of something that came to your mind?

**Nick:** Uhm, like, how… a lot of us experienced the same situations during school, especially. Like we, like in some context, we're like, looked down upon in some senses, depending on which person we were talking to, and stuff like that, it was (=Tyler: Yeah) pretty cool.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I'm sure that that, uh, might have been comforting, I guess, ‘cause you said that you had experienced like a lot of, like, bullying in school, both in (=Nick: Oh, [nod]) the Free State and in Cape Town, right? (=Nick: Oh yeah), yeah.

**Nick:** Very much, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Nick:** It was, [light cough], it was not fun.

**Tyler:** Could you say that again?

**Nick:**  It was much fun, sorry.

**Tyler:** No, [laugh sigh], definitely not.

**Nick:** Bullying is not a vibe.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. Uhm, so is there anyone in the group that you felt a kind of sameness with?

**Nick:** Um, I think like, the, like, majority of the group, in some sense you know? Just because there was a lot of relatable… situations that people spoke about (=Tyler: Mmm). So I was like… pretty much within the entire group I, felt a sameness.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I remember, uh, well, the, the school thing. Uhm, and also, uh, YouTube was also a thing for you and some of the other (=Nick: Oh yeah, yeah) groups, group members. Yeah. Yeah. Is there anything else that you related to that came up?

**Nick:** Ah, I can't really remember now, sorry (=Tyler: That's all right). Sorry.

**Tyler:** That's fine. Uhm, so did you feel different from anyone in the group in like, a significant way?

**Nick:** Uhm, I don’t really think so. Maybe just like… within different viewpoints on saying slur words (=Tyler: Mmm). But, I mean, not really in any other context, because, really closely related to majority of what people were saying.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Okay, so then how do you feel about, uhm, agreement in your group? Do you think your group tended to agree on a lot of stuff?

**Nick:** Oh, ja, of course. I think so, [cough], sorry (=Tyler: That’s alright). Uhm, I think, I think …there was a lot of agreement, I don't think there was any bad banter (=Tyler: Mmm) between anyone, it was all, like, understanding of each other, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), just because, I think, we can relate to each other that much. And understand.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uh, so what do you feel about disagreement in the group? There wasn't much, you think?

**Nick:** No, I don't think so. Not, not that I can remember (=Tyler: Mmm). Mmm.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Okay. Uhm, so how do you feel about the way that you identify or describe the way that you identify, uh, compared to the way that other members of your group were talking about themselves?

**Nick:** I feel like, I feel like everyone experiences, like being queer in their own different, like, view. And, like, your family, really, also has a, a major, uhm, like, hold on how you experience your view in the community (=Tyler: Mmm). So I feel like I had a different, uhm… like, type of – I don’t know how to explain myself. Yeah, I felt, I, I felt like different in comparison to what Luca felt with growing up with his family who was a bit more accepting (=Tyler: Mmm). And, uhm, my family which is like, a bit iffy about, the whole situation.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Nick: Yeah), yeah. Yeah, it's quite interesting because, uhm, yeah, obviously, also your brother is also queer (=Nick: Mmhmm). Uhm, and so you have a kind of sameness and difference with him in the family, situation, because, uhm, yeah you said your family is a bit iffy and not so comfortable with it, doesn't really speak about it. But you, so that's relating, right, with your brother? (=Nick Yeah) But then you also said that, uhm, like your mom, for example, had progressed from the time when your brother came out to the time where you kind of lived openly (=Nick: Oh, yeah, of course) so is the-, is there kind of a sameness-difference with your brother's experience of family?

**Nick:** Yoh, I think, I think my brother experienced something completely different from what I experienced because (=Tyler: Yeah?) he, he told me that, uhm, he didn't have a, he didn't have a, a need to come out or (=Tyler: Mmm) a need to express himself with, within the family and, me on the other hand, I, I want to express myself to my mom, and I wanna, I want her to know (=Tyler: Mmm) that, uhm, I’m, I’m this person, this is who I am. So I feel like that's a major difference between what my brother went through what I went through (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), so, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah. Uhm, so… how do you feel about what you said, in the focus group, uhm, in general?

**Nick:** I think, I think I could have said a little bit more (=Tyler: Okay), I'm not going to lie. But I was like, just like, couldn't, I can't really express myself when it comes to, like, certain situations, and I, I feel a bit anxious (=Tyler: Yeah) talking about situations. So I fe-, I felt okay (=Tyler: Mmhmm), but I felt like I could say a little bit more about (=Tyler: Yeah) certain situations that we were talking about.

**Tyler:** Yeah, right. I mean, you even said that you are a bit shy, and, uh, a little nervous when it comes to talking to strangers, you know (=Nick: Ja), especially if it's about personal stuff, which is what the focus group is about (=Nick: Yeah). Uhm, so, I mean, what things contributed to you feeling shy or a bit quiet that day in that group?

**Nick:** Um, I don't really, well that’s a… (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, yoh. I think it's just like, I think it's just, how I, how I am, you know what I mean? It’s like, I can't really, express myself to people who I don't really know (=Tyler: Mmm). Because I feel like, they're gonna judge me, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Nick:** I like, I'm scared.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Nick: Ja), yeah. Was there anything in that group in particular, that made you feel scared of being judged? Or is it a general thing that you bring to any new space?

**Nick:** Yeah, this is a general thing. It wasn't necessarily, the group. It was just me.

**Tyler:** Okay. Well, that's fine (=Nick: Yeah). It's understandable (=Nick: Ja), yeah. Uhm, so if you say you could have said more, is there anything that you wanted to say that you didn't say?

**Nick:** Well, for, for, I can't really, necessarily remember (=Tyler: Mmm) in particular because there was so much discussed within that small period of time, but (=Tyler: Yeah, yoh, I can’t, uhm... I can’t remember, I'm so sorry.

**Tyler:** No, that's okay. Is – you don't have to remember back to a specific moment in the group. But is there anything that you would like to still share now about your experiences of being queer or experiencing sameness and difference with other people?

**Nick:** Uhm…crap, uhm… sorry, my sister's listening to music, uhm, but... I can’t, I, I don't really know, I’m so sorry.

**Tyler:** No, it's okay. You don't have to apologize, [laugh sigh]. Okay, no, that's cool. Uhm, so, this might be a strange question. But, uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now after participating in the focus group?

**Nick:** Uh… it's, it’s still, it’s still a mix, [light cough], within myself because, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I felt like, I feel a bit more comfortable because, like, [cough], I know that there's like, people who we can relate to, like, you know? And then, uhm, like, I feel a bit better in some, in some contexts and then like the same with other contexts, (=Tyler: Mmm), I think, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Uhm, I wonder if you can be specific about those contexts? How do you feel a little different and how the same?

**Nick:** Okay, so, like, difference is like, uhm, I feel more comfortable talking about certain situations with like, people, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). And the sameness is like, I still have questions and just like, uhm… uh, what’s it called now, like, yoh, I am, I have question in myself. Still questioning myself with certain situations (=Tyler: Mmhmm) that I got a little bit of clarity about in the group. But still, still one of the, still… (=Tyler: Mmm) big in my head.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.Yeah (=Nick: Ja), I think that's, that's, uh, quite a common theme is, uh, you know, people still questioning themselves. Uhm, how do you feel about still having questions about yourself?

**Nick:** I mean, I think, I think it's a normal thing (=Tyler: Yeah) to question yourself. It’s just frustrating. Because, like, you want answers, but you can't necessarily get answers because you don't understand, like, what you're going through in some… sense, you know?

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.

**Nick:** It’s crazy, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uhm, I wonder what, what certain things, uhm, you have trouble understanding about what you're going through?

**Nick:** Like, with, like, with my whole, like, let's say, I think it's like, concerns of my sexuality, like, I have like, questions about like, who I am still because, like, I have different feelings towards different situations and like people (=Tyler: Mmm), like, am I really? Am I really gay? Or am I r-, am I just, like, bisexual or is that just internalized homophobia or is, like, that whole situation (=Tyler: Right), that I don't really, I don't really know how to recognize (=Tyler: Mmm), and, uhm, understand (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). It's like a growth. It's a growing process.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah it is. Yeah. Okay, I see. So (=Nick: Ja) you still have some attraction, of some kind, uhm, to girls or women, and you're trying to understand that?

**Nick:** Ja, because I don’t, I think it's just an attraction, it’s not necessarily a, a need… to or, or want to be with a female, you know what I mean? ‘Cause the whole situation (=Tyler: Mmhmm) is so, so confusing, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Uh-huh, mmhmm). But also at the same time, is that just, my, is that just me wanting to, uhm, form to what my mom views as like, what she wants? (=Tyler: Mmm). My family and stuff like that (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause it’s also (=Tyler: Yeah), a major player.

**Tyler:** Right. So asking yourself, it's, if it's what you *should* be attracted to? Uhm (=Nick: Mmm). Yeah, yeah. Hmm (=Nick: [Laugh]), okay. [Laugh sigh], no, that's, uhm, yeah, that is also quite an, uh, an important theme that comes up, with (=Nick: Mmm) a lot of people in the focus group. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Uhm, is there anything that you, anything else that you want to add?

**Nick:** Uhm… I’ve, I've grown a lot from when I first, like, discovered myself in some sense, you know? (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, in comparison to what I, I used to, I used to be very… closed up and to myself about my, my sexual orientation and now, as I've grown up and got more comfortable (=Tyler: Mmm), in my, in my, in my skin, I'm in some, in some ways, uh, I’ve, I’ve, I've opened up to, exploring, more in the community and like, not being as scared, of entering the community because it's like, it’s such a, a daunting, uhm, not really daunting like, it's, it's scary to first, like, walk into the community, you know what I mean? (=Tyler: Mmm). Because it's like, it's a, I think, it's a completely different, like, feeling (=Tyler: Mmhmm) because you're more accepted. And like, if we have like, a, a, acceptance, within the community in comparison to, just being alone and not wanting to explore or understand yourself, so ja.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah, okay. So it's kind of like, uh, stepping into a new space. Uhm (=Nick: Mmm), and you don't know what to expect?

**Nick:** Uhm well, I’ve, I’ve, it’s more like s-, stepping, it's like walking into like, uhm, walking into this, like new world in some sense. It’s like not expect, not expect, not, sorry, not expecting what is going to happen here.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Sure. Well, tha-, that's good, I guess, that (=Nick: Ja, it is), that you're more open to kind of exploring, uhm, and not being isolated in how (=Nick: Yeah) you feel. Yeah (=Nick: Yeah). Yeah, okay, nice. Uhm, so this question, please answer very honestly, [laugh sigh] (=Nick: Okay). Uhm, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Nick:** Oh, you're, you’re really cool.

**Tyler:** Oh, yeah?

**Nick:** I really – yeah, [laugh sigh]. I felt like, like, you were, you were good. A good moderator. I don’t really know, how to, like, you know, is that good?

**Tyler:** Yeah, no, that's fine, [laugh] (=Nick: [Laugh]). Yeah. Uhm, I'm also wondering if there's anything you think, uhm, about, uh, how the focus group can be improved?

**Nick:** Mm-mm. Mm-mm, not really, not personally. I don’t really, it's, it’s, it’s, I don't know. It's a really cool concept, though.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.

**Nick:** Like, I really enjoyed it, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay, that’s good. Yeah, I'm glad that you did enjoy it. Uhm, I don't know if there's anything that would have made you feel more comfortable about the space?

**Nick:** Not really, I mean, it was really, everyone was really nice and (=Tyler: Mmm) like, there's no, there's no sense of judgment within the group, to anything we were saying. So (=Tyler: Yeah), everyone, everything was really… cool.

**Tyler:** Yeah, good. [Laugh sigh]. Uhm, I think that that is actually, yeah, that's all the questions that I have. So is, is there anything that you would like to sh-, like add? (=Nick: Uhm, geez) About either your experience of the group or about, uhm, your experiences of being queer or sameness and difference?

**Nick:** Ah, my gosh... I don’t really…I don’t, I don’t know.

**Tyler:** If you don't have anything to add, that's also fine, [laugh sigh].

**Nick:** Are you sure? ‘Cause (=Tyler: Yeah!), like, I can, like, okay.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Nick:** Awesome. Well, I'm sorry, ‘cause, I, I don't really know what else I can say. I'm just like, not really, you know? [Laugh].

**Tyler:** There's, there’s no need to apologize for anything. What you have (=Nick: Okay) to say is what you have to say. Yeah.

**Nick:** Well, I mean, thank you.

**Tyler:** Yeah, you're welcome. Okay, cool. So, uhm, I guess we're done. And, uhm, do you still have the list of those counseling services that I gave you?

**Nick:** I think so.

**Tyler:** Okay, well, if you lose it, and you think about it, you can, uh, email me at any point, and I can send you a digital copy, uhm (=Nick: Oh thank you so much). Yeah, sure. And then, uh, I will be in touch when I have transcribed both the focus group and this interview in case you want to look at the transcript, uhm. And then also let you know, at the end of the year, when the final report is ready, in case you would like to see it.

**Nick:** Oh, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Nick:** I would love to see it, that would be pretty cool.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. Uhm (=Nick: Awesome) and then, I have a voucher ready to send you. But, uh, can you also, you can message me, uhm (=Nick: Okay), your banking details so I can EFT you the remuneration for data.

**Nick:** Okay, cool, I will. Thank you (=Tyler: Okay).

**Tyler:** Cool. You’re most welcome Nick.

**Nick:** Awesome.

**Tyler:** You have any questions about anything?

**Nick:** No, but, uhm, the, the entire thing was really awesome. So like, I really, it was cool.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. I'm really glad that you feel that way.

**Nick:** Ja.

**Tyler:**  Yeah.

**Nick:** Very insightful.

**Tyler:** Okay, excellent (=Nick: Awesome) yeah. Okay, cool. So, have a good weekend.

**Nick:** Thank you so much. You too.

Sage

**Tyler:** Uhm, so how have you been since I last saw you?

**Sage:** Uh, ja, I’ve been good. Uhm, just busy with work, uh, so the usual I guess, yeah, nothing, nothing much (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). How’ve you been?

**Tyler:** Yeah, I've been good, also quite busy, but, but well, yeah. Mmhmm. Uhm, so yeah, we can get right into it. Uhm, how did you feel about the focus group?

**Sage:** Uhm, it was a little different from anything I've done before (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so yeah, it, [sigh], I, I mean, I speak to people easily, uhm. Like I'm, a little bit of an extrovert-introvert, so a bit of both (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm so speaking to people does come, like, naturally. Uh, it was a little different, because it was like with complete strangers, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). So that was new (=Tyler: Mmm). And then, yeah, like it was, it was interesting to, to hear, like what everyone had to say, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). I think what I enjoyed most was that it was very educational for me, (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) uhm. ‘Cause some of the topics, uh, or some of the, sort of, what everyone mentioned, uhm, a lot of it was either very new to me, or (=Tyler: Mmhmm) I hadn't like experienced something similar (=Tyler: Hmm), uhm. But then at the same time, there was a lot that I could also relate to, so it was quite nice, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Uh, could you give me some examples of things that you, uh, that were new to you, things that you learned?

**Sage:** Uhm, so definitely what’s, what's new to me is more just like, uhm, I think the, the labels definitely (=Tyler: Mmm), that it's not just as simple as there’s these three labels, you either fit in it or you don't, (=Tyler: Mmm) uhm. And, if, you know, like, you fit into some part of like one category, we automatically just default you as if you're fully that (=Tyler: Mmm), you can only be that, because of this. Uhm, so I think the fact that there's a lot more like, sort of… like labels, there's a lot more ways to describe your, your queerness and to describe gender as well (=Tyler: Mmmm). It's not just as simple as [inaudible]. So I think that for me, was quite new as well, just given like my own identity, the fact that I do identify as lesbian so (=Tyler: Mmm) it’s, its, one of the kinds that's been around for quite a while. It’s, it's sort of, easier to explain, uhm, I think for me (=Tyler: Yeah). So, in that case, like, I, I did learn quite a lot, uhm, just because like what everyone had to say and how they identified and (=Tyler: Mmm) know whether or not they fit themselves into a label or not. So that was definitely something that was new to me (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm. I think also, aside from that, was just, the fact that, I think, the different experiences that I had (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and, at some stage, I thought, you know what, I had it quite bad, [laugh] (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). But then, based on what, like, the others had to say, I realized that, you know, I, I thought I had it quite bad and there was a time where I felt that I had gone through so much, and that I'm sort of like a victim and have the victim mentality, (=Tyler: Mmm) uhm. But eventually, like, you get over that, and you get through it, but then, just sitting, on, like, in on that group, uhm, and hearing what everyone else had been through (=Tyler: Mmm), made me realize that, like, you know, it's, it’s not just something I've dealt with, that people go through so much, and you don't even know it. And some experiences, in comparison to mine was, was quite different, like, especially the, the bullying component (=Tyler: Mmm), because I've never been subject to that type of bullying (=Tyler: Mmm). So, for me, that was something new, because I didn't know that it could get that bad (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm. Yeah, that was, that was quite eye-opening.

**Tyler:** Right. Okay. Yeah, that's interesting, because it sounds like, uhm, you felt a difference from your group members in the way that, you know, they are a little bit more comfortable with not really belonging to an identity category (=Sage: Mmm), like really strongly (=Sage: Yeah). Uhm, but you also felt a kind of sameness, because they'd also been through some hardship, as a queer person (=Sage: Yeah) that you thought was only, you know, your experience or (=Sage: Yeah, yeah) that other people hadn't felt. That's really interesting (=Sage: Mmm). I also think it's quite interesting that you, uhm, hadn't experienced a lot of exclusion and homophobia and bullying in your school days. Uhm, I think you said that, your classmates, you bonded really s-, tightly with each other, because (=Sage: Yeah) you came from tough backgrounds?

**Sage:** Yeah, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm). So, I think, that sort of united us more than anything. Uhm, I think our class was quite, I don’t know if it was limited to my class or other classes (=Tyler: Mmm) as well. But our class as a whole, uhm, some of us had come from primary school (=Tyler: Mmm), gone to the same high school, just because of the area. It, it was quite central. I mean, I grew up in Wynberg, it's just traveling from other, uhm, areas, uh, it's quite central. So (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, some of us had grown up together from like, primary school, to high school, and that bond has, like, it's been there. And it was there before, like, I came out. (=Tyler: Right, okay). So I think because there was a sort of, like, strong foundation that might have helped (=Tyler: Mmm), and contributed to people being a little bit more understanding and open minded. Uhm, so yeah, I was, I was quite, I think I was quite lucky, and quite blessed not to, to have that experience of where people reject you, like, and (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, ‘cause it's like, your classmates knew you as a full human, before they knew you as like (=Sage: Yeah), an identity category, right?

**Sage:** Yeah, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, cool. Uhm, so how do you feel about agreement in your group? What do you think your group tended to agree on?

**Sage:** I think we, we agreed on, like, I think, a lot the parent factor (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, like and how parents deal with things and how they deal with their child coming out. Uhm, I think, part of them, like, like, you would always, like, from what I've seen, which was, was a bit of a trend, was that one parent was, kind of okay, versus another parent that, wasn't, like for it at all. Uhm, and then there's also that trend of, you know, your parent, like initially, they're not sure that, they don't know how to deal with it. But then over time, they either try and ignore it, or they try and sort of just brush it off and, you know, continue to view you as a person rather than, you know, a label or, or like, gender or type (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so I think that was, one of the trends that I picked up was that, some experiences that I had with my parents, you know, the other guys could also agree with it and (=Tyler: Mmm), they could kind of connect to that, uhm. So ja, definitely that one was, was quite big (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, and then I think also… like just as, as coming out, it's, and I mean, it seems like it's like this for a lot of people as well, where, you're not confident and you're not comfortable (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So when you come out, it's like, you're waiting for this huge weight to just drop on you and (=Tyler: Yeah) keep you down. Uhm, so I think, coming out, there was that bit of, uhm, confidence that was lacking, that uncertainty that stays there and, over time, you know, you either, you, sort of build the confidence again, and you become a little bit proud of who you are (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, in some cases, it happens quite quickly, in other cases, it does take some time. Uhm, and if I, I, I kind of picked up that is a slight age difference, like in terms of just a few years (=Tyler: Mmm). And if I think back to how I was, you know, just coming out of high school or (=Tyler: Yeah), like, fresh in, you know, the world, uhm, I think my feelings were quite similar (=Tyler: Mmm). I wasn't very confident I wasn't very comfortable. Uhm, I hid a lot behind the way I dressed, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) uhm. So, it's, yah, like I, I could relate quite a bit to that as well.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah. Yeah, that's true. And what about any disagreement in the group that you felt?

**Sage:** Uhm**,** I hadn't picked up any dis-, like, I didn't feel that I disagreed with anything (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, just because there was so much that I was learning, (=Tyler: Yeah) uhm. I, I, there was one thing that was quite shocking to me (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) was that, which, which is the whole, uhm, and I think Jamie messaged, uhm, mentioned this, which was the fact that, uh, lesbians are not okay with some women that identify as lesbian but (=Tyler: Mmm) also as trans or something else. Uhm, for me, that was a bit of a shock, because (=Tyler: Okay), mostly just because I feel like, you know, as, as myself, like, I don't feel that I, I have, uhm, like I can judge someone else based on their feeling what they do (=Tyler: Yeah), or, or how they identify, what’s their preference (=Tyler: Mmm), because, at the same time, I wouldn't expect them to judge me or to have a certain view just because of, you know (=Tyler: Mmmm) how, like I identify. So for me, that was quite shocking that, people would still react that way (=Tyler: Yeah), especially if you’re sort of like, in this community where, you, you've come from communities that have already sort of like, beaten and bashed you, and now you go and you do it to other people, (=Tyler: Mmm) uhm. That (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know, followed a similar road to you. Uhm, so for me (=Tyler: Yeah) that was quite shocking and, and, a, a little disappointing considering that it's, you know, lesbians (=Tyler: Mmm) and I identify as one. So it was, it was quite a, a disappointment over there.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uh, and I wonder because, uhm, I know you said that you sort of gained some confidence when you, uh, found some lesbian social groups, and you could see other people like you. Uhm, and so, you know, that kind of social group is a positive space for you. Uhm, I wonder if you've experienced any kind of that, uhm, exclusionary behavior from other people in those groups? So you're not, you know, exclu-, exclusionary (=Sage: Yeah), but have you experienced anyone else in those groups who is?

**Sage:** Um, I, I haven't actually, I mean, I know there’s always this like, sort of fine line between someone that identifies as like a, a butch lesbian (=Tyler: Mmm), versus someone else that’s considered a little bit more on like a tomboy side (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, and I think, there’s, there is sort of, like, a type of… like, I can't sort of put a word to it, but (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, maybe as an example, because I, I dress very sort of like, [air quotes] manly, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm) if you could call it that, like, I dress in clothing, that’s, for men (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm. So the, the idea is that I'm this, you know this butch type lesbian because I dress with this clothing, and (=Tyler: Mmm) my hair is quite short. Uhm, but in actual fact, I'm, I’m quite not. I think I'm, I’m more in touch with like, uhm, my femininity and (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it's only once you sort of get to know me and you hang out with me that you pick that up. When (=Tyler: Right) most people face value look at me, they assume that. So (=Tyler: Mmm), there's always this sort of like, when we're hanging out with certain groups, like, “Oh,” uhm, “you're one of the guys” (=Tyler: Mmm). And it's, it's like a thing where, you, you a guy (=Tyler: Mmm) because of this and, sometimes that I do find a little bit uncomfortable because (=Tyler: Mmhmm), at the same time, I'm, I’m quite fine with identifying as, you know, a, a female and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) a lesbian female and, also just using pronouns, like, you know, “she” and “her” (=Tyler: Yeah), versus some of the, like, they'll use you know, “he” and, and that (=Tyler: Oh, really?) annoys me a little bit (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah, it does, it does, [laugh] (=Tyler: Wow, okay). It annoys me a little bit.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Sage: Because, uhm, like). It's using the wrong pronouns for you. Of course, it’s irritating, [laugh sigh] (=Sage: Yeah, yeah).

**Sage:** [Laugh], so it does quite annoy me. Uhm, because, you know, like, basically, to sum it up, it's because you dress and you’re this way you are referred to as, you know, the immediate opposite sex as, you know (=Tyler: Mmm) the community suggests (=Tyler: Yeah) is a male. Uhm, and then they, you know, some people will refer to me as “he” and I often correct them, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). Because it's, for me, it's quite annoying, like, uhm, you know, identify as female, uhm (=Tyler: Yes) I identify I’m lesbian, you know, but, it’s, yeah, like, that's not dependent on how I dress. I dress for comfort, so.

**Tyler:** Yeah, exactly. And, yeah, women can dress in [air quotes] masculine ways, or be into [air quotes] masculine activities, ‘cause you also mentioned that, in the focus group, that you are kind of into that [air quotes] masculine stuff, uhm, and that you also usually feel comfortable around men, and you have a lot of (=Sage: Mmm), or a few straight male friends, right (=Sage: Yeah). Uhm, so I wonder, uh, how you feel, uh, comfort-wise, in those groups, compared to lesbian groups, where’ve you experienced that kind of invalidation?

**Sage:** Uhm, so like, in, ‘cause we've got a few like, uhm, like my spouse and I, we've got a few, (=Tyler: Mmm) like, couple friends (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, which we hang out with, and it's not just, you know, uhm, members of the community. It's, you know, straight couples, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). And, my best friend’s actually straight. So, for me, it's like, when we hang out in that group, uhm, or in that crowd, I, in no way, am I made to feel uncomfortable (=Tyler: Mmm). I mean, they use the correct pronouns without asking me, without confirming, they just know, they pick it up. They listen. So, it's, it's that, little bit of attention to detail where I don't (=Tyler: Yeah) need to correct them. They sort of gauge you know, how I interact, uhm, how my spouse and I interact, and they pick that up (=Tyler: Mmm). So in, in all my years, like, I've never experienced that with the straight groups that I hang out with (=Tyler: Mmm) where, they use pronouns that upset me, or they refer to me in some type of way (=Tyler: Right), uhm. And, yeah, so I think the, the treatment, and, then again, it might also just be the people that I've surrounded myself with (=Tyler: Mmmm), the treatment is, it’s very different, very respectful, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) uhm. And, you know, if they do feel at some stage that they might have said something that was a bit disrespectful or a bit mean towards me, they would always come to me and say, “Look, I feel like I need to apologize for this (=Tyler: Okay), like (=Tyler: Yeah) it didn’t sit well with me,” yah.

**Tyler:** Nice. So I think it might be, uh, sounds to me like a difference between *strangers* in the lesbian community or people you don't, who don't know *you* very well, uh (=Sage: Yeah), and your close friends, who happen to be, you know, straight men. And that (=Sage: Yeah, yeah) difference of recognizing you as like a full human? (=Sage: Mmm) Yeah. (=Sage: Definitely) Okay. Cool. Uhm, so is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't?

**Sage:** Uhm…I, I think I, I spoke quite a lot, [laugh], I’m not too sure (=Tyler: [Laugh). I feel like I, I spoke quite a bit, (=Tyler: Okay) uhm, I, I think I've covered everything (=Tyler: Cool). Uhm, what I might have left out is that, you know, I had a good support structure, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) uhm, which I think I covered as well, but I, I had a good support structure with like friends and so on (=Tyler: Mmm). I think just from a, a family point of view that structure lacks a little bit (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, my mom does try, uhm. I do see her now and then (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like I mean when she needs that, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), so then I'll see her, uhm. But, other than that, like, my family is quite big. Uhm, my mom's got like nine siblings (=Tyler: Wow) and they’ve all got like their partner. Yeah, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So they’re, they’re quite a big family, uhm. But out of the family, I, I’m probably close with like, one aunt (=Tyler: Mmm). And that's just because of like, my lifestyle and so on (=Tyler: Yeah). So, yeah, the support structure there is not that great. Uhm, but at the same time, like I do get that support from, uhm, my spouse's family (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ‘cause the family’s like great, and (=Tyler: Yeah), I mean, over this weekend, they were all here, by the place, you know (=Tyler: That’s nice), they came to braai and so on. So, quite supportive, uhm, quite understanding (=Tyler: Mmm). They’ve never made me feel uncomfortable in any way, uhm. And yeah, they, they’re more family to me than what my own family is, so (=Tyler: Right), it’s great.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, good. Yeah, very good. Uhm, so it might be a strange question, uhm, but how do you feel about your queerness now, after participating in the focus group?

**Sage:** I feel more comfortable. Uhm, not that I wasn't comfortable before (=Tyler: Right), but, I feel more comfortable that, you know, this is a, it’s a topic, that it's out there and that people are thinking about it, talking about it, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), raising awareness (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I think I've, I’ve seen it more now than anything, ‘cause, like growing up, I, and I think this was also mentioned quite a bit in (=Tyler: Mmm) the group is that, I was never exposed to someone that was, you know, in the queer community, or was (=Tyler: Yeah) gay, uhm. Like I’ve, I've never seen anyone – I mean, I might have, I just didn't know about it (=Tyler: Mmm). And, I think when I came out, it's like, I started noticing more and more people (=Tyler: Mmm). And it's people that have been there, uhm, that I was surrounded by, I just didn't know that up until I, you know, had the strength and the courage to admit to myself, (=Tyler: Yes) uhm. So, yeah, I think, like, it's, it's really great to see, how, you know, we are evolving, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). And yes, they will always be, you know, bigoted people and people that don't quite understand and, for them this will always be like an abnormal way of life (=Tyler: Mmmm). Uhm, but it's great to see that with, you know, the young minds becoming a little bit more open and, more, understanding that we are, sort of, getting somewhere (=Tyler: Mmhmm), where I can walk into a store, or walk into like the ladies’ bathroom and not be looked at in a (=Tyler: Yeah) sort of weird way., ja (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah that one gets me every time, uhm (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) I think on, [laugh], I think on three occasions, I actually had security come and get me (=Tyler: Wow) in the women’s bathroom, uhm. Yah! Just because–

**Tyler:** Because you were mistaken for a man?

**Sage:** Yes, yes (=Tyler: Oh, okay). So I've, so I’ve had that happened. I've had it happen in Canal Walk. It's happened in Waterfront. And it's happened in Claremont, as well (=Tyler: Wow). Uhm, where a woman, or probably women, have gone to the security after mistaking me for a guy. And (=Tyler: Wow) I said, “Look,” uhm, “there’s a guy in the bathroom,” (=Tyler: Mmm). And they come in and then, for me, I think the first time it happened, I felt quite embarrassed about it (=Tyler: Yeah) because it's, it’s very uncomfortable and I think everyone was uncomfortable at that point. And then the second and third time that it happened, I was like, “You know what, it's, it's okay. It's a mistake. People make mistakes. Let’s just move on” (=Tyler: Mmm). And, at that point, they had become very, very uncomfortable and quite embarrassed, uhm (=Tyler: Goo-, good, [laugh sigh]), so I think after that – yeah, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah). So, I think after that, I'm, I’m at the point where I'm, like, I'm just walking in, and I'm comfortable and I will – I mean, back when I still used public bathrooms, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]) not, now though – but, yeah, I would just go in and you know, I've, I’ve become a lot more comfortable and (=Tyler: Yeah), the staring as well, like, I think having dealt with staring for so many years (=Tyler: Mmm), it just doesn't, like, bother me anymore.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah (=Sage: Yeah). Yeah. Well, that's good (=Sage: [Laugh]). Yeah. And I like what you said about, uhm, having kind of, uh, more awareness and representation of other queer people now compared to when you were younger (=Sage: Mmm). And it might help, uh, people, uhm, explore their own identities earlier on (=Sage: Yeah). Uhm, I think you, yeah, you obviously talked about your spouse exploring her identity, her gender identity as potentially non-binary. Uhm, and I wonder, has that affected the way that you think about your own sexuality or gender identity?

**Sage:** It, it has, uhm (=Tyler: Okay), it definitely has, like, it’s made me think, uhm, you know, about my sexuality, about my gender identity and (=Tyler: Mmm). For my sexuality, I feel like, yeah, like, there’s, I don’t know, I mean, like, I've tried the whole, like, (=Tyler: Mmm) let me (=Tyler: Mmhmm), see if I’ll, you know, if I'm attracted to men, or if I'm attracted to just women, or if it's a case of where I'm attracted to the person rather than, like, gender (=Tyler: Yeah), or so on or personality, uhm. And it's always been female. Like (=Tyler: Mmm), there's never been, I mean, I think for myself with males, and that's why I've got guys as close friends, it’s (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like when, what I would feel for women, where it would be more of an attraction after I’ve spoken to them and, you know, there's something about their mind that I'm interested in and so on (=Tyler: Yeah). When it’s with a guy it’s more like, “Oh, my word, this is going to be my friend.,” like (=Tyler: Yeah), and, yeah, so I think on that aspect, I don't foresee anything changing there (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, purely because I have explored, you know, that (=Tyler: Yeah), I explored it in my, like, my late teens, I explored it, you know, after I left high school (=Tyler: Uh-huh). It's just never been, but I think of my, my identity. Uhm, I would say I'm quite comfortable identifying as like, a female and (=Tyler: Yeah) identifying as lesbian uhm. I, like I do know, someone that was, was a friend to me, uhm, some time back, who identified as, you know, lesbian, female, and then, at some stage, she identified as, uhm, transgender (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And she's actually gone through transition, and he's now fantastic (=Tyler: Mmm), like he’s just amazing, uhm. Very confident, very comfortable in his skin (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and for me, for myself, I think one of the thoughts there was, am I comfortable in my skin? (=Tyler: Yeah). And you know, I am (=Tyler: Yeah). Is there anything that I'm not comfortable with, where I feel that this is not supposed to be like, my body or parts of my body (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and, I haven't experienced that.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay.

**Sage:** I think I’m quite comfortable.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Well, it's good. Yeah (=Sage: [Laugh]). [Laugh sigh], uhm, okay, so the next question. Please answer quite honestly, uhm (=Sage: Okay), not you haven't been honest so far. Uhm (=Sage: [Laugh]), but, uh, how do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer?

**Sage:** Uhm… Ja, wait, could you just repeat that again? I don't think (=Tyler: Sure) I got the full–

**Tyler:** How do you feel about me being the moderator and interviewer?

**Sage:** Uhm, so, I think before the interview (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I wasn't sure what to expect (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, there was no expectation (=Tyler: Sure), you know, I was open for anything (=Tyler: Yeah). I think, as an interviewer and as a moderator, I think you, you’re quite well-suited for it, uhm. It seems like you've done it many a times (=Tyler: Oh, really?) before, uhm. I think the way – Yeah, [laugh]. Uhm, I think the way you engaged with us, uhm, individually and within the group, I think it's quite great, uhm (=Tyler: Okay). I think you articulate yourself quite well, uhm. You're quite comfortable to speak to. Uhm, you've got a friendly face as well (=Tyler: [Laugh]), so, [laugh sigh], there’s no like (=Tyler: Cool), no awkward steering or (=Tyler: Yeah) anything like that so, yeah, it was quite fun, yah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Thanks. Thanks. Yeah. Uhm (=Sage: [Laugh]), do you have any feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Sage:** Uhm, I think, at this point in time, I mean, the, the questions that were posed to us, it opened up a huge discussion (=Tyler: Mmm) and I think, when people gave, input, it sort of just flowed (=Tyler: Mmhmm), to a point where you sort of had to circulate back and, you know, continue with the next question (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, so I think, yeah, just, for future that, that approach works (=Tyler: Okay). I think if you can put out a question, or two or three (=Tyler: Mmm). And it's a question that gets people to speak and open up, uhm, you'd actually get more than you thought you would (=Tyler: Right) and I think that was great. Uhm, I think, aside from that, uh, yeah. Your tiebreaker works quite well, too. Like it, it was a good tiebreaker. Uhm, I think it's always good to get to know like, just, what people are doing, what they’re interested in (=Tyler: Okay). It gives you sort of, yeah. So I think that was quite well, I, I actually don't have any suggestions of how to improve that. I think if I had to do something like that it would be quite similar. Ja.

**Tyler:** Cool. Okay. That's good to know. Thank you. Yeah (=Sage: [Laugh sigh]). So uhm, I think that is, the, those are all the questions that I really have, except for: Is there anything else that you wanna say about your experience of the focus group or about your experiences of sameness and difference?

**Sage:** Uhm, I think my experience, uhm, with the focus group and with, you know sameness and difference (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, it's very, I think, for, for myself, it was very comforting. And it was quite educational (=Tyler: Yeah?). Uhm, I think it, it's great that, you know, more people are doing this and more people are getting in touch and speaking to each other, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). I think it definitely has a lot of potential to become something great, where you've got all these bright minds, chatting, speaking about ideas, speaking about, you know, support structures, how to support the next generations and so on (=Tyler: mmm). So I think it was quite good. My experience was great. Uhm, I've, I’ve been in many interviews (=Tyler: Yeah?), I've conducted a view as well (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and I think this by far, just the focus group and interview, it's quite different. And it was quite a, like, an amazing experience, as well, ja.

**Tyler:** Awesome. That's really great to hear. Yeah, I had hoped that it would have that kind of, uh, effect, or impact. Yeah (=Sage: Yeah). Yeah. Okay. Great. Uhm, okay, cool. So that is really everything that I have to ask you. Is there any, anything else you want to say, or any questions you have for me?

**Sage:** Uhm… (=Tyler: Before I close up) Yeah, how–?

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Sage:** Okay. Uhm, like your experience, was it, you know, what you were expecting, was it you hoped for? (=Tyler: Off the focus?) Like did you cover, everything? Yeah, yeah (=Tyler: Yes), did you cover everything? Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, that is definitely what I wanted, uhm, kind of opening up the floor to whatever you as participants brought, and, you know, just naturally flowing on each other. Like, do you relate to that? Have you experienced that or not? Uhm, and I think that that's definitely what happened. And uhm, yeah, it is, quite, uhm, comforting, or, uh, yeah, gives me, gives me a good impression that, uh, you felt it was educational, and you feel like it's a, a, it's a space with potential. Yeah. So, yeah (=Sage: Okay), I do think it went really well (=Sage: Cool). Yeah. Okay. Uhm, so you still have the list of the counseling services that I gave you? (=Sage: Yes, I do). Okay, great. So, if it gets lost at any point, you can obviously send me an email and I'll send you a digital copy (=Sage: Okay), uhm. Great, and then directly after this interview., I will compensate you with, uh, for data and I'll send you another voucher. I assume you got the first voucher?

**Sage:** Yes, I did. I think, to be honest, I, I didn't know that there was compensation, that’s why I was (=Tyler: Oh), I was quite shocked when I got home. I was like, “Oh, I didn't know”, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay, [laugh].

**Sage:** But yeah, I think it, yeah, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, nice surprise.

**Sage:** I think it was nice touch. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. Yeah. Uhm, and then I will be in touch later when I have transcribed both the focus group and this interview in case you want to check the transcript for any reason. Uhm, and then towards the end of the year is when the full report will be, done, uh, in case you'd like to read through that as well.

**Sage:** Yeah, yeah (=Tyler: Okay). Sounds good.

**Tyler:** Cool. Well, thank you (=Sage: Cool) very much, Sage.

**Sage:** Thank you so much, Tyler:

**Tyler:** Yeah, I really appreciate you participating… Cool.

**Sage:** Thanks, thanks for having me.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

Focus Group 3

[Only Violet, Percy, and Grace are present when the group starts]

**Tyler:** Okay, uhm, so thank you for coming. Uhm, it means a lot to me that you came, uh, so I hope will it also mean something for you, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, maybe one thing you might be nervous about, uh, today is the recording. Uhm, so you saw on your consent form that, uhm, this is being recorded, uh, with a voice recorder and with a video recorder there. Uhm, but you don't need to worry about who sees or hears the recordings, because it's just me and my supervisor, no one else will watch or listen to them. Uhm, and then we will transcribe the recordings. And when we finish transcribing, uh, the recordings will be deleted permanently. And then on the transcripts, we will use your pseudonyms, and we will remove any information that identifies you, as someone who participated. So no one will know... [All nod] Cool. Uhm, yeah, and I think, before I talk more about what, uh, how this is going to go, then, uh, I think, well, we have already kind of started talking to each other, [laugh sigh] (=Percy: [Laugh sigh]). But maybe we can say that a little bit more. So, uhm, like introducing ourselves, and just what we usually do for fun. Uhm, and has that changed during the pandemic? [Violet nods] Yeah. Anyone can start.

**Violet:** Okay, I’ll go. Uhm, so I’m Violet, I’m [in 18-25 age range], from Cape Town, and, uhm, right now I'm really like, I’m trying to be outside. So, I'll go and sit with friends in parks or at the beach. And, I th-, I, I did that before but it, uhm, I think I’m just more deliberate about [Tyler checks phone, puts it on the table] choosing that as opposed to, uhm, I don’t know, a restaurant or (=Grace: Mmm), something else. I guess there aren't that many options for parties, [laugh sigh]. But yeah, I try to be outside with people that I care about (=Tyler: Mmm). Mmm. (=Tyler: Mmhmm).

**Grace:** Must I go? (=Violet: Yeah; =Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) Okay (=Violet: Sure), my name is Grace, I’m [in 18-15 age range]. Uhm, and I think a lot of what I did, did for fun at least, like pre-lockdown, was, I was super involved in school, like, I, did debating, uhm, I did a lot of like cross-country in terms of sport and stuff that I really loved. Uhm [Violet nods], but yeah during the pandemic and I had a very hard time keeping up with a lot of those things ‘cause obviously, I was at home, and I struggled to actually do things for fun, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), but, uhm, in that time, like I rediscovered things that I used to do like, as a kid like you know, just puzzles, really gotten back into Sudoku as nerdy as it is, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, and yeah also just really, intentionally spending time with people that I care about because you don't really see people, or at least last year out of convenience anymore (=Tyler: Yeah). You had to really try, so, yeah.

**Percy:** Uhm, hi, [laugh sigh] (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), I’m Percy. Uh, *yoh*, I, I think I’m just, I think I’m basic. I don’t know if you guys have like [indistinguishable] outside, [Tyler leans forward to hear better] uhm, you know. I’m really like, uh, it’s, I’ve been inside for quite some time. Whenever I looked like, at, at my WhatsApp status, it’s all people that, they’re like, everyone is just having the time of their lives (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). With me it's just been the same throughout lockdown and I’ve just been, I’m, I’m, I’m just laid-back type of person, uhm, I’m very laid-back so I’m just most of the time enjoying being inside (=Tyler: Yeah). But like, I, tried, I think la-, I think last week (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]) Saturday. So, my, my, my friends were at the studio. It was late night, so like “no you should come to the studio,” I’m like, “yah I’m gonna come”, ‘cause I usually say I’m gonna come and then I don’t pitch, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Oh, [laugh sigh]). I'm very good at that, [laugh sigh]. (=Tyler: Really?, [laugh sigh). I’m very good at saying I’m coming yet I don’t come (=Tyler: Okay), even if, if, if I see them doing something or they go to the pool I’m like “yoh, [indistinguishable]”, “we always tell you and you never come”, I’m like “yah you should, yah should tell me give me the choice”, say “yah you can’t do things without me and I know I’m not there but yeah should just tell me”. So, so I just thought let me just go to the studio and see. Uh, the two hours I said there was too much, I got there around nine. Eleven and just [indistinguishable]. I’m tired man, I just wanna sleep (=Tyler: Mmm). ‘Cause I was really tired ‘cause I, I'm not used to sitting, and I’m used to sleeping and lying (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), so now I was sitting the whole time like *yoh, hai,* this chair is killing my back (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]), I just wanna relax, I wanna be comfortable (=Tyler: Yeah). So, yeah, it's, it's just a basic life of, whenever I need to go out and I’m coming to town and then that is the only time I get fresh air (=Tyler: Mmm), so I have to wake up in the morning and I’m gonna go to town so at least for a day I’ll be out. And then when I go back home, it's the same thing, I go back to my shell and (=Tyler: Mmm), just be me.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. Comfortable at home (=Percy: Yeah, so). Yeah. Yeah, me too, [laugh sigh]. Yeah. Uhm, I also like, uh, some fresh air every now and then. So like hiking sometimes (=Violet: Mmm), if I can. Uhm, and, yeah, I do like things, uh, that I do on my own, like reading (=Grace: Mmm), or watching something. Uhm, but yeah, I've missed like, going out during the pandemic with my friends. Some people do go out, [laugh sigh] (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), but it's, yeah, I don't know. I think I'm too nervous about COVID for that. Uhm, but one thing that has changed is, uh, I liked, like, getting ready to go out (=Violet and Grace: [Laugh sigh]). And so, I've kind of spent more time practicing makeup because I do that. Yeah. So that's something that changed during the pandemic is, yeah, I practice makeup art (=Grace: That’s cool). Yeah. Yeah. Cool.

**Violet:** That is a good part of going out, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Hmm? (=Grace: [Laugh sigh])

**Violet:** That is a good part of going out, getting ready (=Grace: [Laugh sigh], prep).

**Tyler:** Yeah, [laugh sigh], yeah.

**Violet:** Wow, missing out on so much.

**Tyler:** Right? Yeah, totally. Okay, cool. So that was just to warm our voices up a little bit (=Violet: Mmm). Uhm, and, so I asked you to think about two things that we're gonna discuss today. Uhm, one is, how would you, how would you describe the way that you identify, you know, as a queer person or an LGBTQ person, whatever labels you use for yourself? How would you describe that? Uhm, and the second thing is, uh, what experiences with other people, uhm, of sameness and difference, have you felt? Okay. Uhm, now, both of those things are quite personal [Grace nods]. And they're also very open to interpretation. Yeah. So that means that there is no right or wrong answer. Yeah. However you describe the way you identify, whatever experience of sameness and difference, there's no right or wrong way to answer that. Yeah. And because it's so open, it also means that there can be a lot of stories we can hear, a lot of different experiences. So we want to hear from everyone. Uhm, yeah, that's basically what we're here to discuss (=Violet: Mmm [nods]) [Grace nods]. Yeah. And, with my role, I am not really like an interviewer, where I ask a list of questions to everyone. Uhm, instead, I, uh, this space is for you to discuss with each other, uhm, your experiences, and see if you relate or don't relate to some of that stuff. Uhm, so I will be listening and watching, uhm, and, you know, sometimes I can step into ask like, “Can you explain a little bit more about what you're saying?”. Uhm, but you can also ask that of each other, right? Uhm, and if something is way off topic, [laugh sigh], then I can step in and bring us back. Uhm, and also, just to ensure that this space is safe and comfortable for everyone to express what you want to express. That's also what I will do. Yeah. Uhm, yeah. So you can engage with each other in like a natural way, uh, if you wanna know more about what someone is saying, you can ask them. Uhm, but also, yeah, engaging with each other in a respectful manner. And that also means if there's something that you feel uncomfortable talking about, you can say that, you know, “I don't want to discuss this further”. And we can all accept that and then move on [All nod]. Okay. Does anyone have any questions about what I've just said?

**Violet & Percy:** No.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Uhm, so then I think we can get started. So whoever wants to start by, uh, describing how you identify.

**Grace:** I actually have one question, sorry, uhm.

**Tyler:** Mmm! Yeah?

**Grace:** Just in terms of the sameness and difference thing (=Tyler: Mmm) with other people. Uhm, the thing that was unclear to me was, is it, uhm, in terms of like other people as in other queer people or other, just, people?

**Tyler:** It’s, it’s open (=Grace: Open to interpretation) to everyone. So it can be other queer people (=Grace: Right), it can be not queer people (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), it can be your friends, your family, strangers (=Grace: Okay), anything that comes to mind [points to head] that feels significant when you hear “sameness and difference with other people” (=Grace: Okay). Yeah.

**Grace:** Thank you, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Cool.

**Grace:** Okay.

**Violet:** Does anyone wanna start?

**Grace:** Do you wanna start? [Laugh]

**Violet:** Yeah, I mean, I can, I can think of something to say. Uhm, so I'm trying to get more comfortable with the word ‘lesbian’, lately (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I…[laugh sigh], when I was, I guess when I started coming out when I was a teenager, uhm, I think I started with the word ‘bi’ [sounds of a child outside] but it really never, like, connected, uhm… Because I was really nervous around language, I would just tell people, I'm not straight, and then, uhm, move into like, queerness when I started, uhm, learning more about myself and like really exploring the internet. And, uhm, and yeah, and then I was in this very, like, queer space, I guess, like through what I was studying, through movements on, at [university] campus. Uhm, and so, so this thing just, really, it was true, being ‘queer’ and it fit. And now, I think I'm just trying to find something that's like, I guess more specific that I can like meld with that. Uhm, but, my concern is like the, the, I guess, what’s seen as like, the fixedness of the word and, and the limitedness of it, and, uhm. Most, if, I haven't really like dated, uhm, as in like gone on dates and just met people and, uhm, being casual, I've been in like a handful of [laugh sighing] significant relationships, uhm. And so all of those people were trans or non-binary or gender-fluid in some way and so I don't want to project a womanhood onto them, uhm, that's like not true just because of my own, like labeling. Uhm, and so I'm figuring out, like, what I make of, of the word, and then like, talking to people about that, so that they understand. Uhm, like, my best friend is very, she's always been super, uhm, comfortable with the word. And so we recently had a, like, a conversation about that, which is wonderful. So it's also given, like, uhm, like good discussions, I guess (=Tyler: Mmm) [Tyler and Grace nod]. Uhm (=Tyler & Grace: Mmm), so, the question was how you relate to queerness, right? (=Tyler: Mmm) So I think, I think I've, I've never really like settled in, uhm, any one term or word like even queerness itself, uhm, the word like on its own. So I think that's how it's just gonna go maybe like to the rest of my life, it will always be this, uhm, movement [Tyler nods] that I think I want (=Tyler: Mmm). I wanna keep it that way ‘cause I wanna constantly be like checking in with myself. Uhm, so, yah, that's, that’s it for me.

**Grace:** That’s awesome.

**Tyler:** So, uhm, if I understand correctly, you are, uhm, you, uh, like the word ‘queer’ [Violet nods] because it's, it has that movement and that openness [Violet nods], and it allows you to kind of explore in that way [Violet nods], uhm, but you were thinking of ‘lesbian’, using that as well (=Violet: Mmhmm). Uhm, but, uhm, but you're also making, uh, your own interpretation of that [Violet nods], because of your romantic history? Yeah (=Violet: Yeah), partners who are not women?

**Violet:** Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). I don’t think I've dated a woman

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Violet:** Uhm, so, uhm, I, I when I look at it, I think because for a pretty long time, a lot of people really only had the word ‘lesbian’. Uhm, for a long time there's been sp-, there's been space like within that community for like all different genders and people and, uhm, even although, so this is like the, the trick right? Like if you only had that word and it still didn't fit, but it was all that you had, you just had to use it (=Grace: Mmm), so it doesn't mean you were included. I, I, I’m probably overthinking it (=Grace: No), but uhm, I just see it as, or I’m trying to see it as something that is actually expansive [Tyler nods] and that hasn't been given the space be as broad like as, as it is (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and especially like slowly getting to meet so many different people that also have their own connections to it, people of different genders, or just people that can have that conversation has also helped. Uhm… so, but also like, I like ‘queer’ for, like a bunch of reasons, including it's, not ambiguity, but like openness. And then, also, just because I came up with that word and through, like figuring myself out, it's always been there (=Tyler & Grace: Mmm). Uhm, so it's, it's been a really big part of my identity, ‘cause it also means I get to include a lot of people in my world and (=Grace: Mmm), uhm, and (=Tyler: Hmmm), and, you know, the, the poli-, the politics behind it and all [Tyler nods] of that, so, uhm… So ja (=Tyler: Okay). I think I tend to describe myself more through, just, I don't know, being like, visible with partners (=Tyler: Mmhmm), than actually saying, like [Tyler places phone on chair behind them], “Oh, this is who I am” and making sure people know and being out and duh-duh-duh (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so I'm still working on that.

**Tyler:** Okay. Interesting. Yeah.

**Grace:** Gosh, I have to say, like, while you're speaking, I related a lot to some of the things you were saying, ‘cause, uhm, for me, also, I always like, prefer using the word ‘queer’ [Tyler writes something on clipboard], uhm, to identify myself and trying to become comfortable because I want to with the term ‘lesbian’ as well. It’s just, for me, uhm, the reason there's a bit of like, resistance there is because in my household it’s always been a bit of a dirty word (=Violet: Yeah). Uhm, it's very much like a taboo thing, that's, ‘cause as I mentioned before when we were just, uhm, introducing ourselves, I come from very, very religious background [Violet nods]. Uhm, my dad is a very, very Christian. Uhm, and I was just, ministry was just like a very integral part of growing up and, I had to do a lot of like, fighting, uhm, just like, in my early like teen – I’m still a teenager technically – but when I was younger teenager, uhm, having that to kind of compete with when it came to figuring out my sexuality. Uhm, and the thing is, like, I've, you know, heard the word, uhm, ‘queer’ used a very, like derogatory manner in my household before (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, when I was a little bit younger. Uhm, and I think that's almost why [Tyler writes something], it’s, it's funny that it happened with the word ‘queer’ and not the word ‘lesbian’, but I like using it like, in, sort of, uhm, defiance [Violet nods], uhm, of what like, the norms in my household growing up were. Uhm, and also something you said was that it includes a lot of, a lot of people and I can really identify with people who use that word, even though they might be very different to me (=Violet: Yeah) in terms of their sexuality, it's also felt really, inclusive for me, and kind of like, you know, a middle finger to, [laugh sigh], the people who used it, uhm, in a derogatory way in the past. Uhm, but yeah, still getting there with, with ‘lesbian’. Uhm, I've only, like, dated, uhm, women before [Violet nods], uhm, but what you were saying about, you know, not wanting to project like womanhood onto to like non-binary people or gender-fluid people and stuff, it’s like very, [laugh sigh], very important thing to be thinking about. But, uhm, for me, I mean, I'm in a relationship with a, a woman at the moment. Uhm, and, I don’t see, I mean, yeah I'm still pretty young, but I don’t see myself, like, uhm, like that ending for still a while. Uhm, so in terms of that, it’s not something I really have to think about, but I think it is very important. Uhm, but yeah, so in terms of like, circling back to the original question (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), uhm, yeah, definitely, I identify with the word ‘queer’ [Violet nods]. Uhm, and I'll probably like talk about this a little bit later, but a lot of the people that, uhm, I really associated myself with, uhm, in high school were also very comfortable with the label ‘queer’ and it just felt really together (=Violet: Mmm). Uhm, and also when I was a bit younger, I actually preferred using the word ‘gay’ instead of ‘lesbian’ because (=Tyler: Mmm), it’s just almost a bit more like, socially acceptable to me [Violet nods], in my own head, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, that was like, I consider myself like a gay woman. Uhm, but yeah, I'm slowly, like also trying to branch a bit, really think about these things and explore it a bit more because I'm in a space now where I actually have a bit more freedom to do that (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, yeah, [laugh sigh].

**Percy:** Ah, yoh. So, uhm, with me, I, I think like, like I, when I think about growing up, eh, it was just all like, no I think I’m a lesbian, ‘cause it makes sense (=Tyler: Mmm) [Violet and Grace nod]. When I, when I, when I look into the situation, *mxm*, I’m a lesbian man, ‘cause like, so now as, as, as, as I, you know, as I grow older – I’m [in 18-25 age range], sorry – so like, as, [laugh sigh], as, as I grow, uhm, and when I became, uhm, visible to like activism spaces and, that's when I like, I got to, to learn more about other things and how to like properly identify myself, or to actually find the, the space that I fit in [Tyler nods]. So, so, and it's, it’s, I've never been the, like, specific person, like I've never been masculine, I may dress masculine but I, I've never seen myself as that [All nod] masculine person so, hey, ‘lesbian’, I, I, I, I don't think I'm masculine enough to be a lesbian. Uhm, so ‘queer’ sounds better because it's, it’s fluid (=Tyler: Mmm), and that way I can be myself fully without actually, at the back of my mind having that question mark, *eish*, is this ‘queer’ enough or (=Tyler: Mmm) [Violet nods]? But, uhm, so, so [Tyler writes something], as, as I, I became more comfortable with using, or identified actually as ‘queer’ even though like, in, in my community, you’re a ‘lesbian’ whether you like it or not (=Tyler: Mmm) [Grace and Violet nod], you’re not gonna say ‘I am queer’, they’re like, “what? “What is ‘queer’? No man, lesbian’. Don’t come confuse with your, all stuff now, we've just learned ‘queer’ now you want us – we’ve just want ‘lesbian’, now you want us to learn (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]) like ‘queer’ now? Eh uh-uh.” This is, it's too much for other people but when, when, when we actually ha-, have to think of it (=Tyler: Mmm), it's, for me it's, when I say I'm ‘queer’, like I, I don't even have to identify myself, I don’t even have to even say my gender, anything because I’m like, *mxm*. Like in taxis, ‘cause I had dreadlocks first. So now that I’ve, I’ve cut my hair, so like, you just have people, like, “Uhm, dude can you move?”, “Sis, can you move?”. It’s still fine anyway [shrugs]. This morning I, I, the woman asked me to move, and so, she first said ‘she’ and then she, ‘no sorry, he’, and I’m like, “*mxm*, [shrugs] anything you want, really, you don't need to collect yourself, [laugh sigh], it's fine, I get you.” So, it's, it, it’s just being able to, to open myself and be freely and comfortable with just whatever [All nod]. People call me and not just take offence or feel uncomfortable, ‘cause I know that, if you are questioning yourself about me, then I'm not questioning myself about my queerness [Violet nods] so I'm totally fine with it (=Grace & Violet: Mmm). So it's, just taking some time and like, growing up I, I, I don't think I, I came out. Like, I think I smashed out ‘cause (=Grace: [Laughter]), parents always know (=Tyler: Mmm). So, before I knew, I was abused already so by the time I knew what I was, what I was being abused for, I was already old enough to know what I was. So, it's just always been that, so being through all those situations. So, now I've just been in like, spaces where I, I just want to be in, comfortable and be myself fully and just also have an open mind to also exploring because I, I, I, I [Tyler checks phone] believe that like feelings are like, are very fluid and (=Violet: Mmm) so is our sexualities. They’re very fluid so, you might wake up tomorrow with another set of mind. It is, it's okay to mix. There's nothing wrong with that ‘cause (=Tyler: Mmm) we, we can't all be into one thing as well [All nod]. So, I, I, I can't say I am fully a woman and know that I can wake up tomorrow and decide [cracking knuckles], actually, I feel more masculine than I was yesterday (=Tyler: Mmm). So, am I allowed to be ‘he’ just for the day? Can I feel that way? So, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm. Nice)… That is, how I think of, just being, the same inside, yeah, [laugh].

**Violet:** See, like I want, I wanna be able to bring, more of like a fluidity to ‘lesbian’, because I think there's such a special and specific history to like movements and people and, uhm… And I feel like a lot of younger people are connecting more with ‘queer’ and I have no issue with that (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I, I do as well. But I don't want this thing to, somehow, like, ‘lesbian’, every other term has, like, uhm, has like more of a fluidity to it. And, and I feel like it's been left behind a little bit and I don't want that, because that, because of that history being so special, I want to be able to, like, bring it forward to a more ambiguous future (=Percy: Mmhmm). Uhm, you know, and, uhm, I don't know how I'm gonna do that, but I guess talking about it [Grace nods], will help. So, yeah.

**Tyler:** It’s quite-

**Percy:** Although I think, I think like, when, when, when, when I kinda look back to, the time that I was younger, [laugh sigh], the time that I was younger, uhm, uhm, ‘lesbian’ was, was the word. If, if you are a woman and you are attracted to another woman then, the word was [Violet nods], was ‘lesbian’ (=Tyler: Mmm). And then from ‘lesbian’, you take it from there, or you butch or are you a feminine or are you, whatever you want to dress like? So but, with, with that, so, so, so now come this generation now, this generation there is more fluid (=Violet: Yeah), that expresses themselves more openly (=Tyler: Mmm) than I could in my generation because, when, when, when, when, when, when I looked back then and look at now, there, there’s the huge gap. Because then, if, even though you want to come out as a ‘lesbian’, but, you didn't come out as a feminine lesbian [Violet nods], you didn’t come out as a butch lesbian. Because now, having to come out as a ‘lesbian’ is a different thing now. You have to go into it as in you have to be a butch lesbian or you have to be a feminine lesbian, now you have to go into con-, context *again* with that (=Tyler: Mmm), so that, it's just something that is inside and then another surprise inside again (=Violet: [Laugh sigh]). So you couldn't really express yourself, ‘cause, if I were to wake up today and, okay, I am a, I am, I am a butch lesbian and then next week, I decide I wanna be feminine, then I would have had to, to switch boxes (=Tyler: Mmm), if I put it that way, I have to switch boxes (=Tyler: Mmm), I couldn't be both at the same time, because maybe someone would see it as a problematic [Violet nods]. So when I, when you will look into this generation now, how we do, or how things are done now, things are more fluid [Grace and Violet nod]. So people are more themselves, more than any other thing, so, their feelings and how they feel comes first. So whether I, whether I am feminine today, masculine tomorrow, homeless the next day, really doesn't matter (=Violet: Mmm). It's just me, and I'm still the same person (=Violet: Mmm), regardless of how I present myself or how my thinking or how as far as my heart goes, it's still the same person. So, just knowing that Percy is Percy and not having necessarily to understand, or *neh*, necessarily having to explain the feelings or whatever that is going within me. I also, I just think that it, now we are more freely and more open (=Tyler: Mmm) to anything that comes with us. And we, we just, just happens without having that fear of doing it. Because you know, at the end of the day, it's all about you (=Violet: Mmm) and how you see yourself as a person. Ja, so, ja.

**Violet:** Yeah, yeah, it's exactly that, like that pressure of like, I have to fit into this box now [Tyler nods] and I have to stay in that box (=Percy: Mmhmm). Like, that's not for you (=Percy: Yeah), like that’s external stuff (=Tyler: Mmm). If you, know, I think we keep using the word ‘fluid’, so I’m just gonna go with it, so if you know that there's fluidity and you wake up feeling however you wake up that day or you constantly stay in this movement, uhm, that's so internal and then you have to like take that and, and make it into something neater, like for whoever is going (=Percy: Ja) to observe you or, uhm, analyze you or whatever (=Tyler: Mmm), from day to day (=Grace: Mmm). And like, that’s so boring (=Grace: [Laugh]; =Percy: Very) and, uhm, you know?

**Percy:** Having to explain is the hardest part (=[Several]: Mmm). I always find it very, very hard to explain myself (=Tyler: Mmm; =Violet: And-), or explain my actions. And, no, can I, can we not just go forward without (=Grace: Yeah) me having to explain? Like, you don't always have to understand, that’s my thinking (=Tyler: Mmhmm). You don't need to understand everything (=Violet: Mmm, but no, but like-). You don’t need to understand everything about the person, because there are certain things that you as a person can never understand about me, even if I explain them to you. Because I'll explain this one today, then I’ll wake up tomorrow feeling another thing, then I, then I have to explain that all again, and you’re like “*Mxm,* but yesterday, you were like thinking this way, do you n-” [shrug] you see? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) You just didn't have to understand it in the first place, all you have to know and accept is that, this is me (=Tyler: Mmm). So, even if tomorrow is another thing, it's still me so you don't have to question (=Tyler: Mmm) or, I don't have to be in a position where I have to feel like I need to explain myself to you, or the actions or however I'm feeling (=Violet & Tyler: Mmm). Ah, so, ja.

**Violet:** But I think people do understand, whoever like the [air quotes] people are that are asking the business, I think they do understand but they want you to prove yourself (=Grace: [Inaudible]). And, and that's the difference, like there’s, very rarely are you ever actually like educating somebody with them listening (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, *truly* and like wanting to take that on. Usually it’s just like, “Oh, you think you this? Okay, tell me how (=Grace: Yes), tell me why, tell me everything” (=Tyler: Mmm; =Percy: Yeah, those questions). Yeah, because you can tell the difference between somebody who really doesn't know much and they just wanna engage [Grace and Tyler nod], and somebody with, who already comes in with an attitude (=Tyler: Mmm).

**Grace:** Just to put you in a box. Yeah, I think, uhm, like from what you were saying in terms of like looking back, like, I know a little bit younger than you guys. And, uhm, for me, I think one thing I've just always loved about the queer spaces I find myself in is that there's so much more of that kind of understanding that you won't necessarily understand but still respecting that individual [Violet nods]. Uhm, and that's what I love so much about, [laugh sigh], about these spaces, because you don't necessarily have to explain yourself. And, I know for some people, I mean, myself at some point included, and probably at some point in the future again, like I didn't even understand what was going on (=Tyler: Mmm) [Violet nods]. And like the pressure of needing to kind of put it all in like a neat box for the outside world to understand is just, it's too much, [laugh sigh] (=Violet: Yeah; =Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and for me, like my gender’s never been something that I've like really questioned too much [Violet nods]. I can be very comfortable with identifying myself as a woman, like I’ve never felt that strongly about it. Uhm, although, like as a kid, like I tend to really like, prefer doing more like, you know, [air quotes] boy kind of activities. I was like, the typical tomboy playing with [indistinguishable] the boys, [laugh sigh], you know. Uhm, and I also tend to, like present a bit more masculine than like very feminine, I hated wearing dresses, typical things like that. Uhm, but I have understood myself, I've never really, like had a problem with, you know, like, my pronouns being she/her, I was like, that's actually fine, I’m chilled with that. Uhm, but then, in, like being in queer spaces, I've discovered that, you know, not everyone is like that. And there are some, like real issues that people experience [Tyler checks phone]. Uhm, and I need to be able to respect that even though I don't fully understand that because it's really important to some people. Uhm, and, I’ve, like, in contrast, the outside, well [air quotes] the outside world, but you know what I mean? (=Violet: [Laugh]) Like the rest of the world, outside a lot of queer spaces, not that every queer space is (=Tyler: Mmm) completely unproblematic (=Violet: Yeah). Uhm, but outside that, there's so much of the, like, you to kind of prove, you know, why you feel like this? And that sometimes you know, really hectic to do because it's quite traumatic for some people (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, [sigh], I forgot where I was going with this but, yeah, so for me, again, I haven't had as many like, uhm, conflicting thoughts about, or like, I’ve never been, needed another term aside from, from ‘woman’ to identify myself with but (=Tyler: Mmm), that respect and that understanding, even though I might not fully get it, for other people has been like a really important thing, I think that I've gained from a lot of spaces like this (=Violet: Mmm). Yeah (=Tyler: Mmm).

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.Interesting. Yeah. So, I'm hearing that ‘queer’ it's kind of a, a freer term, because you don't have to explain so much behind what that means (=Percy: Yes) [Violet and Grace nod], right? Yeah, which can be really positive because, yeah, you can just say that and then you don't have to justify yourself (=Grace: Exactly) to other people. Uhm, but you [addressing Grace] also mentioned that ‘queer’ had been used in a negative way for you in your household (=Grace: Mmm). I wonder, uhm, who used that in that way? And, and why was ‘lesbian’, s-, more positive for them? (=Grace: Positive?) Was it more positive?

**Grace:** No, it wasn’t more positive. It was, like, possibly worse (=Tyler: Oh, okay). Uhm, yeah, sorry if that wasn’t clear in the past but uh, uhm, I've had, it's been my parents and generally people ‘cause they obviously associate themselves with a lot of other churchgoers and (=Tyler: Yeah) families in ministry and even just around dinner tables. Like I’ve heard some, like really, like, you know, when, like, you just think about those, like, like the stereotypical like, [air quotes] Contantia mom kind of tone complaining about something or other in the media that's like, you know, projecting the Gay Agenda onto (=Tyler: Oh) society, that kind of complaints and that kind of otherness of the queer community. I've heard quite a bit of that growing up (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and ‘queer’ and ‘lesbian’ were terms that we used, not very often, but almost like a very, like words that we don't use, because (=Tyler: Mmm) they're just like that unspeakable and these people are committing acts that are just that (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know, terrible (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and yeah, both of those, [sigh], I think for me just ‘queer’ became a lot more of an accessible term [Violet nods] just because of, uhm, spaces that I was in and people that I was around in, uhm, in school. Uhm, and I became a lot more comfortable using the word because a lot of people used it as well. And I was like, “Okay, I kind of feel like I fit in here using this word [Violet nods]. And it does apply to me, and, you know, this is how I feel”. Uhm, but I didn't actually know, uhm, other like lesbians or other, uhm, women, who like, only fancy women, like, if you could, the traditional interpretation of word. Uhm, and, uh, because of the way that I've heard my parents and people that, you know, adults that I respected use the word before. And the fact that it was such a taboo word, like they, even when they were speaking about like LGBT issues, they’d still kind of refer to, like, [air quotes] ‘gay’ as the, the word and not really many other terms, mostly I think just because they didn't really know them (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, ‘cause they definitely didn't want to engage or learn about the community, they stayed very much, using the, the basic words. Uhm, that was for me why it was like really difficult to, you know, be comfortable with the word. Like I remember, [laugh sigh], one of my, my best friends [indistinguishable], ‘cause, you know like in a friendly way, shame, but I, on the phone with her and I was still like, this is still like, midway through high school, like we were talking s-, about something. And I have to say the word ‘lesbian’ softly so that my parents didn’t hear, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, just because it was like such a thing that couldn't be uttered you know, on the ground (=Tyler: Mmm) that my house was on. So it felt like, uhm, but yeah, does that like kind of clear up a bit of (=Tyler: Mmm) what I was saying before? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Yeah, it wasn't, it wasn't great but (=Tyler: Yeah), I'm trying to move past it and trying to reclaim it a bit because it is a word that I do identify with, it’s a term that I do like, seeing myself like using, yeah. I’m getting there, it’s a process, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmm). Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So growing up, it has been used in a derogatory way (=Grace: Mmm). And, now, are you out with your family, and (=Grace: Yeah), how is that?

**Grace:** I can dip into a bit of that story. Uhm, but yeah, so I was actually outed, uhm (=Tyler: Oh), still no idea who it was. But someone told my parents, I was, I think, maybe 16, 17 at the time. Uhm, and it was not a great experience at all (=Tyler: Mm-mm). Uhm, it was really, really hard, because at school I actually wasn't, you know, I didn't have the chance to come out myself either. Because I'd confided in someone and they’d let it slip to someone else and then the whole school knew before I was really even comfortable with it. ‘Cause I spent a long time trying to not be like queer, because I was like “no, you’re a good Christian child, God, you can’t, you can’t do this” (=Tyler: Mmm). And I'm still reconciling those two kind of spheres of my life at the moment (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but yeah, so at the time, where like, when it came to you know, being outed to them, I literally got home from school one day, and my parents were like, “we know things, like you better come clean now”. And I wasn't really given an option, uhm, and lowkey still have some trust issues, because they didn't tell me who told them, but I'd been out of school for a while so it wasn’t like, it was a state secret. Uhm, and I felt like at that time, the one thing I remember feeling was just so powerless, because, you know, coming out is a, is a big deal. And I wasn't ready to do that with them because I knew how they'd react. And that's exactly what they did. Uhm, [laugh sigh], and, like having that choice, you know, taken away from me, it was, it was not it, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but after that happened, uhm, it was just kind of this thing that we didn't really speak about for a while because it was just easier, I think. It just became this thing, this elephant in the room. Uhm, because I still wanted to be a Christian and my parents were like, “no, you can’t be both” (=Tyler: Wow). And so, uh, there were a couple of things that I could go into, like it wasn't a good time there. I served on the church band and I played piano there for a couple years and they made me quit because you know, I wasn't a, a good enough Christian basically (=Tyler: Wow). Uhm, and (=Tyler: *Shoh*) it was all you know, in a very righteous name of “this is how we do things and you understand right?” So I'm like, *mmph*… Uhm, and so, [sigh], yeah, coming out was not it, but later on that year, uhm, I started dating my current girlfriend and I’ve made some bad decisions. They, when she was just a friend and they walked in on us, it was not it, and it was even worse from there. Uhm, and so, that whole, like, [sigh], coming out, and (=Tyler: Mmm) it was very much never on my terms (=Tyler: Mmm) [Violet nods]. And it's, it's been really nice, like being a new space, uhm, this year being able to do that. Like actually choose when I'm gonna, you know, like when I'm actually comfortable with a person or a group to be like, “Hey, I’m queer”, [laugh sigh], you know? Uhm, what is the original, was there a second part to your question or?

**Tyler:** No, that’s fine (=Grace: Does that-?) Yeah.

**Grace:** [Laugh sigh], yeah. There was something else that I wanted to say. Uhm, yeah so, it hasn't been, it hasn’t been easy. And it won’t continue to be easy, ‘cause at the moment, uhm, the consensus, or not the consensus but the kind of agreement that I reached with my parents is, you know, they just don't wanna know, if I'm going to see my girlfriend. It's actually not great for her, she's moved to Jo’burg to go study so (=Tyler: Oh), hee-hee, we’re dealing, we’re managing, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but, you know, last year, and the beginning of this year, if I was going to see her then they just didn't wanna know (=Tyler: Yeah). And it's hard, not being able to speak about things, even this, like, they have no idea this is what I've come to do today, ‘cause they've told me they prefer to not know. And they prefer to not be privy to that part of my life now, which is, you know, a step up from, you know, restricting me and not allowing me to do things like that, but it's still not, [laugh sigh], not ideal. And, like a small part of me, you know, hopes that one day things might change. Like, my girlfriend now, the family was really like homophobic when she first came out, but they've, like, come a long way since then. And they're amazing people now, they're really supportive, both of her parents and so, you know, I really hope (=Tyler: Mmm) that things might change, but I don't know, somewhere in me, I just don't think it's gonna happen because my family's entire, like principles, it's all rooted in the Bible, and they're very… [window rattles] black and white, there’s no grey (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, from the contrast of like, coming from a background like that, where it’s either right or wrong to (=Tyler: Yeah) very much fluidity, it's, ah, I don't know, it's just, I feel like, I’m floating in the clouds sometimes when I’m in spaces like this, it’s very nice [Violet nods], [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: *Shoh*). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Grace:** That was a very, a lot of talking, [laugh]

**=Tyler:** No, [inaudible]

**=Violet:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that, that’s really hard, that’s really difficult.

**Tyler:** Mmm, yeah. Violet, what are you feeling about, uhm, Grace’s story?

**Violet:** Uhm, I’ve, you know, it’s… I think no matter what reactions might be from your family or… friends, like, chances are, as a queer person, your life is still gonna be hard (=Grace: Mmm) [Tyler nods], [laugh sigh], you know? There's still so much shame that you have to work through before hopefully you can make the decision to tell people and then even then, there's still, uhm, so much within yourself like to unlearn and [Tyler and Grace nod], uhm, like work through for the rest of your life because it’s, like, you know, it can be, like overt homophobia or it can be, uhm, subliminal, you know, it can be TV, or it can be only seeing like certain representations of certain people like for your entire life and, uhm… So I just, I've had like a v-, I've had a very different experience. Uhm, I've been really lucky that I've had family and people in my life who’ve like, you know, put in work to, you know, make, try and make me as comfortable as possible. Like you know that they are still faults and, and things could be better and they are still maybe comments or whatever. Attitudes that you have to move past that, uhm… I, in both like, in, both within my family and in the families of people that I've been with like, I've been around people who try, you know (=Grace: That’s awesome). And yeah, I'm, I'm incredibly grateful for that. Uhm, my partner's family right now, we both live at home. And I stay over all the time, every weekend (=Grace: Ah), like Friday to Monday (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, we are like slowly meeting extended families now because we couldn't do that during lockdown, obviously, and, uhm. You know, everybody tries [Tyler nods]. And we are, we’re very aware of like, pitfalls and awkwardnesses, and try to not put each other in like uncomfortable situations but, but we are both so aware of how lucky we are to [Grace and Tyler nod], uhm, to be able to go into each other's homes and, and feel normal, or as normal as you can feel. Uhm, and I'm just always, like, grateful for that. And I honestly have no, like, I have no idea how I would deal with what you had to deal with. And I can only imagine like, you know, because you're, you’re dealing with other people and what they say. And you also have to take that on and (=Grace: Mmm) work through it and, and I already know how tough it's been for me, and I've had it easy, you know, relatively and it's also frustrating that you can still deal with homophobia all the time, but somehow it's easier than somebody else's experience (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so yeah, I'm, I’m feeling like, not feeling sorry for you [to Grace], but I'm sorry that you had to go through that. And, I’m honestly, I'm also just so grateful for, uhm, like, especially my, my partner's family, because I don't, I had it like good before with previous partners’ families, uhm, especially like I was in a, quite a long-term relationship. Like four and a half years, we lived together [Tyler nods]. Their family was from Joburg, I visited a lot. I took like trips with them and (=Grace: Ah) I spent a lot of time with a mother like in the last year of our relationship and we still talk every now and then. And, uhm, she treated me very well. But I kind of learned the difference between how I was treated by her and how I’m treated by my current partner’s family, where like, with her, I felt like I was her daughter. And that's so special and I'm so grateful for that and I'm not trying to, uhm, like downplay that, because I'm so grateful for it and she's really wonderful. But with like my current partner’s family, I feel like their child's girlfriend (=Grace: Mmhmm), you know, and I didn't expect that, that there would be a difference in that feeling (=Tyler: Mmm). But there's like a difference in the way that they really validate our relationship and like see us as being a partnership the way that they are a partnership (=Grace: Mmm, that’s so amazing). And like it might also just be because, like my previous partner's mother was a single mother and there wasn't that relationality you know, to, whatever (=Grace & Tyler: Mmm). But, uhm, I didn't know there'd be that difference and I feel it, I feel it and I'm just grateful to have all those different experiences (=Grace: Mmm) as well. Like people just doing their best (=Tyler: Mmm), yeah. Yeah, even if sometimes their best is just nothing, we say nothing (=Tyler: Yeah). We don’t talk about it (=Grace: [Laugh]), but like, you know, but that's the best they can give and so I’ll take it (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). Yeah.

**Grace:** I think it just makes me so happy to hear like, of other people's experiences where, for the most part the people that they're immediately close to, you know have really tried because I know it's such a common experience for that not to happen and people who are, you know, also far worse off than me, whose parents will like completely disown them [Violet nods]. It's not a, it's not an uncommon, uhm, thing so, I don’t know I’m just very happy, [laugh sigh] (=Violet: Look-) to hear stories like that.

**Violet:** The thing is like, I can say that at this point, you know, but because I came out so young and luckily it, I was able to choose that to an extent, uhm, I almost forget like how weird and difficult and awkward it was in the beginning [Tyler and Grace nod]. Uhm, so it's we've definitely come a long way, you know, and I can say the same like for my current partner’s family as well, to an extent (=Grace: Mmm, [nods]). Like her mother was always super, uhm, [sigh], I don’t wanna say like open or accepting because that's, I don't know, but her mother was always super present, you know, whereas things were a bit tougher with like her father, so people, they come a long way. And obviously you're starting-

[**INTERRUPTION:** Asanda, Okuhle, and Uranaty enter the room].

**Tyler** [To assistant leading the newcomers in] That’s fine, thank you, [assistant’s name].

**Percy:** Hey [to newcomers, whom she knows personally]

**Tyler:** [Stands to meet and greet newcomers. Orients newcomers to the focus group. Conversation at the table continues]

**Grace:** -Cut you off a bit there.

**Violet:** Okay, can you-? – [to newcomers] Hello! (=Grace: Hi!). Uhm, obviously like you’re starting off at like a lower point or something but, uhm, but people (=Grace: Mmm) … make their way, and I hope that happens

[Violet moves chairs around her to accommodate extra participants]

[Indistinguishable overlaps for 12 seconds]

**Grace:** I like the colour of your nails by the way.

**Violet:** Thank you.

**Grace:** I have a similar colour. I was like, about to paint my nails yesterday, I just never got around to it, I just don't have the patience (=Violet: [Laugh sigh]), it’s just, ugh.

[Indistinguishable overlaps for 3 seconds]

**Violet:** Uhm, this is just Essence. I like the colour as well, I feel [indistinguishable overlap].

**Grace:** It looks very good on you

**Violet:** Thank you (=Grace: [Laugh]).

**Tyler:** [To newcomers]: Uhm, and then, one thing that we ask you to do is, uh-

[Indistinguishable overlap for 7 seconds]

**Percy:** I’m good, just a little tired.

**Grace:** It’s getting warm, I was getting warm

**Percy:** Yeah, it’s-

[Indistinguishable overlap for 6 seconds]

**Violet:** Yeah, that’s why I moved.

**Percy:** You just moved.

[Indistinguishable overlap for 5 seconds]

**Tyler:** [To earlier participants, coming back to the table]: Sorry about the interruption. [Gets pens and continues orienting newcomers]

[Indistinguishable overlap and lull for 16 seconds]

[Newcomers approach the table; participants great in indistinguishable overlap]

[Lull for 18 seconds as focus group seating positions and furniture is rearranged]

**Tyler:** Okay, here's a seat for you…. Uhm, and this [pen] is also for you, so you can, uhm… You can write you name, like that. Uhm… [Laugh sigh], thank you for moving. Uhm, let’s just, yeah, take a minute so that everyone can finish with their forms [Asanda and Uranaty fill in forms. Okuhle is not completing them]. Uhm, but yeah, I like what you were saying, uhm, Violet and Grace about, uhm, family and it's interesting to see the difference there. Uhm, Percy, how do you feel about this, uh, theme, family and acceptance?

**Percy:** Uh, *yoh,* with me, *yoh*, I’ve, I’ve, I’ve come a long way (=Tyler: Mmm). And it’s so nice to hear that you’ve [addressing Grace] never been beaten up, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah). At least they don’t beating your ass up, but, [laugh sigh]. With me, *ai,* it’s, it's, it’s been rough. It’s harsh, to put it actually, it's been rough (=Tyler: *Shoh*). If you know what *rrrough* means [Asanda checks phone briefly], it's been *rrrough* (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh])*.* So, I, I, I, I think I've just always had the mentality of always… just passing it, ‘cause I’ve always said I just have a mentality of just packing things growing up. So whatever happens, I just pack it, [indistinguishable], and just packing. And tomorrow it’s fine I’ll just pack it. So it’s, it’s, it’s just always been that packing and [sounds of papers rustling], like, I, ‘cause at home we were always strained so it was just my parents and myself that’s how we are. So with everything that that happened and, I’ve, I’ve, I’ve just always been in a corner, I still am in my, I’m still in my little corner, because I, it’s… been through what I've been through and now looking back (=Tyler to Okuhle: [indistinguishable] it’s easier to hear [provides medical masks to all newcomers]), I’m, I’ve, I’ve, I’ve, it’s, and it’s, it’s when, when I actually think of, it’s, it’s not that it’s, it’s, over, it’s not that over there, a better understanding. It's just that it’s something I can’t help so they’re just coping with it. So, with me, I, as long as, you know, normally I’m not in your way and you’re fine, I won’t bother you or anything ‘cause I’ve, I’ve been financially, at home, I’ve been cut off since I was 15 or 16, around there. ‘Cause they couldn't buy boys’ clothes for a girl. So, since then till now, it can, it can be five years and I'm still doing the same thing I was doing since I was 15 [Uranaty continues completing form. Asanda joins Okuhle in not completing it] and… So I, I, I, I just s-, stay in my own lane basically. It's, it’s just staying in my own lane, doing what I’m told to do, if I do it, I’m like “I’m not gonna, you see that one, I'm not gonna do, because [inaudible] there’s no entitlement [inaudible]. You don't have to tell me what to do and I don't have to do anything that you tell me because we’re not to each other in any way. No, anything, so I don’t, I shouldn’t feel entitled to doing what you ask. I can do it if I’m, only if I’m not doing anything, then I can do it. But I am doing something, I will definitely not leave what I’m doing for what you’re doing,” because [Violet nods] so it's, it’s, just that, that, that relationship where, you rub my back, I rub yours, you don’t rub mine, it’s fine. So I, I’m, I’m, I’m just grateful that I still live under the roof and we’re still fine at least [inaudible], at least. It’s, the, the, the environment is neutrally as it can be, uhm, regardless of what is in the mind, so it’s just always, to have, I think it's, [plane flies over] it’s, it’s better to not say anything, than to say something sometimes. [Okuhle starts reading form] Because especially, our parents, yah, *eish,* they’re very hard when they just say something, for them, it's completely fine and normal to say [inaudible], with you, it’s, it’s, it’s like a brick, just fell out of the hand and you’re like *hayibo,* and you’re still normal after that? Like, and I’m still supposed to say, “hi, good morning” (=Grace: Yeah)? *Mxm, a*nd so, it’s, and I’m, [Okuhle begins completing form] I’m very hard at, at, and, like ‘cause, growing up, I’ve had things I had to resolve things on my own, ‘cause I didn’t ask them. My, my mom was, was giving me lessons, *ai, yoh,* but it’s too late for those lessons now. [Laugh], it’s just, I just think it's, it’s, it feels like why [inaudible]? Like, no, man, I just think it's too late for, for those lessons for me like, you can’t be giving me such lessons at this age (=Tyler: Mmm) [Violet nods]. Like I learnt, I was living on my own (=Tyler: Mmm) for a couple of years. So, now that I'm here, and then now you think it's the right time to give me lessons, well the, the time that you’re giving me lessons, you’re beating me up now (=Tyler: *Shoh*). You want to give me lessons like (=Tyler: Mmm), and those lessons, I, I, I’m not going to say thank you for them (=Tyler: Yeah), I'm going to tell you how it is (=Tyler: Yeah). ‘Cause you can't expect me to say yes, when you're telling me not to do something that… is, my money (=Violet: Mmm). So let's just, and it’s, it’s, it, I think that, in most things, or in most cases that is always where at home that *yoh*, you’ll always click. That's always where you’ll just see okay, yeah, now we're not together, hey, because it's always something when it comes to money and stuff ‘cause I’m, I, I, I, I’m very, like I’m in my box [Okuhle stops completing form]. So, whenever I, I do something, or whenever I… I, I, I just don't expect to be, to be told what to do, or… told, uhm, whatever it is, man, that is got to my life man, ‘cause it's just that I've, I’ve always lived on my own since I was 15. So, now I'm 25, I cannot blend into being part of this space because for me this space was tos-, toxic (=Tyler: Mmm) in the first place (=Tyler: Mmm). So, and I've never seen any cleansing within the space, because the only time I got, the piece of mind was when I had to move out (=Tyler: Mmm). That's when I was fine. And then when I moved back, it's not that, we spoke about it anything. It’s just me moving back and building my own house at the back and still being in, in my nutshell as much as it’s still the same, yeah, I can say that but it’s just me still being in my box and still doing (=Tyler: Mmm) whatever that I wanna do and not disturbing anyone's peace for my peace’s sake (=Tyler: Mmm). Because it's, it's just hard man to, to maneuver through things and especially when it comes to, to parents and, and all that. So, it’s, it’s, especially when it’s, it’s, my, my mother, she's, she's a, she's a Christian type of, type of person [sounds of children playing outside]. She actually, she, she's very, into church and the Bible and everything that goes with that. Like for instance yesterday I, I wanted to, I wanted to fix my door (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So she was like, “no, it's, Easter what-what, so you can work on Easter”, I’m like, “Yo, that is your problem. [Violet nods] You are going to church, I’ll be here, home”. She’s like “Still, in TV church’s playing, in radio,” I’m like, “*yoh,* in radio and TV, I'll switch on my music *vele* (=Tyler & Grace: [Laugh sigh])*,* and I’ll do my door ‘cause you can’t, you’ll be in church so you can’t be telling me not to work (=Tyler: Mmm)”. Like I'm, I’m supposed to fix my door, I was, she was, no, I’m not, I can't do that because it’s Easters, it’s your Easters not mine (=Tyler: Mmm). And you’re going church and Jesus is being beaten up for whatever. It’s not my problem (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), and, now I'm putting the nail on the door (=Tyler: Yeah), not on Jesus so I (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]) can’t be wrong. So it, it just ended up being that and I, and it’s, whenever we, we disagree or no, we never, we never reach a point where we both agree (=Tyler: Mmm). It's always me saying my point and taking the door ‘cause I’m like, I'm, I’m, not going to take this, I'm going to do what I wanna do (=Tyler: Yeah), [laugh sigh]. I, I, I, like, I, I, I can’t be in like in, in, in, in, have an open conversation with someone that will not open up to anything (=Tyler: Yeah). So, in, in, I, I, I, with my mom, she, she, she, she just never understands anything (=Tyler: Mmm). With her, *ai*, it’s her way or the highway (=Tyler: Mmm). So with me I’ve always chosen the highway, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). It's always been my thing. I’m like, *mxm*, with you I will not deal with right now [shakes finger]. [Laughing], no, no, no, no, no (=Tyler: Yeah). So it’s, it’s, so, it’s, it’s, at, at least, like, the, when you look into, like, when, when I look back and I, but at least some thing's, at least she, she's learned to keep her mouth shut, for most instances, and she just doesn't say things anymore so I’m just fine with her being quiet now, everything, that (=Tyler: Yeah) with regards to me (=Tyler: Mmm). The only time that she says, wants to say something is when it's negative. And I’m like (=Tyler: Mmm), *mxm,* see that's where we stop, because the only time you wanna say something is when it’s negative. So, if you're gonna do that, then we’re still going to continue this way (=Tyler: Yeah). ‘Cause by now, she's, she’s seeing that I, I de-attached (=Tyler: Yeah) from everything, so she always tries and when I, mm-mm, mm-mm (=Tyler: Yeah), that’s not how we do it. So, if we still gonna do it that way, then it's fine, that is still how it's gonna be (=Tyler: Yeah). And I think she, she's just, she just sees that, I am not there. And she's fine with it finally and, just lets it be (=Tyler: Mmm). Because I’ve, the only thing that I've, I’ve told myself and forgiven her and everything that has happened ‘cause she’s never been, she's never said, “I apologize” (=Grace: Mmm). She doesn't know what I've been through (=Tyler: Mmm). She doesn't know what she did… in the role it plays, in my reality at this moment (=Tyler: Mmm), so without her and, or, having to, to think or even for a second, like try and, and think “hey, was, was there something wrong that I did?” If she hasn't had that mind yet, and then I don't think there's ever (=Tyler: Yeah), a, a, a place, or a state of mind whatever which, of actually being like, “yo (=Tyler: Mmm), but one two and three” (=Tyler: Mmm). ‘Cause I, I, I, I think by, by now and in how things are outside with they’re, they’re very tough, and now everything is now open these days. So now whereas as, as a parent, you should know that, if you, you push your child outside, there are sharks out there and they will, they’re waiting for the blood. Just you to say something, and then they, they are waiting, by the time, you will realize that it's your child, they’ll will be gone by that time (=Tyler: Yeah). So it's…that’s the, it’s, what I said that it's not always about understanding (=Tyler: Yeah), it's just for you, as a person having to accept another person (=Tyler: Yes) for being who they are and just (=Tyler: Yeah), keeping an open mind that you can be the same (=Tyler: Mmm), regardless of anything. So, what you see in me is not what you are (=Violet: Mmhmm, [nods]). So, we can be five and be one, but there’s the 6th person that will be different. So, understanding the one different person out of those five people is just what we need to get through (=Tyler: Yeah) our day-to-day bases.

**Tyler:** Yeah, it sounds a lot like, uhm, what we were saying earlier, like when some people ask you to explain (=Percy: Mmhmm, yeah) your identity, but they don't want to listen, right? It sounds like that's, that’s, uh, your relationship with your mother, she doesn't want to see you and listen to you as a person, right?

**Percy:** No, she sees what she sees (=Tyer: Yeah) [Violet nods] and asks, but she doesn't, but will (=Tyler: Yeah), will just not be seeing what you just explained, she’s still being (=Tyler: Yeah). But (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah), so, there's really not (=Tyler: Okay) an end to, to (=Tyler: Yeah) that type of type of situation (=Tyler: Yeah). So you just have to let it be, and (=Tyler: Yeah), as long as you know that you're doing something that, that makes you happy and you're completely at peace (=Tyler: Yeah), and fine with it, that is all you need to survive (=Tyler: Yeah). If you see that moving out will do you 101% then I do that in the blink of an eye ’cause it's the sake of your happiness out there. It’s no use being suffocated in a space where you are every day dying (=Tyler: Yeah), to be outside (=Tyler: Mmm). So just do what makes you happy and you just learn to live through and forgive some things and just be at peace with yourself (=Tyler: Yeah). With the situations as well ‘cause then you just learn to cope better with the situation than living with it. So when you’re outside of it, it's just much better to cope with it because you know, at least I'll get my peace of mind, I'll just go there for, for two days, what’s two days then my whole week alone (=Tyler: Yeah)? So I can do that sacrifice for being at home for a weekend. But the rest of the week, I'm not home. So I’m fine for five days and not fine for two days, so, [laugh], you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). So whatever works, man (=Tyler: Yeah, okay), so whatever works, I've just (=Tyler: Yeah), I’ve just always taught myself to just do whatever, whatever works for me at this moment, then that is where we are.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah, yeah (=Percy: Yeah). Thank you, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, yeah, and thank you, uhm, Asanda, Okuhle, and, uhm, (=Uranaty: Uranaty) Uranaty for joining us, yeah. Uhm, so we have been talking, uh, a little bit about what, uh, being queer means to each of us individually, yeah? How do you describe the way that you identify? And then that became a conversation about how other people feel about that. So we were speaking about family things, uh, for, for now. It is a, this space is a conversation amongst all of you, right? Uhm, I don't ask many questions here. So it's just sharing your experiences, that kind of thing. Uhm, do you have any questions about these forms? (=Uranaty: No) Or any information here? (=Asanda: No). Do you need more time with, with them

**Uranaty:** Oh, I finished.

**Tyler:** You finished. Okay, and Okuhle as well?

**Okuhle:** No, I'm not done yet.

**Tyler:** Hmm?

**Okuhle:** I’m not done yet.

**Tyler:** Okay, do you need time?

**Okuhle:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Okay, [laugh sigh].

**Okuhle:** And I’m still listening [gestures to Percy]

**Asanda:** I think after we finish.

**Tyler:** After?

**Asanda & Okuhle:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Are you sure?

**Okuhle:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Okay. We can do that afterwards, if you'd like, yeah. There'll be time for that. So, okay, then you can keep them, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, okay, so I think, yeah, Violet, Grace, and you know Percy, from, from Triangle. Okay, so, uhm, I think we were talking about how, uhm, yeah, uh, each of you, uh, please correct me if I'm wrong, but each of you, uh, likes the word ‘queer’, uhm, but also ‘lesbian’, uhm. But I think Violet was saying she wants to bring that feeling of openness and, and, uh, freedom and ability to change that’s in ‘queer’ [Violet nods], and you want to, kind of, use that with ‘lesbian’, the way that you talk about yourself [Violet nods], yeah? (=Violet: Mmm) Good. And Grace, you also have a relationship using both ‘queer’ and ‘lesbian’ (=Grace: Mmm). Uhm, yeah, there's some, some complicated things there, because ‘queer’ also feels open and it feels freer, and you don't want to exclude potential people you might be attracted to in future who are like non-binary or aren’t women, uhm. But yeah, there are some, some difficulties from other people, like, Grace was saying some people in her family have used ‘queer’ and ‘lesbian’ in negative ways, right. So, uhm, yeah, Okuhle, Asanda, Uranaty, how do you describe yourselves, and how do you feel about that?

**Uranaty:** Okay, hi, guys (=[Several]: Hi). Uhm, I think it's better to say ‘queer’ (=Tyler: Mmm) ‘cause most of people like when you say you're lesbian, there’s an aggressive way [Violet nods], people they approach you, like homophobic people (=Tyler: Mmm). So if you say to them, you’re queer, their mind, they don't understand what is ‘queer’. The only word that they understand it's ‘lesbian’, so if you are a lesbian you are an enemy [Violet nods]. So it's better that, if you call yourself ‘queer’, they will not know if, what ‘queer’ does it mean or what else. And then, coming to a family thing, I've never had a problem with my family ‘cause I've never said that to them, ‘I'm a lesbian’. I never come out, I don't see a reason to come out (=Tyler: Yeah). ‘Cause, even if a straight person doesn't come out to me and say, “I’m straight”, why should I have to say [Okuhle nods] to you that I'm a lesbian? (=Tyler: Mmm). So, on the, in a way, they saw me like dating girls so they, thing was “Okay, *shoh*, she's a lesbian,” or stuff. My mother does understand. She gives me all the support that I need (=Tyler & Grace: Mmm), ‘cause I don't usually stay with my father all the time. Always in Eastern Cape, so she give me all stuff. I want to say, I have a problem with – also my brothers, I don't have a problem. It's only like in the community. Always it’s gonna be a community so (=Tyler: Mmm), at home I do have all the support that I want to have [Tyler and Violet nod], unless on my father's side family. You know what families are (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]). So, that's why I don't care if they don't accept me ‘cause my political family accepted me so I don't think I have a problem with them (=Tyler: Mmm). They can say whatever they wanna say (=Tyler: Mmm). So I don't think I have much problem and also, like on friendships, there are, there are friendships that you see that this one, no, doesn't understand, what is a lesbian, she's, he's just a friend with you just because, some of, some of them, they want girls. So they want you to approach them and give some (=Okuhle: [Laugh]), *iyebo*? I think that's, that's the issue. I don't have a problem with family or that thing (=Tyler: Okay).

**Asanda:** Hi guys, uh, I’m Asanda. I’m a leader of, [name of a ‘safe space’]. Uh, I’m a queer person and then I’m staying in Nyanga too. My experience with my family, I became, I don’t know, whether I was bisexual or a lesbian [Violet nods], at an early age, and then my family saw that, I think I was eleven twelve, because I was having a sex with another lady but we didn't understand at the time because we were still small. And then my family found out about that, then I have to go to my father's place, because I was still with my mother's family. Then they take me to, because i-, in our culture, they don't understand about our situation, firstly. Because if you a women, you’re sleeping with another, you, you, you called by names, you witchcraft, you have snakes and all that kind of stuffs, then they don't understand especially to us, as a Black person. Then they take me to my father's place with them, I go with them. I think I was at eighteen, eighteen years, because I, I'm not stopping what I’m doing, I’m just continuing doing what I wanted because it was a feeling that I have at that time, and then I didn't know because I was still in a, in a young age. You know, when you're small, you don't know, if you are bi or you are a lesbian or what, you just do what to feel inside that it want to do this. But you know, you don't know what make you do what you do. And then my experience, that, I think I was 18, at my home they say I must go to be married. Then I’ll go to a, I think it’s a force-ly married or it’s a, arranged married, something like that because my husband, I didn’t date him [Violet nods]. They just come to another family, uhm, another family, then they come together with the meeting and they say, you're going to marry this guy, then it’s final, everything is settled (=Tyler: Wow), then have to go to, to that family and be a wife. Because they, they, there were, I think, in my mind they were think that I'm going to stop, if I, I have a man [Violet nods] in my life (=Tyler: Mmm). Okay, I did go there and become the wife and then, I think for 10 years. But in my marriage, when I was in a marriage, I think, 2007, that was, I started seeing guy, girls again, because I have that, uh, attracted feeling with another girl. So I'm in the marriage with a man. But I, I, I love another woman, or I have a, a feeling with another women then, then I do that, when I was still in a marriage, because, I think it’s a cheating, against, against her, so then I cheat in the marriage. But then my husband find out about that, that I have a girlfriend, or a, I don’t know what to call it (=Tyler: Mmm). Then they find out, then they call the meeting. Okay, the meeting, you know, it’s a wife and we’re Black people then, they know that our families, it’s like that, how it’s. And then, they're going to sit both family, my family and the other family, my husband family, they sit down to talk about this, “Asanda, why are you doing this?”. And say “I love, I love women (=Tyler: Mmm), so how can I not doing this?”. “And then your husband?” “My husband, I didn't love him in the first place, because you are the one that loves him, not me (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). So I, I, I have this feeling, so what must I do?” “Asanda, why do you, just, stay in your marriage.” “I am in my marriage, but I love this woman, you see, so what’s the problem?” Then I have that problem with my family to, I think they were disowning me or not talking to me or rejected me at that time. But it is a, it was a confusion, *ukanyi,* a argument, something like that. But uh, I still far from them for a long time, I think four years after, then they talking to me, I have to stay to this marriage. And I'm cheating to this marriage because I'm not stopping what I'm doing, I just hiding to my husband, I’m not saying there that I’m doing this, until that, uh, I’m stopping okay. [Inaudible] when I tell myself I don’t need to lead this life anymore. Even if that they accep-, accepted me, firstly, or what, but now, I, I, I’m not, what do you call it, I'm not depending on them now (=Tyler: Mmm). I have to depend on my love, on myself and what I, I, I want with my life (=Tyler: Mmm). Then I think it was 2010, that I started moving out from my husband place and then the family even, if you know you're a Xhosa girl, there will always be a family meeting, everything, even the small thing, they're going to call they family, “Why are you doing this?”. Okay, they call for me, “why are you moving out?”, and then I tell them, I said them, “no, I am a lesbian. And I have to accept that I am a lesbian because I don't love my husband, and I don't have feelings for him anymore. So what must I do? Because I have to live my life the way I want to live my life” (=Tyler: *Shoh*) [Violet nods]. Yes, so I started to, to go to Nyanga where I’m staying now, right. I, I have a house and I live, my, alone. You know, in, in Cape Town, if you don’t have, you do have a family but you’re not talking to your family, that's paining, painful to you, firstly, because you want someone to talk to, to your family but you don’t have one because they don't like your, your lifestyle or the way that you, because they were saying that you, you *become*, they don't know that you *were* [gestures backwards]*,* but they think now because they don't, I think they’ve forgotten that I do this when I was little (=Tyler: Mmm) but now it’s years later, then they think that you’re just coming out now (=Tyler: Yeah). Okay, then, i-, i-, my love, my life goes. But I have to come forward because I have a girlfriend that I was living with, then my brother saw him and then resorted to my family, and then they call a meeting. That's when they accepted me as a lesbian (=Tyler: Wow). All of them were saying, “there's nothing we can do to you now. Because you're old enough to make your own decision (=Tyler: Mmm). And you, you have your own children. If it is the life that you want to live, we fully support you whenever you want, when, every situation that you have, we are here for you.” I think it take them all my life for them to accept me (=Tyler: Yeah) as, as a lesbian person, as a queer person. Then, even now, I'm not lying about my family, they support even I’ve doing as simple thing, if I say “I'm going to do this event”, they jump [clicks fingers], because I think they don't talk to me for years so I think they, they want to fill that gap that were lost for, for that years [Okuhle and Violet nod] (=Tyler: Yeah). Because now I, I don't, I don’t want to lie about them now. They, they fully support me, everything I do, whatever I want, even I have a girlfriend today, and tomorrow I dump that person and (=[Several]: [Laughter]) come with another one, they don't say to me, “no, yesterday we saw that one and then today”, you know, it's just accepting the person that I come, if I say to, “this is my girlfriend, guys” then, [touches Okuhle’s arm to demonstrate] “but I love this woman now,” and then tomorrow I will come with [inaudible], and I will say “this is my girlfriend now, so” (=[Several]: [Laughter]), they don’t even have an issue about that. If you, they say to me, “just, if my are happy, we are happy. Whatever you do, what make you happy, we are happy with it”. (=Tyler: Wow, *shoh*). That’s my love.

**Tyler:** Yeah, wow, yeah, a really long struggle to get (=Asanda: Mmm) that acceptance, wow.

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable agreement]

**Asanda:** I think a lot of years because I, I was needing that, you know when you are a little person or you growing up, you need support of (=Tyler: Yeah) your family, you need someone to love, especially to your family. And we do have friends, but friends is not your family because friends come and goes, but family is always be, be a part of your, your life forever [plane flies over]. So if you, if your family disown you or doesn’t talk to you, it's, it’s a very painful thing, because even if you, you going to have a heart attack now, and then you’re going to call the people that you’re staying, you’re going call because you don’t talk to your family. [Grace looks down] And even, even yourself, but is a thing that, even if you are still, even, I, I’ll get a skollies or a robbery, then I get shot, the people that I’m staying with, who, who are they going to call? Because I don't talk to them, you see? That the thing that I was very struggling with and it was very painful at that time but now, uh, I’m happy with everything.

**Tyler:** Okay. Good.

**Grace:** I'm so sorry to interrupt. Can I run to the bathroom real quick?

**Tyler:** Yes, you can, do you know where it is?

**Grace:** No, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Uhm, uh, my assistant should be out, uh (=Grace: Okay, I’ll just ask her), you can ask her. (=Grace: [Inaudible]). Yeah, that’s fine, that’s okay.

[Grace leaves for a bathroom break]

**Okuhle:** Uhm, hey guys, uhm, I'm Okuhle, I’m coming from Eastern Cape [inaudible]. Uhm, I prefer being called, uh, I prefer ‘lesbian’ instead of ‘queer’ (=Tyler: Mmm) because I feel like I have to explain to people what does ‘queer’ means [Violet nods]. And at least they have their own information about ‘lesbian’ which I don’t care, I don’t have to explain myself today. Uhm [door creaks ajar], I won't lie, I did found uhm, I had problems with my family (=Tyler: Mmm). Me being lesbian, to the point, uhm [Tyler gets up to close door], my mother disowned me for four years, because she assumed that it’s just a phase, maybe as time goes I will change. But that never happened. And then, she [Tyler sits back down], at the first time she accepted me, I was, I was still with my grandmother. And she told my grandmother that I’m dating girls. At first I was like, “Oh my god, like she really accepted the fact that I’m lesbian.” For the past four years, she had nothing to do with the me or anything. She literally disowned me (=Tyler: *Shoh*), for which I had no support system and no one to tell me what I'm doing is right, whether I'm happy, like I had to do it alone, and I had to stand on what I believe and, as long I’m happy. And after my mother accepted me, uhm, the problem is my father right now. Oh, that guy, he doesn't want to accept me, in which I'm cool with that, to the point, all his entire family want nothing to do with me. Last year, I was in Eastern Cape, I went to a spa, I bought uhm, a t-shirt that say, “Gay as fuck” (=[Several]: [Laughter]) and now I make sure that I wear it every time there’s, there’s everyone, they must just get used to the fact (=Tyler: Mmm) I'm not gonna change who I am, this is who I am, they must just get used to it (=Tyler: Mmm). Even though my father believes that, as time goes, I will change, and, blah-blah-blah, I don't care (=Tyler: Mmm), you just have to get used to it, and, and I can’t bring girls, *yoh*, that’s the most difficult part, because when my father is there, I have to be another person [Tyler and Violet nod], I can't be myself (=Tyler: Yeah). So, I have to be that holy, holy person. And then when he’s gone to work and, they my mother understand the whole process, to the point, my mother, she's so in love with the LGBTIQ community, and she wants to learn more about it. She's been my support system. I think I'm, I’m so grateful that I have her. And also, her family’s side, they’re very understanding, they always want to meet my girlfriend, whoever I’m dating, my friends. And, uh, speaking about friends, uhm, there was a time, uhm, my best friend for 10 years, literally, like, our friendship ended, because sh-, the, I think the last thing she said, she said I'm so possessed, to those demons that I'm doing because, to the point, first of all, I was bisexual then after being bisexual, I was like, “no, I’m lesbian” (=Tyler: Mmm). So, to her, she was like, she can’t deal with me, I'm so possessed, I need to go to church, they must pray for me (=Tyler: Mmm). 10 years of friendship go down to the drain because of who I am (=Tyler: Yeah). And now, uh, I don’t care what people say, I'm living my life, as long I'm happy that what make me, that what matters to me, I don’t care what people say.

**Tyler:** Yeah, wow. *Shoh*, just, yeah, friendship over because (=Okuhle: Over), not, not because of who you are but because of the, the idea (=Okuhle: Yes) [Uranaty nods], on the label of (=Okuhle: Yes; =Uranaty: Yeah) who you are, right? On ‘lesbian’ and, people think that there's demons or there's (=Okuhle: Yeah), yeah, something against your religion. Yeah, *shoh,* that's really hectic.

**Okuhle:** It is.

**Tyler:** Yeah, uhm, yeah, but we are also sharing stories of sameness and difference, you know. So, that's very open to interpretation, that feeling of sameness and difference. Uhm, and so, yeah, with, with any other people, it can be with other queer people, with non-queer people. We talked about family and friends, yeah, this feeling of feeling different, yeah. Uhm, but is there any other experience that you would like to share?

**Violet:** On that topic?

**Tyler:** Mmm. Sameness and difference. What did you think of, Violet, when you were thinking about sameness and difference?

**Violet:** Uhm, I mostly thought about my childhood [Tyler nods]. I think I, uhm… it, it felt so like cliche. Like, it's something that people always say, like, oh, “I've always felt different. I always knew I was different from everybody else”. So I, I didn't want to think in that way, because I felt like, I didn't really realize how, that the reason I felt so different from my friends or from like, my school or community was that, was just because I was queer. That was it. I thought, “Oh, maybe I had different interests, or maybe I, you know, was my personality”. [Grace returns] And I didn’t realize how much of that really actually came down to me not knowing what it was, but knowing that there was something a lot deeper in me that was different, and that everybody around me could reject me for one day, like when I realized what it was. Uhm, and so I think I'm only now realizing just how much of that like loneliness as a child came (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, came from that *alone* and like really not that, really not anything else, because, uhm… Like I, yeah. So that, that was, that was what came to mind like when you asked to think about that topic (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm. And even now, I think, ‘cause now we're all chatting about our family experiences, and, uhm, I've had a really good experience for the most part with, uhm, most family and most friends and people have really, people who, maybe they were homophobic or just like on the edge, [laugh sigh], before, like, once I've come out, or once they, I've actually not really come out to anybody, like, I'll just show up to a family event and be like, this is, this is this person's name and they must just figure out what's going on. Uhm and it’s (=Uranaty: I feel you), yeah, like, and, you know, whatever conversations are happening behind the scenes that I don't know about, like that’s (=Uranaty: I don’t care, don’t even care) their business, yeah. It's fine, ‘cause I know that the people who are really here for me will talk to me directly. Uhm, so I don't, and, and luckily, everybody that is special to me, like luckily, all of those people have, uhm, you know, figured things out on their own, uhm, over time. So, sorry, I've got off track now, uhm… Oh, so I have, I have my, my family, I have my friends and like a big queer community that I think that I'm a part of, and I work in gender and sexuality, like education. Uhm, but even then, when I'm outside of the bubbles that I'm in, I'm not very, like, out and proud and whatever. I still get really nervous, and I still like (=Grace: Mmm), I’m very hesitant, uhm, to be upfront about the fact that I'm queer if I'm not, with people that I know (=Tyler & Grace: Mmm), like, at work. Uhm, I, I work at this like very fancy hotel in town. And, you know, people chat all the time, like half the time there really isn’t anything to do so people talk, and, uhm, ask you, “Do you have a boyfriend?” and whatever. And, uhm, my partner at the time was trans, trans masculine, and so, when people asked me if I had a boyfriend, I would just say yes, because I do have a boyfriend, but it's not what they're thinking (=Tyler: Mmm). And, uhm, so I was able to hide behind that a little bit and I really wasn't out and proud and whatever. And when some people did start to find out, I would get really nervous (=Tyler & Uranaty: Mmm). Uhm, and even next week, I have a job where I'm literally going into teach, like, uhm, teenagers about sexuality. And I'm still nervous about whether or not I should tell the woman that I'm working for that I'm queer, like, I'm still nervous about whether or not I should be up front with those kids (=Grace: Mmm). Uhm, and I just, that’s something I've always having to work through, is like, that I'm so lucky that I've had such a, like, accepting, uhm, family space and friend space. But when I step outside of that, into like, the bigger world, I'm actually scared all the time (=Grace & Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and I, like my partner and I’ll, uhm, be like affective or whatever, but, uhm, there’s still, uhm… uhm, I’m always thinking about it, you know? Yeah. So, so (=Tyler: Yeah) that's, that's that, that's a, may, interpret that however you will, [laugh], yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Does anyone else feel similarly what Violet has said?

**Grace:** In, in some ways, uhm, just in terms of that, always just being in the back of your mind. Like, uhm, my girlfriend and I are both, just because of our own, like pasts and stuff, always just very conscious of, like, how affectionate we are in public, just because we've had bad experiences in the past. And it's been something we've also had to like, work through together. And it's just like something and you just, you know, it's such a, a unique kind of experience, I think, uhm, for queer people ‘cause you don't, uhm, really, I mean, I don't want to, like assume this, but I don't think a lot of straight people, you know, will be very conscious of that [Violet nods]. It's just something that's very normal for them (=Tyler: Mmm), it’s like this, you know, “my girlfriend or boyfriend or whatever, uhm, this is just how we are”. Uhm, and that's also just on the, like the topic that we like came here to discuss, it’s also how, I’ve felt very, like, different in that sense from, like, people who are straight, my straight peers. Uhm, and very connected to those of my friends that are queer because we've all gone through something very similar. It's just something that is always in the back of our minds, whether we like it or not, you know (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). If we’re in like, not in a, like, straight-presenting, if I can call it that, relationship, then it's just, yeah, (=Uranaty: And-) ‘cause you'll feel the eyes are on you, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Uranaty:** And also what I’ll say is that, what we fear about that is that what people will think about us. People are there to talk (=Tyler & Asanda: Mmm). So you don't have to care what people will say, they’re all there to talk. And, the, the fact that you have to listen to peop-, what they think, you're going to be depressed. You should let it go. Think what you think, I'll do what I do. So I, I don't complain about the sexuality. So if you come to me and complain about the sexual, you’re gonna have a problem. ‘Cause if you say to me, like those things, [inaudible], I don’t care. I’m that person that say what you wanna say, I don’t care (=Tyler: Mmm), I’ll still do what I wanna do. So, if you s-, keep on, most of people are taking behind my back, ah, I don’t care (=Tyler: Mmm), just talk. I'll keep on doing what I wanna do. It’s not like, being a, a queer person it's a choice [Grace, Violet, and Okuhle nod]. It’s a not choice, those th-, it’s not something that you chose to be queer. You’re born to be queer, so, if you born to be straight, it’s fine, stay at your lane, I’ll stay at my lane. Don’t comp-, don’t complain how you date twelve girlfriends or whatever (=Grace: [Laugh sigh], how you do your - there's a difference that, people always say that, “how do you intimate?” Like, do I ask you how do you intimate? (=Asanda: [Laugh sigh]). But I said to them, “come to me, I’ll show you (=Okuhle & Grace: [Laugh]) how we be intimate.” That, I’ll say to them, “come to me I’ll show you how we do things. So don't ask me how, ‘how do we have sex?’, all this stuff, I don't ask you how to have sex.”

**=Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm.

**=Grace:** Yeah, yeah. Very invasive and so like, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah. That’s a funny response, though, [laugh].

**Asanda:** I think, I think, it, it is different to, to me as a, as a lesbian who don’t wear [gesturing to Uranaty] like that, like, butch (=Uranaty: Butch lesbian). Yes (=Tyler: Okay). Because, in my experience with, with, with some of my friends, I wear a skirt, I have, wear what I wear. But in my opinion, to come onto what Okuhle was saying, to, to, my friend I think I have friend for almost 10 years [Uranaty returns to completing form], even myself, but, we did have a argument when, when I was came out as a lesbian, because we were sleeping in the same bed. We were doing everything together, we go to church together, almost everything that we're doing, we’re, we’re like (=Okuhle: Sisters), sisters, I can say it like that (=Grace: Mmm, mmm). But the time she found out about my girlfriend is the time that, I think, lost communication between me and her, because she found out about my girlfriend when she was at my house (=Grace: Mmm). And then my girlfriend was sleeping on the bed. Then, there's some question, “Why is girl-?” and I say “It’s my girlfriend”, because I don’t have something to, to hide my girlfriend from her. And then say, “hayibo [inaudible]” because she knows that I was married to, to a man but she knows. But I, I don't, I don't know why, what she was thinking on her mind because she was my best friend and she know about my first girlfriend in Cape Town. I did tell her but I think she was, eh, ignoring to her, or I, I don't know, what’s it', *okanyi,* not, knowing or not want to know, I don't know what's (=Violet: Mmm [nods]) happening to her mind. And then I think we lost communication between the both of us, even now I don’t to talk to her. I miss talking to her because, uh, uh, uh, I have that long relationship with her and then without each other for a very long time. But the thing that she don't even want to understand, that I am a lesbian (=Tyler: Mmm), and I was still a lesbian, and the, the fact is now I, I, I have a, a, a Safe Space, that the thing that, I see that is driving her crazy. Because she, she, she, she saying to me, that, “Asanda, no, [phrase in Xhosa]”, *eish,* w-, when you talking, you know, *mos,* as a Safe Space, that I have Safe Space, my Safe Space. So they think that I'm taking young people to, to be a lesbian (=Tyler: Oh), what-what, she thinks that (=[Several]: Mmm) I am, I’m the one that say to the, to, to my Safe Space members that I am a lesbian, then become a lesbian (=[Several]: Mmm), you see? So I don't know, how can I, I just talk to her about that because I did try to, to, to talk to her, but, no, it’s their choice, it’s the, the way they feel. And then, you see, and then, you see, I, you know when you're trying to explain to someone but, he doesn't want to listen, *ukai*, doesn’t want to hear what you saying because she have her own things that (=Tyler: Mmm) you are saying in her mind. But then, I think “Okay, let me cut, let us short to this lady then, not talk to her because if I'm taking to her [Percy leaves to the bathroom], you’re going to depress me, because in talking, I, opposite side that I’m talking about and it’s not that I did hide it from her because if I did hide, I don’t, I don’t know that I did hide it, and then she shocked now that I became a lesbian, after so many years, but I did tell her, but I don't know, ‘cause ignorance. I’m disappointed in her but, I lost my friend because of I am a lesbian (=Tyler: *Shoh*), you see.

**Uranaty:** Uhm, okay. Another thing is that, there's a reason that I don't understand. Why do we have to come out? (=Tyler: Mmm) That's the point, I don't understand that, why do I have to come out? Come out for, for who? You’re doing for who that you, you say that? Okay, I'm standing here, “stand up, go tell everybody I’m a lesbian”. [Door creaks ajar; Grace gets up to close it] What for? (=Grace: [Inaudible]) I don’t see the reason now, you have to come out. I, I, I, that's the issue for me that I don't understand, that’s why I didn't even come out at home (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I don't understand what, (=Asanda: I, I-) why do I have to come out?

**Asanda:** I think the reason is, is because they see me as a, as a lady that's supposed to, to have a boyfriend. So I think the reason for myself to come out, that, they have to know that I don't date mens, I date womens. So they have to, to, to, to be in their mind that I don't love mens. So I think that’s the reason that I have to come out to my friends and, but, even if I have to sleep with her to the same bed that you know that I am a lesbian, because I know that I'm not going to do anything to her because she’s my friend, and I then I don’t attract to my friends. I know about that, then they, they know about that. But they think that you are now a lesbian, they, they have a mentality to [inaudible] you’re going to, I don't know, if you’re going to crack them and sleep with them or what, I don’t know. But they, they become scary, *ukai*, they become afraid of you (Grace: Mmm). I think that's the reason to, for myself to, to, to come out as a lesbian. I think to you, it, it’s better because they see that you wearing men, men’s (=Uranaty: Clothes) clothes. So it’s, it’s better, because they can see “Oh, it’s a tomboy,” because the straight people sh-, saying that you are a tomboy. To myself, they know, if I'm walking to the street, they don’t know that I'm a lesbian, I’m straight, I’m bi, I’m transgender, they don't know.

**[Several]:** Mmm.

**Grace:** I think, uhm, like, for me, in an ideal world, like I hope one day, we get to a point where we don't have to come out [Violet nods], like that would be great, [laugh sigh], you know. If people, especially young people don't feel the pressure to need to make like a whole, like a whole thing about it. Like, I know like, for a lot of people and for me, it was, it's like a really important thing to be able to share that part of who you are with people [Asanda and Violet nod]. Because of, uhm, just, it, I don't know but for me, it's very much tied to my upbringing and the fact that that was expected of me to be straight, that there wasn't another option (=Tyler: Mmm). And because that was what I was expected to be and that's what everyone perceived need to be as – that was an English sentence, yeah, that made sense, [laugh]. Uhm, for me, like, and even now going out into the world, I’m not at home anymore and, I'm meeting lots of new people, if I want to come out to them, it's often because, it's just like a part of me that I want them to know about (=Tyler: Mmm), if that makes sense (=Tyler: Mmm) [Percy returns] because, uh, it is just such a big part of my identity and a lot of the things that I've gone through that have like shaped me into the person that I, like consider myself to be right now is because of those experiences and, I’m obviously not going to go into like super detail with virtual strangers but (=Violet: [Laugh sigh]) even just so that they know, like, who I am and that part of me so that, you know, if they were thinking of like, you know, making some kind of homophobic comment, you know, if it's someone like that, like they know, and they've got like, I don't wanna say like no excuse but you know, they're aware of like my presence and I also feel that for me when other people, uhm, in spaces, especially if a lot of people a bit older than me came out or like I knew that they were queer in some shape or form, it was comforting for me, and it made me feel a bit safer (=Tyler: Mmm) and more comfortable to do that myself, so, it’s a combination of doing it for me and also, for a space where I think it might be beneficial for other people to feel a bit more safe and a bit more like comfortable, then [Video recorder dies] (=Violet: Mmm; =Tyler: Yeah), I think that's why I, I do it (=Violet: Mmm). But also, it's not like a one-time thing, like I, I know coming out it’s like a thing where it’s like your family but you don't ever stop coming out, do you, like it’s just a constant process, it’s your whole life-

**Uranaty:** That’s the reason.

**Grace:** Yeah (=Tyler: Mmm)

**Uranaty:** That’s the reason.

**Grace:** So I totally understand the whole thing of like, you know, not really feeling the need to and just, you know, existing and then, you know, having a, a partner and the world must just figure it out (=Uranaty: Trust, when you come out), I think that’s cool (=Uranaty: Every day), literally (=Uranaty: Every day, you meet people, you have to come out), [laugh]

**Uranaty:** Every day you meet people you have to come out. No.

**Grace:** Yeah, so I mean it’s not you have to (=Asanda: [Inaduible]) and I feel like if you don't feel you then-

**Uranaty:** Even if you meet someone that doesn't know you? (=Grace: [Laugh])

**Okuhle:** Obviously

**Uranaty:** Obvious you, have to come out (=Grace: Yeah). That’s’ my issue.

**Violet:** But, I mean, you could meet another person-

**Uranaty:** That’s, that’s my issue, that’s why I said, I don't see a reason to come out.

**Grace:** That’s fine, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), each to their own, [laugh sigh].

**Asanda:** I think [inaudible] doesn’t know (=Tyler: Yeah). I think everyone needs to know about it, so-

**Uranaty:** Everyone who is close to you knows that you’re a lesbian. Someone who is passing on the street doesn’t know you’re a lesbian, some, maybe a guy came to you and say “I love you,” so you have to tell them [inaudible overlap, laughter]. That’s a lot of work, that’s a lot of work (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Violet:** If I didn't come out, nobody would know, [laugh sigh] (=Grace: Mmhmm). Like I, so, I, uhm, I mean sometimes even like when I’m around other queer people at a party, it’s happened like just a few times where people will ask, “are you straight?”, or something like that. And I'm like, “why do you think I'm here?” (=Grace: [Laugh]) Like what is going on?. But if I, it always surprises me how much like, it just doesn't cross, let’s say, straight people's minds like you might not be straight (=Grace & Tyler: Mmm), ever. So, I, I have to do that all the time (=Tyler: Yeah), I have to like, work with that all the time. And that's why I think I hide because if I was more upfront, I would have to do it all the time (=Grace: Mmm; =Tyler: Yeah). And it’s so, like-

**Uranaty:** You should just, because every time we come out, there’s the question, every time you say “I’m a lesbian”, there’s a question, “how to do things? What is that? What is-?” that's the reason I hate to answer all these questions (=Grace [inaudible] yourself, please, [laugh sigh]). That's the problem. You came out, “Okay, I’m a lesbian” “Wow you’re a lesbian? How do you become a lesbian?” Like, wow. God made me become a lesbian (=Okuhle: [Laugh]). So like it’s a [inaudible] [Asanda’s phone rings, she gets up to take it outside the room], that’s the reason, I don’t understand.

**Violet:** For me, it's like, having like questions it’s, it’s also silence. It’s also when people just, they don’t (=Okuhle: They’ll be like-) wanna tell me, so that, like, I’ve gotten more silence than questions, and more like (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), just weird things. And I guess people deserve to have their reactions, whenever they are. But, uhm, but I don't even, I also don’t want that so I’ll rather just stay quiet. And I've noticed sometimes Iike there are, if, if I’m with certain, like family members and everybody's going around chatting about a certain thing like, like relationships, or one day having children, anyone who I'm with, they just won't ask me (=Grace: [Laugh]). And that's how I know that those people know (=Tyler: Mmm), even though we haven't spoken about it, if they just don't ask me things, then, uhm, then I know that these people know that I’m queer (=Tyler: Yeah). And, uhm, like, I have stuff to say, I have comments to make about those conversations (=Grace: Yeah). But I'm also okay not talking about it, because I don't want to now go and further explain like, “Okay, so now then, how are you going to have children? Or, or what are you going to do here or there? Or, oh”, they’ll, they’ll be surprised if you want to do like these conventional things (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, it's just decided that that's not for you, and they don't want to hear about it (=Grace & Tyler: Yeah), uhm.

**Tyler:** That's really interesting. It's like, two sides of the same (=Uranaty: Mmm) problem. Either you have to talk about it all the time, or that you, they don't ask you, ‘cause it’s like (Violet: Yeah) you shouldn't talk about it. (=Violet: Yeah) Yeah (=Grace: Yeah) wow.

**Grace:** I wanted to say, Violet, you said something, now about how like, it often doesn't even cross like straight people’s mind, like, you know, you could be queer or, you know, whatever. Uhm, and for me like, it’s kind of the reason why I’ll sometimes go out of my way and make sure people know, because, like, it shouldn't be such a, like, a, not a normal thing, you know what I mean? (=Violet: Mmm) Uhm, and I don’t know, I feel like sometimes I'm first, especially in a lot of like, charity spaces that I’ve found myself in, like, I’m sometimes the first queer person that someone's ever met who’s, you know, openly been okay with that. And it can be pretty, like perspective changing, because for me, the first few queer people that I ever got to know, like, pretty much changed my whole life. Like I was able to, you know, become comfortable and see the world from all sorts of different perspectives I haven't thought of before, which is, ja. But again, you know, it does bring its challenges, there's sometimes too much, too many questions, and it's really invasive personal questions, and sometimes you just get excluded from (=Violet: Mmhmm) conversations. And, yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), I can definitely say I’ve experience like a little bit of, of both of those, of those kind of sides to the coin as well. So-

**=Violet:** But it's always something

**=Grace:** you can choose your battles. It’s always something, [laugh].

**Violet:** You never just get to like be.

**Grace:** Mmm. I mean sometimes, you-

**Violet:** Some-, okay, yeah, sometimes (=Grace: Yeah, [laugh sigh]) but, but a lot of the times there’s just, uhm, a different way (=Grace: You don’t know how to) how it will be approached (=Grace: Yeah, react).

**Tyler:** Mmm. Yeah, I think it's like what you were saying earlier Percy, when it's like, you know, we're just normal humans (=Violet & Grace: Mmm), yeah, but lots of people don't treat us like that (=Uranaty: Mmm), yeah.

**Uranaty:** And also amongst us, we don't treat us the same.

**Tyler:** Oh, yes?

**Uranaty:** Among us, ‘cause, if a, a, a femme approach a butch lesbian that is pregnant (=Tyler: Mmm), it's gonna be a problem. Yeah. Why a butch got pregnant? I also have eggs and I also want a baby, to, to get pregnant, I want my own baby. So I think that's the iss-, and also, also us lesbians. We have a, we are transphobic, (=Tyler: Yeah?) towards trans people. I don’t, I don’t have a prob-, okay, other people says that, I don’t, I have, I won’t sleep with trans, trans person, ‘cause maybe he, or he changed themself to other (=Tyler: Mmhmm), other body, *iyabo*, that stuff. I think we, we also have an issue amongst us (=Tyler: Yes), we also have an issues amongst us (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). And firstly, we have to deal amongst us to go outside to deal with a large community. I think that's the problem. We have also a problem towards us als-, a, a lesbians sometimes hate bisexuals (=Grace & Tyler: Mmm), bisexuals hate trans people, I think that's an issue.

**Violet:** Yeah, there’s a lot of issues with, inside (=Uranaty: Mmm; Grace: The LGB-) the LGBT community as well.

**Tyler:** Yeah, and w-

**Uranaty:** So we can't deal with outside people unless we first deal with us first (=Tyler: Yeah). And then we approach the community (=Tyler: Yeah, [inaudible]) cause appro-, we're gonna approach the community in different ways.

**Tyler:** Mmm, yeah. Have you experienced that? Uhm, problems inside the queer community? Yeah?

**Grace:** Yeah, uhm, not so much my, myself personally. But I know, like a bunch of friends especially, like, I've got two friends who are bisexual and, uhm, one of them who's currently dating a guy, she's dating a guy, uhm, often, like, how do I even say this? Like, there’s sometimes judgment from like the queer community on that, because she's chosen to be (=Tyler: Mmm) with a guy, you know, and it’s like- (=Tyler: ‘Cause it looks like a straight relationship). Exactly (=Tyler: Right). Yeah, so that's definitely a thing, like bi-erasure has definitely been something that people personally have, have experienced. ‘Cause even if it’s like little jokes and like comments from (=Uranaty: Mmm), like other people, you know, like, why could you, why did you choose to be a guy, you know, be with a guy because, like, you know, women, [laugh sigh], you know, [inaudible]. Uhm, and you know like, for me, that's something I will never understand. Being attracted to a guy has never happened to me (=Violet: [Laugh sigh]) but, you know, it's respect. It's that understanding. And sometimes, if can really hurt when, and I know my friend has like, told us before when, you know, like, she's, like, heard like comments like that directed to her. It's just like, you know, she's very much a part of the community and has very much been through a lot of the common issues when it comes to like family and (=Tyler: Mmm) just gen-, general things. And then, is almost like shunned by that community (=Tyler: Yeah). Which isn't it, hey, like (=Tyler: No), *urgh****,*** (=Tyler: Yeah, we were talk-) and that’s not the only issues, yeah (=Okuhle: Uhm), there’s plenty more.

**Okuhle:** And also, last year, I was doing, I was doing a documentary, and this guy that I was working with, he’s gay (=Violet: Mmm) and, what breaks me the most, he was saying he's HIV-positive, and people from the LGBi, LGBTI community, always say, something say to him (=Uranaty: Mmm, how do you get HIV?), “how, how you get HIV?” and, and also, if like, Uranaty would come to me and approach me, sis-Asanda would go to, to me and tell her, Uranaty is HIV-positive (=Tyler: Mmm), so that literally broke to the point, he doesn't have the opportunity to tell the person, *bana¸* “this is who I am, I am HIV-positive” (=Tyler: Mmm). And the sad part, got HIV-positive, he were, he was actually raped and people didn't know what actually happened (=Tyler: Yeah). And then the au-, the audacity to tell other people, you see? (=Tyler Yeah). So, that really affected him so bad to the point, he doesn't, uhm, even though he's open about his, uhm, his status. But then he has this fear if a guy would approach you, he knows, whoever that person is around his circle, will that that person, “don’t go to him, he is HIV-positive”

**Tyler:** *Yoh*, that’s terrible.

**Violet:** Some things of mine, uhm, so they're both non-binary, but the one person is masc-, very masculine, and the other person is very feminine. And there was an issue of abuse between them (=Tyler: Mmm). And no, like, within our outer circle, nobody wants to believe that the victim was the masculine person (=[Several]: Mmm). And a lot of people made assumptions very quickly, like, I was having, I was, unfortunately very involved in the whole fallout. So I knew exactly what was going on, like right from the beginning. And, so the masculine friend like contacted some other friends of ours and told them what happened. And when those friends contacted me, they were like, “Oh, yeah, we weren't sure like, if we should wait, weren’t sure what the truth was, like if we should believe them,” but then (=Grace: I have to go, it’s after 12) talking to me and like me confirming it-

**Grace:** I’m so sorry (=Violet: Uhm, sure), [laugh sigh], I don’t know, yeah, it’s, it’s after 12. It was so lovely meeting you all and being part of this.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay, uh (=Grace: Uh), just pause for a minute. It is after 12, so if you have to go, then you can.

**Violet**: Yeah, I also have to go (=Tyler: Oh, okay), yeah, I, I have to go, yeah.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, do you wanna finish saying what you're saying?

**Violet:** Yeah, well, basically just, uhm, through, like with that specific situation, through talking to me and me confirming it, because I, I mean, I wasn't there, but because I was involved. And I have other stories to tell as well, like, then they believed that, that that person was actually the victim. Uhm, but they just made like assumptions (=Tyler Mmhmm). Yeah, even though that person was confronting them, telling them what happened.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Violet: Yeah), yeah, I see. Uhm, assumptions like, uh, hetero assumptions, right?

**Violet:** Exa-, e-, essentially, yeah.

**Tyler:** [Debriefing Violet and Grace]Okay, uhm, so uhm, since the two of you [inaudible], uhm, this is a form that counselling services on it in case anything that we've discussed here today, you know, uh, makes you feel like you want to talk to someone. So that’s this form, and it also has your compensation for travel costs, and I will, uh, SMS you the voucher, shortly, today. Okay.

[Inaudible overlap]

**Violet:** [To Tyler] Thank you so much. [Inaudible overlap]. Thank you so much. [To remaining others] Thank you, thank you, it was very nice to meet you all.

[**Several]:** [Greeting goodbye]

[Inaudible overlap]

**Grace: [**To remaining others] Thank you so much-

**[Several]:** [Greeting goodbye]

[Inaudible overlap]

**Tyler:** Yeah, so I, yeah, I know it's after 12. So, uhm, yeah, Percy, you we here, [laugh sigh], uh, really early, so if you, you want to leave as well, then that's also fine.

**Percy:** No, it’s okay, thank you.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah, I know that you [to Asanda, Uranaty and Okuhle] came a little late, so if you want to keep talking, we can do that, uhm, if you'd like... Yeah? Do you, do you have, uh, anything else about your experience of sameness and difference that you wanna share?

**Percy:** When, when, when, when I think of it, like, sometimes I’m like, *yoh*, it's, I'm really normal until I'm actually outside. You know, I mean, I'm as normal as can be until I'm actually around people, around, like the community and… So like that, it just makes me like, ‘cause I, I, I, I usually don't like meeting new people (=Tyler: Mmm) ‘cause I’m always like, I'm always skeptical. Uh, *mxm*, there's, there’s, there’s this now again. So it's, so it's just always that mind shift (=Tyler: Yeah), when you, when you outside, and you just try and be outside but still be in that sh-, little shell of yours, being op-, open, but not too open (=Tyler: Mmm) because you, you just don't know what the reaction might be (=Tyler: Yeah). And also, if, if, even if like, like with people, like ask questions, you just like, answer as simple as you can, because you just don't know what the next question is. Or, like a triggering question, or, will your response be triggering, because like, some people really ask questions to just, to just trigger you so that you can trigger them (=Tyler: Mmm). Because by the time you, you, you walked up, they already knew what they were gonna say. So now it's just a matter of how far you will take the conversation (=Tyler: Okay). Or how far you will entertain the idea (=Tyler: Mmm) of the, the conversation. So it's, it's, it’s, it’s just really, kinda difficult sometimes to, to, to, to just be (=Tyler: Mmm) one person and just be you (=Tyler: Mmm). Because you can be you for as, as long as, and in the community and that, that, that I live in or that that we live in, it's, it's just, it’s kind of difficult to be you, to be fully you, especially when you’re outside, because anything can just happen (=[Several]: Mmm). So anything can just switch up, you can be in the shop, buying a cold drink and the next thing you can wake up in hospital for just saying “sorry” or just saying “excuse me” or take-, taking the wrong change, you know? So those, so it's just those, just, just those little things and uhm, there I've just, tol-, I've just given myself that, uh, when, when, when a person talks to me, I’m, I make sure that I, I, I look, the shield, you just, you just have to know the shield is up before you even say something (=Tyler: Mmm). So it's just a warning sign. If you don’t look at it and then you continue, then you just know that it was up there before you even said something, but you just chose to ignore it (=Tyler: Yeah). So it's just always having to, to, to keep up with, you being you and just trying to stay in your lane as much as people try interfere because you're not alone and, so there are just people that we just have to live, (=Tyler: Yeah) with. We can’t be alone all the time so, we just have to cope with some situations and just have to find a way to just avoid many things. I wish like it’s, it’s, I’m just, I’ve, I've learned to just do that, I’ve learned to avoid many things, and I'm very good at not saying nothing. And just, okay.

**Tyler:** Okay, *yoh* (=Percy: So-). Is there anyone that you feel yourself with? Like a friend or someone in your community where you feel okay, like (=Percy: Oh), you don’t have to be alone?

**Percy:** Yeah, no, when I, when, when when I’m not alone or when I feel like I’ve, I’ve over-aloned myself, I always go, ‘cause like, there are guys they’re always sitting at the back, at the back of m’as-, my cousins. So they, they, they just always guys and they always chilling so I always go chill with them. Whenever I feel like it, I’ll go to the studio. So those are just when I feel like I don’t want to be alone (=Tyler: Yeah), then I just go to them, but I, I just know with them, I, I never, I don't think I've experienced any uncomf-, comfortable, uncomfortable questions or being in a space where I’ve been uncomfortable. Because I think they, they, especially my cousin, he's, he's just always on, on, on, like a top of my mind, ‘cause he knows that whenever I come to his place, I expect to be okay. I don't expect nobody to ask me anything in fact, so, he just takes defense, most, most of the time. He's the one that just takes, if he sees the conversation with one of his friends is just becoming uncomfortable for me, he’ll just be like “yo, that is none of your business, like you are here for me, *mos*”. So that one and, the everything like, *yoh*, even though they will be like “*yoh,* but I wanna know about such things,” like, “no, go to Google or something (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), watch TV, like she's not here for that right now, she’s here for whatever”. It, its, turns and I’ll be like, “[inaudible]”, it’s like “No, we don't have to, to tell him anything. It's fine, I'll tell him, *keh* (=Tyler: Yeah), whatever I’ll tell him he'll be fine with it. Even though maybe not before, but *keh*, he just, just not get it from you”. Because I'm, I’m just, I'm, I’m, I’m just sometimes skeptical about opening up about such conversations to, to, to other people. And especially like, when I, when it comes to that time where, where I’ll just go out and one of those days, *mxm*. It's, it's just not, it's not normal anymore to have conversations with people because you just don’t know what they thinking, especially the masculine society, ey. So you just don't know with, what the intentions are, of the conversations because it, I think they, sorry if I may put it like that, but I think it's just the, the same manner asking, it's the same, same line. So there's, there's never anything different. So you never really know what the intention of the question is (=Uranaty: Mmm). ‘Cause they, they, they just have the same way of asking (=Uranaty: Mmm). It's never someone coming and trying a different approach, and that. So, basically, I had this friend – I talk too much, neh? It’s fine (=Tyler: It’s okay, [laugh sigh]), [laugh]. Uhm, there, there, there’s this friend of mine. Uhm, he was from, he’s from Joburg. So he had, he only, he went to Paarl the year before last, and he was only there for, looking for work. So, I, I, ‘cause when, when we go there he did-, he didn’t know Xhosa. *mos*, because he’s a Pedi. So I, we just clicked basically. So we, we, we, we become close, so like he noticed that I, as much as he wanted to be those best friend. Me, I wasn't into that ‘cause I, I’ve always had a red line to there, especially when it comes to guys. I've always had a red line, and, when, whenever, in communication, in friendship, with all that, it’s always, me having, I can have a conversation, I can be friendly, but there’s always a red line that I’ll put up. So he was like, “yo, you are friendly but you’re not that friendly. What’s up with you, man?” and I’m like, “woah, no man, I’m just okay”, he’s like, “No man, don't worry, man. It's okay, man. I'm not here to question you or anything. I'm just fine with you. You don't have to tell me anything, man, we, we’re friends, man, so you don't have to feel uncomfortable when you come to my place or, anything. The reason why I just allow you to, to be you, any way and always take offence is ‘cause it's, it’s just okay to be you, and with me being a guy, it’s, there’s a question mark behind it but, just know my intentions are good”. I was like, “*Yoh*, this guy is very good,” (=Tyler: Yeah) and we became very good friends after that, because (=Tyler: Okay) he was the one that opened the conversation (=Tyler: Yeah). I mean, I, I, I literally had no idea and I didn't see it coming either. So as, as time went by, and I, and I just began to notice, and he just became to opening up and I was like, “Oh!”. So, with him, his thing, his thing is that he's always been seen as gay and even though he was always straight. But he was always different with, when he explains it, with people whenever he’s surrounded by his straight friends, his straight friends would always see him as gay. Because he just had, had his own way of doing things. And he liked his, like, he just had these different things, a different approach to everything. So that's why he was, in his universe, he was seen as gay, but with me, he was normal, because I saw that he’s a guy but he doesn't do the normal guy stuff (=Tyler: Mmm). And he's not the typical guy that you (=Tyler: Mmm) meet every day. So, I think that's just how we clicked and (=Tyler: Yeah), so, and it's just always been happy with, with a different mentality, just thinking, yo, if everyone could just have that mentality of just not always wanting to be masculine (=Tyler: Yeah) and you wanna be dominant in spaces and in conversations too. Just know that you don't have to be dominating conversations, even though you are a masculine in person. And you just, people don't owe you explanations, ‘cause like, in, in, in, in my society, we, we, I just live in a society where like mascu-, masculine people just think they, they are owed explanation to everything that is happening (=Tyler: Yeah) around everyone's lives. So, just having to maneuver through those things, and just being neutral to un-neutral situations, and just picking your battles wisely (=Tyler: Yeah), yah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, *shoh*, thanks Percy.

**Okuhle:** Uhm, from my experience of the differences, uhm, I also had problems in high school, especially in the life orientation class, because it went to the point where we have, uhm, there’ll always be a conversation about the LGBTIQ people. And, they will want to know more questions, and being the only lesbian in class, imagine, the whole class will look back (=Tyler: Look at you, yeah) at me, and, I have to compete with the teacher. So, it got to the point, I don't feel comfortable because people have their own opinions, they’ll be like “*yoh*, you guys are after lines. Some of you guys get pregnant and so whatsoever”. For me it got to the point every time where we have conversation, it involve queer people, I’ll go outside, and I’ll be like “no, I don't have time to listen to negative people because they’re negative and I don't have to defend myself every time we’re in class” because I want them to see, thi-, well, I want them to actually have open mind because they see like a, a lesbian, lesbian are allowed to have a child, there’s nothing wrong about it. Just because this person is lesbian doesn't mean, hey, oh, she can’t have a child. So that's the only thing that, uh, that made me feel like I'm different and I have to stand in class and fight for the LGBTIQ community but then, uhm, it did work out. But then, it, but it got to the point, there was a time, luckily, I was not there. But there was a time, they were like, uhm, “gays and lesbian must get burned, what they doing is a sin, whatsoever”. And I had this bisexual friend of mine and she got to the point to be, uhm, personal, and she was like, and it was this girl everyone knew in class, she got an abortion, and she was like “if you did abortion, that’s a sin. If you’re having sex before, if you’re having sex before marriage, that’s a sin. So th-, there’s nothing wrong with being lesbian or being gay or being bisexual, there’s, stop doing that”. And they were making so hard to bring the Bible and say, *bana*, “guys, this what is, this is what is wrong with this”. But, girl, luckily I was not there, but then even though I wasn’t there, I wasn't gonna, I was not gonna go inside and explain myself or defend because I felt like, uh. But, uhm, I think it got to them, to the point when I was in grade 12, they started accepting it and they wanted to learn more about it, more. And some of them started coming out (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah, some of them started coming out and then, ja, that was it.

**Tyler:** *Shoh,*okay. At least, yeah, they wanted to know in a real way (=Okuhle: Yes), not, not in a, defensive way or something (=Okuhle: Yes). Yeah, yeah, I'm hearing, you know, the frustration that you have to explain yourself to people, that you have to come out often. Yeah. And, and that thing of masculinity, femininity, trying to make sense of people. Yeah, yeah.

**Asanda:** I think my experience, I think, to the church where I’m going.

**Uranaty:** Ay, church, *mara.*

**Asanda:** [Laugh]

**Tyler:** Yeah, lots of problems in the church.

**Asanda:** Where, yes, where I’m going, because my problem was that, my, my pastor know that I am lesbian. But he, he and his wife knows about that, but, the other people don’t know about my sexuality. Then go for a talk, you know, *mos,* when you’re at church then you go to the talk, Eastern Cape. So now, the, I think we were joking about me and the woman that doesn’t know I’m a lesbian, and then say, “No, Asanda, no, mama, I'm not going to, to wash, ourself then you are here”. And then the others like, and then, you see, what's going on? And then the conversation start there, that is what you s-

**Uranaty:** So [indistinguishable overlap] she wanted to start the conversation?.

**Asanda:** Yes. Yes. So, and then, the pastor, “why, why are you not going to bath because Asanda is here?” And then they, she have to explain that “no, Asanda’s sleeping to, with another woman’s [inaudible]”. And then I have to say, I just laugh, because I like to laugh especially when I'm not going to answer you about my sexuality (=Tyler: Yeah) and my life (=Tyler: Yeah). Okay, then we go from there and then we go back to church, and then to church is when they started to have conversation about LGBTIQ people. And then there, there, there is a verse in the Bible, that’s, uh, was talking about negative things about LGBTIs, it’s where I go there, and I stand or myself and tell them, the whole congregation is that I am a lesbian, and there's nothing they going to do, or they, they will say that's going to change me (=Tyler: Mmm). If they need me to their church, I’ll be there, then if they don't know, they don't want me to, to be there, then, ah, I'm leaving, there's nothing I can do. Then I’m standing there after they preaching, I don’t know, I have to come out, as you were saying, I have to come out about my sexuality, and I did tell them that I am a lesbian, and I am a proud one (=Tyler: Mmm). And then you have to accept me, whether you like it or you don’t like (=Tyler: Mmm), because I'm not asking you, I'm telling you (=Tyler: Mmm) that I am what I am, at then it’s end of discussion. And then after, and then after that, I’m, in, in my church I like to, to talk to mens than womens because, on, on, on my side, they think, women if you sleep with another, they’re going to think that- (=Uranaty: That you want them) Yes! That you want them. And then okay, let me, I'm me avoid being with another womens in may church than be to mens because mens, I think there are people that is quicker than women, because if you, if you, you are an LGBTQ p-, person, they are the people that come to take it quickly than the womens, because they don't have that lots of question, “why are you doing this way?”, they just adjust to what you saying and then support you to what you’re saying. But it’s, it’s different to womens because they have to ask you some things, but they don't know about their life, [inaudible as plane flies over]. Okay and then, af-, atter that, I’m talking, talking about, have a meeting to church about I am what I am and then there is nothing they can do-

**Uranaty:** So they called a meeting?

**Asana:** It’s not, it’s a meeting (=Uranaty: For you). It’s not, it’s not, it was not (=Uranaty: Oh) a meeting, to, to call we have a meeting. We just like talking as, as (=Uranaty: Congress), you know when you’re talking about isiXhosa, [Xhosa word], then we were talking there and then they come, the [inaudible], “mama, and now I see that you, you, you're more comfortable to, to mens, then we, we as women don't like you to, to, to, to be, to be in our husband’s (=Okuhle: Mmm, our husbands) Because its’ their husbands that are, are there, because I don’t know if they think I want their husbands or what. Then, they, they feel uncomfortable for me to be around their mens, and-

**Tyler:** Mmm. There's nowhere you can sit that feels comfortable.

**Asanda:** Yes. You see (=Tyler: Yeah), so, and, and then myself, I, I don't have, I, I’m not comfortable with them (=Tyler: Mmm). That's my point. Okay. And then I, and then I did draw a line between everyone who was there that, “Look, guys, I'm not going to tell you who I can sleep with, who I can love here, and who I, I want to spend my time with (=Tyler: Mmm). Here, I come to church, and then to pray and sing and after that go home, (=Okuhle: Ja) that’s to think that (=Okuhle: Not to discuss me) me and you are, Yes! And then nothing else, then it's where they starting to, to, to, to judge LGBTI people. And even now my, my pastor [inaudible], they, they, they support me, if I have evidence, because I am the one that is calling them, then I’m doing this because they don’t know about my sexuality but it's, it's hard, it's hard (=Tyler: Yeah) when you have to, to, to-

**Uranaty:** They try having an issue (=Asanda: [Inaudible]). I don't believe in Bible, sorry (=Tyler: Yeah). I don't read Bible, I don't believe in, there’s living God, that’s the reason, I don't, I don’t believe is Bible. I swear that, that's my opinion. I don't read Bible. My mother is a church-going person. Both my parents, but I don't believe in Bible (=Tyler: Yeah). ‘Cause the Bible says this, you can't have sex before marriage, but they, there are people in church do have, do (=Asanda: Yes), they make sex before, before marriage? And there’s, they, they say that there’s a sort of you don't have to have sex with someone who's in periods, menstruation, but still do they do that, so (=Tyler: There are lots of, lots of rules in the Bible) Who wrote the Bible?

**Asanda:** It’s us.

**Uranaty:** Who wrote (=Tyler: Yeah) the Bible? So that's why I don't believe there’s, that’s why I don’t go to church.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], yeah. Okay, so (=Okuhle: I don’t go to Church), yeah, I'm really sorry, but I have to stop the conversation now (=Asanda: Okay). Because we are out of time. Uhm, and yeah. Uhm, but, you know, there is another interview that you can have after this with me, probably here at the same venue, sometime in the next few weeks, uh, if you want to do that, uhm, so that you can share more, because I really like hearing what you have to say about your experiences. Uhm, they're very valuable, I think. Yeah. So, uhm, do you have any questions?

**Okuhle:** Mm-mm.

**=Uranaty:** No, no questions.

**=Tyler:** No? Okay

**Tyler:** Cool, yeah, thank you very much for coming, [laugh sigh]. Sorry that it's, uh, short for you. It’s uh-

**Uranaty:** Are you taking this?

**Tyler:** Uh, I’m taking it back, yeah, So are you finished with them? (=Okuhle: Yeah). Okay, any questions?

**Okuhle:** No, I don’t think that.

**Tyler:** Uranaty, can I take your number, please? Because I have a, a voucher, uh, to give you for participating. And then also do talk to you, if you want another interview, uhm, with me later, we can do that. Is that fine with you, Asanda?

**Percy:** I didn't get the (=Tyler: Oh) questionnaire.

**Tyler:** This was the, that was the (=Percy: Oh) thing (=Asanda: [Inaudible])

**Uranaty:** That's my phone number. Do you want WhatsApp or?

**Tyler:** No, WhatsApp.

**Uranaty:** WhatsApp

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Uranaty: Okay) Is that a WhatsApp number? (=Uranaty: Yeah) No. Okay.

**[Several]:** [Inaudible overlap]

**Uranaty:** You're gonna send voucher via WhatsApp or?

**Tyler:** I can send it via WhatsApp, or an SMS. Is it a different number for SMS?

**Uranaty:** Yes

**Tyler:** I can send (=Uranaty: I have a different number) them by WhatsApp, I think.

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable overlap in Xhosa]

Asanda

[Asanda completes informed consent form]

**Tyler:** Thanks. You don’t need to read it?

**Asanda:** Mmm?

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh]

**Asanda:** No.

**Tyler:** You need to read?

**Asanda:** No.

**Tyler:** It’s quite-

**Asanda:** It’s the same like the other one?

**Tyler:** Very similar, yes. Yeah.

**Asanda:** You were the one that just called me now?

**Tyler:** Called you?

**Asanda:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** I didn’t call you.

**Asanda:** Oh

**Tyler:** Yeah, I think maybe Okuhle called you.

**Asanda:** Oh.

**Tyler:** Okay, thank you, so I can record?

**Asanda:** Okay.

**Tyler:** Okay, great, thank you very much.

**Asanda:** Where is the mask?

**Tyler:** Oh, yes, yeah, there is a mask there that you can grab [Asanda gets a medical mask on]. No problem… Okay... Great... So how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Asanda.** Nothing much.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Asanda:** Nothing much, because, as you know, that I have a Safe Space.

**Tyler:** Yes, I wanted to ask you about Safe Space. Can you describe what Safe Space is?

**Asanda:** Safe Space is a space where us LGBTI (=Tyler: Uh-huh) meet together and talk about our issues that we're facing (=Tyler: Uh-huh), as individuals, LGBTI (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it’s like a support group (=Tyler: Yes) if I can say, but we call it Safe Space because it’s safer for us to, to talk about our issues (=Tyler: Okay). And then our experience as, uh (=Tyler: Yeah), as LGBTI (=Tyler: Yes, yes. Okay). Ja, so that's why it’s a Safe Space (=Tyler: Yeah). So we meet monthly... (=Tyler: Hey?) We have a meeting monthly (=Tyler: Monthly?). Yes (=Tyler: Okay. I see). And we discuss about what to do and then how to help others (=Tyler: Uh-huh), because we have…not the same problems (=Tyler: Yeah), to meet other problems and then trying to solve if we can, but if we're not, we’ll refer the others to a professional that can.

**Tyler:** Okay, well, that's great. Yeah, I'm sure it's very necessary to have that support group. Yeah. Uh, where do you usually have this?

**Asanda:** In Nyanga

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, I see (=Asanda: In Nyanga township). Right. So it's for, uhm, LGBTI people who live in or around Nyanga?

**Asanda:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. I see. Great. Okay. And how did you feel about the focus group last time?

**Asanda:** *Yoh,* it was very nice, because the thing that was, it, we were open, to talk about our, our experiences and no one judge us or no one questions about, why are you doing this, and why this (=Tyler: Mmm). So, it was like, a safe space (=Tyler: Yeah) that we can share our experiences, it was nice, especially me, as a, as a, as a leader of Safe Space (=Tyler: Yes). In, in, in my Safe Space that we have to, others come with you for, for their, experience, but I never talk about mine (=Tyler: Yes). So that time was here, that was lucky for me to, to talk about my experience (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and not listening to, to others’ experience.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. You got a chance to say, your, your experiences (=Asanda: Yeah, my experiences) Yeah. And thank-

**Asanda:** And not listen to, to other, because in my Safe Space, I have to be the one that have to listen (=Tyler: Mmhmm), not to share my own (=Tyler: Yes, yeah), so that’s why I like it when I was here last time.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. And, and thank you for sharing your experiences. They are, yeah, quite incredible, especially with, uhm, your journey with your family and, uhm, your marriage. And, and that whole thing, that happened over many years (=Asanda: Mmm). Uhm, I wanted to ask about, uhm, that man that you were married to, your husband (=Asanda: Mmm). Did he eventually accept your lesbianism?

**Asanda:** I think now (=Tyler: Mmm), he, he does accept it because I’m not with him anymore (=Tyler: Yeah). So I think he, he accept it or, I don't know because (=Tyler: Yeah) the time that I have my girlfriend, I did go to, [inaudible], to my, to my home, it’s Eastern Cape, my husband was there. And he doesn't have a problem with it (=Tyler: Hmmm), because we’re not together, you see, and he stayed in his home, I stayed in my home (=Tyler: Yeah), you see.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay. Wow.

**Asanda:** But he knows that I’m, I’m a lesbian.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And did he also try, like your family tried, uhm, to change you to make you straight or to make you stop being a lesbian when you were married?

**Asanda:** Yes (=Tyler: Uh-huh). They did try a lot but as I, I did tell you that (=Tyler: Yeah) if you, you have this thing, there’s nothing can change. Even you, yourself, you can try to do it, you can try because you, you want to live for others not yourself. But at the end, you have to, you are the one that is going to stay alone (=Tyler: Mmm) and then you’re going to worry what am I doing? (=Tyler: Mmm) Because this does not make me happy. But you sacrifice your love for the others (=Tyler: Yeah), and then that thing doesn’t make you happy, say. They did try a lot, but, when I'm old enough and then I say, I’m quitting out of this (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Then I’m becoming, straight lesbian. Because firstly I was bisexual (=Tyler: Right), because I have to do this for my family to be in a marriage and to have children, and then the, but aside, I have my own girlfriend, so, you see? (=Tyler: Yes). So the time that, uh, I have work, then I had my own place, and then everything settled and then now I said this is have to stop (=Tyler: Yeah). I’m still lesbian, there’s nothing you can do (=Tyler: Yeah). And then they were, they, they trying to, they, they lectured me, but after years, they accepted me.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Yeah, *shoh*, that's a long journey to get that acceptance. Yeah. And must have been very diff-

**Asanda:** Especial-, especially to us, as, as, as a Black, I think to us because we have that cultural things, so it’s very, it’s, it’s become very difficult, especially to us, as a, as a, femmes, we’re not wearing men's clothes so, they can’t even see that you are, you are a lesbian (=Tyler: Yes), so that, that, that thing that I have, the question, most of their head (=Tyler: Uh-huh), how come and why and why? So if you, if I was a butch lesbian, then they thinking “oh you see he, her that she was wearing trousers, wearing”, you see? (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). But to us girls, as femmes, it doesn’t sit that well, you are like another woman (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So, so, it’s very, hurtful to them that say, my girl, my, my children now is a lesbian, a girl, my child now is a lesbian, then they have that thing especial to us. It's, it’s been really painful.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yes. You always have to explain yourself to other people.

**Asanda:** You see?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah (=Asanda: It’s been very painful-) *Shoh*.

**Asanda:** -because we have to explain every time, every time.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. So, did you feel different from other people in the focus group, about anything?

**Asanda:** No, no (=Tyler: No?), I didn’t feel any differently.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], okay. Uh, uh, what things did you feel the same about?

**Asanda:** The thing that we feel the same about is our experience with our parents (=Tyler: Okay), because I just see to, to, to others, that we have the same experience with the, with, with our partners. See, before they accepted us, they have their journey, to, to become accepting us (=Tyler: Uh-huh) before they accepted, because, I heard, uh, is Okuhle-next, I heard the, about her experience with her parents (=Tyler: Mmm). And then I say “Oh, every, everybody, even not a Black one, even other cultures, they, they have the same experience as us (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). That’s the thing that I heard.

**Tyler:** Oh, oh, you mean Grace, the, the young girl? (=Asanda: Mmm, mmm). Yes. And her very Christian family, yes.

**Asanda:** Mmm and they’re family so I find that it’s not only us (=Tyler: Yeah) that have that, we have to experience.

**Tyler:** Yes, yeah, that's true. But I remember some people, like, uhm, I think Uranaty, was saying that her family is accepting, of her queerness (=Asanda: Mmm. Mmm). Yeah, yeah. Uhm… is there anyone that you disagreed with about anything in the focus group?

**Asanda:** The thing was that I disagree, it was with Percy (=Tyler: Oh, okay). The thing that she was saying about her mother, and being, uh, Christian-ship, and whatever, that thing. I was disagree with that, because, uh, uh, I am at the church (=Tyler: Mmm). I, I know what that life is. The thing that I was, I was disagree with her. I think she didn't even explain to her mother further (=Tyler: Oh okay) to, for her mother to, to, to know about her, because now her mother doesn't know anything about her. And then want, yoh, she wants that, mother to just switch off and then, accepted her (=Tyler: Uh-huh), even not explaining to her about this is what, and this is this, this and this is, is come like this, this is going to do that, this is going to work like this (=Tyler: Mmmm). It’s just wants her, but I’m lesbian that (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and then they have that argument with her mother, because I found out they have argument with her mother about a lot of things, especially, the, the time is, was saying her mother was going to church and she was fixing her wig, and then her mother, “No, you can't do this?”, “Why?”, “On this this day,” “Which days?” So, others want to, to explain, especially our parents, likes to, you to explain, “No, I can do this because of this.”

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. I see. Okay. Right. So you think that Percy should try to explain a bit more?

**Asanda**: Yes, she must explain to her mother (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), to talk to her mother and then, try to explain to her

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah. Uhm, I think, I don't know if you were in the group at that time because you came a little bit later (=Asanda: Mmm), but I think Percy was also saying that, you know, she had, uh, an abusive relationship with her, her parents. Uhm, they would try to beat her and things like that (=Asanda: No, I wasn’t there). Oh, okay, yeah.

**Asanda:** That things happen a lot to, to, to, us as a, as a lesbians (=Tyler: Mmm). Happen a lot, but is, to others is not like just beating (=Tyler: Mmm). It was neglecting and you want to go to traditional healers and (=Tyler: Mmm) to churches to pray for you, that thing happen a lot to LGBTI (=Tyler: Yeah), because they want to change you for who you are, and then going to say this is a demon, this is a what-what (=Tyler: Mmm), you have to be cleansed, you have to, to do all, all, uh, I don’t know, that kind of stuff (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But then, you are yourself and then you know what you want, so (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah, mmhmm, mmhmm). And what make you happy, you have to do. And the thing that I like, me the most, I have to start with myself, not with anothers (=Tyler: Yes), if I can make me happy, I have to do it. Because the time that I did start my, my Safe Space, I do something that I like (=Tyler: Yeah), so that’s why I have my own space because I do something that I like, because I am an LGBTI, then I want to help other LGBTIs (=Tyler: Yes), so I thought, okay, let me start a supp-, a, a safe space for us as a LGBTI (=Tyler: Yeah), to talk about our issues about each other, because others we have lots of problems then you can share about it, then if you can help, you get help, if you not, go to the professional one that can help that one (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). But we have that space to, to cry, *bana,* the space to, to, to share (=Tyler: Yes). And then because in, in our shoulders, we have a lot of things (=Tyler: Mmm), so we want to offload the shoulder to someone that can listen, even, even if you can't do anything, just to listen, that person can listen to me, that make a, a bet-, to be a better person for yourself (=Tyler: Yeah). Because you know, okay, I can go to Taylor and then Taylor going to listen, even if he has nothing to do with it, *ukai*, have nothing to say, just, that person got to sit down to, and then say “Okay, you’re going to be okay”.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. You need someone to just listen.

**Asanda:** Just listen (=Tyler: Yes), even if you’re not saying anything, just to be there and listen (=Tyler: Yes) that’s make others feel…

**Tyler:** Yes, especially if people are in environments where no one listens, right? (=Asanda: Just). Okay. Well, that's great. I'm really glad that you have that kind of space there (=Asanda: Mmm), as well. Yeah. And also, uhm, I wonder, is there anything that you wanted to express, but you didn't express in the focus group? [Asanda’s phone rings].

**Asanda:** No I don’t think I have.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah.

**Asanda:** I don’t think I have (=Tyler: Okay). But I think, I told, I, I explained a lot about my experience as an LGBTI (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and then, and then. But now I want to be an NGO, now. My Safe Space, I want it to become an NGO.

**Tyler:** An NGO? Yes.

**Asanda:** I want it now, but… I'm getting there, I’m getting there (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because next month, I think to have a, a event for i-survivors of GBV, next month (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and, but I don't know the date yet (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Because I have to include many, many people, pastors, i-social workers, police, clinics, everything, that kind of stuff (=Tyler: Yeah), I have to include. But I think I’m going to do next month (=Tyler: Okay). But I don't know the date because I'm still planning (=Tyler: Yeah) it, because, us as a, as a LGBTI, and also as a community, we face lots of things, as, as, as we grow up (=Tyler: Mmmm), as we, in our relationship, within our parents, we face a lot (=Tyler: Mmm) But now I want myself to, others to talk about their experience, and then, and then, and explain to us, why she’s a survivor, or why he’s a survivor, he, how he survived. That’s a thing that I’d like to, to, them to explain to that event. And then the so-, the social worker, if someone is, what do you call it, if someone, uh, going back to that thing, then the social worker with be there. If someone will be, he didn’t open a case, that time, then the police will be there (=Tyler: Yes, I see), you know that kind of stuff, I think next month but this…

**Tyler:** Uh-huh, and this is for GBV?

**Asanda:** Yes, LBGTI, because (=Tyler: In?) – Mmm?

**Tyler:** GBV in LGBTI people's ex- (=Asanda: Yes), lives? Oh, I see. Okay. Right. Yeah, because that's also quite a big problem (=Asanda: Mmhmm). Yeah, yeah.

**Asanda:** And even to us as, as a same-sex relationship we, we do have that, that, that, that GBV.

**Tyler:** You do?

**Asanda:** We do have but we don't talk often about it often (=Tyler: Mmhmm), we don’t talk about it because I think my friend was, was explaining to me that, we have to have a event for, for partners, for LGBTI partners, the same-sex relationship, all of them have to there, that, that event for us to talk about our experience, inside (=Tyler: Mmhmm) LGBTI (Tyler: Mmhmm). Because if we talk about GBV, GBV, we talk about gender(=Tyler: Everyone) violen- yes, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) but not specific to, to, to us in a LGBTI. We talk about (=Tyler: Mmm), but now on our event next month, we want to fo-, focus on lesbian and gays (=Tyler: Yes, yes), only, because in this same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Uh-huh) or this marriage, but there, there’s a lot of fight (=Tyler: Yeah), even if you can heard about Somizi and Banbane, or everything is there. So we want to have that event to, to us talk about (=Tyler: Yes) abuse in same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Yes). Because if we talk about L-, GBV, so no one, it’s not talking about us as LGBTI, just talking about (=Tyler: Yes). But, but we're also facing the same problem (=Tyler: Uh-huh) as they did (=Tyler: Uh-huh) in our, in our same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Yes), because I will have my partner, but my partner beated me, financially, *okanyi,* abuse me financially, and every bad kind of stuff but we’re in a same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So I think we, we’re going to have that, that event (=Tyler: Yes), for us to, to have a open discussion about (=Tyler: Mmm) same-sex (=Tyler: Mmhmm) relationship, and the abuse inside, the (=Tyler: Mhmmm), that relationship.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that is very important yes. Uh, what do you think is, same or different about abuse inside LGBT relationships, compared to general population with straight (=Asanda: I, I didn’t hear you) relationships?

**Asanda:** Firstly?

**Tyler:** Uh, what do you think about, what is the same or different between LGBTI relationships and (=Asanda: Mmm) straight relationships with, violence and abuse? …Is it, is it different, do you think, and how?

**Asanda:** I think in straight people it’s different because, the others, there’s a man involved and the woman, in, in straight, and then the man going to use his muscles and power to say, “I am a man of the house, then you can’t do this, you can’t do this”, in, in, in, in straight, but in us as a, as a lesbian (=Tyler: Mmm), even to us you will date others like, like masculine because to them it’s better because, you see, then you know that this is a girl, if she beat you can beat her, her back (=Tyler: Mmm), you see (=Tyler: Oh). But, even if it's abuse, because if it starts slapping you, even so, it’s abuse. But in in straight people, always that thing that “I am a man” (=Tyler: Uh-huh), so you can’t, can’t talk back (=Tyler: Uh-huh). You can't do this, you can’t do, do, but to us as a LGBTI or as, as a lesbian. If she talk I’m going to “*Hai* girl, wait, wait, you are the girl” (=Tyler: Uh-huh), you see? So no one to us say “you know that I’m a man of the house”, no (=Tyler: Right), no, eh, as we know that we have also, eh, abused each other but this not that kind of, eh, eh, line up or a talk that “I am a man” (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), just abused because, *keh*, abuse is there everywhere (=Tyler: Yeah), even us as a LGBTI, we do abuse each other.

**Tyler:**  Yes, yeah, yeah. *Shoh*. Okay.

**Asanda:** That’s sad (=Tyler: Yeah). Because it, it is sad because me, experience as Asanda, where I am dating a girl, I want to feel that warmth (=Tyler: Mmm). I want to be safe. I want to feel loved, I want, eh, eh, that thing that a woman they what, but when you’re *in* the relationship, *okanyi*, you’re in, that thing is there, but it’s going to be a lack of something between, you see, then that arguments they start (=Tyler: Mmm), that it’s starting in (=Tyler: Mmhmm), in, in conflict or argument because especial to us as lesbian, *yoh,* drama is there (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I don’t know about gays (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) because I never be with gays and sit with them, but to us as a lesbian, wow (=Tyler: Mmm), a lot of drama there.

**Tyler:** *Shoh*. Yeah. Yeah, wow, it’s difficult… Mmm.

**Asanda:** It’s very very difficult because we are, we are ladies, so, we’re supposed to know that, I want my, myself and I treated like this (=Tyler: Mmm). So how can you not treat your girlfriend (=Tyler: Yeah) because you’re, you’re a woman (=Tyler: Yeah). So if you are a woman you know that, I want to be treated like this, so you have to treat your woman as you want yourself to be treated (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But us as a lesbian we don’t do that (=Tyler: Mmhmm, yes). The other can do what the other is not doing, I don’t know what, I don’t know why it’s like that

**Tyler:** Yeah, so I think that conversation will be important to see why does this happen? Yeah. And what can we do to change it? (=Asanda: Mmm) Yeah, yeah (=Asanda: You see? [Laugh]). Yeah. Mmhmm. Okay. So after you exper-, expressed your experiences in the focus group, and you heard from other people, uhm, how did you feel about your queerness after the focus group?

**Asanda:** Nothing... I think nothing (=Tyler: The same?). I’m, I’m the same because I will never change (=Tyler: Yeah) anything. Even someone can say, I never change, I'm going to stay queer (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), and then I’m old enough to, to be whatever I want to be.

**Tyler:** Yeah, and you feel proud of who you are (=Asanda: Yes). You felt proud before the group, you feel proud (=Asanda: And then-) after the group-

**Asanda:** That’s why I’m saying I have this exp-, I have this thoughts now that I have to do this event, because if you talk with others, then you have other ideas, *bah*, “Okay, if I can change there, or *bana*, if I can put there, then how going to people see about that?” (=Tyler: Mmm). As we talk now about, same-sex abuse, in, in a same-sex, you see, that’s a, that’s a, a, a thought that I have now, “Okay, I can do it. What about this one? And then come with their partners, and they sit together, it will be a day that we’re going to talk, everyone can talk, experience, talk about their experience in the same-sex relationship, you see? (=Tyler: Yeah). So that’s the thing I love about queer.

**Tyler:** Yes, you can see other people's experiences and maybe relate and then try something (=Asanda: Something) like that. Okay.

**Asanda:** Then you can see how can you help there and there (=Tyler: Yeah), because after, even if, if, even if you can do that thing as I’m saying that you can talk, but after that you have to be their help, because I can talk about my experience or someone because, maybe it's, it’s still hurting even now, even if, happens 10 years back. But now I have to say, “Okay, now Taylor you’re crying about feeling this sad so that means you're not healed enough” then (=Tyler: Mmm) I can refer you to there, so that she can talk to you by, you can talk to someone, claim your pain or whatever, I don’t know what is it. Then you can be, be alright (=Tyler: Yeah) because some things, the wounds that happened years ago, if you talk about it then it’s still bleeding inside, wherever, whereas you don’t show it outside whereas inside it’s still bleeding so that’s why when I do a event, I have to be a professional people that, if you finished, I can refer to that one, okay, you can talk to that person.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay, yeah, good. Yeah. It's very useful, uhm, mental health work, I think. Yes... Yeah… Uhm (=Asanda: I’m trying, man). Yes, yeah. And it's great that you're trying, it really is. Yeah. Uhm, so then, uh, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Asanda:** Mmhmm (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], you can be honest). I think you’re, I think you are an honest person, because you talk what you see and then you talk what you feel, and then you make everyone feel comfortable (=Tyler: Okay). And then you make us to talk, want to talk more about our experience, you want to make us talk like the whole day (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), if I can say, it’s because you make us feel comfortable (=Tyler: Okay) to talk about our experiences. Not that you have, “okay I have this paper, I can’t talk about this”, you make us to [clicks fingers], to be flexes to talk about everything. Even if you didn't ask about it, but then I feel free to talk, even a thing that you didn't ask (=Tyler: Yeah), so that's a, a comfortability that you make us feel.

**Tyler:** Okay. Good. That's good to hear. Thank you, [laugh] (=Asanda: [Laugh]). Uhm, do you have feedback for how I can improve the focus group? (=Asanda: Mmm?) Do you have any ideas on how I can improve the focus group? … Or is it fine?

**Asanda:** I th-, I, I don’t have it now. Because we did talk about ourexperiences (=Tyler: Mmm). But I think you have to, to invite us, uhm, like to be in, in a focus group, like, you see that time you were here, but you invite more so that we can, we can debate something like a, a debation, uh, in the focus group. Like, if, if I can say, you come with a topic, neh (=Tyler: mmm), then you divided us to two and then the others can say, this is right (=Tyler: Mmm). And then the others, this is wrong (=Tyler: Mmm). Say, every, that two parts have to, to come with the, eh, why this is right, why this is wrong (=Tyler: Mmm), then you can come with, with our things that, this is right because of this. I, I want to say, it’s a debate, neh? (=Tyler: Yes, it’s a debate). Yes, I think next time we can do that and we can debate about thing but, at the end, we have to come with the right solution. Okay, this is where to, and this is the, then you see what is in common between that and that (=Tyler: Mmm) so that can come together or to one thing.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, that's a good idea. Yeah, thank you. Yeah, I think that can help a lot of people think about different (=Asanda: Mmm, mmm) ideas of the same topic

**Asanda:** But at, at the same. And then say, if you say GBV is a, let’s, an example, to say, GBV, and then you point that GBV, and then the others go, GBV is the right, why do you say it’s right? If GBV is wrong, why you saying it’s wrong? It's an example, what I’m saying (=Tyler: Uh), then we both come, we’re going to talk, *mos*. This is right, because of this and this, this is wrong because, and then, there to that to, to all there there’ll be one thing that will be in common, *ukai*, many things that will be common, that we can talk about that things (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because eventually you’ll know, you’ll know that what is right, what is wrong, but it’s going to be a debate (=Tyler: Yeah). But to us, as, as a group.

**Tyler:** Yes, yeah, maybe, uh, to take the topic, sameness and difference and make it a debate (=Asanda: Yes), like LGBT people are the same, or LGBT people are different from each other (=Asanda: Mmm). Now discuss, why (=Asanda: Discuss, yes, why) are we the same, why are we different? (=Asanda: Yes) And let’s go.

**Asanda:** And then we have to, other one, talk about positive way (=Tyler: Mmm), other one talk about negative way but (=Tyler: Mmm), as, it’ll be nice, I think so.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, it could be. Yeah, thank you, [laugh sigh] (=Asanda: Okay, [laugh]). Uhm, I don't have any more questions. So do you have any more, uh, thoughts you want to share, any experiences of the group, or of your life?

**Asanda:** No, no, not yet, because the group, as I was saying, earlier, I was feeling comfortable (=Tyler: Mmm) to be in the group and, especially, [laugh sigh] we were feeling, we, we were coming late but (=Tyler: Yeah), we were calm inside the groups.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's all right. Okay, great. Thanks, Asanda. So, I am finished.

Grace

**Tyler:** So how have you been since I last saw you?

**Grace:** I’ve been pretty good – is that like, meant to be like, in relation to like, [laugh sigh, the conversation or just in general?

**Tyler:** In general, [laugh].

**Grace:** In general. It's been good. Like (=Tyler: Mmm), life's been, life's been good. Nothing, nothing to complain about. I mean, there's a lot of work, but (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), you know, that's how it be, [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Cool. Good to know, [laugh] (=Grace: [Laugh]). Uhm, so then we can get right into it. Uhm (=Grace: Mmm), uh, how did you feel about the focus group?

**Grace:** I was really, really glad that I went, like (=Tyler: Yeah?), I had a really good experience. Uhm, interesting, like, I didn't exactly know what I was like getting myself into ‘cause (=Tyler: Mmm) I obviously haven’t done something like that before. But it was really like… quite a, enriching experience, I think, like hearing so many, like, like just meeting people that were, like, similar to me in certain ways, but like very different in other ways. And I was just (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah, it was really good, like, I enjoyed it, overall.

**Tyler:** Okay, that's good to hear. Uhm (=Grace: [Laugh]), yeah, so you said, you know, a feeling similar to some people in some ways, but different in other ways. Uhm, so is there anyone in particular you felt sameness with?

**Grace:** Yoh, now I’m gonna really have to try and (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) remember everyone's names, oh my goodness (=Tyler: That’s okay). There were quite a few people, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), at our group. Uhm… I almost want to say like, [sigh], what was her name? I think it was (=Tyler: You can just) Viola, I could be wrong. (=Tyler: Yes, Violet). Ja. Um, I think like, especially just, because of, uhm, like, the way she identified and, uhm, when she like, shared a bit of her story I like I could relate in a lot of ways (=Tyler: Mmm) just because I think some of that, those aspects were similar. But I think on the, for the most part, like, it's just always nice being in a space with, like, other queer people, because there is an element of like, you know, something that you share, you know, even if it's not exactly the same (=Tyler: Mmm), [laugh sigh]. But it's still, and I mean, if, uh, like, correct me if I'm wrong, but like, everyone in our group was like, a woman who (=Tyler: Yes), [laugh sigh], was into women (=Tyler: Yes) Yeah, so was like, okay, like, hundred percent, like feeling very, like, [laugh sigh], this is very relatable, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). Um, yeah, so, like, across the board, I think there was a bit of like, connec-, connectedness that I felt with, pretty much everyone I think, except for one person that was only just because I was like, out of the room just for like, when she like, shared a bit of her stuff, so I actually didn’t get a chance to, like, hear what she had to say. I can’t remember her name, but she (=Tyler: Yeah) did come a little bit late, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, Yeah). But otherwise, like, yeah, across the board it was, just like a very general, like nice sense of something in common, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmmhm) that you generally don't have with like a group of people, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's true. Yeah (=Grace: Yeah). Uhm, so was there any difference that you felt from, others in a significant way?

**Grace:** I think, because a lot of, uhm, like what I shared and stuff had a lot to do with, like, my family and (=Tyler: Mmm) how they reacted to me coming out of just my sexuality in general and stuff (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I think it was, like, really nice to hear, uhm, a lot of other people's, like, different experiences, uhm, with family like, for some, you know, it was a really positive experience. For others, it was like, a lot worse than mine. And I think in that regard, like, there was a bit of difference like, I was, like, I could definitely, because it's like, had such a profound impact on me, like (=Tyler: Yeah), the whole thing with my family (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, like, that is going to be like a, a, difference – like it, it, it's not a bad thing though, it’s just (=Tyler: Yeah) you kinda, like, yeah, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). You know, it was, it was different and, there's very few people, if anyone, I think that I’ve, like, been able to relate to on that aspect, like I would, I mean, again, you know, everyone's family is different, but (=Tyler: True) yeah, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Grace: Mmm). Yeah, so like, on the note of your family and the difficulty there with, like, your, your queerness (=Grace: Hmmm!). Uhm, [laugh sigh], so I think, you know, you said that you’re still kind of struggling to reconcile the queer and Christian sides of you, uhm (=Grace: Mmm) especially because of your family's Christianity and their relationship to, uh, religion and, and (=Grace: Yeah) what queerness means from their perspective in that way. But, I wanted to know about your personal relationship with Christianity or with God, uhm (=Grace: Hmmm) outside of – if you *can* separate it from your family's relationship to Christianity – uhm (=Grace: Hmmm), what is, what is that like for you?

**Grace:** That's a very interesting question, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah). Uhm… again, like I think, if you’d probably like asked me the question like a year ago, it would have been, like really difficult for me to separate the two just because, like growing up, like, my, I don't wanna say version of Christianity, but like (=Tyler: Mmm) my family and my parents’ like version of Christianity, was like, really like, embedded in, like, the way that we lived (=Tyler: Okay) and the way we did things and just everything, like. Church is just like such a big part of life (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and my life, and I didn't have a choice to opt out, uhm, until, like – it was quite a weird thing for me, but, uhm, I don't know, like, as soon as I turned 18, my parents were like, “Okay, now we don't technically, like, have any control over you, so, you know, do what you will, we can't force you to come to church anymore”. And I was like, “Okay,” (=Tyler: Yeah). But before that, like, I didn't have a choice and, I mean, I probably could have, like, you know, kicked and screamed a bit, not wanting to go to church, but it was just like a, you, it’s just not something that you do, like, you just go, you know (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and you just, you know, you do all the pleasantries with people, and you just, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), all, all those things, go to youth, you do the things. Uhm, and so it was really difficult for me to kind of separate what I wanted to actually believe myself with, uhm, what my parents were like, enforcing, because it was just such like a thing that I was like, in the middle of and I couldn't get out of it (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and, what ended up happening, especially last year with lockdown, because church wasn’t a thing anymore (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like for a while because of lockdown, it was like all online, it was a lot easier for me to put that kind of distance between myself and like, my youth group, for example. Like, they're all wonderful people, but the environment, urgh, I just didn't enjoy being part of that space. And so (=Tyler: Mmm) I'm still like, on kind of good terms with some of those, uhm, of those people, which is nice. Uhm, but it was really just like, last year, and this year that I started, like, because of the distance I was able to actually like, think about myself like what I actually wanna believe because, the main thing that was like, super clashy was my parents were like, “You can't, be gay and be a Christian (=Tyler: Right), because you're actively choosing to sin, therefore, you can't be a Christian”. And I was like, “No, that logic doesn't work for me” (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but that's kind of what I just had to sit in for a while. And I think now and like it's still a little bit complicated, but like (=Tyler: Mmm), as time goes on, like, I know what I wa-, I know where I want to be, like, I know, the place I want to get to is, uh, like being okay, like with myself in the sense that, I kind of accept who I am and also, am okay with like, being, I mean, again, you know, I'm not a perfect human being, and I know there's plenty of other ways that I screw up all the time. Uhm, and just being okay with that. And knowing that, you know, my creator’s okay with that, because that's the way He made me, and like (=Tyler: Yeah), still loves me. So like, deep down, I'm getting there, like, I do know that I, like, I'm loved and (=Tyler: Mmm) I was like made this way, you know, for a reason (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, but in terms of like, actual, uhm, like, my own, like, personal like faith and stuff. Like it's, it's, it's a process, like (=Tyler: Mmm) I spend some time like every now and again, just like, trying to think about things, you know, because it's very easy when things get busy to just like, not think about it, but (=Tyler: Sure) like, I'll try and like visit churches, like I've been doing in Stellenbosch ‘cause there's like so many churches (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, just to like, get a bit of a taste of like, what else is out there, see what other people, you know, uhm, believe for themselves, because, [laugh sigh]. So I think about, uhm, my church, or my parents, it was like “We are right, all other versions of Christianity are wrong” (=Tyler: Yeah). And I was like, “Okay,” so actually, like exploring that, and exploring it like for myself without that kind of thing hanging over my head has been (=Tyler: Mmm), really good. So, yeah, it's, it's a work in process. And I think it's like, what's important to me is that I know where I want to be and I'm just kinda (=Tyler: Yeah), working towards that, yeah. (=Tyler: Yeah, okay). It’s a very long explanation, I’m sorry, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** No, don't apologize. No, that's good. Yeah (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), it's good to hear that you're working through it and you kind of have the space to do that, and explore what feels right when it feels right to you to do that. (=Grace: Yeah). Yeah.

**Grace:** Another thing I wanted to mention was, uhm, the, I've been seeing a psychologist for the last (=Tyler: Mmhmm) two years, I think. Uhm, no, it's been like a year, and a bit (=Tyler: Okay), the time, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, I was seeing someone at school for like, a while, but, uhm, she recommended that I go see, like an external one, uh, like outside of school. Uhm, and it's interesting, because like, I know, like, on a professional level, like, uhm, their person, what they like, their personal beliefs, you know, aren't supposed to like interfere with, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the professional relationship with the client, but, uhm, my psychologist, she's a Christian. And we have the most interesting conversations about things like, it's just such a safe space for me because, like, it's not something that like, you know, she sort of like, shies away from like, she's got a decent like understanding in terms of like biblical knowledge and stuff. Uhm, and also, like, has her own thing that she believes in, she's like, she had a bit of that to me and I’ve shared that and, just to kind of, talk me through like, certain things, but it', it’s been really nice there because, you know, it's never been something that's like forced, it's just a space where I can actually like, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, you can talk freely) kind of talk about what I want to believe – exactly (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I’ve, that's also been like a big help, to me, uhm, because (=Tyler: I’m sure, yeah), it’s sometimes like I thought it would be easier to just like, you know, disregard the whole thing and just be like, “Nah, you know, screw this whole Christianity thing (=Tyler: Mmmm), I can't even anymore. Like, it's just, it’s not worth it, it’s caused me so much pain,” but (=Tyler: Yeah), like, it's not actually something that I can run away from because, like (=Tyler: Right), something in me just like, I know, what I need to do (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, yeah, it's nice to kind of have that space, but also, that it is something that I do actually talk about and don't just like, [gestures push away] huh (=Tyler: Yeah), there's like, kind of like a sense of accountability, but not in like a “This is what you need to believe” kind of way, more like a (=Tyler: Yes), “You need to sort your shit out” kind of way”, so, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. (=Grace: Yeah) Uh-huh. Okay, that's great (=Grace: Yeah) that you have that space to explore (=Grace: Mmhmm) it with (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]) someone else who’s also Christian without that kind of obligation to be a certain way or think a certain way (=Grace: Yeah). Uhm, yeah. Yeah, that is great.

**Grace:** [Laugh sigh], yeah, it is (=Tyler: Uhm, so-), it’s been good

**Tyler:** Yeah. So what kind of things do you think your, uh, group tended to agree about?

**Grace:** Agree about?

**Tyler:** Mmm.

**Grace:** Let me think a bit back to, the session. Uhm… I’m trying to think, wait, [laugh sigh], so I just need to get it to come back to me.

**Tyler:** If things don’t come to mind, it's also okay, [laugh sigh].

**Grace:** [Laugh], yeah but there were like (=Tyler: It has been a while) really good conversations (=Tyler: Yeah). I remember the, like, what's coming to mind is like a, a disagreement (=Tyler: Mmhmm!), and if you were gonna ask that question (=Tyler: I was), could we like start with that and then maybe go back to, [laugh sigh]? (=Tyler: Yes, yes). Okay (=Tyler: You could go there). Uhm, no, I definitely, I definitely think there were things we agreed on (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I'm trying to think of specifics. But, I remember there was like, an interesting conversation about, like, the whole concept of coming out (=Tyler: Yes) and, some people were like, “Why should you have to come out even?” like (=Tyler: Yes), you know, like, “I don't owe that to anyone” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and then, other people, uhm, myself included, like, have had, like, a very hectic experience with that and think that it's, I mean, yeah, it's just I, I remember, they were like, differing opinions, like and, myself included, was like, definitely differing on, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah, so, yeah) with that. Yeah, sorry for the background (=Tyler: I wanted to) noise if you (=Tyler: That’s fine) hear any of it, like, it's the res life, you know? [Laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], yeah. Yeah. No, that's fine. Yeah, I did want to ask, because you had obviously, like, you had been outed, both (=Grace: Yeah) to your parents and in school (=Grace: Yeah). Uhm, yeah (=Grace: It was late), uhm, was that, were they related incidents like that happened around the same time?

**Grace:** Mm-mm. (=Tyler: Okay), so (=Tyler: separately) I was outed that school, like… (=Tyler: Mmm) quite a bit before. Uhm, and I, I wouldn't really say outed, it was more like a, like a rumor that spread around from someone that I had (=Tyler: Well), like, you know, trusted with that (=Tyler: Yeah), so like kind of, but you know, like, you know how it is at school (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, it's big news one day, the next day, there's more big news (=Tyler: Yeah), so it wasn't like a (=Tyler: Okay), it was like a bit rough. But I was almost kind of glad, like, I think, I don't wanna say glad because I mean, it was like a, a kind of horrible experience at the time, but (=Tyler: Yeah). I didn't need to, you know, go out of my way to come on at school ‘cause, you know, I could just, you know, one day rock up at school and start, you know, dressing like a whole (=Tyler: Mmhmm) tomboy, and so, if people were to question it they’d be like, “Oh, yeah, [laugh sigh], like, I remember that thing I heard like (=Tyler: Yeah) a year ago, like, you know, vibes”, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah) but yeah, at home it was like, a couple of years later, and that was, (=Tyler: Oh, okay), yeah, not, not great (=Tyler: *Shoh*).

**Tyler:** Yeah, no. And you, you still don't know who did that?

**Grace:** [Shake head] Nope (=Tyler: Mmmm). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, so (=Grace: You know), I mean, yeah. Yeah, you did say that-

**Grace:** It’s something I’ve had to let go of. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I suppose. Yeah, so you did say that, that kind of stuff, being outed, uhm, it kind of took the power of announcing yourself as queer (=Grace: Yeah) out of your hands, and you didn't get that (=Grace: Mmm) moment. Uhm, and so-

**Grace:** Yeah, at least for the people that are like, important to me, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), I think that's why it, it wasn't like a huge deal as much for me at school ‘cause I mean (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, it's just people. But (=Tyler: Yeah) yeah, with my parents, it was a big deal for me, yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmm. Yeah, of course. Yeah. And, but you also said that, uhm, these days, at least, it can be empowering for you, when you do decide to come out (=Grace: Yeah) to someone, you know (=Grace: Mmm), because it's like you're sharing a personal piece of information, somewhat confiding in them or like letting them know something more about you (=Grace: Yeah), creating a comfort, because you also mentioned it was comforting when peop-, when people come out to you as well (=Grace: Yeah). Uhm, so, yeah, there's kind of a, a positivity around (=Grace: Mmm) that control that you have now, in a- (=Grace: Yeah) announcing yourself as queer, uhm (=Grace: Mmm). Yeah, so I wanted to know how you felt about Uranaty, she was disagreeing, saying, you know, for her (=Grace: Yes), like frustrated about, you know, why should we have to come out at all? (=Grace: [Laugh]) So uhm…

**Grace:** Yeah. And I remember, like, I mentioned like, to her, I was like, you know, I wish like it was like that, like (=Tyler: Mmm) I really do. Um, and in an ideal world, I suppose, like, no one would have to come out because it would just be like, you know (=Tyler: Yeah) a vibe. People would just like be who they are, you know, and there wouldn't be like such a strict norm that people would have to, like, literally deviate from and then have to, like (=Tyler: Mmm) announce that because I mean, that is an issue, you know. But I think because of the world that we live in, like, I was, like, I, I don't, like, I knew I disagreed (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but it was like one of those things where it's not like it's making me mad. I'm not like, you know (=Tyler: Okay), wanting to change your mind, because I totally see like, where she was coming from (=Tyler: Yeah). And if in her like, situation and circumstances that she finds herself in, like, that's what's most comfortable for her and that's what works. And, you know, her situation is very different to mine, then (=Tyler: Mmhmm) by all means, like, I was like, “Yass”, you know, like (=Tyler: Yeah). “You do you, like, go queen, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), like, do your thing” (=Tyler: Yeah), but, I also still think like, like, in, in that situation, like, I don't know, I think there’s still like, because it's such a touchy thing for a lot of queer people (=Tyler: Mmm), I think it's still something that maybe like requires still a bit of sensitivity, you know, like (=Tyler: Yeah), acknowledgement of the fact that it is a big deal to some people, even if it's not a big deal for everyone, like, in the same way, well, yeah, like, yeah, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I get you. It's kind of a little similar to, uhm, choosing how you identify and what terms you use. It's like, a (=Grace: Yeah, I was-) really personal choice.

**Grace:** –exactly what I gonna, like, mention then I was like, “let me not go down that rabbit hole”, but (=Tyler: Yeah) it's exactly like, I think I mentioned that as well. I was like, I haven't, you know, felt like a huge, like, I, I've never been very uncomfortable with like, the pronouns and (=Tyler: Mmm) my assigned gender. Like, I've been like (=Tyler: Right), “Eh, you know, vibes”, it’s like, sometimes I wish I was like, a bit, like, and I, I tend to, like, prefer more masculine things, but I haven't felt strongly about it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But because of like, my, a lot of my exposure to the rest of the LGBT community, and through like, you know, just hearing other people's experiences, I know it's a huge deal for other people, and it (=Tyler: Yeah) is really important. And there, you know, like the sensitivity and the respect, even if I don't like, I'll never like understand that I think is important (=Tyler: Yes, yes), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's, that's quite interesting. I think a, a couple other participants brought up “You don't even have to understand. It's just about-

**Grace:** Exactly. I used, that was (=Tyler: -basic respect”) something I, we (=Tyler: Hey?), yeah, we definitely agreed on that, yeah, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). The whole understanding versus like, not even needing to, because I mean sometimes you don't even understand, you know, like, [laugh sigh]

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. I, yeah, I think maybe even (=Grace: You know), it might have been you, who said, you know “Sometimes I don't even understand myself” uhm (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]). I don't know if it was.

**Grace:** Was it me? I don't know (=Tyler: I don’t know, [laugh sigh]), it think it was, uhm, I don’t know, somebody, I don’t know if it was me (=Tyler: Anyway, [laugh sigh]). But yeah, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Uhm, okay, cool. So is there any, like, is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't say?

**Grace:** I don’t think I really came with like, stuff that I wanted to say and even in (=Tyler: Mmm), in like, the group, I was just like, really, like, chill, with, with like, soaking in, like, all these other like, (=Tyler: Mmm) perspectives, you know, like, I don't know, I think if there was like, a bit more time, like, I wouldn't have minded like going into a bit, like, more detail and maybe discussing some other things. Uhm, because it was just such a nice space for it uhm. But, I was actually like, okay, like, I was pretty, like, comfortable with, like, what I shared because I've gotten to the point like, that's like a part of my story that isn't like (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, as actively traumatic as it used to be (=Tyler: Yeah). So it's okay, talking about it now. And it's good that I do, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). So I was fine with that. Uhm… but yeah, I think, yeah, I mean, I like, just like, a little, like, personal context, like, I did debating at school, I'm very used to, like, you know, being out there, like, giving my, like, opinion and take on things and, I've been like, trying to work on, you know, like, not always, like, you know, getting in there with my opinion, trying to like, actually, and, and that was like the mindset I, I rocked up there with. I was trying to like (=Tyler: Okay), let me just listen. So I don't think there was anything else that I would have added like (=Tyler: Okay), that I can think of, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), [laugh sigh], I was pretty chill, just like, so soaking it all in and, listening.

**Tyler:** Nice. Okay, cool (=Grace: [Laugh sigh], yeah), yeah. Um, so this might sound a little strange, I don't know, [laugh sigh] (Grace: Mmm). But, um, how do you feel about your queerness now after having participated in the focus group?

**Grace:** I think… that, that whole experience I think was very validating (=Tyler: Mmm). Because, like, not that I need to be like, around queer people, you know, to be a valid queer person, but (=Tyler: Right), yeah, but, uhm, it has been a while like, since I've been in a space where you know, that's something that everyone in the room has acknowledged, like “We're all queer, we're here,” you know, vibes. Uhm, and it was just nice being in a space like that and sharing a bit of like, my story and hearing other people's and I think I just felt like a lot more valid, like in my identity and like a lot more... I don't know. Yeah, I think “validated” is the word (=Tyler: Yeah) that I'm looking for, I don’t think I could (=Tyler: Yeah) find a better one (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah, and just like, yeah, pretty, pretty content. And happy to be queer [laugh sigh], (=Tyler: Yeah, good) and I was like, you know, yeah, I spent a lot of my life like wishing I was very straight, and (=Tyler: Yeah) I know, the more I continue to live, the more I have experiences like this. And I'm like, yoh, I would have never, like, been able to experience that in this way, you know, if I didn't go through all of that and (=Tyler: Mmm) wasn't a queer individual. So I'm just, yeah, I'm happy, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay, good. Yeah, I'm glad that it was positive and validating (=Grace: Mmm) experience for you. (=Grace: Yeah), yeah. Uhm, so this one, please answer very honestly, [laugh sigh] (=Grace: Okay, sure). How do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer?

**Grace:** I, I was like, really, like vibing with you, like, [laugh sigh], I could use like, all the, like, colloquial slang but, uh, it was a vibe, like. I think you, like you let the discussion like happen, but also did like come in when you needed to, when things were like, going a bit like [gestures tangential movement] *weeow* (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like, [laugh sigh], off topic. Uhm, and I think, like, every time you kind of st-, like, like, step in it a little bit, like you, did like a little like, summary thing of like, what someone had said. And I was like, “ahhh!”, because I don't know, I think it just made like, it a lot easier for people, and, and even me as well, to kind of follow what's going on. And hearing things rephrased, I was like, “Okay”, like, if maybe I had not agreed or something, you said it in a different way. And I was like, “Okay, okay”, [laugh sigh], um (=Tyler: Okay), yeah, so, yeah, I think you were great, [laugh sigh]. (=Tyler: Okay, thanks), I think you are great. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Thank you. Uhm, is there any moment (=Grace: Uhm) in particular that, that comes to your mind is an example of thinking you might have disagreed with someone, but then when I rephrased it, you thought “Oh, okay, no, that's fine”?

**Grace:** Uhm… I’m trying to, I remember, *ag*, I’m trying to remember the exact thing, I just remember, like feeling that, uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It might have been about, like, one of the coming out things, uhm, where you like, said something about, you know, uhm, just like rephrasing what someone had said about, like, I think it was them like, just showing up with a partner, you know, and just like, the rest of the world must just like, you know, and I was like, “okay, wouldn't be me, but okay”. And then you kind of said something, *ag*, I really, I'm so sorry, but I remember what it was (=Tyler: That’s fine). [Laugh], uhm, and I was like, “Okay, that actually, like, I can see it in that light”. Like, ‘cause my initial reaction was like, “Ooo, hectic”, you know, but, you know, it's also pretty much ingrained in me, like, still, you know, some part of me is like, very like, “Ah”, you know, “it's kind of like a taboo thing, you know, like, in public, like, ah” (=Tyler: Yeah). I'm very much moving away from that, there's like a tiny portion of like, my (=Tyler: Yes) deeply ingrained Christian self like, going like, yoh, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), [laugh sigh], but yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I think you even said, like, you and your girlfriend had had bad experiences (=Grace: Yeah) being a couple in public.

**Grace:** Yeah so there’s like plus that as well, like I also (=Tyler: Mmm). Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). I mean we also, both came from like, very, like Christian backgrounds (=Tyler: Yeah), and are both kind of dealing with a similar thing. Uhm, but yeah, it wasn't, I have had some, not-so-great experiences as well, so… (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmmhm). Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), like you know, it's, it's not like a stencil, it’s a work in progress, you know (=Tyler: Right). Society will continue to, hopefully go in the right direction as will we, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm (=Grace: Yeah). Uh, do you want to go into any of those experiences?

**Grace:** I mean, [sigh], yeah, I, I probably, like I don’t mind mentioning like, one or two, like, *ag.* I think, like, I think I mentioned in the, uhm, uh, in the discussion that it's just like, aside from incidents, like, there tends to just be like, for me, and for her as well, just like, a very much like a consciousness (=Tyler: Mmm), not like a conscious-, but like, being very aware of (=Tyler: Yes), like, what we're doing in public spaces. Uhm, I think like, right now, like, it's not something like, I think it was something I was a lot more aware of in the past. And we’ve kinda, kind of, like dealt with that, you know. It's been like, you know, like, “Screw it, like, why am I caring so much like? Like, please”, you know, but every now and again, you know, something will happen, and I'll be like, “uhh” [grimace], like, *ag*, especially like, in public, like, I was out, I think it was like on Valentine's Day, like, we went somewhere, we went to the

Waterfront actually, and I'm telling you, we had like, three different, like, isolated incidents of like people, uhm, either, like, I think we went to go get coffee somewhere and, uhm, one of the baristas was like, clearly being like, a bit like, you know, forward about something, uhm. When it came to, her, and asked me, like, you know, is this like, you know – what did they, what did he say? I think he was like, “Is this like your sister?” And I was like, “That is ridiculous. Like, (=Tyler: Yeah), we are very different skin tones, to start off with”, but he was being like, very, like, a bit, not very overly so but you kind of pick up vibes, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), when like, guys like being uncomfortably like in your space kind of and like (=Tyler: Mmm), you know. And, you know, I was at the point where I was like, “No, like, this is my girlfriend” and he kind of gave us like a bit of a look. And it was like such a look. And I was like, I don’t, *yoh*, it's very small things (=Tyler: Yeah) like that (=Tyler: Mmhmm) very small. Even when we were just like walking down, like the side of the, down the street, [sigh], by the harbor there, and obviously like we were holding hands. I'm telling you, especially because it was Valentine's Day, like (=Tyler: Mmm) people *looked*, there was no shame. They just looked and I was like, “You know what? (=Tyler: Yeah) Like, screw you, you know. Look if you wanna, whatever” (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know. Uhm, yeah I think the past, like we were definitely a bit, like, less, like, touchy in public, just because of that, like (=Tyler: Yeah) she’s had bad exp-, I’ve had bad experiences, like, that’s like tame, you know? (=Tyler: Mmhmm), compared to like, yeah. Uhm, yeah, you know (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), I think it's just something that queer people just generally have common stories about, you know, people in public (=Tyler: Mmhmm), not minding their business. Like, just let us be gay (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), just, please, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, [laugh sigh] yeah (=Grace: Yeah). Okay. Cool. Thanks for that, yeah-

**Grace:** But yeah shame some of them can turn into like funny stories, you know, down the line, so you know? [Laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Ja, I guess, [laugh sigh]

**Grace:** Even if they’re a bit, huh [=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I mean if you’re not gonna laugh about it, like what are you gonna do? [Laugh sigh], yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I guess so (=Grace: [Laugh]). Yeah. Uhm, do you have any feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Grace:** Let me think, uhm…I think, like, overall, like, I didn't have like any, like, criticisms (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, like I think, it was really good. Uhm, but, I think we spent like, and uh, it was really good thing, I think, that we spent like, a lot of time, you know, on the introductions and then the, the discussion kind of like flowed, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), from there. Uhm, but, like, the actual, uhm, I think, a lot of the time, like, we went very, like, off topic, which I think is like, you know, fine, you know, but, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), for me, like, I was, like, “Okay I’m coming here to discuss like, a certain thing”. And that's kind of what my mind was like, thinking, uhm, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Okay). Like, I don't know, uhm, if you like understand what I mean, but yeah, so I was just like, uhm, I think also because there like, for my group, I know it was probably like, not the same in other groups, but because people came late there was (=Tyler: Yes) a bit of like catching up that needed (=Tyler: Ja) to happen. I know, that's, like, totally not on you, like (=Tyler: Ja), it just happens, like, life is like that sometimes (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but I think that did influence like the discussion (=Tyler: Yeah) a little bit. Uhm, and I think we probably could have, like, gotten through like a bit… more, not (=Tyler: Yes) new but like, into more depth (=Tyler: Yeah) a bit more, if we didn't have to, like recatch everyone up (=Tyler: Yeah) uhm. Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, I agree), but aside from that, I think, yeah, it was, it was really chilled. And, I don’t know, maybe, if you like, to do this again, I mean, you’re probably not gonna do this again, I don't know, are you like planning on pursuing like, another, [laugh sigh]?

**Tyler:** No, (=Grace: What is it, Masters?), this is definitely. Yeah, yeah, this is something I would like to take further actually, uh (=Grace: Okay) down the line. But, mmhmm.

**Grace:** Mmm (=Tyler: Yeah), this was just like, a small thing. But I was like, maybe, uhm, like, at like having like, little checkpoints. Even just like one, like a little break, like in the middle, just because it can be quite intense. And just like (=Tyler: Oh, okay, yeah), just like (=Tyler: Yeah that’s true) let us like, talk about like other things. Not like, but like just to each other, because I think like the natural conversation we had, like, at the beginning was quite nice (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and also, like, I was so sad to have to leave like I would have loved to stay like (=Tyler: Yeah) chat to people afterwards as well. But that was also like on me, like I had organized (=Tyler: Well) my lift a little-

**Tyler:** Yeah but also (=Grace: But we were like, slightly) it was the, the time (=Grace: Overtime. Yeah). It was already overtime, so (=Grace: Yeah, [laugh sigh]), there’s no problem, yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah. So, I think like just those aspects, like (=Tyler: Yeah) nothing specific to, because I know it was different, probably for different sessions. But (=Tyler: Mmm) like those, that kind of natural kind of moments where people could connect, I think would have been nice. And especially if it was like in the middle, like, after you've gotten to know someone a little bit. And before like, or, like, if there was like, a moment where it wasn't hectic to be like, okay, 5-, 10-minute break (=Tyler: Yes). And then, if it was like, the people were, kind of like comfortable, I could just chat a bit more, and I think it would have made like the rest of the conversation like, a bit, I don't know, like, not that it was uncomfortable. Like I was fine, but (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay (=Grace: Just an idea, [laugh sigh]), yeah, thanks. That is that is a good idea. Yeah. Because I mean (=Grace: [Laugh sigh]), obviously people also need bathroom breaks and stuff like that, so (=Grace: [Laugh], that too), yeah (=Grace: Yeah) that would be a good idea. Okay, cool (=Grace: Mmm). Thank you. Yeah, that's quite helpful (=Grace: You’re welcome). Uhm, so because obviously, like, you know, the interruption meant we had to like stop the conversation, restart it (=Grace: Mmm), introduce each other and (=Grace: Yeah), perhaps lost some opportunity to discuss more things. Uhm, is there anything else that you want to add to, you know, your experiences of sameness and difference, or…?

**Grace:** Hmmm… Let me think about that, briefly... I think, like, I, what I have mentioned like about the like, the things I felt like connected to other people about it, uhm, it was very basic, kind of, like, you know, we're all queer here, like we share some things (=Tyler: Mmmm), uhm, especially in terms of like, I don't know, like generally, a lot of people have very similar experiences like realizing, you know, and that's just something you know you like, share with someone. Uhm, and then the differences. I think maybe what I want to say is like, it was quite interesting the kind of differences that there were, because it was like different within the same kind of thing, which you don't really, you know what I mean? Like, it wasn't like a, you know… I'm trying to think of some really arbitrary difference now, like, I'm an engineering student, and you know, my friend next door is like a (=Tyler: Yeah), a BAcc student, like those are like, very like, you know, very separate differences (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But these were kind of like, very like intertwined kind of like things that we kind of differed on, but (=Tyler: Yes), we knew that some parts of it we still agreed on, so it was just like really, like intricate and cool in that way (=Tyler: Yeah) I think (=Tyler: Uh, do you have-?), if you kind of get what I’m saying.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Do you have examples? I think maybe an example would be like, the coming out thing?

**Grace:** Mmm, definitely, an example there (=Tyler: Right). And even just like how, you know, we identify, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), and in terms of like our sexualities, because there was some differing opinions, which I mean, is 100% like, you know, a personal choice there. But I thought it was very (=Tyler: Mmm), like, it's just so interesting, you know, because there's like, a base level of, you know, something you can all relate to, like an attraction to women, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but, you know, there's still differences within that. And I was like, “Oh, that's so cool”, you know? It’s (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Grace: Yeah), it is, it is a complex kind of relating (=Grace: Mmm), I suppose. Yeah (=Grace: Yeah, very complex), which is exactly why I'm asking about sameness and difference.

**Grace:** [Laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah. Because yeah, I think also, like, for me, like, in my head, like, difference comes with the like, very, like, a low-key, like negative connotation (=Tyler: Mmmm). I think for a lot of people it does, uhm, just like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, instinctively, I think is the word I was looking for (=Tyler: Right). But, uhm, but like, you know, actively trying to unlearn some things. And I experienced a lot of those differences as like very positive things, in the (=Tyler: Mmm), yeah, in the session, like it was just really good to come, like, very neutrally together and just discuss things, you know, without having like a right or wrong.

**Tyler:** Yes (=Grace: Yeah), yeah. Yeah. Great. Okay. Cool (=Grace: Yay). Well, those are all the questions that I have, Grace. So (=Grace: Ah!), are there any, like last thoughts or comments that you want to make about the experience?

**Grace:** Uhm, I don’t think so. I think I just want to say like, thank you, because I mean, I know this was like, for your research purposes, but I think a lot of people like had quite a good, a good time, like, I'm pretty sure it wasn’t just me, so.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Grace: Yeah). Yeah, I mean, it's, it's, uh, a kind of research that I have a personal investment in as well. It's not just (=Grace: Mmm), you know, for a (=Grace: [Laugh]) thesis paper. Yeah, so (=Grace: Yeah), I'm really glad that people, like you, for example, are feeling like you benefit from the experience.

**Grace:** Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), definitely.

**Tyler:** Great (=Grace: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). Okay, cool. So, uhm, do you still have the list of counselling services that I gave you? I mean, you still, you said, you, get to see a therapist, so (=Grace: Mmm), but I mean (=Grace: But), do you still have that anyway?

**Grace:** I do still have the list, yeah. I did bring it with me when I came back (=Tyler: Okay, cool). Uhm, I thought that was like a really nice thing as well, just to (=Tyler: Mmm) make sure people have that information, you know.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah. So if you ever like, lose it and need it again, you can, you know, email me at any point (=Grace: Okay). And I can send you a digital copy (=Grace: Thank you). No problem (=Grace: That’d be awesome). Uhm, and I'll be in touch with you when I have transcribed both this interview and the focus group in case you want (=Grace: Yay) to see the transcripts (=Grace: I’d love to), uhm. Okay, and then also, at the end of the year, I'll be in touch when the final report is ready, in case (=Grace: Okay) you would like to read it.

**Grace:** I think I really would, that would be super interesting, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Grace: Yeah). Cool. And then-

**Grace:** So definitely, definitely be in touch then.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. Yeah. Uhm, and then I will compensate you immediately after this interview. I've got another voucher for you. Uhm, you received the first one, right?

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Cool. And then one thing I need from your, uh, banking details is, what bank are you with? [Laugh sigh].

**Grace:** Oh, sorry, I should have included that, [bank name], [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Bank name], okay cool..

**Grace:** Yeah, sorry, I hit forward on something I had already sent to someone, a family member who does know what bank I’m on, [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). I’m sorry about that.

**Tyler:** No, it’s cool. That's fine (=Grace: Yeah). Yeah. Okay, cool (=Grace: Mmm). So that's all for me. Thank you again, very much for participating. I really appreciate it.

**Grace:** Oh sure, it was really good. Thank you for, for running it and, yeah, it's very good (=Tyler: Yeah). I hope you have a great day and we week (=Tyler: Thank you) further, and-.

Okuhle

[Okuhle completes informed consent form]

**Okuhle:** [Inaudible]

**Tyler:** Hmm?

**Okuhle:** [Inaudible] the same thing that I did, the last time we were here?

**Tyler:** Uhm, not exactly

‘

**Okuhle:** [Inaudible]

**Tyler:** It is a little the same thing. So, I’m going to ask you about, uhm, how you felt about last time and the group discussion, and if you want to add anything (=Okuhle: Okay). Okay, so that’s kind of the same topic (=Okuhle: Ah), yeah. Okay, so everything’s fine?

**Okuhle:** Yes, everything’s fine.

**Tyler:** Cool, I can record? [Laugh sigh]

**Okuhle:** Yes, you can.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], okay.Thanks. Uhm, so how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Okuhle:** Uhm, actually, it was kinda, I [inaudible] a lot better, there were people who went through the same thing that I went through and, speaking about it, and, I feel like it's an open space, like it’s a space where we talk about certain things. And, we all understand (=Tyler: Mmm), even though some of us didn't go through the same thing that we went through, even though you could relate from someone, it's telling a story. It was, yeah, I was happy and it was the first time me opening up about certain things, like (=Tyler: Oh really?), yes, actually about the, the best, they’re, the best, best friend part (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I’ve never talked about it, and for me, that moment, I feel like it's okay to talk about it, because we could relate, and then, ja. It was actually great.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. So it was the first time you could talk about some things in that space? (=Okuhle: Yes). Uhm, so the best friend story, was that when your best friend would, uhm, you know, defend you, or defend lesbian people? Because some people would say, “it's a sin”, uh, but then your friend would say “Other things in the Bible are a sin, but you all do that”? (=Okuhle: I would say-) What was the best friend's story, [laugh sigh]?

**Okuhle:** The, the best friend's story, uhm, as I said, the first time I was actually bisexual (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And then after I, found myself, and then I started claiming that I'm lesbian (=Tyler: Mmhmm), for her, it was like, I’m very different, this Satanism, what I'm doing is wrong (=Tyler: Yes, yes, yes). So, the conversation, didn’t add up, for her because I think like, she wouldn’t understand when I talk about my girlfriend (=Tyler: Mmhmm) then when she’d talk about her boyfriend, then wait, “I don’t understand” (=Tyler: Mmm). For her, she felt like I'm a bad influence and like what I’m doing, it’s wrong. And for me, it was all about me (=Tyler: Mmm), and still about me as long I was happy. And then I decided, uhm, let me just end the friendship (=Tyler: Mmm), even though she took the decision without telling me (=Tyler: Oh). Yes, because I would go to her, she would be so funny, I didn’t understand (=Tyler: Mmm). And then I started taking note of all the things she, what she’s doing. And then I realized, you know what, my happiness matters, if this is the way, this is it, I'm fine with it. As long I'm, uhm, I’m happy. And after the friendship, I think, a few years down the line, I met another girl (=Tyler: Mmhmm). She's lesbian, we friends, we totally get each other. She's not like, my best friend, she’s like a sister to me (=Tyler: Uh-huh), so, for her, I don't have to explain certain things (=Tyler: Yeah), because she’s really understand and she knows me. And for my best friend, it was kind of different even though she know where I’m coming from, but then, uhm, I believe it was the end, it was supposed to be the end of the friendship.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. She couldn't understand that one thing about you, yeah.

**Okuhle:** Yes. And, and the worst part, uhm, is, uhm, on her sister (=Tyler: Mmm). She was also lesbian (=Tyler: Mmm). And then apparently, she started going to church and they, they pray for her. Now she's all holy, holy, she’s, doesn’t act like she was a lesbian, now she’s straight (=Tyler: Uh), and then they think the same thing that happened to her, like I should also go to church (=Tyler: Mmm), maybe things will change. I'm like, “Guys, I'm not, I'm not part of this th-, whole thing, like I didn't wake up and say, you know what, today I’m gonna be a lesbian” (=Tyler: Yeah), because if you knew what we went through. And also, the sister with certain things of being a lesbian, in guys. This is, this is not the choice that I made but I stick to what I believe in, what makes me happy. And even though I may found people that, uhm, that tell me being lesbian is wrong what I'm doing, I was not supposed to do in front of children or whatever (=Tyler: Mmm). But then as soon as I'm happy, and I don't have to explain myself, even though, my family, some of my family accepted me.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I see (=Okuhle: Yes), uh-huh.

**Okuhle:** And ja, and also, what I discover, but also, I also said about my father. My father, I always assume he will never accepted me for who I am but all to find out he had this fear (=Tyler: Mmm) of me being open about my sexuality and I don’t care what people say, and eventually there will be, I don't know, but in his mindset, there will be people that might do something to me (=Tyler: Mmm), because they want to prove a point (=Tyler: Oh). So that was his fear (=Tyler: Okay). And he's very protective about this whole thing and, he always said, you can do whatever you want but please, don't do certain things in front of people because you don't know the person, what the person is thinking (=Tyler: Mmhmm), just be careful. And then I started realize okay he actually does care. And just that have this fear that he, maybe I'll be one of those hate-crime being people (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). So ja.

**Tyler:** I see. So, you thought maybe initially your father didn't support you being a lesbian (=Okuhle: Yeah), but actually he was, trying to protect you from other people (=Okuhle: Yes) who are homophobic (=Okuhle: Yes)? Right. I see. And, and also, uhm, your mother, you said that, you know, she, initially, she disowned you for like four years (=Okuhle: Yes). And then she eventually accepted you again. So, how did that happen? How did she come to accept you again?

**Okuhle:** Uhm, I think, as I said, I always believe in what makes me happy (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uh, after my mother disowned me, she didn’t buy me anything so I had to hustle, find ways to have things and whatsoever. And that time, this is the first time being open about my sexuality, this is the first girlfriend I ever dated (=Tyler: Mmm). So it was the whole thing, it was, I needed some support (=Tyler: Yeah). So, uhm, as I said, after my mother accepted me, it was in Eastern Cape. I don't know how, but they just started believing that I'm not changing. And to the point, I made it heard that I’m always involved, involved in what, lesbian, LGBTI, the whole community, and I made sure that if they do come to my house (=Tyler: Yeah), maybe my mother will understand how I, I am. And after a while they accepted me, things were just fine, okay, and, as I said, she loves, uhm, she loves gays, you know, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. You said, she's really supportive now.

**Okuhle:** She’s very supportive, a lot, a lot (=Tyler: Okay). And she always asks questions, uhm, there was a time we were watching, uhm, we were watching news. And I think it was a LGBTI, I think, so many people were getting married that day (=Tyler: Uh-huh), but it was just queer people. And she was asking me “Are you also going to wear a suit?”, and me like “No I’m going to wear a dress, obviously” (=Tyler: [Laugh]). “So your partner’s is going to wear a suit?” “Not, don’t, it depends how comfortable she is” (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and she was just like, “Oh”, like she, she, she asks so many questions and she understand, uhm, she just wants to understand more (=Tyler: Yes). And also, I have a younger sister, she's like, uh, eight (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I always t-, I always teach her about the LGBTI community (=Tyler: Oh). And how, like, she would see a gay and she’d be like “This is moffie”, “No, this is not a moffie” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). You can call her a him, or you can call him his name or, but don’t call him a moffie (=Tyler: Right), it’s how, it's how, it's how you pronounce it, or it’s, it's how you, you say the word (=Tyler: Yes), because some people get offended how (=Tyler: Yeah) you say the word (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I always teach her certain things and, she always know, uhm, there’s feminine women, there’s butch, like, I just teach her to grow in environment that she must know there are LGBTI people (=Tyler: Yes). And also, this is who I am, she’s not gonna see me with a guy and she knows that, there are actions that.

**Tyler:** Nice, well, that's very helpful to teach children from a young age (=Okhule: Yes) about these things. Did you have someone like that when you were young?

**Okuhle:** No. Uhm, I always say that, uhm, especially to my, to my niece (=Tyler: Mmm) and, and my cousins, because they actually bisexual and I always say them, tell them that *bana,* “You guys are so lucky, because when I came out, there was no one in my family member that, (=Tyler: Mmm) uhm, supported me and told me what I'm doing is right (=Tyler: Mmm), they were all the rejecting me, they were all telling me, they were, they were insulting me, in which (=Tyler: Mmm) I didn't care what they said as, as long I was happy” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And for them to have me to open up about their sexuality and me to tell them what they must do and what they must not do, so they have that support system in which I never had and (=Tyler: Yeah) being involved in like Triangle, so I learned a lot of things and how to do certain things. Because I have this, uhm, niece of mine, she, she said she was lesbian (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And then I asked like, “in 10 years’ time do you see yourself with a woman?” (=Tyler: Mmm) And she said no, then I told her “no, you’re bisexual” (=Tyler: Mmm), but she doesn't the term of bisexual [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Oh, okay). So I was like, “are you sure are you lesbian, or, you just saying lesbian because you're going to school where there’s just girls (=Tyler: Mmm) and there’s peer pressure? (=Tyler: Maybe) And maybe the friends that you have they’re all bisexual and some of them are lesbian so you just wanna, don’t want to be left out?” and (=Tyler: Huh) for her, I, I think I gave her time to think about it. But then I believe she’s just, she’s just straight, she’s just exploring her sexuality (=Tyler: Mmm). In which I always say to her, “it's okay, do whatever makes you happy as long you will know this time” (=Tyler: Mmm) because, I also do the same, I never thought I would date a woman even though I always said, uhm, as I said I was doing a documentary (=Tyler: Mmhmm) last year, and my mother bought me this umbrella, the rainbow umbrella (=Tyler: Oh, okay), and she bought it for me, meanwhile I, I was doing the documentary and then I was thinking, but *hai* man, this woman knew that, actually, like I’m lesbian. Like she literally bought me the umbrella, she knew from the word “go”, even though she was really in denial about the whole thing and whatever, but then ja, (=Tyler: Wow… Okay) I like... And also, uhm, I have to explain certain things to them. Like, I have a cousin of mine. She's butch, and she have a child (=Tyler: Okay), the child is four years old, and my family always ask her, “why did you have a child if you’re gonna turn and be lesbian?” (=Tyler: Yeah). And I always tell them, like, being a lesbian, that doesn't mean, your, your, your womb is lesbian (=Tyler: Mmm), you can’t have children whatsoever. There will be a time I’ll have to explain to you guys *ba,* I'm having a child and I know you’re gonna be curious *ba,* how did I get a child? And I always tell them *mina,* I’m a very gonna open-minded person. I don’t mind sleeping with a guy to have a child (=Tyler: Mmhmm) as long I know who I am, my sexuality (=Tyler: Mmm), even though I don't want to go into this procedure whatsoever, you know, because, uhm, I know I'm not going to afford it. Or (=Tyler: Mmm) there's a possibility it may happen or not. For me, I'm willing to do that. And whoever I date I always tell that person I want to have children. And I do even want two. So, I always tell my family, *bana*, me being lesbian that doesn't mean I won't have children, I will have children. Maybe as time goes, but I don’t know what the future holds but I will have children. So (=Tyler: Mmm), you can see, uhm, a gay person, gay person can have child, children too. But that doesn't, that doesn't mean just because he's gay, or she's lesbian, she can’t have children (=Tyler: Mmhmm). There's no such thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But that's the feeling (=Tyler: Yeah). Having a child, it's also another thing that you must also teach people that (=Tyler: Yeah) and, to the point, uhm, my cousin even cannot, cannot even answer them. And I had to step up for them for that, like I never had someone to step up for me. And, and tell me, I gonna beat you ‘til it’s right, do it, do it (=Tyler: Yes), and for her I have to always, uh, support her and I always to make the family understand, *bana*, this is it, it happens, she was just experience sexuality and that is it. And ja, I wish I had it, but then (=Tyler: Yeah) I had not. But then, eh, I, I always believe, I had to learn, for me to teach, uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the, the next generation (=Tyler: Yeah) in which they find up doing what now.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's great. And hopefully her generation won't have situations like you had in L.O., where you had to compete with a teacher (=Okuhle: Yes) who was talking about sexuality, and everyone would ,you know, yeah, make a big deal out of it for you (=Okuhle: [sighing] Yeah), yeah. That’s awesome, yeah.

**Okuhle:** Yeah, I, I, and also, uh, about the school part, yoh, it was… uh, it got to me, it was really emotional (=Tyler: Mmm). Because people, I think people have, they, they don’t care how they say things, you just say it for the sake of saying it (=Tyler: Yeah) and, then, I don’t care what we like, the, we, like, homosexual people go through and they’ll be like, “they must, we must burn them (=Tyler: Mmm), they must die”, like, who sides, who says such things like that? (=Tyler: Mmm). We, we’re people (=Tyler: Mmm). And they'll be like, “You guys are after nine, minutes late, you know, women, when in the morning you’re butch you get pregnant,” in which, for me, I, I had no knowledge at that time, but then because I felt, I felt very angry (=Tyler: Mmm), and I couldn't defend myself to the point, as I said, when it was the, when we had that topic, I would always go outside. Because I couldn't bear to listen to the opinion in which I always believed, everyone have their own opinion, as long it makes sense to them, it's fine. I'm, I'm not going to explain myself to you or anyone (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm), I know what I'm doing. And I think at that time, if I had, knowledge about LGBTI and the whole thing, I would have told them, but then it was [inaudible].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Okuhle: It was [inaudible]) Wow, okay, *shoh*. Can I ask you more about the group, last time we were here? Do you, uhm, what do you feel about, uh, agreeing? Did you agree with anyone about something?

**Okuhle:** Uhm, I was, uhm, to, uh, about sis-Asanda, do you still remember the story about sis-Asanda (=Tyler: Yes, Asanda, mmhmm), about how she got married? And, uh, I agree because, I, this is not the first time we’re hearing this story (=Tyler: Mmm) like hers, similar story. And I totally agree, some people go to… get married, and they can't have time to explore their sexuality and find themselves. And also, I had this gay friend, and he, he was telling me about his boyfriend (=Tyler: Yeah). His boyfriend is a pastor, his ex-boyfriend, his ex-boyfriend was a pastor. And then he didn't knew, but then he, he like, the guy would always say, “you have to be at school, you have to be at school”. And then he asked him, “what were you doing at school?” And he was telling him, *bana*, “I'm going to be a pastor,” (=Tyler: Mmm), and then sh-, he was like, “You’re going to be a pastor but you’re gay?”. But then he was like, “No, I’m not gay, I’m just exploring my sexuality”. And, he is married now (=Tyler: Mmm), but he's still sleeping with men, and he still says he’s not gay (=Tyler: Wow). And, oh, if, I would say he must just say he’s bisexual but he doesn't want to be in the LGBTI community (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), even though it's bisexual, but, you can do what he wants to do because, uhm, especially in the Black community, uh, being gay and being a pastor, doesn't sound right (=Tyler: Mmm) to their mindset (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It doesn't sound right. What are you going to preach? What are you teaching the, what are you teaching the, the children, what are you teaching the [inaudible]? So, what's happening? (=Tyler: Mmm) What are we gonna call you, woman? (=Tyler: Mmm) A man? So it’s, it's (=Tyler: Wow), it's, it's very difficult (=Tyler: Yeah). And, as I always say, *bana*, every day we learn and sometimes it's, sometimes it’s very hard to teach people because that's what they believe and, I always, uhm, always say that, uh, people like, uhm, let me, let me make an example like my grandmother. My grandmother believed, *bana,* there's no, uhm, homosexual people. And my mother believes that there's no homosexual people, then also I believe that (=Tyler: Mmm). That's like a mindset. And that's how we grow and that's how we believe and it's very hard to break the chain and, try to explain to people there’s no such thing as that (=Tyler: Mmm). We in the 21st century (=Tyler: *Shoh*), maybe people, maybe people that time they were in the closet (=Tyler: Mmm). Now we're open and fighting for our rights, so ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, wow. Okay, yeah, so you, so you agreed with, uhm, Asanda’s story about, uh, yeah, well she, was, was, proud of who she was, and she didn't let that keep her in a marriage that wasn't happy for her. But this other person, this pastor, he's not doing that (=Okuhle: Mmm), he's denying himself (=Okuhle: Yes). Yeah, wow.

**Okuhle:** Yes, and, uhm, the, what was I gonna say now? Uhm, the, and also the part where we have to be open and, like coming out (=Tyler: Mmm). For me, I don’t really understand the term of coming out. Until, uhm, Uranaty said every day we come out (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And for me, like this week, there was this girl, was like “So who’s your boyfriend?”, I was like, “Okay, this is the moment”, like, I never thought of it, but I was doing it. But I never came to my mind, *bana,* every day, when someone have to, I have to explain to the person, I’m, I’m dating a woman (=Tyler: Mmmm), like, that's my moment of coming out (=Tyler: Mmhmm). In which we so in denial of the fact we, we have to come out (=Tyler: Yeah), but we not taking note of, we have to tell people this is who we are and we actually are coming out (=Tyler: Mmhmm). For me I started realizing this time of the week when I was at my, my brother's house and this girl was asking me, like (=Tyler: Yeah), you know (=Tyler: Yeah). So it was like, clear in the moment it was like, “Okay” (=Tyler: Yes), it started to make sense then.

**Tyler:** *Shoh.* And so then, uh, how do you feel about disagreement in your group? Did you feel like there was disagreement or you disagreed with anyone, about something?

**Okuhle:** Uhm… No. (Tyler: No?) There was no disagreements. I think, we all had, uh, in my part, I feel l know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), we had similar things in which I understand (=Tyler: Yeah), there was nothing I didn’t understand, even though Uranaty said, uhm, the part of, she doesn't believe in Bible, but that’s her, her opinion in which I don't, I understand. *Mina,* I do understand, I understand [inaudible], that’s how she feels, and it’s fine.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay, I see. So then, uh, did you feel sameness with anyone, there?

**Okuhle:** Excuse me?

**Tyler:** Did you feel sameness?

**Okuhle:** Yes, I did. (=Tyler: Yeah?) I did. As I said, we all went through similar things just that we never took notice of it. And we, we do it, we do it, we do certain, we do things and we never took notice of it that we, actually went through the same thing (=Tyler: Mmm). Just that we thought, uh, *ag,* maybe this was, maybe I’m going through this alone. No one, no one will never understand (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and there are so many people that can relate (=Tyler: Yeah) and, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), so yeah, all was so positive.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, so then how did you feel after the focus group, when you realized people can relate to each other, uhm, and that you're not alone in these experiences? What did that feel like?

**Okuhle:** Uhm, I, I felt like, I have to be open about my sexuality (=Tyler: Okay). And even though what I went through, it's not gonna stop me from who I am. And this is what makes me happy, from the word “go”, I never stop believing, this is who I am so, yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. So, uh, how do you feel about your queerness after participating in the group last week?

**Okuhle:** Uhm, very proud (=Tyler: Yeah?). Very proud, yoh, I’m very proud (=Tyler: [Laugh]). I don't, [laugh sigh], care what people say, I'm very proud, even though, uh, there are things you can’t say to other people because you don’t know what they’re thinking (=Tyler: Mmm) so, I always fall back, but then when I see it’s a safe space area, when I can have my own, like, opinion, it was safe, so ja.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh, uh-huh, great. Yeah. Uhm, is there anything that you wanted to say, on that day, that you didn't say?

**Okuhle:** Yes (=Tyler: Yeah?). Uhm… I think, no not last year… two years back (=Tyler: Okay), I was raped (=Tyler: Oh…) And, uhm…nobody knows from my family that I was raped. And I was dating this woman (=Tyler: Mmm). And it happened, I was, that time, I was going through a lot. I was having flashbacks in which I never had time to be, uh, to tell anyone what I went through. And also, I never got the support because I would have flashbacks, and my ex-girlfriend would be like, “no, don’t cry”. She never let me, to, to, to be emotional and (=Tyler: Uh-huh) express my, my feelings (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So I always felt like I’m very sophisticated, to be a point I feel like I, I don't know whether I’m, I’m lesbian, or I’m straight, but one thing I'm sure I’m bisexual. And then, uhm… things were rocking our relationship. I ended up dating a guy... And after dating a guy, and then I slept with the guy… for me, I feel like me being raped, it doesn't actually say that, uhm, because I always thought, me being raped, I'm scared of men (=Tyler Mmhmm). And, I *chose* to be lesbian, and for me after what I did, and I, and I took time, took time with myself and then I was like, “No, I'm not. I'm not actually straight (=Tyler: Uh-huh), this is who I am”, because I felt no connection (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I felt nothing. And, I’ll always regret doing it (=Tyler: Okay). But then for me, I think it was the best thing I could do for myself to find who I am (=Tyler: Mmm). And also to, to nat-, to not let a, a rape hold me (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because, uhm, like I said, I always believed that me being raped, it was like, I'm scared of men, I want to date women, maybe, maybe that, in which, the women do get raped by other woman (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But that we, we, we, we don’t wanna talk about it (=Tyler: Yeah). We’re still hiding it, but there will be a time, I believe, there a time we'll talk about it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But then, uhm, after what I did, I decided I know this is who I am (=Tyler: Yeah) And I'm true to myself. And that's when I started being more, because there time, I would always hide my sexuality (=Tyler: Mmm), I won’t feel comfortable because I’m not sure, whether what I'm doing it’s wrong. And then, uhm, after that, I was like, “You know what, this is who am I (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I don’t care what people say, I'm gonna believe to what I’m, what makes me happy” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And… I'm not proud even to talk about it. But then, I feel like I should, and it’s an open space and, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), uh, even though it happened, but, even though I never regret, but then I believe (=Tyler: Yeah) it was supposed to happen for me to find myself. And I don't want to lie. After that happened. I started going to, to counseling and whatsoever (=Tyler: Okay). But now, I’ve finally healed (=Tyler: Okay), from my rape and, the relationship ended because my girlfriend found out. She didn't understand, because I was, I felt like I, I had to explain to her to make her understand, not knowing I was selfish, because I had this mentality, she’lI understand, she’lI know where I'm coming from and then it was like “Okay, that's how we feel, it’s her”. But it was a decision that I had to make. Maybe it was for me to through it, maybe it's my story that I have to work through it, and it, it was supposed to happen and it happened (=Tyler: Mmhmm) when the time she was there, but then, ja, it was….

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. So that girlfriend of yours, she didn't understand, uhm, that, what you were experiencing because you had been raped? (=Okuhle: Yeah) Or she didn't understand, w-, did you, uh, sleep with a man after that when you were in your relationship with that girlfriend? (=Okuhle: Yes) Oh, okay, and that she didn't understand? (=Okuhle: She didn’t understand) Oh, I see.

**Okuhle:** And I think, uhm, there were so many things that, uhm, we were not ready to be talking about (=Tyler: Mmm). Even though we were like best friends but, uhm, two years down the line, I find out she's HIV positive (=Tyler: Oh, wow). She, we, I think we found out at the same time and I think I had so much anger because she had this but, I was raped, so she got the HIV from me (=Tyler: Oh). So it, to her mind, it was like, “if I'm HIV positive, you’re also HIV positive” (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And I went to the clinic and I was negative (=Tyler: Ah). So we never had the time to actually talk about what actually happened (=Tyler: Yes), because, if I recall, right, we were, the time we were in the relationship, we were both negative, then what happened? (=Tyler: Yeah). What did you do that I don't know? (=Tyler: Mmm) But, I'm not, I'm not saying that she slept with a guy (=Tyler: Yeah). I’m not saying it, you can touch someone's blood without kno-, knowing, but we never literally talked about it (=Tyler: Yeah), it was just put it under the carpet (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And it got to the point, she was very, she was blackmailing me into the fact “why are you doing such things because you know my status?” (=Tyler: Wow). In which I was also finding myself and she was older, older than me (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I was young, and I always said “but I’m young, I need to do certain things, even though I am in a serious relationship but I need to do certain things, you need to let me explore,” because as I said, I never had the time to… to, to, to play around or, be with so many people because, every time I'm always been in relationship, it's like three years, four years. So I never had the time to, be single and to, to know myself and find myself, to the point that’s where I started, I still need to find myself after the whole thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Then I started finding myself, and for her, it was, yeah man it was like that. So it was, there were so many things that we weren’t talking about (=Tyler: Yeah, wow) and, for me, because, I, also, I couldn't say anything, I hadn't, I had no right to talk (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I felt like I’m being suffocated, in which right now, I'm talking a lot and people, they tell “why do you talk a lot?” Because, I always, especially like, in the relationship, I always tell that person I never had time (=Tyler: Yeah) to, to talk about or express about how I feel (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Because I was always told what I'm doing, it’s wrong. I can't say anything, uhm, I, I can’t even, I cannot be very emotional or whatsoever. I had no feelings. I just had to do (=Tyler: Yeah) what I was told to do (=Tyler: Yeah), because she was older than me and (=Tyler: Yeah), uh, then, it was a learning process. So (=Tyler: Yeah) I'm not letting anyone suffocate me.

**Tyler:** Yes. And it's like a, a sign of your strength now that you can talk about this (=Okuhle: Yes), and not be silent and, and feel isolated (=Okuhle: Yes) and stuff like that. Wow, that sounds like a very difficult time that you went through.

**Okuhle:** Yes, yoh (=Tyler: Yeah) it wa-, twen-, 2019 and 2020 was the most, like (=Tyler: Wow, yeah), but then I survived. I always go back and, then think I survived (=Tyler: Yeah) even though, uh, I think I saw her, two weeks back (=Tyler: Mmm). And she came to my house and it was cool, there was (=Tyler: Okay), nothing, there was, we didn’t, we still haven't talked about the whole thing she didn't understand (=Tyler: Mmm). As I said, we always had to hide everything and be covered and [inaudible] (=Tyler: I see). For me, it’s like I'm really talk about it and she’s not but then, in time, if that’s how she feels (=Tyler: Yeah), I have to accept it. It’s not like we're in a relationship, we’re not, but then it’s fine (=Tyler: Mmm), but I still believe, I wish I could explain to her why I did it, but then she doesn’t wanna hear anything. And also, I feel like, I also want to know about what actually happened, how did you get infected? At that time, we had no knowledge, sorry, we had no knowledge about the things you must do and whatsoever. Because we like, you know what we must go do with this and, and [inaudible], when it comes to having sex, we had to do thing we must do, things we mustn’t do. And I always tell her, *bana*, “know what, let me just, let us go to the clinic and have more knowledge and ask questions (=Tyler: Mmm), in which we never did it that. And, as I said, we started speaking, I think l-, this year, January, and she was like, uhm, “Know what, me and you we risked a lot. We risked a lot. And I'm telling you we did what we did, I didn’t wanna have”... And even though, uhm, after we breakup, I went again for a test, an HIV test, and I’m still negative (=Tyler: Okay) And was like, yeah, as long (=Tyler: Okay) I’m safe.

**Tyler:** *Shoh*. Well, that's good (=Okuhle: [Laugh]). Yeah. Wow. *Shoh* (=Okuhle: I’m glad I’m safe) Okay (=Okuhle: Ja). So, uhm, why didn't you express this in the focus group? Was it because of the time? [Laugh sigh].

**Okuhle:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Or anything else?

**Okuhle:** No - like the whole sort of me being raped or what story?

**Tyler:** Yes, that whole story that you just told me.

**Okuhle:** Uhm, you’re the second person I'm talking about it with (=Tyler: Really?) Yes. Oh, about the guy, also, yeah, even though I do talk about me being, uhm, being raped I always talked about it, but me sleeping with a guy I feel like, I still need to, to have strength to talk about it for people (=Tyler: Yeah), because I always feel, I always fear that, uh, the LGBTI community, they’re too very judgmental (=Tyler: Mmm). As I told you about that gay guy that is also (=Tyler: Yes) [inaudible]. So, I need to be, to be strong enough, whatever they say, I need to be like, “this is what I am. (=Tyler: Yes) And I’m okay with it, this is who I am” (=Tyler: Yeah, mmhmm). So, it's still a process that I’m, one day I will talk about (=Tyler: Yeah), I’m not sure.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Okuhle:** But we, also still, uhm, I’m waiting for sis-Asanda, we, we’re hosting an event about rape, so maybe I’ll have strength to talk about it (=Tyler: Yeah), I’m not sure.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Wow. Yeah, I think it's quite important for you to think about that and to talk about it. Uhm, you know, it's like, when you are surrounded by a lot of people who say that being LGBTI is wrong and it's, not real, or there's something, some problem, like, for example, you didn't find the right man, or you had a bad experience with a man and that's how you’re lesbian. And it's like you wanted to see, if you have a good experience with a man, does it do anything? And if it's no, then, you kind of feel “Okay, no, I'm not lesbian because of that (=Okuhle: Mmm), I’m lesbian because, it's who I am”, [laugh sigh]. Yeah, so, that’s good.

**Okuhle:** And I, ja, I, I think I needed, I needed that moment for me to find myself (=Tyler: Yeah). And it helped, I don’t wanna lie, it helped, it helped a lot (=Tyler: Okay). Today, I can stand and say this is who I am, even though I got raped, this is who I am, this is not gonna change, this is who I am.

**Tyler:** Yes. That's great. That's really great. Uhm, yeah, thank you for sharing that, I appreciate it (=Okuhle: It’s a pleasure). Uhm, so how do you feel about me being the moderator, and the interviewer?

**Okuhle:** [Laugh sigh], uhm, I feel very great and very comfortable (=Tyler: Yeah?), because I can tell you’re open-minded and this is like a very warm and safe space. I can talk about it, and, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. That's good. Uhm, is there anything that you think I can do to improve the focus group?

**Okuhle:** Uhm… No.

**Tyler:** No? … Okay, great. So, uhm, is there, any final thoughts that you have on the experience of the group and talking with other queer people?

**Okuhle:** Uhm… believe in who you are (=Tyler: Uh-huh), and be open-minded. Even though there are certain things that you went through, but then take time, and find yourself.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, great. Great. I think that's all the questions that I have, actually. Uhm, is there anything else that you want to share about your experiences or how you felt about the focus group?

**Okuhle:** No.

**Tyler:** No? (=Okuhle: Yeah, that’s all). Oh, okay, great. Thank you very much, Okuhle (=Okuhle: It’s a pleasure), yeah. Uhm, yeah, I'm glad that you found it was a positive experience (=Okuhle: Yes, it was) to share. Yeah.

**Okuhle:** It was, I mean, it, it, it gave me, it gave me time, to be, to be true to myself (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And to have like, an eye, to see, to see people in other level and stop being so very blinded of the fact that there are people who are judgement, whatever. That's why I said, uhm, I will get time to, to be open about what actually happened (=Tyler: uh-huh) and, for me, right now, as I said, you're the second person that I’m, I told (=Tyler: Mmm) this about it, and maybe as time goes, I’ll tell maybe more people (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), but I don’t know. So this is like a great experience (=Tyler: Yeah). And I feel very comfortable taking about it.

**Tyler:** Okay. Great. I'm really glad you feel that way. Can I ask, uh, why did you choose to tell me this story? (=Okuhle: [Laugh sigh]) If I'm the second person? [Laugh sigh]

**Okuhle:** [Laugh] As I said, uh, this is a safe space area, so (=Tyler: Okay), I feel like, ja, I should just talk about it (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). And I feel like it was needed to talk about.

**Tyler:** It was?

**Okuhle:** It was needed (=Tyler: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah), that, it was a need for me to talk about it. And, uhm, I don't know whether it's a process of me being ready to open, to be open about it (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and start talking about it (=Tyler: Mmhmm), but it's just a way forward (=Tyler: Yes), since [inaudible] there will be a third person [inaudible], you see.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. And I think about finding that safe space where you're going to feel like you're gonna be judged or something. So if you feel that, and you feel the need to express it, then, you know, you can make that choice to tell someone. So I'm glad that you felt comfortable and safe here, [laugh sigh] (=Okuhle: Yes I did, yes indeed). Yeah, great. Okay. So do you still have that list of counseling services that I gave you? (=Okuhle: Yes, yes I do). Okay, great. I think you are fine, because you are someone who goes to Triangle a lot, right?

**Okuhle:** Yes, yes, (=Tyler: Yeah), I, as I said, I'm doing so many, I’m also seeing another NGO. So I don't attend counselling by Triangle, I’ll attend another NGO, so yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay, great. Uhm, okay, well then, uhm, I will be in contact with you later, uhm, after I transcribe the recording for this interview and for the focus group, if you want to look at the transcript, uhm, and then at the end of the year, I will have the final report ready in case you want to see the report of this study (=Okuhle: Yes). Okay. Great (=Okuhle: Great). Well then, uh, any questions? Any last thoughts?

**Okuhle:** No.

**Tyler:** No? Okay. Thank you.

Percy

[Percy completes informed consent form]

**Percy:** What’s the date?

**Tyler:** Uh, the 16th. Of the 4th.

**Percy:** Okay.

**Tyler:** No questions?

**Percy:** Mm-mm.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], so I can start recording?

**Percy:** Pardon?

**Tyler:** I can record?

**Percy:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. So how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Percy:** Mmm, I’ve been good.

**Tyler:** Yeah?

**Percy:** Yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), pretty normal.

**Tyler:** You’re just, uh staying at home, in your, in your box, [laugh sigh], in your lane? [Laugh]

**Percy:** Yeah, I’ve just been in… it's, it’s just been normal.

**Tyler:** Uh, uh-huh. Yeah.

**Percy:** I don't think there's, there’s anything different I’ve done so far since.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay (=Percy: No, not.). Cool. Uh, so how did you feel about the focus group?

**Percy:** Uh, it was good. It was, like, like I said, it, it's been a while since I've, since I've been in a focus group (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And it's been a while since I've like openly spoke about my thoughts (=Tyler: Mmm). And just like talking, being in a space where you’re comfortable (=Tyler: Yeah) to openly speak about anything and everything, how you feeling, how you live (=Tyler: Mmhmm), how things are (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know so those type of things. So it’s, it's, it’s okay, it's been good. (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). It's just been a while since speaking (=Tyler: Yeah). Mmhmm.

**Tyler:** So the group was comfortable for you?

**Percy:** Yes, very comfortable (=Tyler: Yeah), it was very comfortable.

**Tyler:** Yeah, ‘cause I remember-

**Percy: ‘**Cause I, I felt I was comfortable even when, the, uhm, Uranaty, the ones that I knew came, ‘cause I didn't know they, they were coming (=Tyler: Yeah). So I thought I was gonna be meeting new people but still I was comfortable to openly speak.

**Tyler:** Yes (=Percy: Yeah) With those other two women who were here-

**Percy:** Yes, because I was comfortable from, from, from, set (=Tyler: Okay). Yah.

**Tyler:** Good. Nice. And what was it like to hear stories from them, also?

**Percy:** It was very interesting, neh? (=Tyler: Yeah). Reason being is that, uhm… my thinking, neh (=Tyler: Uh-huh, uh-huh), is… like, in, in, culturally, like in African culture or, f-, my background basically (=Tyler: Mmhmm), how things are dealt with, with regards to, like, homo-, homophobes, it's different, in regards to, some other people ‘cause I, I, learned from, I don't remember but the one with long black hair (=Tyler: Grace). Yah, Grace, ‘cause when she spoke about her like “Oh! So it's different, like, I didn't know that, I thought you were accepted, I thought, *mxm*, immediately, no, I I have a girlfriend so everything is fine, there’s, they don’t fetch much problems” (=Tyler: Mmm). I didn't know that, it's actually the same thing, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), yah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Cuz her family is very Christian and has big problems with her being a lesbian.

**Percy:** Yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), so it’s, it's just very interesting to know that, also, like… some people also experiencing the same thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And it's just people that were like “no they don’t get those much problems” (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Because like the life is, is, okay and (=Tyler: Yeah) the stability and everything so (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So you felt a sameness maybe, with Grace?

**Percy:** Yes, the samenessand then like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like we, we, we in this together (=Tyler: Mmm). It's the same struggle just, different… like, uhm, different situations, but it's (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), its the same struggle (=Tyler: Yeah), basically.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Did you feel any other sameness with anyone in the focus group, even Uranaty, Asanda, Okuhle?

**Percy:** Oh…Mmm… I think, just the space, man (=Tyler: Mmhmm). The space was, my neutral (=Tyler: Yeah)… space, the preferred space, it’s the space that I just prefer to be in, the people, the conversations, just, it was, just, it was my normal situation (=Tyler: Uh-huh), what I would do. ‘Cause I, I believe I’m, I’m, I live an abnormal life (=Tyler: Mmm) so it was just, what I’d prefer to do as my norm (=Tyler: Uh-huh), what I’d prefer to, to be like (=Tyler: Yeah), people like, I’d prefer to, to talk to, even if you meet someone in the taxi by the streets it's that mentality that I’d prefer to, openly speak about, you know? (=Tyler Yes). Because like there’s, there's no reason you can't have conversations in places (=Tyler: Yeah), like anywhere you can have an open-minded conversations but… people differ and their mentalities differ so (=Tyler: Mmm), a certain conversation could lead up to, something that is not good, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So ja, so it, the space was just, my normal space, the space I would prefer to be in (=Tyler: Okay, great). So it could have been with anyone (=Tyler: Yeah) but the mentality… Yah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. Did you feel, uhm, different from anyone in a significant way?

**Percy:** No (=Tyler: Mmm), honestly speaking, no (=Tyler: Mmm). I’m, I’ve, I’ve, since like, since December I’ve been going through a lot and there's been a lot happening and stuff like that (=Tyler: Mmm). So, like just, being, different people and just, like different mentalities and, like an open conversation, and just, life in general type of situation (=Tyler: Mmm). So, it just, kind of felt okay speaking for, for, for a second, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause I've been quiet for (=Tyler: Yeah) quite some time.

**Tyler:** Yeah, mmhmm. Yeah, you did talk about how it's difficult in your, in your environment (=Percy: Yah), uhm, and you have to like just not say anything, because if you say anything sometimes people can be like, you know, harmful towards you (=Percy: Mmhmm). Uhm, yeah, so you had the space to, to talk and it was comfortable (=Percy: Yeah). Yeah. Okay. Uhm, do you think your group members in your focus group disagreed about anything?

**Percy:** No… I hardly think so (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmm), hardly think so (=Tyler: yeah), reason being is that, like, I, I, I think, in each of us, we all have, something that, we all facing (=Tyler: Yeah). And then by, by dealing people that are facing some, some things are like, different things makes you realize that you're actually not alone in this. We might all be smiling and needing the same, safe space and (=Tyler: Mmm), just being friendly but, also, we also facing something like you are, like you are, like you are so, in each of us we're all facing something (=Tyler: Mmm). We are in, in one space, and we all share our thoughts, all share what we're facing. It's different, but the, but the emotions and everything, it’s the same.

**Tyler:** Right (=Percy: Yeah, so). Yeah, yeah, emotions-

**Percy**: It’s the same emotion, just different situation (=Percy: Yes). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. *Shoh*. Okay. Yeah (=Percy: [Laugh]). Uhm, is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't say?

**Percy:** Uh-uh. No (=Tyler: No?). Don’t think so.

**Tyler:** Okay. You felt like you shared-?

**Percy:** We were very loud, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh], very, very loud.

**Tyler:** No, it was good, [laugh sigh] (=Percy: Yah, [laugh sigh]). You feel like you shared Enough of your experiences?

**Percy:** Uh, yeah, pretty much, ‘cause I (=Tyler: Mmm) literally shared everything, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay. I have a question or two for you about some of those experiences (=Percy: Okay). So, uhm, you were telling us how when you were 15 (=Percy: Mmhmm), you left home, uhm, because things were really bad with your, your parents (=Percy: Mmhmm). Uhm, and then you were, you know, living on your own for a while (=Percy: Mmhmm). But then you moved back home (=Percy: Mmhmm). Uhm, eh, how did that happen that you decided to move back home (=Percy: Move back home?)? Yeah.

**Percy:** Oh, uhm… So it, it had been happened that, like, whilst I was living on my own, I was working, everything was good and, so it happened that I, I lost my job (=Tyler: Oh), like the contract ended (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So I still (=Tyler: Uh-huh), I stayed but then, like, I realized, ey, I’m actually, I’m out of options and I'm in a foreign place (=Tyler: Okay). Because I'm originally from Paarl, I was born in Saldana, I moved to Paarl so I’ve been in Paarl. So moving to Khayelitsha, it was… (=Tyler: Mmm) like, one big step in my life and I (=Tyler: Yeah), I, and without any backup from nobody so (=Tyler: I see) why. So I just thought okay, no, instead of just, still living here, ‘cause I still have to pay rent (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, so let me just go home. I'll build my shack and just, be in my space (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So I negotiate-, ‘cause my mom didn't want anything to do with shacks in her yard, [laugh sigh], you know (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). So I, I had to, to speak to her on the phone a couple of times about idea and, so she finally agreed and I moved back, built myself a shack, bought the equipment and just stayed, stayed in my shack and, *mxm*.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. In the same property as your-?

**Percy:** Yeah the same property just the back, like now (=Tyler: Yeah), there’s a flat now ‘cause I sold the shack, bought bricks and (=Tyler: Okay) built the flat (=Tyler: Okay). So I stay in that flat now.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah, I see. So it was a financial decision.

**Percy:** A, a, as long as, I don't ask her anything, yeah, and she’s fine (=Tyler: Mmm). As long as I don't bother her with anything (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause like in, for instance, yesterday, uhm, I think it was around eight so I, I, when I finished washing the dishes, so I just, I left, I like “goodnight” and then like “Where are you going?”. I need to go find money (=Tyler: Mmm) to go like to come here because I was short with twenty Rand (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So I just told her “no, I'm just going to, to, to check if, to ask for twenty Rand because there is somewhere I’m going in the morning”, so I just left, she said nothing, slept (=Tyler: Mmm). So it's, it’s just like that when I, when I, when I have to go somewhere. I just wake up, I bath, I go (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I come back later, “Hi I’m back” and that it (=Tyler: Yeah), when I leave, “Hey, I’m going” (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). So it’s… (=Tyler: Yes), it’s pretty, same, neutral.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Because sometimes you said that you can still have, uh, arguments with your mother (=Percy: Yah!), when she tries to teach you lessons (=Percy: Mmhmm), uhm, or something like that. Uh, yeah....

**Percy:** So it's, it's just (=Tyler: Yeah) … it's difficult man (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). Because when you, when you live like, especially with your parents, you don't expect to, to have like some struggles, like especially financially (=Tyler: Mmm), and when they know that you don't have a job and you, you just always there so. So I just guess you just kinda expect something (=Tyler: Mmm). Like expect them to see that you, you do have problems but you don’t ask (=Tyler: Yeah). So it's just those little things, but yeah (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah, okay). But I’ve just learned to deal with them and (=Tyler: Yeah), find ways to have money or if I don't have it then I just don’t have it, if I don’t (=Tyler: Yeah), if I borrow then I just know that I have to give them back whoever I borrowed so yeah (=Tyler: Mmm), that’s it.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mhmm, yeah, and I'm sure maybe it can be uncomfortable to be at home.

**Percy:** Yeah, very (=Tyler: Yeah), but I'm just always in my, in my space (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah. But-). So just to keep myself out of that as well.

**Tyler:** Yeah. But you did also talk about some, times feeling more comfortable, for example, like with your cousin, uhm, and he sometimes has friends and the friends ask (=Percy: Oh) about you, but then he tells them to stay in their lane, [laugh sigh].

**Percy**: Yeah, in their lane (=Tyler: Yeah, uhm), and, just mind their own business (=Tyler: Yeah), and their own lives (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, and you also, uh, became friends with some guy, uhm, because, he could see you were feeling a bit defensive or-

**Percy**: Yeah, he’s an open-minded person.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And he also had, it's kind of a sameness-difference thing-

**Percy:** His own struggles in his own world (=Tyler: Yeah), and, yeah.

**Tyler:**  Like some people thought he was gay, but he’s straight (=Percy: Mmhmm), so-

**Percy**: Even now he ha-, he has a gay friend that he sent me a picture of and, like his gay friend is like really gay, is like that girly gay (=Tyler: Uh-huh), type of person (=Tyler: Yeah). So that vibey, like that vibey gay type, I’m like, *shoh,* and he was like, *yoh*, I have this friend and he sent me a, a picture of them like they were in the groove. Then he just sent me a picture of them dancing ’cause he loves to dance and I couldn't dance (=Tyler: Uh-huh, [laugh sigh]), [laugh sigh], to even save my life. So, so I was watching the reel like “ah, this is nice” like all, very vibey, all dancing and like “Yeah he’s a’ight and whatnot” and I’m like “That’s a’ight” (=Tyler: Yeah). It's, it’s good that you have a new best friend (=Tyler: [Laugh]), that is a male so you replaced me (=Tyler: Oh, yeah). So it like “nah, it’s nothing crazy”, yeah, then ahh, yeah. (=Tyler: Uh-huh. He's very comfortable-) So it’s, yah, he’s (around people) he’s very comfortable (=Tyler: LGBT people, yeah). He’s very cool, he’s a cool dude.

**Tyler:** Okay, nice (=Percy: Mmhmm), yeah (=Percy: He’s very nice). So, uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now, after the focus group?

**Percy:** Uhm, even bolder (=Tyler: Yeah?). Yeah. And just more… like, okay and (=Tyler: Okay), just… freely, flying (=Tyler: Uh-huh), if I may put it that way (=Tyler: Yeah). I’m just glancing through the clouds and just, being in my zone and (=Tyler: Uh-huh), doing, what I have to do (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), living the life I want to live, or, the way I want to live it (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah, so, this little bit like neutral type of situation (=Tyler: Okay, okay). It’s just not trying to let everything get in my mind and stuff like that.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uhm, yeah so like, did it help you to hear that you're not alone in some of these feelings?

**Percy:** Very, very very, it helped a lot to know that actually… Like, I'm not alone in this situation and (=Tyler: Yeah, mmm) … I just have to face some situations and let them be what they can (=Tyler: Mmm). Yeah, so (=Tyler: Mmhmm, yeah, okay). We can’t change it so we let it be (=Tyler: Yeah), be okay with it, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, yeah, well, that's good. I'm glad that you feel that kind of security, maybe (=Percy: Mmhmm), yeah. So, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer, [laugh sigh]?

**Percy:** Uh, great actually, you can (=Tyler: Yeah?), it's just easy to talk to you. And it's just simple, man (=Tyler: Mmm), it's not, there, there's no boundaries or anything (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or any reason not to say anything. It, it's just a fluid conversation, man (=Tyler: Yeah). Yah. It's just a click, yah (=Tyler: Yeah). So I don't think I'll be here if the last time wasn't (=Tyler: Yes), that great, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), so yeah it, it’s just been okay talking and, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, good. I'm glad that you felt comfortable (=Percy: Awesome, [laugh]), yeah. Do you have any feedback for how I can improve the focus group?

**Percy:** No, it's, it's good (=Tyler: Yeah?). It's good. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. So-

**Percy:** Coffee next time.

**Tyler:** Oh yeah?

**Percy:** I’m, I’m a coffee fan, especially in the morning.

**Tyler**: Say again?

**Percy:** I’m a coffee f-, I’m coffee person (=Tyler: Coffee for next time, [laugh]), I’m a coffee person (=Tyler: Yes, yes), especially these times in the morning (=Tyler: Uh-huh), cup of coffee is very good (=Tyler: Yeah). But anyway, that's o-, that's only thing, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay, [laugh], thanks, yeah, yeah. Uhm, so I think that's all the questions that I have (=Percy: Mmm). Is there anything else that you want to share about your experience?

**Percy:** I actually thought I wasn't going to be doing one-on-one (=Tyler: A one-on-one?), [laugh sigh]. I realized that when I got here in the morning, they, when I asked for Uranaty and Okuhle, they were like “it’s one-on-one”, oh, Asanda, ‘cause Uranaty wasn’t here. Oh,I didn't realize actually (=Tyler: Really?) that I was gonna be doing one-on-one, legit (=Tyler: Oh). I did not realize I was gonna be doing one-one-one (=Tyler: Okay). But it's all good, though (=Tyler: Okay), no problem.

**Tyler:** Why? Why did youfeel you didn't want to do-?

**Percy:** No I thought, I thought it's gonna be next time (=Tyler: Oh), ‘cause I thought today's is a focus group (=Tyler: Again?) feedback, with the group (=Tyler: Oh). And then next time is going to be one-on-one. So that’s why I thought it’s, was gonna work. (=Tyler: Oh, okay), yah, so I thought it was feedback day (=Tyler: Mmm) for last time, yeah.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. I see. Okay.

**Percy:** It was just the confusion I had. (=Tyler: Yeah). Must have read somewhere (=Tyler: Sorry about that) ‘cause I’m sure you did mentioned it somewhere, but I just must have not, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah), read it (=Tyler: Yeah). But it's all good (=Tyler: Yeah). There is no problem.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So towards the end of the year, I will, produce the final report for all of the focus groups that I do, if you want to read that, uhm, then I'll let you know (=Percy: Great, I would love to-) what I do that. So that's like feedback on the focus group (=Percy: Uh-huh), uhm-

**Percy:** Yeah I’d love to (=Tyler: Yeah). No problem.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, so you don't have any other thoughts, experiences, comments?

**Percy:** No, it’s very much shared (=Tyler: It’s good?) Yeah, everything, it’s just talking.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. Thanks, Percy. So, I will just-.

Uranaty

**Tyler:** Yeah, it’s the same. [Uranaty hands the complete consent form over]. Okay, thanks. Uhm, [inaudible], so I can start recording?

**Uranaty:** Okay.

**Tyler:** Okay. [Activates voice recorder] (=Uranaty: [Single cough]).Okay. So, uhm, how have you been since the last time you were here?

**Uranaty:** Yeah, it was great, ‘cause, I think, some of the things we, we spoken, I managed to get it from, to take it to, to my safe spaces (=Tyler: Oh, yes?). Yeah. Because we, we having some similar issues (=Tyler: Uh-huh) with the, with the talk that we had last time (=Tyler: Yeaah). So they were grateful to know that there are also people who are suffering from what they are suffering from (=Tyler: Mmm). So yeah, I think that was (=Tyler: Okay), was an experience to share (=Tyler: Okay) with others.

**Tyler:** Good. So what things, uh, did you, did you share with them? What was (=Uranaty: I shared-), what was similar?

**Uranaty:** Okay, I share that, how do they, they prefer themselves to be called (=Tyler: Mmm), as, being ‘lesbian’ or ‘queer’? Most of them, they prefer to call them ‘queer’. Some of them, they, even though they don't know yet wha-, who, they are ‘lesbians’ or not. (=Tyler: Mmm) ‘cause they are still young (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So they don't know what to choose ‘lesbians’ or ‘queer’, some they don't understand what ‘queer’ is, want me to explain what ‘queer’ is (=Tyler: Yes) to them, so they can explain, and you can for some reason you chose to be queer than to be a lesbian (=Tyler: Yeah). So yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I remember you said you prefer queer (=Uranaty: Yeah), because to a lot of other people, ‘lesbian’ sounds something negative (=Uranaty: Something negative, yes), like an enemy or something. Uhm, but, uh, how do you feel about your what your other focus group people were saying – that they prefer ‘lesbian, because people understand that, and they don't ask questions, but for ‘queer’, they don't understand (=Uranaty: Mmm), so they asked questions? Yeah.

**Uranaty:** I think we, we, we prefer different things (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So I will say to them, if you prefer to be called a lesbian, it’s fine for yourself, and if you prefer to, to be called queer, it’s fine for yourself ‘cause, you don't have, you don’t share the same experience about those two words (=Tyler: Mmhmm), so.

**Tyler:** Yeah (=Uranaty: Mmm). Yeah. Okay. Good. Uhm, so, uh who did you feel, uh, what did you feel that your group members agreed with?

**Uranaty:** They agreed to be called as a lesbian (=Tyler: Uh-huh). They (=Tyler: Okay), they prefer to be called as a lesbians ‘cause, they grew up knowing that it’s a lesbian game, and they don’t know another, they don’t understand (=Tyler: Yes) what does ‘queer’ mean (=Tyler: Yeah). They only know that there's a lesbian, there’s a gay, there’s a LGBTI (=Tyler: Yes). And so (=Tyler: Okay), uhm, even some of them, they, they want to become like, other lesbian, they want to be called, like, man, so maybe they are trans, but they even didn't, didn’t know how, to explain themselves that they are trans (=Tyler: Yeah, maybe). You can be trans but you don’t know that you trans (=Tyler: Uh-huh), so, yeah.

**Tyler:** And in the focus group that we had, how do you feel about agreement?

**Uranaty:** About agreement (=Tyler: Mmm) about ‘queer’ or ‘lesbian’?

**Tyler:** Or, about anything. What do you think your group agreed on?

**Uranaty:** The focus group last time? Oh, I think we, we all were on the same page, because our stories were similar (=Tyler: Mmmm) were similar, that, ‘cause we, we share the same thing (=Tyler: Mmm). And then we, what can I put it? We… we have differences. We have differences, so, I think we shared some good things together and experience to each other (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and knowledge, also bring knowledge to each other.

**Tyler:** Mmm. Can you give an example?

**Uranaty:** Like, like I've said that, I've never have an experience with being chased away (=Tyler: Yeah) at home (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Some others have experience with, so I, so those others who shared that they have experience to be chased at home, so I can able to help those who have been chased at home.

**Tyler:** Yeah, because you feel-?

**Uranaty:** Yeah, I can feel the pain, I, I did, I’ve listened to what they've said, and what is, what is it like to be chased at home.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. Okay. And then maybe you can help them to feel accepted?

**Uranaty:** Yeah, and, most of them, some of them, in other times I can live with them, I give them home somehow (=Tyler: Oh, okay) because I think three, I’m sharing a home with three, with three lesbians (=Tyler: Okay) ‘cause they’ve been chased, the past two weeks (=Tyler: Wow). So now it's time to get them, like, a shelter or, anything because we can’t stay in the one flat we have (=Tyler: Yeah), we are three (=Tyler: Yeah), ‘cause there’s COVID (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah, yeah). So, I'm trying to get them some safe place.

**Tyler:** Yes. That's really great that you can offer them a space to stay and-

**Uranaty:**  There's no where they can go if you chase them outside, they will get raped or (=Tyler: Yeah), but, yeah.

**Tyler:** *Shoh,* okay. Uhm, is there anything that you think your focus group disagreed about?

**Uranaty:** We disagreed about… about coming out (=Tyler: Mmm). We disagreed about that com-, the others wanted to come out, and the others don’t, for me, I didn’t, I didn’t say I want to be coming out (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So they say we're going to be coming out (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Still now I don't understand why I should be come out (=Tyler: Yeah). Some of them wanted to come to be known. I don't want to be known. It's fine. It's who I am, so…yeah, they say that.

**Tyler:** Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah, so that's fine for you, if you don’t want to-

**Uranaty:** It’s fine for me. I don’t want to come out. Come out for who? (=Tyler: Yes, yes) ‘Cause if a straight guy didn’t say to me that “I’m straight”.

**Tyler:** Exactly. Yeah (=Uranaty: Mmm). But then for other people, like Grace, for example, she said that sometimes it can be positive for her to come out to people (=Uranaty: Mmhmm). What do you think about that?

**Uranaty:** It *can* be positive for *them* to come out (=Tyler: Yeah), ‘cause, yeah, maybe they're intimidated, some other guy is trying to… get them but (=Tyler: Hmmm), they’ll say “No, I'm lesbian, so don't, don't do that stuff”, and that, (=Tyler: Mmhmm), that’s where you’ll, that’s where people get, like beaten and this stuff when you say “No I don’t want you, I’m a lesbian”, “Why are you dating another girl?”. There’s issues coming on that point when you coming out (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm, mmhmm), I think so, some of, no, maybe of them, some of them, they like i-come out (=Tyler: Yeah), so you can’t just say you can’t (=Tyler: Yeah), because I don’t want to come out, so.

**Tyler:** Yes, exactly. I think maybe it's like the terms that you use to describe yourself (=Uranaty: Mmm, yeah). It's just for you. What other terms people use it, it’s for them (=Uranaty: It’s for them, yeah). Yeah. Okay. Uhm, is there anything that you wanted to share in the focus group, but you didn't share?

**Uranaty:** Mmm, last time.

**Tyler:** Any, any experience that you wanted to talk about, but maybe there wasn't time to share?

**Uranaty:** I think it's, it’s a, we, we, we, I don't know if I need, an experience or what, ‘cause there are… In my community (=Tyler: Mmm), they know, they know me, I’m a lesbian, all this stuff, and I’ve never been discriminated or stuff ‘cause I have been living in a small community (=Tyler: Mmm). So, I've never been dis-, discriminated or stuff. So, I think I should, I need when other people from other, communities come to me that, I need help from, so I think I need like skills, or things to know what I can do, or what help I can get (=Tyler: Mmm) first so that I can help them (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Just those three people, I live with them.

**Tyler:** Right, right. Okay. Okay. So there's no other experience you thought about, like sameness, difference and being queer, to talk about in the focus group, but you didn't talk about it?

**Uranaty:** No, I don’t think so.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, interesting (=Uranaty: I don’t think so). I remember you said something about, like, you know, there are problems inside the queer community (=Uranaty: Mmm). Uhm, like, for example-

**Uranaty:** Yes we do discriminating each other.

**Tyler:** Hey?

**Uranaty:** When we are discriminating each other. Like (=Tyler: Yes), you know, being bisexual, all that stuff

**Tyler:** Yes, and uhm, aga-, discrimination against trans people (=Uranaty: Trans people, ja, and intersex), and maybe some people question like, kind of butch lesbian (=Uranaty: Mmm) get pregnant or something like that. Do you have, uhm, any people you think of, for example, that have, uh, behaved that way?

**Uranaty:** Yeah, there are people among us like in Triangle Project (=Tyler: Oh really?), uh, among us, obv-, obviously we gonna get, if we do that. “How can you be butch and get pregnant?” (=Tyler: Mmm). I understand why a butch can get pregnant, because, also has eggs and is, also a human being (=Tyler: Mmm). So I think we, yeah, also, also in Triangle we need, we need, we need someone who gonna teach us that, you can get pregnant, whereas, whereas, even in our community, they will be shocked that, why a femme get pregnant? (=Tyler: Mmmm). Now she's sleeping with, guys, all of the sudden (=Tyler: Mmm). I think we also need knowledge and also that, we’re, that, we discriminated bisexual people (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). You know that you can even, bisexual but not dating guys (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Even, even, a man can be bisexual, even that I’m looking some other guy, “No, *yoh* guy it’s very cute, “you’re bisexual in your mind but not dating guys (=Tyler: Mmm) than the other bisexual people.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay, so people who have bisexual attraction (=Uranaty: Yeah), but they don't do anything about that attraction?

**Uranaty**: They don’t do, they don’t do, they are not bisexual.

**Tyler:** Yeah, why do you think that is?

**Uranaty:** I think, you share feelings, I think, I think it’s, you don't share feelings, with it’s, emotional feelings. You don't share feelings with, that person, but you share the “Oh, this guy's is very cute”, nah-nah-nah (=Tyler: Uh-huh) which you sometimes say “I wish, she was look-, he was looking like a girl”.

**Tyler:** Oh… oh okay, I see.

**Uranaty:** Even that, even, even color skin, we’re discriminating each other with color skin ‘cause, if I'm dating a White chick (=Tyler: Mmm), like, “how can you date a White chick? There’s a lot of Black chicks”, but (=Tyler: Mmm), I said I wanna date a White chick, that’s fine (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). I think that's also an, an, a problem.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. So, uhm, is, is the problem about certain boxes, like a box for lesbian, and if you do something that (=Uranaty: Yeah) doesn't fit with that box, then people say “but why you're doing it?”?

**Uranaty:** Also people are boxing themselves.

**Tyler:** Yes. And the same with race, only boxing yourself (=Uranaty: Yeah) to date within your race. Yeah.

**Uranaty:** Even some of our parent will always say that, lesbian, lad-, men should date a woman, women should date a man, they are boxing themself… We also are boxing ourselves, also.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm, yeah. And you say that there isn't, uhm, someone to, to help, people at Triangle Project who have these issues?

**Uranaty:** I think we should have someone (=Tyler: Mmm) to come and teach us, no, maybe like, even a workshop, someone come and teach us, a lesbian can get pregnant (=Tyler: Uh-huh) even if I’m, even if someone is, is a butch lesbian and pregnant (=Tyler: Uh-huh) and tell us that “I, I got pregnant because I wanted a baby (=Tyler: Uh-huh), it doesn't mean that I’m a less of a lesbian” (=Tyler: Right, right). So we need something like that, like a workshop that we can, get taught, taught that, this is it (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). You can get pregnant. That's all.

**Tyler:** Mmm, okay. Yeah. Uhm, so how do you feel about your queerness now after the focus group?

**Uranaty:** I feel stronger than before (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). I feel stronger than before ‘cause, I’ve shared what I wanted to share, and I received some, good sharing people (=Tyler: Uh-huh), things that they wanted to share. So, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. So it, it feels, uh, like, empowering (=Uranaty: Yah), to, to, uh, to share and not be judged, and also to listen to-?

**Uranaty:** To others. Even if we go, even if we’re together like Triangle, you don't know, what Okuhle is thinking and what Percy is thinking. So it help us to, to come in the focus group and say (=Tyler: Okay, yeah), what we were thinking so it's like, we, we sharing some things that we don't know from each other.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah. Because you don’t usually speak about (=Uranaty: Speak about-) these things.

**Uranaty:** -anything, we just have fun and (=Tyler: Yeah) talk about crazy things so (=Tyler: Yeah), we don’t even share about serious things that is happening in our lives (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So it was, lovely to (=Tyler: Yeah), to hear how they feel so you can’t push the button where they can be angry or (=Tyler: Yeah), some stuff.

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah, because obviously you and Okuhle and Percy and Asanda, you know each other (=Uranaty: Yeah). So do, how would you describe your friendship now, after the focus group?

**Uranaty:** It's, our friendship has always been stronger. So I think it's still stronger now, yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay, cool, [laugh sigh].

**Uranaty:** We’ve been friends for a long time, so.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. So, um, how do you feel about me as the moderator and, and interviewer?

**Uranaty:** [Laugh sigh], you’re very calm (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Yeah, you’re very calm and, and very good listener (=Tyler: Mmm). I think, yeah, you’re very calm and a good listener and, you've came to learn, not to come to say that “I know” (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). You’ve come to learn from, other people (=Tyler: Mmm) and you didn't say that “I know, this is gonna happen, so I want this.” Some of, uh, uh, the other people, like, facilitator will say this “I want this, I want this, I want this” (=Tyler: Yeah). So, they won’t expect them to cross the other line and talk about other things (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). So they come for “I’m gonna to do this and do this and go” (=Tyler: Uh-huh, uh-huh). So I think you, you had listened for what we wanted to do (=Tyler: Okay), and even you came back for second opinion. So others will do that and, never come back (=Tyler: Yeah). Take pictures and, and go on (=Tyler: Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah). So we appreciate that you can also want to see how we feel (=Tyler: Yes) about the focus group. So we appreciate that (=Tyler: Okay). We've talked about that with Okuhle that we, we never see that someone will gonna call us again-

[Percy opens the door]

**Tyler:** Hi. [Percy asks for coffee]. Huh? [Percy reiterates]. No, I'm sorry, not today, [laugh sigh], thank you.

**Uranaty:** But, we spoke about, how, Okuhle that we, we never see someone that was gonna come in and ask us to do another f-, it’s follow-up (=Tyler: Mmm), a follow-up (=Tyler: Mmhmm), yah. We never see someone is gonna do a (=Tyler: Okay), come do a follow up. We just thought we’re gonna do a workshop and it’s done.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh. And you appreciate this?

**Uranaty:** Yah, we appreciate that you (=Tyler: Okay), you’ve call us again and see how we feel, maybe one of us we’re hurt (=Tyler: Yeah) to the focus group, so, yeah.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh, uh-huh. But you, you weren’t hurt after the focus group? (=Uranaty: No, no, we’re not, we’re not). Okay, okay, good. Yeah, that's great to hear that you also are benefiting from a follow-up interview, also. Yeah. Do you have any feedback, uhm, how I can improve the focus group?

**Uranaty:** I think it's us who are gonna improve like, we need to take, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah, the time), the time, time, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). I think you, you done nothing wrong (=Tyler: Okay). You did well, so it’s a round of applause.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], okay, thanks (=Uranaty: Pleasure). Yeah, so because of the time of the focus group, you came a bit late. Is there anything else that you wanted to share about your experiences?

**Uranaty:** About being lesbian?

**Tyler:** Yeah. And sameness and difference with other people in your life.

**Uranaty:** Oh,I think I will give an advice.

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Uranaty:** Look, to be a lesbian. Let’s just stop to that mentality to party with the lesbian will always get drunk and do similar things (=Tyler: Mmm?). Yeah, lesbian do that. We must stop that, we must stop doing that. Because in face of people, yeah, they are gonna get drunk, you're gonna have sex, all the stuff, any way they want to have sex, so (=Tyler: Mmm), I think we should stop that, we should regain our dignity.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Uhm, stop that practice? (=Uranaty: Mmm) Or show that there's more than that practice?

**Uranaty:** There is more than, more than that (=Tyler: Yes). And not all of us are there, but, once they, you do one thing, then they all.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, I see. Yeah because also, you know, straight people do that as well, [laugh sigh]

**Uranaty:** Mmm. But since we lesbian, so…

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm… Okay, yeah, that is good advice. Yeah, I think it's, is it part of what you were saying, like, we have to, fix some of the things inside the community (=Uranaty: Mmm) and then reach out to (=Uranaty: Reach out the community) the straight world? (=Uranaty: Yeah). Yeah… Okay. Great. So those are all my questions, Uranaty (=Uranaty: Okay). Uhm, do you have any last thoughts or, questions, comments?

**Uranaty:** No, I think, you guys have like social workers? You do have social workers?

**Tyler:** Uhm… do we have social workers, at UCT? I think so. (=Uranaty: Mmm) Mmhmm. Why?

**Uranaty:** Actually there are people who would like to refer to them to social workers, they need social workers (=Tyler: Mmhmm). They need people to speak to (=Tyler: Mmm). They can speak to me, but they don't give them, [cough] (=Tyler: Yes), what they need to have.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I'm not sure. I don't know anyone who is a social worker (=Uranaty: Mmm) But I think, you know, Asanda was telling me now, that she's trying to organize an event next month (=Uranaty: Mmm) with social workers and some people. Have you spoken to Asanda about that?

**Uranaty:** Yeah, we did. I did, I did (=Tyler: Okay), we did spoke about that.

**Tyler:** Okay. If I, I will ask, around and if I hear of something, then I can (=Uranaty: Okay) give that information to you.

**Uranaty:** Okay, it will be appreciated.

**Tyler:** Okay, great (=Uranaty: Yeah, thanks). Cool. So then we can stop.

Violet

**Tyler:** So how have you been since the last time I saw you?

**Violet:** It's, uhm, been a bit, uh… varied, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), in terms of work. I’m still looking for, like, full-time employment (=Tyler: Mmm). So a lot has happened, and also nothing, [laugh sigh], has happened, like interviews and discussions and just, and nothing (=Tyler: Mmm). So… it's, yeah, it's been a bit tough, but (=Tyler: Yeah, that's sounds really frustrating). Yeah, and it's been like a year and a half of it now. Uhm (=Tyler Wow) … [shrugs], (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) it is what it is.

**Tyler:** Yeah, so rough (=Violet: Yeah, there’s nothing I can do now). Mmm.

**Violet:** There’s nothing I can do about it besides carry, on (=Tyler: Mmm). Um, but I did go to, a queer party which was (=Tyler: Oh), it, health-wise a terrible decision (=Tyler: Okay). But, uhm… that was fun (=Tyler: Okay). Last, this past Saturday? Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah? ... Okay, nice (=Violet: That’s about it, yeah). That's really cool. Uhm, what kind of event was it? Do you mind telling me about it?

**Violet:** Yoh, so it's called Same-Sex Saturdays (=Tyler: Uh-huh). It’s, based out of (=Tyler: Ohhh) Jo’burg usually (=Tyler: Yes) and, they’re kind of doing like a tour of (=Tyler: Yes) the country. Uhm (=Tyler: Uh-huh) … so they brought it here for the first edition, it was at Waiting Room.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah, I heard about it. Yeah (=Violet: Mmm). Cool.

**Violet:** It was great, it was really fun, yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice. Yeah (=Violet: Mmm). Okay. Well, we can get right into the main discussion, which is, how did you feel about the focus group?

**Violet:** I was really glad to be there (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm. I find it funny that it seems like this is, like, the lesbian cohort. Like I don't know who else, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah) you had, but a lot of people [laugh], just, descended on that particular day (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm… and I appreciated listening to everybody's stories, it was all so, different (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm… And some of them have definitely sat with me, uhm, since I've just, you know, been thinking about (=Tyler: Yes?), what I can remember I guess, so.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay, so what kind of moments have sat with you? What have you been thinking about since then?

**Violet:** The one woman’s story in particular, I can't remember her name but (=Tyler: Okay) she was in the yellow top, uhm…

**Tyler:** Mmm, Asanda, I think,

**Violet:** Yes (=Tyler: Mmm), she got married at 18 and (=Tyler: Yes) just, really that whole, progression of her story. Uhm… because also, to be honest, like… if I saw this woman walking, if we were walking down the street together, I would never think she was queer (=Tyler: Mmm), you know? (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, uhm, people always say that of me (=Tyler: Yes) all the time, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yes, I was about to say, yeah.

**Violet:** [Laugh], and I, when I think I look gay, all the time, [laugh] (=Tyler: Uh-huh). So, [laugh], I think I’m… whatever (=Tyler: Yeah). But I’m, but I really, uhm, I think because I'm in spaces where, mostly, for the most part, people are, like, visibly queer in some way (=Tyler: Mmm), all the time and, so I just get to pretend like I am too and like we’re all on the same page [laugh] (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And, uhm, it was, it was very special, I think, for me to be there and remember like, it, you know, there’s family everywhere (=Tyler: Mmm). That, and that's, that's how I, that made me feel, and especially with her story, Asanda’s story.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's quite interesting. Because, yeah, as you say, like all participants there

identified as lesbian in some way. Uhm (=Violet: Mmmhmm), but there was also like, some interesting, difference in your stories, uhm (=Violet: Mmm) and the way that you identify and, what labels you use and why. Uhm, so is there anyone that you felt a kind of sameness with, in a, in a way?

**Violet:** Everybody in a way, I think (=Tyler: Mmm), at, at different points, you know, you'd say something and somebody would nod, like (=Tyler: Right). And then you just assume, “Okay, maybe that specific thing that I said resonated with this person in some way” (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and I felt that from everybody at some point, the person that was sitting next to me (=Tyler: Mmhmm, Percy), seemed like we have a similar approach to family (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… Percy on my left (=Tyler: Ah), uhm… I guess we, we converged on ideas about gender in a way (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… Grace (=Tyler: Mmhmm)… shame, maybe I didn't have a whole lot. Well, actually, I remember feeling similarly to Grace coming into my first year of university (=Tyler: Okay) and just wanting to be queer all the time (=Tyler: Yeah), and, you know, [laugh], just like explore this, thing that I, that I could not in the same way still, you know, being in a high school environment and (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), varying like, degrees of Asanda's story of just like who she is (=Tyler: Yeah) And I don't remember a lot about the person sitting across from me, but, uhm, for me it was just in the, in the moments of nodding (=Tyler: Yes). Like I could tell “Okay, there's something here”, (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uhm, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay (=Violet: [Laugh sigh]), yeah. Is there anyone that you felt a difference with in a significant way?

**Violet:** Uhm, actually, well the person sitting next to me I thought it was funny when, not funny but, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm)… the way they said… the, oh, that whole story of like “Oh, I don't understand how, why we need to come out” and (=Tyler: Mmm) some people, uhm… I guess,… linked that to them being more masculine-presenting and maybe there's just like (=Tyler: Yeah) a degree of… uhm… you know, yeah, you know what that is, and, and I think I, didn't I, I, I know that of people I suppose, and my partner’s more genderfluid and presenting and (=Tyler: Mmm)… but I guess I, I really wouldn't know ever what it's like to have people just *know* (=Tyler: Right), uhm, from, from a single conversation or from just like, looking at me (=Tyler: Mmm). And I, I, yeah, I wouldn't, not to say that this, that is immediately this person's experience because like heteronormativity will always still be a thing and (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), we always make assumptions but, uhm… I, I guess I never really thought at that point how much work is kind of cut out for you, uhm, or like how how much it can be (=Tyler: Mmm). Not to say that it is, but, but that it can be, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). So I guess that there was a difference, there (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm…(=Tyler: Mmhmm). [Sigh]…

**Tyler:** And, but what did (=Violet: I mean-), yeah? (=Violet: Yeah?) [Laugh].

**Violet:** No, no, carry on.

**Tyler:** What did you feel about agreement and disagreement dynamics in your, in your group? … If we're on that topic of difference, did you feel that you disagreed with anyone or agreed with anyone, in… in ways that come to mind significantly?

**Violet:** No, I felt that everybody, I guess was handling themselves (=Tyler: Mmm) in a way that made sense to me even if it wasn't, uhm, what I would do, I (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, I… There were some stories that I really just couldn't, that were so far out of my – I would absolutely comprehend them because I know, what people are up against, how they live, et cetera, it’s like – but for me to actually be in that, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), environment, like I could never really say what I would do, so, (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), uhm… I would, yeah, I just, I understood why everybody had gotten to a (=Tyler: Yeah), the place they’d gotten to, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. So, uhm, whose stories felt that kind of distant to you in your personal experience? Was it like, Asanda and her arranged marriage? Was it (=Violet: Mmm) someone else… Also?

**Violet**: I think more so Grace and Percy,actually (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). Yeah. Grace’s, uhm…uh, I guess, religious aspect with (=Tyler: Mmm) her family... So… yeah, I, you know, I come from a religious, mother (=Tyler: Ja). Uhm. She's Catholic, but…

**Tyler:** But you did (=Violet: But it) say your family was more or less supportive of you?

**Violet:** Yes, and (=Tyler: Mmm), and that extent of, uhm, that really weighing down on her, uhm, I… Yeah, I, I couldn't really imagine that. And (=Tyler: Mmhmm)… it's, Percy didn't go into it in great like, detail, but it's evident that she experienced violence and, uhm, again, this is one of these things where you know, and you hear from people you meet (=Tyler: Mmm), articles and, you know, it's like a, I suppose at this point, like a quintessential queer experience in the country but, I think, uhm, it will always… hit me, I guess, whenever somebody is in front of you, kind of (=Tyler: Mmhmm) thing that… uhm, and somehow you just all ended up in the same place, you know, like (=Tyler: Yeah) all, ended up sitting here, telling our story. Uhm (=Tyler: Mmm)… So I think those two felt the most distant from me, actually.

**Tyler**: Right. Yeah. (=Violet: Yeah), yeah.

**Violet:** Because I think it feel distant because they're still sitting in the, uhm… the shit, man, you know, they're still struggling it every day (=Tyler: Yeah), whereas everybody else, I think had come to some kind of conclusion with family and therefore (=Tyler: True) with who they could… be, you know (=Tyler: Mmm) outside of that, that initial space (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, everybody else had come… to a, a more like, friendly, you know, understanding (=Tyler: Mmm) kind of resolution and, and they had not, and I, don’t know if they ever will (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, yeah, you're right. But uhm, I also wonder like, even though you have had a different experience in terms of, like, not really experiencing the violence that, uh, Percy was describing, or not having those staunch religious family issues, uhm, you did also, you know, mention like being out in the, uh, the cis world or the straight world, uhm, and still experiencing certain, like, anxiety or a little scaredness (=Violet: Mmm) or nervousness. Uhm (=Violet: Mmm), and, so it's, in kind of a way that you're also, sometimes still in it, even though it's obviously very different, but (=Violet: Yeah), yeah.

**Violet:** Yeah, no, you’re never f-, yeah, you're never fully... (=Tyler: Mmm) out of that (=Tyler: Mmhmm) and yeah, I'm not, I don't think anybody ever will be or is (=Tyler: Yeah). I think I'm, I’m more so relating it to family (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah) and, specific, like, that can come out of, out of that (=Tyler: Mmm). For me, in the grander, I'm trying to make more decisions… to be, you know, out (=Tyler: Mmm) in, in, in circles that aren’t necessarily queer or (=Tyler: Mmhmm) spaces that aren’t for my family. It's difficult (=Tyler: Mmm!), but I had, I had a workshop last week (=Tyler: Yeah), it was…I was, I was doing the whole, like, Queer 101 thing. And, uhm… eventually (=Tyler: Yeah), and, and a big part of it was that I had to be, open and, uhm, my, the person who contacted me really wanted me to, share, myself and be vulnerable and be honest and whadda-whadda (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and she didn't know, well, I hadn’t told her that I was queer, she was just saying in general. At some point, so I basically had to take this group of people through like the realities of homophobia (=Tyler: Mmm), and transphobia and at some point, during the discussion, I was like, “Well, you know, I do this work, but I'm, I wasn't even gonna tell you guys that I'm queer.” And then the conversation led off from that and, ended up being really positive (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ended up being like two, it was only like six young women that I was with and two other facilitators. And uhm, ended up being like two of them are probably queer, but they're just like sitting with it and dealing with it (=Tyler: Mmm). And I don't know if they would have said that if I hadn't said anything (=Tyler: Right). And then even the woman who contacted me, in like th-, I was dropping her at home (=Tyler: Mmm) after the session and, in like the last 10 minutes of us, having been talking consistently for weeks, she was like, “Oh, I'm also in a same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Hmmm!) but I also didn’t tell any-, like I don't tell people, I don’t shared it in, my (=Tyler: Yeah) work.” Yeah. And uhm… that, so I guess… I guess it's just the whole thing of like, you, you being out and open allows other people to open and (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm), [laugh] the story, you know, the circle.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay (=Violet: But uhm…) Uhm (=Violet: Mmmm, yeah?), [laugh sigh], yeah, uhm, I, I wanted to know, like, as someone who works in, uh, gender and sexual health and sexuality education, right (=Violet: Mmm), and you just described like a workshop that sounded in some ways a little similar to my focus group. Uhm, so, what, how do you feel about this focus group that you participated in? Like as someone who works in that, in a similar, kind of, field?

**Violet:** What do you mean? (=Tyler: Uhm, [laugh sigh]). No, I mean, like I definitely feel, felt myself as a participant (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and… it was, uh, good for me to know what ideas I think about sexuality and gender are kind of turning in people's minds (=Tyler: Mmm) and at the same time, of queer people, all who are involved in…a, a queer community somehow outside of themselves (=Tyler: Mmm). So, in that way, then those, there would be ideas circulating and, and things changing but, uhm…. So I find it interesting, you know, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah) and, especially from the, from the position of a participant, which I’m usually not, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). So, but what do you mean, tell me more?

**Tyler:** No I just meant, like, uh, the usefulness of, of the group (=Violet: Mmm) like that for, like exploring sexuality and gender (=Violet: Mmm) experiences.

**Violet:** You know, it also just humbled me a little bit (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) because I have… a very, you know, limited, I think…uhm, I think I'm, I don’t, like, I, I would say, I'm not sheltered (=Tyler: Mmm), because I… go out and put myself in certain environments and spaces, and I read and I learn, and I talk and I blah-blah-blah. But I, but I am absolutely sheltered like, by my own experiences and positionalities and, the way I move around the city and, what I have access to so, uhm… It was also just a bit of a, maybe not humbling, but uh, you know, a necessary kind of reminder, I think of like, the fullness of the queer experience (=Tyler: Mmm), that isn't just me reading about stuff on my phone (=Tyler: Right). Or, you know, uhm, or watching a documentary or (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, chatting, with like a, a certain few friends (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, because a lot of my friends, who are very close to me, in some regard do have like, a working relationship with queerness with their families and (=Tyler: Okay), who, uhm, you know, are part of the same circles that I am a part of (=Tyler: Mmm). So… so we, we are in a bit of a bubble, I suppose (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm… where it's, I guess it's unfair to say like learning about other people's trauma is helpful. But, but as far as my work goes (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, it's definitely… you know, in a way… allows me to, I think, be a bit more… explicit, I think, in the things that I describe in my workshops (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… Yeah.

**Tyler:** Alright... Yeah. Cool. Uhm, so is there anything that you wanted to say during the group that you didn't say?... Any, like experience of sameness or difference, uhm…?

**Violet:** I think so, but I'm not sure I can remember.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's okay. I remember that you actually had to go, uhm, because of the way that the, uh, the interruption with people coming late happened, it moved, like the discussion, uhm. But, uhm, I remember like around 12, that you h-, kind of had to go, but you were in the middle of describing a situation that happened, uhm, with a couple of your friends who were a non-binary pairing (=Violet: Mmm). Uhm, but like the, they were in an unhealthy relationship and the masculine one, masc, the more masculine one was being abused by the more feminine one (=Violet: Mmhmm), and your other friends were reluctant to believe that (=Violet: Yeah). Uhm, do you, do you wanna say anything more about that particular incident?

**Violet:** Well you remember it quite clearly, so (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh]), [laugh], that’s, that’s it, that’s literally what happened (=Tyler: Oh, okay). Uhm, there were, yeah, just a handful of friends who… were hesitant to believe them in the beginning and, uhm, the friend themself, assumed that all of the friends within our circle would immediately gravitate towards you know, their feminine ex (=Tyler: Okay), which, yeah, was… in a way, I suppose that, that has happened, but it also hasn't (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm… (=Tyler: Okay) I guess it also just comes back to like, who, who was your friend, in the first place? (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, who was closer to you in the first place? But, uhm… yeah, sorry, it's, it's, it’s, what, what can I, what can I say?

**Tyler:** No, I'm, I'm, I was just asking since you had to leave at that moment. I was wondering if you were done with, kind of, with, with the story before you left. Uhm.

**Violet:** Well, yeah, I, I, I think so (=Tyler: Mmm). It was more so the… the, even though that these are two non-binary people (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the way that gender interpretation, I think, has, uhm, the role that it has played in the, aftermath of all of this, I think is actually pretty significant. There (=Tyler: Yeah) are ways that identities and presentations were leveraged (=Tyler: Mmm) against others, positionalities were leveraged. It's become a very politicized, uh (=Tyler: Mmm), break-up (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, uhm, ‘cause they, like alongside gender presentation, they also just come fromm incredibly different backgrounds (=Tyler: Oh yeah?). Uhm… so… (=Tyler: Mmm), [sigh], yeah (=Tyler: Okay), that’s it.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay, I see. Yeah, it's a complex situation. Uhm, ja.

**Violet:** So yeah, it’s tough to talk about.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I'm sure it is. Uhm, another question that I had, uhm, on the way that you were, you know, talking about how, you'd like, “queer”, but also “lesbian”, and you (=Violet: Mmm) want to kind of bring forward some of the history of “lesbian” being a more open term than something that only describes coupling between cisgender women (=Violet: Mmm). Uhm, you know, and you use that for yourself. Uhm, but you don't want to impose a, a “woman” identity on some of your partners who have been trans, non-binary, etc. And you also mentioned, uhm, at one point that you had – or have, I'm not sure, uhm – a trans boyfriend, and I was wondering if he or they, uhm, were fine with you using the word “lesbian” to describe your relationship?

**Violet:** So we, broke up, about (=Tyler: Okay) almost 2 years ago, and, uhm… the idea of like, identity labels was always very confusing (=Tyler: Mmm) in our relationship. It was weird, in the beginning, they were not, uh… out as trans (=Tyler: Mmhmm), as far as I can tell, they actually had a pretty strong lesbian identity (=Tyle: Right), and therefore also needed me to take that on... And there, and I didn't really because, uhm, I was young, and I just didn't know myself, I didn’t know what was going on, didn't know what this thing meant, uhhh. Uh, I was 18, they were 20 when we met (=Tyler: Okay). And then over, and, over time, to not like to throw you into too much of like, that relationship history (=Tyler: Okay), but, that then sort of turned on its head when they really started to stand in their gender. And, then, it became of, like, a bit of like, a dirty thing, I think, because, uhm, because they probably really wanted to like renounce this rejection of womanhood (=Tyler: Mmm). They were like, “No, fuck that word”. Uhm, sorry, for that (=Tyler: No, it's fine, [laugh sigh]), swearing, [laugh]. Uhm… and so then I could not be that thing either (=Tyler: Mmm), and then, but then also projected a whole lot of like, lesbian-ness onto me. So, it was, because of that relationship, was just a very, like, tricky (=Tyler: Mmm) thing. So I was only able to come out of that and look at myself, you know, after the relationship, somehow a little bit towards the end as well, because I think as, they became more, uhm, secure in themself, I was also able to just be my own person. Uhm, so… so yeah, I think a lot of that… Uh, I feel like, if we were still together… hopefully, uh, now, at this point in both of our lives, they would be able to, understand where, why, what that means to me (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm…but it's no, no, the, the, the label is not something I have to contend with in a current relationship, yeah (=Tyler: Okay).

**Tyler:** Okay, I see (=Violet: Yeah). Yeah.

**Violet:** And, he’s not masculine, he's not, a trans man, so that level of fluidity also, like, there's a lot to (=Tyler: Mmhmm) play with there as well (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm… yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that's quite interesting to see that, you know, that ex-partner of yours was, kind of using, uh, their own gender journey, as, as, like a point at which to, kind of, uhm, at least express how you should identify, as well. Yeah, quite tricky, [laugh]

**Violet:** It was a tough time, [laugh]

**Tyler:** Yeah. Wow (=Violet: Yeah). Okay, so, this might be a, a weird question, I don't know, but, uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now after having participated in the focus group?

**Violet:** It makes me, uh… it just makes me, happy, (=Tyler: Mmm) that queerness has so many stories and is so varied and yet is still something that, I think everyone in that room was really proud to be (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… and… I really love being in queer community (=Tyler: Yeah), no matter what the context is, or the reason for being there is (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm. It’s very special to me. And, uhm… even going into it, I felt good that I was gonna be around other queer people (=Tyler: Mmm), you know. Uhm… and so I definitely felt, happy having left. Grace, we left together, and she asked me for my number so she could contact me in the future, [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). She was very sweet, and I just, uhm, yeah, I just felt that, a, a, a quite deep appreciation for that and (=Tyler: Mmm), probably not, okay, maybe it this, I shouldn’t be telling you this but, uhm, no, I just, I chatted to like my partner about some of the (=Tyler: Okay), some stories I had heard and, and I definitely had a dialogue about it, like, the, in the few days after that and (=Tyler: Mmm), I didn't give any like, identities (=Tyler: Sure) or anything, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, at all. But just some of, you know, some things really sat with me and (=Tyler: Mmm), and I needed to get that out (=Tyler: Yeah). So I, I felt really happy, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, great (=Violet: Mmm). Yeah. Uhm, so this one, please answer quite honestly. Uhm, how do you feel about me as a moderator and interviewer?

**Violet:** I felt you were a really good listener (=Tyler: Okay), uhm. I felt you were maybe a bit hesitant, I know, you said consistently like, uhm, that you're not gonna p-, like, you know, impose too much or participate too much. And I did feel that there was a bit of a hesitation on that part, that I don't know what your like, intentions are, I suppose, with like that style of, uhm, moderating. So that's, that's, that's for *you*. Uhm, but I felt (=Tyler: Yeah) you were kind and like, just a very good listener, I think. And you were able to… I guess, move, move things along quite well, you know (=Tyler: Okay), when there was like a dip, or a, yeah, a moment, you were able to keep, keep things going.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool (=Violet: Yeah). Thanks. Uhm (=Violet: Mmm), so do you think, uh, do you have any feedback for how the focus group can be improved?

**Violet:** Not really. Uhm… (=Tyler: Okay) No, not really.

**Tyler:** Cool. So that's, uhm, basically almost all the questions that I have, uhm, except for, is there anything else that you would like to share about your experiences of sameness and difference, about queer identification? Anything that still comes to mind that you think you didn't get a chance to say?

**Violet:** Uhm… well, I could say something, I could round it up (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh]), formally. Uhm, [laugh], (=Tyler: Sure) for me, like, I think I said in the, in the focus group that, uhm, I’ve largely just been in relationships, I haven’t really dated and stuff so (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm… I've always experienced a difference on many levels with all of the partners that I’ve had, [air quotes] “all of them”, a handful (=Tyler: Right). And, difference has always been a part of, the, communal queer experiences that I've been involved in. Uhm, there's, yeah, there's just, I think, a constant, thread of sameness and difference running through, uhm, many of our experiences (=Tyler: Mmm). The assumption, I suppose is that, people have the same bodies or the same genders or the whatever, then, uhm, there'll be like an inherent relationality (=Tyler: Mmm), if that’s even a word, but that's very rarely ever been the case for me (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Which is wonderful (=Tyler: Yeah), but when there is a, a same, an experience of sameness it's also so, uhm, profound, for me, I also hold on to that (=Tyler: Yes), uhm, quite sacredly when it, the, the times that it has happened.

**Tyler:** Yes.

**Violet:** Uhm, so, and I've found sameness, in many different aspects of my life a lot, with many different people but, but the sameness in a queer context is always very special.

**Tyler:** Mmm (=Violet: But, uhm) yeah, I think it kind of-

**Violet:** And so is the difference, I suppose.

**Tyler:** Hey?

**Violet:** Uhm, and so is the difference, as well (=Tyler: Mmm) but, I think, speaking on sameness and how impacted I think by sameness in queer friendships I've been in the last, few years (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, it’s actually been quite profound.

**Tyler:** Yeah, uhm, I remember you saying like, when you were growing up, uhm, you kind of sensed that you were different from a lot of other people, but didn't really have the language to explain to yourself why you were different or how? Uhm, and it was a lonely experience also, I believe you said. And so, would you then say that like, that profound experience of sameness, uhm, is the opposite of loneliness? … You feel-?

**Violet:** I hadn’t really thought about it until you said it (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), uhm [laugh]. But I guess so, yeah, sometimes, what makes, uhm, those sameness experiences so special for me is like, I can go back and think, how I would feel if I was a child, and this person was in my life and, I had this, like, interaction with this person, with both of us being children (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, some friends that I've made in the last couple of years, have become so special to me, because… because I could imagine growing up with this person (=Tyler: Oh, okay), or I wish I had, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, that's like a thing that I feel with a few recent friends (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and I think I never really thought about it like that and made that connection.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Well, if you hadn't made that connection, let me not, [laugh sigh], also impose or anything, [laugh sigh]

**Violet:** [Laugh], no, I mean, it’s something to think about, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Cool. Well, Violet, I have, yeah, that's, those are all the questions that I had for you. Is there any, any final thoughts? If not, that's fine, [laugh sigh].

**Violet:** Uhm, no, no, nothing really, just thank you for, for the opportunity (=Tyler: Okay) to share with other people.

**Tyler:** Yeah, you’re most welcome. And thank you, again, for participating. I really appreciate it. Uhm, yeah, so, do you still have that list of counseling services that I sent you? Or, gave to you? (=Violet: It’s somewhere) It’s somewhere (=Violet: Yeah). Okay, cool (=Violet: [Laugh]). Uhm, if ever you lose it, and would like another copy, then you can email me at any time and I can send you a digital one. That's fine (=Violet: Cool). Uhm, and I will compensate you like immediately after this, uhm, both the, the voucher you received last time? (=Violet: Mmm), yeah? Okay, cool. So there's another one and then the remuneration for the data. Uhm, and then I will be in touch with you later, when I have transcribed both the focus group and this interview, in case you want to look at the transcripts. Uhm, and then also, towards the end of the year is when the final report will be ready. So I’ll let you know when that's ready, in case you'd like to read it as well (=Violet: Okay). Okay.

**Violet:** One thing that I can say (=Tyler: Yeah?), sorry, ‘cause you (=Tyler: Sure) asked about, me in this interview as somebody that does the work that I do. You know, actually, I did an, my Honours in, on queerness, I suppose, let’s just say that (=Tyler: Mmm). And so, it was interesting for me to be on the other side of that because I did participant research and (=Tyler: Yeah) it was, I was very, uhm, way more like taken by the process of, of interviewing than I was by like the actual thesis writing, like I, like my priorities were just… not right, uhm, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay.

**Violet:** But, uhm… so it was, I, you know, a lot of like the routine, like researcher things we have to talk about, the, the consent forms and, the this (=Tyler: Mmm), and, all of those processes was, it was fun for me to (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, watch someone else do that, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, I totally agree. This is probably the most fun part of the entire research is actually talking to participants, yeah (=Violet: Mmhmm). Mmhmm.

**Violet:** Yeah that was, that was, I’d, I'd been in one other like, I think it was a PhD study, but I was very young (=Tyler: uh-huh). Uhm, so, since doing my own research I haven’t been like a participant in anything, so it was, yeah, nice, nice.

**Tyler:** Cool (=Violet: [Laugh]). Yeah. I'm glad you enjoyed it (=Violet: Mmhmm). Okay. Well, thanks very much, Violet. I really, yeah, good luck with, [laugh sigh], finding work, uhm (=Violet: Thank you), and everything. And yeah, I'll, speak to you, later.

**Violet:** Cool (=Tyler: Cool), have a good day

**Tyler:** Thanks, you too.

Focus Group 4

**Tyler:** [To Benjamin]: No questions?

**Benjamin:** No.

**Tyler:** Cool.

**Natalia:** My name is Natalia.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** [Collecting consent forms] Oh, great, thank you.

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable mumbles]

**Tyler:** Thanks.

**Lola:** Will we be notified when the study is published?

**Tyler:** Yes. Yes, I will definitely be in contact everyone who participates, in case you’d like to read the final report.

**Lola:** Yes.

**Tyler:** Yeah, totally. [To those handing forms over] Thank you. Yeah, so you all have, uh, nametags that are by you. If you’d like to change anything on them, I hope there’s nothing wrong, [laugh sigh], then there is a marker for that. Uhm, but if you’re fine with them, then that’s cool. Okay… Okay, great, thanks very much. Cool, so thank you all for coming. Uhm, it means a lot to me, and I hope it will mean something to you, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so, if you’re feeling a little nervous about participating, that’s totally understandable, uh, perfectly fine. Uhm, but there are some things that I can say that hopefully will, you know, uh, calm your nerves a bit. Uhm, one of the things is, as you’ve seen on your consent form, I am recording this session. There is this voice recorder here, and there is a video recorder over there. Uhm, but you don't need to worry about who has access to the recordings, because that's only me and my supervisor. No one else will see them. And when we transcribe the recordings, when we're finished with that, we will delete the recordings permanently. So there'll be no trace of them. And when we transcribe the recordings, we will remove your identifying information, like your name, that's why we use your pseudonym, and other details by which people can identify you specifically as having participated [All nod] Cool. So, uhm, there are more things I can say, but before I get to that, uhm, I think we can, uh, you can actually warm your voices up a little bit, [laugh sigh], with an icebreaker. Uhm, so just introduce yourselves and tell us like what you usually do in your free time, like, what do you do for fun? And how has that changed during the pandemic? If it's changed. Okay, anyone can begin.

**Benjamin:** Uhm, my name is Benjamin. Hi, uhm, I suppose during the pandemic, I become a stoner, but I’m not much of a stoner anymore (=Several]: [Laugh sighs]). Uhm, ‘cause, like, I just ask [inaudible] to stop. And, [cough], sorry, weed cough (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Then, uhm, what else did I do? Study and read (=Tyler: Mmm). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice.

**Malcolm:** Okay, I'll go, uhm, I'm Malcolm. And what I, I don't really go out that much anymore (=Tyler: Mmm), I'm so swamped with work all the time. But I enjoy hanging out with my friends. I love going to the beach. During the pandemic, watching movies, and so I must have watched all the Marvel films (=[Several]: [Laughter]) twice over again. So yeah, reading, writing, ‘cause with, with school and study work. Yeah.

**Lola:** Uhm, hi, my name is Lola. Uhm, although I'm not sure how long I'll keep that, I'm experimenting with some new names. Uhm, and in my free time before the pandemic, I didn't have much ‘cause I work full time and I'm studying through [university]. And now with the pandemic, I work full time, study through [university] (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Uhm, but I enjoy going to the aquarium and reading and sleeping (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), when I have time (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah.

**Natalia:** My name’s Natalia. I like to read, write, walk, watch series, it's pretty much stayed the same in the pandemic. I guess it's become more focused, more structured, but it's still just really the same. Just having fun, really, ‘cause I've just finished university and I don't know (=Tyler: Mmm) what I'm doing so, figuring things out.

**Lola:** Congrats (=Tyler:Nice). Yeah (=Tyler: Well done).

**Caleb:** Hi, I'm Caleb. Uh, in my free time, I jog, but the pandemic really, went away, or I stopped a bit, but I've, starting again now. Uhm, but, and I read a bit, so, ja. Ja.

**Tyler:** Cool. Nice. Yeah, I, I also read, it seems we have quite a few readers here, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but I haven't been doing that so much, uh, during the pandemic, j-, uh, also a job and studies (=Benjamin: [Cough]), uh, makes it hard, [laugh sigh]. And yeah, hiking, uh, going out of my friends, which obviously has been compromised by the pandemic. Uhm, I think one thing that changed for me is like I like going out, uh, but I also like, uh, like getting ready to go out (=[Several]: Mmm). So I've kind of invested more time in, uh, the pr-, like practicing my makeup art (=[Several]: Mmm) Yeah, so I just, do that a lot of the time. Yeah. And then just take it off, [laugh sigh].

**Lola:** Do you think we can close that blind?

**Tyler:** Yeah, sure (=[Several]: [Laughter]) [Gets up to close it]

**Lola:** Sorry, like I just feel like I haven't, like I can’t even see Malcolm because I'm just avoiding the sun (=[Several]: [Laughter])

**Tyler:** Yeah, sure, [inaudible].

**Lola:** Uh, that’s so much better, thank you so much.

**Tyler:** [Inaudible] Uhm, cool. [Closing more blinds]. Okay, great. Uhm, so then, the topic for discussion today, uhm, I asked you to think about two things. So, the one is how would you describe the way you identify? And the other one is what experiences of sameness and difference with other people, friends, family, romantic partners, strangers, society, other queer people, not queer people, etc., have been important to your life, or what comes to mind when you think sameness and difference with other people, in important ways, right? And, that means, uh, a few things. Both of those questions, they are quite personal, right? And, uh, they're also very open to interpretation. Okay, so that means two things. It means there are no right or wrong answers. There's no incorrect way to describe how you identify. There's no incorrect way to say “this is an experienced the sameness or difference I have felt”. Cool. And, uh, that also means that we want to hear from everyone because it's so open to interpretation, there are many possible things we can hear [Lola nods]. Yeah. Cool. So that's the ‘what’ of the discussion. The ‘how’ of the discussion, let me start with my role. So I am not really an interviewer. I don't have a list of questions that I ask and then you all talk to me. This is a discussion amongst and between all of you, you all talk with each other. And I'm going to be slightly less involved than you are. So, uhm, I will be listening and watching. And I will, uhm, you know, jump in to ask if, if someone can explain a little bit more about what they're talking about. Uhm, you can also do that with each other, ask each other to elaborate a bit. Uhm, I will also jump in if the topic goes way off track (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]), just to bring us back in. Uhm, and also if it's necessary, uhm, to ensure that the space remains comfortable and safe and respectful for everyone. Uhm, but, yeah. So, another thing about, uh, that respectfulness is when you ask, uh, someone to elaborate on something, and if you feel uncomfortable elaborating, you can say that, you know. You can say you're not really comfortable talking more about that, and we can all respect that and move on. All right. Cool. Does anyone have any questions about what I've said [All shake heads]... No? No comments, thoughts?

**Benjamin:** All good. [Music playing outside]

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. So then we can start with the first kind of topic, which is, how would you describe the way you identify? Anyone can begin.

**Benjamin:** I’ll start, uhm (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]) … so, my experience has been like, relatively privileged in terms of like, so I’ve got ADHD so I’m already neurodivergent, so like, I've never really struggled with my sexuality [Tyler opens clipboard on lap], or like what I identify as. Like, always been fine being a man, so like I’m just, a cis man, and I never personally struggled with my sexuality, so just ga-, I’m gay. And I've just never been attracted to women, so, unfortunately (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]). Yeah, yeah, so, gay’s, gay man [Natalia nods] (=Tyler: Yeah). [Inaudible], ‘cause I also think with ADHD it’s quite, that's not stuff that I, I’ve struggled with. I rather struggle with like, everyday things [Lola nods] like, just, executive dysfunction [Lola and Natalia nod], so, I don't worry about the, like, pronouns and all, like I’m…

**Lola:** If I, I'm nodding a lot, I work with neurodiverse children (=Benjamin: Yeah). So I, I see that a lot that the, it tends to be the more neurodiverse they are, the less they struggle with their identity. And they kind of just like, “Oh, well, this is another thing”. And they kind of go on with it. So, if I looked very enthusiastic, (=[Several]: [Laughter]) I’m not being creepy, I’m just like yes that’s, that’s true to what I've (=Benjamin: Yeah) noticed.

**Tyler:** Interesting.

**Malcolm:** Okay, I suppose [inaudible] (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Uhm, yeah. So, in terms of how I identify, I, I identify as a, a male. Uh, uhm, I suppose if I, if I use the terminology, then it's a cisgender male [All nod], right. Uhm, but I am gay, I’m homosexual, I'm attracted to, to other men, romantically, sexually, whatever. Uhm, think I had a girlfriend like in primary school (=[Several]: [Laughter]), whatever, because that was the thing to, to do. Uhm, I think in, in grade eight when I just started high school was like the last time I was interested in a girl but mostly [Tyler nods] because, [laugh sigh], I think that was more pressure from family and cousins and, because I've been called a *moffie* and things like that since I'm very small. Some of my cousins and family reflect on that with me, “*ons kan dit sien dat jy’s a moffie van drie jaar oud*”, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), that kind of thing? So I think that made me scared. But by the time I got to high school, I was like, “this is who I am”, you know. I don't think, sometimes even if a, a lady must touch me, you know, like feel, not, [laugh sigh], molestation but even just their hand grazes me, even that makes me [shrugs in discomfort], you know, that’s how (=[Several]: [Laughter]), how not interested I am on that. I love women, the most important people in my life alone. You know, my mother, my sister, my late granny, but, uhm, yeah. I’m a gay male, I suppose. Yeah.

**Tyler:** Nice.

**Lola:** Well, my story's a little longer than, (=[Several]: [Laughter]), than that, if that is okay (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, so I use the term ‘queer’, because I find it the most encompassing [Malcolm nods] and because I like that it's a little vague [All nod]. I think this is a setting where I'm happy to kind of unpack that. But generally, when people ask me, like, “Oh, what are you?”, I'm kind of like, “I don't owe you that information” [Malcolm nods]. Uhm, so I use ‘queer’ as, as a defense I suppose [Tyler nods], to like, “it's none of your business” [Malcolm nods]. And also because, it is always been the one that's most comfortable for me. It's the most fluid and it allows me to be fluid, in my experience without having to like update people all the time, you know (=Malcolm: Mmm). Uhm, so, uhm, in terms of, of, like sexuality, I kind of just use that as a, a broader brush (=Malcolm: Mmm). And then, in, in terms of gender, uhm, that was a bit of a harder thing to unpack. Uhm, so I, uhm, obviously AFAB, right, so Assigned Female At Birth [Malcolm & Tyler nod], and I'm still very femme-presenting. Uhm, because something that I think we're still figuring out, even within the queer community is that gender identity and gender expression are not the same thing, right? (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm) So I can use ‘they/them’ pronouns and be non-binary, and still have long hair, and wear makeup and, uhm, be very femme-presenting. So that's been interesting, because you can't really get upset with people for making assumptions when your presentation is kind of what's expected from you [Malcolm, Benjamin, & Tyler nod]. So I am always misgendered but I don't, get too in my feelings about it, because I'm not really giving them a lot of visual clues to go off of (=Tyler: Mmm), so, uhm, like, I use ‘they/them’, but I mean, I get ‘she/her’-ed a lot. And it's kind of just what it is. Uhm, so I identify as, as ‘queer’ in the broader sense for sexuality, and then, even the label ‘non-binary’ I’m not, [sigh], super comfortable with (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, I don't know. So, like ‘queer’, ‘genderqueer’ as a whole, I suppose, uhm, there's a lot like more to that but we, we can get into it, what, what about yourself? [to Natalia]

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Benjamin:** Do you think ‘non-binary’ is kind of the same as ‘queer’ in terms of it's just, less, it's just a term for that, and ‘non-binary’ just means ‘I'm somewhere on the spectrum’?

**Lola:** I think a lot of people do use ‘non-binary’ as an umbrella term (=Benjamin: Mmhmm). So I don't like mind it (=Benjamin: Mmm). I think we have, we're starting to get a bit of a specific presentation of non-binary (=Benjamin: [Inaudible], which is like a really androgynous (=Benjamin: Ja; =Caleb: Mmm) or even feminized AMAB person. And so, like I don't, or at least, that's the image that I’m being (=Benjamin: Mmm), that I see in the media and, and things like that. So, when you say ‘non-binary’, that's the image that pops up in my head. And I don't look like that. I don't relate to that sort of presentation. So, yes, I think it is an umbrella term, but it's not one that I feel affinity- (=Benjamin: You don’t identify with being ‘queer’, ja) towards. I don't identify with it, because I don't see myself in the way that it's portrayed (=Caleb: So, w-) But technically, yeah.

**Caleb:** So would you, you said you feel more comfortable with people calling you ‘genderqueer’. Like w-, is, relating to your gender.

**Lola:** [Sigh], I feel comfortable with people not referring to it at all.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Caleb:** Yes, no, that’s what I’m saying.

**Lola:** I mean, so for me, that’s like biggest thing that's always, like, I will admit that I used to, uhm, like not really understand transgender issues at all (=Caleb & Benjamin: Mmm). And I was like, ‘cause people would be like, “Oh, you know, they wake up and they don't feel like they belong in their bodies”. And I was not like, “I don't wake up and feel like a woman, like what nonsense is this? Nobody wakes up and-” (=Caleb & Benjamin: Ja). That was my first clue, uhm, (=[Several]: [Laughter]), apparently some people do! And, uhm, and so for me, it was kind of, it was more the, the rejection of the expectation of what it means to be my assigned gender than a strong pulling towards something else [Tyler nods]. So it's more the absence of feeling like a woman than feeling androgynous or feeling like a man, or-

**Benjamin:** Do you think – okay this is a bit off topic – but do you not feel that maybe those feelings “I feel like a woman” is not necessarily related to, like, your gender or your sexuality, and it’s more just, your s-, how you, your, like, your mental state at the time, like your psyche? Because I know for me like, dealing with anxiety, depression and everything, like, my feelings come and go, and I’ll like recognize that I feel like doing something but it’s not because I actually want to do that, it’s because of something else. That's just the way I've like learned how to like think (=Lola: Yeah) about that. Do you-?

**Lola:** I think (=Benjamin: Mmm?), yes and no, right? So I think, uhm, something that, has always, like, made me feel like I'm not [air quotes] trans enough or like non-binary [Tyler nods] enough is that (=Benjamin: You don’t fit in that box) I don’t experience intense dysphoria, right. And so I spoke to my boyfriend about this the other day because I was like, “maybe I'm just faking,” and I had like a whole crisis and he was like, “shhh”, uhm, ‘cause he's also trans, he’s a trans man [Benjamin nods] and so he has a vastly different experience, but we can relate on some issues. And he reminded me that while I don't necessarily feel dysphoric, I feel a lot of euphoria when I'm gendered (=Benjamin: Mmm) [Tyler nods] with ‘they/them’, or when I'm handled or perceived in a, in a more neutral way. And so, while I do think that that fluctuates and maybe that’s, maybe ‘genderfluid’ is a better word for me then, I don't know, these labels are all very like subjective, right?

**Malcolm:** Yeah, and I think I,I think maybe it's like the people that you've come into contact with also they, they want to understand (=Lola: Mmm) and they want to, they want to know, it's like you have to come out every time (=Lola: Ja), which is so annoying (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]), but, ‘cause you ha-, because the, of the questions they ask you, I suppose you must now try and also put it into perspective for yourself, “okay, this is how I am this is how I am not, this is what I don't agree with, this is…”.

**Lola:** I think the, the, the f-, the leaning towards ‘queer’ in general (=Malcolm: Mmm) is also just like, an excuse for me to not have to try and put it in a box, because it's really difficult (=Malcolm: To, to, exactly), and that’s all, like what you said is very valid. And like, I also suffer from mental illness and stuff. So when you're depressed, you don’t feel like anything, [laugh sigh], right? (=Benjamin: Yeah) You, you lose, or I at least often lose all sense of identity and, and what I am and what I love (=Malcolm: Mmm), and who I love. And, and so I think that that's like a very valid insight. Uhm…

**Benjamin:** Going back to what you said about, you just, so for you, your, your, the drive to explore your gender was more a positive, positive reinforcement in terms of euphoria when you do it. And for your boyfriend, you said it was a more, a negative, dysphoria, like a negative thing of like, what do you call it? A negative….

**Natalia:** Like a self-deprecating-

**Benjamin:** Not reinforcement or whatever but ja (=Lola: Ja). Do you, do you think there are more like, are those only two options, or do you think people like experience-? I suppose, if you experienced the negative one, you will probably experience, like the positive reinforcement as well, when you do accomplish it.

**Lola:** Uhm, I think, speaking like, sorry I've got to hair my mouth, uhm.

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Lola:** Speaking, uhm, which I don't like to do, but like speaking on behalf of what I understand of my boyfriend's experience is that, uhm, he has both euphoria and dysphoria [Benjamin nods]. I think what I've noticed in my circles of my friends, is that when you are binary trans, right, it's a lot easier to like find things that affirm your identity [Tyler nods], because we go “Oh, blue is a boy’s color, makeup is a girl’s thing,” okay, these are not true things (=Benjamin: It’s more defined), but it's more defined, whereas like, to find things that are gender-neutral, that people perceive as neutral and will validate in that neutrality is really hard. And I think as an AFAB person, I experience that differently because, like, if an AMAB person wears a skirt, wears makeup, that's like, a little bit more obvious that it’s a gender thing, whereas I'm like, wearing pants now. And even if I have a short haircut, people will go, “ah, lesbian”, [Caleb nods] right? And so, the way in which AFAB people can even externally express their identity is, in my experience, a bit more limited. Uhm… Yeah.

**=Tyler:** Mmm. Mmhmm

**=Caleb:** Yeah.

**Benjamin:** ‘Cause you (=Lola: [Laugh sigh]), so then it comes to, it’s not necessarily about, you know, expressing it, it's also how people perceive that because if you’re born, like, born a man, you said, you have more options in terms of expressing it and receiving attention for that expression or like, people noticing that in, like, you, that being an expression of your gender for you, but you’re saying, dressing in pants, it's not actually an expression of your gender because women can do it, or (=Lola: Yeah), like women already do it.

**Lola:** I think, I don't want to speak to like a AMAB non-binary experience and what they find-

**Benjamin:** No-no-no (=Lola: is affirming), I’m not speaking about that (=Lola: [Laugh sigh]) I’m just saying, but like, they've got more, like, that's just another patriarchal thing where like men, just, another male privilege that they have, because-

**Lola:** Yeah, well,I, I think there's also a lot of like erasure within (=Benjamin: Mmm) AMAB non-binary [Tyler nods] and, and, there's, like, it's like the same thing as being a bisexual in a, in a het-passing relationship [Tyler & Benjamin nod] it’s like, yes, you have passing privilege but you also have erasure (=Benjamin: Yeah). And so, within all sorts of privilege in marginalized spaces, there's, it's kind of a double-edged thing, so, I'm just speaking from my experience of trying to (=Benjamin: No that’s why I’m-) express my, (=Benjamin: [Inaudible]) no, ja I’m just trying to like, be aware of-

**Benjamin:** Yeah I know that’s like, onlyspecific to you, but I'm just (=Lola: Yeah) speaking about, just, hypothesizing.

**Lola:** [Laugh sigh], ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool.

**Natalia:** I can fill in the blanks on that one (=Lola: Thanks).

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Natalia:** No ‘cause ja that is my experience, I think, and like, I-

**Benjamin:** What’s your experience?

**Natalia:** My experience is that thing of like, you're assigned male at birth, you don't relate to it, but there is a privilege in presenting in it because it's like (=Benjamin: Yes), it's hidden. It's completely hidden, like no one, like, I do dress up, obviously (=Benjamin: Mmm), like, go out looking fabulous, but like, I'm very, it's very- (=Lola: Can confirm, [laugh sigh]). I do disguise it in daily life. And I don't mind, really, it doesn't make me feel like, uhm, uncomfortable unless it gets to like, weird, awkward situations where it's like you're expected, something's expected of you as a man, and then, obviously, I kind of shrink and I’m like no, I don't, I don't know how to relate to that. But like, uhm, in terms of-

**Benjamin:** So in everyday life, do you view it as masking, or do you view it as just, not being fabulous?

**Natalia:** That’s a good question (=Lola: [Laugh]).

**Benjamin:** Is it an active role of “I’m hiding this” or it more just a passive thing of “I'm not showing this”?

**Natalia:** Uhm… I don’t know actually, let me think, [laugh sigh]

**=Benjamin**: Or is it a context-dependent?

**=Lola:** I think that’s also like, (=Benjamin: Yeah) that's, that’s not necessarily mutually exclusive, right? (=Benjamin: Yeah) So I think, you can-

**Benjamin:** So it is context dependent on which situation, ‘cause sometimes in like more straight situations, you’ll, “okay, no I’m hiding”-

**Natalia:** Yeah, well yeah, that's the thing. So like, if I'm like…

**Lola:** Code-switching.

**Natalia:** Yeah, I guess. I'm not familiar with the term, but that’s, that does sound right. Like if I'm in a bar, and like, I’m ju-, I just wanna… join up with a group of like, stoner guys and hang out with him, like happened the other night, I did not actually wanna hang out with them, they invited themselves (=[Several]: [Laughter]) to the table, [laugh sigh]. Not, got nothing against stoner guys, but they were just blowing smoke in my face, which is a bit annoying, but anyway, I will, [laugh sigh], you know, I don't, I don’t wanna be in that situation, and go “these are my pronouns, I'm gonna (=Benjamin: Yeah) put on a dress now”. So like, that is hiding, I guess. Like I'm, I'm very, and, and like bro-ing it up with them, I’m like [deepens voice], “ja, ja”. But in daily life, like, I don't feel like I'm hiding right now (=Benjamin: Mmm), I mean this is pretty much, like, I feel pretty comfortable just walking around dressed like this. I've got long hair, obviously, which, I think if I had short hair, it would feel a bit kind of out of place in my own identity (=Tyler: Mmm). And, uhm… yeah, I guess, the one thing I do is, like, if I go to an, an explicitly like, queer space, like, and I'm like, trying to fit in, I do get a little bit like [looks around], “do I really fit in? (=Tyler: Mmm) [Lola nods] Am I, am I queer enough? Do, do people get, do they get me?”. ‘Cause I think often, uh, people have, often sort of just assumed I'm like, a gay dude. And they’re like, “you're, you’re a gay dude, we, we get it”. And then I s-, I feel like I need to explain like, I actually like girls, but I, I sort of feel like a girl, you know, like I wanna, I wanna be them, I don’t wanna get with them, kind of thing, you know? So it's, [laugh sigh], it’s a bit more complicated, but it's, it's harder to… yeah, it's, it’s harder to, to (=Caleb: Define) physicalize to people, I guess.

**Lola:** That's a really good way to put it.

**Natalia:** Yeah, I don’t know if it’s a word but, it seems to work.

**Malcolm:** I think you should coin that, yeah.

**[Several]:** [Laughter and overlap]

**Lola:** Trademark, [laugh sigh]

**[Several]:** [Laughter]

**Tyler:** Okay, yeah, great.

**Caleb:** Uhm, I identify as a gay cis male, ja, but I haven’t really had, like, problems with my, or, issu- I haven’t had con-, inner conflicts about my gender. One thing that I feel with my gender, though, is it's very, it, my gender is a verb, in my opinion. Fo-, for me, gender is a verb [Lola nods]. It's like, what I, like, if I sit like this [crosses legs], then I'm presenting more feminine, not, nef-, not necessarily but that's what society has taught me. But, and, I don't care about that. Like, like, if I sit like this, and I present f-, I, my expressions don't bother me [Lola nods]. I feel male, either way, and, like, what, when you guys were talking now, and, [sigh], I haven't ever felt a problem with my, the way I identify, maybe because of the privilege that is associated with being male (=Tyler: Mmm). And I feel like if s-, if there wasn't necessarily that privilege, maybe I would not.

**Lola:** Yeah. I think that's really interesting because a lot of my like, when I initially started questioning my gender, it was, it was purely based on the rejection of what was expected of me as a woman (=Caleb: Oh, ja) [Tyler nods]. It was like, I don't like the idea of gender roles. I don't like that because I'm the girl I’m supposed to do X, Y, and Zed. And so, for me, it was a, out of a place of, of, uhm, what’s the opposite of privilege? Marginalization (=Caleb: Yes), I suppose? (Caleb: Ja, ja). It was the, the expectation of like, what [air quotes] being a woman was supposed to be that made me be like, “well I, I don't relate to this at all”. [Tyler writes something] And so, I think a large part initially was just a rejection of like the patriarchy and like living very intense feminist ideals. And, I, I mean, I don't even know what non-binary was, right? Like, that's not something that you really see portrayed in, or at least when I was growing up, uhm, and I was raised in like a Christian conservative household. [Tyler stops writing] And, so, it was never really presented to me as an option. And it was only after making friends with more like, gender diverse people, if you want to, like, put it that way, I guess, uhm. And more like, queer people broadly that I felt that I was even in a space that I could confront my gender, because I think sexuality is something that like, you're gonna notice, if you're attracted to someone or not [Malcolm nods], because you're like, expected to, right? And so, if you don't feel that way, it becomes apparent to you (=Caleb: Yes), whereas gender, there's less, explicit expectation, I think, nowadays with what that’s supposed to look like. Uhm, and it was only in certain environments that even began to question that.

**Benjamin:** Do you think that, now I'm thinking behind it, but like, you said you’re female-presenting at birth, and then you said a lot of your drive to, I don’t wanna say [air quotes] change your gender, but like just explore your gender more was because of, the structures and stuff they placed on you? And you [addressing Caleb] said, you didn't feel like because as a man, you have the male privilege of being able to do whatever the fuck you want, basically (=Caleb: Ja). But, uhm, do you think-? I’ve lost my train of thought now (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]). Yes, do you think that there was another male privilege we have in that, like ‘cause I’ve also felt, like gender norms in like, my three older sisters, I’ve got a big family like, gender roles and all that, also, like, it annoyed me, but never to a point where I was like, I want to change me, or I don’t (=Caleb: Mmm) ident-, it was more like, that pisses me off, y’all must change.

**Lola:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** Yeah.

**Benjamin:** Do you think that's another male privilege I have? Because I grew up as a man, so they kind of, indoctrinated me to like, seeing or like, expecting my way more than you would as a woman who, or, [air quotes] who was born a woman.

**Lola:** I think, what was, like also difficult for me is that, al-, although my parents are like, conservative and Christian, like, they never raised me to be less than (=Benjamin: Yeah). Like, I'm the oldest of four siblings, and I was like, very academic at school. And my parents were like, “yes, you're strong”, like I'm a debater, and like, I never felt, I, in myself, never felt less than as a woman. And it was like, kind of put on me by society as I grew up (=Caleb: Mmm), and as I learned about things, and I was like, “well, that's not right”. Uhm, so I think, like, I think a bigger question to ask is, like, “if gender roles didn't exist, would people have as many gender issues?”. And like, I don’t think so, right [Benjamin & Tyler nod], I think if everybody could kind of just be who they are, regardless of, because when it comes down to it, you're assigned based on like, your, auton-, like your, your body and your, your genitalia (=Tyler: Mmm), which is ludicrous, [laugh sigh], when you think about it. Uhm, and, and so if, if that was kind of a non-issue, and people were just people, and could do whatever they needed to do to fill who they were, and fill the gaps in society, rather than the roles in society, I think we'd have a lot less of this binary expectation (=Malcolm: Yeah) on people.

**Malcolm:** Yes, because, you know, I'm just, to, to that point, I, I think about all of these, uhm, well what I will say is, many of my friends are, are straight. They identify as straight and all of that. Like I said, I was always almost scared to, to operate with, with too many gay people, you know, and so on, because I think of where I grew up. Because I hear lots of terms [gesturing to other participants], here, that growing up I simply don't hear. If you were a lesbian, you look like, “jy’s ‘n tomboy, she looks like a girl, she, she must be” thing and, and much, much uglier terms, you know, in, colloquialisms, in Afrikaans and that kind of thing. Ugly, ugly words. Uhm, and if you were, if you're gay, okay “jy’s gay of jy’s a ‘n moffie, you’re a moffie”, whatever the case, you know, so, so there’s not all of these terms [Lola nods]. You know, if you present as, as being trans or, or whatever, then you a moffie, it’s a, it’s a, a moffie. But they will tell you, “but you, I'm not a moffie, I’m only gay.” They would rather be with me than with that (=Tyler: Mmhmm). If I, if, what, what you are saying, they would not understand you at all, you know what I mean? [Caleb looks around the room] And, and like you said, uhm, all of, all of those, all of those labels and trying to, to fit into this and that and that, I think it causes more problems, because what if you don't fit into any of those labels? [Lola & Tyler nod] You know, the, the L, the G, and the B and the T and the I and Q and the A, and the, you know? What if you don't fit into, into any of that, but you know what you're experiencing internally, mentally, emotionally, and, and so on? And the people that you grow up around, you can't talk to them about any of these things. I don't, I've heard that you guys speak about feeling privilege, privileged and, maybe I misunderstand it but, you feel privileged because you male and so you can get away with more things, or that kind of thing, almost, uhm, as opposed to being [gesturing in Lola’s direction] female and dealing with, with these things, or identifying, presenting as a, as a female, but I never felt any form of privilege, being male, you know. Like I said, I've been called names, uhm, by different people, you know, even my late father, growing up. Uhm, so, I never felt a sense of privilege [Tyler nods], because of how I, because of how I look, or whatever the, the case might be, I've always had to work hard maybe or, I always have to explain [Lola nods] to people I come into contact with as well. And I think in explaining you get lost in all of those explanations to the point that you just say, “you know what, screw you. [Lola nods] (=Tyler: Mmm) Okay, I'm not coming out again, not at this party, not here at school, not here at work, or not in this company.” Uhm, so it's, it's, it's tough going through, through life, feeling what you feel (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And knowing that you're, being told that you're wrong, and God hates you, and this and that and this and all of those things, but you don't fit in to what these people are saying is, is [air quotes] normal, the way it's supposed to be. And you know you didn't create yourself (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, you didn't ask for any of this, in any case (=Tyler: Mmhmm), whoever might have created you, where you come from (=Tyler: Mmm). So I think all of the labels and trying to fit into them and trying to explain them, it, it, it’s a, it's a frustrating (=Lola: I remem-) and agonizing (=Lola: I agree, I remember once-), uhm, experience, [laugh sigh].

**Lola:** Somebody was getting upset, because some, uhm, people were using the word ‘literally’ as ‘figuratively’, right? [Natalia & Tyler nod] And, like, and people get upset about this, uhm, and I used to get really upset about it and then I, I read something quite interesting that said the, the purpose of language, right, is to be able to communicate and to reach understanding between people. And as long as the understanding is reached, then language is doing its job. So as long as I know, you ‘literally’ weren’t dying, right, then it's fine that you're using it like, as a hyperbole (=Caleb: Mmm), that's fine, as long as the understanding is reached. And I think with, with labels, there's a, a kind of double-edged sword, because for a lot of people, finding that label (=Malcolm: Mmm), and finding that community and finding that sense of identity, whatever the word may be, can be really empowering (=Benjamin: Mmm). And knowing that there are other people who feel similarly to you, and this is the word they use and that brings comfort. And then on the other side of that, you have exactly what you're [referring to Malcolm] talking about, where the labels start getting, like, more and more hyper-specific and more and more, like, abstract, even, if you wanna go there (=Caleb: Ja), like I don't know if anyone has like read a Wikipedia article on like, ‘the genders’ recently, but like, my hat, even I'm like, *yoh*, that’s really specific and I don’t understand. And I try to understand, uhm, you know, I work with young people, I work in a, in an alternative school, and I think we have a lot of queer kids. Uhm, I've noticed a, a huge overlap in the Venn diagram between neurodiversity and queerness [Benjamin nods], uhm. And so, you know, these are kids who, they have all the language that I didn’t have growing up, we didn't have these words (=Caleb: Ja). And they still don't know [Malcolm nods], because it's not that simple, right? It's not finding a word and being like, “Ah, yes, that's the one”. Uhm, and I think what, what I always like to use the analogy for is like, it's like the term ‘feminist’, right? So I think, I hope, most people would be like, agree that they're a feminist. But then you have people who call themselves feminists and who are like, anti-men (=Caleb: Ja) and who, like, hate men, and have a really nasty sentiment, which is not how feminism stands for, right? (=Malcolm: Yes, mmm) Ideologically it's equality between sexes. But then people see this *extreme* feminism and they’re like, “I don't want to associate with that” [Tyler nods], and so, you also have, in the queer community, you have, like very extreme sentiment within certain labels that can alienate more, [sigh], I need to find the right word to like be PC and also express my idea, uh, quiet queers (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, like moderate queers, right? (=Tyler: Mmm) And there's nothing wrong with your queerness being your entire identity, but it can alienate people who don’t (=Caleb: Yes) find their entire (=Caleb: I, I resonate) identity in their queerness.

**Caleb:** I resonate with that (=Tyler: Mmm). Ja. I feel like, that is something that, like, w, in queer commu-, like, I feel uncomfortable a lot of the times in queer spaces [Natalia & Malcolm nod], like, because I feel like I'm not queer enough or, or maybe I am queer enough, but I'm not presenting queer enough or whatever. I've, just feel like that's something that has, like, I feel. Ja, I resonate with that, the, but also, I don't know, we've been talking a lot about gender. I think, I'm gonna pivot the conversation to sexuality [Lola nods], if that’s fine with everyone (=[Several]: [Laughter]). Uhm, but, I also feel like in the queer community, or in the gay community [Lola nods], I feel like more specifically, I don't know about the, but gay male community that, sex is a, a currency, not a cur-, like (=Tyler: Mmm), a form of, to measure your success. Like, if you're not, like, sleeping around with a lot of guys that, uhm, you, you’re not, like, I don't know, it's like, you're not very, [air quotes] you're not one of the successful gays (=Tyler: Mmhmm). You get what I mean? I don't know if someone else has-

**Benjamin:** Ja, no, very much like, ja- (=Caleb: Right? And-). Can I-? Can I carry on?

**Caleb:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Benjamin:** ‘Cause I feel like I have words to describe it better, uhm. [Clears throat] I kind of keep the gay community kind of, at like arm's length. Because it's, it's quite toxic (=Caleb: Yes. Yes). Because I've kind of thought about it a lot and kind of realized it’s because it's kind of a reaction to being gay because being gay is trauma [Lola nods], and, or our straight society, and very few of them deal with it. (=Caleb: Yes) So they kind of see-, seek escapism through drugs, alcohol, sex, like, body image issues, and all that, pop culture and everything. And that would be fun in ano-, in an of, in and of itself. But it's the kind of the reason behind it, the makings of it toxic in terms of… you feel a pressure to do that, when you're in that space. And also, they kind of make you feel shit, because (=Caleb: Yes), you've got to have a gym body, and, ja [Caleb & Tyler nod], you just feel very, very judged, so, understand what I’m saying about the whole gay (=Caleb: Ja), gay community?

**Caleb:** Ja, with like, I feel like sex is just one of the, like (=Benjamin: Ja), like you said now, it's like your, but I feel like that’s very White male thing, though. Like, specifically (=Benjamin: Ja), the, I, the, might be, I might be talking, (=Benjamin: Ja, this is like) I don’t know (=Benjamin: This isn’t like, ja), but I feel like, I feel like there's a culture there in the gay community, of… if society has marginalized us, so we’re going to take the attributes of a straight, successful, everything that's like, has been given privilege, like the st-, straight White male, we're gonna do everything that that guy does, and we’re gonna do it better, but we're not straight. But, if you get what I mean, like, they're gonna have a better body, they're gonna have more sex [Lola rises to get something out of camera], they're gonna, like-

**Benjamin:** But is that because they're reacting to straight culture, or is that because they’re horny men?

**Caleb:** Yes. Ja, no, and like you said-

**Benjamin:** [Laugh], [inaudible] that because we're horny men, and there's no women to kind of, like, dampen that, horny men, horny men, it’s just (=Caleb: Yes), ja.

**Caleb:** But… ja, in-, interesting.

**Benjamin:** ‘Cause testosterone is, [inaudible]-

**Caleb**: Ja, I, I agree [Lola returns]. But it does create a (=Benjamin: Ja) toxic… (=Benjamin: Yes) space.

**Benjamin:** And that, in and of itself, is what the gay community should be moving away from but it’s influenced by toxic masculinity and all of that, ja (=Caleb: Ja). And because they don’t deal with issues, as well, so.

**Caleb:** That's why I said earlier, I don't feel comfortable in queer spaces, but I feel like that was, the wrong term now [Tyler nods]. And it's more… gay culture (=Benjamin: Yeah; =Tyler: Mmhmm). [Laugh sigh]. (=Benjamin: Yes). Yes, ‘cause queer spaces is, actually some, like, this is a queer space, and I feel comfortable in this [Natalia nods] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Ja.

**Lola:** I think also if you look at like, the Cape Town queer, like, party scene (=Caleb: Yes), it's like, I d-, and can only speak to Cape Town because this is where I am (=Benjamin: Yeah). But like, [Caleb rises to get something off camera] there's no, or not ‘no’, but there's very little queer spaces that don't revolve around drinking and drugs and partying [All nod], and, and like (=Benjamin: Sex), and sex, and there's no like, like, here's a queer book club (=Tyler: Mmm) or, you know, here's like a queer board game shop (=Tyler: Yeah), or coffee shop or something. And, I think that's also, we've seen, slowly, but we've seen things like teen pride crop up and like the Book Lounge in Cape Town that's like, making spaces that aren’t these hyper-sexualized, hyper-party environments (=Tyler: Mmm). But it hasn't really filtered up yet. And so, like I think, you know, this [Caleb returns] might be a bit far from what the conversation is, but we also tend to then find like microcosms of chosen family, and you have to find like, your type of queer, right? And so like, my, my friend group, we’re not super hard partiers [Benjamin nods]. Like, we love watching series, and, you know, they play D&D and like, that’s, I don't have the time- (=Benjamin: And if you get drunk, you get drunk at home, like you don’t [inaudible]). Ja, we get drunk at home and smoke at home, like, you know. And so we have to create, and it's, it's, it's isolating in a way because now you f-, you're like, Okay, cool, like, I'm queer, or gay, or whatever. And, look, there's like a whole community out there, that also don't fit into (=Caleb: Ja) [All nod] And so then it's like, a double isolation and rejection, ‘cause you're like, these are supposed to be my people (=Tyler: Mmm). And, and you can't relate to that. And so you're like, “Oh, I'm wrong all over again” (=Tyler: Mmm; =Caleb: Yes).

**Benjamin:** Because that's another reason why I've never really struggling with my sexuality in general, is because, I already see myself in my, in terms of my like, personal identity as quite like independent, so I don't look for places to fit in. Ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It’s more like, people that will like, that can converse with me in like an intelligent manner, more, like, it's more about that (=Tyler: Yes) So, I've never struggled with that. But going back to what you said earlier about what we were discussing, with the stages and all that. Wait I’ve got a few thoughts (=[Several]: [Laugh sighs]), what you just said now, with the, kind of extreme society that we have, is that not, do you think, just a reaction, like if you think of like, if you think of like, momentum. We had on one extreme in terms of straight society, now we’re at the other extreme, and it's gonna have to like balance out eventually. But, it won’t make that happen. So that’s why you said like the, the non-sexual queer spaces are com-, kind of coming, are starting to evolve, but still, it’s a slow process?

**Lola:** I, I agree that it was a reaction, I definitely think it was a reaction (=Benjamin: Mmm), I think all things are reactions to (=Benjamin: Ja) each other. And, so in order to get the moderate, like, you have to have the reaction to the rad- (=Benjamin: Ja), and eventually (=Benjamin: [Inaudible]) you'll find a kind of middle ground. Uhm, I think sometimes we, I think all of us here, as queer people have a lot more privilege than like queer people of 50 years ago or 100 years ago (=Caleb: Ja). And we sometimes forget how far we've come, even, uhm. And I mean, like, I look at, like the children that I teach who are like, 13, identifying as bisexual, and like, their parents not caring and they just go about their life, and it's like, the most normal thing ever (=Malcolm: Mmm). And I'm like, wow, I had like, an entire crisis about this thing, (=[Several]: [Laughter]), you know, and, and it’s just like (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable overlap]), “Oh, my favourite colour is black, I'm a bisexual, and I like English”. Like, it's like, the most casual thing in the world, which is, which it is what (=Benjamin: It’s what we’re fighting for) what it should, what, what we, what we want it to be, right? We want it to be a non-issue. Uhm, and so I think sometimes we, I, forget how far we've come and how much privilege, like we're not being killed anymore, right? (=[Several]: Ja). Uhm (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable overlap]), in, in, in Cape Town, specifically, like, in its legal, and in spaces, there are still a lot of places that experience extreme legislative, like, uhm, suppression, and stuff like that. But, uhm, I think it's easy to, to look at the, the, how far we still have to go if we don’t always look back (=Tyler: Mmm) and see how far we’ve come.

**Tyler:** Yeah, if I may, uh, (=Malcolm: Ja), take it back, sorry, uh, Malcolm, I was actually going to ask you, if you related to what, uh, Benjamin and Caleb were saying about gay community? Uh, also, (=Malcolm: Ja), Natalia, since you are often mistaken for a gay men, do you to what they were saying?

**Natalia:** Well, you [to Malcolm] go first, please.

**Malcolm:** Uhm, yeah, you know, I th-, I think it, it is a very highly sexualized community. And it, and it is also, it's big, you know, much bigger, and there’s obviously social media, all that as well. But it's also small in the sense of everybody knows everybody (=Caleb: Ja). You can easily be in a setup like this where I was dating Benjamin but Benjamin has slept with Natalia, and Natalia is now hooking up with Tyler, and it's okay (=Tyler: Yeah). Whereas that kind of environment is not okay for me again, like I, I almost get upset because, you know, I'm trying to get with you, but you've already slept with two of, of my exes or, you know? So, I think so- (=Lola: It’s very incestuous, [laugh]) (=[Several]: [Laughter]), it can, it can be very, ja, it can be very small, you know, where, where that is concerned, because many people who know one another are in communication with one another. And, uhm, there's a, there's a, a, a joke that they, that Jack made, made on, on Will & Grace, once, “if you, if you, if you straight, you’ll go on a date, and maybe the date might lead to sex if you're lucky. If you’re gay, you'll have sex and maybe that sex will lead to a date” [Tyler nods] or a, a, you know, a more prolonged, uhm, connection or whatever the case might be [Tyler nods]. So I think we, it’s, it's, for many gay men, it's easier to go to, to, to sex first. And so many of them don't even attach all of these feelings and trauma or inadequacies or, uhm-uhm, gender issues or feeling any form of privilege because they are male, whether you are a, a White male or a male of colour, you know [Tyler nods], there is, in society, there is certain uhm-uhm-uhm privileges that goes with a male and obviously, physicalizing [gestures to Natalia] that you are a, a male. So, I don't even think many people think that far. And I suppose that's a, a type of trauma that must be unpacked with individual, uhm, people as well. But, they just go, [clicks fingers] straight to it, which can be, which, when you starting out, you, you know, that's the way you, you do it. That's maybe the way I also did it (=Tyler: Mmm). It is probably the way I did it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But, as you grow older, you see how unhealthy that is, how it doesn't work, and, you know, me working with, with, with kids as well, and so on, I see how I wouldn't want that for them. And in another life, you know, uhm, with the, when the AIDS pandemic, you know [Lola & Tyler nod], in the, in the 80s, and whatever and so on, if, your life would have been over. Many of us at this age, you know, we would have been going to so many funerals and dying out and whatever. But now, uhm, it's still a big problem but, with, you can have it and you can live very long. So you're not, gay, gay men are not dying out as early as maybe they did [Lola nods], or they not as hidden or persecuted as much as they were in the past, like, like Lola said earlier (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So it, it becomes quite scary, that that is still the culture (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, sex first, you know, and then going towards developing deeper connections with somebody and whatever. And it's not everybody, and I can't say that I'm speaking for everybody. But, yeah.

**Benjamin:** But do you not feel the way you feel, like, towards that, towards sex, like, innately thinking that hookup culture is negative… Why can some people not just, why can someone people not just have sex and it just not affect them? For some people, sex doesn't hold the value and, it's not as important to them or it is just…

**Malcolm:** You (=Benjamin: [Inaudible]), you are right. I mean, if it's so, if it's, if, if you are that kind of person (=Benjamin: Ja), and it's not an issue for you (=Benjamin: Yes), so be it. But, uhm, I think it can become an issue (=Benjamin: No-no-no-no, [inaudible]), you know, emotionally and so on to sort of just leaving your body like that-

**Benjamin:** And I'm saying, but is (=Malcolm: Yeah?) that an issue, with the sex, or is that an issue with how you were taught to think about sex? Because I guess, like, I've often thought with rape and everything. Would rape be as traumatizing as it is, if sex, if so much value weren’t placed upon sex?

**Lola:** Yes, because rape isn't about sex, it’s about [inaudible] [Tyler nods]

**Benjamin:** Yes, I know, it’s about power, ja (=Lola: [Laugh sigh]). But I'm saying, but I'm saying, if, if sex weren't taking the pedestal like it is, and someone was raped, would it be as traumatizing uhm, as then, if they didn’t see it as super important? If it, no-no- [Indistinguishable overlap].

**Lola:** -to answer your question, right, to answer your question, I think, if you, i-, like, if you th-, le- let’s talk about someone who doesn't value sex in, in the way that (=Benjamin: Ja), that society has told them. Let’s, let's talk about a prostitute, right, who for whatever reason, let’s, let's talk about an empowered prostitute, somebody who wakes up and is, like, “Yass, this is how I'm gonna do my day” (=Benjamin: Yeah). If that person is raped, it's still trauma (=Caleb: Yes; =Benjamin: No-no-no, [inaudible] it’s still power). No, no, so, so to answer question, in my opinion, yes, it would still be as traumatizing (=Caleb: Ja, I agree). I don't think we can reduce rape to like the way that society values sex.

**Natalia:** But what-?

**Benjamin:** No-no, but that’s what I’m trying to ask because, like you said (=Tyler: Mmm), with, if there weren't a gender binary, if it weren't a dichotomy, they wouldn't be issues. I'm saying if, we didn't value sex at all, let’s just say it was just like, thrown around. ‘Cause I, I suppose what, what made me think about it was a book I read, based in like, pre-history, like, before, we were, like, organized into societies and whatever. And there, this was also the author’s point of view, like, you just have sex because they felt like having sex, and, and then even though, like the girl was, like, raped repeatedly, she didn't see it as rape because that's just what happened. And it wasn't, it wasn't a traumatizing event for this character-

**Natalia:** Isn’t that also like you’ve been brainwashed?

**Benjamin:** Yes, exactly, what I'm saying, but, everything we know is technically a form of brainwash, because-

**Natalia:** But it’s, I think like-

**Benjamin:** SoI'm not saying I'm right. I'm just trying to eng-, like, just speak about it.

**Natalia:** I think it's like if you're living in like a, a free love (=Malcolm: Yeah), world, that's not like the same because you kind of arrived at it of your own choice (=Benjamin: Yeah). And you're very attuned to exactly what you want, what sex means to you. Whereas if you like, I'm assuming in that time, or, like, in a society where you've had your autonomy, I guess, taken away, you're kind of, in a way you’re not as… I don't know if it's less traumatic, but it's, it's it's normalized to an external to you like, you just kind of go with it, which I think like people did, back in the day like, women did a lot (=Lola: Yeah). Uhm, but I do see, in terms of your experience, Malcolm, I think like… I understand how that, that thing of like… hookup culture, if you're looking, you're looking for like, a serious relationship, and sex means something very big to you, not saying to you specifically, but (=Malcolm: Mmm) that, that angle is like, I think it is frustrating because it's like… it doesn't necessarily mean you, you're like anti-casual sex, but if you, if, if everyone in your kind of subgroup or in those spaces is like going for it. And sex is kind of on a pedestal, on a, like it’s kind of sacred to you, I don't know, I, it's not really my experience, because I'm not like, I'm not in the gay community. I don't know what, what it's like, I'm not really, I haven't really had that problem of like… up to a point maybe, but like, the problem of trying to find a..

**Benjamin:** Partner.

**Natalia:** Yeah, so that's something serious, and then, and then it's all, like, everyone's, everyone else is, like, in a culture of like, casual, casual only, I think it's like, it is frustrating.

**Caleb:** It's like when someone has to, I don't know, walk through a minefield (=Natalia: Mmm). You know, you want to f-, you want, but, it's, that's bad, actually a bad analogy. Uh, but like, you (=Natalia: Okay), you don’t, but (=Malcolm: [Laugh]), you have to, you don't know what you're gonna get (=Tyler: Mmm), like, and you'll have to get to know the person before, like, and then it's already like, too late. If you get what I mean, ‘cause, the first interaction will be if they're very, uh, sexual person who doesn't value sex, and you just, like, think, “okay, maybe I should pursue a relationsh-, one-on-one, should pursue a relationship”. And before you know, it's like, “oh, okay, no, this is not gonna work for me”. But then it's already, you already went through this, and you already interacted with this person, and, ja.

**Malcolm:** Yes.

**Lola:** I also just think we should be careful of saying just because somebody engages in casual sex doesn't mean they don't value sex, right? (=Benjamin: Yes, ja). It can just be that they hold it in a different light and I think that that's valid, and it doesn't mean that it is like, (=Caleb: Yes, no, I agree; =[Several]: [Indistinguishable overlap]), no-no, I know, I just think we should recontextualize it, just because people engaging in casual sex or sex with multiple people, or whatever. Uhm, just because they would view it differently, doesn’t mean that it isn't important.

**[Several]:** [Agreement]

**Lola:** As you were, [laugh].

**[Several]:** [Agreement]

**Tyler:** I think if I may, uh, rephrase, uh, this recent conversation, I'm hearing that there is like a tension with, uhm, a societal expectation of ‘supposed to’, you're supposed to be like this, or be like that. Very much like what you were saying earlier, Lola, about gender. And there's a frustration for you, that certain ‘supposed to’ obligations for being a woman were imposed on you, right? And so you had to kind of work your way out of that. And I think what you were also bringing up about, for gay men [looking at Malcolm], uhm, the hookup culture, there was kind of a, [looking at Caleb] a ‘supposed-to-ness’ about sexuality and (=Caleb: Yes) being homosexual. And like you were saying, Malcolm, for some people, that can be a problem (=Caleb: Yes), because it's like, you don't actually really want that as your primary thing. And that's why it becomes a problem because other people are following it, but also to what you were saying, it's like, well, that can actually be quite liberating, if you regard sex in, in a way that makes sense to you. And you, you really enjoy having, you know, casual sex, because it's liberating and empowering and you're not being persecuted and killed for it like people were a few years ago, [laugh sigh]. So yeah, I think that is quite an interesting theme that I'm hearing, uhm, in this group, also about the way, uh, that you all identify, which is how this whole thread started. Because there, there seems to be a sameness in this group, in the sense that we're all queer. We're all LGBTIAQ+, but we have different ways of relating to identifying. Because, uh, Benjamin, and Caleb, and Malcolm, you said, you feel quite stable in ‘gay man’, right? Whereas there's a certain instability that Natalia and Lola have a little difficulty navigating [Lola & Natalia nod], being not entirely cis, or not entirely either heterosexual or homosexual, right? So, there's that difference in the sameness here as well.

**=Lola:** I think – oh.

**=Benjamin:** So-

**Benjamin:** Okay, and this is another point from like *earlier* on. Lola, you brough tit up again, uhm. Do you not think that an entire concept of LGBTQIA+ is kind of just a band aid, in terms of, so we had straight society, and then we kind of weren't fitting in, so we formed this gay society, LGBT whatever society? Uhm, and for the majority of us, 90%, 80%, whatever, it, it, it still is an issue or (=Lola: Works) patches the issue (=Caleb: Yes) over enough. It like, it serves enough of us for it to still carry on. But then it's for those few, that 30%, whatever that doesn't fit into it, they, then feel uncomfortable and then expands society, like you said, now it’s non-binary, and then we add another letter, and then like, it just goes further and further. And that kind of issue with that is we won't ever reach, it's kind of like a limited infinity where it won't ever reach a point, because the issue, it’s not actually solving this issue, which is a dichotomy in straight society, [laugh sigh]. We're not really solving an issue, we're just trying to have a crutch to like, move on with life (=Malcolm: Yes).

**Lola:** I think what I wanted to say is like, in my, my preparation for the two questions that you [Tyler] sent us, when I was thinking about difference, the word that just came to me the most was ‘intersectionality’ (=[Several]: Mmm). And so, the difference is, is, is how our different parts of our identity overlap. So if you have, like, a religious or like a Christian, queer person, they are – maybe, I'm not painting veridical brushes here – going to want to save themselves to marriage. The fact that that is with a man or with a woman is like, irrelevant to them. Their identity is gay, but their religious beliefs are still that sex is something that must happen within the sanctity of marriage. And so, you have the, the overlap, and I think that's where, that's where individuality comes in. Because all of our Venn diagrams are going to look different, and the privilege that we experience within those different identities, the combination of that is different every time. But to what you [Benjamin] were saying about the LGBTIQA+ community being a bandaid, I think that's exactly true. We, even within the community, you have, uhm, you have racism (=Malcolm: Mmm), and you have transphobia, and you have sexism (=Tyler: Mmm), and you have all of these things, because you've taken a group of *incredibly* diverse people, where the only thing they have all in common is (=Benjamin: [Indistinguishable overlap]) that they’re not cis-het, right? They can be anything else, uhm. Like, you even, you even get like, mmm, [air quotes] cis-het aromantic people (=Tyler: Mmm), right? So they're still heterosexual and they're so cisgendered that they're aromantic and that falls into the, the, the umbrella of ‘queer’ (=Benjamin: Mmm) and so you have these people who are having *vastly* over experiences with, with, very bad phrasing, [air quotes] a common enemy really, that brought us together is to unite against, uhm, legislation initially, right? (=Natalia: Mmm) And now, it's kind of like… it's a bit of a mishap group of people (=Caleb: Ja) because there aren’t always shared interests anymore.

**Caleb:** Yeah, you’re right.

**Natalia:** That, that ‘supposed to’ thing is literally like, it all comes down to that, because I, I was saying just now I haven't really struggled with the whole, uhm, like navigating hookup culture, but then I remembered I'm actually talking shit ‘cause I have (=[Several]: [Laughter]). I have struggled (=Benjamin: You’ve blocked it out). Yeah! (=[Several]: [Laughter]), [inaudible], I do enjoy casual intimacy, but, uhm, not with strangers. So I find like, I once, I once tried that. And I was, like, like, went on, went on a date and like, did that whole thing and like, I went home and I was like, “what am I doing? I can’t-”, because like, for me, like, that doesn't work. It's obviously fine. Like hookup culture is fine, but like, the ‘supposed to’, I felt so many norms that like, felt like they were heaping down on top of me like, like I have, I *have* to do this now, I *have* to do this now and any, any time there's that kind of pressure, which is why I don't do like Tinder dates ‘cause I'm like, I don't want to be in that position where I feel like there’s a ‘supposed to’ – and I'm just gonna keep stealing that term from you (=Tyler: Go ahead) (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]). But like, yeah, and that's why I understand like, I think it's very valid what you [Malcolm] feel about like, there's a ‘supposed to’ in the, in the gay community (=Malcolm: Mmm, ja) of, kind of, hedonistic sex that, if you don't relate to that, you kind of get alienated within the group you’re supposed to be (=Malcolm: Yes), supposed to be fitting into and like, uhm what was the next thing I was gonna say? Oh, yes! Like, the way you look even within the queer community is so like, obviously, people want to be super glamorous. I wanna be super glamorous (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, not everyone can be and you can't be all the time so it does feel like there's a competition (=Malcolm: Yes). And that's like, I just like, I'm still trying to understand how the whole gender thing works in terms of like, looking… like presenting in a certain way, because I think there's a lot of like, people within the, the queer umbrella. Like they, they eat each other, like (=Malcolm: Yes) [laugh sigh], they go, they go a-, I know so many people, what you [Lola] were saying earlier about long, long hair, and I know so many people who, uhm, have long hair, and they're like, they're often queer women or, or femme-presenting, and they just feel completely alienated by other queer people [Lola nods] because they got long hair. Like, it's like the most ridiculous thing. It's like, you can look however you like (=Malcolm: Yes). And the same with like, uhm, with men and like, and, and not, and not like, like, men aren't the problem, it's, it’s the way they are ‘supposed to’ be that's the problem. And being that way, by choice (=Malcolm: Yes), but not being a dick about it, is fine. Like, being a masculine man is like (=Tyler: Mmm), that, that shouldn't be a problem. It's, it’s if you've, forced to be (=Malcolm: Yes), or if you’re like, forced to be in a certain way (=Tyler: Yeah). So I think it's just, like, for me, it all boils down to choice and, and being sensitive to other people's choices, like people are so, and especially like, uhm, those who are homophobic or right-wing are often like, “but, but what's wrong with just being the guy and then she's the wife's, like, looks after the kids and you go to work”, and it's like, that's not wrong, if you choose it. But why are you-? (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable overlap]).

**Malcolm:** Yeah, because, yeah, you know, I always come back to the, the point, I co-, I do consider myself a, a God-fearing person, I believe in God. Uhm, I don't, I don't consider myself a Christian, per se, anymore, you know, because of all of those, because so many people who prescribe (=Lola: ‘Cause of the ‘supposed to’s), all the ‘supposed to’s, you know, that goes along with being a part of that religious group (=Tyler: Mmm), you know. And a, a big message from that religious group is, “God hates you, you’re a sinner, you’re going to hell”, and like, it's, it's a done deal for me (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know. Uhm, and the Bible this and the Bible that. So, uhm, in terms of, of, of what a, a, a male is supposed to be, a lot of it also obviously, it has, you know, besides societal, it as religious, you know, “a, a man must do this and a man must do, do that and a woman must be subservient to a man”, you know. So all, some of those, those are things that can come from the Bible and, and that's obviously, uhm, what, what people believe, you know, they, they follow the parts of the Bible that work for them, type-thing. Uhm, that’s a whole other conversation, [laugh], but, like, he [Natalia] was, like he was saying, you, you don't, or I didn't choose, I can only speak about, about myself. I didn't choose to be gay (=Tyler: Mmm). I didn't choose to be attracted to, to, to other men (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I don't know how people can tell me that I, that I chose that, I, I didn't. I can tell you that I'm just not into women in that way. It just doesn't work for me, it doesn't work like that for me and I don't know how to explain it to you, who don't understand it, you know, if that makes sense. But if you, the choice I make is to be open about who I am, obviously, and to, uhm, and to be in a relationship with, with other males. Those are, I suppose, choices and to, to say that I, to say openly that I'm gay, I think is a, is a, a, a choice that I, that I make but you can, like you said, you can see also, in how I am, in how I talk, you can hear in how I talk, or how I move my hands or how I, I walk, you know, people can say “oh yeah, I can see he’s like that”. How can people, how can people have ever thought that you’re not (=Tyler: Mmm), you know what I mean? So, uhm, if you, if you are choosing to be in a relationship with a w-, let's say for example, you are gay, right. That is how you feel on the inside, and you choose to follow, “Okay, the Church says I must be in a relationship with a woman. I can, I'm gonna get married and have kids so my family can be c-“, if that is what you, what you choose to do, that is fine. So many of them come out then later on it messes up the woman and messes up those kids and it’s a whole, thing. But if you don't, if you don't choose to do that, whether you, as a gay person, you choose to be with, with other men, or, uhm, or you don’t at all, you stay by yourself, I don't know, you know, sex is not a thing for you, or being in a relationship with somebody else, is not the thing for you, being with other people is not a thing for you. Uhm, all of that are, are choices that should all be okay, I think, you know. Uhm, it's, it's when you, it's when you try to, to fit in with the, the ‘supposed to’ and you know you don't fit in with it. And you still try go along with it, you know, I think you also cause a lot of unhappiness for other people maybe [Lola & Tyler nod], also around you, because you can be of the thing of “yes, it’s about me”. But what about that woman who maybe marry or, you know? Uhm, so I think that, that you, there are certain things that you choose, you know, where this whole ‘supposed to’, uhm, I'm not choosing what I'm supposed to do, right? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) But there are also certain things that you don't choose about yourself, that you don't have control over [Tyler nods]. And people are, are, people make it seem like, like you *do* have control over [Tyler nods] those things, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), because maybe they don't, they don't understand that they are not like that. Uhm, so, I don’t know how to, to, to sort of navigate that kind of thing (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because now, for example, myself, I'm in the, I'm in the classroom, I have to teach. I have to teach other children. Children will tell me, “No, sir, but being-”, and they don't recognize me maybe as being gay or whatever. But, “No, sir, it's wrong to be gay. It's wrong, the Bible, you're going to hell”, and, “No, sir. My mother is [inaudible], they hate you, it’s not right, I don’t [inaudible]”, small kids, 11, 12, 10 years old, they speak like that. That's how they’ve been, maybe raised, that’s what the, what their church, or their family or whatever, their religion, their cultural group, whatever the case may be. So you have small kids already growing up with these, with these things. And then on the other hand, like Lola said, you can see here, around you, the kids who already identified, one of my learners, [inaudible], who wrote in his essay about his boyfriend. I would never have – imagine that, grade seven (=Caleb: [Laugh sigh]), writing about my, about my boyfriend. You know, it just wasn't a thing. But if that child already has those feelings, and is already thinking in that way, and so on, I'm having to tell him, that he's wrong (=Lola: Mmm). I’m, because I'm going to build in, I don't know what, self-hate or whatever and so on. When a child that, that's young, is, are you telling me that he's choosing that? He’s consciously made that choice to go against the ‘supposed to’? (=Natalia: Mmm) The ‘supposed to’ doesn't even resonate with him yet, you know. He must still get maybe to, to that level, but he's already experiencing those feelings (=Tyler: Mmm). So I think there are things that you, that you make choices about, uhm, and then there are certain things that you have no control over. You're not about your self, and your identity and your feelings (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Lola:** I think, uhm, like I was outed at work, actually (=Tyler: Oh, wow). I had a, uhm, *yoh*, that's a whole other story (=Malcolm: Mmm). But the point that I want to make is that I, uhm, I had a, a parent phone my boss, the very upset because I’m queer. And their daughter feels uncomfortable and whadda-whadda-fishpaste (=Malcolm: Ja), uhm. Because I will tolerate opinion, but I will not tolerate hate in my class (=Malcolm: Mmm), so if you're going to be homophobic, I'm going to call you out, that's not okay. Uhm, and, in all terms of discrimination, like, I just, my classroom must be a safe space for all people (=Malcolm: Yeah). You not getting to express your opinion doesn't mean it's not safe for you, it means I'm protecting others (=Malcolm: Mmm), uhm. If your opinion is hate and harmful, no. Anyway, uhm, and I think, you know, my boss was, was talking to me and, shame, she was very, uhm, *yoh*, she was trying to navigate parents and employees (=Tyler: Mmm) and she was doing the most. Uhm, but she said something about the gay agenda, which just gives me like the heebie jeebies, because firstly, what even? (=Malcolm: What is that?) Like, I didn't get the memo, did anybody else get the gay agenda? (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable overlap; unison disapproval]). But this, this idea, and to touch back on what you, what you guys were saying about this hypersexuality is, that is what's been fed to (=Caleb: Yes) conservative straight people. And I look at like 13-year-old girls in my class, who are talking about the crushes they have. Sex is the furthest thing from their minds [Malcolm nods]. It's wholesome, it’s innocent, it's, it's a schoolyard crush, right? And we don't see, or I don't see enough of that representation and that normalization and, because so many people find their identity when they are older and (=Caleb: Yes) when sex is a thing that happens (=Caleb: Ja), uhm. You know, that, that becomes part of it, but we see children who are innocently expressing interest and desire of like butterflies, and they wanna hold hands on the playground. And, and people getting upset because they've, they’ve hyper-sexualized what queer identity is (=Malcolm: Mmm), and that makes me very upset when I see, like small children who are told that they can't hold hands on the playground or whatever, bec-, not, not in my situation, but, you know, I know that this happens because, because it's wrong. And it's (=Tyler: Mmm), it's this, that and the next thing and I think, you know, I don't, I don't have a problem with people living their best casual lives or whatever it is they want to do. But when that's the only narrative that's getting peddled [Caleb nods], it's not only harmful to the people in the community, but it's harmful to the way that the community is viewed from an (=Caleb: Yes) external point of view. And I think, when we think about the, in my experience, the biggest voices against queerness, it often is your more conservative [Malcolm nods], religious type of people. And so they're going to pick out the most, [sigh] (=Benjamin: Yes), promiscuous aspects, right (=Malcolm: Yes), of what a queer experience can be (=Malcolm: Yeah), and then they attack those. And I think the people that suffer at that the most people, are the people who don't identify with those aspects (=Malcolm & Benjamin: [Indistinguishable overlap]).

**Benjamin:** Now I’m asking, I know you probably don't, you don't think this but, now is it, is it the people who are promiscuous, is it their responsibility to change or hide that, or is it, the issue’s actually with the straight people?

**Lola:** No, not at all, (=Malcolm & Benjamin: [Indistinguishable overlap]), that’s what I’m saying. It’s, I think it's because that's the (=Benjamin: Ja), the main narrative that's peddled. I think that's what's problematic. I don't think (=Malcolm: Yes) that people should like, not be promiscuous (=Benjamin: Mmm), like live your best life. There are straight people who are (=Caleb: Ja, exactly!) just bad like (=Malcolm: That is, ja!) Like, I think that's what we forget, like, that's what the conversation never is (=Malcolm: Yes! Exactly). For everything a queer person does, there’s a straight from doing the same thing.

**Benjamin:** No there’s ten straight people (=[Several]: [Laughter]).

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable overlap]

**Malcolm:** I would think that, ja, certainly, uhm, I think we all have friends who are, identify as being straight. And you know for a fact that, that they are promiscuous, you know (=Caleb: Ja). It's not, and it's not turned into this, into, it's not spoken of as being like, a, a, a, it’s not identified, oh that is like the straight agenda (=Tyler: Mmm). This, the, the straight agenda is still a whole, a loving family, and a (=Caleb: [Laugh sigh]) beautiful home and a white picket fence or whatever and living with your children and raising a beautiful fam-, that is, it's, it’s, it’s still as if everybody has that, you know, inclination or that there's not space for them to have this promiscuous gap and then go to that. Uhm, I feel like when you are, when you are, are, are, a gay person, it's, it's everything is always the worst of everything in the, in the world. You know, this is like the, these are the people that are, they’re in hell, I was born in hell. Now. You know, when I was born, I was already in in hell. I've been told since so small already. That's funny, [inaudible], you going, you know? This is where you're going. And straight people, I listen sometimes to, to the conversations they have, so you, as you grow older, older family members are willing to discuss more things maybe with you, and you hear of this auntie that had, a, an abortion, can you believe it? Auntie so-and-so that keeps her, she had an abortion when she was younger, you know, when it was even a more ostrac-. So, I don't know why when you are, when you are a, a, a gay person, everything always goes towards the, the worst (=Caleb: Mmm) possible extent or extreme, you know, these are all terrible people, even if you, if you want to practice free love and have sex with whoever you want to have sex with. That is your decision, that, that is all of our, uhm-uhm-uhm, it is all of own prerogative, you can do what you want to do. But even that is not all that you are (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But the, the narrative is almost like if you, if you, if you’r gay, then it’s only about sex. That is the, that is all that, that these people are, and they want to turn all of our children into that also (=Tyler: Yes) [Natalia nods]. You know, so, I don't know how we going to, if that will ever be, [laugh sigh], dealt with or addressed (=Tyler: Yeah). Because I know that I'm, I'm gay, but sex is not all that I am (=Benjamin: Mmm). And I'm certainly not trying to turn anybody's child – I don’t know how to do that – turn somebody’s child gay, (=[Several]: [Laughter]: =Lola: [Sigh]), or there’s a gay agenda. I, I don't know what the gay agenda is, as a gay person, I don't know what the gay agenda is. Maybe you can clarify that for me, I don't completely understand what that means. Maybe I, I don't want to, you know, think about it in an incorrect way, maybe one of you can clarify the gay agenda to me (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), but I know that I don't have (=Tyler: Yeah) such an agenda. Like I said, in, in my class, I have to listen, if a child speaks like this, because, sexuality education, so it's part of the curriculum now (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, there's books on it, textbooks on it and all of that. So gender norms and gender roles and those terms, ‘bisexuality’, ‘homosexuality’, ‘hetero-‘, those terms come up. So I can’t, if a child says that for example to me, I can't push him down (=Tyler: Mmm). I have to find another way, and my message will normally be about, like she [Lola] said, tolerance, respect, you have no right to be nasty to, ‘cause I don't agree with everybody I come into contact with. I don't think you agree with everybody that you, that you come into contact with (=Lola: [Laugh]), but we are all on the, on the earth together (=Tyler: Yes). So, constantly going to all of these like negative extremes is, it's, it’s, so, so harmful (=Tyler: Yeah), [sounds of children playing outside] you know, because you are not dealing with the humanity of the person at all. You don't feel like this person is even a, a human being (=Tyler: Yeah), you know (=Tyler: Yes), but you are, a human (=Tyler: Yeah) you know, you are okay.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Thank you for that. Uhm, I'm hearing l-, like good things about some of your examples, uhm, like you were talking about a specific time experiencing the class with children saying problematic things. Uhm, I think way earlier you also mentioned, you know, some people in your family had told you like, from when you were a toddler, that you were A, gay and B, going to hell because of it. Okay, uhm, and Lola, you also bringing up the example that, uhm, you know, some, some students’, uh, parent was, like, really angry with you and that whole experience. Uhm, and even Natalia, you talked about that one time where you had a date or a casual encounter and there was all that ‘supposed to’ stuff and you were like, “Oh, God”. Yeah, so, my whole point of bringing all that to your attention is I really enjoy the spec-, uh, the specificity of your examples. Like, can we talk about a specific interaction, like you just did, like, a specific interaction or a relationship, where you felt something about sameness and difference in queerness? [Lola raises hand slightly] [To Lola] Yes?

**Lola:** Is there a bathroom that can-?

**Tyler:** There is a bathroom, uhm, you can speak to my, uh, assistant, she's right outside the door (=Lola: Okay good), and she’ll direct you to that (=Lola: Okay, perfect). [Malcolm rises too] Uhm, you might need to take toilet paper with you because there might not be any (=Lola: Oh, thank you so much; =Malcolm: [Inaudible] You also? (=Malcolm: I just need the bathroom, yes). That’s fine. Okay, [laugh sigh].

**Malcolm:** Is there, is the bathroom upstairs or only-?

**Tyler:** Downstairs, yes.

**Caleb:** Okay (=Tyler: You can continue) [Pause] (=Tyler: Hmm?) Shall we wait for them? Uh-

**Tyler:** You don't have to (=Caleb: Oh, okay), you can continue (=Caleb: Uhm).

**Caleb:** I had a… [laugh sigh],lost thought

**Tyer:** Do you, do you have any specific examples of like an interaction or a relationship where you felt-

**Caleb:** Sameness, sa-, and difference, uhm? (=Tyler: Mmm)

**Benjamin:** That's a tough one because, like I said earlier, with me, sexuality and gender haven't really been a defining, [clears throat], haven’t been a, they don’t form part of, I'm just a person and I happen to be into guys (=Tyler: Right). It's not really any defining characteristic ones, so they probably are specific experiences where it did come up. But it wasn't, [clears throat]… monumental enough, like it wasn't a (=Tyler: Mmm), because I mean a trauma is specific to the person and just anything that like disrupts your state of whatever, your mind, but so I never had any experiences where it was necessarily traumatic or like, specifically noticeable, there, there were of course, there are times were, where it was, but (=Tyler: Mmm)… It's not, like you said, like, I can’t like go on and on, there probably, like there are experiences but it was never a huge thing for me (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), noticing those experiences (=Tyler: Right). So it’s, because I felt so comfortable in being a guy, a straight man, not a straight man, a, a cis-man (=Tyler: Yeah). So there were very few experiences (=Tyler: Okay). But it was generally, like different in the same, I suppose then there are probably like (=Tyler: Yeah) many of the same, but it was never like super noticeable for me (=Tyler: Right). And when it was, I think… So I kind of knew I was gay when I was like, three, four, five (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But it was a thing where… I'm like, I'm a guy, I'm a boy, but I'm not like other boys. I'm more like, friendly with the girls and like, I’m more like the girls, but I’m not a girl so. And it was like alienating but [Natalia nods] in that regard, it was, I kind of, just, I was like, okay wait, just wait to puberty, like, any experiences that are the same or different is just because [Tyler checks voice recorder], just wait ‘til puberty and it’ll be fine (=Tyler: Okay), and then there were, and then I was gay, so. Like, I think when I did deal with these issues for myself, it was never [Malcolm returns], it was at such an early age that (=[Indistinguishable other voice]), it was at such an early age that, I’ve, it might be like a thought, now at some point I’ve just managed, it’s not like a conscious memory or anything (=Tyler: Mmm, okay).

**Caleb:** Uhm (=Tyler: Yes), talking about sameness and difference, like, uh, first, is there s-, I can’t remember on the form (=Tyler: Yes), but is there a part that like you, I want to say something and I don't want it to be re-, reported on?

**Tyler:** If you wouldn't like it to be reported on, that's fine. I can-

**Caleb:** Okay, it’s like a from this point on (=[Several]: [Laughter]) I just don’t, it, it’s a lawsuit. So (=Tyler: Okay; =[Several]: [Laughter]), I don't want to, so I don't want the lawsuit to be mentioned (=Tyler: Okay), that’s why (=Tyler: Right).

**[Redacted for 2 minutes 20 seconds. Lola returns during this section].**

**Tyler:** No, that’s totally fine (=Caleb: Ja), thank you for that. Where, uhm, which school in Botswana? Is that-?

**Caleb:** [School acronym. School name in full]. (=Tyler: Okay yes). Oh, you ha-, have you ever been there? (=Tyler: Uhm) Like, have your friends-?

**Tyler:** I used to live in Botswana and went to [other school name]. Do you know [school]?

**Caleb:** What? My mother works there (=Tyler: Oh, cool). So you went to [school]? (=Tyler: Yeah). For- really?!

**Tyler:** When I was a kid (=Caleb: Oh, okay, interesting). Yeah, when I was very young, I was like seven.

**Caleb:** Okay, and then you moved here for your high school years or what? (=Tyler: Yeah). Okay, I mean, that’s nice. My mother teaches grade two there (=Tyler: Cool), [laugh]. Wow (=Tyler: Nice). Interesting.

**Tyler:** Yeah, really cool.

**Caleb:** Yes.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], yeah. So, uhm, does anyone else have some like relationship, uhm, like with your parents, with a romantic partner, with a friend, a peer, a colleague, where, uh, that comes to mind, the sameness and difference (=Malcolm: Yeah). Yeah?

**Malcolm:** Okay, I can. In terms of a relationship that is, is now meaningful to me where being very different is, is with my, with my late father, he died when I was 15. Uhm, and then I was only really coming, you know, into, accepting who I am, that kind of thing. And I wasn't living at all anymore, there were some issues and so on. So, I couldn't really live at home anymore. And I was attending high school in Bellville South. So I went to live with my grandmother, in Bellville South (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So in, I think his last few years, that he was a-, alive, I wasn't living at home. I only went there, you know, [child yelling outside] weekends. But in terms of, of, of who he was, how he identified, he identified as a, a straight male, you know? And he had Catholic, and played rugby, and he was a, a, a quite a sports, you know, he was very [inaudible] and all these things, he was quite well known. And even after he retired from sport, he still had a presence in rugby [Tyler nods] and, and I come from a happy family, so he connected with some of my uncles on my mom's, so he was very much, you know, that macho man type of person, and he, and when I was very young, like, man, five or six or seven, like, I was very young. There's this, this, uhm,-uhm-uhm, man, I don't know how to describe him or her or they, uh, probably, probably a transgendered person. Grew up, born, born male, assigned male at birth, and then he, he basically lived as a female for most of his life, wore female clothing and all of that, but I don't think he, or they, underwent any, you know, (=Benjamin: Confirmation surgery) sex confirmation surgery or anything like that. So, and this person was friends with my mom (=Tyler: Mmm). And one day, he came, he stood at the car, and I was coming from, from inside, you know, from, out of the house and they were already looking into the, the, started to move me away from my granny’s house, I didn’t normally want to go home. I love being there with her and she passed away last year, God rest her soul. Anyway, so I, uhm, I came, I came out, and this person, I don't know, I don't want to say names of other people, you know, I don't, since it's like-,

**Tyler:** I mean, any name that you mention, I will also change (=Malcolm: Yes, yes) into something random. So that's fine.

**Malcolm:** So it was this, that in-, that individual, uhm, was standing at the car there. It was, I grew up with my mother sort of, you know, my mom knew him. And my father just became so upset (=Tyler: Mmm). “*Jou, ef”,* in Afrikaans, yeah, we spoke Afrikaans mostly, “*Jou ef, jou weg vat, weg vir my kar, fok, weg, en* *wat soek jy? Dis bad luck”,* have that thing, if you were a gay person, uhm, I don’t know if it’s so, if it’s Coloured culture, you know, you bad luck (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, you bring bad omens or something, I don't know (=Tyler: Mmm). And so in Afrikaans, we’d say *Dis bad lucke mense,* you know? And he made this scene and, we got into the car but I saw it, and I heard how upset he got. And I asked him afterwards, “why were you so rude to, uhm, to this person?” but I said the person's name, everybody on the road knows him, and so on. He's obviously well known. Uhm, and he said, “I'm not interested in this kind of people. I’m not interested, these people can drown”, you know, that whole narrative (=Tyler: Mmm). Then, when I was, I think I was eleven, or something, grade six or whatever. I remember my sister and I, we both washed early. And I came out of the house, I don't know what I was doing, walking or dancing, I don't know what I was doing. But he turned around and he looked at me with such disgust, I will never forget his, the way he was looking at me. And he said to me, “*jy’s amper soos n’ moffie”* (=Tyler: Mmm)*.* It was like he was, he was, like, angry (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, at me, man, and I wasn't, it wasn’t like I was prancing or whatever, whatever the case might be, and so on. But like, there was, I knew that he, he loved me. And I knew that he was proud of me, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), and he always spoke about what I would be, and this, and get an education and do this and do that, and you must, you know, all of that. So I knew that was there (=Tyler: Mmhmm), but I also feel like even though he didn't say it, I feel like maybe he knew that maybe I was a bit different, you know. And he didn't like that (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I always say, I never came out of the closet to my mother, she came took me out, opened that closet, took me by my hand and brought, and said “enough of this. You are my child, and you're not going to go through this anymore”, that kind of thing. So, and that happened, my father died the [date in December], that happened on New Year's Day, 2016 (=Tyler: *Shoh*). The, that, later that month, basically, but it was on the first of January, I remember it was after the New Year's Eve party we had at my aunt's place, and so on. So, where, where my father is concerned, knowing how he felt about gay people, I wonder if that was maybe because of, of, ‘cause like I said, people, people said these things. Maybe they made certain remarks about me since I was very small, already, you know? Uhm, some people would ask me “*Spiel jy netbal?”*, and you know, netball, you know, uhm, they would say things like that. My sister was very, uhm, man, she was very rough, [laugh sigh]. And so on, and she was very sporty, and soccer and all of these things. And then they would say, “*Malcolm is die meisie mense and Karin is die seun mense”.* Now can you imagine him saying that to a man, saying that his firstborn son, he’s now this manly man, and you're saying this about his firstborn son. So I wonder if, if maybe those things made him also feel the way he felt (=Tyler: Mmm). But he, he died before I really spoke openly about being gay to anybody. I had a best friend at the time, I spoke about, I spoke these things to. But I was never, I felt so, so, so different, even at that age, from him. And I could, I could never ever speak to him about these things in the way I can sit and speak to, to you guys here now or to anybody else. I was never able to, to speak to my, my own father about those things. And, yeah, everybody’s different from everyone. We are all individuals. But I mean, if you are, are a family, there is supposed to be some kind of sameness there, at least I think so (=Tyler: Mmm). I could be wrong, and you can tell me I’m, I'm wrong or I’m, I'm misunderstanding it, but there, there must be that kind of, of, of connection in terms of, of, of, of sameness, of belonging (=Benjamin: Shared identity), of being a part of each other – sorry?

**Benjamin:** Of shared identity.

**Malcolm:** Yes, exactly, you know. Even though we are not exactly the same, obviously not, you know, but I felt so, so far away from, from [gestures shape of a figure] who he was, and I’ve, I could never, now that you've, I’ve never thought about, you’ve now asked is there a relationship, you know, where sameness, and there are just different to other boys at school, maybe, or on the playground, whatever. And same with certain other boys or even girls, you know, I always fit in more with the girls, I didn't really, like I said, wanna hang out with the, with the gay guys too much, even at school. Yeah, I’ll never forget, there were, there were, in the Afrikaans class, they were these five gay guys, I'm still friends with one, we are close friends now. We, at school, I didn’t want to associate, really with him, you know, they used to walk in a, in a string and I would hear the kids say “*ja*, *vyf bunnies, vyf moffies”,* you know? Nasty things like that, when I go to the boys’ toilet, you know, things like that. But in terms of my, my father, I would’ve wanted to feel a little more – because I'm your child (=Tyler: Mmm). And you, you made me (=Tyler: Mmm), you know I didn’t create myself. You and my mother, you were involved in whatever you, you know, I come from you (=Tyler: Mmm), you know. But I just I, I, I, felt the so different from him and those things that you said to me, also, and this is what I would have maybe wanted to speak to him (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm) about, you know, but maybe we can listen to what other men are saying, that it's his fault that I'm gay, or, you know, he, you know, he had a hand in it, or (=Tyler: Mmm). But, whenever other bullying or other, uhm, connections, even, whatever other differences I've had with other people, feeling different from other people, and however else I might’ve felt the same, I would have wanted a, a, a greater sense of sameness with him, you know. Yes, he’s, was heterosexual, he’s straight or whatever. I'm gay and so on, but. there should have been a, a bigger connection there. And maybe I was still very small. Had I maybe grown, you know, maybe into adulthood and I could speak to him about these things. Maybe it might have been better or worse, maybe I would not have been as open as I am if he was still alive. But, yeah, that's a significant relationship for me (=Tyler: *Shoh*), where that is concerned.

**Tyler:** Thank you, Malcolm, wow.

**Lola:** [Inaudible] while I was in the bathroom, [laugh].

**Malcolm:** Oh, did you finish?

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable overlap]

**Caleb:** We’re, we’re talking about, I just wanna clarify again, relationships, right? (=Tyler: Yeah) Sameness in relationships, at the moment?

**Tyler:** Yeah, if you, if, I'm asking for more specific examples (=Caleb: Okay), so you can talk about an interaction, if it's not a relationship, maybe a stranger, or, like, you know, a date or something, or, yeah. Just that.

**Benjamin:** Well I suppose we’ve mentioned quite a few of the differences we feel with other straight, or other gay people, like within the community and everything (=Tyler: Yeah), so, ja.

**Caleb:** Uhm, well, I haven't been in many relationships, I think I've been like, I don't know, it's difficult, to say, like, what (=Benjamin & Malcolm: [Indistinguishable overlap]). But like I've been in, I consider, personally, I don't know about the other people, [laugh sigh], but, I've been in like, two. And, I feel like, out of the difference, it’s all, I always [video recorder dies] feel like, in relations-, we're at a different stage of, like, someone has come out when they 13, someone's come out when they 16, 18, 20. Or, just started accepting or (=Benjamin: Different life stages) going into their, uhm, identity. And I feel like in the queer community, it's very out of sync, like, w-, with straight people, you're, you, I don't know, when you're 12, like you said, these schoolyard- (=Benjamin: [Inaudible] puberty) Yes, like, everything happens in, and it's all like, in sync. But with queer people, I've always seen it’s, it's out of sync, and that caused, in my opinion, like, the rel-, the two relationships that I’ve had, has brought about the biggest problems (=Tyler: Hmm), in the relationship, was (=Benjamin: Yes), like, that, that disconnect, like, I've been out since 16 I think, I don't know, like, and even then I thought, like, I came out late. And then they only came out when they left the house and things and, from that, it's like, okay, but I went through this when I was in high school already, and now you're putting this stuff on me. And I'm like, okay, but like, I really don't care. But, since like, I've already gone through it, you know, and so, like, not that I don't care, but I, I don’t, (=Benjamin: You don’t wanna go through it again) I don't want to go through this again. Like I’m done, and I feel like, like, in samne-, like difference in relationships, I feel like that’s where, that’s something that has happened to me, ja (=Benjamin: Ja; =Tyler: Wow).

**Caleb & Benjamin:** [Indistinguishable overlap]

**Caleb:** Can you [Benjamin] relate to this?

**Benjamin:** Ja (=Caleb: Ja) well I think it’s not really same or different, it was just, different stages of, of the same (=Caleb: Yes). Yes. Uhm, my first relationship in Matric was actually with a second-year university student and he, when I met him, he’d kind of like, just come out of the church, from being like, super religious, like played in the band and everything, like very just, going against being gay, like, “Jesus will heal me”, whatever, whatever. And then I think, I was kind of the person he was like, “Oh, wait, actually, it was fine”. So I kind of like replaced Jesus in his life (=Tyler: Oh, wow; =[Several]: [Laughter]; =Caleb: Wow!; =Lola: That’s really, that’s really intense). Yes, so like, I was kind of placed on a pedestal and like I was perfect and like, not worshiped, but, like, he’d always used to say, like, we'd be talking about something and he’d be like “no it’s not about me, it’s about you.” And I’m like… (=Caleb: Huh?) it really is a two-way street kind of, but, ja. So, a lot of like, so we were the same in terms of that, but, with the dichotomy in term-, not dichotomy, just the (=Caleb: Ja), the scale, we were on, we were at different points in the scale and, so that brought up a lot of issues with him, like idolizing me and not being [inaudible] (=Caleb: Ja) and all of that so (=Tyler: Wow, interesting). Codependency (=Caleb: Oh, ja, [laugh]), [laugh].

**Lola:** I have a very, uhm, complicated relationship with my mom, whom I love very much. Uhm, I moved back in with her when I left [university], so I still, I live with her again now. Uhm, and, you know, it's, I think, [sigh], people are very quick to be like, “ah well if people aren’t supportive, like, cut them out, cut your losses and move on with your life,” like you don't need family, like blood doesn’t make family, chosen family, you know, there’s this big narrative, which, uhm, is true for some people. When you live under your mother’s roof it’s not that simple (=[Several]: Mmm). I think my, my struggle with, with her mostly is that in every way except that she doesn't accept my queerness, she's a great mom (=Benjamin: My parents are exactly like that). Right? Like, she has made huge sacrifices for my brother and I, she works two jobs. She sits with me when I'm sick, she, like, she’ll go out of her way above and beyond to be a good mom. But my boyfriend isn't allowed in my house because he's transgendered (=Tyler: Wow). Like, isn't allowed in the house. And, like, it's a bone of contention, obviously, because I live there and now I can’t have my boyfriend visit me. I'm not even, like I’m not talking like, staying over or like, being (=[Several: [Indistinguishable overlap]), just, just like visit me, right, just like (=Caleb: Come drink coffee, [laugh]) [inaudible], coffee. Like, he, he’s legitimately not allowed in the house because he's transgendered. And, uhm, that's really rough, you know (=Malcolm: Of course), and, and I think I, uhm, I have this really difficult, eq-, like, I've equated losing my faith to finding my queerness. Uhm, which I think is (=Benjamin: Is that [inaudible]), it is true for a lot of people. Like I, uhm, I was hurt by the church, and I was rejected by leadership. And I've had a lot of conversations with Christian people [inaudible] like, it was people who [inaudible] about God, like valid, but (=Benjamin: But-) also, no, uhm, [laugh sigh], so, you know, but with my mom, it's just there's this person. And I think what's hard is like, I see how difficult it is for her. ‘Cause it like, breaks her, when she like, sits there, and she's like, crying because she loves me. And she wants what she believes is what's best for me. But she also needs to, she also feels like she needs to stand her ground and her principles. And, and so there's this, this constant, normally unspoken tension in our house about what is and isn't okay. And when, uhm, she found out that I’m in a polyamorous relationship with my trans boyfriend, who is dating another trans man, so it's just a whole lot of not very Christian-okay, uhm, [laugh] (=Malcolm: [Laugh]). You know, it’s just (=Malcolm: [Laughing] yeah), it’s like, my mom looked at me like I was piling on the nightmares. And, uhm (=Malcolm: Oh, yeah), she doesn’t even know that I’m non-binary, so (=Benjamin: [Laugh]), so we don’t [inaudible], I chose my battles with that one, uhm. But you know, I think having, [sigh], I was saying to someone the other day I get really annoying how people paint people in history as good or bad, like (=Benjamin: Yeah) divide like that, for me, it's such nonsense, ‘cause we're like a kaleidoscope of grey, like that is the human experience. And I think that's a lot easier to do with people who are at arm's length, or when their grey shades kind of match up with yours. Whereas with my mom, the differences are so, like, painful to our relationship, that (=Benjamin: Such a contrast), we've said out loud to each other that like if she wasn't my mother, we would have no relationship. And if I move out the house, like I don't know if I'll come visit her for Sunday lunch because I can't find my boyfriend, so, like (=Malcolm: [Inaudible], exactly; =Benjamin: Ja), you know, it's, it's hard because I do love her and I acknowledge the sacrifices that she's made and the love that she's given. But to reject something that is so-

**Benjamin:** Fundamental

**Lola:** Fund-, that’s exactly the word, like fundamentally who I am, like, it's not like “Oh, you don't like my shirt”, [laugh sigh] (=Caleb: Ja), you know, it’s-

**Benjamin:** Oh you actually don't like me (=Lola: Ja), like, this is me.

**Lola:** And, and, there, there, like my experience with people is that they're tricky about that, because it's the whole, like, hate the sin, love the sinner. Uhm, and, and I think what you said was interesting about the choices we make, and I've, I’ve, I’ve heard narrative where like, “it's fine with you’re gay as long as you don’t act on it”. Like, then you must live a life of abstinence, and you're must (=Malcolm: Yes, yes), you must just be single and, and deprive yourself from this temptation from the devil.

**Malcolm:** Yes, you must turn to God.

**Lola:** Yeah, you know, you must find [inaudible] (=Malcolm: Your sustenance there). Yeah. And I just, I, uhm, obviously rejected that. I was like, no, thank you, uhm, I have found people who love me and who accept me and, and I've found chosen family. And yes, our chosen family is a little bit messy. And, you know, we also get upset with each other. And we have a lot of differences within ourselves, and-

**Benjamin:**  But at least we know we’re all there because we want to be there, [laugh] (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh])

**Lola:** But there’s, there's that, that active, that choice of acceptance. And I, I think what, what really makes me upset is, like, [sigh], I work with kids and I, and that means that I work with parents, unfortunately. But I feel very strongly that before you have children, that you need to sit down and look at like, what that might mean (=Caleb: Yes). That might mean you have a queer child. That might mean you have a disabled child, or a sick child, or a child who's gonna like completely reject your views. And if you go into this and you’re like, “Ah, I'm going to be a loving parent, I'm going to be there for my child and” (=Caleb: Yes), like you need to know what that means. Because I see, day in and day out, in my own life, and then in the lives of my students, uhm, because obviously, now that I’m outed at work, I'm like, I'm the gay teacher, which is fine, (=Caleb: Yeah), [inaudible] guys, I have other qualities, but like, it's cool. We can chat about RuPaul’s Drag Race” and it’s fine (=[Several]: [Laughter]), uhm, it’s a great bonding activity with kids. Uhm, but you know, like, I’ll have kids come crying to me, because they, they think they might be gay and it's the scariest thing in the world, ‘cause they know their parents are gonna reject them (=[Several]: Mmm; =Malcolm: Exactly). And you play this, you know, you are everything to those children, you are their source of, of, food and, you

**Benjamin**: You are the gay community, basically.

**Lola:** No [inaudible] the parent (=Benjamin: [Inaudible], ja), the parent. Like, like, I think a lot of my freedom to like kind of tell my parents was that I am financially independent, like, I live with my mom and I pay rent, and all of those things. Uhm, but people who are dependent on what is a conditional love, and what was different for me with my mom is my mom never kicked me out physically. But she kicked me out emotionally (=Malcolm: Yeah). And I had to tell her that, I was like, “you want me to come and tell you when I'm upset, and you want me to be open with you. And like, thank you for not putting me on the streets, like kudos (=Benjamin: [Indistinguishable overlap]) for being that kind of (=Benjamin: Not what you signed up for) parent,” but I cried when I had my first kiss because I couldn't go and tell my mom about it. And I was so excited and it was this big moment for me and, and it was made to feel shameful and dirty and wrong and sin and, and it's, it's hard because I'm, I’m at one space with how fortunate I am that my parents haven't kicked me out. Right? Like that is, I’m, I'm lucky that I haven't been destitute. But emotionally I might as well have been. And so (=Malcolm: Yes) you're, you're caught in this in-between of, well I'm grateful but I’m, I've still (=Benjamin: [Indistinguishable overlap]) experienced intense rejection and hurt and I can’t have friends in my house (=Malcolm: Yes) and I can’t-

**Benjamin:** The privilege you have does have [inaudible], ja.

**Lola:** Ja, it has its limit as well. And so that was, you know, that's a relationship where there's a lot of, a lot of same and different, and I relate to you in being like, but this is my parent, we should have more in common (=Malcolm: In common, yes), you know. We should want to sit and spend time together and talk about our lives. And, and it's just (=Malcolm: Yes) anything longer than “how was your day?” and the weather, anything serious, anything that matters (=Benjamin: Ja; =Malcolm: Mmm), just becomes an upset, to the point that my mom and I don’t really communicate about real things anymore because it just hurts.

**Malcolm:** And it's, it’s, it’s as if everything that, that, that you are comes from outside of this home, from this space (=Lola: [Sigh]). It's, it's, it’s never that, that, that they are a part of this experience. And I grew up with you, around you, you know?

**Lola:** Ja, that’s what always gets me (=Malcolm: So-), when people are like, “Ah, I don’t want you around my children, you’re gonna turn them gay,” like, honey, I had so many straight people around me (=Malcolm: Seriously, yeah!), [laugh]

**Benjamin:** Why did I not turn straight?

**[Several]:** [Indistinguishable overlap]

**Malcolm:** Exactly (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Lola:** But you know, that, that, that, that thing of blame. I was, uhm, in high school I was a competitive debater. And so within debating you learn a lot of like philosophy and rhetoric and, and things that are very liberal, I mean, [university] BA kids are your coaches so obviously, it's a little, a little liberal. And, uhm, and I had a, a friend who was a couple years older than me, uhm, who identified as, as a lesbian at the time. And my mom was like, “you've had negative influences in your life, I wish I never let you do, do debating, like debating is why you’re gay (=[Several]: [Laugh sigh]), hanging out with, with [university] students hang out, and hanging out with Jessica is why you’re a lesbian”. And I'm like, I don’t think that's true. But there’s, and I think that that kind of filters down further onto parents don't acknowledge their role or trauma, and like that’s got nothing to do with queerness or anything like, any parent is a fallible human. And so they're going to do things in your formative years that are going to have a negative effect on you. And there's very few parents who stand up and take responsibility for the role that they've played in, in you're, not-so-nice past. Like, they're very proud to be like, “Oh, I was a rugby player, my son is a rugby player, he got that for me”. But your anger issues? Also go that from you (=Malcolm: From you; =Caleb: Ja). And, and that’s never acknowledged. And so the sameness that, that your parents want to acknowledge is always the good, in, in my experience (=Malcolm: Yeah), uhm. And, and that sucks, and growing up and realizing that your parents are f-, are humans and that they're not superheroes, I suppose (=Malcolm: [Sneeze]; =Benjamin: Bless you), that, that sucks.

**Benjamin:** That’s normally the end of childhood, when you realize your parents are humans (=Tyler: Yeah) and not gods.

**Tyler:** Yeah, *shoh*. Yeah, thank you very much for that, Lola. Wow. Uhm, we are actually running close to the end of this session. So, uhm, does anyone have any experience that they would like to say? It's kind of like the time for, [laugh sigh], the final, uh, contribution, if, if you have anything, uhm.

**Benjamin:** I suppose, I’ll just say like, I’ve got, I’ve got three older sisters and a younger brother, and he's also gay. But we've never come out to my, our parents because, like, it’s kind of the same situation where I know they won’t kick me out. But like, why deal with the unpleasantness? I’ll just wait ‘til I'm independent, whatever, and they’ll be fine. So, I do understand what you're saying about, like, living [inaudible], like my father. Even though he is like a macho man, he kind of, it was, we were very privileged in that that he was still like, he was conscious that, not to tr-, kinda enforce that on us. So he was, he, like let us play piano, he was fine with us doing whatever, whatever. But he was still like a very religious man, and like still has gender roles and everything. So, what point was I trying to make about you said? [Laugh sigh]

**Caleb:** Uhm, it’s, I’ve a very different experience with my relationship with my parents. My father was a pastor, which is, was, for like, seven years. Like, when I grew up, like, and before I went to school, he was a pastor, then he went to do quantity surveying. But, anyways, I just wanted (=[Several]: [Laughter]) to, I just wanted to set the scene why, why it’s interest-, like I find my family quite interesting is how it turned out. ‘Cause they accept me hundred percent, like, I can speak to my mother, which I've, I’m very grateful about, like about anything. like with my queer experiences, whatever, relationships. anything. I can't do that with my dad. He accepts me, like, fine, but I want, how can I say? I'm, I can go and speak to him about my relations-, he’ll be fine with it, but it’d be awkward, like (=Benjamin: Is that not-?), that’s it.

**Benjamin:** Is that not less because of innate difference, just because you're different people, you’re just (=Caleb: Yes) note as close as your mother?

**Caleb:** Yes, but it's not about rejection (=Benjamin: Yeah). The, they haven't rejected me at all, which I'm very grateful for. And, which is, ja, ja, just, I just think like, with you guys talking about difference now, I’m finding, I didn't realize like, wow, like, I always knew that parents would, some parents reject their, uh, children, but I didn't-

**Benjamin:** It was never your experience (=Malcolm: Yes).

**Caleb:** It was never my experience and I'm very grateful for that. But I didn't also know that so many people get with like, all three of you that are getting s-, s-, like, the idea that-

**Malcolm:** Some rejection

**Caleb:** Some rejection, not, but I've not had, I don't think, any rejection from my parents in the sense of my sexuality or identity or anything.

**Malcolm:** Yeah. In terms of, in terms of my, my family life, also, just as a, as closing point, I don't want to paint all of them out to be horrible people or whatever, because they're not, you know, not, not all of them or whatever the case might be. I have been very accepted for who I am. You know, I think that's also because of, of, maybe it's because I, I, you know, I went to university and I'm also financially independent and I am, I’m there for my mom and I was there for my grandmother, and, you know. I'm dependable and those, all of those things. So (=Benjamin: [Inaudible]), so, sorry?

**Benjamin:** You tick all the other boxes, so it becomes-

**Malcolm:** I tick all, I tick all of the, the other boxes. And so where, where my, my queerness or being gay is concerned, it's not something that is discussed. We don't we don't talk about that, we don't ask him anymore, ‘when is he bringing a girlfriend home?’, or ‘when is he getting a wife?’ because I'm turning 29 in June, so they, none of that happens anymore. They know better than to s-, say anything like that to me at this age, in my life. But, uhm, in terms of, of being able to talk about my feelings, you know, and, and, whether its guys, or, or those kinds of, being gay, or the experience, it's not something I would ever feel comfortable doing with, with family. I speak to my friends, there’s forums like this, you know, uhm, we can have a conversation along those lines. But where that, that overarching difference is concerned, it’s still there with the, with the family. I love them and, and I know that they love me, and they're proud of me and all of that, yes. But there's not that, that, that, I don't want to say ‘safety’, uhm, but there’s not that, that, that freeness, you know, to have a (=Benjamin: A relationship) meaningful conversation about these matters with my, with really any of my, of my family.

**Benjamin:** But now I'm wondering, sh-, why, should you necessarily, I, I suppose it’s, probably is a good idea with people that are related to you, but should you necessarily feel like, like you said, you create your family or whenever, but I’m saying is it a necessarily a negative thing that we don't have those relationships, with our families, like?

**Lola:** I think for me, the, the comparative is that my younger brother would sit with his girlfriend on the couch (=Benjamin: Oh, ja; =[Several]: [Indistinguishable agreement]). And [inaudible], and she would be invited to all of the family braais (=[Several]: [Indistinguishable agreement]), and like, my younger siblings were never protected (=Benjamin: Ja) from my brother's relationships. Whereas like mine, it's like, “oh please don’t say anything in front of-,” ‘cause I’ve got two half-siblings who are a bit younger. And so, I hear you and I think the ‘supposed to’s that are like (=Benjamin: Yeah), why should we feel this affinity towards families (=Caleb: Ja) necessarily? For me, it's the comparative (=Benjamin: Ja). And that is what (=Benjamin: Ja) painted the ‘supposed to’. Yeah.

**Benjamin:** I have the same experience. So, growing up, I was like, it doesn't matter if I'm gay, it's fine, like, my parents didn’t know, like, whatever, it’s fine. And then so it never really bugged me, it didn’t, it wasn't a difference I noticed or cared about. And then, when my sisters, because I’ve got three older sisters, they started bringing boys home from university and boyfriends. And I was like, okay, it's cool, it's fine. And then only like, since like, 2017, 2018, did I start realizing that, oh, wait, like, my sister just got married, and, like, my parents are super happy for them, welcomed him into the family. It's so great, but that's never something I, I would share with them, or something they could be happy with me about like, I couldn’t share that happiness with them.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, it's about that also, yes (=Benjamin: Ja).

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah*.* Natalia, any final thoughts?

**Natalia:** I mean, yeah, I just I also, I also feel very lucky to have had such an accepting family, and I went to an accepting school, obviously, I've been sort of a bit of an outcast, but never like, felt like I couldn't be who I was. Except within myself. Like, I've been kind of cruel to myself, you know, growing up. I've given myself a hard time but like, I think that just happens when you compare yourself to other people. But it’s, I mean, not being compared to other people by others has been very helpful. Uhm, and-

**Benjamin:** It was trauma avoidant.

**Natalia:** Hey?

**Benjamin:** It was trauma avoidant.

**Natalia.** Yeah, it was (=Benjamin: [Laugh]). I think it was definitely trauma avoidant, it was like, the, the, the best possible circumstances to go through these things, but they still do happen, you know (=Benjamin: Yeah), you still get the, the dysphoria and the, and like, most of my friends are actually cis-het males, or at least cis males, and they're not all like, uh… (=Benjamin: Toxic). Yeah, like, they love me and (=Tyler: Yeah), it, it still like, bothers me when, when I know they don't fully understand. But I, I feel completely safe. So like, I don't (=Benjamin: Yeah), I haven't really had to fight to, to belong. And like, uhm, that kind of, earlier when you said, am I, like is it a disguise, or is it a, a what is it?

**Benjamin:** Is it an active or passive process (=Natalia: Yeah) of hiding-

**Natalia:** Like, it's having that choice has been amazing, because I can present fully like masculine if I want to. And sometimes I do want to, even though it is like, it's not true to how I feel, but it's kind of fun. You know, it's like, just to, uhm, kind of be a bit kind of cocky and masculine and like-

**Benjamin:** Like putting on the glamorous (=Natalia: Yeah) [inaudible], it's like putting on another [inaudible]-

**Natalia:** Exactly. And so, uhm, and also ‘cause it, it’s within those queer spaces where there is an expectation to be different, you kind of feel like a rebel ‘cause they like, you know, “we don't want any masculinity here”. That's kind of the vibe you feel, and you're like, [deeper voice], “howzit, howzit” (=[Several]: [Laughter]), and then you’re like, “but I'm also queer”. And I like, I like, you know, taking people by surprise. So like I do feel very blessed. And, uhm, and, ja, I don't really feel like I have a relationship like that, that I can point to. Like a lot of subtle things over the years, but nothing that stands out as like a pivotal moment when I felt different and- (=Tyler: Yeah).

**Lola:** Can I ask a question that might startle both of you and I know we’re nearly out of time? (=Tyler: Okay) I just have a question because I've seen now there's, there’s been a movement in certain spaces to like, exclude, like, cis men, right, but include like non-binary, like, how, have you been in a space where it's like, non-binary is welcome, but then they look at you, and they're like, hmmm?

**Natalia:** You know, I've been wait-, I've been wanting to for years, but I w-, I kind of think it would be like, an amazing moment. If someone was like, “get out of here, cis man!” and I could just say, “I'm not a cis man” (=Lola & Benjamin: Yeah). And they would be very embarrassed. I kind of, a part of me wants that to happen ‘cause it would just be awkward and funny, but it's never happened.

**Lola:** ‘Cause I think the way that that narrative is, like, kind of put forward is implying, like AFAB non-binary people, or people of a femme, femme experience, but there, there’s very little language for that. So I was just wondering if, if, you [Natalia], even if you [Tyler] have experienced something like that, where they like, not really expecting an AMAB person to show up.

**Natalia:** I’ve felt that energy at times (=Lola: Oh, okay; =Malcolm: Yes), but I haven't, I haven't been told, like, “can you, can you leave? You shouldn't be here”.

**Malcolm:** Yeah. But I think people who, who, who, like you said earlier, finding your type of queer, sometimes they gravitate to each other, like if you consider the, the, uhm, if you think gay culture and so on, as a group of, of, of gay men who, you know, cisgender gay mean, you know, we might be more close. And you have gay men, and there are drag queens, maybe, you know, by night, type-thing. And they are maybe a, a group and maybe a group of, of, of, lesbians or whatever. You, so, people, sometimes they, they, they gravitate also towards, towards each other, and maybe they won't outright tell you (=Natalia: Yeah), “no, you can't be here”, or whatever. But maybe you might feel, maybe you went with a friend somewhere to a party or whatever, a, a lunch or an evening out, or whatever the case might be. And you might feel there’s (=Malcolm: Yeah), you know, you are not really included here. Nobody's telling you, “you don't belong”, or, you, “Please leave”, “we don't want you here,” “this is only for this type of-”, but you, you feel almost, I don’t, I don't belong here. I'm rather gonna go sit there, or I’m rather gonna go stand over there, or, you know (=Natalia & Tyler: Yeah. Yeah).

**Benjamin:** You feel othered.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, you feel othered, yes, in your own community, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it happens. Mmm. But I'm glad that you were all feeling comfortable enough to express everything that you have today. This has been really great. So, thank you for that (=Malcolm: Thank you). Are there any like, uh – oh, what are you, uhm, like taking away from this chat? That's my final question.

**Malcolm:** Yeah

**Tyler**: How has this been?

**Benjamin:** Nothing I haven't thought about before, like, at length. Not much, maybe just like consolidation and validation of my own thoughts, I guess, ja (=Tyler: Okay).

**Malcolm:** I think the, the, the human experience can be very, very, uhm, it can be very, I don't want to use the word, ‘complicated’ can have such negative, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), connotations, and whatever, uhm. But the human experience is very varied, [laugh sigh], a very, very, very different, you know, especially, and, and when you consider those, you know, my friends call it, call, call us the alphabet mafia (=Lola: Yes; =Caleb: [Laugh]), some of my friends, and whatever. Uhm, they have that, but then I laugh, you know, I don't, I don't take offense to that (=Tyler: Yeah). Because it’s them, you know, and I feel okay around them. But, I think, uhm, there’s, there's so many different experiences that people go through that, that simply, they, they just don't fit into any of these, into any of the, the, the labels and so on. And, and, and I come back to that idea of how do you, how does Natalia choose that, all of those feelings, that whole network of emotions and, and, and all of that, that sometimes, maybe makes Natalia feel completely not a part of the world (=Tyler: Mmm), but he is here, you know? (=Tyler: Mmm) So, we – I’m not, I’m just using an example of Natalia. Yeah, so, so that's what I, I think this has been a very, very, for me, I learned, I think I learned a lot from, from you guys, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, me too), honestly.

**Lola:** I think it's good that we have these conversations and like my friend asked me why I went all the way here because it was expensive, and I was like, because there’s not enough queer academia by (=Malcolm: Yes, yes) queer people. And I think that, like, this was, this was me doing a [inaudible] for my community. And like, it was really encouraging to see that there are more people, like to see on the indemnity form there was like number 17. So clearly you have like more people that are doing this (=Malcolm: Wonderful, ja). And I think the fact that like, like you said, it's not really anything that I haven't considered or had conversations in private with friends, but that it's now moving into an academic space, for me, very exciting. Uhm, and I think that we need, we need more of that. And so, uhm, yeah, I think it's a good sign towards the, the, the changes that are being made and, it was also encouraging to, to speak about how, uhm, you know, there is a need for queer spaces that aren't hyper-sexualized and aren’t like nighfi-, nightlife centered and, and to hear that that's a sentiment that is shared. And I think that, you know, that's something that we can all take away with, and I don’t know, maybe have [inaudible], or whatever the case, you know, and just, we, we’re, we've found all these differences and these similarities, but I think the challenge now lies, like, what are we going to do about that? And like, what are we going to do to create the community that we want? Uhm, and it's exciting that that's happening, and that we have the opportunity to even do that freely. So, this is a very positive [inaudible].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Great. That is excellent to here.

**Natalia:** Yeah, I would add to that, it's nice to have a space, which isn't like particularly performative, or like (=Tyler: Yeah), buzzword-heavy, and like, I don't know, it's, it's, it’s, it’s a bit different to, the university environment, not that that's a bad thing, the university environment, but it's like, very, it can be a bit stifling when you, everyone feels like they've, they’re kind of glamming up a bit, a lot of the time. And, uhm… and, yeah, this is, feels very relaxed and natural and-

**Benjamin:** It's kind of doing what we hope for, it’s not having an extreme or, [inaudible], I, if, if there’s a movie about being gay, it’s about being gay and how they came out and trauma, it's not just, it’s never just, the character that happens to be gay.

**Natalia:** Yeah (=Tyler: Mmm). Exactly.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.

**Caleb:** Mmm, I’ve found this, uhm, I’ve, I don't have a lot of gay friends, or like, queer friends, uh, in general. And the reason I wanted to come was to have, be able to speak about queer issues. And I feel like that is something that I feel very satisfied in now. Like, it's a place that, like this, this is, that is what this has given me. And that is what I was hoping for, as well. And, as you said, a-, like this is an academic, for academic reasons as well, ‘cause I did, I did do sociology in, a, some part of sociology in, uhm, in gender studies, and I feel like this just lit it up. It wasn't like (=Benjamin: It made it real) text, like I knew about everything it’s not like, but this just like, [clicked fingers] gave it light, like (=Lola: Made it real) Yes, yes. It’s just, and that's what, that's what I've gained from this experience. Ja.

**Tyler:** That is excellent to hear (=Caleb: [Laugh], wonderful). Yes, that's the kind of stuff that I’d hoped that this kind of space would achieve. So (=Caleb: Ja) I’m happy to hear that. And if you do have, uhm, anything else that comes to mind that you think, “oh, I wish I had said that,” that's fine, because there is a follow-up interview, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, and that will be in about, uhm, a couple of weeks. I'll be in contact with each of you individually. It can be in person, here, probably here, uh, but it can also be online. So Zoom or something like that. Uhm, and then let me-.

Benjamin

**Tyler:** Uhm, so how have you been since I last saw you?

**Benjamin:** When did you last see me, when was that? [Laugh]

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], the focus group. The focus group was, uhm, a couple weeks ago (=Benjamin: Yeah) Maybe, a bit longer ago.

**Benjamin:** Uhm, well, uhm, I can't think of anything. I suppose it's, it's been up and down, generally, so (=Tyler: Yeah?), ja, it's, I’ve been fine otherwise.

**Tyler:** Yeah. You've, you’ve done a little bit of traveling?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I'm in PE at the moment, yes

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. I see.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, it’s just for, the uni, for the [university] vac.

**Tyler:** Right. Right. Okay (=Benjamin: Yes). Cool. And you were not, uh, inconvenienced by the fires very much, were you?

**Benjamin:** Not in any way whatsoever, no.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay, that's good. Good (=Benjamin: Ja). Ja. Uhm, okay, so then we can get right into the discussion, which is, how did you feel about the focus group, in general?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, quite positive. Like (=Tyler: Mmm), like I said, I spoke to like a few friends and they were all like (=Benjamin: Yeah), “brah, can I do this as well?”. So uhm, ja. So (=Tyler: Mmhmm) I guess I probably then construed it in a very positive light, I guess, so you can, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), you can make from that what you will (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But, uhm, how did I feel? I suppose, I felt, less like profound. It wasn't like, nothing I'd, like I said, like, it wasn't nothing I'd heard before (=Tyler: Mmm). It was more like validating and just, uhm, consolidating what I’d already known or thought about for myself, and also just, it was interesting to speak other people. It would have been nice I think if there were another Person of Colour (=Tyler: Mmhmm), to hear their experiences (=Tyler: Yeah), but otherwise, but it was really interesting hea-, especially hearing non-binary people's, uhm… their (=Tyler: Yeah) dysphoria and all that, hearing about that, ‘cause that's something I've never had to like, deal with for myself (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Ja, no just (=Tyler: Yeah), thinking what else.

**Tyler:** Okay. So, so was that all to do with the positivity? It was, like hearing just like things you hadn't considered before, like certain non-binary participants, (=Benjamin: Ja) and it was also the validation. Like, what, what was p-, positive about it for you?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I suppose I think that might have been, that might be more to, like, uhm, applicable to me, specifically (=Tyler: Okay), or personally, because I am interested in like, just queer, like psychology and all that. Or just psychology in general. So, uhm, ja and so for me, it, for someone who's just interested in (=Tyler: Mmm) like, important stuff, I guess. And also not important stuff but (=Tyler: Mmm), it was… or stuff that's not necessarily important to my life, like (=Tyler: Yeah) non-binary issues and whatever. So, uhm… that's why I enjoyed it, because it was, uhm… it wasn't *needed*. It was, uhm, or like, for me, it wasn't needed for me. It was more like a privilege, or an, an enrichment to my life to like hear about it, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, I see. Well, that's good to hear, [laugh sigh]. Uhm-

**Benjamin:** It’s, ja, it's not, I don't think that's, uhm, ja, I don't think that that would be everyone's experiences with it, ja (=Tyler: Sure). Like that's, the one thing I noticed, uhm, I can't remember the guy’s name sitting next to me, the Black (=Tyler: On your left?) guy, Coloured guy, ja (=Tyler: Oh), on my left (=Tyler: Malcolm). Malcolm (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… what I noticed with him was, like, I think he's like, the three, three gay, like great, gay people there, like we all, like, said, like, we can recognize the privilege we have not having to deal with gender issues. But I sort of noticed that, this might sound a bit rude but, like I could see that Malcolm had, had less incentive to, like, explore these issues for himself. So a lot of like, what he brought up was kind, I noticed, it was kind of like, assumed knowledge for all of us there. It was like, an important thing for him to say, but for us it was kind of like, “ja, like, did you not know this when you were like, 12?” Like, [laugh], like, ja, we were like, it was, like he, like, a lot of what he said was like, “Oh, like, I felt othered by like, my father, and like, whatever”. And it wasn't a bad thing. It was very valid for him to say, but, uhm, that's what I noticed, just with the different levels of like, interest in like, the psychology of things and like the depth of it, uhm (=Tyler: Okay). So, you know, it wasn't, that, that wasn't a negative experience in any way (=Tyler: No), it was just that, like, ja, that's, this was just feedback that I'm just giving on the, [laugh] (=Tyler: Right, uhm) on this session, ja. I suppose because there'll be like, ‘cause like, I'm assuming, is this to go forward? Because, uhm, I'm thinking like, if you want more sessions or wherever (=Tyler: Mmm), it might be a thing where you speak about what you want out of it, or like what you plan because, I suppose because like (=Tyler: Yes), having just, a queer talk (=Tyler: Yeah) is a bit open-ended in terms of like (=Tyler: Yeah), the variety and like, just (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), inf-, infinitely many possibilities of, of whatever you could talk about, ja.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. Yeah. So I mean, a part of, uh, the choice to keep it open-ended is to see what ha- (=Benjamin: Ja), what comes up (=Benjamin: Yes, yes, ja). But I think that it also very valuable feedback. Uhm (=Benjamin: Ja), there are still things that, could be useful. Like, what did you assume you would be talking about coming here? (=Benjamin: Yes, ja). Or what would you like to talk about? Uhm (=Benjamin: Ja), yeah. So that's, that's, yeah, an important takeaway. So thank you for that. Uhm, I think, uh, it's kinda interesting that, you know, you say that, uhm, there were lots of things in that focus group that you hadn't necessarily thought about for the first time, like you’d thought about those things before. Uhm, uh, but then, [laugh sigh], you, you did ask a lot of questions of some of the participants, like Lola, for example. Uhm, you know, and, and I, I wonder how you felt about that? Kind of, kind of - (=Benjamin: About asking questions?). Yeah. Yeah, asking questions of, of other participants to like, explain themselves or how they identify, their opinions, etc.

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I f-, I suppose I felt pretty confident in that because like, I suppose you sort of encouraged us to do that at the start and also, that's kind of like the pers-, just the type of person I am like (=Tyler: Sure). It's weird, like, I would probably read Wikipedia articles on, [laugh], gender dysphoria and like I’ve, I’ve, I probably have r-, ja I have read like articles, you know, about everything. So it is stuff, I'm like, generally interested in so (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I'm not, that's why I’m saying it is, I’m like, ja, it is very personal to me, my experience and it, I don't think it just would be the average, even queer person's experience in terms of like interest (=Tyler: Sure) normally (=Tyler: Sure). But..

**=Tyler:** So you were asking…

**=Benjamin:** I enjoy asking questions.

**Tyler:** Ye, yeah (=Benjamin: Pardon?), so you asking those questions out of like, curiosity? Uhm.

**Benjamin:** Yes. Out of my own, like, personal interest in just (=Tyler: Mmm), because like, ja, ‘cause I suppose I care and, like, I’m empathetic and all whatever, so ja, [laugh] (=Tyler: Ja), uhm (=Tyler: Right). Ja so I act-, I, I enjoyed answ-, asking her questions, I enjoyed her answers. Their answers? Their (=Tyler: Their answers, yes) I can’t rem, ja, she was fine with their answers. Ja. I’m, ja, just trying to remember (=Tyler; Yeah), well, it was a while ago. Uhm, ja, no, I enjoyed, I, ja, I enjoyed ans-, asking the questions. And it was, what I really, I enjoyed her, ‘kay we’re going back to, history with Malcolm where like, I could engage with her on a level which felt almost equal. In terms of, we can have like a very intelligent conversation about like, the… the incentive for wanting to have, to change, or to decide to, like, come out or change, like, decide you‘re non-binary or come out as non-binary or whatever. It was interesting to like, just hear.. (=Tyler; Mmm), ja, just her speak, they speak quite openly about it. Ja.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Okay (=Benjamin: Ja), okay. Interesting. So I think that kind of ties in with one of my next questions, which was like, uhm, who did you feel a sameness with, in the group, if there's anyone in particular? So you think, Lola (=Benjamin: Uhm-), on that level, perhaps?

**Benjamin:** Yeah, Lola, definitely, because, like I said, with, when I started, like, I've got ADHD and I am neurodivergent (=Tyler: Right). So… being gay was kind of just, it wasn't the first instance of difference that I experienced with (=Tyler: Sure) most other people so it was kind of just another accepted thing. So… that's why like, I felt with her and also like – I keep on saying her because, sorry, [laugh] (=Tyler: It’s okay). Lola, I’ll just say, I’ll just say Lola. Uhm… ja it was more a kinship in terms of our, like, shared interest and in like, ability to interact on the subject (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And ja, ja (=Tyler: Okay). Ja, sameness in terms of her but, ja, less about shared experiences and more about shared mindsets, I guess.

**Tyler:** Okay. Sure.

**Benjamin:** So like, we might not have come from the same places, but we'd ended up in similar like mindsets. Similarly (=Tyler: Right), a close friend of mine, Fatimah, she's Muslim, bisexual, from Durban (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, funny enough, like, she's the only person ever that's, like… understood me on such a level. Like, we're like, I want, I wanna say twin flames or whatever. But she says also, like, we've been, like, gotten stoned together and taken psychedelics toge-, and she’s like, “why you like of all people? This (=Tyler: Yeah), this White boy from PE (=Tyler: Yeah), that was raised Christian and why, why, why do we connect? Like, why do I (=Tyler: Mmm) understand you and you understand me better than like anyone else?” So, so, it's like similarly, it’s not necessarily that we have similar backgrounds but it’s (=Tyler: Yes) that we've, it had the same effect on our, or a similar effect on our (=Tyler: Mmm) shaping I guess, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay. And is there anyone else that you had a sense of sameness with, in a different way?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, not really, not that, not, not enough that I like (=Tyler: Okay) can think of it on the fly, but (=Tyler: Mmm), it was more (=Tyler: Okay), it was just, that was (=Tyler: Yeah), okay but that was that was like a mental sameness, not necessarily…

**Tyler:** Right, right (=Benjamin: Yeah). And then, and then, what about a sense of difference from other people in your focus group?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, (=Tyler: Is-) specifically (=Tyler: -is Malcolm?) relating to like queer, ja , I suppose with Malcolm's but that was, less about queerness and more about, I suppose, incentive or want to… I don't want to say intelligence ‘cause it’s not intelligence it’s just (=Tyler: Mmhmm), one, ja, like, like I said, like some of these, he's like, he mentioned quite- [cut out and freeze for 7 seconds]. Can you still hear me?

**Tyler:** Yeah, hi, I'm back. I don't know what happened.

**Benjamin:** Okay (=Tyler: He mentioned?). Uh, it's probably my WiFi, I’m, I’m a farm, ja.

**Tyler:** Oh.

**Benjamin:** Ja, my internet connection is unstable (=Tyler: Okay). Let me turn.

**Tyler:** It's fine. Uhm…

**Benjamin:** Ja, I'm trying to, [sigh], put it in a way I actually mean it, because like I don’t wanna say he’s – can you still hear me at least?

**Tyler:** Yes, I can. Yeah.

**Benjamin:** Okay. So I can carrying talking if you freeze. Okay (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, he, ja, I was just, in terms of difference in… I suppose how far we've gone in terms of like exploring, just, queer issues, I guess. Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I did, uh, notice that your focus group, in particular, had kind of an intellectualized conversation (=Benjamin: Yes), which is not necessarily speaking about individual experiences very much (Benjamin: Yes, broader). I, I kind of had to bring, uh, your group into that (=Benjamin: [Laugh], ja) sort of halfway through, but you were kind of talking in almost abstract ways about (=Benjamin: Yes), the significance of certain things for society (=Benjamin: Ja, very like academic language, I remember, ja). Yes. So I think perhaps, is that what you're saying? That Malcolm was less (=Benjamin: Yes) involved in that (=Benjamin: Yes) kind of talk (=Benjamin: Yes, yes). Okay. Right.

**Benjamin:** Ja. So, that's one thing, it wasn't anything that he did wrong (=Tyler: Mmm). It's just, that’s like, a difference I noticed (=Tyler: Yes) in terms of mine and Lola’s conversation and Natalia's to an extent as well (=Tyler: Mmm). But then, when Malcolm's, were like, ja, I suppose, ja, Malcolm actually, [laugh], followed the (=Tyler: Yeah), the brief of the interview, and we went (=Tyler: Perhaps, [laugh sigh], ja), ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Uhm, what do you think about agreement in your group? What do you think you tended to agree on?

**Benjamin:** Uhm…

**Tyler:** Whatever comes to mind.

**Benjamin:** I suppose actually, we kind of agr-, everyone, no one had, conflicting experiences (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or experiences that like invalidated, or sh-, like, threw, like doubt onto another one in terms of, because, like, even though we are individual experiences, could be like, except ja, it kind of just showed that there isn't… like… a specific way that this has to go about, like (=Tyler: Mmm), even with like we've discovered with it, there's gender dysphoria and gender euphoria, and both can be reasons for you to realize you’re non-binary. (=Tyler: Yeah) Ja, it was like, very little disagreement and more just, ja, just understanding and just hearing (=Tyler: Okay), like you said, it was, it was less like a, like a factual academic discussion and more like, a personal like (=Tyler: Right) view or, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay (=Benjamin: Yeah). So then you don't think there was much, uh, disagreement in your group?

**Benjamin:** No. I suppose, ja, no, not that I remember, I think, I, I probably I might have come off as maybe a bit, like, argumentative in terms of my questions (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?) ‘cause I know I do, often, [laugh]. So I saying, they might men-, someone like, someone else, or like Malcolm might mention that, ja, Benjamin disagreed with me a lot, but, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), that might have been me just like, conversing or something, you know, ja (=Tyler: Okay). Probably, ja, probably, other people will probably say that I disagreed a lot. But, [laugh] (=Tyler: Oh), but uhm, ja, no, it was, I didn't think there was lots of disagreement in terms of what (=Tyler: Okay) anyone was saying, or (=Tyler: Okay. Yeah, uhm-). Or, I’m trying to think did I disagree with anyone? I suppose, there might have been disagreement in terms of “Oh you experienced that this way. My experience was with this, like, like this (=Tyler: Yes), or like my experience differed (=Tyler: Mmm) in this way”, ja.

**Tyler:** I see, yeah. There was one moment in particular that I'd like to revisit (=Benjamin: Mmm, yes), which is, I think, we were, you were raising, uh, pretty interesting points, uhm, about what things would change in society, if the norms around sex, sexuality and gender also changed. Uhm, but you brought up an example, which a lot of your group members resisted, and that was when you brought up- (=Benjamin: Oh, the rape thing). Yes. So, uh, could you tell me what you were thinking when you were trying to express that?

**Benjamin:** Oh, what I was thinking was, that was kind of, not me thinking, rape would change, it was more, what is the most extreme thing that I think could be affected by such systematic changes in thinking and attitudes? So, so like that was kind of just an hyper-, a hyperbolic example that illustrated the point. So I was thinking, so like, it was not ‘cause I believe that it was like, it was just for the purpose, purpose of discussion. I was thinking, well… if we don't view, if we don't put sex on the pedestal like we do, would rape still happen, because like, like Lola said, rape isn't about sex, it's about power. (=Tyler: Exactly. Yes). If sex no longer held the importance it did (=Tyler: Right), would people still rape anyone? Because it no longer gave them that power, because it's like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it would be seen similarly as it's like, just, just mildly invading someone. So, so that's, that’s like, I was just, not that I believe, because it, in the end, it is like a biologically significant event. So.

**Tyler:** Yeah, it’s a, a trauma (=Benjamin: Yeah). Yeah. (=Benjamin Yes, ja). Yeah. I tried to think after that of a, a different analogy that could be a little similar (=Benjamin: Yes). Uhm, and, and that one that I- (=Benjamin: Ja, [laugh sigh], useful, maybe not as diverse). Maybe. But, uhm (=Benjamin: Yeah) I think it's kind of, uhm, if we think about ableism, for example (=Benjamin: Yes), right? So that's also a norm in our culture, as, as humans (=Benjamin: Mmm), is to privilege people who are abled, and to marginalize those who are not, right? And it's kind of, uh, pedestalizing ability, in a way, right? And so, it's, the question that I thought you might have posed with the rape example is like (=Benjamin: Mmm), if we didn't have an ableist normality in society, would it still be a trauma if someone cut off your limb? (=Benjamin: Yes) And (=Benjamin: There you go, ja), the (=Benjamin: Pretty, pretty much, yes) answer is yes. It would still be a trauma.

**Benjamin:** Ja, ‘cause it still affect to you, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. It's, it's violence, [laugh sigh] (=Benjamin: Yeah, [laugh]). Yeah. How you, how you live your life after that would be a different question, depending on, you know (=Benjamin: Yes), the norms attached to your ability or not (=Benjamin: Ja). Yeah (=Benjamin: Ja). What do you think about that?

**Benjamin:** So ja, so what I was, ja, I was asking that and I was contemplating if… if, like the trauma around it was taken away, and it was just an event. Like, ja, basically, ja, everything you said, ja.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], do you think that that, that that is possible?

**Benjamin:** No, that, (=Tyler: Right) that's what I was asking, ja (=Tyler: Right, okay), that’s what I was trying to discuss, ja, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay, okay (Benjamin: Yes). Yeah. Uhm, yeah, I don't know. What do you think (=Benjamin: Mmm) about if, if someone in the focus group had experienced a violation like that, what do you think your question, uh, would have done to the group?

**Benjamin:** Uhm… like thinking of statistically, there probably definitely was someone that had been raped. So (=Tyler: Mmm)… or like, ja, there probably was. Uhm…how my question, my question might have changed. Uhm, I suppose I would have maybe then asked, first, like, if they were fine discussing it. And then also, and then, then I would have gone on to ask, like, “how did you experience like the after-effects or like the processing of it? Like, how did the trauma like manifest I guess in your everyday life?” Because like, I suppose, even for me, so like, my best friend was raped. And he, like he speaks about it, but, like, when we have spoken at, at length about it, but, he's, ja, it was, it’s a weird situation, because he was like, ja. And then for me, like I was never raped but there were ish-, instances of like, coercion into having sex (=Tyler: Oh), where like, I should probably deal with that. But, ja, it wasn't really necessarily traumatic experiences for me (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So how would my questions have changed for them? Ja, I would have maybe just asked about it and then like… how they would have dealt with that, ja, and (=Tyler: Okay) probably been less in-, invalidating of, I maybe would have been explained to them, like, no, no, no, this isn't me thinking this. This is me just trying to open a discourse about it, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. I see (=Benjamin: Yes). Cool. Uhm, is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I suppose, ja, probably just could’ve carried on talking about… (=Tyler: Yeah?), like various spheres of being queer. Uhm… maybe-

**Tyler:** There was nothing that you walked away with afterwards, like, “Oh, I wish I had talked about this.”? Or… There was nothing, or was there something perhaps, uh, that your group dynamics made you hold back on saying?

**Benjamin:** Mmm… not that I remember, no (=Tyler: That's cool, that’s fine). I suppose, it was also because, so like you said it was kind l-, of more of a, intellectual like academic setting, so, a lot of the time it was, it was quite… it was nice for me because I suppose that's how I've like, I’ve kind of intellectualized a lot of these questions for myself (=Tyler: Mmhmm), to make sure that like, I’m objective from them, I guess (=Tyler: Right). And… so for me, it was a very fulfilling experience in terms of that, because it kind of agreed with how I thought about… the LGBTQI community and our issues. Uhm, so that, I suppose that's why I kind of gravitated towards Lola ‘cause I think she's also in terms of dealing with like (=Tyler: Yeah), probably like childhood developmental psychology, probably also, like has encountered all of that (=Tyler: Right)… So, ja, no, there's nothing I felt that I hadn't, or that I held back on, per se, it was probably just (=Tyler: Yeah) some, or spheres that I hadn't explored in the conversation, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Well, that's good, to know that was like, mainly, you know, all kind of covered, even though, as you say, you probably could have (=Tyler: Did) kept, [laugh sigh], chatting for a while.

**Benjamin:** *Yoh,* I, I definitely could have carried on for like, a few more hours, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, there's so, there’s really so much to, to talk about.

**Benjamin:** Yes (=Tyler: Ja), exactly, we could, ‘kay, we could have gone from non-binary issues, and then to trans issues, and then maybe, uhm, bi-erasure, and then, like, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uhm, I, I think, you also, uhm, mentioned, that, like, your family is not very accepting of, of, of queerness. And also that you have a, a brother who's also gay, right? (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, and I think you said that, you know, you were, you were sure that your parents wouldn't kick you out physically. Uhm, but they might do so emotionally, which is a term that Lola used (=Benjamin: Mmm), uhm, to describe their family experience, you know? (=Benjamin: Ja). Uhm, so does this mean, uh, just clarifying, uh, that you aren't like, property out, uh, to your parents?

**Benjamin:** Not to my parents. To my siblings, yes, but ja, not to my parents, ja.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay. Okay. Uhm, and so, what is your relationship with your brother like? Do you two talk about these, like frustrations, sometimes?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, [sigh], most people assume we do and like we'd na-, we would (=Tyler: Right), but, but we actually don't, [laugh] (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, we've, like, only because, I suppose it was more, less about being queer itself and more how just we were different as people. So, I (=Tyler: Right) growing up, I kind of distanced myself from my family, and also, like, just held myself aloof and independent of them (=Tyler: Mmm), in terms of like, a lot of myself. And, because he was younger than me, and I hate to say it, like, I'm quite more intellectually advanced than he is (=Tyler: Sure). So, it was like a similar thing where, any issue he, or anything he felt was important or any issue he brought up, it was kind of like, this is like, a child talking to me (=Tyler: Okay), so. And then also, he was annoying. So (=Tyler: [Laugh]), [laugh], uhm, ja, so he, ja, there was, there’s, well there are, well we have like, as the years have progressed, like, especially recently, now that he's kind of leaving the asshole teenager phase. Uhm…we kind of are starting to like bond but we've not, not really, never spoken about it. And that's also because, if there were reason to, I felt like I would’ve, and if I felt like I needed to, I would’ve but (=Tyler: Okay), my one older sister, he and her are like, extremely close. Like, she like basically helped raise him. And I've come out to her property and everything's fine there. And, ja, she's very supportive. She, I know that, she's got my brother covered. Like (=Tyler: Okay), I don't really need to (=Tyler: Yeah), deal there. So it's, ja, so it's, ja (=Tyler: Ja), so that's why, we're not really close and (=Tyler: Sure). I haven't really liked him much up to this point because of the whole asshole teenager, unteachable like (=Tyler: Yes), woe to me, woe beyond me, ja, anyway, ja, [laugh]. (=Tyler: Uh-huh, uh-huh). So, uhm, ja, and we've never really discussed it, but he knows, and I know and like, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Sure. Cool. Thanks for clarifying that (=Benjamin: [laugh]). This, this might be a weird question. Uhm, I suppose because you've, pro-, s-, I think you mentioned that you have felt kind of stable in your identity for, for quite a long time. Uhm, but (=Benjamin: Yes), but how do you feel about your queerness after participating in the focus group?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I feel a lot more privileged regarding my queerness (=Tyler: Oh, yeah?). In terms of not having ever had struggled with my… gender (=Tyler: Okay). I suppose, uhm… ja, like I said, like, nothing, because nothing mentioned… had like, had never, or, it had already crossed my mind before like, so there was, there wasn't unexp-, or like, unknown of territory, like, I knew about gender dysphoria. And I knew (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I contemplated the idea of gender euphoria before as well. So, it was nothing that I was like, “wow, this is like profound or like re-, revelation to me” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, like, it was very just consolidating and, and validating of, just my experiences, and also their experiences. But how do I feel? Ja (=Tyler: Okay) … I suppose… I'm not sure, I haven't really thought about it, I suppose I might (=Tyler: Yeah) have just felt more comfortable in, but ja, just, privileged, I guess, because, because I had the privilege of not having to deal with the sexuality di-, divergence as well as gender divergence (=Tyler: Yes). So (=Tyler; Yeah), ja.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool, cool. Uhm, so, this question, [laugh sigh], please answer, quite honestly - not that (=Benjamin: Yeah) you haven't honest until now (=Benjamin: Yeah). But, uhm, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Benjamin:** With regards to what? Or just…?

**Tyler:** It’s, you know, uh, just me (=Benjamin: Uhm) there in the room. Uh-

**Benjamin:** Quite positive, because (=Tyler: Okay), I suppose you do, you do give off, uh, I don't wanna say non-binary, but uh, do a queer energy. Like, you know, you know, you like, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), it's like, not, this is, it's not news to you, ja. But (=Tyler: Okay), uhm, so I suppose that is then itself quite reassuring because, while, I'm just hypothesizing, I guess you probably have… some of the privileges of being seen as a masculine figure, but also, because it's, that's kind of, it’s, everything, but without the toxic masculinity (=Tyler: Okay), because that's like (=Tyler: Yeah), the queerness kind of takes that away, almost, yeah. So (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ja, quite positive in terms of just, I don’t know ‘cause, like, you were very like, professional about it. So, like, I knew that it was, a safe space so ja, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay, [laugh sigh], cool. Thanks. That's good to hear (=Benjamin: Thank you). Uhm, and do you have any feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Benjamin:** Uhm, I suppose like I said earlier, maybe, with like, maybe not just queer group more like, okay, or, [sigh] or maybe that’s difficult, because you want integration (=Tyler: Mmhmm), so it’ll have to be a balance between… getting s-, people with like, similar, okay, maybe you can split it into, intellectual conversation regarding the queer community and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) like (=Tyler: I see), more experience-based conversation, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. There, there is something, I wouldn't say a problem, but something, uh, that, is, can potentially create space for people to get a bit lost with it being too open, the, the topic (=Benjamin: Yes). So perhaps it was (=Benjamin: Ja) too open in some ways.

**Benjamin:** And also, I know, like, some of the intellectual conversation could go over a lot of people's heads in terms of they just don't give a fuck (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, [laugh sigh], I can kind of see gay people being like, “I don't care about gender euphoria and dysphoria because, like, not that I don't care about it, but like, okay (=Tyler: Yeah), I don't really feel like discussing the psychological, like, reason, reasonings behind it”. That's just, “okay, cool, like, moving on”, ja (=Tyler: Yes, okay). So maybe in terms of that, there could be people where, that, and also maybe just not being able to follow, but anyway, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Benjamin: Ja). Okay. Yeah. Cool.

**Benjamin:** I’m thinking, uh, otherwise, I'm thi-, I can't think of anything to improve, maybe, like I said, a qu-, a Person of Colour or another, uh, like another, like another Person of Colour (=Tyler: Right) would have been great (=Tyler: Yeah, uhm). Or… but (=Tyler: Yeah), no, but it was a, quite a diverse group in general, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And, uhm. you'll see when, when the final report is produced, that each focus group (=Benjamin: Mmm) looks quite different in terms of the people who make it up. You know, like- (=Benjamin: The demographics, ja). Yeah, exactly, demographics are (=Benajmin: Mmm) quite diverse across everyone who participated. But yeah, there, there is like a, d-, different degrees of sameness in certain social demographics (=Benjamin: Ja) in one particular focus group compared to another. That, uhm, I will say was, uh, based on, on timing of participants coming to me (=Benjamin: Mmm). Uh, it, it wasn't a choice either way to (=Benjamin: Ja) kind of arrange (=Benjamin: Ja) people in a certain way. Maybe that's also something that I can look into (=Benjamin: Mmm), uh, if I'm carrying it into, carrying it on in future. Yeah.

**Benjamin:** Ja, if you wanna do your PhD, then you can (=Tyler: Ja) get the same people and then specifically, like, do different arrangements, by ja anyway, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, so that is, those are all the questions that I have. Uh, if you have any final thoughts or comments, questions?

**Benjamin:** Uhm… Do you plan on doing it again? [Laugh].

**Tyler:** I do, actually, I do (=Benjamin: Okay), I don't think this should be stopping here. Uhm (=Benjamin: Yeah), like, I mean, as you expressed your friends, who, who then like (=Benjamin: Ja), you know, uh, you told me expressed interest, I think there (=Bnejamin: Yeah), there is really something, uh, promising here for a lot of like, queer people in, in South Africa just to come together and to, to (=Benjamin: Ja), not just, you know, uh, provide data for a research study. But (=Benjamin: Ja, but) to actually just share (=Benjamin: Yes) these experiences with each other. Yeah.

**Benjamin:** So ja, like a huge issue in, I suppose just, I suppose I can only really speak for the gay community in Cape Town, I suppose Cape Town would be a very good place to start, ‘cause it is kind of, the hub of queer society in South Africa, I guess… If I can, ja (=Tyler: Yeah), do you see it as that as well?

**Tyler:** Uh, [laugh sigh], yes, so, in, (=Benjamin: [Laugh sigh]) in a certain way, uh, that is also something to be (=Benjamin: Yeah) that I, yeah, I will be talking about at least in, in the research report (=Benjamin: Ja), ‘cause it does have (=Benjamin: Mmm) a, a sort of symbol as like a, a (=Benjamin: Yes) queer capital of, of Africa (=Benjamin: Yes), not just South Africa (=Benjamin: Ja). Yeah, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Benjamin:** Uhm, so I suppose it would be a good place to start there, but, that's what I'm thin-. Wait, what was my point again?

**Tyler:** If I'm, uh, gonna do more of this.

**Benjamin:** Ja, [inaudible] but, [sigh], more of them... Mmm … Ja I suppose because, like, like we even mentioned in the group that, like, we found that, or like, the gay community is very toxic in Cape Town in like, just on the g-, on the whole. So like, a lot of us kind of just keep it at arm's length and keep it a bit distant and that (=Tyler: Yes), and therefore like distant from each other. So (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and then, because of that, there is already the, like, kind of hesitance towards other gay people. So (=Tyler: Right), and therefore, there, there are very few like circumstances, like you said, where you could just speak about, like Lola said, just openly like she wouldn't normally, if someone asked about this, she'd be like, “No, I don’t owe you this”. But she said, “because of the setting, like I understand that and I'm, I feel comfortable sharing with this” (=Tyler: Yeah). So I suppose creating spaces where it is gay, the non-sexual queer space, uhm. And (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), if you want to actually just, ja (=Tyler: Ja), so I suppose that'll be very interesting, ja.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm.It definitely seems like a need across everyone who's participated (=Benjamin: Yes, ja). I think that this is-

**Benjamin:** Yeah, like I said, ja, like, because there has been kind of a call in the queer community to like, we say we're inclusive and all that, but we're actually being just as cunt-ish as all the straights, so, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah), if not worse, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah), ja.

**Tyler:** Exactly (=Benjamin: Ja). Okay. Cool.

**Benjamin:** So, so, that'll be quite, ja. And then, then might be like, interesting, I suppose but yeah, you don't want, it to turn out like a thing where you choose what you want to talk about, or who you want to talk to, and (=Tyler: Mmm) all of that so, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it, it’s definitely a growing project, so we'll (=Benjamin: Yes) see what participants-

**Benjamin:** So ja, it’ll probably be a thing like where like, you want to include as much diversity as possible but sometimes you’ll (=Tyler: Definitely) naturally just have more gay people than you will, anyone else, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, I can't control who wants to participate (=Benjamin: Yeah). Yeah (=Benjamin: Yeah). Mmhmm, yeah. Okay, cool. So that, you, oh, you didn't take the paper with the counseling services last time, uh, because you have a therapist, I believe?

**Benjamin:**  Yes (=Tyler: Okay), ja.

**Tyler:** So, cool. But if ever, for some reason, you'd like a copy of that, I can email it to you, whenever you'd like (=Benjamin: Thank you). Uhm, and then, oh, you will send me your, uhm, banking details, uh, on WhatsApp so I can remunerate you?

**Benjamin:** Yeah, I’ll send them on WhatsApp now, ja.

**Tyler:** Okay cool. And then I'll also send you another voucher. I assume that you got the first one. Uhm.

**Benjamin:**  I did. Yes (=Tyler: Okay). I forgot about that, actually (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yeah), [laugh]. I’ll go use it actually.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And then, yeah, I will let you know when I have finished transcribing both this interview and the focus group, uhm, in case you wanna look at the transcripts. And then towards the end of the year, is when the report will be ready (=Benjamin: The data will come out, yes), in case you want to read that, yeah.

**Benjamin:** Of course, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, cool. That's all that I have.

Caleb

**Tyler:** So how long have you been since the last time that I saw you?

**Caleb:** Good, busy, work’s getting, [laugh sigh], university work’s getting a bit like much now but (=Tyler: Mmm) as expected.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it is that time of the semester, I guess where it's like (=Caleb: Yes), really hectic, mmm (=Caleb: Ja). Mmhmm. Okay, uhm, so I guess we can get right into like the, the main conversation (=Caleb: Okay). How did you feel about the focus group?

**Caleb:** Uhm, I, I found it very interesting, the d-, I did-, it was not as what, not what I expected. It was more diverse if I can say so. I realized what a narrow view I had of queerness, if I can say. Like, well, not ne-, I didn’t, I wouldn't consider my view narrow, but I would say it's been broadened (=Tyler: Okay, okay), uh, from that experience, ja.

**Tyler:** Uh-huh. Okay, that's really interesting. So what did you expect if it wasn't what you expected?

**Caleb:** I don't, I don't know. Like, I feel like it, I would, it wouldn’t, I expected it to be something more in line with what my queer friends would have spoken about. But I think the, I think the group was older than I expected and that's why the dynamic changed. It wasn't people of my, uh, of my age group only and I think that's what caused it to be different (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Which I found quite, i-, ja, that's w-, that's what made it interesting to me, I think.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah. And how did it broaden your views?

**Caleb:** Uhm, I think I understood the, problem that many queer people face with gender better (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like… ‘cause, uh, it's not a problem that I, identify with very closely but, uh, seeing people's, experiences, their, uh, real life, or, them talk about their real life experiences. I’ve, that has taught me a lot, ja, that has broadened my view quite a bit, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, the gender non-binary participants (=Caleb: Yes), uh, Lola and Natalia?

**Caleb:** Yes, particularly (=Tyler: Mmhmm), ja.

**Tyler:** Interesting. Okay. So uhm… is there anyone that you felt a sameness with, in the group?

**Caleb:** Sa-, *ooff*… *(*­Tyler: However you interpret that) *yoh*,I can’t remember their names, to be honest uh (=Tyler: That’s fine). Uhm, I felt, I think the guy that sat across from me (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I think that when we spoke about, uhm, just gay culture in general (=Tyler: Yes), about, like I think hookup culture or something (=Tyler: Mmm), that's something that I related to. Uhm… uhm… the person sitting on, the, opposite you (=Tyler: Yes), what’s their name? Their (=Tyler: Lola), Lola. Uhm, they were l-, uhm, they spoke about… uh, the need for other spaces that are not, nightlife-central (=Tyle: Mmhmm) I, I think, or party-centered (=Tyler: Yeah). And I think that is something that I related to, as well. Uh, it, of there not, uh, of a culture that is not, necessarily only there to, pursue relationship with, but (=Tyler: Mmhmm), to actually have a culture that, where people can feel safe to share their experiences, because you don't have another space to do that. But (=Tyler: Yes), it, shif-, tends to shift into a direction of always, “What are you here for? What are you looking for?” And (=Tyler: Mmm), ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and tha, that is something I think I resonated with.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. It's quite interesting. Uhm, the, what you first mentioned about, you know, sometimes in queer spaces, you don't feel that comfortable. And there's a, a question of whether you are queer enough. But then a little later on, you backtrack to almost correct yourself and say what you actually meant was gay spaces. Uhm, so (=Caleb: Yes), and I think it comes from that conversation with, uh, Benjamin, about, uhm, gay spaces, and then Lola also about, you know, nightlife culture and, uhm, hookup culture and that kind of thing (Caleb: Yes). So I wonder what is, uhm, the difference, how would you describe the difference between ‘queer’ and ‘gay’?

**Caleb:** I feel, uh, ‘queer’ in my opinion, I might be wrong, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm) from the point, uh, an academic standpoint, but it's much more broad. It's not, uhm, to me, well, when I was speaking about gay culture I was more specifically speaking about male gay culture (=Tyler: Yes), uh, not, uh, including lesbians and, ja, uh. But male gay culture specifically (=Tyler: Mmm). Uh, but where ‘queer’ i-, if I speak about queer culture, it's, people who are gender-nonconforming, uh, everything on the gender spectrum, everything on the, uhm, on the sexuality spectrum that is not cis and not hetero (=Tyler: Mmhmm). That's queer, in my opinion.

**Tyler:** Right, right. (=Caleb: Ja) Okay, (=Caleb: Ja). Yeah. Yeah, you described the focus group as more of a queer space, and you felt comfortable (=Caleb: Yeah), in comparison?

**Caleb:** I felt more comfortable actually there, in, than, gay spaces… (=Tyler: Mmm) Ja.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes, you brought up that whole thing of, especially for White male gays, uhm, kind of, uh, trying to, use all of the privileges that come with a White straight male identity, and just happened to be homosexual, I suppose. And so maybe (=Caleb: Yes), there's that pressure-

**Caleb:** I feel like many White gay men, actually, how can I say? They, forget about their privilege (=Tyler: Mmm). They tend to, “but I am a minority”, and then they ride that train, without considering the privileges that they, have. Like, you might, I feel like they, they might not be aware of the privilege that they have as much as they should (=Tyler: Right). And, uhm, the guy sitting, [sigh], gosh I can’t remember (=Tyler: [Laugh]) their names (=Tyler: That's okay). Uhm (=Tyler: You can describe them), across from me, to the right.

**Tyler:** Malcolm

**Caleb:** Malcolm, yes (=Tyler: Yes). The teacher?

**Tyler:** Yes. Malcolm.

**Caleb:** Yes, okay. He said that he didn't, he doesn't know about the privilege that we speak about (Tyler: Mmhmm). He mentioned that somewhere, I can't remember (=Tyler: Yes). And… in, I c-, I can't speak for him (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I feel like it's not necessarily that he doesn't know of it, but I think he just hasn't recognized it. He, he is, somewhere in his life, he has come across where if he was a female, he would have tr-, been treated differently. I think (=Tyler: Yes). In my opinion (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I think, bu-, but, that aside, he is not White, so (=Tyler: Mmhmm) it's like, h-, but, that's just one example, the-, but many White males, they have *more* privilege (=Tyler: Mmhmm), they have being White, they have been male, everything (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And then, they deny that (=Tyler: Mmm). And I think that is even more problematic. Ja.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. Uhm, I think as interesting, point to explore with some with, uh, with some of your participants in your group, uh, the meaning attached to the word ‘privilege’, just like the meaning attached to the word ‘queer’, it can mean different things in people's minds, I suppose (=Caleb: Yes). So maybe (=Caleb: Ja) he was thinking about it in a different way, uhm (=Caleb: Yes), maybe. But, uhm, yeah, that is quite interesting the-, uh, what you bring up about, yeah, certain, like, especially White gay males forgetting their privilege. Uhm, is there anyone in particular that comes to your mind as an example or it is the general vibe that you get from certain gay spaces?

**Caleb:** No, I, I think I try to avoid, like, when I have come across these, instances (=Tyler: Mmhmm), where, or people, I tend to move away very quickly, because I feel so uncomfortable (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… so, ja, let me rather say instances then (=Tyler: Okay), like, when I have gone to gay clubs in Cape Town, like I've been there twice, but I've never made friends there. Like I've met new people there. But I've, like, that's it. Met them. Goodbye. And don't want to speak to you again, because, it’s, left a bad taste in my mouth (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). If I, ja.

**Tyler:** Right. Right. Okay, for those reasons?

**Caleb:** But I think this, but I think the, [sigh], I feel like social media also has a whole different dynamic (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause I think, uh, gay culture has been very much perpetuated there in a toxic manner that isn't manifested as, uh, how can I say? As, its manifested way more obviously in, on social media than, o-, in, uh, in reality, if I can say so.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. Uh, is there a particular social medium that you're talking about, or in general?

**Caleb:** [4 second pause].Wha-, well, I, I’d rather say in general (=Tyler: Okay), like, if I think about Twitter and Instagram but not (=Tyler: Mmm), if you take WhatsApp, I don't know, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh]), I don’t, like, ja (=Tyler: Ja). It, it, I'm talking borm-, more about connecting with people that, or having an interest in people that you might not necessarily know (=Tyler: Yes, okay), if I can make sense of (=Tyler: Yeah), does that make sense? (=Tyler: Yes) Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Is there, anyone with whom you felt a difference, in a way?

**Caleb:** [4 second pause]. Uhm, I think everyone (=Tyler: Mmhmm), yes. Because everyone was so different, uh... Uhm, yes, definitely (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm…

**Tyler:** In the sense that (=Caleb: Well-) everyone is an individual and have their own individual experiences?

**Caleb:** Yes, I didn’t, I didn't relate to someone very, strongly (=Tyler: Mmm), anyone in the group. (=Tyler: Mmm). I feel like, uh, D-, n-, no, *ag* (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I keep forgetting, the guy sitting across me (=Tyler: Benjamin). Like, we were of the same age (=Tyler: Mmm), Ben, Benjamin, ja (=Tyler: Yes), we were of the same age. And I think that is what I related to probab-, not of the same age but a, similar age (=Tyler: Mmm). And I think that's what I related to most, but, him being, he spoke about being neurodi-, neurodivergent and, I feel like that came across a lot (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and that made me ag-, again, like, feel very different from him (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). Ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm… In what ways-?) But interestingly (=Tyler: Yeah?), in that sameness again, sorry, I'm jumping now is that, m-, most people they were quite educated (=Tyler: Mmm). Or, did, not, uh, it, that was the general idea I got (=Tyler: Yes), it was everyone had a high standard of education or even [fire alarm starts], oh god, sorry, there's a fire alarm in my (=Tyler: Oh, No. Okay) res. It’s (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) probably a false alarm. Give me two... (=Tyler: We can stop this, and) Let's just continue, it, it happens a lot. Like they'll announce it now and I'll, but, just letting you know, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], okay, sure). The-, no, someone probably smoked a cigarette in their room or something, don’t worry (=Tyler: Oh, okay, okay). It, it happens all-

**Tyler:** We can really stop this at any point if you, if you need.

**Caleb:** No, it's fine (=Tyler: Okay, okay). The-, can you hear it? Like it’s bo-

**Tyler:** I can, but I can hear you, so it’s fine.

**Caleb:** Okay, ja (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, what were we speaking about? [Laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), sorry.

**Tyler:** Uhm, uh, you were talking about, uh, most, or everyone feeling quite educated.

**Caleb:** Oh, yes. Ja. Uhm, ja, that's, tha-, that's a sense of sameness that I got in the group. But, since we're off, we're going more the differences side, the gender issue ag-, or, or, being, uncomfortable with your gender or no, having experienced gender dysphoria (=Tyler: Mmm), is something that I can't relate with (=Tyler: Right). I don't think I've have, if I have it wasn't something significant to me that, ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm, okay). That's, just, ja.

**Tyler:** Cool. Uhm, (=Caleb: Ja), what do you think about agreement your group? Uh, what do you think you tend to agree on?

**Caleb:** Uhm… most things. I can ro-, c-, I can say about things that I had, didn't agree on more (=Tyler: Yes, yes, okay). I think, uh, the, the things that I agreed with, I can't remember because it didn't stand out to me but (=Tyler: Mmm) the things, when Benjamin spoke about if, uh, if, uh, sex was seen as more casual (=Tyler: Mmm) would people see something about rape, that like, was like, no, I totally disagree with him (=Tyler: Yeah) [fire alarm stops]. Uh, it, no, like, that's simple no. I don't even have to explain myself (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I d-, Iike, ‘cause, I can't, under-, I don't understand where his reasoning has come from (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, he, he tried to explain it, I tried to follow. I didn't understand it, and, I simply disagree with him (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, what’s another? Lola said something that… Uhm, something that's not necessarily with the group but (=Tyler: Okay), in queerness, in g-, queer, queer people in general tend to be very socialistic. I don't know why (=Tyler: Okay), it's just a trend that I've seen (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And this is like, I'm an econo-, I study economics. And, this is something that has, I don't understand why it like, this thing, trend exists, like, but I'm not of the opinion that socialism is the way out, I feel like it's because the current system, the capitalist system has… has, uh, because of privileges, uh, marginalized (=Tyler: Mmm) lots of people because of it. And, because the, but I think that is one thing that I tend to disagree with many queer people with, is I don't think socialism is the way to go. Ja.

**Tyler:** Uhm, okay. Okay. That's fine, [laugh sigh]. (=Caleb: That's a bit off topic, but like-). No, no, that's interesting. It's a really interesting (=Caleb: Okay) point to bring up. Yeah. Uhm, so, how do you feel about, uh – Oh, is there anything that that you wanted to say, in the focus group, but you didn't?

**Caleb:** I think this, specifically this (=Tyler: This), I was, I wanted to s-, I wanted to hear the sentiment in the group (=Tyler: Mmm) and I forgot about that (=Tyler: Oh). I, I was, I wanted to hear what other people's opinions would be, (=Tyler: Mmm) ja.

**Tyler:** Okay, so you didn't bring it up, simply because you forgot about the topic?

**Caleb:** No, I think I just thought about it afterwards and I was like (=Tyler: Oh), this is something that I, like, continuously come across (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like with queer friends (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uh, and it's usually like, no, uh, usually, that conversation always goes like, “No, we, I don't, I don't agree with you.” And I was interested to see if my stereotype upholds (=Tyler: Mmhmm), if I can say it that way, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Sure. Yeah (=Caleb: Ja), that would be interesting to see (=Caleb: Ja). Uhm, so this might be a strange question, uhm (=Caleb: Ja?), but how do you feel now about your queerness after having participated in the focus group?

**Caleb:** Ah, interesting. I feel more settled in it, if I can (=Tyler: Yes?), more comfortable in it, in a way that I didn't expect I would be (=Tyler: Oh). I didn't expect I would become more com-, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it was interesting to me. Ja, and I think afterwards, I felt, more… I, I usually, when I was younger, and, I didn't realize how long this has been going, of how scared I was to, uh, act in a, gender-nonconforming manner (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And when I interacted with people who are comfortable in their gender-nonconforming-ness, if I can say so, uh, I felt like “Oh, like, why do I worry?” Like, yes, I, I was like, sh-, “I should talk in a deep voice to be masculine and (=Tyler: Right), or walk in a certain way (=Tyler: Mmm), do not have certain mannerisms.” I feel like it is also internalized homophobia, but like, very suppressed, d-, far back. But, I think after that, I don't, I care less, and I didn't realize that I would care, like, that I cared that much and I think it came, I made that realization, ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Okay, great. So there's something, slightly liberating about (=Caleb: Yes, definitely) the, the experience. Okay (=Caleb: Yes). Cool. Very interesting. Uhm, another thing that you brought up that I found quite interesting was, uhm, how, you know, in the context of your relationships, it was, uhm, how certain, how gay partners aren't always on the same timeline when it comes to outness, and, uh, comfort in their identity. Uhm, and (=Caleb: Yes), yeah, so, and how that affected your relationship, ‘cause you were, sort of reliving things that you have gone through that your partner was then experiencing at the time. Uhm, I wonder if you have any like example of how that like actually affected a relationship?

**Caleb:** *Ooff…*

**Tyler:** If you're comfortable, [laugh sigh], going (=Caleb: I feel like it came across-) into that.

**Caleb:** -very much with the parent dynamic (=Tyler: Okay). Like, I'd be in the room and my partner's parents would call, and I won't be mentioned (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And it's like… uh, what am I doing, this like, how, “what are you doing now?” “No, I'm just at my house” (=Tyler: Oh, Okay). No, you're not, [laugh]. Uhm, also, with, well, that's the first partner I was with, and… like, I always felt, how can I say? Because he spoke about how he's only come out now and his parents found out he didn't come out to them and things. But then he'd, want to be intimate in public. And I'm like, “Okay, I'm fine with this but I don't know like, if, I could, like, if I can hold your hand, would you freak out? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Because I, how would, what would your reaction be?” And that constant having to think, not necessarily what other people think ‘cause I just, I don't care anymore. But that's *me*. I have to think about what *they* think, I have to think about what how the-, what *they* care about, if that makes sense.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yes. Like if your partner (=Caleb: And) was comfortable with that, actually. Uhm.

**Caleb:** Yes. And that, that whole conversation, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), what is it appr-, like, is it even worth it? Like that's a whole emotional rollercoaster it could lead to because you know how they are not very far on this journey of theirs. So, might it be triggering to ask these questions? Might it like, uh, ja (=Tyler: Right). It’s complicated.

**Tyler:** Yes. Quite. Wow. Okay (Caleb: Ja), uhm, so, uh could you – Okay, [laugh sigh], never mind, I, uh, my question is, uhm, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Caleb:** I didn't get to know you (=Tyler: Ja), because you didn't, uh, you didn't interact that much, and I think that is one thing that has come across like, I don't, like (=Tyler: Mmm), you’re this neutral person. And… ja (=Tyler: Uh-huh), that's about my own biggest opinion, because it's like, you're intriguing, like, I don't, like, who are you? I don't know your background (=Tyler: Right). I've learned a bit from everyone else (=Tyler: Okay), but not from you. And I think that's what came across, ja.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm, that I'm not a participant in the group, actually, in the same way?

**Caleb:** Yes, (=Tyler: Right) yes.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah. How, how do you feel about that? Is it uncomfortable?

**Caleb:** I, I don't, I don't care to be honest (=Tyler: Okay), like, no, it's not uncomfortable (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I feel like you were very good at, directing the conversation and, I can see that you've had conversations like this before (=Tyler: Okay). Like, like that came acr-, I was like, “Oh, wow, I wouldn't, like, you are really following this (=Tyler: [Laugh]), like, really looking and pinpointing certain things”. And, that came across very, and, I, that was very comforting to me (=Tyler: Okay). Like, that you, uhm, were following it, the conversation that well, and (=Tyler: Yeah) di-, not directing it in a way of saying, “you have to go-”, like, directing is the wrong word, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah. Yeah)… I feel like you understand what I'm saying, [laugh]?

**Tyler:** I think so. Yes, yeah (=Caleb: Yes), I think I do. Yeah, it's a strange dynamic to have to navigate, uhm, especially because I, you know, I am a queer- (=Caleb: Nav, navigate, that’s the word, [laugh]). Yeah, [laugh sigh], yeah. Yeah because, as a researcher, I don't want my experiences to kind of frame or bias anyone else's answers, you know, about (=Caleb: Yes) how they experience things (=Caleb: Yes). Uhm, but ja, at the same time, I am also a pers-, and a queer person, and that's why I'm there and doing this (=Caleb: Yes). So, yeah (=Caleb: Yes). There are brief moments where I let something of my life slip, like the fact that, uh, I went to [school], [laugh] (=Caleb: Yes.). Uh, yeah.

**Caleb:** I spoke to my mother. She's like, “who, wait (=Tyler: Really?), who, is parents still there?” and [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], no. Yeah, uhm.

**Caleb:** Ja, I was like, “No, that's probably ages ago.”

**Tyler:** Yes. Very long time ago. Uhm (=Caleb: Ja), yeah. if your mother has your surname, then I, she was not a teacher when I was there.

**Caleb:** Yes, definitely, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Ja, [laugh sigh]. Okay. Uh, do you have any feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Caleb:** Improved? Wow (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm…but, what's your g-, goal out of it? If I, ‘cause for me, it was a great experience but I don't underst-, like, it's not my, uh, the outcome doesn't matter to me (=Tyler: Right), if that makes sense (=Tyler: Right). Like, I felt very comfortable. Uhm, there's nothing that I had a problem with (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), if I can say it that way, but, uhm, in the way that,

I feel like there could, if you wanted more results from difference and sameness, I feel like there can be more, you can have more questions in that line? (=Tyler: Sure, sure). Maybe, but that might be too, too, [sigh], scripted (=Tyler: Mmm). And your bias might come through to-, too much. But I think that is the, it could be more, i-, you can extract more from that (=Tyler: Sure), possibly (=Tyler: Mmm), but you can also, you can also meddle with the whole natural flow of things (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Ja.

**Tyler:** Ja. Yeah, that's also a tricky thing to navigate as well, the kind of questions (=Caleb: Ja, I can imagine) that I’ll be asking. Yeah. Uhm, so, uh…it is, not just about using the focus group to collect data, uhm, you know, to like, gather stories from people. Uhm, but also to see what participating does for people so that, uhm, the group can hopefully be used again, uhm (=Caleb: Ja), as, ja. Not just to collect things, but to accomplish things for people who participate, you know, uhm.

**Caleb:** One thing that, like, I, I'm in Stellenbosch, and there's this group called QueerUs (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and one thing that I've, I've never gone to their group, so I might be biased (=Tyler: Okay), from, but I've never gone because I'm also, [sigh], of the opinion, “oh, my goodness, everyone's just gonna complain about their problems” (=Tyler: Right). And I do not want that (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, that's why I wanted to join this because it wasn't, a place for you to vent, if, if you get what I mean (=Tyler: Yes), and that is something that I appreciated. Because it was, it was just a discussion (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I'm scared of, if you create a space like this, that it's gonna turn into this place where “Oh, my goodness, I have to go and listen to John Someone, complaining about what his mother did again this weekend.” Like, I know he doesn't have another space to do it but, if you understand I don't want to burden myself with people, other people's problems the whole time (=Tyler: Yes, yes). And I feel like many queer spaces that are set up, end up being, becoming that (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and that is something I don't want (=Tyler: Right), uh, out of, ja.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah, that's also something I took into consideration when, uh, designing the questions. Uhm, like difference, for example, I'm not asking about trauma. I'm not asking (=Tyler: Yes) your, any injury that you've experienced socially. Uh, if it comes up, then it's something to discuss. Uhm, but I think that (=Caleb: Yes) it’s good to have space for more than that.

**Caleb:** Yes (=Tyler: Yeah). I think, and that's why, that's why, I think that's why I enjoyed it so much (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Or (=Tyler: Yeah) found it so liberating, because it was more than just, listening to people's problems (=Tyler: Right). It came up because context (=Tyler: Yeah), definitely, but, uh, ja.

**Tyler:** Mmm. Okay. Great. So I think those are all the questions that I have. Uhm, do you have any, (=Caleb: Okay, wonderful) like, final thoughts or comments or whatever, on the experience?

**Caleb:** No, keep doing what you're doing. I think it's wonderful, [laugh sigh]. (=Tyler: Thank you so much Caleb). I'm excited to read your paper.

**Tyler:** Yes. Yeah, yeah (=Caleb: Ja). Okay. Cool. So yeah, I will be in touch with you when I have transcribed both this, uhm, interview and the focus group in case you wanna look (=Caleb: Okay) at the transcripts. Uhm, and then (=Caleb: Wow, shame), yeah, and then towards (=Caleb: Good luck, [laugh]), thank you, [laugh sigh]. And then yeah, towards the end of the year, the report should be ready so I'll let you know when it is, in case you'd like to read it (=Caleb: Okay). Yeah, uhm (=Caleb: That would be great, thank you). You're welcome. Uh, do you, did you take that list of counseling services I gave at the focus group?

**Caleb:** I did, I, like, uhm, it, I, I think it might come, become useful because, [sigh], last year (=Tyler: Mmhmm), someone was outed by a friend to their parents (=Tyler: Mmm), and it was a whole thing that I, and it up being something that I had to deal with and, uhm, I called counselors and things and I think that might be useful in case something (=Tyler: Okay) like that happens again, so (=Tyler: Okay), ja.

**Tyler:** Cool, well, if you ever lose it, you can email me at any point and I'll give you another copy, electronically, so that's fine.

**Caleb:** Okay, thank you.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And, uhm (=Caleb: Ja), uh, you received the last voucher?

**Caleb:** Uhm, no, the-?

**Tyler:** After the focus group, you didn't receive a voucher? SMS?

**Caleb:** Was it a SMS or something? (=Tyler: Yes). Maybe I did, maybe I didn't (=Tyler: Oh), I’ll check.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah, please let me know (=Caleb: Okay), uhm, because I'm going to send the other one (Caleb: Okay) after this interview, uhm.

**Caleb:** Okay, I don't think I did, but I, I'll go, w-, I'll check the date and go (=Tyler: Okay) see, okay.

**Tyler:** I can double check as well and, and send you (=Caleb: Okay), I think, a, a WhatsApp copy of it, yeah.

**Caleb:** Okay, yes. That'd be nice.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. (=Caleb: Okay). Uh, yeah and then I'll EFT you shortly, uhm, as well.

**Caleb:** Oh, thank you.

**Tyler:** Cool. Okay, thanks very much, Caleb.

**Caleb:** Thank you, I really enjoyed, enjoyed this experience.

**Tyler:** I'm really happy that you did. I'm also very grateful (=Caleb: Okay) for you joining.

**Caleb:** Okay, good, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, cool.

Lola

**Tyler:** Thank you. So how have you been since I last saw you?

**Lola:** Uhm, well, the fire, that's happened and that was a thing (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, and, I was in a car accident and witnessed (=Tyler: Oh, wow!) a hate crime against my boyfriend. So (=Tyler: What?!), a bit rough, ja, so we (=Tyler: Wow), we were, it was on Sunday, actually. And (=Tyler: Okay), we were heading to the pride market that was happening (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, we were at that circle in Sea Point. And this guy kind of accelerated out of nowhere, and it was a, a collision, and as we got out the car, my boyfriend got out because he was driving to, like, deal with it. And the first thing the other guy said was, “you don't even know if you're a fucking man or a woman” (=Tyler: Oh, God. Okay). And then just like continued to be, like, incredibly transphobic and problematic (=Tyler: Wow), uhm. And, then obviously got into the fact that, there was an accident, and then told us to follow him to the nearest parking lot. And when we did, he, like, got out and started swearing and going on again, uhm, and being like, “you’re just a confused individual, you have no idea what you're doing”, uhm (=Tyler: *Urgh*). And the car guard came over to be like, “Is everything okay?” And then – oh, sorry, my alarm is going off, let me just grab that quickly (=Tyler: It’s okay). Uhm, and then the car guard came over, like to try and, you know, placate the situation (=Tyler: Mmm), and the man was like, “I don't need you in my fucking business, fuck off”, and just, like, just that, and it was so horrible. Like, we were on our way to a pride event and [cut off for 3 seconds], and, ja, we were all in shock and obviously, we'd just been in a car accident, so (=Tyler: Yes), uhm, and then while we were at the market, we got the message that my [cut out for 11 seconds], my laptop, my work, everything was there. So, that was like, the start of my week, uhm, basically (=Tyler: Oh, wow), since Sunday. So I, I had a bit of a rough week and (=Tyler: Mmm) then, it was just, uhm, ja, the, it was like, it was a hate crime is (=Tyler: Yeah) what, what it was (=Tyler: Yeah). And it's almost like, because we're so good at, you know, giving ourselves positive feedback loops and choosing to be around people who make us feel good in our community (=Tyler: Mmm), you almost forget how, violent, how much violence there still is (=Tyler: Yes) towards queerness, uhm. So it was, yeah, it was just, it was horrible.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that sounds awful. I'm really sorry that you experienced such a heavy week (=Lola: [Laugh sigh]), like, on so many fronts (=Lola: Ja). It’s just wow, uhm. Yeah, [laugh sigh]. Wow. Okay. Uhm, I don't know, if you, uh, made use of any of the counseling services that I, uh, gave to you last time?

**Lola:** Oh, I do, I do have a therapist that I speak to weekly (=Tyler: Okay), and I had my session on Tuesday. So I am (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, like, I am in counseling (=Tyler: Okay) for it, and we are working through it, but it was just, like so uncalled for (=Tyler: Ja, exactly), really.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Wow, and I, it sounds like he was also responsible for the crash more than you were.

**Lola:** Well, ah, a little bit, it was a bit of both (=Tyler: Okay) because he was on the right hand side of the circle so he had right of way (=Tyler: Okay). But he was going at a pace that there was a long enough gap for us to go through safely, and then he accelerated so (=Tyler: Right), uhm, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Right. Yeah, still, uhm, there's still no situation in which that kind of behavior *would* be called for, so, yeah (=Lola: Agreed). Yeah. Okay. Well, uhm, and I hope that your boyfriend is also in some sort of, uh, has some sort of help, uh (=Lola: Yes), like counselling, okay.

**Lola:** Yes, and he also has weekly therapy sessions so he's (=Tyler: Okay), he's alright. I think it just, it made, ‘cause he, he doesn't really like driving, like he drives (=Tyler: Mmm) but it's not his favourite thing. And so, obviously, that didn't help, like being in (=Tyler: No) an accident didn’t help (=Tyler: No), uhm, ja.

**Tyler:** Wow. Okay. Okay. *Shoh*. Uhm, okay, so then, uh, I wonder if we can move into the conversation about the focus group? [Laugh sigh].

**Lola:** Sure, [laugh sigh], absolutely.

**Tyler:** Okay. So, uhm, how did you feel about it in general?

**Lola:** I think, in general, it was really good. It was a really positive and like, affirming, uhm, environment. I felt, I did feel safe, I, I was happy with the, the way that everybody kind of respected one another, uhm. And, there was a lot of… genuine curiosity like the questions that were asked, even though some of them were a bit, uhm, pointed, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yes). Like (=Tyler: Yes, I thought so), I knew that it was coming from a good place (=Tyler: Mmm). So, it didn't feel, uh, like I think if those questions had been asked to me in a different setting or by different types of people, it would have felt a bit invasive or (=Tyler: Yes) a bit, uhm, not so cool (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But, because of the, the context and everything, it was, it was nice to be able to, sort of, actually unpack things and like, answer those questions. Because so often, you know, you don't even get a chance to answer those questions for yourself, because (=Tyler: Mmm) they're never facilitated in a safe way (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, so I found it very, uhm, like enlightening for myself as well, to be asked those questions and to have to answer them. I did find, I forgot, I think, I forget what his name was (=Tyler: That’s fine), with the, the one, the one guy was, [laugh], he was like, asking a lot of questions (=Tyler: Benjamin), and like really direct (=Tyler: Yes) and I was like “wooo, okay (=Tyler: Yeah), you can, [laugh sigh], simmer out a little bit there (=Tyler: Yes), uhm. But, but it was never, I didn't feel, uhm, uncomfortable or attacked (=Tyler: Okay). It was just, it felt, at one point that there, like, there was a lot of (=Tyler: Yes, yes), attention directed in a specific direction, my direction (=Tyler: Ye-, yes), and I was like, “this is not the point of this whole thing” (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, but it was also really interesting to hear more about the, the, the gay, the gay scene, like the, the male gay scene, uhm, because that's obviously not a circle that I move in, at all. Uhm, and it was also really nice to, to be reminded about, the differences, right, like, I, I think we, we spoke about it a lot, how it's kind of a hodgepodge group of people that have been (=Tyler: Yes) put together under one umbrella, but it was nice to hear that, you know, some people are all about like, casual, uh, or non-committal intimacy (=Tyler: Mmhmm), where others still want some sort of, commitment, before those things happen, and, and how, you know, it is such a, there is such a range of (=Tyler: Yes) approaches to the lifestyle (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and it was good to be reminded of that, ‘cause I think sometimes, you know, the loudest voices are kind of what becomes the representation of the community (=Tyler: Yes, yes). And, and that's not always truly representative of everything. And so that's why (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like, within the conversation it was nice to hear, but in the broader sense, like it's good to see that studies like this are happening, where we're taking a step back from, like, “oh, we're fighting for queer rights” (=Tyler: Right), to being like, “okay, but like, this community also has diverse needs (=Tyler: Yes), and diverse views on things, so (=Tyler: Mmm), it was, it was good to, feel like steps are being made to acknowledge the differences within, in the community (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, it was also really nice to see a familiar face, I think that (=Tyler: Right) calmed down a lot. Uhm, (=Tyler: Natalia), so, Natalia, Natalia, seeing Natalia was there was really good and was good for us to connect. And (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it was also nice, to, because we weren't allowed to discuss the, the study with anyone who wasn't there, but I knew Natalia, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh]), so we could talk about it, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh]). And, uhm, so we, we didn't really go into it too much but it was, like mentally, it was nice to know that like we could if we wanted to (=Tyler: Yes). And we both said like, it was nice, and that the people that we were with were all really nice, and (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, Natalia still said like he would have actually liked, for us to have had a way to stay in contact (=Tyler: Mmm), if that was like allowed, I don't know (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but I, I said to him, I was like, “why don't you just ask Tyler if the other person is okay with it, and if (=Tyler: Yeah) Tyler’s okay with it, then I'm sure you can get the contact details (=Tyler: Yes), like, it’s, there are (=Tyler: That is very possible) ways around that stuff (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but, it was just, it was cool to meet queer people that I hadn't met before in a safe neutral sober space, right (=Tyler: Mmhmm), which we spoke about as well, how there aren't really a lot of meeting places that aren't (=Tyler: Yeah) centered around alcohol. Uhm, and, uhm, like, I mean, I, I do drink. I don't (=Tyler: Yeah), I don't have a problem with alcohol but it's (=Tyler: Mmhmm) nice that, like I mean, some people don't, my boyfriend is sober (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, he doesn't really want to be in those kinds of environments but that shouldn't like, limit his access to community (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). Uhm, and it was also interesting to, to feel almost like an instant bond with these people over something that we had in common (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And that was quite, uhm, I wasn't expecting that (=Tyler: Okay), I wasn't expecting this common interest to be so unifying, uhm… which sounds silly, because like, it makes sense that it would be unifying but (=Tyler: Sure), I was, I was surprised at how comfortable we all felt and (=Tyler: Yes) how much we all shared. Because it's one thing to know that it's a safe space and like, on the papers, it says your confidentiality will be protected (=Tyler: Yes). And it's another thing to *feel* that you can share those things and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) I think we all shared very deeply and (=Tyler: Yes) very, uhm, personal things, a lot of our conversations were quite heavy (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and, it's amazing to me to see how, [sigh], I don't want to say ‘easily’ that space was created, but when you have people who go in with the same intention (=Tyler: Yes), and the same heart (=Tyler: Yeah) for the situation, and, and that was encouraging, it was really encouraging.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. I mean, I was also quite surprised at the extent to which your group or your, like, everyone in your group was so, uh, ready to discuss, you know, and to share and to (=Lola: Mmm) learn from each other. Uhm, and (=Lola: Ja) I think, it was, uhm, one of the groups that I had to do the least moderation in. It was kind of like you flowed off of each other very well and, and quite naturally, and yeah, at some points, I thought, “okay, maybe I should step in”, such as when Benjamin was asking you so many questions, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but, I think you also, like, t-, like as participants, and you in particular with that situation handled those things quite well, uhm, so (=Lola: Thank you, [laugh]), yeah, [laugh sigh] (=Lola: Yeah). Yeah, so, uhm. Uhm, I wonder if there's anyone that you felt a sameness with, in particular?

**Lola:** Uhm, I've, I actually, I was surprised at how, how much I shared a sentiment with, ah now I don't re-, uh (=Tyler: That’s okay), what were their (=Tyler: You can describe the person), their names again?

**Lola:** He sat to my right. Uhm…

**Tyler:** Ah, Malcolm.

**Lola:** Yes, Malcolm! (=Tyler: Mmm), I was surprised at how much I, uhm, related to, to his story of, like, the religious upbringing in the family (=Tyler: Yes) and, and that sort of thing, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm). Because I think… you know, it's, [sigh]… there are also many more instances now where parents *are* accepting, and are just like, “Ah, well, you know, whatever, my kids queer, they also like soccer, move on” (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but for a lot of people, that just isn't the reality, so it was really, it was... It was, I felt the same as with that, with the, with the family dynamics, and how he said that, you know, it's just a thing his family doesn't talk about anymore. They know not to ask about getting married and girlfriends (=Tyler: Mmm) and stuff. And, but also when he said he felt like, because he did so many other things, like he got a university degree, and he has a good job (=Tyler: Mmm). He didn't say it explicitly, but it almost sound like he felt like he needed to prove something to his family, because like, you know, he was gay, but, but that's okay because he's all of these other things (=Tyler: Yes). And I definitely feel that sometimes (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), because I'm also like, I'm the eldest of, of four siblings, and, uhm, so I'm expected to kind of like, I got a bursary to study (=Tyler: Mmm), and I was always academic, and I did well in my extra murals, and, uhm… you know, I'm not the problem child (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because I was always very well-behaved, because I knew, like, it's, it’s my personality, but also because I knew that I couldn't, you got to like, pick your battles, like you can't be gay (=Tyler: Right) and the problem child (=Tyler: Mmhmm), so you kind of have to be a model child in every other way (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, and so even though he didn't say that explicitly, I kind of felt that, is what he was, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) saying (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, uhm, I, I related to that. I think, the person I related to least was, uhm… Okay, not Malcolm, not Benjamin, not Natalia, the one like (=Tyler: Caleb), the furthest away from me.

**Tyler:** Caleb.

**Lola:** Yes (=Tyler: Yes). Caleb. Uhm, because he sounded like his parents were like, quite chilled (=Tyler: Mmm) and fine (=Tyler: Mmm) and, his life had been fine and, uhm, you know, like, I think, that's, because, he's also like a s-, a s-, a het – *ag*, not het – a cis, a cisgendered, White male, like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), he embodies a lot of societal privilege (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And even within the queer community, a lot of privilege because (=Tyler: Right) he, uhm, is a cis, White male. Uhm, and, you know, like, if you look at queer representation in media, and all of those sorts of things like, there, a lot of that is, that's what you see. It's like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the gay best friend and, and that's kind of it. So I didn't, I didn't really feel like I connected to him (=Tyler: Okay), uhm, much at all, but not, not necessarily in a negative way (=Tyler: Yes), I just don’t think we had any similar experiences.

**Tyler:** Sure. Sure, whereas Benjamin, also being a cisgender, White male, he also spoke about difficulties in his family, and I suppose, is (=Lola: Yeah) that where you had slightly more relatability with him (Lola: Ja), than Caleb?

**Lola:** I think also, we just spoke more so I (=Tyler: Right) felt like we engaged more (=Tyler: Directly to each other), whereas I didn't really – di-, directly (=Tyler: Mmhmm, [laugh sigh]). Uhm, whereas, uh, Caleb didn't real-, like we didn't (=Tyler: Mmm), there was no point that we were kind of having a conversation (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, and also, I think, it was him at one point that was like, I think, I might be mistaken, but I think he was the one who said, “this conversation has been a lot about gender, like, can we bring it back to sexuality?” (=Tyler: Yes). And he, like, I don't know if I was just already on the defensive a bit because I'd been answering so many questions, but it kind of felt a bit like, ‘aggressive’ is the wrong word, but he was like, “I'm not being included in this conversation, that's not okay” (=Tyler: Oh) uhm, like, is (=Tyler: Okay) how I kind of felt and I, I don't know if he, felt, like he wanted to… I, [sigh], I experienced him as the least willing to listen to others (=Tyler: Okay). Like, like, I was very happy, like, during the conversation when it was about like, the gay style, like, I was very happy to sit (=Tyler: Mmm) and just listen (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I found it interesting to learn about it, but I got the vibe that he, kind of wanted to be involved more than listen, uhm (=Tyler: Okay). It's just the vibe I got, like it wasn't, it wasn't bad, or, or (=Tyler: Yeah), or anything. And it, and it was definitely, I mean, he was still engaging and listening. I'm just saying, like, if, if you asked me to rank the group (=Tyler: Okay, [laugh sigh]), from the most to the least rec-, less receptive, I, I would have said that I, like I didn't really connect with him, he didn't seem as, uhm, interested in the gender stuff, because it (=Tyler: Okay) was something he didn't relate to (=Tyler: Right). And so, there was like a… a slight apathy, I would almost say towards it, or just like a, an, a, misunderstanding (=Tyler: Okay), or not misunderstanding, but like a not understanding it (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, even when, ‘cause when we got to him, he was the last person to introduce himself (=Tyler: Yes). And he kind of introduced himself as a cis male, like very flippantly (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, and quite like, you know, “I'm cis, he/him” kind of, uhm. That, which is just very… typical of someone who hasn't struggled with their gender, right? It's just like (=Tyler: I suppose, yes) if you’ve never had to think about it, it's just like, “well (=Tyler: Yeah), I don't understand what the big deal is” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And that's kind of, I experienced a little bit of that, uhm, from him (=Tyler: Right), but obviously not in a way that made me feel like unsafe, or like I couldn't share, or (=TyleR: Yeah), he wasn't nasty, or (=Tyler: Yeah) anything like that. Uhm, but I think we were an interesting group dynamic. I was also the only AFAB person (=Tyler: Yes). Which was interesting, ‘cause I, I think I would have liked to discuss some of those aspects (=Tyler: Yes, I'm sure), a bit more (=Tyler: Mmm), in a way that like, to relate to other people. I also realized that, when I sent you my information, like, my name is gender-neutral, Lola is a gender-neutral name. And I said, I use they/them pro-, so you had no idea either, like from what I sent you, unless you looked at my WhatsApp profile picture, I suppose (=Tyler: Yeah), which like, gives it away.

**Tyler:** But even still, it could be, I mean, people use pictures of their partners (=Lola: Yeah), so I, I didn’t know, yeah.

**Lola:** No, that,that, that's true. Uhm, but I think that was the only thing that I felt very, was v-, the biggest ‘other’ (=Tyler: Okay), the biggest difference (=Tyler: Yes), was that there was no one to share, like, we didn't really speak about the experience of being an AFAB queer person (=Tyler: Mmm), or like, uhm (=Tyler: Yes), sort of, like, we, we, I touched on it a little bit when I said (=Tyler: Mmm) that it's difficult for me to present gender-neutrally, because like, if an AMAB person puts on a dress, then everyone immediately goes (=Tyler: Yes), “ah, there's something queer there” (=Tyler: Yes). Whereas if I put on pants, it's like, errr, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), no one thinks anything of it, ‘cause AFAB people wear pants (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, uhm, I think that would have been something interesting to explore a bit more and like (=Tyler: Yes) being a woman in the queer community, ‘cause for a very long time, I did identify as a woman, and so I took space as a woman and, and that, uhm, and, like talking about, like, we also, I, I posed the question to you and Natalia about, like, in spaces that they are like, “women and non-binary,” like, how, how do you, how do you feel about that? And, like, we didn't speak about, like, when they put an X in “women” (=Tyler: Yes), and like, they're trying to include non-binary, but like, that almost paints non-binary as like female light, which it's not (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and like, this kind of, the inclusion of non-binary into, like femme spaces, but like, in a way that's, almost erasing the non-binary identity. So, it would have been interesting to explore that a little bit more (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Uhm, but I think that's also just like the group that like we happened to be in so that was a conversation that, like, didn't happen.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it is, uhm, a quite, uhm, interesting to look at, uhm, from my perspective, like, what the group composition is, in terms of everyone's like, various social demographics. Uhm, so like, the sex-gender composition of a group, you know, you being the only AFAB person. Uhm, but in other groups, it's not like that, I've had like (=Lola: Mmm), like one group where there were only AFAB members. Uhm, and, you know, and there's also other, like, realms of diversity to look at (=Lola: Mmm), like racial is also one, uhm-

**Lola:** I was also gonna point that we only had one (=Tyler: Yes) POC person in our group, but I think (=Tyler: Mmm), it would have been interesting to, to hear more about, like his experience as a Person of Colour. I mean, he did, he did touch on it (=Tyler: Yeah) a little bit, but, because there was no one to be like, “ah, me too!”, and there was no back-and-forth, it also was a conversation that was, it wasn't really a conversation so much is more him just sharing it (=Tyler: Yes). And, I would have liked to, be-, because I went in with like, I'm gonna bring my side of the story and (=Tyler: Yeah) my experience, but I also really wanted to hear others’ and learn from others (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So it would have been nice to, to have a group that had more racial diversity, to hear that sort of side of things (=Tyler: Yes), because, uhm, you know, my circle of friends is, is, is very White (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, we have some POC people in our group, but also like from very similar socio-economic backgrounds as us (=Tyler: Right), so it's, it’s a different experience, uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And so, so ja, I think the (=Tyler: Yeah), you obviously would have a better idea of exactly how the group dynamics would affect the conversations ‘cause you've had multiple groups (=Tyler: Uh-huh). But I was very aware of, of the composition that, that we were and, and why that meant that we had certain conversations.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. Yeah, that's definitely a point of, of analysis for me. And obviously, like, when the final report is out, then you'll be able to see, like (=Lola: Mmm), what threads come up between the groups and what was a little different, what people brought to it. And perhaps (=Lola: Mmm) based on, on who they were in that group, uhm, you know, and the, and the experiences they could relate and not relate to, based on those (=Lola: Mmm) dimensions (=Lola: Yeah), I suppose.

**Lola:** Because it's also like, in a group where, if we were, say, the whole group was genderqueer (=Tyler: Mmm), then that would have been a less big topic for me, like, it, it wouldn't have, the whole conversation wouldn't have been me and Natalia (=Tyler: Right), about the genderqueer, because we would have all been genderqueer (=Tyler: Yeah), so it would have been more back-and-forth. So, uhm, I think, the parts that were more monologue-y and more storytelling were indicative of where the difference happened (=Tyler: Uh-huh). And the dialogue was more, uhm, sort of indicative of, of the sameness if, if you (=Tyler: Mmhmm) had to look at it like that. I noticed that when we were, other than my, my one-on-one interview with Benjamin, uhm, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh sigh]), uhm. But, but ja, uhm...

**Tyler:** Uhm, yeah, so what, how do you feel about agreements dynamics in your group? What do you think you tended to agree on?

**Lola:** I think we all agreed that, like progress has been made. And I think we all agreed that, uhm, we take that for granted. Uhm, towards the end, you know, we spoke about that. We all agreed that there's a need for more queer spaces that are like, not centered around alcohol and not centered around the nightlife, stuff like that, uhm. We all agreed that the queer community can be quite incestuous, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm), because it's so small and (=Tyler: Yeah) be-, because like, the options are more limited. Uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), we agreed that it's a diverse group. And (=Tyler: Yeah) we acknowledged the differences within that, I think that was a big, a, nobody was like, “No, we all have the same goals” (=Tyler: Yes), so I think we're all able to, to identify that. So in that, agreement, there was difference (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, I think… we all agreed that it's, that it's, uhm… *yoh*, *yoh,* I'm glad we didn't wait another week for the follow-up, ‘cause now I must recall this conversation (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) that happened, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it's okay if you can’t recall it.

**Lola:** Uhm, I can recall, like, bits of it, I'm just trying to think of, of what we all agreed on. I think... We, we agreed that, that…. Like… that, th-, that queerness is accepted in levels. I think we all agreed that, like being gay is more accepted than being trans (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I think that was something that like kind of came up. Uhm, and that's, like, also the, the presentation of what kind of gay you are (=Tyler: Yeah, mmhmm), is affecting how you're accepted in society. Uhm, I think we agreed on intersection of privilege, uhm… (=Tyler: Yes) and (=Tyler: Yeah). I don't think there was anything that we… all (=Tyler: disagreed?) of the conclusions that any of us made, we agreed on (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So there was no, there was, there was different experiences, but nobody was really like, “I don't actually think that that's true”. The closest thing to a disagreement that we came up about was like casual intimacy (=Tyler: Yes). That was the closest thing to a disagreement, and that was more of a, a, a viewpoint (=Tyler: Yes) or a moral thing. Like I think at the end, everyone was like, “it's okay if you want to have casual sex and it's okay if you want to be (=Tyler: Mmhmm) in a committed relationship first” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but we had a v-, like, we didn't have any, confrontation or (=Tyler: Mmm) arguments in our group (=Tyler: Mmhmm), it was, it was very, on the same page about (=Tyler: Yes), about things.

**Tyler:** Yes, yes. But there was a, a moment that, uhm, kind of raised a, a question to me, uh, uh, which I haven't really, uh, gotten into yet, ‘cause I haven't, uh, at this point, uh, had a follow up with Benjamin. But there was a, a moment when he was trying to pose a hypothetical about what kind of things would change in society, if certain (=Lola: Oh, yes) perceptions about sex had changed (=Lola: Yes, yes), and he used a very, perhaps a problematic example of how that might change (=Lola; Oh, ja, ja). He was referring to rape.

**Lola:** I forgot about that. But yes, (=Tyler: Yes) no, I was not okay with that (=Tyler: No), and I did call him out, uhm (=Tyler: Yes, you did), [laugh sigh].

**=Tyler:** So thank you, I was also, you know, on the edge of calling, him, out on that, yeah.

**= Lola:** Because I was like, er, just, quickly, mmm. Ja. Uhm, yeah.

**Lola:** Because, like… [sigh], I think that's something that maybe we should have, said in the beginning is that we need to remember that everything we speak about, somebody in this room could have experienced (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, so like… I'm curious as to whether he would have said that in front of a rape survivor (=Tyler: Yes, exactly), uhm, because, you don't know, like, yes, we're sharing a lot of experiences, but you don't know all the experiences that people have had (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And so, I, I used to do competitive debating, and I coach debating now. And you, we do a lot of hypothetical, and we (=Tyler: Right) do a lot of high level argumentation and (=Tyler: Mmm), what I always say to my kids is, “imagine that someone sitting in the room has had the experience that you are speaking about, (=Tyler: Mmhmm) because you don't know”. And, the idea that like, if sex was less holy, rape wouldn't be as bad (=Tyler: Mmm) is like, a flawed argument because rape isn't about sex (=Tyler: Exactly), it's about control (=Tyler: Yes). And, and it's got nothing to do with like, how physically, objectively appealing a person can be (=Tyler: Yes, mmhmm), because, children are raped and old people are raped (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And… you know, it's not just like, [sigh] (=Tyler: Yes, yes), ja, no, I, I remember that now. I, I for-, I had forgotten about that but (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) I remember it now, and (=Tyler: Yeah), and ja, and I think that also maybe shows, that he probably hasn't had a lot of conversations about rape (=Tyler: Mmm), and that he probably hasn't, probably hasn’t, I'm making assumptions here (=Tyler: Right), probably hasn't been a victim of any sort of, like sexual harassment or sexual assaults (=Tyler: Yes, mmm). Uhm, whereas like, as an AFAB person (=Tyler: Mmm), I have, because it's just a lot more inherent, uhm, like in culture of like, catcalling (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and like, uhm, like people objectifying you (=Tyler: Yes), or like school dress codes, and how (=Tyler: Yeah), like, all of that is rape culture (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, you know, I, I remember being in high school, and people would be like, “ah, that test raped me”. And I was like, (=Tyler: Yeah), “no, you can't say that because (=Tyler: Mmhmm) you're equating you finding a test difficult, probably because you didn't study (=Tyler: Yeah), to someone who has been through a traumatic experience that they had no control over that is life-changing and (=Tyler: Yes) shattering and, and that's not okay”, so (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), I think, I think, I’m, I'm kind of glad that the conversation ended where it did, but (=Tyler: Yes) I, I do think, I hope that he sees that as an opportunity to like, maybe go and have some more conversations about it and, and do a little introspection (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). Hopefully, my (=Tyler: Yeah) calling him out makes him rethink that because (=Tyler: Yes) I think it's very problematic, uhm (=Tyler: Yes), sort of, view to hold (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]). Uhm, because that's like saying, “Well”, [laugh sigh], no, it’s just no, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah), I disagree on that (=Tyler: Yeah) and I think everyone else at the table was also like, “Woah” (=Tyler: Exactly). Uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), Natalia definitely got a bit like, “Uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), excuse me?” Uhm, (=Tyler: Ja) so (=Tyler: Mmhmm), so, ja, that was, like I know what he was getting at, right, like I understood his (=Tyler: Right) line of thinking, it was just (=Tyler: Yeah), wrong. [Laugh].

**Tyler:** Yes, exactly. Exactly. Okay. So then, maybe, okay, no, you said that you were happy that it stopped where it did, uhm, that line of conversation (=Lola: Ja, because-), but also, uhm-

**Lola:** -I'll say, I’ll say why. And I don't think it would have been, unhelpful for the conversation to continue (=Tyler: No, sure), but it wouldn't have, it would have been off topic (=Tyler: Yeah). Like it wouldn't have been what we were supposed to be talking about (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I think it's a good conversation to have (=Tyler: Yes), and I think it is something that should (=Tyler: Yes) maybe be studies in group (=Tyler: Mmm) dynamics and spoken about and (=Tyler: Yeah). But it's not about (=Tyler: Yeah) sameness and difference in queer identity.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. True, uhm (=Lola: So, it derailed it a bit). Yeah, a little. Uhm, yeah and then you’ve also raised like, how, how the conversation might have been different, had there been a different composition of people, for example, more AFAB people, uhm, uh, uh, more genderqueer or non-binary people, maybe also more People of Colour. Uhm, but I'm wondering in that focus group, is there anything that you wanted to say but didn’t?

**Lola:** Uhm… I think I did touch on it a little bit, but like, I didn't really, like I spoke a little bit about male privilege (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm… or, I mean, I guess I spoke more about like, the, the, the gender privilege of, of male (=Tyler: Okay). But I think, I think sometimes… people, people focus on where they fall into a minority (=Tyler: Mmm), and where they fall into a marginalized group that they forget they hold other privilege (=Tyler: Yes). And so, like, White queers are very quick to like be “boohoo, but I'm, but I'm queer (=Tyler: Mmm) and I'm also marginalized”. I'm like, “but you have White privilege (=Tyler: Yes), you don't get to pretend that you don't. And you still need to do the work about internalized like, being a racist and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) the way that you benefit in society”. And, I think I would’ve, if I had more, [sigh], it sounds weird to say if I had [air quotes] ‘backup’, but if like I had another person who is like, “Yes, I am agreeing with what they're saying” (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, I would have spoken more about the fact that there's still a lot of male privilege in, in queer circles (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, like, between… just like the type of representation that we see in the media, the fact that like, uhm, like, the gay art teacher at school in primary school was never an issue. It was never a threat. Nobody had a problem (=Tyler: Mmm). But if there's a lesbian teacher, it's like, it's like, not okay, like, “My children are safe (=Tyler: Yes), like, they're predatory”, and, like (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, that sort of thing, even. Uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and… like, there's, there's a lot more. And I, I spoke to my stepmom about it once and so, my family is very religious. And she said that the reason that people are threatened by lesbians is because, uhm, it's a de-, like, it's a demand, [sigh], demantling, that's not the right word (=Tyler: Dismantling?). But it – dismantling, thank you! (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), it dismantles the, the, male being the head of the relationship, or the head of the society or whatever, because in a gay relationship, there’s, there’s two men, but there’s still like a man in the relationship, and that's fine (=Tyler: Right). But in a lesbian relationship, there is no male, so like, where is the social hierarchy? (=Tyler: Mmm) It's like, affecting the patriarchy and that's why lesbianism is so threatening to people (=Tyler: Right), uhm. She said it like, a bit more Biblically, and she was like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), there's no head of the household and like (=Tyler: Yeah), God and stuff. But her, her insight into, into it was actually quite interesting to me (=Tyler: Yes). And I think we, we still have a lot of that sort of, uhm, like… [sigh], like (=Tyler: Mmm), we just need more queer disabled, we didn't have anyone in our group who, who was (=Tyler: Sure) at least visibly disabled (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, uh, we, we had a little bit of neurodiversity, which was cool, but we didn't really touch on that much (=Tyler: Mmm) like, uh, Benjamin said he’s ADHD. And, uhm, there was a little bit of, of talk about mental health and mental illness. And I think, that would have been interesting to talk about a bit more, like being, like how being queer affects your access to mental health (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or, you know, the fact that people used to think that being gay *was* a mental illness (=Tyler: Right). Uhm, we didn't really speak on that (=Tyler: Mmhmm) at all. Uhm, but like, I think, ja, I would have liked to touch on a little bit more of the intersectionality of privilege, uhm, with, within our group dynamic or within any, within any group dynamic, like (=Tyler: Sure), uhm… because people are like, “well, I'm queer, so (Tyler: Yeah) boo me,” and I’m like (=Tyler: Yes), “but, but, but you’re White, and you're ph-, a-, physically able, and (=Tyler: Yes), you know (=Tyler: Yeah), you come from good socio-economic background (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), and, *err-err-err”*.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I liked what you were saying about Venn diagrams, and the overlapping of, of that kind of thing. I liked that imagery that you used (=Lola: Ja) to kind of talk about (=Lola: Ja) intersectionality. Yeah, uhm, I wonder also, like, if it, if you would’ve liked to speak more about your relationship with polyamory?

**Lola:** I would’ve, ja (=Tyler: Mmm), that was something else. And that's also why I was really hoping that Kade could make it, but he had class (=Tyler: Oh, okay), uhm, and so he couldn’t. We didn't really speak about (=Tyler: Mmm) relationships at all (=Tyler: Yes), in our group dynamic (=Tyler: Yeah). We spoke a lot about personal identity. We didn't really speak about dating in the queer scene. We mentioned a little bit about like, Tinder and, and Grindr (=Tyler: Yes) and stuff like that, but we didn't really speak about, what it means to be in a relationship when you're queer and how, your family is a lot less accepting when you're in a relationship than when you're like, like Malcolm and I kind of touched on it a little bit within the queer faith where like – *ag*, the queer faith – within faith, where some of the, the rhetoric is “well its’ fine to be gay as long as you’re abstinent” (=Tyler: Right, yes). Uhm, and, and like, the fact that you're expected to like “okay, cool, you can't change yourself, but you also aren't allowed to have love and you aren’t allowed (=Tyler: Yeah) to have family and (=Tyler: Yeah), you aren’t”. Uhm, and so I think I would have liked to talk about that and, and also like, the fact that polyamory is still incredibly stigmatized (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and like… it's just not, it's not understood, it's not accepted, uhm. Like my boyfriend, his parents don't even know that he is dating me because, uh, they know that he's dating his other partner, and they've been together for a while. Uhm, and, and he knows that he parents aren't gonna accept it and so it's like, being in the closet all over again (=Tyler; Yeah), uhm, which is horrible. But like, I respect and understand his family dynamic, so I'm not gonna push him to tell them about me, uhm (=Tyler: Yes. Yeah especially-). Also they did know at one point, so, like that he was in a polyamorous relationship. And every single time they phoned him, they made it an issue. Like, every single time they spoke, it was an issue and (=Tyler: Mmm) he just said, and he's like, “I can't go through that again” (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I was like, “it's okay”, uhm. So (=Tyler: Yeah), I would have liked to, to speak about relationships in general and then also polyamory, because I'm very new to it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I am, I'm, in a polyamorous relationship, but I'm also only dating one person. So (=Tyler: Mmm), it’s, it's a different experience than like what Kade has (=Tyler: Exactly), uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). And, and that would have been really int-, I mean, you could have done a whole study just on polyamory and (=Tyler: Yes) the different ways that polyamory exists, because like, Kade has two partners. Leo is his other partner (=Tyler: Uh-huh), and is only dating Kade but like also sees other people kind of casually (=Tyler: Okay), and that's okay. And I don't see anyone else, so like (=Tyler: Uh-huh) I'm in a polyamorous relationship, but I'm monogamous. And it (=Tyler: Mmm), it's like, it's very different (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, people think it's just cheating with a label and like, it's not (=Tyler: Yeah). There’s a lot of consent. There's a lot of talking, there's *more* understanding of boundaries in a relationship and respect and, uhm, and stuff like that (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Uhm, so that, that would have been nice to talk about. But that's (=Tyler: Yeah), and I, and I know that Natalia is also, uhm, poly-ish (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, but that's a difficult conversation to have with monogamous people, regardless of whether they're queer.

**Tyler:** Yes (=Lola: Uhm) Right (=Lola: So). Yeah, yeah, there is, there’s so much to talk about, uhm, in terms of like, yeah, things that are not conventional or normative, and not just like a sexual identity, or a gender identity, but also a, a kind of relationship, you know? So yeah, that's, it really could be a whole study on its own. Uhm, yeah. This might be a weird question, but, uhm, how do you feel about your queerness now, after having participated in the focus group?

**Lola:** Uhm… I think, it gave me an opportunity to do a lot more introspection, and I appreciated that, I feel a little bit more connected with myself (=Tyler: Okay). I feel, a bit more hopeful to, to hear other people's stories and, and to hear that there are people whose parents don't care is always really good for me, because so much of my trauma is (=Tyler: Mmhmm) family rejection with my queerness (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm…it's… it raised a lot more questions in, in, in my queerness and, and I, I would love to have more conversations, and like more discussions like this (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm… I think… it just, especially if I look at like what we didn't talk about, for me (=Tyler: Yeah), it, it just reinforced the idea of, of, of intersectionality and like the Venn diagram of privilege and, just listening to the way that, that like, some of them said things was, uhm… you know, I, I think, it's just, so clear to me that we don't always acknowledge our own privilege. And so, I've done a lot of introspection into like, my space as a White person (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And like, what that looks like, and, uhm, and so, yeah, [sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah). In terms of my queerness, it didn't really change how I identify (=Tyler: Sure) or anything. It, uhm, it, it did, it did make me feel, kind of, grateful that there, that there are other people that I can connect with (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, it was a very, uhm, whatever the opposite of isolating is (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh sigh], experience, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). And, and it also opened a lot of conversations. Like, obviously, I didn't disclose anything that we, that, spoke about, but I did have more conversations like with Kade and, (=Tyler: Sure), uhm, with some of my other queer friends. I think, it, it made me a little bit sad that so much of, of my life is still, like, so much of society isn't okay with who I am (=Tyler: Mmm). Like, it was nice to be in a space where I could just be and it was fine. But then like, I have to go to work and I, I can't talk about my boyfriend’s boyfriend. And you know, I can't use, or not I can’t, but like I don't choose to identify at work (=Tyler: Ja) as non-binary and use they/them pronouns (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, some of my students know, that I do because some of my students are queer themselves and so we have (=Tyler: Okay) a lot of individual conversations (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and… and, and, and yeah, it was, like it was very bittersweet, like, to be honest. It was, on the whole, it was really enriching and really good (=Tyler: Yes), but it also just kind of brought more attention to the way that the rest of society isn't accepting and (=Tyler: Okay) where it's lacking (=Tyler: Yeah). You know, like, you don't realize, that you're missing something until you have it for a little while and then you don’t (=Tyler: Yes), so, (=Tyler: Yes), ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And it's really striking me as something that I had hoped for, but that I can see is not only coloured by that hope in my, uhm, seeing what participants feel about fo-, the focus groups. And so far, absolutely everyone has said that they would like to have something like this again, you know? Uhm, so I think it’s, it is not just like, what kind of data can I collect from this method of doing a study? But what does it actually accomplish for people to sit and discuss these things with each other? So yeah, I think it’s, it's really, uhm, generative. Uhm, yeah.

**Lola: ‘**Cause, I mean, there are no other platforms at least (=Tyler: Like you said, yeah) that I know of (=Tyler: Mmm), that, that do this, especially with strangers. I think that there's, there's something really, unique about having these conversations with people that you don't know (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm. ‘Cause I can have these conversations with my queer group of friends and like, we do have these conversations (=Tyler: Mmhmm), but they're not bringing, they're not bringing wildly different perspectives to me, because obviously, we, we, like with like, and (=Tyler: Exactly) we tend to befriend with people who agree with us (=Tyler: Yes), uhm. Something else I would have liked to talk about is like, being queer and like, a-, I think we're, our group was still quite, like relatively young, but like (=Tyler: Mmm), looking at like raising a family. And if that's something we want to do, and how you go about that in a same-sex relationship (=Tyler: Yes), like we didn't really discuss (=Tyler: Yes) the, the difficulties of adoption, when you're queer (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or surrogacy, or, like whether we even want kids and like, is being queer like, is there any correlation? ‘Cause I, I know a lot of gay people who don't want children. (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, and like, if there's any correlation between that, or, you know, the reasons we don't want kids or whatever, I think that would have, that would have been an interesting thing to touch on as well (=Tyler: Mmm), ‘cause we were very, we didn't have like an older queer person-

[Cut out audio and frozen screen for 1 minute 11 seconds]

**Tyler:** Hi, [laugh sigh].

**Lola:** Hello?

**Tyler:** Hi.

**Lola:** Hi, I don't know what happened, my laptop freaked out (=Tyler: Oh), so I just, I just switched over to my phone.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. That's fine (=Lola: Uhm). Uhm, yeah, you were saying it, we, we didn't have, uh, older queer people to talk about (=Lola: Ah, the connection is so bad). Oh… Uhm…

[Cut out audio and frozen screen for 19 seconds].

**Lola:** Is it working?

**Tyler:** Yes, hi.

**Lola:** [Pause for 5 seconds].Oh, I don't know, the connection, the connection seems to be in and out but (=Tyler: Yeah), ja, we didn't have any, like older queer people, we were all very much the same age (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, and so that would have been an interesting, like, demographic thing to look (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm) at as well. Uhm, and we did kind of mentioned how with the AIDS crisis, we lost an entire generation of, of queer people, and how that's sad because we don't really have a lot of role models, or, you know, I think… somebody also mentioned that, that that could have been a contributing factor to the, sort of, like, casual sex approach to the gay lifestyle, is like “we're gonna die soon anyway, so like live fast die young, I guess”, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Whereas that isn't really the case anymore, uhm. Especially like we're not being killed at the same rate (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, [laugh sigh], we have higher life expectancies now (=Tyler: Mmm), and we didn't really talk about what it means to be like, being older and being queer (=Tyler: Yes). So that would have (=Tyler: Yeah) been interesting.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that is definitely a good point. Uhm, yeah, and I think most of the, the whole study is, is younger people. Uhm, yeah, I don't think anyone has actually brought that up yet. Uhm, so it's definitely another thing to, to look at in future. Uhm, so how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Lola:** Uhm, you were very quiet, I (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh sigh]) guess, [laugh], but, you didn't really say much (=Tyler: Mmm). You told us that you were recording in the beginning and then you told us what the questions were and then you kind of sat there (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I think… I, I felt like you trusted us, a lot, because you didn't, you didn't really step in, and you trusted us to know when to kind of move on or to change and, like… you trusted somebody to call Benjamin out. I'm sure that if it had gone on for much longer (=Tyler: Yes), you would have done it yourself (=Tyler: Yes). Like, like I’m, I, I had full faith that you (Tyler: Okay), you would have done something. But, uhm, I didn't, there was no point at which I was like, “*yoh*, they really should have said something” (=Tyler: Okay), or, uhm, I didn't feel like you needed to be more involved. I would have, I would have liked to hear about your experiences (=Tyler: Yes), just because you were another queer person at the table and so (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I was interested (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, but like, I understood what your role in, in the (=Tyler: Mmm), in the process was. Uhm, I, think as a person, you must be pretty great if this is what you're doing for your study, and that's exciting, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). And, uhm, like, I'm glad to see that this kind of thing is happening and (=Tyler: Mmm), that academia is including queer research (=Tyler: Yes) and queer voices. And, uhm, I was very, glad to see like, when I signed up, that the researcher was a queer person, ‘cause (=Tyler: Mmm) I would have had, I’d have had a problem with a cis-het person conducting this. It's like a White person doing a study on, on like, POC (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, it feels like it's not really the right person to be doing that, so (=Tyler: Right), uhm. It was, it was like, that was good, I, I wouldn't have done it if, (=Tyler: Mmhmm), if you weren't queer. Uhm… no, I had, I had no problems. I, I would have just liked to hear more from you (=Tyler: Yeah) but like I understand that wasn’t your role, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, it's weird, ’cause I, I also would like to share, uhm, especially ‘cause I'm asking everyone else to share such, such personal things about themselves. Uhm, and the whole reason they're doing it is because I asked them to do that, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, but yeah, it is a weird kind of thing to navigate, the like, the researcher, like role and responsibility and like not (=Lola: Mmm), uhm, not like biasing the conversation from my own (=Tyler: Mmm) interpretations and experiences and stuff, you know, what, what happens when I don't like direct people into a certain area, because of, you know? But yeah, it's, it's a tricky thing to navigate, uhm.

**Lola:** Yeah, it, it reminded me very much of like, a therapist kind of role like, you're, well I mean you're doing your psych, so I mean, ja, it, it is, is kind of, uhm (=Tyler: Kind of), but, like, kind of, like. So, what I love about my therapist is that he doesn't, like, I can't stand when therapists are like, “this is a one-way relationship and you're not supposed to know anything about me (=Tyler: Mmm) and just lie on my couch and tell me (=Tyler: Mmhmm) about you”, I hate that. So I know a lot about my therapist, and like, when I call him each week, like I also ask him how his week was. Like, it's not in depth, I can't tell you like, identifying information, but (=Tyler: Yes), I know his opinion on things (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Because, it's important to me to know, like, are you homophobic? (=Tyler: Yes) Because if you are, I don't want you as a therapist (=Tyler: Exactly). Are you racist? Because if you are, I don't want you to-, how do you feel about poly relationships? Like (Tyler: Mmhmm), and so I think, when, the, when the, the relationship is kind of one-way, or very neutral, you risk… like, like you said, you don't want your biases to influence it. But like, your biases also matter, because you're the one who's going to be doing the interpretations on what we've said (=Tyler: Exactly), and you're the one who's going to be writing up the report. So like, I kind of do care what you think about these things, because (=Tyler: Mmm) at the end of the day, you are going to put this into data and research and it's, it's, I mean, nobody sets out with a hypothesis and hopes it to be disproven (=Tyler: Yeah). Like, yes, that's still research. And that's still (=Tyler: Yeah) like an answer, but you want to be right (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I've watched a whole bunch of videos about how like *p*-values are hacked and how (=Tyler: Yeah) people make sure that they research reaffirms. So, you know, I, I think, now that I'm thinking about it, I would have liked to know a little bit more about (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], okay), about you, [laugh]. But like, but I think, but I think knowing that you were queer was kind of like, enough for me to feel like, “okay, h-, they probably have the best intentions” and like (=Tyler: Mmhmm), this is for a good cause. And (=Tyler: Mmhmm), and I fell, I felt that that sameness that we had in common was comforting (=Tyler: Yes), and like settling (=Tyler: Yes), uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah, I will say that I have, I do relate a lot to what you were saying in the whole group. Uhm, it seems like you’re also, like, uh, you're obviously a very, like you said, an academic person, and, and, you know, quite well-educated and also very articulate in these, in these matters of, of gender, sexuality, and, and queer life and, and issues and stuff like that. And so, like, it's almost like, uh, having an interpretive voice that mimics the kind of voice that I would be using in this study. So that's cool (=Lola: Okay) uhm, and I- (=Lola: Well that’s cool, that’s good to hear). Yeah! Yeah, and I think, uh, something that I, I do relate similarly to is, uhm, things that, that Natalia was saying, uhm, as an AMAB person who is, uh, non-binary, and there's a conflict between like, glamming up, ‘cause I also do that, but then, not, and, and, wondering, and trying to, like, yeah, think of, of, like, what is that going to do for the way that certain people perceive me in this space? You know, uhm, so that's, that's, yeah, personally, uhm, something that I can relate to. Yeah.

**Lola:** Yeah. Well, that's cool that, like you, were, repre-, your feelings were represented in the group, even if you were quiet. So that's (=Tyler: Yeah), that’s, that's cool.

**=Tyler:** Yeah, yeah mmhmm, yeah, so that's just a piece, [laugh sigh].

**=Lola:** Uhm, yeah. Uhm, I’m glad to hear that.

**Lola:** Thank you, [laugh sigh], that (=Tyler: Yeah) makes me feel a little bit better, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], okay), now that you brought it up, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Uhm, do you have any feedback on how the focus group can be improved? Besides, you know, potentially me sharing, when it's appropriate, a little bit (=Lola: Yeah) more of, like (=Lola: Uhm), me.

**Lola:** Something I noticed (=Tyler: Mmm), is that everyone was fiddling with the Prestik. (=Tyler: Oh, yeah). And so, and like, I work with neurodiverse children, and I'm, like, slightly neurodiverse. And, like, I think having, [sigh], not something that's distracting, but giving people something to do while they're there (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like, even if it's just asking people “would you like to take notes?”. They probably won't, but they might doodle (=Tyler: Yeah). And for some people that, like that helps, uhm (Tyler: Yes), or like, just something to, to, uh, something else that they can like, like even now, in this conversation, I've been fiddling with, like, a, a (=Tyler: Right), a hair clip, the whole time (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, people, people struggle to just sit and talk (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm. Like, ‘cause like, I don't know, if you noticed, but towards the end, Natalia got very quiet (=Tyler: Yes). And afterwards, I asked, I asked, I asked her, like, why? (=Tyler: Mmm). And she was like, “*yoh*, my focus after an hour, like I can't, I can't (=Tyler: Yeah) actually talk for two hours. I can't focus that long. And so (=Tyler: Okay), I, I zo-”, he, he wasn't zoned out (=Tyler: Yes). But they, uhm, their capacity isn't a two-hour session (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I understand that these conversations need to be long enough. And like you need to be able to get into it. But (=Tyler: Mmm) giving maybe (=Tyler: A break?), like every, I, three of us needed a bathroom break (=Tyler: Yes, exactly). Like a break would have, would have, would have been good, [laugh sigh]. (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), something like that, or, ja, just something else to like fidget with or to do (=Tyler: Mmm), or, uhm. Ja (=Tyler: Mmhmm), I, I don't, I don't know how, like, I would have been really happy if you had like put down something for me to fidget with, other people might be like, “that's weird, why (=Tyler: Okay) is that there?”. Or, or something. But like, uhm, also, just, maybe, making the debrief at the end a little longer (=Tyler: Okay). I know that we had a very, I don't know that all of the conversations were as like intense as ours (=Tyler: Yeah). But, you know, it, we had a very intense session (=Tyler: Mmm), and then it was kind of like, “here are, here are counseling services that you can contact if you need help,” and I, I think that was good (=Tyler: Mmm). But maybe allocating 15 minutes at the end for everyone to like, kind of just, recalibrate that they need to like go back out into the world now (=Tyler: Okay). And, you know (=Tyler: Okay), we'd had a heavy, like, you know, at the end of therapy (=Tyler: Yes), you like have to close everything before you like (=Tyler: Yeah), go back into the world (=Tyler: Yeah). I think maybe a more, uhm, intentional cooldown (=Tyler: Yes, yes) time could have (=Tyler: Okay), could have been helpful, for our group (=Tyler: Yeah), because he had spoken about such intense (=Tyler: Yes) emotional things (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, I don't know what the other dynamics were like (=Tyler: Okay). It wasn't, you know, no one left there crying (=Tyler: Yeah). I don't, I don’t think you would have let anyone leave crying (=Tyler: Yeah), or like, pushed them out the room, [laugh]. But just like a, a more intentional, focused, uhm, debriefing (=Tyler; Yes) kind of (=Tyler: Yes), re-calibrating (=Tyler: Okay) would have, would have been good, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Thank you very much for that, Lola. That's really helpful feedback. Uhm, yeah, ‘cause I, I don't intend for these focus groups to finish with this study this year. You know (=Lola: Mmm), I want this kind of space to, to keep going. Uhm, (=Lola: Yeah), so yeah, that's really, uhm, helpful to incorporate into (=Lola: Mmm), into the next ones (=Lola: Yeah), So, uhm, that’s-

**Lola:** I don’t know what, to what degree this is, like, uhm, [sigh], ‘appropriate’ maybe isn't the right word, but like now that I've been a participant in the study, but if you ever, like, [sigh], this is something that I'm very passionate about (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, if you need another assistant, or if you need, like, if you need to find like queer children (=Tyler: Okay), like, I know like, like, like teenagers, like (=Tyler: Yes), if you need to like find teenagers to talk to, or, if there's any way that I can, like help you (=Tyler: Okay), or if you have like a Patreon, where you need like, (=Tyler: Laugh sigh]) monthly funding or something that I can (=Tyler: Yeah) subscribe to like, this is something that I, I want to be involved in (=Tyler: Okay). I,, I don't know what capacity you would have (=Tyler; Yes) available for me to be involved in (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But if you think of something, or you need something, please let me know. Please contact me (=Tyler: Yes). Like I, would love to be more involved than just like have, like the discussion that one time (=Tyler: Yeah), that one focus group (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). So, like, I'm excited by this, and I would love to be involved.

**Tyler:** Excellent, yeah, thanks, I'll keep that in mind. Especially as it, as it, uhm, uh, the next steps, I suppose. Like after, after this Master’s (=Lola: Yeah, as it grows), you know? Yeah (=Lola: Yeah), yeah. (=Lola: Yeah). So uhm, yeah, that's, that's me done with the questions. Do you have any final thoughts, questions, comments?

**Lola:** Uh, no, I, I found this, this really good. I think, I think what could be interesting is to have a second, now that we had the group chat, and we've had our individual debriefs, it would be interesting to see, if you got the same group of people back together (=Tyler: Mmm), what conversations would happen, then? (=Tyler: Yes). Like, I would be very interested to sit down with those (=Tyler: Yes) same four people and (=Tyler: Yes) talk again (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, because I think, I think, we've already identified that there was a lot we didn't say (=Tyler: Yeah), but it will also be interesting for me to see after we've all been forced to do a little bit of reflection with you (=Tyler: Yes), if anyone would have changed their mind or been like (=Tyler: Mmm), “ah, there's a thing I really wish I said that I, I really would have loved (=Tyler: Mmm) to hear Malcolm's thoughts on (=Tyler: Yeah) or something”, uhm.

**Tyler:** Or seen something different (=Lola: That-), now that they've taken (=Lola: Yeah) other people's experiences out with them to the world (=Lola: Mmm), and do they notice that happening (=Lola: Yeah) with them? Ja.

**Lola:** Like, I would love to hear their feedback on (=Tyler: Yeah), on our conversation as well (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), so, so yeah, but other than that, no, I, I‘ve found this a, incredibly positive experience. I was very excited by it. I was very happy to participate, and happy to be involved in other capacities, if there are such capacities (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, uhm, I think it's important that more of the stuff happens (=Tyler: Yeah), so, like, cool.

**Tyler:** That's great. Thank you. That means, like a lot to me. So, yeah, yeah. Uhm, okay. So, yes, uh, I will be in touch about the transcripts when I've transcribed this interview and the focus group in case you wanna, you know, check out the transcripts. And then towards the (=Lola: Yes, please) end of the year, when the focus group, when the r-, r-, final report will be ready, uhm, so that you can read that. And then yeah, hopefully, something thereafter. Uhm, yeah.

**Lola:** Yeah, that's exciting.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Okay, cool. So then you can (=Lola: Ja), uh, like, sign the consent form and in the email (=Lola: Ja, will do), I also asked for your EFT, uh, banking details so I can EFT to you remuneration (=Lola: Okay) for this, uh interview, and then I'll send you another voucher as well.

**Lola:** Perfect. Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). Okay – oh, and that's something else, I think it's really great that you are a remunerating people (=Tyler: Mmm). There seems to be a lot of expectation for people to just share their stories, like for the good of whatever (=Tyler: Yeah), but, you know, it's important that, like, people are renumerated for their stories and for their experiences. And, like (=Tyler: Mmm), I was really happy to see that, not that I expect it, and (=Tyler: Yeah) I probably would have done a free study anyway. But it's, it's good, like, I think it's good practice and like, (=Tyler: Mmm), I, like, I commend you on paying people for their stories, like that needs to become the norm. So (=Tyler: Okay, yeah), thanks for that as well.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, you're welcome. And thank you again, for participating, and for giving me this really valuable feedback.

**Lola:** Ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Lola:** Okay. Cool. I hope-.

Malcolm

**Tyler:** Thanks. So how have you been since I last saw you?

**Malcolm:** Man, I’ve been alright. It's obviously been the busiest time of the term, at work (=Tyler: Mmm) so, beyond, beyond fatigue, I’m alright and yourself?

**Tyler:** I'm good. Thanks. Yeah, it is also very busy on my side, uhm (=Malcolm: Mmm). Yeah, yeah, yeah. But okay, [laugh sigh]. Uhm, so we can get into the main conversation. How did you feel about (=Malcolm: Okay) the focus group?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, man, I, I, I enjoyed it. It was, it was very, very different (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, I obviously have other, other gay friends, lesbian friends, uhm, trans friends. But, I've never quite been in such a, such a setting (=Tyler: Mmm), because it was, as much as we were talking, it was also very educational, very academic, you know? (=Tyler: Yes). So, ja, so it was, it was quite an education. I heard some things I'd never heard before (=Tyler: Yes). But it was also a little one-sided, you know, I mean everyone else was, was, was, that was there was, was White (=Tyler: Yes, [laugh sigh]). And from a, a, obviously, from a different, not, not, not race, specifically race, but, from a bit of a different walk of life, I don't know them personally (=Tyler: Mmm). But they come from, from more of a, a privileged, you know, background and so on so maybe it's not the full picture of what it's, you know, what the, the LGBTI or the homosexual, uhm, or the trans, you know, or gender-nonconforming, if I can put it that way, experience might be in, in Cape Town as a whole (=Tyler: Mmhmm), the Western Cape. But, I certainly learned, learned a lot, it was an experience, it was different (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). Thank you, [laugh] (=Tyler: Oh, [laugh sigh]), thanks to you also for that.

**Tyler** You're most welcome. And thank you for, for participating. Uhm (=Malcolm: Mmm), yeah, so what certain things did you learn, and what were some of the things you hadn't heard before?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, I think some of the terminology which I can't even remember all the words now (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yes). There were some, there were, some, ja, there were some terms being used, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, is it fam-f or fam-man, something like that, uhm (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), what the lady's name again? Uh (=Tyler: Uh, [laugh sigh]), okay not a lady, but, Lola I think (=Tyler: Lola) her name was, I don’t want to, uhm (=Tyler: Yes), Lola, I think her name was, hey?

**Tyler:** Yes, Lola.

**Malcolm:** Yes, so a lot of the things that, that she said, you know, I didn't, had, hadn't even, uhm, occurred to me, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), the type of relationship she was in, her, her challenges and struggles, you know, with her gender identity. So, you know, those were things that, that hadn’t really occurred to me before (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, where I, where I, learned quite a bit. The other, the other guys who were, who were there, uhm, yeah, they were, uh, uh, obviously gay men and so on. And so we had, we had some similar experiences, I suppose, in terms of when they spoke about, you know, promiscuity between gay men and whole party scene often, which maybe is less now during COVID, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]), but, yeah, those were, those were some things you know, that I, that I, that I could resonate with a bit (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, yeah, but just in terms of, of, of… man it just, int-, when I think about, about how one is bullied, and, and maybe they didn't get into that, ‘cause maybe it's a little personal, so they didn’t maybe want to go into depth with that. But when I think about how people are bullied and, and treated, you know, in, in, some of our communities and so forth, I didn't hear a lot, you know, about those kinds of experiences (=Tyler: Mmm), except now for, for, for Lola who spoke about her, her difficulty with her with her parents and of course, and of course with her, with people at school (=Tyler: Mmm), which is something I fortunately have not experienced yet (=Tyler: Yes), I've never been ill-treated because of my, of my homosexuality where, uhm, being a teacher is concerned (=Tyler: Yes). I’ve heard some remarks from learners and, and, you know, things come to my ears. I'm quite strict as an educator, so nothing’s said in my face, but you know (=Tyler: Mmm), you hear, you hear, uhm-uhm-uhm, gossip and you hear things afterwards, teachers talking maybe or, other learners coming to tell you “this one said this and that” (=Tyler: Mmm), but I haven't really been, you know, ostracized or anything like that because of my, uhm, sexuality (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I don't, I don't speak openly about it at work (=Tyler: Mmm), I mean, in terms of my kids, and my parents, and, and, and all of that. I am still a very private person not because (=Tyler: Mmm) I'm ashamed but because I, I want people to know what I want them to know type thing (=Tyler: Yeah, mmm). It's my place of work so I don't wanna get into it (=Tyler: Yes). But, yeah, I haven't really had very, very negative, you know, in my face, uhm, nastiness in my place of work. Uhm, except for like I said some of the things that I heard, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), afterwards or, what was said, “Oh, this one said that” or “Sir, that learner said you were this” or, you know, that kind of thing…. But (=Tyler: Yeah) yeah, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Yeah. Yeah, that's i-, I'm glad that you brought that up, ‘cause I was going to ask about, [laugh sigh], yeah, your experience as an educator compared to Lola’s and their experience. Uhm, yeah (=Malcolm: Mmm), so I think, uhm… if I can also-

**Malcolm:** Did you, did you, sorry, sorry I just want to ask you quickly, did you now, did you refer to Lola as being ‘their’?

**Tyler:** Yes. Lola’s pronouns are ‘they/them’ (=Malcom: Okay), yes, [laugh sigh].

**Malcolm:** They/them. Okay, so I'm, you see, those are things that I need to, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), I need to get (=Tyler: Yeah), I need to get, I don't know, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yes, yes, it’s tricky (=Malcolm: I need to get with the picture, right?), it’s tricky for, for many people. Yeah. Even, even, (=Malcolm: Yeah) for me sometimes I slip up as well, so, yeah (=Malcolm: Yeah). Yeah, uhm… but, yeah, and I, and it's uh, a good, a good thing, I think, yes, that you, uh, brought up (=Malcolm: Hmm), uh, some of the, uh, demographic differences of the focus group members, you know. Uhm (=Malcolm: Yeah), and so, uhm, you know, you brought up there could probably be, you know, a White privilege coloring some of the experiences that they talked about, perhaps. Uhm (=Malcolm: Mmm, yeah), and uhm, it's, it's, interesting, uh, there was quite a, uh, the word ‘privilege’ went around the focus group quite a lot, I think. It, it (=Malcolm: Mmm), uhm, characterized a lot of the conversation. Uhm, now (=Malcolm: Yeah), you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that you said that, uhm, you didn't really feel a strong sense of male privilege, uhm, possibly because of the, uh, the kind of homophobic environments in which you grew up in. Uhm, so (=Malcom: Yea-), yeah (=Malcolm: Mmm), I, I wonder, uhm, how you, how you feel about that, that, uh, male privilege, thing?

**Malcolm:** Yeah you know, uhm-uhm, I think in terms of, of, of, male, I think I mentioned it on that Saturday as well. Males, there is male privilege (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, in society. Uhm, I suppose men get away with more (=Tyler: Mmm), [laugh sigh]. And even, even, even as a, as a, as a, a, a gay man, some, some people are, are, not able to hide it, but they can, they are, what are they? They’re masc, right? They’re very masculine (=Tyler: Oh masc, right), right? So, so they're very masculine so they, they can also get away with, with, with – I don't want to say get away with things, it sounds so negative shame. But ja, there’s that privilege and you can, and you can pass through (=Tyler: Yes) and you, and you maybe won’t, you won't meet all of the difficulties that maybe sometimes females meet (=Tyler: Yes). And then of course, you can look at privilege for men in terms also of, obviously their, their racial group (=Tyler: Mmm). And, but for me, personally, I never really felt, I never really felt privileged, because I’m, uh, because I'm a male (=Tyler: Mmm), right? Maybe, maybe I've, I've, I’ve had certain responsibilities or there's been certain expectations from me, because I'm the eldest son, I'm the eldest child (=Tyler: Mmm). I, I was my, my grandmother's eldest grandchild also, you know, so, uhm. So maybe in, in terms of, of there’s been, there’s always been a lot of responsibility on me. And, but in terms of, of feeling a sense of, of, of, of privilege (=Tyler: Mmm), not, I’ve,I've still had to work very, very hard. And (=Tyler: Mmm) I've had to, my work has had to speak for me (=Tyler: Right). And I think may also bec-, yeah, and I think maybe because of, of my, my work ethic and, uhm how I've also tried my best, I'm certainly not perfect or whatever, but I've carried myself and, and all of that. And what I've, I’ve, you know, shown in public and, and to people and all of that. I've also been able to, to get by, you know, I, I, there's been discrimination, there's always been bullying, like I told you since I was very small. But, uhm, I think also because of, of how hard I work and, and, and all the effort I make, and like I said, how dependable I always try to be and so on. I have been able to, to sort of pass and, and even move up the, the ranks and whatever, in my work and all of that. So I don't know if, if that is privilege, (=Tyler: Right), maybe because I'm a, a cisgender, uhm, gay guy. But I'm, I'm still also, I wouldn't say that I'm really, really femme, you can tell, [laugh], you know (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], okay). Certainly pe-, certainly people have always told me that they can (=Tyler: Yes) tell, how I (=Tyler: Yes), how I think that people can’t tell I’m gay, heaven alone knows, type thing (=Tyler: [Laugh], yes). Uhm, people, a, a friend always makes the joke to me, when you, when you look at me and you look in my face, [laugh sigh], I look a little scary and rough and whatever. But when I open my, my, my mouth, and start talking my hands start going, then you can see (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), you know (=Tyler: Right), so. So yeah, in terms of, of, when I think of the word ‘privilege’, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), I think of, my mind immediately goes to this notion of being, of having this like, natural head-start (=Tyler: Okay), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). Besides, besides how much money you have, besides what family you come from, what your education level, is (=Tyler: Mmm), whatever other things might be added to, to your, to your profile as a, as a person (=Tyler: Mmm), or whatever the case might be. Uhm, it's like there's this natural advantage already (=Tyler: Mmm), you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Like this head-start, that's what my, when I think of being privileged (=Tyler: Right, right), that’s what we think about, and I don't think that I've, that I've had that (=Tyler: Mmm). You know, my, my late father when he, when he was able to, he did the best he could for me (=Tyler: Yeah), my mom, my family, but it's never really been easy, you know, I've had to work very, very hard. I've had to navigate stigma and (=Tyler: Mmhmm), uhm, and discrimination and (=Tyler: Mmm) bullying (=Tyler: Mmhmm). When I was in high school, I used to be scared to go to the boys’ toilet, I used to be scared (=Tyler: Ahh) sometimes to go out for interval, I normally sat in the class (=Tyler: Wow, okay). I was my school’s, I was my school's head boy and people called me the *hoofmeisie* (=Tyler: Oh, wow, okay). Uhm, so (=Tyler: *Shoh*), so I don't know about privilege (=Tyler: Yes), I, I have had to, to work quite hard, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), despite whatever negativity might be in the soc-, in society and around me (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). But because of how hard I've worked, you know, uhm, there's some kind of respect that now (=Tyler: Yes) over the years that have come. So at least that's what is sometimes, you know, shown in front of my face. Like I said, things are said behind all of our backs, I'm sure, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmm). Everything doesn't, everything doesn't always come to your ears (=Tyler: Yeah), you know (=Tyler: Yeah), but, ja, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay, okay, yeah, yeah. Uhm, I wonder, uhm, if, uh, if you felt a, a sameness with anyone in the group?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, look, in terms of, uh, I, strangely, when I, when I listened to, to, uhm, to Natalia (=Tyler: Mmm). You know he’s sometimes, he's, he's in a, in a space where he’s supposed to feel, you know, welcomed, as though he fits in, type thing (=Tyler: Yes), but he’s still sort of on the outside? (=Tyler: Yes). I, I felt, I, I've always felt that, in a sense that where he, where he’s speaking from, I, I could be misunderstanding it or (=Tyler: Mmm) maybe I'm just, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), only feeling a part of what he said or something, uhm, or I'm going off on my own tangent with it, [laugh sigh]. But like, uhm, I felt like this, like this whole, this thing of, you know, being in, in circles where it's like, as if you're supposed to fit in, but you still don't quite feel as though you belong completely (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, I have, I have felt some of those feelings in times (=Tyler: Yes). And in terms of some of the, the family, you know, dynamics, of course, also being an, an educator in contemporary South Africa, you know, there’s still, our constitution says one thing, but we know how the people are still in my opinion, very backwards (=Tyler: Yes), [laugh sigh], regardless of all the rights (=Tyler: Yes) that all of us have (=Tyler: Mmm). People, people won't even leave you alone, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). It's, it's one thing to be tolerant and to be accepting and welcoming, you know, and, and we’re not always looking for that (=Tyler: Yeah). When I say we, I mean, you know, that LGBTIQA, A+ community. We're not always looking for this idea of to be accepted and we want to be accepted and whatever. Because I mean, uhm, whatever acceptance had to happen, I had to make it and that was the most difficult acceptance in any case (=Tyler: Right). So no one else’s is, really carries any weight, but to, to have that, that you know, that love, to be able to talk openly to, to the people who are closest to you (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, to not have that is, is actually quite heartbreaking (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, so and in that way I felt a sense of sameness with, with Lola (=Tyler: Yes). Because of some of the things they've been through (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, with, with some of, family members that are very close to them (=Tyler: Yes). And also, uhm, there was, there is the odd parent or the odd learner or whatever, uhm, in terms of, of your work life and your work environment, there are going to be some remarks, there are going to be certain attitudes, you know, uhm. Whether you know, it's, it’s outright discrimination or just like, low-key prejudice or just pulling up the nose or gossiping, there are going to be those things. So with, with some of those matters, I felt a, a sameness with Lola also (=Tyler: Mmhmm). The other two gentlemen, the one, I, I don't know, I don't want to, I don't, I don't know. I can't remember his name (=Tyler: Right). The one who, the one who was almost like, like, like, like he was the interviewer, [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh], yes, I know what you mean, uh (=Malcom: Uhm), Benjamin (=Malcolm: Yeah), he was next to you.

**Malcolm:** There, sorry, how do you say his name?

**Tyler:** Benjamin. Benjamin.

**Malcolm:** Benjamin. (=Tyler: Yes) Ja. So sometimes I felt almost like he was the, the, the interviewer (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). I don't know, I feel like he's like, like, maybe he might have been the youngest one there also (=Tyler: Mmm). I don't know. I don't know how old he is, and, and so on. But yeah, he, I, I don't know, he's a, a, a, like he said he’s a cisgender, uhm, gay guy, int-, where, when I think of sameness, sameness with him, that would be the fact that, that in terms of, of where this, the notion of, of, of gender identity and so on, comes in, never really felt any doubts where that's concerned (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, or, like, uhm, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). I, I’ve always considered myself to the, to the best of my, of my, of my knowledge, or, uhm, feelings and emotions and all of that, to be a, a, a male (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm), you know. So that's, that's how I've, I've, I've seen myself, uhm, and then of course, I, I happen to like guys, you know (=Tyler: Yeah). So I, the, the, the word ‘gay’ sometimes is a issue for me, but I am a homosexual, I'm attracted to, people of the, of the same sex as me (=Tyler: Mmm). So with, where that is concerned, and I think that was similar with, with, what was the another one’s name? Cay- Caylin? (=Tyler: Caleb, Caleb) What was his name? (=Tyler: Caleb) Caleb (=Tyler: Yes), Caleb, yes. Caleb, ja. So I think, I think with the, with the two of them, I, I shared that in terms of, of, of sameness, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). There was never really this question around my gender identity, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), as much as, as, as, even with my, with my, with being a homosexual. Uhm, yeah I tried to, to date girls when I was much younger, I went along with that kind of thing, and so on. But the first time if, or as far as I can remember, the first time I liked a boy, I was about 11. I think I was in grade five, grade five, grade six, eleven-twelve. You know, that's the first time I, I (=Tyler: Mmm) liked a boy and at that time, I was still, dating girls, but I knew, you know, there was something, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah). So in terms of, in terms of that, I think I shared sameness with uh, with the other two gentlemen that were there (=Tyler: Yes). Yeah, I think, I think that's it (=Tyler: Oh, okay). If something else comes up now, then I’ll (=Tyler: Yeah), I'll mention it to you, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Uh, what about difference that stood out in a way for you?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, yeah, look, look, obviously, uhm – let me not say obviously, what do I mean, obviously? (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). But like, the people who were there are all White (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, uhm, and I'm not sure what their backgrounds is, I don't want to make judgment calls about (=Tyler: Yes) anybody or the lives or whatever. But, I would like to think that, that their, their lived experiences is much different to, to maybe mine (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). They've, I’m sure they've also experienced their own levels of, of, of homophobia and, uhm, uh, discrimination, prejudice, whatever the case might be. But, I feel like, in, in maybe my, my growing up and so on, it might have been in the community maybe where I grew up, the types of people around me. It might have been a little, a little worse than, than some of their experiences. But that’s me making a, a, also a bit of a, a judgment call, uhm, on, on the, on the basis of the fact that they are obviously, that they are White, and there’s, I suppose, still quite a lot of privilege that goes with, with being White (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). So, so yeah, I don't want to make it about, about race, because that's not what this is, is about. But… ja, you know, uhm, private school backgrounds and, and, not a private school, or, I don't know what kind of school the, the other gentleman was at, and so, all of those things, man (=Tyler: Yes). Uhm, I feel like maybe, maybe there they, they might have been a little more, more privileged (=Tyler: Mmm), where that is concerned (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, you know, growing up in, in, in a more impoverished, you know, setting (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, I feel like that, that could have, that, that can also be a bit of, of, of difference (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But that's not to say that even in their own growing up, that they were also not met with (=Tyler: Mmm), with homophobia, because it is quite universal, you know (=Tyler: Right, right), uhm, homophobia, uhm, not being understood, being, being treated differently because of their (=Tyler: Mmhmm), of their gender identity or their, uhm, sexual orientation (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So yeah, I wouldn't say that I, I felt big, big differences, you know, apart from or, or, except for, for that, which I just mentioned (=Tyler: Yes, yes), you know. Because I feel like we, we come from from different walks of, of life (=Tyler: Yeah), and that was just me listening to them talk a bit about their background, the little that they (=Tyler: Mmm), that they mentioned (=Tyler: Mmm), you know (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Uhm, yeah, I, I don't also want to say too much because like I said, I obviously don't know the people (=Tyler: Yes, yes), I don't know, exactly where they are from and so on (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). But, yes (=Tyler: Yeah, Okay), and maybe there were certain things they didn't say there, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah) So, I also don't want to be unfair towards them.

**Tyler:** Yeah, true. Uhm, but yeah, I think it is also quite important to explore difference not just in difference as you know, queer identity, whatever that means (=Malcolm: Mmm, oh-). But all the other categories of social life (=Malcolm: Mmm) that could make (=Malcolm: Yes, and then-) difference a thing.

**Malcolm:** -at, mmm, sorry to, sorry to break your word, Tyler (=Tyler: No that’s fine). And then also in terms of, in terms of difference where, where, where queer life, of course is concerned (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, with, with, with, with Lola, you know, being a, a, a, I'm not sure how she identified (=Tyler: Mmm), is it a now non-binary person? (=Tyler: Yes, yes) You know? (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, with her, with her and then obviously, also, uhm, Natalia (=Tyler: Yes), who also had a, a similar and also had, I think his pronouns if I remember on his card, he didn't really mind (=Tyler: Yeah), whether ‘she’ ‘they’ or ‘him’ or (=Tyler: Mmhmm), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). I, I think to, uh, what RuPaul always says “Call me he call me she as long as you call me,” [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yes). I don't know, you know? I'm making a joke now (=Tyler: Mmm). But, uhm, so, so of course in terms of, of, of their I g-, their gender identity, and, and, and how they, they identify (=Tyler: Mmm), uhm, there is of course, some, some, there is difference there also. Uhm, also, in terms of, of the type of relationship that, that (=Tyler: Yes) Lola, uhm, is in (=Tyler: Yeah). For me, that also felt very, very, very different (=Tyler: Mmhmm), because, uh, look, okay, for me now, that's also where, where my upbringing and all of that comes in (=Tyler: Right). For me, that is, is not, uh, it, it's not the kind of thing that you would, that you would see it, and I think I said there, if you were to come, you know, in between some of my, you know, mmm, life, whether it's now my friends, my family, where I grew up, the circles I'm usually in, whatever the case might be (=Tyler: Mmm). They wouldn't, they wouldn't understand (=Tyler: Mmm). They wouldn’t know, they would ask, in English “Now what are you?”, in Afrikaans, “Nou wat is jy einde?” (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). You know what I mean? And, and, and there are all, like I said, they're all of these little colloquial terms (=Tyler: Yes) for, for, for gender identities (=Tyler: Yes) or for, for sexual (=Tyler: Yeah) orientations or how people identify or for how people *think* you identify or what they *think* you are, you know? (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Because I think many people, they, they, they do think in like binaries, they need (=Tyler: Yes) to be able to put you in some, in some kind of box that works in their mind (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). So, so they'll call you something like ‘a double adapter’, because you, you go, you go both ways, they're not sure which way you go, what you are, how you look, you, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). That, that kind of thing, man, they'll, they'll call you, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), different names like that. So in terms of, of difference, where queer, where, where, where gender identity especially is concerned, uhm (=Tyler: Mmm), I obviously have some of that, you know, with regards to, to (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Lola and, uhm, Natalia (=Tyler: Yeah). The other two gentlemen, I think also said that they, you know, pretty much cisgender (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), gay guys, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah, okay). Homosexual men (=Tyler: Yes), so ja.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah, I wonder on that note, uhm, you said you have a little bit of a discomfort with ‘gay’ and you prefer ‘homosexual’. Uhm, could you clarify a difference that you feel there between those terms?

**Malcolm:** Oh. Yeah, look, ‘gay’ obviously, can mean to be, to be, to be happy and, and (=Tyler: Mmm) all of that, right? If you, if you think about the word (=Tyler: Sure), the word, and, and also sometimes with, with, with ‘gay’, it's almost like there's also some, some, some discrimination involved there, man (=Tyler: Mmm). Because, uhm, yeah, so for me, it's, it's, it's very, very like, like informal and colloquial and all of that (=Tyler: Okay) so yes, I would say, “Okay, ja, I’m, I'm a gay guy” and, and whatever (=Tyler: Mmm). Kids will sometimes when they're calling each other names, “*yoh* you gay, you, (=Tyler: Right) you being so gay now,” (=Tyler: Yes) or, you know (=Tyler: I see). So, so there’s still, there’s all of that attached to that, to that word (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So when I, when I, when I said in terms of homosexual then I, that's obviously how I would exper-, how I would describe myself in terms of (=Tyler: Mmm) my, uhm, my sexual orientation (=Tyler: Yes, yes), you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, because it’s not- (=Malcolm: Because of the fact that I-). Yeah, it's not used (=Malcolm: Pardon?) in a discriminatory way, the way gay can be, you know? Uhm (=Malcolm: Ja), mmm, mmhmm, okay.

**Malcolm:** It’s not, it's not, it's not quite used in, in that way. And, and, for, for saying who or, or what I am, it, it is for me, it's, it's, it's a better term (=Tyler: Yeah). If I'm now going to try and (=Tyler: Yeah), put it into, into words for people, because like I, I think I mentioned, I always say it (=Tyler: Mmm), everywhere you go, when you are (=Yes), when you are different, you have to, you have to constantly come out (=Tyler: Yeah), you know? (=Tyler: Mmm). People wanna know the story and how you knew and don't you think this and what about the Bible? (=Tyler: Uh-huh) And what do you think about that? And what are your, the kids say? And wha-, (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) what do you think about this? And do you want your own child to be that then? (=Tyler: Yeah) You know? So, so for, for that also (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm), I prefer the word ‘homosexual (=Tyler: Yes), [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah. Uhm, so… I wonder, uh, how you feel about agreement in the group? Is there anything that you, what do you think your group tended to agree on?

**Malcolm:** Uhm…that we, that we, I think, I think one thing that came out that was important to all of us was to have the, the opportunity to be able to talk about these things openly (=Tyler: Mmm) in a, in an, an educational, like I said, an academic environment (=Tyler: Mmm), you know? (Tyler: Mmhmm). Uhm, and it's, it's not, it's usually not the kind of space for that. I'm also a part of academia, I'm also busy with (=Tyler: Mmm) a, a, a Master's (=Tyler: Hmm), but, and mine is in education, language education, but it’s, I can't talk about, about me and, and those, in that setting even (=Tyler: Mmm), you know what I mean? (=Tyler: Mmhmm) Uhm, even sometimes with my friends, and at school, and, and whatever, I can't really talk about these things. It's, and, and when we talk about it, it’s, it's normally us as, as friends, when, when we, when, they are – I don't drink alcohol anymore (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, I do smoke now and then, [laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmm). But, when it's that kind of setup, you know, it's a party and, now these, we're talking about these things, and, ja this, and God made me like that, and this is the way it is, you know, it, it (=Tyler: Mmm), it's that kind of thing. I think, I think what we agreed on is that, that, that there's a, a necessity for, for, for these kinds of conversations (=Tyler: Mmhmm), in a more, you know, educational, uhm, environment, more educational environment (=Tyler: Yes) a more academic setup (=Tyler: Yeah). You know, one that's not so, so, uhm, focused, or a part of, of, of the partying and the nightlife (=Tyler: Yes, ja) scene and whatever (=Tyler: Mmm). So I think that's something that we agreed on (=Tyler: Okay). I think, I think there was also some agreement, uhm. Natalia didn't say much about his family, I think, uhm-uhm-uhm, Cleb- not Cleb-, how’d you say his name again? Cle?

**Tyler:** Caleb.

**Malcolm:** Sorry?

**Tyler:** Caleb.

**Malcolm:** Sa- (=Tyler: Caleb) Saleb? (=Tyler: Caleb) Caleb, sorry (=Tyler: Yes). I think Caleb also didn't also talk too much of his family (=Tyler: Mmm). But I know in terms of, of, of difficulties in having these conversations with your family (=Tyler: Yes), people who are close to you. I think that was also something (=Tyler: Yup) that came up (=Tyler: Mmhmm) in the, one said that he had not even come out to his family yet (=Tyler: Mmm). Like I said, uhm, the, Caleb, Caleb didn't say too much on that (=Tyler: Mmm). Natalia I can’t remember him speaking much, you know, of his family specifically, kind of thing (=Tyler: Yeah). But ja, I think, I think a s-, a space where you can (=Tyler: Ja) talk about these things to people who are close to you, and to, to, to like-minded people (=Tyler: Mmm), people who are having the same experiences, uhm (=Tyler: Mmhmm), like, that is obviously not just based on partying and, and, and (=Tyler: Yes) those kinds of things (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). Not that there's anything wrong with that (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), certainly, you can (=Tyler: Yes, but, but yes), you can have a, an intellectual conversation but I mean, something that's more, a, a space that’s more, uhm, if I can say, accredited, almost, you know?

**Tyler:** Mmm. Okay (=Malcolm: Uhm), okay.

**Malcolm:** I think that's the, that’s the only way that these messages will, will, will, will get out to other people (=Tyler: Yes), because I mean, people who, who, who think differently, they are not going to be at those parties in any case (=Tyler: Right). They're not even going to watch those movies or the type of, those kinds of, the music. They're not going to, if it's a, if it’s more educational, a more academic space, and, you know, a word gets out (=Tyler: Mmm) of a, of a thesis published around some of these things or a research article (=Tyler: Yes) around these things, or an, an interview on a, a formal and an accredited news program (=Tyler: Yes) with somebody discussing these things. Uhm, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah), I think that’s also something that we, or not as far as what I’m saying, but (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah), that was something I think we agreed on, yeah.

**Tyler:** Yes. Okay, great. Uhm, is there anything you think that you disagreed with?

**Malcolm:** Oh my goodness, was there? I think in, in short, when we spoke about, about, where, attitudes towards I think sex is concerned (=Tyler: Mmm), I think there, slight, uhm, disagreement (=Tyler: Mmhmm), where, trying to also build a connection with somebody. And, the idea that, that, what if there’s is nothing wrong, you know, with practicing, I don't know, free love, or (=Tyler: Mmhmm, casual sex), even the word promiscuous, the word promiscuous can sometimes sound so, so negative, but more casual sex, you know? (=Tyler: Yes, yeah). Uhm, yeah, I think that was, but I can't remember if there were things that we like (=Tyler: It’s okay), that we like hectically disagreed on (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm). Obviously, we, we, we, we have some differences in terms of our, our, our backgrounds and the experiences that we, that we have (=Tyler: Mmhmm). But I think we were, we weren't really, heavily disagreeing with one another, as much as we were (=Tyler: Yes), uhm, listening, you know (=Tyler: Yes). And, uhm, the other one was, was interviewing some of us (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh]), I thought so [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah. Okay. Uhm-). More Lola, I think, [laugh], shame, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah (=Malcolm: Yes). Uhm (=Malcolm: Mmhmm), so, is there anything (=Malcolm: Yeah?) that you wanted to express in the focus group that you didn't?

**Malcolm:** Uhm… I, I don't, I don't really think so in terms of the, the conversation we were, were having, I, I tried to make a, a meaningful contribution (=Tyler: You did). Uhm, uh, just with regards to, I just wanted to know, because I, I don't know, which other, uhm focus groups, uhm, like, like, like Lola also mentioned, I also noticed (=Tyler: Mmhmm), because I think my form was like number 18 or 19 (=Tyler: Mmm). So, so, uhm, obviously, there are other focus groups, also (=Tyler: Yes), other participants and, but I, I just wanted to ask, are you going to, uh, try and maybe go into some of the more, uhm, I don't want to now hamper on that or belabor that idea, but some of the impoverished, you know, communities, uhm (=Tyler: Yes, yes). There are for example, more, more Black, more so-called Coloured and (=Tyler: Yes), and whatever the case (=Tyler: Yes) might be, of different ethnic, uhm, backgrounds also (=Tyler: Yes) because, uhm, I think, I think as, as, as, uhm-uhm-uhm, LGBTIQA, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), plus people, gender-nonconforming individuals, uhm, people who don’t agree with all the ‘suppose-to’s (=Tyler: Yes). I think it becomes vast, you know, and, and I think maybe you might also be surprised of, of, of what you learn (=Tyler: Yes), from different people, I don’t know, I was wondering if you are (=Tyler: Yes), are also going to, because those people might not, ‘cause you know where I heard about this? On, uhm, on Instagram (=Tyler: Yes), I saw the, I saw the advert on, on somebody (=Tyler: Mmhmm) that I'm following’s Instagram, also a, a, a transgender individual, [name] (=Tyler: Mmhmm, yes). So I saw,yes, so I saw the advert on, on, I think I'm not sure if it's now ‘their’ or ‘her’ (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, ‘his’, uh, his little status message (=Tyler: Yes). And I didn't even say anything to, to, to, to him, or to them, to her. I didn't say anything. I just took the email (=Tyler: Yes), I th-, I took the email, sent you an email (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, because I wanted to, you know find out more about it (=Tyler: Yeah) and be a part of it (=Tyler: Yeah). Yeah. So, so I think, so yeah people who are not [inaudible] who would never see your, even your advert (=Tyler: Yes). I'm not sure how you are, are, uhm, are, are, uhm, also getting the word out there (=Tyler: Yeah), I, I don't know, I’m not saying you are not doing it (=Tyler: Mmm). But that is also something important (=Tyler: Yes), you know?

**Tyler:** It is something important. Yes. And you, uhm, you will see-

**Malcolm:** And maybe, you can also look in, uhm, oh, mmm (=Tyler: Yes). I don’t know if you already have (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I guess you already have.

**Tyler:** Yes. So, uhm, when I produce the final report, you will see all the details about how I've reached out to people, who I've reached out to. And also, uhm (=Malcolm: Yeah, okay), the diversity of the focus groups, because each group actually so far looks different in terms of the kinds of people who, who (=Malcolm: Yeah) comprise each group. And, uhm, I wanted to make the, uh, the whole study quite diverse in terms of a lot of social categories. Uhm, but obviously, each individual focus group will perhaps seem more or less diverse, uhm, depending on what you look at. So that's also something that, you know, when the final report comes out, you will definitely be able to see and to explore for yourself, like, you know (=Malcolm: Yeah), who has been participating and what things have been said. (=Malcolm: Yeah). Ja. Mmm.

**Malcolm:** Yes, it's, yeah, it's, it’s, it’s, it, I, obviously, it will being the report is, but it's not so, yeah, so much that I'm saying that, that I would per se personally, I now wanna know what is (=Tyler: Mmmm). It's just, I was, if you are [inaudible] you know (=Tyler: Yes), if you're, uhm, looking at that kind of, of, of thing?

**Tyler:** Yes. Yes (=Malcolm: Ja). I want, I want more voices, a very diverse (=Malcolm: Mmm) range of (=Malcolm: Yes) people coming to talk about (=Malcolm: Ja) the same, allegedly the same topic, sameness and difference (=Malcolm: Yes, yes), but to see what comes up when people from various walks of life approach that topic (=Malcolm: Yeah), together, yes. Uhm, (=Malcolm: Seriously, so yeah) yeah. Uhm, and it's also something that I think is just the start of this project. Uhm, I think it needs to be (=Malcolm: Mmm) bigger, but, but yeah.

**Malcolm**: Ja, I hope so, [laugh].

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh],yeah. Uhm, so this might be a weird question, but how do you feel about your queerness, after having participated in the group?

**Malcolm:** So-, say again?

**Tyler:** How do you feel about your queerness after having participated in the group?

**Malcolm:** How do I feel about my queerness?

**Tyler:** Yeah, or about your, you know, the way that you, uh, identify, you know, like, as a, as a homosexual person and you've had these conversations, has there been an effect? If, if you feel exactly the same, that's also fine, [laugh sigh].

**Malcolm:** [Laugh sigh], yeah. Oh, yeah. I don't, uhm-uhm, I, I think in terms of, of, of what I know (=Tyler: Yeah), besides now about my, my identity and how I identify, I, I learned, I learned a lot. I saw, a, a, a, a different picture (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, in terms of of, of how I, for example, identify, uhm, I don't, there’s, that there’s much of a, of a, a, a change (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, (=Tyler: Yeah, yeah). Uhm, yeah (=Tyler: Okay). It's maybe not something that I, that I, that I think too much about (=Tyler: Yes). I don’t think there’s, there’s, there’s a big, a big change, or (=Tyler: Okay), or it sounds almost like I'm, I’m indifferent and whatever, but (=Tyler: No, [laugh sigh], no, uhm), but… yeah.

**Tyler:** No, not at all. No, that's fine. Uhm (Malcolm: Yes, yes), so, how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Malcolm:** Nah, I, nah, I, I've actually, uhm-uhm-uhm, enjoyed it with, with you in the, in the focus group, uhm, because, it was good the way the questions obviously were, some of the questions were, were very guiding and, obviously very good with, with, with summarizing some of the themes and leading the (=Tyler: Mmm), the conversation around, some of the key things that came up. And, and I also liked that, that for the most part you enjoyed the, you allowed sorry, the, uhm, the participants to also say what they, what they felt, what they wanted to say (=Tyler: Mmm), without necessarily going, “Okay, less of that and more of this” (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). Uhm, yeah, some of the other, [laugh sigh], uhm-uhm-uhm, participants (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]) said, sometimes, you know, “can we go back to this?”, or “can we come back to that?” (=Tyler: Yeah). Uh, and I thought it was very interesting how you just like, you didn't say, anything. But I suppose the, the richness of the data also lies in the, the spontaneity of the, the responses and so on (=Tyler: Mmm, yes). So, so I think that's also very important. So, yeah, I, I, I've enjoyed the, the experience with you. It was, that was a very, a very uhm-uhm-uhm, a opportunity for me to learn, you know (=Tyler: Yeah), and was a, a, a space, to also share things that like I said, I don't always have a, a space to share it in (=Tyler: Mmm, mmhmm). Uhm, yeah (=Tyler: Yeah). Because like I said, there were some, some similarities with the participants who were there (=Tyler: Mmhmm), things I could genuinely shake my head to and, and say, “yeah, you know, I felt similar or I’ve had a similar experience” … (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm, okay, okay). Yeah, and I think allowing that to flow was, was, was very, it was cool. It was very, very good, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay good, well, thank you, [laugh sigh], thanks for that. And I'm glad that you found it, uh, helpful, or at least, uh, yeah, decent moderating, [laugh sigh], for, for what it was doing (=Malcolm: Yeah). Uhm, I have, I think two more questions. Uh, the one is (=Malcolm: Mmm?), about your experience in school when you were a kid. Uhm (=Malcolm: Mmm?), I think you mentioned like, you know, that you even here that you had, uh, had your first kind of real attraction to, to another boy when you were like eleven, twelve or something. Uhm, but then (=Malcolm: Yeah), there were, uh, in your school, perhaps your high school, you distanced yourself from the other kids who were gay, uhm (=Malcolm: Yeah), perhaps because you wanted to not be subject to kind of the homophobic talk that happens about them, right? You didn't want to be included in that? So, uhm (=Malcolm: Yeah), how do you feel looking back on that decision to distance yourself now?

**Malcolm:** Yeah, look, uhm… if I, if I, if I, think back to specifically high school (=Tyler: Mmm). In my, in my grade, as far as I can, can remember and know (=Tyler: Mmm), I was the, I was the only gay guy there (=Tyler: Okay). There could have been others who we're hiding, I, I'm talking about now, I'm talking about the, the English classes, we had two English classes (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, talking about in grade eight and nine level now, two English classes and obviously, grade twelve it becomes more when kids choose subjects, you know (=Tyler: Right), the, the class group, obviously, fewer kids but, but more classes. So in that, in that, in that grade group in the, in the English, when I say by English classes, I mean, English home language English [inaudible] (=Tyler: Right) classes. Yeah, I was the, I was the only gay guy the or at least the only one that, that people knew were gay (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, my friends were, were girls (=Tyler: Yeah). Yes, I was friends with some of the other boys, we spoke, we, some intervals we hung out together in the classes, whatever the case might be (=Tyler: Mmm). Parties whatever we did, uhm-uhm, you know? I had friends who were male. But I was more with, with my group of, of girls and I was comfortable with them. And I distanced myself from the, there was this group, there was this group of, they were five. I’m not sure if they even identified, because the one I know certainly did not identify as being, as being gay, until much later on, I think he didn’t, up to when he came to university only (=Tyler: Mmm). And he, today, I was actually speaking to him a few minutes before I started this, the interview now. So we also very, very close friends but at high school we were not really friends and we will reflect on that. Often he will bring it up (=Tyler: Okay). But I, I distanced myself because, you know people, I was, people already making fun of me (=Tyler: Right). So, calling me names or whatever, I wasn't going to walk around, in, because they, [laugh], it’s funny now. They were these five, these five effeminate boys (=Tyler: Yes). And they walked in a string, they were together everywhere and they had this one girl with them (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], uh-huh). I will never forget one of the, the boys in my class saying, ‘cause they walked past and we were in the class, and they came past the class and they came past one after the other (=Tyler: Mmm). And he said loud, “*yoh, vyf moffies!”* (=Tyler: Ah). I’m not sure if he said *vyf moffies* or bunnies, it was one of those two words. I think it could be *vyf* bunnies. Oh, you've heard the term ‘bunny’, hey? Which is also a bit of a derogatory term for a (=Tyler: Okay), a, an effeminate guy or a gay guy (=Tyler: Yeah), you know? Yeah, where, uhm, where many gay guys, uhm, especially, especially Coloured gay guys (=Tyler: Mmm) will refer to themselves as *moffies* and so on (=Tyler: Mmm). It's less often when they refer to themselves as being a bunny (=Tyler: Okay), but I'm not, I'm not sure if you've heard that one before (=Tyler: I actually haven't). But that's one. You haven't?

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Malcolm:** Wow. But yeah, that's one of the terms for, for somebody who, for a boy, who’s effeminate, or who’s uhm-uhm-uhm, who's gay or people suspect is (=Tyler: Yes), or, you know, one of those derogatory terms that’s used (=Tyler: Mmm). And I didn’t wanna be a part of that, I was already dealing with my own, you know (=Tyler: Right). They will make fun of me, but they (=Tyler: Yes), but people would say to me, “*Ag,* nah, you, I'm still okay with you because you know, you gay, but *moffies*, I don't like *moffies*, and err”, and I'm just like, what is the difference? And, and (=Tyler: Mmm), those kinds of things. “No, I don't, I don't like a boy who wants to be a girl,” (=Tyler: Okay) you know? Uhm, so, it's, things like that, that, that (=Tyler: Right), that they would say that was already said around me (=Tyler: Yes, okay). Uhm, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah), people, if I go to the, in the toilet, they say things to me in the toilet (=Tyler: Mmm) and whatever (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So, I would, I would be scared, like I said earlier, I would be scared to go to the toilet (=Tyler: Right) I would normally go [inaudible] time when it was quiet or when school was quiet (=Tyler: Yeah), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). For the most part was, it, were in the classes (=Tyler: Mmhmm) But yeah, so I distanced myself from that and even from like the whole Cape Town gay scene, if you will, and whatever (=Tyler: Mmm), yes, I have friends who, who identify as, as homosexual and so on. Uhm, they are few, and of course, I know, other homosexual men and so forth. But I've, I’ve generally tried to, to, to, to distance myself I've you know, been very undercover in my (=Tyler: Mmm), in my dealings, in my [inaudible] (=Tyler: Mmm), because yeah, it's, it's, maybe it's a touch or a hint of internal homophobia also. But, like, yeah (=Tyler: Okay), I feel like I must distance, I can't get into deep (=Tyler: Right). Many of, many of my friends genuinely don't even really know what I'm talking about now. Especially the, the, the heterosexual ones (=Tyler: Yeah). Close, close, to me, you know, closer than some of my family (=Tyler: Mmm), [laugh sigh]. Uhm, don’t really know, my experience, but I feel this sense of, of, from many of them, you know, “but you know, Malcolm, you still okay, you gay, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), but like *moffies* or whatever”, and you know what I mean (=Tyler: Mmm), like that, they effeminate and whatever they, they want the, the, the level of, of, of homosexual or whatever, of gay that they can take. That's okay for, for them (=Tyler: Right), sometimes I feel like that (=Tyler: Right). I, yeah, I don't know, I don't know (=Tyler: Right), I'm not different, uhm-uhm-uhm-uhm, I think the word came out there that day, I don't physicalize (=Tyler: Yes) you know, things different. I don't, I don't wear, for example, put on, on makeup or (=Tyler: Yeah), or wear earrings that are, are more flamboyant or (=Tyler: Yes), uhm, wear parts of, pieces of my clothing is, is female. Or it's, it's supposed to be (=Tyler: Yeah), not that clothes has a gender, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh], yes). But it's supposed to be girl's clothes (=Tyler: Right).There’s, there's not anything like, like that, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), my, my being effeminate is, is, is in my mannerisms and whatever, and my mannerisms, the way I am, is what they can handle (=Tyler: Mmm). And I’ve always, I always keep myself in that, I don't want to draw too much attention to myself (=Tyler: Right. right. Okay). And that comes from, from a very, very young age (=Tyler: Yeah), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). People even told me “but you not gay”, like some of my friends from younger who I’m not really friends with anymore (=Tyler: Mmm) because they, they, they, uhm, maybe because of acceptance, we also grew apart, I grew apart from them (=Tyler: Yeah), obviously. Uhm, but they, in the earlier days, they also had the attitude of “but you are not, *dit issie wie jy issie, ja, jy’s a bitjie sensitive,”* and, *“issie”* (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, whatever but *‘dit issie jy nie, dit issie who jy issie’,* and (=Tyler: Right, *shoh*, okay). So I, I always try to keep it, you know, at a certain level, [laugh] (=Tyler: Mmm). And that comes from high school days, from, from young, from even (=Tyler: Yeah) before high school.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, it definitely makes sense when lots of the people around you paint a picture that it's just, it's so wrong to be, to be *that* way, you know (=Malcolm: Yes). So obviously you want to (=Malcolm: Yah) try to avoid that and not be that kind of-

**Malcolm:** Yeah, you don't always want to, you don't always want to, uhm, you know, deal with all of that (=Tyler: Ja). And…

**Tyler:** Ja, okay. Well, thank you for, for clarifying that one. My final question is, uh, do you have any feedback for how the focus group can be improved?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, like, like I said, uhm-uhm, I think I mentioned earlier and you already answered on that I suppose, where, I think more people of, of, of different walks of life (=Tyler: Yeah), uhm, are concerned. So I think, in that way, it, it could have been, but I… I think there were, there were guiding questions. I, I love how you, you know, pulled, pulled things together and, set the, the conversation in a, in a direction around the, the things that really we were saying (=Tyler: Mmm), you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm), nothing was being, was being imposed on us, uhm, or anything like that. Yeah so, so I think in terms of the way the focus group was handled, you know, how you, how you moderated, uhm, and mediated the conversation, like I said, and all of that. I think that, that was very, very well done (=Tyler: Okay, thank you), but obviously, you, you know, answered me, where getting more people of (=Tyler: Yeah), you know, different walks of life are concerned, you already responded on that.

**Tyler:** Yes. Okay. Great (=Malcolm: Yeah). So then, do you have any final thoughts, questions, comments?

**Malcolm:** Uhm, uh, I suppose I, I want to thank you for, uhm, for replying to the email, [laugh], back then (=Tyler: [Laugh]). Uhm, yeah, and for, for, for being a part of this, uh, experience, because I, I like being a part of, of, of things like this. And uhm, I, because I feel like it's, it's, it's very, very important. The message, the message, now I'm saying the message, then that's why they say maybe we have an agenda or something, [laugh] (=Tyler: [Laugh]). But the message of, of, of our humanity and of different people's, you know, uhm, humanities (=Tyler: Mmm), different people's lived experiences, and, uhm, different people's identities, you know, it needs to, it needs to get out there and it has a, a, a place in, in academic circles (=Tyler: Yes), you know (=Tyler: Yes). It's not only arguments over drinks (=Tyler: Yeah), at a club, at a braai, or, sitting at campus (=Tyler: Mmm) on the lawn, you know (=Tyler: Mmhmm). It's, it's, because even being at, in an academic setting, it can be not academic, you know (=Tyler: Mmm). There, I, I, I want to, I like to be a part, I've, I’ve been a part, I was a part of a different, uhm, program also at my university in my final year, in my undergrad studies, where we also looked at, at sexuality education (Tyler: Mmhmm), you know, and where some of these things, also, uhm, some of these matters. There, I learned not to call it ‘issues’ (=Tyler: Right) because ‘issues’ can be negative (=Tyler: Okay), call it ‘matters’, my lecturer would always say, [laugh], “Call it, let's, let's use the term ‘matters’, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), where some of these matters come up”. So bringing it into more academic spaces, because it's, it's always so in the, in the bedroom and in the club (=Tyler: Yeah), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). If my, my, my whole life and my whole existence is only, it's only about sex and parties and, and, and (=Tyler: Mmm, mmm), not that there's anything wrong with that but you know? (=Tyler: Yes, yes). It’s sordid, sordid and, and, and, you know, uhm (=Tyler: Yeah). Healthy, and immoral (=Tyler: Mmm), and corrupting and (=Tyler: Yes), there's an agenda to do that, you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). It’s not fair (=Tyler: Yeah), it's not, certainly not fair to somebody, to somebody like me (=Tyler: Yes, exactly), you know? (=Tyler: Yeah). I’ve, I’ve, I’ve, I, I am *more* (=Tyler: Yes) than (=Tyler: Yes) you think or whatever (=Tyler: Yeah). So, ja, I'm thankful to have been a part of, of this, however small, whatever contribution I made (=Tyler: It was great), to just be able to, to share in it, you know (=Tyler: Mmm), like for me, that was important, and I'm grateful to you, also for including me, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Okay. Well, you are most welcome, Malcolm. And I'm also very grateful that you participated. And have given (=Malcolm: Yeah, no worries, [laugh sigh]), have given really helpful feedback and h-, and really important input (=Malcolm: Yeah). Uhm, so, yeah, thank you as well. And, uh (=Malcolm: Ja) yeah, I share your sentiment. It is, uhm, really important that more gets said about queer experiences and in more places, you know? (=Malcolm: Yes) Uhm, so, (=Malcolm: Yes). Yeah. Okay. Well, then, uh, we are finished. And thank you also for, [laugh sigh] going overtime. Uhm, (=Malcolm: Loud gasp]), yes, no, that's fine (=Malcolm: I’m so sorry). No, it’s, don't be, don't be, we were having to be a good chat-

**Malcolm:** It was supposed to be 30 minutes, hey (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]), I'm talking so much, I'm so sorry.

**Tyler:** [Laugh sigh], it's totally fine. Uh, luckily, you were the last one today (=Malcolm: [Laugh sigh]). [Laugh sigh]. Uhm-

**Malcolm:** Oh, is it? Oh, okay, [laugh] (=Tyler: Yeah. So, uhm-) So you've had a full day of this?

**Tyle:** Not a full day, just, uh, two, before this (=Malcolm: Oh), uhm, yeah (=Malcolm: Oh, okay). So uhm, do you still have the pamphlet of counseling services that I gave you the end of that one? You don't have to (=Malcolm: Yeah), find it, uhm. I'm just checking it’s –

**Malcolm:** Yes, I, I, I do have it, it's actually at hand (=Tyler: Okay), I have it in my hand.

**Tyler:** Uhm, yeah, just checking if, if ever you lose it, and you'd like another copy, you can email me at any point, in case, you know (=Malcolm: Yeah). Uhm, and then, yeah, so I'll be in touch with you when I’ve finished transcribing the focus group and this interview, if you wanna check the transcripts. And then at the end of the year when the focus, when the full report is ready. Okay?

**Malcolm:** Yeah. I hope I, I, I can get a copy of it (=Tyler: Yes, yeah) also, to read (=Tyler: Definitely). Ja (=Tyler: Okay), thank you.

**Tyler:** Great. You’re most welcome. Okay, so then I'll send you, uhm, another voucher, and an EFT right after this one.

**Malcolm:** Oh, oh, okay. Okay (=Tyler: Okay) then, [laugh].

**Tyler:** Great (=Malcolm: Alright). Okay, so-.

Natalia

**Tyler:** Uhm, so how have you been since the last time-

**Natalia:** I had, I had no issues with it (=Tyler: -I saw you?), by the way, ja.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay.

**Natalia:** Pretty good… Uhm… chatted to Lola about the session. Uhm, we both enjoyed it (=Tyler: Mmhmm). Yeah. That's, there’s much to report.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay. Uhm, yeah, you and Lola know each other. Uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), how have you known each other? [Laugh sigh].

**Natalia:** We haven't, we've only met at parties actually. But we've done a lot of DM-ing (=Tyler: Okay), just replying to each other’s stories, uhm… (=Tyler: Right). Throughout lockdown, we've always been saying, “wow, we must get together some time”, that was the first time meeting in person after a long time but we, we hoping to make plans at some point. They live in, I forgot, Durbanville (=Tyler: Yeah), somewhere far away (=Tyler: Uh-huh). Uh, Strand or Durbanville, so, we never get around to seeing each other, but we’re hoping to.

**Tyler:** Yeah, okay. Okay. So it's more like a, an acquaintance, developing friendship kind of thing? (=Natalia: Yeah, yeah). Oh, okay, okay, cool. Cool. Uhm, so how did you feel about the focus group?

**Natalia:** It was really nice. Uhm, I've never done anything like that before (=Tyler: Mmm), it was very, uhm, very comfortable, and very well-managed. And the questions were good, although the things did sort of just flow. Like it wasn't that, structured in t-, you know, you didn't really prompt as much as people just talked, but that was good, you know, I think we’d have been fine either way (=Tyler: Mmm). Uhm, and, ja, no complaints.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. Uhm… I think, uh, you know, I saw you, looking down a lot, looking away, fidgeting a bit. Uhm (=Natalia: Oh), I think you were, uhm, *slightly* quieter than some of the others. I wonder if, uhm, how you were feeling, uh, as other people spoke?

**Natalia:** Well, yeah, I think that, that's just me (=Tyler: Okay). I wasn't in any way uncomfortable. I'm quite a, sort of introspective person. So, I do a lot of listening. Uhm, and then occasionally, I'll take the gap, but I'm, I’ll never, you know, I’m, like, if everyone starts talking at once, I'm never the one that (=Tyler: Mmm) sort of (=Tyler: Mmhmm) charges ahead. But I do fidget (=Tyler: Okay). Uhm, and I do kind of, sort of listen more than I talk but, yeah (=Tyler: Okay), that wasn’t... [cut out audio]

**Tyler:** Sorry, could you say that again?

**Natalia:** Sorry you're freezing, you’re freezing, so (=Tyler: I, yeah). Okay you’re back (=Tyler: [Laugh sigh]). Uhm, so, I was just saying. I do fidget, I do, and I am quite quiet but it was it wasn't because I was uncomfortable with anything.

**Tyler:** Okay. Okay. Cool. I see. Right. Uh, just generally, the more kind of reserved type of person, I suppose?

**Natalia:** Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Okay, cool. Uhm, so how do you feel about agreement in your group? What do you think you tended to agree on?

**Natalia:** About what?

**Tyler:** What do you think you tended to agree on?

**Natalia:** Sorry. Bad WiFi, let me just see if I can (=Tyler: Okay). Ja…Okay... Sorry,how do I feel about what?

**Tyler:** Uhm, agreement in your group? Uh, what do you think you tended to agree on?

**Natalia:** I think, uhm… well I can't think of anything I didn't agree with, I think I, I obviously related more to Lola’s experience. Uhm, I'm so far from the sort of gay scene that the guys were talking about. So I don't really, uhm, relate to any of that. And also… ja, I don't relate to having been sort of mistreated by my family or rejected or things like that (=Tyler: Mmm). So, uhm, but I did f-, I, I was very interested to hear everything and to, uhm, be able to illuminate the other side to some extent, you know, the, uhm, the more gender-oriented side and, uhm… ja, but what did I? I, I don't think there was anything that that I disagreed with… Uhm… (=Tyler: Okay). Yeah.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Interesting. Uhm, yeah, on that, uhm… note of you feeling like you've had a, an accepting family and an accepting school environment relative to, you know, some of the other participants. Uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), I think you said like, uh, that you have kind of been more hard on yourself, uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), you know? (=Natalia: Big time). Uhm – Oh, yeah? So where does that come from, do you think? If you, if you don't mind talking about that.

**Natalia:** Sure. Uhm, I think that comes from… I don't know… Maybe, okay, maybe it comes from… you know, having been an outsider to some extent, but not necessarily for those reasons. But it still influences this kind of imposter syndrome, or, like, insecurities. I think those come from, like, feeling rejected, but not necessarily for identity, gender identity reasons, although I d-, I have actually felt that as well, but not in the same way, not in the way of like, people in your family not accepting you but definitely in terms of, just struggling to find my place in social circles and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) identity stuff. So I think, uhm, it's a combination of that, and, just, ja, insecurities, and (=Tyler: Mmhmm) who am I? All those things, and then, internalizing that into, into all areas, kind of thing. And I definitely, uhm, it’s definitely a defense mechanism as well, I used to be kind of like really, uhm… rude to myself as a defense mechanism. You know (=Tyler: Okay), it's like, like, t-, to joke about it all the time without actually talking sincerely, because I didn't anticipate being able to have sincere conversations or ‘cause I'm just, shy away from it, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay. Yeah. Yeah, it's quite a complicated dynamic, uhm, to have to look at, I think, yeah. Yeah. Uhm… Yeah, there’s, you des-, uhm, you described, uhm, something quite interesting, I think, that I picked up, uhm (=Natalia: Mmm). Like that, that you have a, a certain playfulness with your presentations, you know (=Natalia: Mmm), like, uhm, you enjoy glamming it up. Uhm (=Natalia: Mmm), uh, but you also don't mind, uh, sometimes even enjoy, uh, coding as like a cis-het male, especially if it can be a little (=Natalia: Yeah), uh, almost, almost mischievous – I don't know if that's the right word – but to kind of correct people who think, “oh, but you're not queer enough to be here”. And you can say, “But I am”, you know? (=Natalia: Yeah). Uhm, so it's cool that, you know, on kind of both, sides of a, a gendered spectrum, you can find a (=Natalia: Mmm), a playfulness. Uhm, but at, at the same time, you also expressed that, uh, there can be discomfort on both of those ends as well. Like, I think (=Natalia: Yeah) you described, uhm, how in certain queer spaces there’s like a competitiveness with, with glamour and, and being fabulous (=Natalia: Yeah). Uhm, and on the, on the other side, there can be sort of a gendered, uh, expectation of you, that you, are a cis-het male and relate to these things, you know. Uhm, and that (=Natalia: Yeah), you know, can, uh, ja, can make the experience awkward and, and uncomfortable, and perhaps, you know, tap into that thing of “Oh I don't really belong”. Uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), yeah. So,uhm, what do you think characterizes that difference, in, in each sense, you know? Like, where, wha-, in which situations, do you feel comfortable and, and playful, and in which situations do you not (=Natalia: Uhm-) feel that?

**Natalia:** I feel comfortable around friends (=Tyler: Mmhmm). If I’m meeting new people, it's like a big thing of how do I, how do I present? (=Tyler: Yeah) … Uhm, and like, how do I, who do I fit in with? Who do I attract? Who do I (=Tyler: Yes) alienate, if I'm this way? Where do I open myself up to being judged, and where do I, do I strengthen my social standing with people? Obviously, with friends, none of that stuff matters, you know, I'm not like, trying to befriend people just for how they view me or whatever but, you know, in, just [cut out audio], with strangers or the public people, even like (=Tyler: Mmm), how, which, which way should I go here? (=Tyler: Ja). And, uhm, the answer is usually to exaggerate one way or the other (=Tyler: Mmhmm). So just like, one extreme or the other tends to help me place myself within groups of people (=Tyler: Mmm), and, uhm, if I do form lasting friendships with them, obviously it becomes a bit more nuanced, and I'm gonna let them see more sides of who I am. Uhm, but especially with dating, like making dating profiles, or, I didn't really do dates with strangers, but that's like a big minefield, because (=Tyler: Ja, ja) people are attracted to such different things. I know I'm attracted to more feminine, so… if I, if I went on a date with myself, I'd want to go on a date with my most glamorous self, you know? [Laugh sigh] (=Tyler: Mmhmm). I would-, so that's like, that's where it becomes a competition, because, you know, people, seem to want extremes… in terms of what they're attracted to, qui-, including me, and, like I am attracted to the more extreme feminine. So, [audio lag] I think that kind of exaggerate- useful if you're trying to attract a mate or something, which it, uhm, which isn't necessarily healthy but I don't think it's because people are evil and judgmental, I think that's just about, what, what we find attractive, and tends to be, very gendered, in my experience.

**Tyler:** Yeah. Yeah. I can relate to that as well. Uhm, I think I even mentioned in the beginning of the, the focus group when we were doing like, the, uh, icebreakers on, on, what (=Natalia: Sorry), it’s okay, uhm-

**Natalia:** I, I heard, I heard “beginning of focus group”.

**Tyler:** Yes, icebreakers and asking everyone like, uh, “what do you do for fun?”, that kind of thing. And I mentioned that, you know, I do makeup art and so obviously, that's like, femme-presenting, in a lot of ways (=Natalia: Mmm), uhm, and yeah (=Natalia: Ja), I relate to that experience, uhm, that you talk about, like, when you're going out to a public space, like how do I choose to, uhm, present? And yeah, also (=Natalia: Yeah) dating profiles, yeah, [laugh sigh], like, what images do I put up? Yeah.

**Natalia:** Yeah (=Mmm). Yeah (=Tyler: Mmhmm, okay). Ja, it's, it’s a very tricky one (=Tyler: Yeah). I'm sort of only figuring it out now. But I change it all the time. It's constantly changes.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Uhm, is there – I think you may have spoken about this already. But is there anyone that you felt a, a sameness with?

**Natalia:** Uhm… I felt very drawn to Malcolm as a person (=Tyler: Oh, yes?). I thought Malcolm was, great, yeah, I found his story very moving and, grandmother and his father, like, I wish, that was the sort of thing I wish I could, I, I couldn't have contributed anything, but I wished I could have said like, I wish I had sort of said more and sort of gone like, “tell me more” ‘cause that's when I, you know, that's when I, I'm very curious about relationships and stuff like that. And, uhm, and I related up to a point to, to how he feels about, uhm, just trying to fit in, in the dating world, but feeling alienated by everyone else looking for something different, uhm. And, but ja, in terms of my experience, it was obviously much closer to Lola's, I think we’re similar in most ways. Uhm, I’m a lot l- [cut out audio], I don’t know, Lola’s very [cut out audio], sure about “this is right” and I'm still kind of, kind of, self-deprecating [cut out audio], everything, you know, ja. I’m, I’m, I wouldn't kind of, fight for my identity the way Lola would, you know, I'm not really a fighter about it. Uhm, that's another thing maybe about like being, being able to, adapt or dress up or, or like, glamorize, it's , it’s, it helps you to, to be louder, ‘cause I'm not quiet like that if I'm dressed up, you know. If I'm at a party, I’m, and when I'm with my friends, [phone rings], sorry about that. Uhm, okay, you’re back. Uhm, no, when I'm with my friends, I'm very, uhm, very loud and talkative and then, but I think that, that's like, finding comfort in, in different… personas (=Tyler: Mmhmm), or, ‘personas’ sounds very like put on, it's just different aspects of who I am (=Tyler: Yes) that are more comfortable in different environments. And then, I suppose… I was comfortable at the focus group, but I was also on default mode so I didn't, sort of, I wasn't being particularly outrageous or loud. And I, and I liked the fact that, uhm, being able to, to put on these sort of disguises helps you to be kind of outrageous and loud, you know. I don't know how I arrived at that because, the question was about something else but that's, [laugh sigh], where I ended up.

**Tyler:** No, that's, that's great. Uhm, yeah. So it's quite interesting that you, you know, relate to Lola in a lot of ways. Uhm, uh, but there's also a, a difference there, uhm, in a kind of (=Natalia: Yeah), a surety, or, or, a confidence in, in, uh, your, both of your, uhm, identifications, you know, as, as non-binary (=Natalia: Yeah), yeah, uhm.

**Natalia:** Which I suppose, also to do with Lola having to fight more against the, the system, you know, I haven't really had to fight as much to be understood (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And I haven't had to hide as much. I think, like, I, my mom literally washed a dress for me the other day, like, that's (=Tyler: Mmm), you know, that's the kind of accept-, [laugh], it's not like I have to, I still hide, you know, I choose to hide just to avoid embarrassment, but I, ja, it's very different I think when you, when you have to be, when you from a non-accepting environment, I think it does make you angrier and, and more, like, “these are my pronouns, this is who I am”, you know?

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Uhm, and, and is there anyone else that you felt a, a difference with, in the focus group?

**Natalia:** Uhm, I don't know about a difference, I, I felt, uhm, but I think like, the other two guys were definitely opposite to me, because they were, you know, very much, cis and very much from like, very masculine backgrounds, it seemed (=Tyler: Mmhmm). And, uhm… I think they were more… traditionally masculine than I am, as it appeared to me, so I think like, I didn't have a difference of opinion with them, but I think we were very different in those ways (=Tyler: Mmhmm, mmhmm). Uhm, (=Tyler: Yeah), ja (=Tyler: Yeah). I don't re-, I didn't really relate to their experience.

**Tyler:** Okay, I see. That's interesting that you, uhm, connected with Malcolm’s story (=Natalia: Mmm). Uhm, but and he's also a, cisgender gay man, like (=Natalia: Yeah) the other two are (=Natalia: Yeah). Uhm, so, so how is Malcolm different from the other two for you?

**Natalia:** Uhm, I think because… Malcolm was very, uhm… he spoke from the heart. I don't want to say anyone didn't speak from the heart, it wasn't that (=Tyler: Mmm). I think… it was so, like, he spoke so much about relationships and family bonds and things like that, I think more than the other two, and, uhm, I related to that [cut out audio], even if I didn't relate to his exact experience. I related to aspects, like, you know, having an accepting mother and, and as I said, like, the way he's sort of struggled a bit socially I related to, but I think it was more like he just spoke [cut out audio] about things that were more closer to me in terms of, ja, being about human connections and things like that, and spoke a bit more about…[pause for 9 seconds, frozen screen].

**Tyler:** Hello? [pause for 6 seconds] Hello? [Pause or 4 seconds]

**Natalia:** Hello, I’m, I’m here (=Tyler: Hi), your image is [cut out audio], frozen.

**Tyler:** Uh, yeah, yours is also frozen for me, oh, unfrozen. Okay, [laugh sigh]. Uhm… yeah (=Natalia: Sorry), uh, I think I caught what you were saying though, about, uhm, Malcolm, and, uh, those aspects (=Natalia: Mmm) that you related to. Uhm… is there anything that you wanted to say in the focus group, but you didn't?

**Natalia:** Uhm… that’s a good question. [Pause for 6 seconds]. I think I wanted to, be able to give more specific examples, I found myself surprised at how few specific examples I could come up with of feeling like I didn't belong (=Tyler: Mmm). And that might be because I felt, like uncomfortable about having so much more of a privileged experience than the others but also, I think it, it just made me think like I've, I've, I spent a lot, like I used to kind of obsess about that feeling of not belonging and I think I've, I’ve just come, come through a lot of that, like, I've come out the other side, I've made the right kind of friends, I've got more confident, all that stuff. And it felt like all the things I used to think about in terms of feeling I don't belong, aren't as potent anymore. Uhm, so I would have probably talked more about those if I hadn't kind of started to go, “well, that one doesn't really bother me anymore and that one doesn't really” ... And, I might have gone more into my specific gender identity but I also felt like, uhm, sort of felt comfortable with, with how I was understood and how I’d sort of ma-, made myself come across. I, didn't feel like I, I needed to explain more than, than Lola and I had sort of said about that, aspect of that.

**Tyler:** Mmm, mmhmm. Yeah, I see. Uhm, so… if I hear you correctly, it's like, uhm, you, thought about specifics of when you didn't belong, uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), but now you're in a space where that kind of thing doesn't bother you as much as it used to, uhm (=Natalia: Yeah). And so, is that why you chose not to speak of it, because it's like almost more of a non-issue now than it used to be?

**Natalia:** Yeah, well, the specific things I could think of (=Tyler: Okay), that used to be huge for me, like I, like it, like the dating conversation. I used to think about that a lot. I used to think like, I don't know how to navigate the dating world, because people expect me to be a man. But that thought came from one experience of, of a date where I'd felt that expectation. And that person is now my friend and we’re both, like transgender, [laugh sigh], so it doesn't, like, it wasn't relevant anymore. It's, it’s changed so much and I'm like, I'm dating. I'm sort of seeing someone now who's completely accepting and, so it's like, I don't, like, with, I used to take small examples in daily life and think “this is, this is the norm, this is it”. And now I've had enough, much bigger, better things that have kind of disproved that to me.

**Tyler:** Okay… Yeah.

**Natalia:** So… [cut out audio for 7 seconds] so, I just felt free. So overwhelmingly. And also other people around me have grown and, and have come to understand me better, for the most part, and much better than I ever thought they would. So it's… ja, I just felt, I felt better about things then. And I think if you'd asked me a few years ago, you might have got an angry rant. And I would have been more, more of that type of, you know, like, [audio lag] “I need to be accepted and that's, and I still feel, get off my chest and that needs to be heard,” you know?

**Tyler:** Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah, totally. Uhm, so, sorry, it was a little bit, uhm, choppy there. Uhm, so I don't know if you did say this, and I just missed it, [laugh sigh]. But, uhm, what-? (=Natalia: Sorry, froze, back). Yeah, uh what is- (=Natalia: Also you froze). Hello?

**Natalia:** I’m here, ja.

**Tyler:** Hi, okay. So what has helped you move into this space now, of, uhm, a kind of, uh, I want to say, a, a more positive space? Yeah.

**Natalia:** Uhm, well, this is the thing, I'm trying to work out how much of that, ugliness did I, inject into the situation?... [cut out audio for 10 seconds] was there from other people and them not understanding my gender identity, which I'm sure factored into things. But I think now it's more like, more people understand it now in, in my close circles, and I feel more resolved about it, I feel more comfortable expressing it. Uhm, and I've had more time, like throughout university, I've had more opportunities to express it, you know. I've got to play women and men on stage. I've got to, dress up as whatever at parties. I've got to, like I’ve had the opportunity to make statuses about things I wanna be heard on. So I think at this point, I feel more heard and I feel, much calmer about everything like it's not this, panic to, to be understood…. And people are just more understanding these days, or I meet more understanding people (=Tyler: Mmm). I depend less on, on, on fitting in with the queer crowd. And I've coincidentally, made more friends from the queer crowd. So it's, it's less about validation, now, as well.

**Tyler:** Mmhmm. Yeah. Yeah. Uhm, is there any specific place, uhm, or area that you relate to being the queer crowd?

**Natalia:** Sorry, is there any specific area?

**Tyler:** Uh, or place that you relate to being the queer crowd?

**Natalia:** Uhm… like, friends of friends that I befriended, at university in order to try and fit in. And then I would kind of, hang out with them and go to, like, weekends away with them, and then sort of not hear from them for months. And then I always felt, “ah, shit, this, you know, my, my identity is being, isn't being accepted”, you know (=Tyler: Oh), because I, I wanted to be in with that crowd. And now, it's, it's less about that, you know, I try to be at all the parties and, uh, you know, just, have relatable conversations, go, “yes, I've experienced that, too”, you know (=Tyler: Mmm). Now, it's like, I have access to more of that and I f-, and I run after less of that.

**Tyler:** Okay, okay. Great (=Natalia: Yeah). That's a much better space to be in, yeah. Which, which (=Natalia: Yeah), yeah, uh, it can be difficult to get to, uhm, you know (=Natalia: Mmm), mentally, you know. So (=Natalia: Yeah), that's great, uhm. So this might be a strange question, but, uh, how do you feel about your queerness (=Natalia: Sure) now, after having participated?

**Natalia:** Uhm, I d-, I think I found it affirming, like it's always affirming. And that's why I went in the first place was just because I, I knew it would be, uhm, affirming to, to be part of that and, to hear other people's stories and stuff. Uhm, it's very… it's very nice to be, in an environment where that sort of thing can be talked about, and also where I can't start pulling my bullshit and like, making fun of myself, which I do a lot less than I used to but, you know, I would normally, kind of, laugh if someone asked me to talk about my queer experience, I’d be like [cut out audio and frozen screen for 23 seconds] than others.

**Tyler:** Hi, sorry, I lost you there. Uhm, [laugh sigh], uh, so-, sorry about, hi (=Natalia: Okay), sorry about that. Uhm, I don't know what happened. Uhm, [laugh sigh] (=Natalia: Hi) I missed the last- (=Natalia: You need me to repeat?) Yes, uhm (=Natalia: Okay), you were saying that you, if someone asked you about your queerness, you would laugh about yourself.

**Natalia:** Oh, yeah. Well, I was saying that wouldn't have been appropriate, uhm, at the focus group. So, there was none of that kind of, there was a very honest, it was a space to be honest and not (=Tyler: Okay) and not hide, you know, it was a space of down-to-earth, honest discussion and that's very affirming, you know? It feel, you feel an affinity with others.

**Tyler:** Yeah, yeah. And you also mentioned, it was not like a, a performative space or a space that (=Natalia: Yeah) uses a lot of buzzwords, that kind of thing. Uhm (=Natalia: Yeah), yeah. Yeah. Okay. Uhm, so how do you feel about me as the moderator and interviewer?

**Natalia:** You were great. Uhm, you, you are, your, your questions are good, you…[cut out audio] Lola said, it's, it’s very important research, obviously. And yeah, I, I, I appreciate you for doing this. I think it's, uhm, you’ve also been very helpful with all the communications and explaining things that I just get confused by so, yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Thanks. Yeah, that's good to hear. And I'm also really grateful that you've participated. Uhm, so, yeah. Uh, do you have any feedback about how the focus group can be improved?

**Natalia:** I don't think so (=Tyler: Okay). I don't think... So, so you're doing lots of them, right? Like you’ve got lots of groups of five or what?

**Tyler:** Uhm, I have had four groups. And (=Natalia: Okay), that, yeah, so, and then it's (=Natalia: Mmm) follow-up interviews, uhm. It's between four and six participants, per group (=Natalia: Mmm). Uh, yeah, but because this is a Master's study, it can only be so big, I suppose. Uhm, but I'm definitely not done with it… Hello?

**Natalia:** Nice. (=Tyler: Yeah, [laugh sigh]), that's great.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Natalia:** Oh, I can't see, if I, if I freeze, yeah, I just said, that's great, [laugh sigh].

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool (Natalia: Yeah). Uhm, so then, that's all the questions that I have. Is there, are there any, like, last comments, thoughts, questions that you have?

**Natalia:** Um… I don't think so.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool.

**Natalia: I**…yeah.

**Tyler:** Okay, great. Uhm, well, yeah, then, then we are done. Uhm, do you still have that, uh, paper of counseling services I gave you last time? (=Natalia: Uhm-) Did you take in take it?

**Natalia:** I didn’t take it.

**Tyler:** Oh, okay, right (=Natalia: I didn’t, no). Yeah.

**Natalia:** Yeah (=Tyler: Okay). But I (=Tyler: Uhm-) do have, I do have counseling (=Tyler: Okay), in my, in my life, I think I’m, I think I'm fine in that area.

**Tyler:** Okay. Cool. Uhm, so I'll be in touch with you when I've transcribed the interview and the focus group, in case you wanna see the transcripts. Uhm (=Natalia: Okay), and then also towards the end of the year when (=Natalia: Mmm, definitely) the final report is ready… (=Natalia: Mmm), in case you want to read that, yeah (=Natalia: Okay. Great). Yeah. Uhm, and then… yeah, I will send you another voucher straight after this and your EFT, when you give me the, the consent form, [laugh sigh], and your banking details, [laugh sigh].

**Natalia:** Okay. I’ll do that now.

**Tyler:** Okay, cool. Thank you very much, Natalia.