# Towards a Situated Understanding of Vulnerability – An Analysis of Ugandan LGBT+ Exposure to Hate Crimes in Digital Spaces

Cecilia Strand & Jakob Svensson

Published online: 08 Jun 2022.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 125

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

# Towards a Situated Understanding of Vulnerability – An Analysis of Ugandan LGBT+ Exposure to Hate Crimes in Digital Spaces

Cecilia Strand, PhD[a] and Jakob Svensson, PhD[b]

[a]Department for Informatics and Media, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden; [b]Department for Art, Culture and Communication (K3), Malmö Univeristy, Malmö, Sweden

**ABSTRACT**

This study maps Uganda LGBT+ experiences of online hate crime and analyzes how preexisting vulnerability morph in digital spaces. Based on field notes, workshop material, and interviews with 13 LGBT+ individuals, the study finds that digital presences in contexts where users are vulnerable due to state—sanctioned discrimination and social exclusion, digital arenas exacerbate users' vulnerability to hate crimes through their digital footprints. The longing for community and intimacy, together with in some cases an unfamiliarity with how digital media can be misused, appear to facilitate both the ideologically driven perpetrators hunting LGBT+, and Crime passionnel, where an (ex)partner miscalculates the implications of publishing private material. This study thus illustrates how digital spaces are not safe(r) spaces, where LGBT+ are free to playfully explore sexual orientation and gender non-conformity, away from society's abhorring gaze. Furthermore, contrary to what could be expected, LGBT+ individuals' vulnerability was most often not the result of an outside intruder hunting LGBT+ online. The article reiterates the importance of a situated approach, acknowledging the environmental influences when studying and addressing LGBT+ vulnerabilities in digital spaces.

## Introduction

It is often argued that marginalized individuals and groups, including LGBT+, that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and where the plus represent all non-conforming sexualities and gender identities, as well as heterosexual allies can expect to benefit from strategic use of Information and communication technologies (ICTs). Although there are numerous studies detailing how digital tools and spaces support marginalized individuals and communities' empowerment efforts, this study seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of digital spaces as inherently emancipatory in the sense that social agents become liberated from and escape the normative regimes that causes their socio-cultural and economic marginalization and even physical abuse. So even

**CONTACT** Cecilia Strand  cecilia.strand@im.uu.se  Department for Informatics and Media, Uppsala University, P.O.Box 513, 751 20 Uppsala, Sweden.

if digital spaces in theory offers a spatially and temporally separate space where LGBT+ individuals can escape the socio-cultural normative regimes, most notably heteronormativity and repressive legal structures that makes them vulnerable; this study calls attention to that relief from everyday lived experiences of persecution, is an unrealistic dream unless structural vulnerabilities embedded in the specific contexts are resolved.

A more nuanced understanding of digital spaces' role in offering LGBT+ individuals an escape from structural vulnerability in a hostile physical environment is not entirely unique, but according to Powell, Scott, and Henry (2020) there is a significant lack of research on sexual, sexuality, and gender-based digital harassment and abuse. With the Ugandan state's and non—state actors' repression of LGBT+ individuals having received sufficient attention (as will be elaborated on in detail below), this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the implications of digital boarders' permeability. Through a situated approach to contextual variables, the purpose of this study is to explore Ugandan LGBT+ experiences of onlineand exposure to hate crimes in digital spaces and analyze how structural vulnerabilities embedded in a repressive context, also plague online life , as well as disrupt life outside the digital realm. By showing how digital spaces cannot offer protection from hate crimes, here defined as crimes where perpetrators target individuals because of their perceived membership and/or affiliation to the LGBT+ community, this study will calls attention to that digital spaces are far from unproblematic in hostile environments such as in Uganda. Moreover, it underscores the importance of vulnerable individuals taking appropriate safety measures.

The article is organized as follows: After this short introduction, we introduce the Ugandan context where LGBT+ individuals continuously find themselves vulnerable to a range of human rights abuses, as well as the role of digital spaces for the Ugandan LGBT+ community. The subsequent section introduces the paper's situated approach to the empirical material. The ensuing methods section present the design of the study, the ethical protocol that was developed and guided data collection, as well as the analytical process. The result section emphasizes the importance of approaching vulnerability and digital security as intimately interlinked to offline structures of oppression. The concluding section explores how structural oppression appear to exacerbated Ugandan LGBT+ vulnerability and argues that situated digital literacy may decrease risk, but not remove them as long as oppressive structures remain untouched.

## Unpacking socio-structural vulnerability of Ugandan LGBT+

Ståsett (2007, pp. 46–52) defines vulnerability as a "propensity to be wounded . . . and exposed to "physical or emotional injury or attack," and thus refers to both the "actual, contingent fact of possibly being wounded, or in

a situation of immediate danger or risk." Although all human beings may be vulnerable at some point, that is susceptible to physical or emotional injury or attack, some individuals and/or communities are consistently vulnerable due to structural factors in their context (Ståsett, 2007). Kuran et al. (2020, p. 2) argues that vulnerability should be approached as a "result of different and interdependent societal stratification processes that result in multiple dimensions of marginalization." Marginalization in turn impede marginalized individuals' freedom and capacity to act independently (von Benzon & van Blerk, 2017). Certain groups are thus more susceptible to physical or emotional injury or attack due to embedded socio-cultural normative regimes and legal structures that sanction and even condone their vulnerability.

Historical sources are mostly silence on LGBT+ individuals, but there is evidence of some degree of social acceptance of sexual diversity and gender expressions in the pre-colonial Ugandan society (Epprecht, 2008, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2008). Structural vulnerability thus appear to be a legacy of the British colonial power's introduction of Victorian heteronormative ideals, which was codified through criminalization of homosexuality (Tamale, 2013). While state-sanctioned discrimination dates back to colonialization, active persecution of non-conforming sexualities and gender identities appears to be a product of the now notorious 2009 Anti-homosexuality Bill.

There are numerous studies attempting to make sense of the 2009 attempt to reform the Ugandan penal code and the events that led to the dismissal of the Anti-homosexuality Act a few months after it was passed in 2013. Research endeavors have explored the particularities of domestic power dynamics in Ugandan politics paving the way for the legal reforms (Bompani & Valois, 2017; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015) including political actors' manipulation of anti-homosexuality sentiments to create artificial scapegoats in a time of social anxieties (Tamale, 2012). Although the role of transnational religious norm entrepreneurs' opportunistic courting of political actors played a role (Kaoma, 2013, 2014; Oliver, 2013, Wahab, 2016), it is also important to recognize domestic actors, most notably Roman Catholic Church in Uganda and the Anglican Church of Uganda's normative influence on public opinions on same-sex desires (Ward, 2015). Other works have focused on unpacking state-sanction homophobia and the Anti-homosexuality Bill's from a legal perspective (Johnson, 2015; Tamale, 2009), and its implications on Uganda's international human rights commitments (Englander, 2011), as well as negative impact on international relations, including donor relations (Moreau & Currier, 2018; Saltnes & Thiel, 2021). Several studies have explored socio-cultural aspects and in particular heteronormative ideals, which can explain why anti-homosexual rhetoric appear to resonate with Ugandan publics (Boyd, 2013; Sadgrove, Vanderbeck, Andersson, Valentine, & Ward, 2012), as well as the same sex desiring individuals precarious existence in the wake of the Bill (Nyanzi, 2013;

Peters, 2014). In short, the overlapping factors and processes behind the relative recent rise in homophobic sentiments and subsequent attempts to strip the LGBT+ community of rights have received extensive attention.

Even if the Anti-homosexuality Act was successfully challenged in the Constitutional Court in 2014; the court did not address the substantive issues, i.e. criminalization of same-sex desires. The legal victory in 2014 did thus not bring about a change in preexisting homophobic attitudes, or result in a decrease in discrimination and marginalization of LGBT+. With 96% of the Ugandan population stating that homosexuality should not be accepted by society, public opinions on LGBT+ rights are almost universally negative (Adamczyk, 2017). The pervasive negative attitudes combined with criminalization have also create as climate of fear of association where family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors will exclude or even banish suspected homosexuals from the family, neighborhood, and/or community. UNHCR and other service providers noted an unprecedented exodus of Ugandan LGBT+ asylum seeker in the aftermath of the passing of the Anti-homosexuality Act, and estimated that at least 400 LGBT+ Ugandans sought safety in Kenya between January 2014 and February 2015 (Zomorodi, 2015).

The protracted and acrimonious public debate on the Bill, which was dominated by its proponents (Namusoga, 2017; Strand, 2011, 2012) appear to have embolden and legitimizing homophobic forces in the country, and levels of persecution increased, including the number of hate crimes in the direct aftermath of the Bill being introduced (Englander, 2011). Amnesty International (2014) attribute the increase of hate crimes to perpetrators feeling empowered to enforce the spirit of the law. The Anti-homosexuality Bill also led to a crack-down on safe spaces in Uganda and increased the risks connected with public displays of non-conforming sexual preferences and gender identities, as well as manifesting physically as a community (Human Rights Watch, 2014, Thapa, 2015). The Bill thus renewed the need for adopting a strategy of invisibility, a strategy that has historically and across contexts, provided varying degrees of protection against violence for individuals falling outside heteronormative and/or gender expectations (Wilkinson, 2017). After the introduction of the Bill, many LGBT+ reported modifying their attire and behavior in public to masquerade non-conformity to avoid detection and hate crimes (Amnesty International, 2014). Local human rights organizations, such as the umbrella organization Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and our partner organization (here anonymized for ethical reasons) all testified to a strategy of low public visibility in times of increased hostilities (personal communication in 2016 and 2019). Ten years later, community members still face high levels of persecution in physical spaces, most notably by law enforcements targeted harassment and/or extra-judicial hate crimes (Neiman, 2019). The Covid-pandemic caused

a deterioration in the human rights situation for Ugandan LGBT+ and led to a rise in homophobic rhetoric and where the LGBT+ community was blamed for the disease (Nyoni, 2021). Deterioration also included cases of arbitrary arrests where new Covid-19 restriction grants law enforcement discretionary power to intervene in the interest of public health (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2020).

In conclusion, hate crimes, appear to have increased after the introduction of the Anti-homosexuality Bill and become more socially acceptable. Human rights violations perpetrated against Ugandan LGBT+ individuals range from "physical threats, violent attacks, torture, arrest, blackmail, non-physical threats, press intrusion, state prosecution, termination of employment, loss of physical property, harassment, eviction, mob justice, and family banishment" (Sexual Minority Uganda, 2016).

## Non-sexuality and gender related legal structures adding insult to injury

Besides the existing legal framework that renders LGBT+ vulnerable to human rights abuse, the Ugandan context contains additional laws that increases LGBT+ individuals' vulnerability. The Anti-pornography Act of 2014, and The Ugandan Computer Misuse Act of 2011, both impact Ugandan LGBT+ and grants the Ugandan state far reaching discretionary power to control and restrict citizens' expression. The Anti-pornography Act states that pornography is "any representation through publication, exhibition, cinematography, indecent show, information technology, or by whatever means, of a person engaged in real or stimulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a person for primarily sexual excitement." With such a broad definition, private sexual communication could easily be the subject of legal repercussions (Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), 2017).

The Computer Misuse Act of 2011, section 24 criminalizes cyber harassment, which is defined as a person using a computer 'to make any request, suggestion or proposal which may be treated as obscene and indecent by the recipient of the message". Section 25 of the same act also criminalizes offensive communication, which is defined as intentionally and repeatedly using electronic communication to disturb or attempt to disturb the peace, quiet or right of privacy of any person without purpose of legitimate communication. The vagueness of the wording and how to legally determine whose peace is disturbed by a certain material makes the offense unpredictable, "and gives law enforcer the discretion to pick and choose what qualifies as offensive" and ultimately who to prosecute and charge (HRAPF, 2017, p. 8). Albeit these laws are relatively new, there are indications that the Computer Misuse Act is being used to target LGBT+. The Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum

(HRAPF, 2017) identifies two cases where LGBT+ were charged under section 25 for sending text messages and posting photos on Facebook that are labeled as an attempt to disturb the peace.

## The role of digital tools and spaces for the LGBT+ community

In an environment that renders Ugandan LGBT+ individuals vulnerable to a range of human rights abuses, digital networking spaces, most notably social media, holds a promise of temporary refuge. Social media offers users the opportunity create affinity spaces, which can be used for fulfilling a variety of needs.

Social media's potential to support social change is often attributed to the spaces' affordances. Affordances include key functions such as self-controlled *visibility; persistence* or permanence of information (i.e. user-generated content remains forever accessible); *editability* (i.e., editing of a communicative act before, as well as after it is viewed by others); and *association* between individuals and/or individuals and content (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Digital spaces provide the users an alternative space where they can hide from behind a protective wall of anonymity, and curiously investigate non-heterosexual preferences, explore self-expressions, and find accepting and welcoming communities as well as ask questions and make social mistakes without risking immediate physical harm. Digital networking spaces could thus potentially serve as "a queer safe space" (Pascar, Hartal & David, 2018).

Beyond satisfying individuals' needs for identity play, exploration of sexual orientation, seeking and giving social support to community members without having to enter a physical space; digital arenas also play a key role in organized resistance against structural injustices and human rights abuse (Dencik & Leistert, 2015, Guo & Saxton, 2020). Social media allows LGBT+ activists across the world to, despite a shoestring budget, pursue sustained advocacy for de-criminalization, anti-discrimination policies, and greater societal acceptance (Currier & Moreau, 2016; Edenborg, 2020; Oluoch & Tabengwa, 2017). In conclusion, given the community's lack of access to physical and traditional media spaces, social media are uniquely positioned to significantly support the Ugandan LGBT+ community's needs

Historically, Ugandan mainstream media's coverage of LGBT+ rights advocacy has ranged from blatantly discriminatory, to ambivalent, to active silencing (Namusoga, 2017; Strand, 2018). In a regional comparison, Ugandan mainstream media was found to contain significant higher levels of discriminatory, stereotypical, sensational, moralizing language, than the other surveyed countries (Pellot, 2020). With Ugandan public discourse producing spaces, such as public spaces and mainstream media inaccessible to LGBT advocacy, digital communication and media plays a crucial role for the community. Digital spaces allow Ugandan LGBT+ to

engage in human rights advocacy and dissemination of counter-narratives which addresses the persistent misrepresentations and dehumanizing narratives of Ugandan LGBT+ (Svensson & Strand, 2018), even if later studies indicate that these platforms are under utilized (Strand & Svensson, 2019). Valois (2015) finds that the Internet provides LGBT+ bloggers a space where they can challenge heteronormative dogmas that dominate the Ugandan public sphere. The anonymity that the digital provides for, makes the site a relative "safe space" for Ugandan bloggers (Valois, 2015).

Bryan (2019) argues that Uganda's digital queer spaces, regardless of being "private" or "public" are to be regarded as counterpublics, where the latter is a response to the dominant publics' failure to provide spaces for the "Others." Bryan's (2019) ethnographic work finds that digital media allows for and facilitates the formation of a Ugandan queer counterpublic, where its inhabitants experience a relative freedom in being "deviant" and provide a space for meeting social, cultural, and economic needs. Amoedo (2021) arrives at a similar conclusion and argues that Facebook constitutes a "subaltern counterpublic" in the Ugandan context. Fraser (1990, p. 67) defines subaltern publics a "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." Facebook is a key for Uganda LGBT+ to express same-sex desires, creating and sharing life narratives, and provide social support to each other as they navigate same-sex desires in a repressive context.

Despite multiple studies attesting to the importance of digital spaces in the Ugandan context, they are not unproblematic. There is limited understanding of how structural vulnerabilities invade and distort the digital realm's multiple affordances. Amoedo's (2021) study of Ugandan gay CIS-men on Facebook indicates that the interviewees were acutely aware of their vulnerability and took several steps to decrease risk associated with a gay digital life. The Facebook users had adopted a range of safety measures to avoid detection and potential subsequent harassment and/or arrest. Safety measure included but not limited to using pseudonyms and false profile pictures, testing new contact's knowledge of the local gay slang, and ability to name of gay night clubs, as well as two-step verification through mutual friends.

## A situated approach as an analytical point of departure

Both authors have spent years following and engaging with the Ugandan LGBT+ community's human rights struggle, and therefore established a range of relationships, including with that of a "critical reference group" (Wadsworth, 1998), consisting of a local LGBT+ organization. The research has been carried out with the full support of the organization (name removed for ensuring anonymity).

By drawing upon a critical reference group as a source of verification of analysis, we hope to ground the analysis in local realities that may be only partially available to outsiders.

This study departs analytically form a situated approach, which entails drawing upon the socio-historical, geographical, and cultural contexts, including social and power relations in the analysis of empirical material. Situatedness has a history in feminist thinking, emphasizing how knowledge and power inequalities are situated in the different contexts women find themselves in (Haraway, 1991). People are beings in a situation, "rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark" (Freire, 1996, p. 90). Situatedness underlines how particular situations give rise to particular vulnerabilities in which the contextual and the interpersonal interplay in intricate ways. By drawing inspiration from the concept of situatedness, the authors acknowledge that exploration and understanding of social phenomena are intertwined with participants' interpretative schemes, that is, the set of assumptions, values, expectations, and frames of reference that allow the person or group to assign meaning to everyday experiences. Through a situated approach, the study aims to reflect and emphasize that Ugandan LGBT+ individuals' experiences of hate crimes online can only be understood in the broader context of Ugandan heteronormative regimes and decades of state-sanctioned discrimination. Experiences of digital vulnerabilities are thus a unique product of the Ugandan contexts' particularities in terms of its intersecting axis of oppression. The empirical material is thus made sense of through and together with, as well as primarily meaningful within the specific circumstances of Uganda.

Furthermore, a situated approach denotes a temporal aspect. Besides the fact that digital experiences are situated in a network of entangled structural influences, experiences are also situated in time, that is, there is a temporal aspect. A situated approach thus calls for being mindful of how persecution shifts over time as a consequence of domestic elites' rhetoric, alterations in the legal framework, and level of enforcement of existing frameworks, as well as international relations, including transnational norm entrepreneurs and donors.

## Method, empirical data, and analytical process

With the Ugandan context's multi-layered structural vulnerability thoroughly attended to, we now turn to the empirical material. The empirical material consists of multiple sources, ranging from ethnographic fieldwork in 2016, workshop material from a workshop on digital security in early 2019, and interviews with LGBT+ individuals in 2020. The research thus draws on material collected over the course of 4 years. With the initial fieldwork from 2016 conducted for slightly different purposes, this study's

emphasis lies primarily with the semi-structured interviews that was conducted in 2020. In the interest of transparency, it should be mentioned that the interview study was part of a larger participatory action-oriented research project that was developed together with the local partner organization (name removed for ensuring anonymity) and funded by the Swedish Institute 2019–2021. Each set of the empirical material is described in greater detail below.

### Field work 2016—First signals from the field

During ethnographic fieldwork among LGBT+ individuals in the capital region, it was noted that digital spaces were far from unproblematic. This material consists of six in-depth interviews, observations, and informal conversations at a weekly gay bar, as well as other meeting places in and around Kampala. Although the field study had a different focus, a by-product was participants' narratives indicating that social media spaces was far from the reprieve for a hostile environment many expected and hoped for. These early signs of increased vulnerability to hate crimes were explored further in 2019 and resulted in project with a participatory action research component. The project aimed at creating a better understanding of the extent and develop awareness raising activities to strengthen the LGBT+ understanding of digital security and promote safer practices. Funding was secured, and the project commenced in 2019.

### Digital security workshop in 2019—Responses from LGBT+ community

In February 2019, the partner organization conducted a digital security workshop, which invited 15 LGBT+ peer educators and community activists from different parts of Uganda to strengthen the participants' awareness and understanding of, as well as skills to promote safer digital practices. Empirical material primarily consists of the workshop report (compiled by the partner organization). The workshop report contained details on participants' experiences of digital vulnerabilities, and workshop outcomes such as counterstrategies to decrease vulnerability to hate crimes. The workshop material was supplemented with an hour long semi-structured qualitative interview over skype with the partner organization's lead training officer to capture the organization's understanding of the community's overall digital literacy, scope of security concerns, and sense of urgency. The interview also focused on exploring the partner organization's understanding of how security issues were impacting the community more broadly. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

### Interview study of 2020

The primary corpus for this paper consists of 13 structured interviews conducted in mid-2020 at four different sites, in Kampala, Eastern, Bunyoro Kitara Region and the Central Regions of Uganda. Recruitment into the study was done by the partner organization, using a broad set of criteria: self-identifying as part of the LGBT+ community, regular presence on digital networking spaces, having at least one personal experience of hate crime online. That is, having experiences of crimes, that were attributed to sexual orientation, and/or non-conforming gender identity/display. Hate crime includes a broad range of crimes such as verbal hostilities such as hate speech, harassment, blackmail and threats of violence outside digital spaces. Due to the Covid pandemic, data collection was conducted entirely by the partner organization mid-June to mid-August 2020.

Interviews were structured by an interview guide that was developed in close consultation with the partner organization, and pre-tested on two LGBT + persons, representing either a rural (Bunyoro Kitara Region) or urban area (Kampala). Interviews covered four broad themes: the interviewee's sense of safety in online environments, experiences of hate crimes, impact of hate crimes, and if experiences had triggered the individual to adopt strategies to decrease risks. All interviews were recorded.

An ethical review protocol was developed jointly with the partner organization prior to data collection to ensure that data collection and handling complied with ethical standards for social science. All participants were informed beforehand on the study's objectives that participation was voluntary and that a participant could withdraw at any moment without giving a reason. A standard consent form was used to document participants' consent. The form was provided both as a print-out document and communicated verbally at the sites of the interviews. All participants were also guaranteed full anonymity. We have also chosen not to disclose the name of our partner organization as we deem this of minor importance for the interpretation of the results and conclusion of this article.

### Analytical process of field notes, workshop material, and interviews

As the research draws on material collected over the course of four years and where the initial fieldwork was conducted for different purposes, emphasis lies on the semi-structured interviews that were conducted in 2020. Early field notes was primarily used as a reference point to establish the existence and prevalence of the phenomena already in 2016. Workshop material and interview with staff sought to further explore the contours of hate crimes in digital environments, and the LGBT + community's response to this emerging threat. Both sets of historical material

were analyzed using an open content analysis, and where accounts were read together with additional historical and contextual information, to develop an understanding of the emergence of the phenomena.

Interview data was processed at two levels. The first surface level focused on mapping the presences and extent of vulnerability. The analysis sought to identify common themes in the interviewees personal descriptions of experiences of online hate crimes. All interviews were analyzed deploying a process of iterative reading, parallel annotations, and construction of overarching themes. The following themes emerged in the process of capturing the core of the stories: *the enemy within, banal crimes with devastating consequences, self-incrimination*, and finally, *development and adoption of risk mitigating strategies*.

The second level of the analysis entailed a process of further development of the themes using an abductive analysis, where reviewed research functioned as a dialogue partner to understand Ugandan LGBT+ individuals' experiences of hate crimes triggered by digital activities. In the light of previous research's pre-occupation with digital tools as predominantly empowering, the understanding of digital spaces as inherently precarious in the Ugandan context emerged slowly. The analysis sought to interpret the participants' narratives and understandings of their experience online, together with existing historical and contextual information on LGBT+ structural vulnerability in Uganda. The analysis thus sought to broaden and move beyond the individual perspectives of the survivors of hate crimes, and develop a deeper understanding of vulnerability as a consequence of contextual factors invading digital spaces.

It should be noted that because of the Covid pandemic, the authors were not able to be present during any of the interviews due to the ongoing Covid19 pandemic, and thus relied entirely on the audio-recordings.

## Findings—Digital spaces as a source of increased vulnerability

The results of the exploration of Ugandan LGBT+ experiences of online hate crime follow a chronological order dating back to 2016. The analysis of how structural vulnerabilities embedded in a repressive context disrupt and plague life in digital spaces is, however, primarily grounded in the 2020 material.

### Early signs of hate crimes in the digital realm

Field notes from 2016 contained some of the earliest reports indicating that digital spaces were far from benevolent. While the material was dominated by narratives underlining the importance of digital spaces in the aftermath of the Anti-homosexuality Bill, field notes also contained details indicating digital practices increased vulnerability to hate crimes.

One gay man in the capital region described an experience of having agreed to a date with what he thought was a potential sex partner, only to be met by a police officer. The Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) fortunately had a hotline set up to which he called and managed to get access to legal assistance. Our partner organization underlined that especially in the rural parts of the country, where HRAPF services are not as widely known or accessible, arrests of LGBT+ persons after being solicited online was a growing problem using digital dating services to arrange for dates/meetings. The partner organization corroborated the involvement of law-enforcement in solicitation of LGBT+ individuals in attempt to arrest and/or blackmail.

Although informants relied heavily on digital spaces to share information and resources, as well as socialize including dating; informants in particular warned against naïve usage of popular dating applications, as these had been known to also be used by common criminals to identify and locate victims to blackmail. It also became clear that Ugandan LGBT +, especially in the capital region, were slowly adopting what could be labeled a two-step authentication procedure. This entailed, never agree to meet with an unknown individual, unless the person was authenticated and vouched for by another trusted source (Svensson & Strand, 2018).

### Emerging vulnerability and community responses

Security in digital spaces continued to surface as a concern both for individual members and community organization. Peer educators working in and outside Kampala, noted that when phones and computers were being stolen, which happened relatively frequently in all parts of Uganda; thieves would use the material they found in the stolen hardware to "blackmail and hunt us around" (interview with training officer). Furthermore, the multiple socio-cultural normative regimes and legal structures made it impossible for LGBT+ to report the theft and claim ownership of the stolen property, as it also entailed claiming ownership of any self-incriminating visual material. Ordinary thieves had thus developed a practice of utilizing factors in the environment to engage in a side-business to property theft, namely risk-free blackmail.

Ordinary theft was, however, not the only problem. Similar to the single story from 2016 that implicated the Ugandan police, the partner organization had noticed that law enforcement officers were starting to regularly demand to see the content of phones of LGBT+ individuals.

*"we had reports on that members being arrested, and forced to produce their phones because they were looking for information about homosexuality . . . we tell them if they are being arrested, or in danger of being arrested by the police, find out how you can get rid of your phone, because they will make you open it to see the pictures, to see the people you communicate with"*

(interview with training officer).

The partner organization also noticed that police officers across Uganda appeared to be under the impression that the Anti-homosexuality Act of 2014 was still in effect. They acted under the belief that they had jurisdiction to search for incriminating digital evidence. They would thus upon arrest quickly demand access to the individual's phone and in particular want access to images, as "that is the only witness, they would find . . . at the end of the day people are being put in cells because their phones can get them there" (interview with training officer).

In response to security issues emerging as a real threat to a key infrastructure to the LGBT+ community; the partner organization organized a workshop for peer educators in February 2019 to explore the community's exposure to risks in digital environment and to increase risk awareness as well as strengthen peer educators' capacity to promote safer digital practices. The workshop emphasized raising awareness in rural areas as it had noticed that members in the rural areas had significant lower digital literacy. Rural members quickly learnt how to use various applications Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, but have low understanding of how these spaces also created digital footprints that if ending up in the wrong hands, could be a legal liability.

## Unpacking LGBT+ vulnerability in digital spaces: Introducing internal threats

The 2020 interviews sought to deepen our understanding of experience of hate crimes and online vulnerability in the Ugandan context. With earlier fieldwork indicating the importance of factoring in the context's repressive structures, the interview study sought to explore the contextual factors' impact more closely.

All 13 interviewees were survivors and had first-hand experiences of hate crimes facilitated by digital tools. Moreover, all survivors had secondhand experiences of hate crimes. Almost all interviewees report having encountered cyberstalking, that is the use of the Internet or other digital communication means to stalk/follow/monitor an individual. Ten of the 13 also report having encountered cyber bullying; that is, the use of instant messaging, social media, e-mail, and other forms of online communication to haunt/threat/intimidate. A handful of individuals had also experienced sextortion, that is, when an

individual is persuaded to send pictures, and/or undress in front of a webcam, and/or persuaded to engage in sexual acts in front of webcams, and where the material is later used for blackmail.

### *You can run, but you cannot hide . . .*

Albeit legal discrimination has been part of the Ugandan context for decades, the protracted and acrimonious debate around the Anti-homosexuality Bill in which elite actors de-humanized LGBT+ and rejected the notion of equal rights as well as framed the community as a threat to society; led to an overall deterioration in the human rights situation for LGBT+. Physical spaces became significantly more dangerous to enter unless non-conforming sexual orientation and/or gender identity was successfully concealed. Against the backdrop of intensified repression, digital spaces were ideal to take refuge from discrimination and abuse, including hate crimes.

The interview material does, however, indicate that refuge was not to be found. In addition to previous types of systematic harassment perpetrated by members of the public, state actors, most notably law enforcement, blackmail from common thieves, hate crimes were also committed by a different and unexpected set of actors. According to some of the hate crime survivors, vulnerability in the digital realm is not primarily a result of ideologically motivated trolls or law enforcement agents trawling the net. Contrary to what could be expected, LGBT+ individuals' vulnerability was most often *not* the result of an outside intruder hunting them online. Instead, the interviews repeatedly stated that hate crimes often originated from a crime passionnel, that is, (ex)partners or friends who choose to disseminate private material to individuals outside the LGBT+ community after a breakup or falling out. Dissemination of private and/or compromising material was often, but not always, combined with attempts at blackmailing. Excerpts from four different interviews illustrate the phenomena.

> *It was my boyfriend who used to work in xx company, who got jealous when he saw that I was getting close to another guy. So he decided to release all my information on a WhatsApp group . . . I tried to reach out to him and apologize. But he requested that I give him money to not share my information. He went on and shared it . . . and have now learnt to never share nude pictures*

> *My ex -boyfriend shared my private information with my family. I was then called to a family meeting to defend myself. I was also arrested because of this, but bailed out. I have been blackmailed many times because of this.*

> *I posted a picture on my Facebook, and then someone writes "what are you showing, you Lesbian?"." The picture and comment were screenshot and shared on my family WhatsApp group. The family then called a family meeting where I tried to defend myself.*

> *My girlfriend's pictures were somehow leaked to the Red Pepper (Ugandan tabloid paper that often outs suspected LGBT+ individuals on their front page, authors remark). In the pictures we were together. We were very shocked. People started calling us homosexuals and we had to get offline. But people continue calling us homosexuals*

In a different context, a compromising picture and/or message, may be embarrassing or humiliating, and even result in a scandal. But in Uganda the easy-to-commit crime—breach of privacy—can have devastating and long-term consequences for the victim. An outing of an LGBT+ as a revengeful response to something so banal as breakup or disagreement often had detrimental consequences for the individuals. A thoughtlessness dissemination of private material can lead to the destruction of a life. One of our interviewees was raped as a consequence of being outed, and another was forced to leave the country and flea to Kenya after being outed, as shown in the two excerpts below.

> *I had a friend that I used to chat with for a really long time. and I send him nude pictures. When things didn't go well, he shared them on Facebook . . . after the material was shared on Facebook I was raped.*

> *A son of a neighbor saw me on a Facebook page. After he saw the picture, he started rumors on me being gay . . . I fled to Kenya to seek asylum because of this.*

Exposure of private digital material may thus not only result in arrest, blackmail, and/or physical violence, but lead to being socially ostracized from family and kin networks, as well as loss of employment. In a context where marginalization limits your social and economic opportunities and freedoms, social isolation often has devastating consequences. Ugandan LGBT+ digital life, even in closed communities are thus precarious, and especially in the cases where the individual is unaware of or lacks the skills to limit digital footprints that is inevitably left behind.

A third theme is how the digital footprints of a Ugandan LGBT+ create a repository of self-incriminating material. Digital spaces and the digital footprints that is generated, creates new types of vulnerability, when they intersect with the Ugandan contexts. When digital spaces are embedded in a context that celebrates heteronormative ideals, to the point that other social constellations and activities are cause for persecution, the digital footprints may be a source of increased vulnerability. The Anti-Pornography Act of 2014, and The Ugandan Computer Misuse act of 2011, which provides law enforcers nebulous reach, puts most LGBT+ at risk of criminal charges. The Ugandan contexts makes many digital footprints a potential legal liability and digital spaces becomes a hazardous place.

The partner organization emphasizes the role digital footprints play in the Ugandan context and recognizes they have become more digitally savvy to counter the risks that digital life introduces. Police officers are focused on

gaining access to the suspected LGBT+ digital archives in order to collect evidence and as a mode to identify other "suspects" through the address books. The partner organization conclude that Ugandan law officers now knows what they are looking for.

> We tell our members in the case that you are being arrested, or you are in the danger of an arrestment, find a way to get rid of your phone. Because they now know that that there is The (Interviewee emphasis) evidence. If you open your phone, they will ask to see the pictures, see the videos, see the chat and who you are communicating with. This is how they find other people (Training officer partner organizations, 2020).

So unless the users take great care to prevent the collection, storage off, LGBT+ user will be compiling a dossier of self-incriminating evidence. In a different context, digital footprints of an LGBT+ individual socializing, flirting, dating, or supporting a human rights organization would have been of limited interest to a scorned ex-lover, friend, employer, landlord/lady, and law enforcement. In Uganda, however, it increases the risk of being a victim of a hate crime with no real expiration date.

### Resilience and risk mitigation strategies

All the interviewees mentioned that they have adopted some practices to lessen the vulnerabilities that digital life in Uganda produces. Almost all interviewees report protecting their hardware, which predominantly is a phone, with a password, which creates an initial barrier should the phone be stolen or seized by the police. About half of the interviewees report concealing their identity as a safe practice, and combining it with identity-play, which entailed masking one's identity by altering descriptive facts and even constructing another identity when socializing with someone new. There is an understanding that visuals may be a liability, which has led to practices of cropping out or blurring the face on visual material that may be compromising, but that still allows users to share visual material. Other strategies entailed researching new contacts and block unsolicited contact attempts from strangers. Several also used some sort of two-step-authentications process, where an unknown individual had to be authenticated by a trusted source. The practice of verifying the identity of a new contact was found in the 2016 Kampala study, and appear to be a fairly well-established practice in the capital region. The two-step authentication is however dependent on that the individual is connected to a LGBT+ community. All interviewees used a range of adaptive skills but recognize that countermeasures are not an impenetrable defense against hate crimes. Nevertheless, the range of risk-mitigating addressing their vulnerabilities in the Ugandan context indicating that the LGBT+ community is adapting to the

realities of their type of vulnerability online and developing what could be termed *situated digital literacy* (a concept we return to in the concluding discussion below).

With digital spaces essential for personal and intra-community communication and organized resistance against oppression and contextual factors likely to remain, developing situated digital literacy, which departs from the specific realities of oppression in Uganda, may turn out to be essential for increasing LGBT+ individuals' safety.

## Concluding discussion: Toward a situated digital literacy

The study's findings indicate that hate crimes in digital spaces are not isolated to the digital realm, but frequently materialize in the offline world and subsequently plagues both worlds. Digital spaces in the Ugandan context are thus, as indicated in the introduction, potentially problematic spaces, at least if you belong to the country's LGBT+ community. Drawing on empirical material covering 4 years, 2016–2020, consistently indicates that Ugandan LGBT+ are vulnerable to hate crimes in both worlds, not because their digital practices in themselves are problematics, but because the surrounding society enables and promotes persecution.

It could be argued that digital spaces increase Ugandan LGBT+ vulnerability to hate crimes, simply by offering perpetrators new opportunities and more convenient tools for threats and harassment. This study does, however, argue that increased vulnerability is far more complex. LGBT+ vulnerability in digital spaces is intimately interlinked and inseparable from the Ugandan context's intersecting systems of oppression, most notably the heteronormative normative regimes codified in the Ugandan legal system that organize and legitimatize repression of non-conforming sexuality and gender identities. In an environment where hate crimes against LGBT+ are state-sanctioned, socially acceptable and offer default impunity to perpetrators, digital spaces could only be a safe space if digital boards were indeed impenetrable. Digital spaces in Uganda are thus not queer safe space (as it is suggested by Pascar, Hartal & David, 2018). On the contrary, in Uganda, oppression knows no boarders and that includes digital boarders.

The results also underscore that digital spaces, the opportunities, and vulnerabilities social media use give rise to need to be be approached and studied and using a situated lens. Simplified claims about digital arenas as inherently empowering need to be refuted, as many before we also have argued. Social media platforms should be approached as sites of with logics and affordances of their own (Svensson & Strand, 2018), which intersects with other media platforms and communication traditions in a hybridized

(Chadwick, 2013) and ecological (Treré & Mattoni, 2015) fashion. A situated approach also calls attention to the importance of understanding temporal fluctuation.

Situadness also plays a key role in developing contextually appropriate countermeasures to decrease vulnerability to hate crimes. With heteronormative regimes and repressive legal frameworks likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future, digital literacy becomes a key tool to reduce vulnerability. Digital literacy is commonly understood as an individual's ability to find, critically evaluate, and clearly communicate information on various digital platforms. It has also been argued that digital literacy can benefit greatly from adopting a critical perspective (Pötzsch, 2019; Vuorikariet et al., 2016). Future risk mitigating strategies undoubtedly need to include efforts to expand the community's situated digital literacy. In Uganda situated digital literacy must include an understanding of that safety online is precarious and conditioned on the individual's digital practices and management of risk factors. A situated digital literacy entails gaining critical awareness of the compounding factors making them vulnerable in the digital realm, including the lesser-known and discussed phenomena of intra-community perpetrators. Albeit discussing the existence of intra-community perpetrators may be a sensitive topic, it nevertheless needs to be acknowledged in order to develop appropriate safer practices. Furthermore situated digital literacy should arguably also highlight how life online indivertibly creates digital footprints, through data saved in online dating applications, messages from a (same sex) partner, a saved picture, etc., and unless hardware and stored information are properly protected, these traces render the individual vulnerable to hate crime and/or legal actions.

Finally, it is important to highlight that although this study explored LGBT + individuals' experience of hate crimes and how the Ugandan context exacerbated vulnerability in digital spaces, it is important to acknowledge that descriptions of participants that might make them come across as victims in this study, are also resilient survivors. The story of LGBT+ individuals in Uganda is also that of fearlessness and bravery, organizing pride parades, refusing to be silenced or shamed, running clinics providing essential sexual reproductive health services in a country where they risk being harassed, jailed, and persecuted and subjugated to extra-judicial violence, including mob killings. The director of our partner organization, for example, was severely injured in an attack at home, which required prolonged hospital treatment and even longer convalescence. Still, she returned to her office and tirelessly continues her work for equal rights for LGBT+. She is not alone. Despite the prevalence of hate crimes in the digital and physical world, the community continues to explore how digital spaces can contribute to strengthen their community, explore their sexuality, and doing so as safely

as possible. It is our hope that our research can play a role, albeit a very small one, in this important work.

## Acknowledgments

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Funding

## References

Adamczyk, A. (2017). Cross-national public opinion about homosexuality. In *Cross-National public opinion about homosexuality*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Amnesty International. (2014). *Rule by law-discriminatory legislation and legitimized abuses in Uganda*. London: Amnesty International Ltd. https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/afr59062014en.pdf

Amoedo, L. H. (2021). Kuchu counterpublic on Facebook: Gay men's challenge to hetero-sexist policies in Uganda. *Anthropology and Humanism*, *46*(1), 21–37. doi:10.1111/anhu.12318

Bompani, B., & Valois, C. (2017). Sexualizing politics: The anti-homosexuality bill, party-politics and the new political dispensation in Uganda. *Critical African Studies*, *9*(1), 52–70. doi:10.1080/21681392.2015.1137479

Boyd, L. (2013). The problem with freedom: Homosexuality and human rights in Uganda. *Anthropological Quarterly*, *86*(3), 697–724. doi:10.1353/anq.2013.0034

Bryan, A. (2019). Kuchu activism, queer sex-work and "lavender marriages," in Uganda's virtual LGBT safe (r) spaces. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *13*(1), 90–105. doi:10.1080/17531055.2018.1547258

Chadwick, A. (2013). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford University Press.

Currier, A., & Moreau, J. (2016). Digital strategies and African LGBTI organizing. In *Digital activism in the social media era* (pp. 231–247). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dencik, L. & Leistert, O. (Eds.), (2015). *Critical perspectives on social media and protest: Between control and emancipation*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Edenborg, E. (2020). Visibility in global queer politics. In Bosia, M. J., McEvoy, S. M. & Rahman, M. (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of global LGBT and sexual diversity politics* (pp. 349).Oxford University Press.

Englander, D. (2011). Protecting the human rights of LGBT people in *Uganda* in the wake of *Uganda*'s 'anti homosexuality Bill, 2009.' *Emory International Law Review*, *25*(3), 1263.

Epprecht, M. (2008). *Heterosexual Africa?: The history of an idea from the age of exploration to the age of AIDS*. Athens: Ohio Univ Ctr for Intl Studies.

Epprecht, M. (2010). The making of 'African sexuality': Early sources, current debates. *History Compass*, 8(8), 768–779. doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2010.00715.x

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, 2nd ed. CA: Penguin Groups. (first published 1970).

Guo, C., & Saxton, G. D. (2020). *The quest for attention: Nonprofit advocacy in a social media age*. Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press.

Haraway, D. (1991). *An ironic dream of a common language for women in the integrated circuit*. Philosophy of Technology. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum. (2017). *The computer misuse act, 2011: Yet another legal fetter to the basic rights and freedoms of marginalised persons*. Author. Retrieved from https://hrapf.org/index.php/resources/human-rights-advocate-magazine/97-fourth-issue-of-the-human-rights-advocate/file

Human Rights Watch. (2008). *This Alien legacy the origins of "sodomy" laws in British colonialism*. London, UK: HRW.

Human Rights Watch. (2014). *Uganda: Anti-homosexuality act's heavy toll- discriminatory law prompts arrests, attacks, evictions, flight*. Human Rigths Watch. Retrieved september 10, 2020, from https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/14/uganda-anti-homosexuality-acts-heavy-toll

Johnson, P. (2015). Making unjust law: The parliament of Uganda and the anti-homosexuality act 2014. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 68(4), 709–736. doi:10.1093/pa/gsu021

Kaoma, K. (2013 The Marriage of Convenience: The U.S. Christian Right, African Christianity, and Postcolonial Politics of Sexual Identity. In Weiss, M., Bosia, M. (Eds.), *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression*. ISBN 13: 978025203772.

Kaoma, K. (2014). The paradox and tension of moral claims: Evangelical Christianity, the politicization and globalization of sexual politics in sub-Saharan Africa. *Critical Research on Religion*, 2(3), 227–245.

Kuran, C. H. A., Morsut, C., Kruke, B. I., Krüger, M., Segnestam, L., Orru, K., . . . Torpan, S. (2020). Vulnerability and vulnerable groups from an intersectionality perspective. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 50, 101826. doi:10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101826

Moreau, J., & Currier, A. (2018). Queer dilemmas: LGBT activism and international funding. In Mason, C. L (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of queer development studies* (pp. 223–238). New York: Routledge.

Namusoga, S. (2017). *The framing of homosexuality by two Ugandan newspapers: An analysis of new vision and daily monitor* (Doctoral dissertation, Centre for Communication, Media and Society University of KwaZulu-Natal).

Neiman, S. (2019, November 21). Uganda's escalating LGBT crackdown feels eerily familiar. *World Politics Review*. Retrieved from https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28364/uganda-s-escalating-lgbt-crackdown-feels-eerily-familiar

Nyanzi, S. (2013). Dismantling reified African culture through localised homosexualities in Uganda. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 15(8), 952–967. doi:10.1080/13691058.2013.798684

Nyanzi, S., & Karamagi, A. (2015). The social-political dynamics of the anti-homosexuality legislation in Uganda. *Agenda*, 29(1), 24–38. doi:10.1080/10130950.2015.1024917

Nyoni, Z. (2021). COVID-19 emergency powers as a weapon for targeting LGBTIQ people in Uganda? *Harvard Human Rights Journal, Online Journal*. 3 May 2021. https://harvardhrj.com/2021/05/covid-19-emergency-powers-as-a-weapon-for-targeting-lgbtiq-people-in-uganda/

Oliver, M. (2013). Transnational sex politics, conservative Christianity, and antigay activism in Uganda. *Studies in Social Justice*, 7(1), 83–105. doi:10.26522/ssj.v7i1.1056

Oluoch, A., & Tabengwa, M. (2017). *LGBT visibility: A double-edged sword*. Geneve, ILGA: State Sponsored Homophobia. https://ilga.org/downloads/2017/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2017_WEB.pdf

Pascar, L., Hartal, G., & David, Y. (2018). Queering safety? An introduction. *Borderlands*, 17(1), 1–3.

Pellot, B. (2020). *Media representation of LGBTQ people in Africa*. The Arcus Foundation. Retrieved from www.arcusfoundation.org/publications/media-representation-of-lgbtq-people-in-africa/

Peters, M. M. (2014). *Kuchus in the Balance: Queer Lives under Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill* (Doctoral dissertation), Northwestern University.

Pötzsch, H. (2019). Critical digital literacy: Technology in education beyond issues of user competence and labour-market qualifications. tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. *Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *17*(2), 221–240.

Powell, A., Scott, A. J., & Henry, N. (2020). Digital harassment and abuse: Experiences of sexuality and gender minority adults. *European Journal of Criminology*, *17*(2), 199–223. doi:10.1177/1477370818788006

Sadgrove, J., Vanderbeck, R. M., Andersson, J., Valentine, G., & Ward, K. (2012). Morality plays and money matters: Towards a situated understanding of the politics of homosexuality in Uganda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *50*(1), 103–129. doi:10.1017/S0022278X11000620

Saltnes, J. D., & Thiel, M. (2021). The politicization of LGBTI human rights norms in the EU-Uganda development partnership. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, *59*(1), 108–125.

Sexual Minority Uganda. (2016). *"And that's how I survived being killed" testimonies of human rights abuses from Uganda's sexual and gender minorities*. Kampala, Uganda: SMUG.

Ståsett, S. J. (2007). The Ethics of Vulnerability, Social Inclusion and Social Capital. *Forum for development studies*, *34*(1), 45–62. doi:10.1080/08039410.2007.9666365

Strand, C. (2011). Kill Bill! Ugandan human rights organizations' attempts to influence the media's coverage of the anti-homosexuality Bill. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *13*(8), 917–931. doi:10.1080/13691058.2011.589080

Strand, C. (2012). Homophobia as a barrier to comprehensive media coverage of the Ugandan anti-homosexual bill. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *59*(4), 564–579. doi:10.1080/00918369.2012.665679

Strand, C. (2018). Cross-media studies as a method to uncover patterns of silence and linguistic discrimination of sexual minorities in Ugandan print media. In Schröter, M & Taylor, C (Eds.), *Exploring silence and absence in discourse* (pp. 125–157). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Strand, C., & Svensson, J. (2019). "Fake news" on sexual minorities is "old news": A study of digital platforms as spaces for challenging inaccurate reporting on Ugandan sexual minorities. *African Journalism Studies*, *40*(4), 77–95. doi:10.1080/23743670.2019.1665565

Svensson, J., & Strand, C. (2018). ICTs and opportunities of empowerment in a context of state-sanctioned homophobia: The case of the LGBTQI community in Kampala. *EGOV-CeDEM-ePart 2018*, p. 229.

Tamale, S. (2009). A human rights impact assessment of the Ugandan Anti-homosexuality Bill 2009. *The Equal Rights Review*, *4*, 49–57.

Tamale, S. (2012). *The poltics of sexual diversity: An afterword in sexual diversity in Africa: Politics, theory, and citizenship*. S. N. Nyeck & M. Epprecht Eds. Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

Tamale, S. (2013). Confronting the politics of nonconforming sexualities in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *5*(6), 31–45. doi:10.1017/asr.2013.40

Thapa, S. J. (2015). *LGBT Uganda today: Continuing danger despite nullification of anti-homosexuality act*. Global Spotlight. https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Global_Spotlight_Uganda__designed_version__September_25__2015.pdfhttps://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Global_Spotlight_Uganda__designed_version__September_25__2015.pdf

Thomson Reuters Foundation. (2020, March 31). *Uganda charges 20 LGBT+ people with risking spread of coronavirus*. Retrieved from https://news.trust.org/item/20200331154246-ffh8z/

Treem, J. W., & Leonardi, P. M. (2013). Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *36*(1), 143–189. doi:10.1080/23808985.2013.11679130

Treré, E., & Mattoni, A. (2016). Media ecologies and protest movements: Main perspectives and key lessons. *Information, Communication & Society*, *19*(3), 290–306.

Valois, C. (2015). Virtual access: The Ugandan 'anti-gay'movement, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender blogging and the public sphere. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *9*(1), 145–162.

von Benzon, N., & van Blerk, L. (2017). Research relationships and responsibilities:'Doing'research with 'vulnerable'participants: Introduction to the special edition. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *18*(7), 895–905. doi:10.1080/14649365.2017.1346199

Vuorikari, R., Punie, Y., Carretero Gomez, S., & Van den Brande, G (2016). DigComp 2.0: The digital competence framework for citizens. *Update phase 1: The conceptual reference model*. Luxembourg Publication Office of the European Union. EUR 27948 EN. doi:10.2791/11517

Wadsworth, Y. (1998). What is participatory action research? Action research international (Paper 2). Retrieved May 1 2022. https://www.montana.edu/cpa/news/images/articles/hires/img200603291143660763-1.pdf

Wahab, A. (2016). "Homosexuality/homophobia is Un-African"?: Un-mapping transnational discourses in the context of Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill/act. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *63*(5), 685–718. doi:10.1080/00918369.2015.1111105

Ward, K. (2015). The role of the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Uganda in public discourse on homosexuality and ethics. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *9*(1), 127–144.

Wilkinson, C. (2017). 'You're too much!': Experiencing the straightness of security. *Critical Studies on Security*, *5*(1), 113–116. doi:10.1080/21624887.2017.1294832

Zomorodi, G. (2015). *SOGI-related forced migration in East Africa: Fleeing Uganda after the passage of the anti-homosexuality act*. The Global Philanthropy Project. Retrieved from https://www.issuelab.org/resources/24089/24089.pdf