



Incorporating Homosexual Orientation and Identity
within an existing Religious Identity:
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Research addressing homosexuals in South Africa has markedly increased since democracy. Yet there is a dearth of research on the lived experiences of homosexuals who were or are Christian and how these individuals negotiate the two identities. Most commonly the research that does exist focuses on theological or social aspects. The primary objective of this research was to gain an understanding of psychological aspects of Eastern Cape gay men and lesbian women who were raised in Christian families and who later developed homosexual identities. This was done to examine how these participants managed to integrate the two identities. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen people all over the age of 21 years, who had been Christian at some stage of their lives and who self-identified as homosexual. Results were analysed and discussed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

Some of the younger participants had not worked through all of the issues involved in being both Christian and homosexual. Their sexual orientation had been accepted but confusion as to their place within the Church remained, whereas older participants were found to have resolved their identity issues with respect to their homosexuality and Christianity.

None of the participants chose celibacy as a viable option. Only two rejected Christianity entirely in favour of living out a homosexual lifestyle. These two participants did not commit to any particular belief system following their rejection of Christianity. One participant remains ambivalent about being homosexual and Christian. Importantly the remaining ten participants integrated the two identities by re-negotiating their Christian belief rather than their sexuality. Most of these Christian homosexuals have maintained an active participation in the Church and assert that their relationship with God is intact. However participants claim that the role of Church authority in their lives has been significantly diminished and that essentialist Christian churches are avoided. These shifts are ascribed to the pervasive homophobia experienced by participants within those environments.

Keywords: Christianity; sexuality; homosexuality; relationships; identity; interpretative phenomenological analysis; Eastern Cape; South Africa

DECLARATION

I am the sole author of this thesis.

No part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

To the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights. Any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people that have been included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines.

This is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my supervisor.

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Verity Anne Nicholas

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

ANC	African National Congress
APA	American Psychological Association
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
DEWCOM	Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Committee of the MCSA
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church (or, in Afrikaans, Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk)
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
MCSA	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
NP	Nationalist Party

The term 'gay' is used exclusively for homosexual men; the term 'lesbian' refers to homosexual women; the term 'homosexual' refers to either lesbians or gays unless the term 'homosexual men' is used.

The official race classification in South Africa during apartheid continues to be used in contemporary South Africa. White refers to people of European origin; Black refers to dark-skinned peoples indigenous to Africa; Indian refers to descendents of the original Indian immigrants to South Africa; Coloured is applied to people of 'mixed' race heritage.

In this research 'Church' (capitalised) refers to the universal Church of believers or the South African Church of believers. 'church' (with lower-case 'c') is applied to local community churches.

A Model-C School is applied to a school system in which the school is partially supported by Government funding and partially by school fees paid by parents. The Model C schools were formerly limited to White children under apartheid. Now de-segregated and partially managed by school governance bodies, they still typically have better educational opportunities for children.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The following is an excerpt from Nelson Mandela's inaugural address in May 1994:

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world (Mandela, 1994).

Twenty years later it is good to reflect on our journey as South Africans. Mostly, when we read the profound words of Nelson Mandela, we think in terms of the racial inequalities that existed for too many years before our first democratic elections in 1994, forgetting that others also experienced significant discrimination. The subject of this study is to reflect on the freedom of homosexuals in our country: freedom before the law, freedom before the Church and God, and freedom within the context of the South African society at large. Specifically the study seeks to examine how homosexuals who are raised in Christian families, manage to incorporate their sexual identities with existing Christian identities in contemporary South Africa.

Published literature shows that the most dominant issues for homosexuals revolve around homophobia and unfair discrimination. There has been some published material over the last several years around the attitudes of South African society towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals. However considerably fewer articles have been published on the effects of social and religious forces that significantly impact their lives. In the South African context, in which Christianity is sometimes seen as promoting homophobia, this has the potential to make incorporating a homosexual identity into an existing Christian identity particularly difficult. Therefore the aim of this study is to investigate the implications for individuals who seek to incorporate their homosexual orientation and identity within an existing religious identity. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is used as the theoretical basis for the study. The individual lived experiences of the participants (13 in all), as related during semi-structured interviews, are the focus of this research. These marginalised voices are analysed using IPA to foreground their struggles in the face of ongoing homophobia and discrimination in South African.

During the apartheid era, the South African government not only entrenched racial segregation, but also actively marginalised and discriminated against homosexuals. In Chapter 2 (Literature Review) I

examine published literature on how Christian faith, Church policy and State law have historically colluded to police and prohibit homosexuality in South Africa. In 1994 the first democratic elections marked a significant change in the position of the State with respect to the treatment of all people in South Africa. Our new constitution was negotiated on a platform of equality before the law and incorporated a clause that specifically prohibited discrimination against homosexuals. I then examine the negotiation of homosexual rights through the process of transformation and explore the ability of South African society as a whole to adapt to the new inclusive position since it is important to trace whether homosexuals have continued to experience homophobia in the new dispensation.

I also outline international developments in psychiatry and psychology. I compare this view to that held by the South African Church and State positions during apartheid. Published literature is reviewed on the way in which people experience their sexualities and how they come to understand themselves in relation to their Christian belief system, the laws of the country and their sexualities.

In Chapter 3 (Methodology) I describe the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and why this particular approach is most suitable to this research. I discuss some of the theoretical foundations of IPA and how this can be used to focus on the meaning participants assign to their experiences and what the implications are that these events have on their thinking about the Church and their own sexuality. This is followed by a description of the sampling strategy used. I give details of the participants themselves in respect of age, race, whether they were raised in rural or urban settings, to which Christian denomination they affiliate and other demographic details. The form of in-depth semi-structured interviews is given and IPA data collection is discussed. Transcription methods and the use of computer software to assist in textual analysis of the data are elucidated. Issues of confidentiality and other ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 4 (Analysis and Discussion) traces the experiences of participants from early childhood both with respect to their lived experiences of being raised in Christian families and the perceptions of when and how their homosexuality was internally recognised. The disclosure processes of the participants, from the point of self-disclosure (or recognition and acknowledgement within themselves that they have homosexual desire) through to disclosure to friends and family and, in some cases, to disclosure to Christian communities are explored. Differences and similarities between participant experiences in seeking to deny or disown homosexual desire are illustrated. I continue with an analysis of the responses of Christians to disclosure once some of the participants

moved out of the closet as well as their strategies of resistance to Church authority. This includes the perception of the Church being hypocritical, disrespectful and judgmental. The Analysis and Discussion chapter closes with a discussion on the ability of participants to discuss their Christian faith with homosexual friends and, equally, the ability of Christians to discuss homosexuality with participants who self-identify as homosexual Christians.

Benefits to undertaking this study are three-fold. Firstly, it is hoped that participants themselves might benefit from the interviews. They would have an opportunity to openly discuss experiences that they may not have had the occasion to talk about previously. Secondly, the research will fill a gap in the literature and open up further understanding of homosexuality in South Africa. Thirdly, the research is designed to show the complexities involved in identity integration for homosexuals who were or are Christians rather than seeking right-wrong dichotomies that are prevalent in the homosexuality debate in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The central theme of this chapter involves a review of how Christian faith, Church policy and State law have historically colluded in their attempts to police and prohibit homosexuality and to review the implications of this for negotiating homosexual identity in contemporary South Africa. The influence of Church, State and culture is still remarkably strong, even in the face of the new Constitution and changes in the law. The historical religious and State prohibitions are significant because they are still important today (Punt, 2006b), particularly in how people experience their sexualities and how they come to understand themselves in relation to their Christian belief system, the laws of the country and their sexualities.

I begin with a literature review about the history of South Africa specifically as it pertains to the treatment of homosexuality and homosexuals during and after apartheid. As noted, this is still relevant for contemporary homosexuals living in South Africa. Although it is acknowledged that the line of argument used here is not the only, nor indeed a dominant thread regarding South African history, it is the thread that is pertinent to this research and to the lived experiences of the participants who contributed to this research. The thread is supported by the literature quoted in these sections.

2.2 Policing Race and Sexuality during Apartheid

During the 1930s and 40s, the Nationalist Party (NP) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) forged a close relationship (Leonard, 2012). In 1948 the NP was voted into power (by a White minority) on the platform of complete separation of Black and White South Africans in all aspects of life (Gerber, 2000). Christian nationalist politics of the time supported heterosexuality, patriarchy, and White middle-class male power structures (Jones, 2008; Retief, 1994). The DRC was perceived not only to provide theological legitimation for apartheid policies, but also to actively conspire with the government in their implementation (Leonard, 2012; Punt, 2006b; Swanepoel, 1997). The ruling NP did not pretend to separate their politics from their religious beliefs (van der Vyver, 2000).

During the apartheid era the State became preoccupied with promoting and maintaining the moral, mental and religious purity of its White male constituents (Craven, 2011; Jones, 2008). Although the NP eventually became notorious for the extremities of its policies around the policing of race, notably miscegenation, it should be understood that there existed a mutual policing of sexuality and race. Efforts to control and regulate the sexual practices of South Africans were part of the ideology of purity and separation of the White race and were policed simultaneously.

The policing of White male homosexuality does not suggest that the apartheid government was unaware that non-White male homosexuality existed (Craven, 2011) nor were they were ignorant of lesbianism. The absence of legislation against non-White homosexuality most likely resulted from a belief that, if they could keep Black and White separate, then Black homosexuality did not need to be contained because it could not contaminate the purity of the White Afrikaner race (Elder in Marx, 2011). In essence, the State was not concerned about the corruption of Black people. Furthermore sex between women was not mentioned in the Immorality Act. Homosexuality thus traditionally became a deviant male act (Mongie, 2013; van Zyl, de Gruchy, Lapinsky, Lewin, & Reid, 1999), and, at that time, a deviant White male act. This approach was supported by the beliefs held by the DRC.

2.2.1 Selective Science

Since the early 1950s, when the NP was developing the apartheid laws, a growing consensus emerged in international medical and psychological discourses that there was no scientific evidence to support the view that homosexuality was pathological. Public debate started with the work of Alfred Kinsey, a zoologist at Indiana University, who published two major works on sexuality (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). Criticisms of his methodology notwithstanding, Kinsey's reports were singularly successful in the shaping of attitudes towards sexual practices at the time. He stated clearly that a homosexual-heterosexual binary categorisation did not exist. He also maintained that sexuality is fluid over time and claimed that homosexuality is a natural variant of human sexuality (Kinsey et al., 1948).

By 1973 the American Psychological Association (APA) had rejected homosexuality as pathological and by 1987 when the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (DSM-III-R) was published, homosexuality had been erased as a psychological disorder. Despite the international

trend amongst psychiatrists and psychologists to define homosexuality as a natural variant of human sexuality, the South African State continued its policy of discrimination against homosexuals (Cameron, 1993, 1994). Notably, they claimed that homosexuals could be converted to heterosexuality and used a variety of conversion (or reparation) therapies in attempts to cure White gay soldiers (Jones, 2008; Schaap, 2011; van Zyl et al., 1999). These human rights abuses have never been brought to account (Kaplan, 2004; Simo, 2000)..

2.2.2 Instability and Protest

The power held by the apartheid regime reached its zenith in the 1980s when the militancy of the (banned) African National Congress (ANC), and international pressure forced the NP to reconsider its racial policies. President FW de Klerk, the seventh and last NP president, realised, along with key leaders of his government, that the policies of apartheid were no longer tenable. De Klerk took office in 1989 and unbanned the ANC in 1990. In February 1990 he released Nelson Mandela from 27 years of imprisonment and much of the ANC leadership returned from exile. The stage was set for political and social transformation (Cameron, 1993; Gerber, 2000; Stychin, 1996).

The importance of these political and social events and the changes that resulted had a significant effect on homosexuals who had lived with harsh discrimination during apartheid. Because the State finally turned away from its apartheid principles, the Church too was obliged to reconsider its position on its own racial policies and also debated its policies regarding sexuality.

2.3 Democratic Change and Constitutional Protection

During the transitional period between the end of apartheid and the beginning of democracy a multi-party multi-racial negotiation process occurred. The negotiations were followed by the first multi-racial elections in 1994, the enactment of an Interim Constitution (Maier, 1993) and the resolve to draft an inclusive permanent Constitution by 1996 that was based on the secular principle of equality before the law (van der Vyver, 2000). The historical and legal events discussed in this chapter are summarised in Appendix A.

2.3.2 Negotiating Homosexual Rights

Negotiation towards a new Constitution emanated as a reaction to apartheid discrimination and was sanctioned as a “never again” dispensation (van der Vyver, 2000). The new Constitution was based on human rights concerns and, since the ANC could not be seen to be inconsistent, the human rights had to be granted specifically to all who had previously experienced discrimination. During the negotiation process it became clear to gay and lesbian activists that there had opened a space for them to enter the dialogue and use the language of rights to gain constitutional rights.

Gay and lesbian activists formed the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (commonly called “the Coalition”) to carefully orchestrate a strategy to have homosexuality specifically protected. The story of how this was done makes for interesting reading (Cameron, 1993, 1994; Massoud, 2003; Stychin, 1996), the main theme of which was the lobbying for equal protection before the law for gay and lesbian South Africans, something that had not been extended to them under apartheid. The final Constitution was passed by parliament early in 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) and included a Bill of Rights (section 9) that entrenched the right to equality before the law and freedom from discrimination inter alia on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The new Constitution created the foundation that allowed old laws to be challenged in the light of the new protection of rights. Since the promulgation of the new Constitution the courts have worked hard at changing the old discriminatory laws to promote the establishment of a South African society based on equal rights (Gerber, 2000). South Africa was seen as having an opportunity to ‘reinvent itself’ and introduced sweeping measures that decriminalised homosexual acts, ended discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and introduced pro-gay legislation (see Appendix A). The process occurred with relative ease until the marriage laws were challenged. Suddenly religious institutions (including but not confined to Christian Churches) opposed the infringement on their doctrine.

The controversy of homosexual marriage marked a shift from the right to be able to choose one’s sexual partner to a call for society to openly acknowledge homosexual partnerships. The stage had moved from a private right to the claiming of a social right equivalent to that enjoyed by heterosexuals. Throughout the debate supporters of same-sex marriage simply held to the ideal of equal rights, that the legal prohibition of homosexual marriage was unconstitutional. Ultimately the Church forced its definition of marriage as being heterosexual on the State. The adoption of the Civil

Union Act in November 2006, which allowed for a non-religious marriage of either heterosexual or homosexual partners, was a clear compromise to the stormy debate (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

Although Church and State had worked in tandem during apartheid they experienced a definite relational shift when the marriage act was challenged. On a platform of equality the State could no longer favour the Church (Cilliers & Nell, 2011). Churches have responded differently to the separation of Church and State. Some have shifted their own positions whereas others have opposed the changes or asked for a reversal of laws to shift the State back to a pre-democracy dispensation (see Appendix A).

2.3.2 Implications of legal transformation for Church authority concerning gay and lesbian rights in South Africa

The post-democracy secularisation of the State has had far-reaching repercussions. From the late 1980s the pressure on the State to change its racial policies began to see results, and, in tandem with the State, different church denominations began critically review their policies on racial segregation within their own congregations. Soon after this the Church began to debate and discuss homosexuality the implications of the rights-based new Constitution amongst their own congregants and ministers. Although the information regarding the positions of the denominations covered in this literature review are neither complete, nor do they do justice to the nuances, debates and discussion within the various church bodies, I have briefly present only those themes that are pertinent to the participants in this study.

The DRC published its position on homosexuality as early as 1986 (Swanepoel, 1997; Vorster, 2008). Within the Presbyterian structure of the DRC much debate and discussion occurs within the entire church polity before being formalised by the General Synod. The majority decision of the General Synod in 1986 held amongst others that homosexuality is a deviant form of sexuality as revealed in scripture (Vorster, 2008). This decision was taken into reconsideration in following meetings, but no major shifts in position were recorded until 2002 when the Synod commissioned further research to be done on homosexuality over the next several years (Anonymous, n.d.; Punt, 2006b; van Loggerenberg, 2008; Vorster, 2008). By 2007, after exhaustive research and much debate, the Synod's final policy statement was more exclusive of professing homosexuals than inclusive.

However the final clause in their position statement they allowed a degree of independence for local congregations to decide how homosexuals could be accommodated at local congregational level (Anonymous, 2007).

The Anglican Church in South Africa opposed the apartheid government. Unlike the DRC in which decisions regarding policy are made within South Africa, the Anglican Church in South Africa is governed by decisions made every decade at the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in Canterbury, England (Morgan, Nowell, & Virtue, 1998). Although South African Anglicans are obliged to uphold Lambeth decisions and are not allowed to bless same-sex unions, retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been an outspoken supporter of homosexual rights within the Church for decades (Davis, 2013; Gerber, 2000; Kane, 2007; Malcolm, 1996; Vanderbeck, Andersson, Valentine, Sadgrove, & Ward, 2011). Tutu likens the discrimination against homosexuals in contemporary South Africa to that of racial discrimination during apartheid (Davis, 2013; Malcolm, 1996). Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, who followed Desmond Tutu as Archbishop in South Africa, has also been a strong supporter of homosexual rights. He is quoted as saying that the damage done by apartheid should have taught Africans to treat others with more respect (Kane, 2007).

The Roman Catholic Church, comprising about 7.1% of the South African population ("South African demographics profile 2014," 2014), is headed (in South Africa) by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. This body also opposed state policies during the apartheid era (van der Vyver, 2000). However Pope Francis, elected in 2013, has reiterated the view that the Catholic Church considers homosexuality as "objectively disordered" and that he considers same-sex marriage to be an "anthropological regression" (Otto, 2003; Pentin, 2014; Yip, 1999). The official position is that, while homosexual orientation is not considered sinful, sexual activity arising from it is (Corbett, 1997). Worldwide the Catholic Church still requires celibacy from all priests. Not all in the global Catholic clergy agree with this position. One study, conducted amongst ordinary Catholics in Britain, has shown that their attitudes diverge significantly from the official church position (Clements, 2014). Homosexuals themselves view the Catholic Church as adopting a negative stance towards them and claim that Vatican statements are contradictory to what they believe about homosexuality (O'Brien, 1991). Recently there are some signs that a softening of institutional attitude is being debated (Willey, 2014).

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) has the largest African following (12%) of the mainline churches in South Africa (van der Vyver, 2000) and comprises about 6.8% of the total

population ("South African demographics profile 2014," 2014). The MCSA rejected apartheid from 1948 to 1994 claiming that State policies could not be justified on biblical or theological grounds (van der Vyver, 2000). Homosexuality and church policy regarding the treatment of homosexuals has been debated and discussed over many years (Bentley, 2012; Mtshiselwa, 2010), although a position statement has not been formalised because of the diversity of opinion amongst the clergy. For this reason there has been a degree of public confusion as to the position of the Methodist Church and the attitude towards ministers who are gay men or lesbian women. It was only in 2014 at the MCSA Conference that a position paper regarding homosexuality was finally adopted. The adopted proposal was submitted by DEWCOM (Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Committee). It simply acknowledges that there are differing voices within the clergy, some inclusive and some exclusive of homosexuals and same-sex marriage (Alistoun, 2014; Samodien, 2007). The position paper states that the MCSA accepts that consensus has not been reached and allows for this diversity of opinion (Alistoun, 2014). This decision was made in the interest of unity and presumably allows each congregation to make their own decisions as to how they treat homosexual congregants. The issue of allowing Methodist ministers to perform same-sex marriages has yet to be resolved.

The co-called Pentecostal or Charismatic movement began in South Africa in the early 1900s as an import from North America but quickly became the most strongly indigenous African form of Christianity in South Africa (Anderson, 2000). Up to the late 1980s both Black and White Pentecostals in formal denominations avoided confronting the racial divides and political structures of oppression. Post democracy racial attitudes between Black and White Pentecostal/Charismatic movements have softened but Pentecostal/Charismatic groupings have remained deeply opposed to homosexual lifestyles (Anderson, 2000). The relevance of their fundamentalist approach is significant for negotiating homosexual identity today as much as it has been in the past.

Much of the debate between homosexuals and fundamentalist (or at least conservative) Christianity centres on the origins or causes of homosexuality. The debate involves a 'nature' versus 'nurture' discourse (Punt, 2006b; Silverstein, 2003; Wood, 2000). Published research demonstrates that homosexuals often argue that their sexuality is immutable and that no choice is involved (Locke, 2005; Robinson, 2012; Stychin, 1996; White, 1995). Christians who support essentialist beliefs claim that homosexuality is a choice and that homosexuals can undergo successful conversion (or reparation) therapy to convert to heterosexuality (Stychin, 1996). The nature vs. nurture debate about homosexuality implies the adoption of a binary sexuality system (Chavez, 2004; de Gruchy, 1997; Sullivan-Blum, 2004; Wood, 2000), an either-or system in which no homosexuality-

heterosexuality continuum can exist. Using this strategy conservative Christian groups define homosexuals as an out-group (that are not acceptable) and heterosexuals as a separate in-group (who are). Heterosexuality becomes compulsory in this context making the binary concept merely divisive and exclusionary (Wood, 2000). In promoting conversion therapies the Church (and previously the State) adopts the position of helping homosexuals choose their sexuality correctly.

2.3.3 The Christian treatment of homosexuality

As mentioned previously, the American DSM declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973. One of the men who was strongly instrumental in this process was Robert Spitzer (Silverstein, 2003). Some years after the DSM declassification Spitzer published a paper (Spitzer, 2003) that claimed that homosexuals could change their sexual orientation if they were strongly motivated to do so. A review of the Spitzer's study found it to be flawed and unethical (Drescher, 2008; Malony, 2001; Silverstein, 2003) and the APA distanced itself from it claiming that the treatment of homosexuality by conversion/reparation therapy was ineffective and harmful to patients (Carey, 2012; Silverstein, 2003; van Zyl et al., 1999).

Nevertheless Christian-based conversion therapy proponents (Johnston & Jenkins, 2006; Silverstein, 2003), including South African organisations (Anonymous, 2015; Bekker, 2013), used and continue to use the Spitzer study to support their approach, even though Spitzer has formally and publically retracted his assertions (Carey, 2012; Davis, 2012). Recently there has been a definite international shift away from Christian conversion therapies. The shift resulted in Exodus International, a Christian organisation that routinely used reparative therapies, closing its doors in 2013 (Tenety, 2013). Californian laws have also been promulgated banning conversion therapies for gay youth, effective 1 January 2014 (Davis, 2012).

Recently a change appears to have occurred in the approach of some Christian denominations who, instead of using a binary homosexual-heterosexual categorisation, have adopted a continuum concept of sexuality (Germond, 1997; van Loggerenberg, 2008). The continuum concept implies that people exist somewhere on a continuum between heterosexual and homosexual, and while many people inhabit the extremes at either end of the continuum, many also exist somewhere between the two. The implication of this way of thinking is that it makes it difficult to determine where to draw the line that determines where heterosexuality and homosexuality begin and end and,

consequently, who should and should not be discriminated against. One example of the adoption of the continuum concept by a Christian denomination is reported by van Loggerenberg (2008) in which she facilitated a shift in entrenched homophobia within a portion of the DRC. However, van Loggerenberg's success notwithstanding, the continuum concept is not widely held. It is further acknowledged that many, often silent, Christians have no objection to accepting homosexuals as family, friends, colleagues and fellow worshipers (Oosthuizen, 2013; van Loggerenberg, 2008). This occurs regardless of the policy a particular denomination holds. If the argument stands that there exists a continuum of sexuality, then we also need to accept that there is a continuum of belief about the place of homosexuals within the Christian community (Yip, 2002). The State, in developing our new Constitution has withdrawn from the religious or social debate about whether homosexuality is acceptable or not. In essence the State does not care to look at that aspect; it simply maintains that everyone will be equal before the law. The Church has taken up the debate since democracy and institutionally is largely opposed to it. A continuum concept may therefore be useful in the context of the debate in that it allows for a softening of attitude from both sides.

Although our laws have changed, and there has been some shift in a few of the Christian denominations in South Africa, social attitudes amongst the general population have not shifted significantly (Massoud, 2003; Nel & Judge, 2008; Roberts & Reddy, 2008). This has significant implications for gay men and lesbian women. A post-apartheid South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) (Roberts & Reddy, 2008) study showed that over 80% of the South African population have negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Importantly, it also indicates that most homosexuals have continued to experience homophobia in the new South Africa. The findings are consistent with other demographic studies (Sandfort, 2000) that show that less favourable attitudes are more prevalent among men than women, older than younger people, among less educated and religious people, and people who live in rural rather than urban areas.

In contemporary Africa some political and traditional leaders assert that homosexuality is a Western import, brought about via colonial legislation and Christian marriage, and that it is essentially unAfrican (Corbett, 1997; Epprecht, 2013; Gibson, 2010; Reddy, 2002; van Zyl, 2011; Ward, 2013). One consequence of these discourses is that Black homosexuality is de-legitimated and Black homosexuals in South Africa have become vulnerable to homophobia. In particular they have to negotiate their identities in the face of a cultural and social demand to conform, predominantly in areas in which African traditional religion dominates.

2.4 Negotiating Christian and Homosexual Identities

In this section I consider the implications for individual homosexual Christians in negotiating their homosexuality and faith in contemporary South Africa. The end of apartheid ended the collusion between the Church and State. In response various South African denominations have shifted to using social and cultural prohibitions rather than a reliance on the State to support their homophobic positions.

Contemporary homosexuals are often referred to specific texts in the Bible that ostensibly condemn homosexual acts. There are usually six texts that are quoted and these texts are used to problematise their sexual identities. In recent academic literature these texts have become quite hotly debated, both amongst people who condemn homosexuality and those who struggle against that condemnation. It is therefore considered important to contextualise these verses and the debate surrounding their interpretation.

2.4.1 Interpreting Texts

In this section I mention specific biblical texts that are most often used to condemn or to persuade homosexuals to attempt to change their sexuality. Whilst it is not my intention to venture into a theological treatise it is important to understand some of the debate around Biblical discourses and homosexuality, mostly because homosexuals themselves see the Bible as exclusive of them. These are the texts reported in the literature that have bearing on the individual participants in this research and are given in full in Appendix B.

The biblical texts claimed to refer specifically to homosexuality or sodomy number only six in all and form the basis of the Church's argument against homosexuality. They are Genesis 19:1-29, Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 from the Old Testament, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Timothy 1:9-10, Romans 1:18-32 from the New Testament. Six short passages written by several authors over 1600 years imply that the Bible is largely silent on the subject. Notably, homosexuality does not form the focus of any of the texts (Punt, 2006a).

The Bible itself is a deeply contested document. It is in its translation and interpretation that so many differing opinions and beliefs are held. One of the reasons for this is that the Bible has been

translated from its original texts, Hebrew and Greek, into modern language and, on occasion, a “best guess” has had to be used for words that have disappeared into obscurity (Germond, 1997; Locke, 2005; Mader, 1993). In addition Jesus Himself spoke Aramaic and the New Testament was written (in Greek) many years after His death. The original languages of the Bible (Hebrew or Greek) have been extensively studied. The authors of the books, when they were written and the story-line within the chapter or book have been evaluated. In addition the geographical, cultural, historical and political contexts have been studied. Attempts have been made to discover for whom the books/verses were written, the purpose of the writing, the choice of words and whether these words are translatable (Germond, 1997; Muller, 1997). Hence there are multiple factors that may give clarity or make the understanding of biblical texts problematic. How these specific texts are understood concerns whether contemporary readers are able to put aside their modern constructs and read the Bible in an unbiased or neutral manner (Germond, 1997; Locke, 2005; Punt, 2006a). The lens through which we read texts significantly affects how we understand them (Germond, 1997; Locke, 2005).

To complicate matters further, there are several examples that show that the Bible itself is internally contested (Germond, 1997). Contextually accepted practices at the time of the writing of the Bible have fallen away in our contemporary context. Slavery for example was an accepted institution during Roman times and is not specifically challenged in the Bible itself. But, based on some of the central tenets of Christianity, slavery was eventually abolished (Otto, 2003). Likewise, there are ethical conundrums that exist in contemporary society that were not part of society at any time during which the Bible was written. This could include issues like genetic engineering, global warming, affirmative action and surrogate motherhood (Matthews, 2008). The fact is that sometimes Scripture alone is unable to give definitive answers. Homosexuality as a sexual orientation and identity is a relatively recent construct (Robinson, 2012; Schuyf, 2000). The word ‘homosexuality’ was first used only in 1869 (Schuyf, 2000) and is largely associated with the history of Western homosexuality. Therefore the concept of homosexuality as we construct it today did not exist in Biblical society (Muller, 1997; Sedgwick, 1990).

The ways in which the six Biblical texts may be interpreted have been extensively reported and a variety of approaches have been explicated to this complex subject (Germond, 1997; Le Roux, 2006; Locke, 2005; Matthews, 2008; Muller, 1997; Nortje-Meyer, 2005; Otto, 2003; Punt, 2007, 2014; Robinson, 2012). There appears to be significant debate as to the meaning, context and interpretation of the disputed texts in the literature. The debate about these six texts in the

contemporary Church occurs between traditional theology and liberal theology, between the essentialists and constructionists, between the literalists and progressives, between those who seek to exclude homosexuals from the Church and those who would include them.

Jeremy Punt uses Schüssler Fiorenza's framework for discussion of the different approaches involved (Punt, 2006b). On one hand a Doctrinal-Fundamentalist approach is defined as a conservative and literalist interpretation that incorporates naive essentialism (Szesnat, 1997). Scripture is interpreted as divinely revealed and claims that context is not a significant parameter to interpretation (Szesnat, 1997). It has clear boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Religious security results if one stays within the boundaries. A possible limitation is that the fundamentalist approach does not allow for religious tolerance. On the other hand the Scientific-Positivist approach accepts that contextual differences between the past and the present do exist. It takes a value-free, disinterested, objective position and does not accept any socio-political or theological engagement since this is seen to be unscientific (Punt, 2006b).

Punt (2006) suggests that South African society has remained largely confined to the doctrinal-fundamentalist paradigm, with some movement into the scientific-positivist paradigm. Equally, South Africa is a society that is characterised by a history of essentialist rhetoric that is often uncritically accepted, regardless of the progressive Constitution that protects the rights of homosexuals (Punt, 2006b; Stychin, 1996). However it is acknowledged though that all variations of belief do exist within Christian denominations in South Africa (Yip, 2002).

The Christian rejection of homosexuality is based on a number of premises (de Gruchy, 1997; Otto, 2003; Wood, 2000). Essentialists claim that God's good creation was heterosexuality. Thus homosexuality is defined as a sin, perverse, abnormal. They also believe that procreation is the only legitimate goal of sexuality (Cameron, 1993; Germond, 1997). Since homosexuality cannot lead to procreation it is considered to be a radical deviance from the order of life. Homosexuality is also often conflated with paedophilia and is considered to be contagious and therefore a threat to society (de Waal, 1994; Gibson, 2010).

The fundamentalist approach to homosexuals is the oft-quoted "love the sinner and hate the sin" (Coetzer-Liversage, 2012; de Gruchy, 1997). In reality this means that gay Christians are loved by God, but that they should stop being homosexual to be accepted by Christians. Ideally, according to

them, homosexuals should become heterosexual, but, in the absence of this, they should be celibate. It is a convoluted logic that defies understanding (de Gruchy, 1997).

Fundamental or literalist biblical interpretations have come under increasing attack in recent times (Germond, 1997; Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007; Tatchell, 2000; Ward, 2004; White, 1995). These authors claim that fundamentalists are not correct in their literal interpretation of the Bible; nor are theirs the true interpretation. Further, Ward (2004) and Locke (2005) claim that fundamentalists are in a minority in the Christian world and that they are remarkably selective and biased. For example, there appears to be no difficulty in relegating to the past such practices as stoning to death and the possession of concubines (Ward, 2004). This means that both the fundamentalist approach and the more liberal interpretations regarding homoeroticism could be correct, but much would depend on a differential in affording authority to one particular passage over another (Locke, 2005).

In South Africa Christianity may no longer be the state religion but it still wields enormous influence over the minds of people (Germond, 2001; Punt, 2006b). Uncritical acceptance of the selective interpretation of fundamentalist teaching spreads homophobia. Domination politics constructs homosexuals as inferior and renders violence done to them as invisible or deserved (Barton, 2010).

John Stott, a renowned biblical scholar, has the view that homosexuality is contrary to Biblical teaching (Stott, 1985). In his reading of Genesis, Stott is clear that the divinely constructed union of a man and a woman excludes the possibility of homosexuality being compatible with biblical teaching. And yet Stott (2007) also says the following:

(Jesus) despised nobody and disowned nobody. On the contrary, he went out of his way to honour those whom the world dishonoured, and to accept those whom the world rejected. He spoke courteously to women in public. He invited little children to come to him. He spoke words of hope to Samaritans and Gentiles. He allowed leprosy sufferers to approach him, and a prostitute to anoint and kiss his feet. He made friends with the outcasts of society and ministered to the poor and hungry (p. 325-6).

The point is that the outcasts of society were extraordinarily drawn to Jesus. The outcasts loved him and enjoyed being with him. And He loved them. In the time of Jesus, these outcasts were not accepted by the fundamentalist religious leaders, the Pharisees. Jesus argued with the Pharisees of

His time, inter alia because of their exclusionary practices, calling them hypocrites and blind fools. It is possible that homosexuals today feel rejected by our modern-day Pharisees, the legalist Church. Paul is very clear about divine grace – it is extended to the same people for whom death is the wage of sin, that is, to all humanity (Ward, 2004).

2.4.2 Implications for Homosexual Identity

The political and religious histories of homophobia in South Africa still influence the negotiation of Christian homosexual identity. Church collusion with the State, although no longer formalised, still occurs, albeit in a less direct manner. For example, the link between high-ranking government officials and the Rhema Church (Oosthuizen, 2013; Rossouw, 2009) is not as direct as the clear collusion that occurred between the Church and State during apartheid rule. In addition, although democracy has been established and legislative change has occurred, most South Africans continue to hold homophobic attitudes (Roberts & Reddy, 2008). I turn now to review the documented ways in which Christian homosexuals negotiate identity formation in contemporary South Africa.

Historically identity formation is viewed as an individuation process in which the core self could be realised. This core self is often viewed as fixed and stable over time (Levy & Reeves, 2011). In contrast this research uses a concept of identity that is viewed as fluid, complex and a construct that varies over time (Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris, & Hecker, 2001; Levy & Reeves, 2011; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001). Sexual identity is viewed as one element of identity that intersects with other elements of identity, such as gender, educational level, religiosity, class and community. The development of a homosexual identity is particularly problematic in South Africa since it runs counter to the societal heterosexual norm as well as counter to a significant portion of organised religion. “Coming out” is the process whereby homosexuals control knowledge about their status as gay men or lesbian women (Herek, 1996). It is a pivotal process for homosexuals in that it involves initial awareness and eventual acceptance of homosexual identity that has both sexual and religious significance (Levy, 2009; Sedgwick, 1990; White & White, 2004). Coming out is a significantly more problematic process for Christian homosexuals than it is for non-religious gay men and lesbian women. For Christian homosexuals an existential crisis arises when they realise they are not only social pariahs but also that, according to essentialist interpretations, their souls are cast out by God.

In the coming out process one's initial awareness is followed by acknowledgement and acceptance of one's homosexuality, and finally a decision to confide in or disclose to others. Self-disclosure and the factors that contribute to it has been extensively studied (Butler & Astbury, 2008; Herek, 1996; Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007). The process of disclosure to self and others has been shown to be a prerequisite to the development of a positive homosexual identity and psychological wellness (Nel, Rich, & Joubert, 2007). Concerns with the evaluations of others are shown to be one of the most difficult issues because it involves possible rejection and retaliation (Franke & Leary, 1991).

Both gay men and lesbian women describe similar processes to coming out and consistently report feeling different as children (Robertson, 2011). Processes of Christian identity and sexual identity are reported to be intertwined and fluid (Levy & Reeves, 2011). Levy and Reeves (2011) propose a five-stage coming out process that begins with an awareness of the existence of conflict between Christian doctrine and same-sex attraction. This is followed by a response to that awareness that causes participants to maintain a level of secrecy about their sexual desires, including possible 'compartmentalisation' (a term used when an individual separates part of his/her life or personality so that each functions separately in different contexts). Homosexuals then actively seek additional information and reflect on their dilemma. Resolution is achieved when participants embrace a more personalised faith (Levy & Reeves, 2011). White and White (2004) describe a simple three-fold coming out process: coming out to oneself, coming out to God and coming out to one's Christian community.

In an internet study Ream and Savin-Williams (2005) showed that Christian fundamentalism can be a strong challenge to identity formation for homosexuals because the sexuality of the individual does not conform to the requisite religious beliefs. The resultant psychological distress can be significant and may lead to poorer mental health outcomes like anxiety and depression. Homosexual Christians report effects such as guilt, depression, anger, fear, post-traumatic stress (Buchanan et al., 2001; Lewis, 2009; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001; Sandfort, 2000), isolation, abuse, and internalised homophobia (Barton, 2010; Levy, 2008). Other issues that arise include higher alcohol and substance abuse problems, social ostracism, homophobic victimisation, discrimination and violence, and higher rates of suicidal ideation or attempted suicide (Lewis, 2009; Sandfort, 2000).

In a meta-analysis Lewis (2009) reports on research findings that refute claims that homosexuals, because they are homosexual, lead riskier lives. He finds that there is significant evidence of contextual or social stress that give rise to the higher incidence of psychological disorder rather than

subjective stress. He claims that discrimination, alienation, marginalisation and poorer health outcomes amongst homosexuals are caused by “place-contingent minority stress” (Lewis, 2009). Meyer (2003) in his meta-analysis proposes a model of minority stress that cites a hostile and stressful social environment as evidence for the prevalence of mental disorders in homosexuals. One study found that as much as half of their participants reported enduring long-term psychological distress and fear that neither God nor society accepted them (Barton, 2010). Another showed that homosexuals who rejected Christianity did so believing that this was their only option and suffered internalised homophobia and poorer mental health as a result (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005).

Internalised homophobia refers to self-hatred and intense alienation resulting from the suppression of sexual desires (Levy, 2008; Yip, 1999). A belief that one is evil may accompany the self-doubt (Levy, 2008). For homosexuals who are Christian, Sandfort (2000) argues that internalised homophobia takes the form of significant anxiety regarding public exposure of one’s homosexual identity and the resulting possibility of stigmatisation and ostracism by the Church. Mood and anxiety disorders, particularly depression, are prevalent amongst lesbians (Sandfort, 2000), whereas anger issues are more prevalent amongst gay men, predominantly during adolescence (Robertson, 2011; Sandfort, 2000). In a study conducted in Gauteng, the effect of low self-esteem and the impact of hate speech was shown to increase gay men and lesbian women’s vulnerability to depression (Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008).

In a South African study Robertson (2011) found that the age of first disclosure of sexual orientation to other individuals occurred typically between 14 and 18 years of age. Adolescents usually disclose first to friends, followed by siblings and, when faced with the task of disclosing to parents, most appear to disclose first to their mothers. Occasionally mothers become aware and are accepting of their child’s homosexual orientation some time before the child discloses to them (Pitt, 2009). In a qualitative study conducted in the Western Cape investigating a group of 10 gay and lesbian participants, disclosure to parents was most frequently face-to-face and reactions from parents were most often negative (Robertson, 2011), particularly if the families held strong traditional and Christian values (Sandfort, 2000). Robertson (2011) reports that many parents in her study took a lengthy period of time to accept their child’s homosexuality and suggests that, on occasion, it might be better not to disclose to family members as the risk to the adolescent can be considerable.

One of the tasks in the coming out process is to rationalise the negative evaluations of society. Homosexuals struggle with this in part because they have few clear-cut models to emulate, although

the internet does provide significant help to struggling closeted homosexuals in that it provides contact with others and information regarding sexual identities (Sandfort, 2000). Social support for homosexuals is nevertheless low, leading to less stable relationships of shorter duration and also to higher levels of promiscuity (Sandfort, 2000).

Cass's model (1979) of homosexual identity formation interprets public disclosure of (homo)sexual orientation to be correlated with the level of private self-acceptance. Her ideal model is complete public openness that is closely aligned with complete private acceptance of homosexual identity (Cass, 1979). However Franke and Leary (1991) conceptualise public coming out as being primarily determined by the fear of rejection by others, without a close correlation to private acceptance. In this research I conceptualise the public disclosure process to be determined only partly by a fear of rejection, partly on the degree of private acceptance and partly on contextual factors or practical circumstances of individual gay men and lesbian women. For example, non-disclosure may be preferred to protect an aging parent who might struggle to make sense of a child's homosexual identity.

Homosexuals who initially experience same-sex desires often do so against a backdrop of Christianity. Often they have been raised in Christian homes with Christian habits that have formed part of the fabric of life, for example weekly church attendance. It is only later, from about 10 years onwards that sexual awareness develops (Coetzer-Liversage, 2012; McClintock & Herdt, 1996).

2.4.3 Homosexuals and Christian identity

In this section I consider the ways in which homosexuals negotiate the integration of their homosexual and Christian identities. Literature indicates several ways of dealing with the conflicts involved (Barton, 2010; Buchanan et al., 2001; Levy, 2008; Levy & Reeves, 2011; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001; O'Brien, 2004; Pappas, 2013; Pitt, 2009; White & White, 2004). Firstly, many homosexual Christians crumble in the face of Church homophobia and fall prey to shame and guilt. Those homosexuals who accept the Christian doctrine of homophobia may choose to attempt to change their sexual orientation. Often this results in intense alienation and a low self-esteem (Yip, 1999). Ream and Savin-Williams (2005) show that the belief that sexual orientation could be changed predicts higher internalised homophobia and a conviction that even homosexual desire is unacceptable. Homosexuals then often resort to reparation/conversion therapies or ex-gay

ministries. Reparation interventions by Christian organisations typically reinforce what is considered to be appropriate gendered behaviour rather than attempts to change sexual orientation per se (Robinson, 2012). Bem (2008) asserts that gender non-conformity and homosexuality are linked, although there is a parallel body of research that strongly refutes this (Gottschalk, 2003; Johnston & Jenkins, 2006; Liben & Bigler, 2008; Zucker, 2005). Men may appear feminine, women may appear butch, but the behaviour or appearance itself does not imply homosexuality, it just reflects behaviour preference.

There is a dearth of information regarding the form of reparation/conversion therapies available in South Africa. There is also scanty literature on the forms of reparation therapy used in South Africa, although a small number of organisations are known to exist. These include New Living Way Ministries (Bekker, 2013), Living Waters South Africa (Anonymous, 2015), and possibly some training materials and courses available from the South African branch of Focus on the Family. The techniques used by these organisations appear to be limited to prayer, discipleship and counselling (Anonymous, 2015; Bekker, 2013). In church-based interventions, demonic exorcisms amongst Christian charismatic churches in South Africa are known to be performed as part of Deliverance ministries, although no formal literature on the phenomenon could be found. According to international sources exorcism (supposedly of a homosexual demon) is commonly used to rid homosexuals of their same-sex desire (Anonymous, 2009; O'Brien, 2012; White, 1995), even though it is argued that in the Bible there exists no account of homosexuality being linked to a demon (Moyer, 2010). Conversion therapies have been shown to have little or no success (Anonymous, n.d.; Johnston & Jenkins, 2006; Jones & Yarhouse, 2011; Sandman, Fye, Hof, & Dinsmore, 2014) and are rejected by South African psychologists and psychiatrists. As discussed previously, the international trend amongst psychiatrists and psychologists is to define homosexuality as a natural variant of human sexuality. In South Africa the Psychological Society of South Africa specifically affirms sexual diversity and supports a harm-avoidance approach (Psychological Society of South Africa, 2013).

Secondly, to those homosexuals who view homosexuality as unacceptable within their Christian belief systems, an alternative is to remain celibate indefinitely (Buchanan et al., 2001; O'Brien, 2004; Pappas, 2013). This is a complex response that accepts Christian teaching that homosexuality is an affliction to be overcome and an acceptance of the shame associated with being faulted (O'Brien, 2004). Christian interpreters claim it is part of the human condition to face difficulty and, as Christians, homosexuals are taught that the struggle with their sexuality is part of the process of their sanctification (Ganzevoort, van der Laan, & Olsman, 2011). Others claim that being celibate is

an acceptable alternative in order to remain compliant with anti-homosexual Christian teaching (Pappas, 2013). Celibacy is also often a church requirement for any authority position held by a known homosexual (O'Brien, 2004).

The decision to employ conversion therapy or a celibacy strategy is frequently linked to essentialist interpretations of Old and New Testament passages. The interpretations stress obedience to God's Law, and a literal application with respect to sexual mores (Ward, 2004). The approach seeks to deny same-sex impulses and to curb or eliminate homosexual conduct. Homosexuals who seek to be obedient to interpretations of Biblical texts that problematise homosexuality have the least ability to explore alternative routes to positive Christian homosexual identities. Those homosexuals who choose celibacy or conversion therapies are often compelled to deny, downplay, repress or hide their sexuality if they choose to remain accepted within their Christian communities. Pitt (2009) reports that "without exception" his 34 participants had a time in their lives when they rejected their homosexual identities, although all of them found this to be a futile endeavour. Homosexuality is described as being a stable disposition (Sandfort, 2000).

A third strategy is to reject Christianity, or at least to distance oneself from the Church, in order to be able to affirm one's homosexual identity (Buchanan et al., 2001; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001) and maintain one's self-esteem (Pitt, 2009). For gay men and lesbian women who were raised in Christian families, renouncing Christian belief means discarding a framework of meaning in which homosexuality is often viewed as having no place (O'Brien, 2004). Ganzevoort et al. (2011) argue that many gay men and lesbian women who were raised in Christian families are likely to believe that, having acknowledged their homosexuality, it would be hypocritical of them to continue to practice their faith. The apostates, including both homosexuals and many heterosexuals, often leave the Church because of perceived intolerance towards homosexuals (O'Brien, 2004), although homosexuals who reject Christianity often claim that their relationship with the institutional church is the problem, and not their relationship with God (O'Brien, 2004).

In one study nearly half of the gay participants rejected their religion in its entirety (Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien, & Williams, 1994). Another study, done in a number of religiously conservative States in the United States known as the "Bible Belt", over half of their participants (both gay and lesbian) rejected the theological evidence for the problematising of homosexuality by Christian fundamentalists (Barton, 2010). In an internet study 25% of gay and 39% of lesbian respondents left the Church (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005). The research also showed that young

participants suffered psychological harm specifically as a result of rejecting their belief systems. Another study that used Australian national survey data showed that most of their respondents left the Church entirely (Hillier, Mitchell, & Mulcare, 2008). The studies imply that South African Christians who acknowledge same-sex attraction would seriously consider leaving Christianity completely.

Yip (1999, 2002) showed that some gay men and lesbian women who are Christian employ a form of counter-rejection of the Church and its doctrine. In using this approach the Christian church is problematised rather than the individual homosexual. Yip shows that, in order to achieve this, gay men and lesbian women must have a fundamentally positive self-image and must not only challenge Church authority but must actively discredit it. Yip found that respondents claim that the Church is ignorant of the complexities of human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, accusing them of being naive and narrow. Respondents (gay men) also claim that the Church's exegesis of the homosexual biblical passages is faulted (Yip, 1999). They believe that the Church is not infallible, and that the ultimate guide should be one's own Christian conscience. This view is distinctly counter to the viewpoint of the Church itself and is a demonstration of the positive self-image of the participants. Yip's studies imply that affiliation to any particular Church by Christian homosexuals does not necessarily denote conformity to Church authority structures (Yip, 2002).

A fourth strategy identified in the literature is that homosexual Christians may compartmentalise their religious and sexual lives. 'Compartmentalisation' is also referred to as a commuter approach to identity in which gay men and lesbian women move from one identity to another in mutually exclusive groups (Ganzevoort et al., 2011). The individual compartmentalises himself/herself and might present as heterosexual at church while maintaining a homosexual identity amongst friends. As such an individual may keep his/her sexual identity separate from their Church community and also keep their Christian identity separate from the gay community (Levy & Reeves, 2011; Levy, 2008). Conflicting notions are kept separate even in an individual's own mind (Levy & Reeves, 2011) and identity conflict can be managed in this way (Levy, 2008; Levy & Reeves, 2011). In this view Christian homosexuals choose to tolerate the conflict, often by remaining in the closet (Barton, 2010; Levy, 2008). However the commuter strategy can generally be maintained only for a limited period of time simply because living such a split life can be very stressful (Ganzevoort et al., 2011). The two identities are often brought together if both partners are Christian and homosexual (Pitt, 2009).

A final strategy identified in the literature is when gay men and lesbian women actively attempt to integrate their Christian and homosexual identities. Importantly, this strategy often involves gay men and lesbian women adhering to a construct of homosexuality which views their sexuality as created by God and immutable (Sullivan-Blum, 2004; Yip, 2002). These Christian homosexuals engage in a process of deconstruction of fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible (Bosman, 2006) and re-evaluate the authority of the Church in their personal lives (Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001). In doing so, it is possible to claim that their homosexuality is not of their choosing but is God-ordained. Integrators maintain their claim to a Christian identity while developing an individualised approach to spirituality (Ganzevoort et al., 2011; Sullivan-Blum, 2004). Most form a personal theology based on their personal relationship with God, their own conscience, science, logic, scripture and Church tradition (Ganzevoort et al., 2011; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001). Yip (1999), in a UK-based study of 60 gay men, found that Christian belief has become more private and individualised and that institutional rules set by the Church are not prominent in working out an integrated identity. It is estimated that 70-80% of Christian homosexuals choose to remain in the Church and persist in attending Church services even in the face of Christian homophobia (Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005; Yip, 2002). The primary reason for not attending church is the perceived negativity towards them.

Christian homosexuals not only face rejection from many heterosexual Christians as a result of their sexuality, their Christianity is also viewed with suspicion by non-religious homosexuals (O'Brien, 2004). As a result they define themselves as individuals who 'live a contradiction' and many see this as a purpose in itself (O'Brien, 2004). Homosexuality becomes both a gift and a burden. The forging of their own character and their challenge to the contemporary church is often conceptualised as central to their purpose within Christianity (Ganzevoort et al., 2011).

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown that significant violence and discrimination occurred against homosexuals in the Western world and, more specifically in South Africa during apartheid. Within this context I have shown that the collusion that existed between State and Church during apartheid endorsed heterosexuality and criminalised homosexuality. Science and medicine is shown to have been variously used to label (as pathological) and change (by conversion therapy) homosexuality both by the State and the Church. Some fundamentalist churches still promote the use of reparation therapies.

I briefly traced the debates around homosexuality when Democracy was negotiated in the early 1990s and showed why the Bill of Rights came to include a prohibition against the unfair discrimination of homosexual men and women. I noted societal responses to this and a variety of Church responses. The intolerance of homosexuality has remained part of many Church denominations, particularly those that adopt an essentialist interpretation of biblical texts. Finally I have described how Christian homosexuals respond to the current positions of Church, State and society in relation to their sexuality.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study investigates incorporating a homosexual orientation and identity within an existing Christian identity by using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). In this chapter I begin with a discussion of the IPA approach itself and its theoretical foundations. I follow this with the strategies used in defining a sample appropriate to the study, as well as consideration of the role of the researcher. I also address the methodology of transcription, coding and thematic analysis as well as the relative strengths and weaknesses of the strategy used. The key ethical issues considered significant to the study are discussed.

Prior to 1994 there was a dearth of published literature in South Africa on gay and lesbian themes. However democracy and the de-criminalisation of homosexuality that came in its wake has increased the visibility of these subcultures. As a result the number of published psychology articles on aspects of homosexuality has also increased. Most of the published material revolves around the attitudes of society towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals, for example Cahill (2000), Hagen (2007), Malony (2001), Mwaba (2009), Roberts & Reddy (2008). These studies are largely positivist in nature, using quantitative means of analysis on fairly large samples. However, considerably less has been published from the viewpoint of South African gay men and lesbian women themselves and the effects of social, and religious forces that deeply affect them. This research is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature around the lived experiences of Christian homosexual men and women living specifically in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. In so doing, a more in-depth exploration of the complexity of 'insider perspectives' was deemed necessary, rather than the more usual quantitative approaches (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Therefore this research does not aim to achieve a representative sample nor is there a necessity to limit the participants to particular quantifiable questions typically used in survey research. Some of the forces at play for South African gay men and lesbian women are both complex and powerful (as explicated in the Literature Review) and it is this complexity and novelty of experience that is considered to be of central importance in this study.

3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) has most often been used (and was indeed birthed) in the health psychology field (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA is theoretically grounded in phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic philosophies (Larkin et al., 2011; Smith, 2010). Phenomenology does not attempt to view objective accounts of events but is rather concerned about the world as it is experienced by people within situated contexts and at particular times (Smith et al., 1997; Willig, 2001a). Phenomenology is drawn from several philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur (Heidegger, 1962; Larkin et al., 2011; Quest, 2014; Rodriguez, 2014; Yardley, 2000). In this research I have incorporated a humanistic element in that the subjectivity of participants is accorded central importance (Yardley, 2000). In addition to this central concern, the researcher is required to reflect on the accounts of participants. In doing so the researcher, as far as possible, “brackets” or suspends his/her pre-conceptions, beliefs, prejudices, etc. in order to become more open to the understandings of the participants particularly during the interview process (Quest, 2014; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The suspension or bracketing of assumptions allows the researcher to examine those preconceptions during the Analysis phase of the study and forms the strongly reflective component of the research (Larkin et al., 2011; Rodriguez, 2014). For these reasons I explain my own biases at the end of this chapter.

IPA is also connected to hermeneutics, the theory and science of interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The understanding of the experience of a participant is always viewed from the perspective of the researcher. It is not possible for a researcher to entirely remove himself/herself from the story being related. This “intersubjectivity” is significant. It means that the researcher and participant communicate with each other and together make sense of a participant’s experience in a meaningful context (Larkin et al., 2011; Smith, 2010). The participant engages in self-reflection with the researcher and in so doing processes his/her experiences more systematically than usual. This yields a richer story and a more comprehensive source of data for the Analysis phase of the research (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The researcher also interprets what is said through the filter of his/her own experience and understanding (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Willig, 2001a). Smith and Osborn (2007) describe this as a “double hermeneutic” in which the participant makes meaning of his/her experience in the telling of the story, and the researcher interprets that meaning. IPA recognises that the quality and depth of interaction between the researcher and participant is central to the interpretation of the participant’s experience.

The epistemological stance of the research acknowledges the significance of the use of language in conveying experiences. A methodology that captures the unique social and religious experiences of homosexual men and women was required for this research. This rich source of information could then be used to explore in detail how this group makes sense of their personal, religious and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA is particularly well suited to the in-depth understanding of participant perspectives from a researcher position through intersubjective inquiry and analysis (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011).

IPA is also idiographic in approach. This focuses on the individual, the particularities of experience of individuals in particular contexts (Quest, 2014; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The idiographic approach is most obviously expressed in the single case study. However IPA studies are more commonly performed on small sample sizes, the aim of which is to analyse the details of each account to make specific statements about each individual (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). It is possible to form more generalised conclusions about larger populations, but the means of obtaining the generalisations is through the detailed examination of individual case studies (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

IPA holds that people are not passive observers of objective reality but rather that, as a result of their own interpretations of events, develop an understanding of their world that makes sense to them (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). IPA assumes that what participants think and feel is linked to their verbal statements. Interpretations of experience, both by participant and researcher, are intertwined with the ability of both to articulate their thoughts adequately (Blore, 2011). The meanings that participants give to experiences are expected in some ways to be similar, although experiences that are unique to individuals are also typically investigated (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

IPA acknowledges that the researcher cannot be separated from the process of research (Smith & Osborn, 2007) and acknowledges that an interviewer may probe interesting areas that arise. The use of semi-structured interviews makes provision for this. It could mean that participants may have previously interacted with a researcher prior to consenting to be interviewed. This is seen as both a limitation and an advantage. The limitation is that some material might inadvertently be excluded by directly asking about participant experiences. It also may be advantageous in that specific events known to the researcher may be pertinent to the research and may be probed during the interview.

In IPA research the sample size most often comprises a small number of participants (ideally between three and ten participants) because of the intense and detailed analysis and is typically a fairly homogeneous group selected in the basis of specific criteria (Rodriguez, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2003, 2007; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Willig, 2001a). In addition to a small sample size the study is often limited to a particular geographic location, meaning that the results would not be generalisable to broader populations and settings. Transferability is however possible if detailed and rich descriptions of contexts can be given (Larkin et al., 2011; van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). For example results from this study might form the basis of comparison with studies of a similar nature in other geographic locations, possibly where similar contexts exist.

As previously noted in this chapter, IPA is considered to be the most appropriate methodology to use to answer the research question at hand. There are some advantages and disadvantages to using this qualitative methodology. One of the distinct advantages to using IPA is that it is accessible, inductive and allows for different levels of analysis (Blore, 2011; Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The methodology uses simple guidelines within an existing theoretical framework and allows the researcher to be open-minded (Blore, 2011; Griffiths, 2009; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Although it is acknowledged that researcher bias may occur preconceptions are specifically addressed, clarifying the researcher's own role in interpretation (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Griffiths, 2009).

However, because the qualitative guidelines are unavoidably loose, what constitutes good qualitative research becomes difficult to define (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Unlike quantitative data that has a standardised presentation format, IPA has a degree of variability in how data are presented and this may be seen to compromise its rigour (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Because IPA is language-based it must also be acknowledged that speaking of an experience may not be an adequate description of the event (Blore, 2011). In the context of this research it should be noted that the richness of Afrikaans- and Xhosa-speaking participants' descriptions of experiences might be compromised by their second- or third-language use of English in the interviews. Depth and complexity may therefore be somewhat compromised.

The units of analysis in this research are the participants interviewed by the researcher. They are all homosexual, have been Christian at some time in their lives, are from the Eastern Cape, and were interviewed over the period 8 May to 8 July in 2013. The worlds in which each has lived are inseparable from the meanings and experiences assigned by the participants. It is these

phenomenological fields that are the units of analysis of this research. The IPA approach then is appropriate to this research because of the required focus on the meanings participants assign to their experiences and how they make sense of those experiences.

Analysis of transcripts of participants remains grounded in the individuals' details of their accounts and includes seeking connections between themes both within a single interview transcript as well as between participant accounts (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The use of the loose semi-structured interview style allows for the emergence and analysis of surprising or unique aspects of individual experiences as well as those that are shared by participants (Griffiths, 2009). All of the interpretations made during analysis retain the lived experiences of the participants regardless of whether commonalities of individual experiences are found or not (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). In this research the expressed experiences of participants are grouped and extrapolated where appropriate but extracts of the interviews ensure that the voices of the participants are retained even where commonality of experience exists.

3.2.1 Sampling Strategy

This study investigates the incorporation of homosexual orientation into an existing Christian identity. The starting point of the sampling strategy was to set specific criteria that would give quality interviews within the parameters of the study. Participants were required to meet all of the following criteria: they had to self-identify as being homosexual; they were required to have a Christian upbringing or self-identify as having been a Christian at some time in their lives; they had to be at least 21 years old; they had to have completed at least Matric or an equivalent school qualification; they had to be located in the Eastern Cape of South Africa and within a 100km radius of the small city in which this research is located. Participants had to be willing to be interviewed in English for the purposes of this study. This purposive strategy was defined to intentionally select research participants for the specific perspectives they have (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The objective was to identify themes that are common to most or all of the participants as well as to highlight experiential variations according to differences in age, race, language and culture.

I did not limit the study to any particular church or denomination, nor was there a requirement that the participants still self-identify as Christian. I reasoned on the basis of the reading of literature that individual participants could have decided that the two approaches are not compatible and made a choice to reject Christianity in order to pursue their lives as homosexuals.

The rationale behind the age and education limitations was to purposively select participants who might have deeply reflected on the impact and implications of their homosexuality to their Christian commitment and at least to have partially worked through some of the complexities. The journey of each individual was therefore expected to yield richer information than for younger homosexuals who had not yet reached the level of being able to reflect on these matters in a mature way.

The decision to ground the study in a particular South African location meant that the participants would also be bound by the particular context experienced both in a small city in the Eastern Cape, and also in a few of the more rural villages around the city. The usefulness of this strategy is that I would be able to access both city and rural perspectives, and would be able to obtain participants of different ages, races and languages. The Eastern Cape city is largely populated by English-, Afrikaans- and Xhosa-speakers and there was the intention that I would be able to locate participants from each language group, from White, Black and Coloured populations and also from both genders. It was a matter of convenience to locate the study geographically in an around my place of residence and to use English as it is my mother-tongue. The transcriptions were also made easier in that there was no requirement for them to be translated.

In this research a sample size of thirteen was selected. As noted previously the IPA approach is useful where small sample sizes are needed, often between two and ten participants. The somewhat larger sample size in this research was chosen to obtain a reasonable spread of gender, race and ethnicity, Christian affiliation, location (urban or rural) and age. It was reasoned that the research question could not be addressed without this kind of spread in participant demographics.

3.2.2 Recruitment Procedures

In seeking out participants for this research I used a number of posters at specific locations in the city and used convenience and snowball sampling strategies to obtain my first few participants. This involved gatekeeper selection of potential participants based on the willingness of the individuals and their ability to provide the depth of reflectiveness required for the study. Despite South Africa's liberal constitution and the expected higher visibility of homosexuals in our society, I found that potential participants were remarkably difficult to access. Even within the more liberal University

environment, making contacts was problematic. I had to be referred by known and respected gay and lesbian leaders in order to be able to connect to willing individuals.

After I had obtained about half of the interviews by convenience and snowball sampling I found that all of my participants at that point were White and mostly female. It was at this time that I started using purposive sampling. I actively sought out the Black and Coloured candidates using the gatekeepers I had previously used. When a total of thirteen interviews had been conducted the variations I had sought were considered to have been sufficiently investigated for the purposes of this study. A summary of the participant profiles are given in Tables 1, 2 and 3. Participant names have been replaced by pseudonyms chosen to reflect the participant language, ethnicity and gender.

Details of participant ages, race and relationship demographics are included. The race and language information is important with respect to the manner in which their interview material is read. A Xhosa-speaking Black man lives within a different social context and perspective to that of White English- or White Afrikaans-speaking men. Likewise a Xhosa woman's perspective is quite different to that of a Xhosa man. Church involvement during childhood and adolescence is also given. All participants claim to have attended church regularly as children. All but one remained within the Christian belief during childhood and adolescence. The type of community and church that participants attended as children are important when the childhood contexts contribute significantly to decision-making later in life, particularly with regard to homosexuality and Christianity. The roots of belief of each individual hold considerable authority. Traditional denominations are drawn from the mainline churches such as the DRC, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations, whereas the Indigenous African Churches that these participants attended are informal, charismatic and independent.

For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity I have seen fit to separate Tables 1, 2 and 3 instead of creating a single table giving comprehensive detail. I have done this so that the demographic details given would be unlikely to be traced to any single participant. A participant is a minister of religion. In order to maintain his anonymity I call him "Pastor" and do not identify him further because of his expressed fear of consequences should his homosexuality become known within his denomination.

The location of each interview was arranged with each participant individually. Due to confidentiality issues some participants were interviewed at the University in a designated interview/therapy room. Others were interviewed in a consulting room in a safe venue. In a few cases I travelled to the

interviewees homes. The locations were chosen partly for privacy, partly convenience and partly to reduce or eliminate the possibility of interruption or noise. The length of interviews ranged from about 40 minutes to 100 minutes. All were audio-recorded using a small hand-held digital voice recorder (Olympus DS-2400).

Table 1

Participant Profiles and Demographics.

Pseudonym	Age in years	Gender	Race	Home language	Profession
Anele	21	Male	Black	Xhosa	Student
Lutho	27	Male	Black	Xhosa	Administrator
Brendon	25	Male	White	English	Graphic Designer
Ian	50	Male	White	English	Teacher
Johan	44	Male	White	Afrikaans	Teacher
Odwa	36	Female	Black	Xhosa	Business owner
Entle	42	Female	Black	Xhosa	Administrator
Gerda	45	Female	Coloured	Afrikaans	Teacher
Karien	50	Female	White	Afrikaans	Accountant
Magriet	36	Female	White	Afrikaans	Business owner
Carolyn	24	Female	White	English	Student
Faye	55	Female	White	English	Lecturer
Hillary	44	Female	White	English	Not employed

Table 2

Relationship or Marital Status of the Participants

Number of Participants	Marital/Relationship status
4 people	Unmarried and single
1 man	Unmarried with a male partner, not living together
1 man	Unmarried with a male partner, living together
1 man	Married to a man, separated
1 woman	Divorced from a man, now single
1 woman	Married to a man, involved with a woman
1 woman	Married to a woman, living together
2 women	Unmarried with female partner, not living together
1 woman	Unmarried with female partner, living together

Table 3

Participant Community and Church Involvement during Childhood and Adolescence

Number of Participants	Community	Church
1 Black	Rural	Traditional denomination
1 Black	Urban	Indigenous African
1 Black	Rural	Indigenous African
1 Black	Rural	African Charismatic
2 English	Urban	Traditional denomination
1 English	Rural	Traditional denomination
1 English	Rural	Non-denominational
1 English	Rural + Urban	Non-denominational
2 Afrikaans	Urban	Traditional denomination
1 Afrikaans	Rural	Traditional denomination
1 Afrikaans	Rural	Traditional denomination

3.2.3 The Interview Process

Interviews in this investigation were semi-structured, reported to be the most widely used data collection method in interpretative research (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Willig, 2001b). Questions are typically few in number and are designed to allow open discussion (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The sequence of questioning is not important and, as noted previously, the researcher is free to probe any interesting aspects that arise or to follow the participant's interests to produce richer data (Smith & Osborn, 2007). A copy of the interview guide is given in Appendix C. A copy of the information flyer that was used either prior to or at the beginning of the interview process is given in Appendix D. The consent form is shown in Appendix E. The ethical issues around voluntary informed consent are discussed at the end of this chapter. Interestingly during the interview process only one participant asked about my own sexuality. She was still deeply closeted and asked a number of personal questions to assuage her own nervousness in talking to me.

3.2.4 Transferability of Results

Reliability in quantitative social science research is regarded as the degree to which results can be replicated (van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006; Yardley, 2000). However interpretative researchers

assume differing realities for individuals and therefore seek a degree of dependability rather than reliability. Dependability is achieved by being frank regarding the methodology used and also through the richness of analysis of data (van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Dependability is enhanced through comparison of data obtained through the interviews. The emergence of common themes reinforces the dependability.

Generalisability of IPA research is enhanced by ensuring that data obtained in this research is true of people researched in other similar research in different locations worldwide (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Awareness of different perspectives given in published research aids in the development of a more profound analysis (Yardley, 2000). Data obtained in this study are therefore compared to literature findings in psychology as well as findings in other disciplines, e.g. sociology. Because of contextual differences there are likely to be differences in material between this study and other published data but if the ability to transfer the results to other studies in different contexts exists, then the research is said to hold greater credibility. In this study the research process is explicated, the argument for the use of IPA is shown to be the most appropriate to this study and 'thick' descriptions are given in the form of excerpts of participant interviews in the discussion and analysis section. This is followed by meticulous phenomenological analysis of the interviews. Both perceptions common to two or more participants as well as unique or unexpected findings are analysed and discussed. These approaches together increase the quality and rigour of the research (Yardley, 2000).

3.2.5 Management of Interview Data

Interview data was downloaded from the small recorder to my personal computer and stored in a protected electronic file. Following this the one-on-one interview data was transformed from audio recording to digital text by a process of transcription. Transcription symbols are shown in Appendix F and are adapted from Seale (2004). The electronic format allows for the use of computer assisted management software to manage the amount of data generated from the participant interviews. The transcription process itself is laborious by allows the researcher to become immersed in the data through close listening and the transcription of pauses, emphases and emotions expressed by the individual participants. This transcribed data is then uploaded into a computer programme that assists in the management of the interview material.

Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) refers to the use of computer software to assist in qualitative research in psychology. Not only does it save time in respect of its capabilities in organising complex and large quantities of data, but improves the validity and reliability (St John & Johnson, 2000), it also acts as a sophisticated electronic filing cabinet facilitating the management of the data. ATLAS.ti was selected from the number of programs available in South Africa since it offers a user-friendly sophistication needed for the analysis of complex data, although not all of its functionality was used in this research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The use of such software, whilst making the management of the data much more efficient, does not provide an analysed set of data, nor does it obviate the need to critically examine the data to tease out its nuances (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Features embedded in the software of ATLAS.ti made the software particularly useful in eliciting commonalities and differences between interview data. Included in the features is the ability to attach memos to particular texts. This was extensively used in this research to note and manage researcher insights and interpretations.

One of the disadvantages of the use of ATLAS.ti is that, in order to code effectively, one must be consistent and rigorous in applying the research question parameters to the work of coding. This can therefore become quite a rigid process that focuses on volume rather than depth of meaning. In order to minimise this risk I noted significant decisions regarding coding and applied the decisions consistently throughout the coding process. This process of analysis is necessarily iterative until the structure of coding is rigidly and consistently applied to all of the data (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Once the process of coding and attaching memos is complete connections are made between themes. Commonalities are grouped according to conceptual similarities (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012) within the text of each interview as well as between similar opinions or experiences expressed by different participants. In all cases the grouped and unique aspects of the interview data focus on the individual voices of the participants.

In the writing of the analysis and discussion section a narrative account of the lived experiences interviews is given, together with the researcher interpretations of the accounts. Each experience is introduced, explicated using extracts from participant interviews, and is followed by the analysis of the researcher. The extracts of interviews represents the participants' making sense of what they have experienced, whereas the analysis represents the interpretation of those experiences by the researcher (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This embodies the 'double hermeneutic' of IPA and is the

hall-mark of such research. Significant or unique findings are reported at the conclusion of the research.

3.2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research was reviewed and approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Psychology Department at the University of Fort Hare for studies involving human subjects before the onset of any interviews. In this section I provide information on the ethical and security concerns involved in the research. This includes informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation and the storage and dissemination of recorded data. The approach outlined is based on work by Allan (2011) and by Babbie (2011).

3.2.7 Informed Consent

At the onset of the interview phase I used a number of gatekeepers to access participants. I explained what I intended, what were the participant criteria and made available information flyers. Gatekeepers then contacted their relatives or friends who are homosexual, gave some or all the information to them and asked their permission for me to contact them directly. I then made contact with willing participants and arranged to meet them.

Since all participants were over the age of 21 and were all deemed to be competent to give consent to participate in the research I requested each of them to sign the consent form (see Appendix E). The original documents are held by me in safe-keeping. Most of the participants did not wish to keep the information flyer as they did not want the flyer to be in their possession and possibly be seen by friends, colleagues or family. I accepted this rationale. In such cases I explained that, if they had particular complaints about any part of the process, they could contact my Supervisor or the Head of the Psychology Department at the University of Fort Hare. This important information was on the flyer and I felt that they needed to know they had recourse if they were distressed.

3.2.8 Confidentiality

At the beginning of the interview process I informed each participant what research participation entails and what risks and processes are involved in the analysis and publication of data. I was careful to explain what security measures I had in place to ensure that their identities would be kept confidential (and anonymous in some instances) and how I intended altering their personal details and verbatim excerpts when publishing results. Many were already aware of what is involved in research and all indicated they were comfortable with the process.

I have previously mentioned that Table 1 shows the pseudonyms assigned to participants and information regarding their age, gender, race and home language are given to allow the reader to obtain a better grasp of the demographic profiles of the participants. Also mentioned previously, I deliberately separated the information regarding whether participants are single, married (either to a same-sex partner or in a heterosexual relationship), cohabiting or living on their own. I have done this in order to confound any possibility of tracing the identities of the participants.

3.2.9 Risks Involved

Having explained the risks involved in the security of the information I would have in my possession by the end of the interview process, I then explained the possible psychological risks to the participants themselves. I clarified that they need not talk about topics or answer questions that were difficult for them. At all times I tried to create a psychologically safe space in which participants could freely and comfortably share their experiences and feelings. I also asked each participant to contact me or the Psychological Services Centre (PSC) at the University of Fort Hare should they feel the need for therapy following the interview. At the end of each interview I asked if the participants had experienced distress as a result of the interview. To the contrary, most said that it was pleasurable for them to tell their stories from beginning to end as they had not done this previously.

3.2.10 Voluntary Participation

Each participant was left to read the information flyer before the interview commenced. In this document (see Appendix D) it clearly states that contribution to the research is entirely voluntary

and that the participant may withdraw from the research at any point, even at the end of the interview. For those who had never been part of research previously and had no information regarding the process, I reiterated this verbally.

3.2.11 Electronic and Paper Data Protection

The recorded verbatim data is kept on my personal computer in a protected file. During transcription I did not attempt to alter any details or names. However, before uploading data to the ATLAS-ti software I altered the names to their pseudonyms. In addition some place names and educational institution names were changed. No other data was changed at this time. The reasoning behind this decision is that I knew I would submit electronic versions of the thesis to my Supervisor for guidance and was concerned that data sent via the internet may not be secure. In order to protect the participants I therefore began using pseudonyms before uploading the interview data into ATLAS-ti and before any documents were sent via the internet. The original transcriptions with actual names are kept in a protected file on my computer.

3.2.12 Researcher Subjectivity

IPA is an approach to research that is necessarily affected by both the participant and the researcher. During the entire interview, coding and analysis processes I have reflexively considered this subjectivity to ascertain the effect it might have on my understanding and interpretation of the data. In addition to this I have examined my own biases prior to the onset of the interviews and report on these in this section.

I was raised in a home in which religion played a marginal role, but was expected to attend Sunday School. From my teenage years onwards I have been involved in a number of different denominations, from the strongly charismatic to the more traditional and conservative. In recent years I have become somewhat uncomfortable with the institutional church. In this research I hoped to further my internal debate as to how the Church and Christians treat “outsider” groups. Most particularly I wanted to gain personal insight into the Church’s position and my own Christian perspective not only into how outsider groups are treated, but also what it means to be part of an outsider group in such a context. Through this research I have come to understand that the issues

involved in the homosexual debate are far more nuanced than I had realised. My initial intention was to obtain clarity within myself regarding these issues. What has emerged is a better understanding of the complexities of living as a Christian homosexual in contemporary South Africa.

This research seeks to investigate the psychological effects on Christian-homosexual identity and is not positioned as a theological treatise, or indeed a political or social one. It is not my intention to interpret whether homosexual people are accepted by God or not. The participants are real people, with real issues. In this research they have at all times been heard and treated with respect.

3.3 Conclusions

In this chapter I discussed the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and its appropriateness to this research. I have traced the theoretical bases of IPA as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages of using this methodology. I followed this with some detail of the participant demographics and sampling strategies used in this research, giving details such as age, race, language and employment details. I also explicated the interview process including matters of confidentiality and protection of participant identity. The methodology of transcription, coding and thematic analysis using Atlas-ti software was discussed. Key ethical concerns were presented, including issues arising from the type of data collected, the coding and analysis of the data and the protection of the participants from any possible psychological harm that could have occurred as a result of the interview process. Finally consideration of the role of the researcher was described.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This investigation examines the experiences of individuals who are raised in Christian families and who later develop homosexual identities. In particular the research investigates how these participants manage to integrate the two identities. In Chapter 3 (Methodology) I described the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as an appropriate method in this research. In this chapter I report the findings of the analysis.

In her influential book *Epistemology of the Closet* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asks why we would seek to question whether a historical figure (Socrates was her example) might have been gay because homosexuality is a modern construct. This does not mean that same-sex sexual conduct did not occur, but there was no form of homosexual identity as we know it today. Sedgwick's observation is of significance because literalist Christian interpretations of the Bible denounce homosexuality on the basis of Biblical texts that were written long before the modern concept of homosexuality became defined and used even amongst academics (Punt, 2006a, 2007b; Sandfort, 2000). Christian homophobia that developed on these foundational texts still has significant consequences for homosexuals living in South Africa today. It affects the way in which they view themselves, their families, their relationships with others and their sense of belonging in their church communities. In the Literature Review I considered the political and social backdrop against which contemporary South African homosexuals live, and touched on the biblical texts most often used by segments of the Christian Church to condemn homosexuality. Furthermore I illustrated how homosexuals have been shown in the published literature to face the dilemma of negotiating the two identities.

In this chapter I draw together the threads of these discussions and examine the accounts of the participants in the light of this contextual information. The analysis is divided into seven parts. The first part is titled "Belonging: Community and spiritual connectedness" and traces the early experiences of the participants and their Christian upbringing in South African communities. The second part is titled "Experiencing and becoming: Gendered play and same-sex attractions". This part traces the early experiences of Christian upbringing of the participants and the impact of this exposure on the development of their sexual identities. In the third part, titled "Silencing the self" I

describe participants' initial responses to the awareness of homosexual identities. The fourth part is titled "Living in the closet". In this section I analyse the fears about the disclosure of sexual identities to others. Part five, titled "Breaking the silence" deals with participants' experiences of disclosure to others. The sixth part is titled "Speaking back". This section presents the analysis of how participants make sense of the responses of others to the disclosure of their sexual identities. The seventh and final section is titled "Last words" and examines the personal cost of participants who manage to integrate their homosexuality with their Christian belief.

4.2 Belonging: Community and Spiritual Connectedness

In this part of the analysis I examine participants' early childhood experiences with Christianity. In particular it traces how they experience a progression from simply participating in Christian rituals to making a commitment to the Christian faith. As noted in the Literature Review Christianity still plays a significant role in ethics and morality in South Africa. This means that often Christian rituals, habits and principles are taught early in each child's life. The most concise example of a participant's early experience of Church attendance is given by Gerda as shown in Extract 1.

Extract 1: "You had to go to Church"

Gerda: I think Christianity has always been part of my life in a sense (.) for I grew up in a Christian home (2.0) um::: but when I started to build a relationship with God it was much later in my life (1.0) umm (.) but I can't remember a time (2.0) when young (.) not (1.0) partaking in Christian activities (1.0) um::: and that time my association with Christianity was church (1.0) in the sense that (.) you had to go to church (1.0) this is what you have to do (.) and this is how our household has been

In Extract 1 Gerda explains that Christianity has always been part of her life. In participating in Church activities as a young child she learns the framework of understanding herself and her family. She also understood that Christian rituals formed part of her sense of belonging in the family. All of the participants interviewed in this study were raised in Christian homes and spoke of attending Church in their early lives. In addition to Christianity forming a very ordinary part of life as children, a number of participants related that the communities in which they were raised and their family's friends were also church-going Christians. Thus their wider community socialisation also included belonging that was associated with Christianity.

Although young children accompany their parents to church it has been argued that they are too young to understand what it means to be a Christian (Dawkins, 2006). It is only later, often in

adolescence (Robertson, 2011) when they understand Christian belief, that they make an informed decision to commit to it. A number of participants describe a gradual development of a relationship with God, sometimes culminating in a significant event, or commitment experience. In Extract 2 Brendon describes a moment of quiet acknowledgement of his Christian commitment. Brendon had been raised in a Christian home and this event occurred when he was about 15 years of age.

Extract 2: “I just got to say to God, listen, I’m Yours”

Brendon: I think when you get to Grade 8 nowadays (.) Standard 6 (.) there’s that questioning that you get in the teenage stage .hh I’ve always been that good boy you know .hh u::m And I think I jus::t sort of fell into the church (1.0) I was always one who was involved in church (.) in my Grade 8 year um I got involved in the youth group here (.) an::d it wasn’t this miraculous thing that everybody always expects (.) it was a quiet moment (.) I think it just got to a point where I was needing something in my life .hh um:: (.) and I think God just (1.0) slowly began to work and it got to a point where I sat in church after Youth Service had finished and it was a Friday night and I just sat and I was just sore and I just chatted with God and I just thought to myself this is it (.) I feel I need to make a formal decision (.) I just got to say to God listen I’m Yours (.) this is it you know (.) let’s start this thing off

Arguably the same kind of process might occur in the development of a homosexual identity, in that this too could involve a gradual realisation of same-sex desire or even a single moment of insight. In this sense there is perhaps a parallel to both the development of Christian and sexual identities. It is significant that most of the participants in this study were more vague about identifying the moment at which they became Christian than the moment at which they recognised their same-sex sexual desire. Arguably because Christianity was woven into the fabric of family life from an early age its conscious acknowledgment was not necessarily significant. However in the context of silence around sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, acknowledgment of this aspect of themselves was particularly significant and was clearly remembered.

4.3 Experiencing and Becoming: Gendered play and same-sex attractions

In this part of the analysis I discuss participants’ stories about their experiences of becoming aware of their sexualities. Many of the participants believed that they could trace their homosexuality to their early childhood when they perceived their early gendered play differed significantly from their peers. They concluded that this signalled the development of a homosexual identity. This is best illustrated in Extract 3 in which Anele relates a story of playing “house”.

Extract 3: “I always insisted on being the mother”

Verity: What experiences lead you to:: realise that you are homosexual (1.0) and more or less what age:: did that happen?

Anele: I think I remember at four

Verity: [at FOUR (.)] wow

Anele: - we used to play (1.0) uh:: HOUSE an::d I always insisted on being the mother .hh understanding that there's probably ten or so girls you know (.) I would insist that no:: I have to be the mother understanding that that guy will have to be the father (.) so I started having that kind of attraction (.) and you can't label it at four or five (.) but you understood that you want to be in this space (.) that you want to .hh assume certain gender roles (.) it wasn't that I wasn't a girl you know (.) that I completely understood (.) completely was okay with (.) I did not fit in necessarily with the guys (.) something was lacking .hh coz they always .hh went out playing um (.) hunting you know and playing sports .hh and to me that was so () I felt .hh we could do something more interesting rather than just .hh going out and getting dirty (.) but you know when you had to play house I was there with that guy who .hh kind of assumed the affectionate kind of relationship that a mother and father has .hh behind closed doors (.) we'd kiss and do this and this and this (.) so it started at that age

Children's gender identity develops between the ages of two and three years and socio-dramatic play, such as Anele describes in Extract 3, is common for a child of that age, even when cross-gendered play is exhibited (Louw & Louw, 2010). By comparison, development of sexual awareness is reported to occur from about 10 years onwards (McClintock & Herdt, 1996). As noted in the Literature Review, Bem (2008) asserts that gender non-conformity and homosexuality are linked. However, gendered inversion is interpreted from a heterosexual perspective and is an old idea. Much research to the contrary has been published (Gottschalk, 2003; Liben & Bigler, 2008; Zucker, 2005). Some boys play with dolls. Some girls prefer wearing boys' clothing. But the behaviour itself does not imply homosexuality; it just reflects a particular preference of behaviour at that age. In all likelihood the parents of the participants and other adults in their early lives also did not have insight into the difference between gendered behaviour and sexuality. What they might have done was to reprimand the children because the gendered behaviour did not fit the gender of the child.

Anele explains that, although he took on the role of the mother he completely understood that he was not a girl. He too conflates the gendered play with sexualised play in which he describes himself as having a same-sex attraction to the boy who played father. However, as previously noted, sexual awareness only develops from about 10 years onwards (McClintock & Herdt, 1996). Anele, in hindsight, seems to conflate homosexuality and gendered behaviour and uses the cross-gendered activities as early evidence of his homosexuality.

Anele's account of cross-gendered play as an early indication of sexual orientation is a feature common to the narratives of a number of other participants. A consequence of participants' accounts of cross-gendered play as an early indication of homosexuality is that it substantiates claims that homosexuality is inherent. Without exception the participants in this study believe this to be true. In contrast to this, leaders of many Christian churches assert that same-sex attraction is a choice (Corbett, 1997; Ganzevoort et al., 2011; Locke, 2005; Robinson, 2012; Stychin, 1996). These

Christians assert that homosexuals can and ought to choose to be attracted to the opposite sex. In light of this the cross-gendered play accounts can be seen as a strategy to refute this argument.

In Extract 4, Entle highlights her cross-gendered choice to wear men's clothing and also the silence of her community around sexual matters. A consequence of the silence is that it left Entle feeling completely alone in the world. This theme of loneliness is common to many of the participants and confirms findings reported in the literature (Barton, 2010; Levy, 2008).

Extract 4: "I'm buying you all the dresses in the world"

Entle: My mother was like (.) hey I'm buying you all the dresses in the world but you don't like the dresses (.) instead I'll go to men's shops (.) and I didn't know what was happening (.) I didn't know that was wrong (.) I just said to myself (.) you know I feel comfortable .hh (.) I thought that the reason was because .hh at home (.) there was a lot of farming and we dress like men all the time (.) I did not think of sexuality at that ti::me (.) but for me I felt comfortable dressing like this (.) I didn't know that hey:: I'm a lesbian no one ever asked me that because no one was talking about that

Verity: [mm

Entle: it took a lot of time ((emotional)) in that environment (.) being lonely (.) you are seventeen (.) now you eighteen (.) you nineteen (.) you are so negative ((emotional)) ... about things that are happening to you (.) I didn't even know that there's gays, there's lesbians (.) I never see that (.) there was no TV to show me (.) there was no magazine .hh that I can relate unlike the youth of today (.) they can read about it

When children are raised in cities or with access to television, the internet, newspapers or magazines they may well come across information that might help them to identify the nature of their same-sex attractions. Entle was raised in a deeply rural village in the Eastern Cape Province where it was taboo to discuss sexual matters, and homosexuality was never mentioned. The silence in her family and in the community, coupled with the dearth of information, meant that the development of a homosexual identity was particularly problematic for her. Like Anele, Entle became aware at an early age that she was different because she preferred wearing men's clothes, although she ascribed the preference to the appropriateness of the clothing to her farming activities. And like Anele, Entle ascribes the cross-gendered behaviour to markers of homosexuality that she was able to see only later in her life. It is significant that Entle viewed the silence of her family and community as having been ameliorated by better access to the popular media in more recent times. This is supported by findings in the literature (Sandfort, 2000) She notes that young people now have the ability to access information even if their communities are silent. It does raise the issue of how homosexuality is depicted in the popular media.

Another significant challenge that participants encountered during adolescence was the gender and sexuality politics in schools. This is best illustrated in Extract 5 that is taken from an interview with

Johan. Johan was raised on a remote country farm and attended primary school in a nearby rural Afrikaans village. The school was renowned for its heteronormative focus on sport, whereas Johan loved music and the Arts.

Extract 5: “There was always a sort of teasing”

Johan: These thoughts about (.) yourself .hh must come from somewhere (1.0) but like I say it was at Primary School I had bad experiences (.) and even starting High School (.) there was always a:: sort of teasing and things and purely because I wasn't playing rugby and I was into music (2.0) and possibly acted a bit less butch than the rest of them (.) so there was that

In Extract 5 Johan describes how his involvement in music and the arts challenged the gendered norms of his school. The teasing is one of the ways in which homosexual adolescents understand from their peers that their sexuality is not tolerated. This observation is consistent with other studies of homophobia in South African schools (Bhana, 2012; Butler, 2007). Arguably though, an interest in the Arts, whether exhibited by a heterosexual or homosexual learner in a South African school, would likely generate the same sort of teasing and could be ascribed to peers bullying individuals whose behaviour does not conform to a school norm.

4.4 Silencing the Self

This part of the Analysis chapter deals with participants' initial responses to their growing awareness of homosexual identities. Discussion begins with an excerpt from an interview with Magriet (Extract 6) in which she relates the moment of recognition of same-sex attraction.

Extract 6: “I was not allowed to think that”

Magriet: I once felt very attracted to one of my friends and I was quite shocked (.) but then I knew there was definitely something going on because I never up to then (.) and that was when I was nineteen (.) experienced anything (.) as intense with guys (.) although this was still not physical it was just like (.) feeling really in love (.) I would describe it like that (.) so I became aware of it really .hh or identified it as being um a homosexual attraction I suppose at the age of nineteen clearly (.) although when I look back I think there was several incidents but I was not allowed to think that so I didn't classify it (.) I was just (.) ignoring it completely

In Extract 6 Magriet describes being “shocked” by her attraction to another woman. In the Literature Review I noted that coming out of the closet is identified as a defining process for homosexuals (Herek, 1996; Levy, 2009; Sedgwick, 1990; White & White, 2004). Within the South African context acknowledging one's homosexuality is difficult because it runs counter to the majority social and

religious norms of the country (Massoud, 2003; Nel & Judge, 2008; Roberts & Reddy, 2008). This means that there is a strong motivation for homosexual men and women to deny their own acknowledgment of sexual orientation (Butler & Astbury, 2008). Magriet is 36 years old and one of the strengths of interviewing older participants in this study was their ability to reflect on past experiences and identify how events unfolded. In this way they are able to understand the context in which these events occurred and how they played a role in shaping their experience. In hindsight Magriet is able to acknowledge her attraction to women prior to the event described in Extract 6, and at the same time describes being so shocked that she retreats from the self-acknowledgement of the sexual attraction.

Acknowledgment of homosexual attraction was also difficult for other participants and reasons for this vary. Acknowledgment is seen as a challenge to personal, social and religious norms, but also because many of the participants do not identify with the stereotypical representations of homosexuality that dominate much of public discourse. Two participants spontaneously discussed this aspect. In Extract 7 Gerda describes her response to the butch lesbian and screaming queen stereotypes.

Extract 7: "I don't want to be this"

Gerda: You jus::t may be wondering (.) i::s this possible? (.) but it was never a thought I entertained .hh um:: because of the community I grew up in (.) the guys were always mocked and called moffies and whatever

Verity: [mm

Gerda: And ... all the girls who (.) we thought were lesbians behaved very butch and um:: you kind of find it very difficult to see the woman in them (.) and because the whole persona was one of (.) I don't want to be this () um:: so:: you didn't want to be also associated with that (.) so I think I jus::t never entertained it (.) or never allowed myself to entertain it (1.0) until I got to university

Stereotypes dominate public discourse possibly as a result of the gendered inversion mentioned previously in this chapter becoming pervasive and dominant in representations of homosexuality. When homosexuality does become visible, it does so most often when the gendered inversion is exaggerated by gay men cross-dressing or when lesbian women dress and behave like men. However when gay men and lesbian women do not conform to the exaggerated gendered inversion they are not recognised and their sexuality remains invisible. The stereotypes then become all that is seen and recognised by society as being homosexual. This means that it is not only the social silence around homosexuality that is problematic, but the way in which homosexuality is represented when it does become visible. Heteronormative discourse up to the recent past in South Africa has depicted homosexuals as screaming queens and butch lesbians possibly because this is primarily what has been visible. The excerpt of Gerda's interview shown in Extract 7 is interesting because she herself

did not identify with the portrayal of “*moffies*” (gay men) or butch lesbians even though she eventually came to identify as lesbian. She may well have recognised her own sexuality much earlier if not for the distaste for and rejection of the stereotypes.

One of the consequences of the depiction of homosexuals as “inverted” is the assumption that heterosexuals can differentiate between who is gay and who is heterosexual. Additionally when gay men meet, there is the assumption that there exists some sort of visible code, an instant recognition, of homosexual orientation, even when the gay men do not behave or dress in a cross-gendered manner. Brendon, in Extract 8, had clearly made this assumption and is surprised when he discovers it is erroneous.

Extract 8: “Don’t lights go on if you meet another gay?”

Brendon: I:: had met:: a guy .hh who:: was a butch rugby player (.) and he said to me Brendon I’m gay (.) and I thought (.) no:: man (.) don’t lights go on if you meet another gay? ((chuckles)) .hh And it was my first encounter with:: a normal (.) gay person because the issue is that the media always displays gay people as aah! screaming queens

Verity: [stereotyping

Brendon: or lesbians as .hh these butch...

When confronted with the question as to whether homosexuality may underlie her struggles, Gerda’s immediate response is to dissociate from such stereotypes. Brendon on the other hand admits to a tacit acceptance of the screaming queen and butch lesbian stereotypes. He expresses surprise when he begins meeting what he terms “normal” gay people and this impacted his impression of gay men.

In both cases, Brendon and Gerda express discomfort with societal stereotypes of homosexual people. However many lesbians are feminine and many gays are not and the stereotypes have significant potential for harm for homosexuals. The psychological health of homosexuals could be enhanced and the prejudice of South African communities could be ameliorated by challenging these stereotypes. Psychologists and other mental health workers could play a significant role in this, in counselling, in outreach activities to vulnerable groups, in client advocacy, community collaboration projects, preventive education and by influencing public policy (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D’Andrea, 2011).

Not only does societal heteronormativity (a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation) result in victimisation of cross-gendered behaviour and stereotyping of homosexuals, it also problematises the way in which homosexuals view themselves. The effect of

the subliminal absorption of societal anti-homosexual messages is the possible development of internalised homophobia (as discussed in the Literature Review). It results in significant anxiety reportedly due to a lack of acceptability, particularly in Christian groups (Sandfort, 2000). As previously described in this section, Johan endured significant homophobia and hate speech during his formative years which he said affected his self-esteem. As a result he went through a period of internalised homophobia, in agreement with research findings detailed in the Literature Review (Polders et al., 2008). His period of self-loathing is described in Extract 9.

Extract 9: "I disliked myself for being like that"

Johan: You see I think it was a self-imposed hatred (.) I started becoming a homophobic

Verity: You hated that part of you?

Johan: Yes

Verity: [mm

Johan: In myself - but also in others if I recognised it (.) and then I disliked myself for being like that (.) because I'm not: .hh a judgmental kind of person (.) and I think that compounded the self-loathing (.) that was really what it was about ja:: (.) I didn't like myself an::d (.) ja (.) I couldn't see how to:: (1.0) make the two come together

The participants in this study related a variety of ways in which they struggled with their responses to their growing awareness of their (homo)sexuality. Lutho was the only participant who said that acknowledging his sexuality was not difficult for him. Ganzevoort et al. (2011) argue that some gay men and lesbian women who are Christian choose to compartmentalise (or separate) their religious lives from their social life with other homosexuals. Extract 10 highlights Lutho's argument that, because he has behaved as a good Christian, other Christians ought to be content with that and not challenge him on his homosexual lifestyle.

Extract 10: "What I do besides being in church doesn't concern anyone"

Lutho: I didn't regard (homosexuality) as a sin (.) I still don't (.) so it didn't have much impact on me (1.0) you see (.) as a Christian I go to church (.) I pray (.) I do everything that they do there (.) what I do besides being in church doesn't concern anyone (.) it's my business and my business alone (.) and if I say (.) God here I am (.) forgive me (.) I've done this (.) I've done that (.) then I don't see a problem (.) why should I explain myself to other people? (.) especially in church (2.0) so it didn't have a negative impact on me (.) it didn't have anything ...

Lutho rationalises his relationship with the Church by compartmentalising his world. He explains that he partakes in all Christian activities according to what is expected of good Christians at Church. Indeed he indicated a number of times in the interview that he enjoys his significant involvement in church activities. However, he asserts that what he does outside of church is quite a separate matter. The separation between his religious activities and his life with his friends is clear. The realisation of his homosexuality did not have a negative impact on him possibly because he had

already separated this part of himself from his church activities. In Extract 10 he defends himself by compartmentalising, although, according to the literature, this compartmentalisation phase is not likely to be enduring (Ganzevoort et al., 2011).

4.5 Living in the closet

As homosexuals move into the closet, they have acknowledged to themselves that they are gay or lesbian, but seek to withhold disclosure to others. As noted in the Literature Review, disclosure occurs in phases, beginning with a coming out to self and culminating in disclosure to friends, family and community (Levy & Reeves, 2011). This section analyses the mechanisms and consequences of the struggle to prevent disclosure to others.

In the Literature Review I argued that Christian homosexuals find it difficult to acknowledge their same-sex desire because it is viewed as being counter to South African social norms and Christian belief (Massoud, 2003; Nel & Judge, 2008; Roberts & Reddy, 2008). Many gay men and lesbian women also express concern that they are rejected by God because of their sexual orientation (Franke & Leary, 1991). This concern was discussed by several participants and is best illustrated by an excerpt from the interview with Magriet (Extract 11).

Extract 11: "It made me feel...scared of God"

- Magriet: It was just a:: big no-no so ja (.) it made me feel isolated and I:: suppose scared of God (1.0) scared of my life ja:: hh uh
- Verity: Scared that God would condemn you?
- Magriet: ja no definitely
- Verity: So:: so:: at that stage you felt that the Church or your Christian friends would condemn you .hh and that God would also condemn you?
- Magriet: At that stage I:: thought all the above ja
- Verity: [mm
- Magriet: My friends would definitely condemn me (.) The church definitely (.) and even uh:: ja God as well (.) I definitely felt that I was doomed

In Extract 11 Magriet expresses some of her thinking whilst in the closet. Part of what she experienced whilst closeted was the fear of condemnation from her Church, her friends and God. But in addition to working through the fear itself, the closet is a place in which she could think through the issues and try to resolve them before coming out. In this way she could be better prepared to face the challenges of others on these same questions. Being in the closet may well afford a private and safe space to think through how to respond to this type of challenge.

4.5.1 Infinite Sadness

In the last section (Living in the Closet) I argued that there are benefits to being in the closet, privacy to work through issues being one of them. But there are distinct disadvantages to withholding knowledge about homosexual identity. Before disclosure to individuals or to groups of people, the closet can result in restricted opportunities to talk through the issues with someone else. There is little or no support. This makes the process much more difficult and many participants found themselves sinking into depression. The best example of such a discussion is given by Magriet (Extract 12) in which she describes her journey into depression. At the time she was a university student living with a group of fundamentalist Christian student friends. When she became aware of strong feelings towards one of students in the house she began to feel isolated.

Extract 12: "You just...spiral down"

Magriet: Ja (.) it was hard (.) I think you jus::t compensate (.) it's like living anything that's:: hard or that scares you (.) you jus::t ... ignore it (.) or try to ignore it (1.0) but ja:: I was stuck because you feel so lonely but there's nothing you can do about it (.) you just I suppose spiral down:: feeling more lonely and not being about to talk about it (.) I would describe myself as being very depressed then and .hh the depression also just got worse and worse hh as I tried to:: ja resist what I was really feeling

Magriet's loneliness and isolation could be interpreted as resulting from the context of living and working with fundamentalist Christians. Her withdrawal from them was possibly because of feared disapproval or rejection of her sexual identity. She reports that the perceived homophobia in her circle of Christian friends exacerbated her struggle and made the process much more problematic.

Ample research indicates that psychological distress is highly prevalent amongst homosexual men and women. They experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, isolation, internalised homophobia, substance abuse, higher victimisation and higher rates of suicide and attempted suicide (Barton, 2010; Buchanan et al., 2001; Levy, 2009; Lewis, 2009; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001; Robertson, 2011; Sandfort, 2000). The foundation of the psyche is rendered unstable by the realisation of homosexual desire and much of what is believed about oneself and God and one's place in the universe is shaken. Most problematic of this phase is the anxiety around rejection by significant others and it is this that renders homosexuals silent. Gay men and lesbian women are able to admit their sexuality to themselves but it is something about which they cannot speak. The conundrum often results in depression. It is part of the silence of being in the closet. This is the process that led Magriet (Extract 12) to spiral into depression.

In some ways the closet is a step forward from the denial to self described in the previous section. The closet represents a recognition of homosexuality whereas silencing the self involves a failing to recognise or a refusal to recognise. The closet is at least a recognition within oneself, but a concealment of that knowledge from others. The depression has to do with a knowledge of who one is, coupled with the melancholy of not being able to share it.

In this study the psychological distress of participants was reported by most to be significant. Of the thirteen participants three participants, two men and a woman, reported that they attempted suicide. Two female participants said that they had resorted to self-harm, and three participants had been admitted to psychiatric units. The high incidence of psychological distress, even in this small sample, is in agreement with findings of other studies (Barton, 2010; Herek, 1996; Nel & Judge, 2008; Polders et al., 2008). The question is whether the fact that they are homosexual in some way might be linked to a character weakness or susceptible personality or if the higher rate of psychological distress is related to contextual factors (financial stresses, high crime, unemployment etc.) in South African society in general and in religious institutions in particular (Lewis, 2009; Meyer, 2003). In this study participants relate experiences of psychological distress to concerns about the perceived judgment of others, and of God. This finding is in agreement with Barton (2010) who claims that poorer mental health outcomes by homosexuals results from living in stressful social and religious environments.

Amongst the participants was a variation in responses to the acknowledgment to self of their sexual orientation. For example, Johan rejected homosexuality in himself and others and also rejected God. Johan is creative, an artist, and had experienced homophobia at primary school. In Extract 13 Johan describes this experience.

Extract 13: "I was completely depressed..and..denied God's existence"

Johan: By the time I was nineteen I was completely depressed you know (.) because of that issue (.) I've always known:: I was different (.) but aroun::d seventeen (.) eighteen years (.) I started to accept the fact that I'm not attracted to women .hh then I became very depressed and I wouldn't accept it and became homophobic (.) to such an extent that I tried to commit suicide (.) ja .hh and it's actually during that period that I completely:: denie::d God's existence (.) when I was nineteen I:: tried to commit suicide (.) it was my first year at Technikon that it really b::lew up (.) the depression got to:: to me

Johan had left a High School in which he was somewhat sheltered from the homophobia he had experienced in Primary School. The High School focused on developing his artistic skills and his sense of being different did not really arise within that context. He reports that his depression began after

he left High School when he acknowledged to himself that he was gay and, at the same time, began to experience significant homophobia. In Extract 13 he describes a withdrawal into the closet in which his anger was turned towards himself (internalised homophobia) and towards God.

While Johan's depression resulted from his acknowledgment of homosexual inclinations, Carolyn reports that her depression started before she came to realise that she was homosexual. In Extract 14 Carolyn explains that the depression was exacerbated by homophobic behaviour from others in her school class.

Extract 14: "I was pretty unstable"

Carolyn: The depression had been there from about thirteen fourteen (.) I started cutting:: in Standard six:: (.) I was very isolated from people (.) .hh the people in my class were bullying me:: and so I was very isolated from them (.) I felt (.) shunned by them .hh um

Verity: (Do you have any idea) why?

Carolyn: I don't know if it was that they picked up that I was gay (.) .hh o::r (.) I don't actually know why

Verity: And the idea behind the cutting?

Carolyn: Was to relieve the pain (.) to cause physical pain which goes away .hh emotional pain just sits (.) I was trying to transfer from one form of pain to another that would dissipate (.) u::m

Verity: [mm

Carolyn: .hhh (.) I think I went a bit psycho ((chuckle)) because of my depression (.) it wasn't:: properly medicated at the time .hh um:: so:: I was pretty unstable (.) I kno::w I'd eventually go onto anti-psychotics for a whi::le as well (.) .hh so:: ja (.) it was major depression along with some other stuff (.) I'm not really sure what

It could be argued that, although the onset of Carolyn's reported depression occurred before she entered the closet, it was intensified by the context in which she found herself. Carolyn's depression was exacerbated when she became infatuated with a Bible-study leader when she was about fifteen years old. She asserted that her advances were rejected on the basis of biblical teachings against homosexuality and that a number of other Christians had been drawn into trying to cure her or persuade her that homosexuality is inconsistent with Christian teaching. The generalised homophobia directed towards her by her classmates was possibly compounded by Christian homophobic rhetoric and the rejection of the Bible Study Leader. These factors together might have exacerbated the depression to the point at which she described herself as developing some psychotic features, although she did not give details of the nature of the psychosis as such. No other participants reported psychotic experiences.

From the small number of participants interviewed in this research, there are two tentative conclusions that may be drawn with respect to the higher incidence of depression and suicide attempts amongst homosexuals. The first is that psychiatric issues may well exist before the

individuals become fully aware of their sexual desires, as evidenced in Carolyn's excerpt. Where there was depression prior to the acknowledgment to self of homosexual attraction, the distress was reported to be exacerbated if rejection and homophobia were involved. The second is that participants describe significant anguish around the realisation of homosexuality even when no previous psychological distress had occurred. In these cases participants reported that psychological distress often led to depression. This means that, in agreement with literature, contextual stresses caused or exacerbated psychological distress for participants in this research (Lewis, 2009; Meyer, 2003).

Amongst the participants only one claimed that he had never experienced psychological distress in accepting his homosexuality. Lutho presents as being self-assured and very confident. In Extract 15 an excerpt of the interview with Lutho describes his own thinking around psychological distress.

Extract 15: "You are the one who's got a problem, not me"

Lutho: I've never had a conflict with myself (.) I've never had a breakdown (.) I've never had that self-hatred (.) I've never (.) .hh and in me here I've got a very strong character (.) I never never battled with myself

Verity: Okay .hh okay um:: .hh so (.) as far as you are concerned (.) there were absolutely NO implications from your sexuality .hh um (1.0) in terms of your Christianity (.) none whatsoever

Lutho: I see none (.) I'm a loud person (.) I love to make jokes (.) I love people (.) so (.) if they find difficulties it's their business (.) not mine (.) .hh and I'm not going to let my sexuality hold me down (1.0) I'm not going to do that (.) because I know what I am capable of and I know where my mind can take me (.) I don't need your approval (.) I'm here (.) I'm here to stay (.) deal with it (.) you are the one who's got a problem (.) not me (.) so that's how I deal with the issues (1.0) so if you like it then you like it (.) sit down and shut up (.) if you don't get up and leave

Both: ((chuckle))

Lutho: Even my friend Zuko: (.) whenever they got picked on I would fight for them (.) but ah-ah *Boetie* wait (.) just because we're gay doesn't mean we don't have the same (.) we've got this thing (.) we have the same man power that you have (.) and I will fuck you up

Both: ((laugh))

Lutho was one of four participants who were in their twenties. The other three presented as deep thinkers but not nearly as confident and poised as Lutho. As shown in Extract 15, I was surprised by his assertion that he had never experienced psychological distress and sought to ensure I had not misinterpreted his meaning. He then confirmed that he had never experienced any anxiety or distress when he disclosed to self. During the interview I found myself wondering if his self-assurance was a mask, a defence, that he routinely used and if there was another more vulnerable man behind the mask. In a later part of our conversation I probed this possibility by questioning a discrepancy in his thinking on marriage and experienced a shift in confidence to a man who was more insecure and uncertain. His recovery of confidence was quick though, as shown in Extract 16.

Extract 16: “We’re living in flesh. We’re not angels”

- Verity: If um (.) if I had to decide on:: a heterosexual partner both you and I would be:: sinning because n::either you nor I are married
- Lutho: If we having sex before marriage
- Verity: Yes
- Lutho: mm
- Verity: So (.) now:: you’re saying you are not marriage material (.) so what you’re saying is that .hh you are actually going through a series of .hh um:: sexual relationships outside of marriage
- Lutho: [((chuckle, discomfort))
- Verity: [What (.) what do you do with that?
- Lutho: [((chuckle, discomfort))
- Verity: I’m asking difficult questions I know but what do you do with it?
- Lutho: Okay:: um:: (.) hey (.) it is a difficult question man (.) you know (.) we’re not perfect (.) we’re not Jesus Christ (.) we live on earth (.) né
- Verity: [mm
- Lutho: Obviously (.) we going to be tempted (.) to do (.) things that are going to keep us off rail in the Christian life (.) then okay fine (.) I can do it (.) I deal with it (.) then I pray and God forgives my sins (.) you see (.) because I mean we are (.) we are living in flesh:: (.) we’re not angels and (.) .hh I (.) it (.) it (.) ok (.) I get this (2.0)
- Verity: You say it can’t be done (.) really
- Lutho: Ja

My estimation of Lutho following these exchanges is that he generally presents as a young self-assured man. Possibly in this way he cues others to respond in kind to him: if he is okay with himself, others will be okay with him. He might possibly be more accepting of himself as a gay man because homosexuality is somewhat more visible and accepted in contemporary South Africa: he has never had to deal with the criminalisation and victimisation of homosexuals that existed during the apartheid era and homosexuality is generally more permissible now.

It should also be noted that Lutho had been circumcised as part of the Xhosa passage from boyhood into manhood several years before this interview. Traditional circumcision is considered to be a culturally significant ritual and may well form part of the foundation of his confidence (Gwata, 2009; Mhlahlo, 2009). He is a man (as opposed to a boy) and behaves as such. However, as seen in Extract 15, there are times when bravery in the face of societal homophobia could be quite dangerous. Lutho asserts that he would defend his friend Zuko were Zuko to be victimised. I wondered if Lutho fully understood the implications of being so overtly ego-centric and self-assured. Lutho himself presents as a well-dressed well-built effeminate gay man and the risk of violence toward him and his gay friends is not negligible even in contemporary South Africa. Again I speculated that this might possibly be a function of his age. The older participants in this research have the years of experience to retrospectively reflect and temper their previous boldness, whereas Lutho does not yet have this life experience.

An example of someone who does have the life experience is Ian. He is 50 years old and was the only participant who spontaneously recounted the experience of being young and gay during the apartheid era. He reports that he became aware that any attempt to be open about being gay carried significant risk. This is shown in Extract 17.

Extract 17: “We know who you are. We’ll catch you”

Ian: You know Afrikaans Pretoria was very conservative when I was a student (.) so the straight guys come to the club at two o’clock in the morning (.) jump off and knock the shit out of you and I:: was exposed many times to the cops coming in there and raiding the club and trying to arrest you (.) even to the extent that they thought all the paedophiles were hanging out in the gay bars (.) policemen would film all of us (.) they make you stand against the wall and look at you and say ja:: I’ve seen your face (.) I know who you are (.) we know who you are (.) we’ll catch you (.) I was exposed to a lot of that sort of gay bashing

Unlike Lutho who has not had such dangerous experiences, Ian wisely chose not to publicly flaunt his homosexuality for fear of the repercussions, particularly during the apartheid era during which homosexuality was criminalised.

4.5.2 Keeping it Quiet

In this study all of the participants (except Lutho who claims he has always been open about his sexuality) went through a phase in which keeping their sexual orientation hidden was paramount. In her influential work “Epistemology of the Closet” (1990) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick states that the closet is a defining feature of homosexual oppression. When an individual finally acknowledges to self that she or he is homosexual, there is often a period in which there is elevated anxiety around private or public disclosure to others. One of Brendon’s comments is particularly relevant to this claim. Extract 18 is an excerpt from the interview with Brendon in which he asserts that he could not have begun his work to integrate his Christianity with his homosexuality if he had remained in the closet.

Extract 18: “It couldn’t have begun while I was in the closet”

Verity: You:: certainly have gone through a struggle in trying to get the Christianity .hh and the sexuality together (.) when did that struggle begin?

Brendon: .hhh well (.) ***It couldn’t have ... begun while I was:: in the closet*** because::e you got this homosexuality on the one side and .hh you’re trying to pretend for the next four years that you’re not homosexual (.) that it’s not a part of you

Verity: Why would you need to pretend?

Brendon: Because of society (.) because the church here in Fort Langham said (.) nothing (1.0) it said nothing (*Bold and italics mine*)

Brendon's claim is significant. In saying that he felt it necessary to be in the closet, to pretend that he is not gay, he is also saying that there is significant collusion from the Church and society for him to remain in the closet. His meaning might be that the closet silence does not only occur as a result of a decision by homosexuals to stay in the closet but that the Church and society are actually not willing to have the conversation. They shut it down and actively collude to keep homosexuals closeted and silenced. This is the oppression to which Sedgwick refers. Brendon also claims that homosexuality is not simply covered up; the topic is avoided altogether in his community.

A common feature of the interviews with participants is the fear of what consequences might result from discovery or disclosure of homosexual desire and how participants address these issues.

Brendon, in Extract 18, states that he could only begin to integrate his Christian belief with his sexual orientation once he had emerged from the closet. I move now to the participant I named "Pastor" in the Methodology chapter. He is in active ministry. At the time of the interview with Pastor he was not involved in a gay relationship, nor had he been for some time. In Extract 19 he describes his fear of the consequences of discovery.

Extract 19: "I'm afraid to be cast out"

Pastor: I still need to safeguard myself (1.0) and it's not because I'm afraid for people to find out who I am (.) but I'm afraid to be cast out (.) the one thing I'm absolutely sure of is (1.0) God has put me in the ministry and He will take me out (1.0) but I might just be kicked out (.) or I might be allowed to stay in with conditions (1.0) and I think that's the scary part for me

Verity: (You're scared of the conditions?)

Pastor: Ja that's the scary part for me (.) I'm now living (1.0) not a full life (.) or a complete life (.) but I'm living a life for which I am fine (1.0) but I think I'm scared of being told (.) we'll accept you (.) we will keep you in the ministry (.) but these are the conditions you are going to have to adhere to (1.0) an:::d being looked on as a freak by my fellow colleagues who embraced me before (.) I'm afraid that suddenly I'm now going to be seen as the one who messes around with children because that is their idea about homosexual people

Verity: Serious?

Pastor: YES

The passage (Extract 19) shows that Pastor fears irrational treatment by his peers, by those in authority over him and by the members of his congregation. The homophobia within his church denomination could conceivably cause his ministry to stall and his calling to be compromised. His protective response is to remain silent. In the Literature Review I noted that, in an essentialist approach, homosexuality is often conflated with paedophilia and is considered to be contagious and a threat to society. However, the argument that perpetrators of child molestation are linked to homosexuality has been largely debunked (Clark, 2006; Herek, n.d.; Jenny, Roesler, & Poyer, 1994; Stevenson, 2000), hence my surprise that Pastor expected to be labelled as someone "who messes

around with children". I return to Pastor's story later in this chapter when his concerns and resistance are further discussed.

Pastor (in Extract 19) explains that he is afraid to be cast out of his religious community should it be discovered that he is homosexual. In order for him to be cast out there must be some (perhaps false) information and belief regarding the place of homosexuality in Christianity and society that is held by his parishioners and church authorities. Being in the closet can be far more difficult for someone whose community, family and church have remained silent on these issues. I have discussed Entle previously. She is the one participant that grew up in a deeply rural village that was insulated from external sources of information such as television, newspapers and the internet. In Extract 20 she explains how her own knowledge of homosexual desire was suddenly widened. She was in Standard 9 (about 16 years old) at the time.

Extract 20: "Two women getting married!"

Entle: I read in Bona (.) Magazine (.) a Xhosa Bona Magazine where I saw two women getting married (.) .hh I remember I said what is this? (.) I didn't want to say it's bad because I never heard anyone talking about it saying its bad (.) .hhh but I said to myself Jesus Christ two women in Cape Town getting married! (1.0) then I ask myself .hh questions (.) .hh and what I like in that article (.) there were telephone numbers at the bottom (.) you know (.) to the editor (.) I wanted to know (.) I didn't know about internet at that time because .hh at schools there was nothing

Verity: [mm

Entle: I should have Googled .hh (.) I didn't (.) there was nothing .hh I just read and said how I wish I can see these people (.) .hh why am I interested? .hh why am I thinking about it when I cook? (.) I think about that article (.) I even cut it and kept it .hh (.) but it was just that one reading

The isolation and lack of information in her Xhosa village delayed the realisation and acknowledgment of her homosexuality. There was nothing in her community that would help her to gain insight into her own dilemma. Although Extract 20 shows the initial realisation that there is such a thing as homosexuality and that she is not alone in this world, Entle only began seriously seeking information when she had access to a computer and the internet at College. Her story highlights the community collusion around maintaining the silence around homosexuality and a general lack of information amongst deep rural communities in South Africa. She reported that the self-discovery process was lonely and difficult for her.

In Extract 20 Entle explains her surprise and amazement that there are others who have same-sex desire. What is interesting is that, when she did acknowledge same-sex desire to herself, she did not start questioning adults in her family or community or church. The implication of this is that there must have been something in the way that the community maintained the silence that would

preclude Entle from discussing it with anyone in her community. Entle's community, as previously noted regarding other participants' communities, did not want to open a discussion around sexuality and may well have actively colluded to keep Entle closeted and silenced. Possibly the silence implied an ignorance of the option of homosexuality as a lifestyle or merely a silence about sexuality in general as this could have been considered to be too private to be discussed. Entle reports that it was only much later, when the internet became available to her, that she began to process her sexual identity and move out of the closet.

4.6 Breaking the silence

In this part of the analysis the sadness and silence of living in the closet are replaced by participants' consideration of disclosing their sexual orientation to others. When participants reach this stage they report starting with a debate. Participants include concerns about whether to disclose, what to disclose, to whom they might speak, why they might or might not disclose and the possible consequences of that disclosure. I have shown in the literature that the most significant concern regarding disclosure to other individuals was their evaluation or judgment (Franke & Leary, 1991). Examples of the fear of disclosure have already been shown in the previous section, whereas in this section I analyse the practices of actual disclosure and their consequences.

4.6.1 Thinking about disclosure

A consideration of disclosure to others typically follows the acknowledgment and acceptance of one's own homosexuality. The first step to the disclosure process is a cost-benefit debate during which many decide first to disclose to friends, followed by family and then other significant adults (Pitt, 2009; Robertson, 2011). A significant challenge is the possible perceived power differential when disclosure to parents or other adults is considered, whereas the equal power of peers or friends is conducive to disclosure. According to Robertson (2011) most gay men begin disclosure towards the end of High School, usually between 14 and 18 years of age. However, for Brendon, disclosure was particularly problematic and it was only in his early twenties that he was able to confide in a close friend that he was gay. In Extract 21, Brendon describes how he finally managed his first disclosure.

Extract 21: “It was the first time I had said I’m gay”

- Brendon: Anyway I:: met:: a girl there (.) Claire (.) she was quite:: the party animal and she had been with guy::s and I was the one who looked after her (.) she had a rough Saturday night (.) and she said Brendon I just wanna tell you something (.) that I am Bisexual (.) and then I:: said to her I’m Bisexual too ((laugh)) and she’s like (.) ja no (.) I thought so (.) and then a couple of weeks later
- Verity: That’s interesting so you didn’t go the who::le step
- Brendon: I didn’t go the whole step (.) I remember I went partying and:: Claire met me (.) this time I was hammered an:d (.) anyway I said to Claire (.) “I’m gay” (.) it was the first time I had said “I’m gay”
- Verity: [mm
- Brendon: In my third year out of school .hhh an::d I said “Claire I’m gay” (.) she said (.) I know and she said Brendon I’m not Bi (.) I said it because I wanted you to say this

This dialogue shows how inordinately difficult it was for Brendon to disclose to even his closest friends. However, when disclosure occurs, it is often accompanied by a strong sense of relief. As explicated in the Literature Review disclosure usually occurs first to friends, then siblings and finally to parents (Robertson, 2011). Robertson (2011) also notes that, when faced with the task of disclosing to parents, most homosexual men and women disclose first to their mothers. Ian, a fifty-year old participant in this study, remembers well what happened when he disclosed to his parents. He too followed the pattern noted by Robertson (2011) of disclosing first to his mother. This is shown in an excerpt (Extract 22) from the interview with Ian.

Extract 22: “I came out of the closet and my parents accepted it”

- Ian: When I was a drama student I came out of the closet and .hh my parents accepted it (.) I mean my mother cried (.) she said I’m happy you finally accepted it for yourself (.) and .hh so there I was very lucky (.) I was very fortunate
- Verity: sho
- Ian: My parents didn’t shun me at all (.) .hh I was accepted like this (.) they:: spoke for two or three minutes and that was it (.) and we had supper (.) it wasn’t an issue for them (.) so he ((gestures to partner)) had a big problem (.) my:: partner had a big problem with his parents accepting it (.) they said they just want to die basically (.) .hh but I was very fortunate (.) my parents accepted it

Ian relates the difference in response between his own parents and that of the parents of his partner. Sadly his partner refused to be a participant in this research because he had received such judgment and condemnation from his Christian parents and Christians in general during his coming out process. The psychological distress had a long-term effect in his case in agreement with Robertson (2011). According to Robertson (2011) most parents respond negatively and take a lengthy time to accept their child’s homosexuality. Pitt (2009) does note that occasionally mothers become aware and are accepting of their child’s homosexual orientation some time before the child discloses to them. In Ian’s case his mother had possibly worked through the likelihood of her son being gay before he disclosed to her, whereas his partner’s parents had not at any time accepted their son’s sexuality. Whilst gay and lesbian participants begin to work through their sexualities long before they choose to disclose, parents are often taken by surprise and are unprepared or

uninformed. Families and friends of homosexuals in South Africa are impacted as much as gay men and lesbian women themselves. Ian is 50 years of age and it is remarkable that his parents were so well informed and prepared for his disclosure during a period of South African history marked by considerable State sanction, criminalisation and significant societal homophobia. In contemporary South Africa information is more readily available to homosexuals as well as their parents and parental shock at a child's disclosure is notably more moderate for younger participants.

Following disclosure to friends and family participants in this study spoke of their debates about public disclosure, or disclosure to work colleagues and Christian communities. A case in point is Pastor's choice not to disclose to his parishioners or church authorities. Franke and Leary (1991) argue that there is often an assumption that complete disclosure to everyone is indicative of the highest degree of psychological health of gay men and lesbian women, including disclosure within a Christian community or work environment. However Franke & Leary (1991) also show that the practical circumstances of participants may dictate the boundaries of their openness to others. In this study both Magriet and Odwa note that they have never disclosed their sexuality to work colleagues and clients. Both of these participants made an informed decision that disclosure might significantly harm their respective careers and income. Both claim high income earning capacities, live in cities and have professional identities to uphold. In these instances they report that the healthier option was not to disclose in the context of their professional lives. Extract 23 is an excerpt of the interview with Magriet in which she explains her reasoning for the non-disclosure of her homosexual identity at work.

Extract 23: "They would feel uncomfortable"

Magriet: Because I am a professional at work I don't always tell people that I'm gay (.) I know that lots of people will:: hh um:: (1.0) will judge me because of the type of work I do (.) they would basically feel uncomfortable (.) and for that reason I won't tell them (.) um:: because I also believe that my professional life is comple::tely separate from my personal life and I think everyone believes that (.) so why do I have to then te::ll people that I'm gay at work so::

Verity: [mm

Magriet: that's completely different (.) but again if someone sees on my Facebook page o::r asks me if I'm gay I won't hide it (.) I really don't care then but I keep things separate (.) and I'm not someone who wants to go to the () and wants to rub in people's faces that I'm gay (.) I just want to live my life

In Extract 23 Magriet asks "why do I have to tell people that I'm gay at work?" The implication of this is that she is not required to disclose her sexuality to her clients since heterosexual colleagues never make this kind of disclosure nor does anyone expect them to do so. Disclosure of homosexuality in professional life is closer to a confession than it is to a simple impartation of information since the consequences of the disclosure can be significant. And a confession implies an admission of

wrongdoing. Magriet is one of the participants who has managed her two identities successfully and fully accepts her homosexuality. For her no wrongdoing is implied. A further implication is that the divulging of homosexuality ought to be a private decision, one that is made at the sole discretion of the person doing the disclosing. An expectation of disclosure is therefore an infringement on that freedom of choice.

4.6.2 Exorcising the demon

In the previous section the debate about disclosure as well as practices of disclosure by homosexual participants was examined. This part of the Analysis chapter deals with the responses, specifically Christian responses and interventions that result from disclosure. Discussion begins with Anele, a young Xhosa man who is debating whether he wants to continue to be a practicing Christian. Extract 24 is an excerpt of the interview with Anele which explains that he attended a historically White English-medium High School (often referred to as an ex-Model C school in South Africa). In Extract 24 Anele expresses confusion with respect to competing identities and is perturbed by the comments about his homosexuality from his Xhosa friends and family. He presents as an articulate effeminate young man who thinks deeply about the issues he faces in life.

Extract 24: “Maybe religiously there’s no place for me”

Anele: Okay:: there is a God and I go to church religiously .hh and um:: I pray sometimes and I understand that if things are wrong .hh there’s Someone I can appeal to (.) .hh a Higher Power (.) .hh that is something I grew up understanding and knowing (.) then:: people changed that view for me (.) people say that .hh the Bible:: has different verses which object to homosexuality (.) an::d I am either a child .hh of (1.0) the White man since I’m a Westernised product because I’m homosexual now (.) and that is .hh (totally) un-African (.) or that I have been taken in by the devil (.) an::d .hh I’ve taken to his ways (.) now (.) I think of myself a certain way (.) my mother would think that I’m just (1.0) practicing satanic rituals (.) and my mate would think that it’s my:: Model C education that’s directing me in a different s::tream (.) so now I think okay there’s conflicting views about me an::d they kind of impose on me (.) maybe I don’t have a place in this circle you know (.) .hh maybe religiously .hh there’s no place for me (.) because clearly I identified myself as homosexual (.) I refuse to think that .hh it’s something that is .hh uncouth or not right (.) then I must not fit in here (.) maybe I should then .hh do some introspection (.) then I decided to take a back seat

I mentioned in the Literature Review that contemporary political and traditional leaders have punted the idea that homosexuality is a Western import and is unAfrican (Epprecht, 2013; Gibson, 2010; Reddy, 2002; van Zyl, 2011; Ward, 2013). Black homosexuality is thus de-legitimised and heterosexism strongly endorsed (Gibson, 2010; Mtshiselwa, 2011). Indeed homosexuality in the Xhosa culture has been described as “an anathema” (Mtshiselwa, 2011). In an early part of the interview with Anele, he explained that he had been circumcised as part of his traditional Xhosa

entry into manhood. Implicit in this is that he identifies himself as being a traditional Xhosa man (Gwata, 2009; Mhlahlo, 2009), regardless of his sexual identity. In Extract 24 he says that he is also part of Western English culture, having been educated in a historically White English-medium school. In addition to these differing influences, until fairly recently, he also saw himself as being Christian. It is interesting that both essentialist Christianity and Xhosa traditional culture overlap in their rejection of homosexuality as a normal variant of sexuality amongst human beings. In Extract 24 Anele articulates that he seems not to fit anywhere and wishes to withdraw (from Christianity) to do some introspection.

Joffe (1998), in describing social representations theory, asserts that rather than looking at facts and reasons to explain events that occur in society, participants in her study drew on an us-versus-them understanding. For example, American heterosexuals (the in-group) might claim that AIDS is confined to the American male homosexual population (the out-group) and do not take into account the fact that HIV exists amongst the entire population, including heterosexuals. In another example contemporary evangelicals might call homosexuality “the gay agenda” thereby grouping homosexuals as an out-group who seeks to weaken family bonds and Christian morality in America. In doing this they seek to strengthen their own religious identity and group cohesion (Ganzevoort et al., 2011). Out-groups could include foreigners, other races, other language groups, other nationalities and the like.

In Extract 24, Anele’s homosexuality is ascribed to the deviant behaviour of an out-group (the White community) by his Black friends. In other words, they conflate Whiteness with deviant sexuality. His mother conflates homosexuality with Satanism. So Anele’s racial identity, his sexuality, and his religious leanings are all brought into question. Implicit in this is that he does not belong to his in-group (Black, heterosexual and Christian) and is accused of being part of a polluting outsider group (White, homosexual and Satanic). In another part of the interview Anele expressed his confusion of being a (circumcised) man and a homosexual who attends church and so these issues were central to his internal debate some time before his friend and mother brought it into focus. According to O’Brien (2004) his internal debate is likely to continue for some time before he resolves these issues for himself.

Other participants in this study describe various Christian responses to disclosure of homosexual desire. I have previously described the participant, Carolyn, who had become infatuated with a Bible-study Leader (pseudonym Diane). Carolyn’s advances were rejected on the basis of Diane’s

Christian interpretation of biblical teachings. Diane described Carolyn as being possessed by a homosexual demon and suggested demonic deliverance (or exorcism) as a valid method of removing Carolyn's homosexual desire. Extract 25 expresses Carolyn's acceptance of this judgment and interpretation.

Extract 25: "It's a demon inside of you that makes you feel this way"

Carolyn: In Standard Eight (.) um half way through the year (.) I was committed to:: Linksmed for a week or two (.) but (.) ja (.) basically it was all really related to:: me being completely in love with Diane and her telling me repeatedly (.) don't feel this way (.) it's wrong (.) it's a demon inside of you that makes you feel this way

Verity: [and you bought that?

Carolyn: I believed it because I believed in Christianity:: and she was this:: Leader (.) she knew what she was talking about you know (.) she's .hh older and wiser (.) her dad was a minister (.) he'd been through all these things

The perceived power differential between Diane, a minister's daughter and an older leader in the church, and Carolyn who was younger and perceived to be more ignorant of spiritual things, arguably gave Diane the credibility to convince Carolyn that the interpretation of demon possession was correct. In Extract 25 Carolyn describes a common Christian response to the disclosure of homosexuality (Anonymous, 2015; O'Brien, 2004). Six other participants experienced similar homophobic rhetoric from Christians, but only one, Faye, described a number of different responses from Christians in her church community. Faye had been married to a prominent leader in her church and of her community. When the news of her homosexual affair broke, her husband, himself a man who had indulged in a number of affairs, spread the news of his wife's infidelity with her lesbian lover. Extract 26 is an excerpt from the interview with Faye, in which she lists a variety of responses from her church and social community.

Extract 26: "They would cross over to the other side to avoid me"

Verity: So what responses did you get from the people who knew about all this?

Faye: Steve my husband told a lot of people in the church (2.0) ja so there were a lot of rumours and stuff but nobody ever came to ask me or talk to me:: about it (1.0) nobody:: (3.0) there were two ministers in town who contacted me separately (.) an::d said (.) we just want you to know that we're here for you:: (.) and the minister at our church was very supportive (.) um (.) so I continued going to church (.) .hh it wasn't easy though (.) my:: daughter in law's mom and I had been very good friends for years (1.0) and she just stood by me (1.0) unconditionally (.) .hh she and I would go to church together (.) she'd walk in front of me and I'd hover behind her shoulder (.) and we would just sit in the same place

Verity: [she shielded you

Faye: mm:: (2.0) there were people in the church if I'd see them:: at the shopping centre they would cross over to the other side to .hhh to avoid me (.) um:: ja (4.0) my father's second wife was very charismatic (.) she called me when she heard (1.0) and told me that I must go for deliverance because my father had been a freemason an::d um:: (1.0) clearly this was the work of the devil (3.0) um (2.0) an::d when I told my mom about Joyce her response was .hh I could have loved a woman ((chuckle)) (4.0) we also had a:: Bible Study group that's been ongoing .hh all these years

Verity: mm

Faye: an::d (3.0) from time to time the subject of homosexuality has come up an::d the majority of them just shake their heads and say well they don't really know

Christians who were negative towards Faye ranged from ascribing her lesbian affair to demonic activity resulting from her father's free-masonry, through to ignoring or avoiding her altogether. Notably nobody spoke to Faye about it. However Faye (Extract 26) also relates that not all responses by Christians and other friends were negative. In fact she focused on specific examples of significant support. Faye was positively received by three ministers of religion, her mother, her daughter-in-law's mother and her Bible Study Group. This experience of a continuum of acceptance-rejection is consistent with literature as explicated in the Literature Review (Oosthuizen, 2013; van Loggerenberg, 2008).

Other participants in this research assert that the most psychologically damaging responses came from Christians who linked homosexuality to demon possession or some form of collusion with Satan. In Extract 26 Faye is encouraged to seek demonic deliverance because of her father's involvement in free masonry. However the offer of deliverance from the demon of homosexuality is reported by participants to be more common, although, as noted in the Literature Review, there is nothing biblical that links homosexuality with demons or deliverance (or exorcisms) (Moyer, 2010). Most participants said that they had managed to avoid a deliverance process themselves. Reparation therapies (including exorcisms) are reported to have limited success (Johnston & Jenkins, 2006) and, according to the APA, can lead to psychological harm (Carey, 2012; Silverstein, 2003; van Zyl et al., 1999). In this study only one participant, Carolyn, reported that she agreed to submit herself to a deliverance ritual and another participant, Brendon, spontaneously spoke of witnessing some of these deliverance events. In Extract 27 Carolyn explains the events, at fourteen years old, when she experienced the series of exorcisms.

Extract 27: "They had someone in to exorcise demons"

Carolyn: I think sometime in Standard Seven (.) there was a bit of a craze of having exorcisms (.) I remember there was:: (1.0) some:: Priest or something that we went to:: (.) and they had someone in to exorcise demons (.) there was a bit of a sermon beforehand (.) it was a farce (.) it was like um:: the Salem Witch trials (.) you know with .hh all that hype (.) that collective hysteria (.) I was a teenager and there were other friends of mine who were getting exorcised (.) so I thought this must be what it is (.) I must have demons inside me (.) so:: I mean you see someone else going through their exorcism an::d you think okay that's what it is (.) you know (.) you see things in movies and stuff (.) it's ((sigh, whisper)) embarrassing to me now ((laugh))

Verity: Did they have an altar call or something?

Carolyn: Ja something like that (.) who:: has problems o:r thinks they have::? they'd pray for you and then you would decide whether you thought you had a demon or not and go to the room with him and some other people (.) and I went through the calling out of who is this demon (.) and they asked

give us your name (.) all that stuff (1.0) ja: (.) I'm really glad my friends at university don't know this stuff ((chuckle))
 Verity: So then they laid hands on you
 Carolyn: Ja: ja and
 Verity: and the demon was:
 Carolyn: exorcised ja

As shown in Extract 27 Carolyn is embarrassed by her experience although she reported that her mother and leaders in her church argued that the exorcisms were effective. Nevertheless Carolyn's sexual orientation remained constant disproving this contention. Carolyn argues that the rituals were ineffective and caused her further psychological distress. She is one of the two participants who have chosen to reject Christianity in its entirety and claims that the negative impact of the exorcisms was a significant factor in this decision. She reported that she had never been happy as a Christian and does not experience other Christians as happy.

Brendon and Carolyn had been friends since primary school. He had disclosed his homosexuality to himself but not to others at the time that Carolyn's exorcisms occurred. Brendon described himself as two people living inside: one that was gay and one that was Christian and desperately trying not to be gay. He had observed some of Carolyn's exorcisms and, as a result of similar discussions with Christians who influenced Carolyn to undergo exorcism, also believed that he was possessed by a homosexual demon and was in need of deliverance. His response to observing Carolyn's exorcism ritual in a large charismatic church is shown in Extract 28.

Extract 28: "It horrified me and it's messed her up"

Brendon: I sat and watched (.) twice .hh an::d it horrified me (.) an::d it's:: messed her up
 Verity: [mm
 Brendon: and I told her (.) I said Carolyn you know that (1.0) was the worst thing people could have done to you
 Verity: [mm
 Brendon: um:::
 Verity: Okay (.) but that didn't mess you up? (.) watching that didn't mess you up?
 Brendon: It did (.) it separated the two people in me (.) even more
 Verity: a:::h ok

Brendon went on to say that the experiences really damaged Carolyn and left him in deeper silence and despair. Implicit in this is that Brendon withdrew further into the closet and feared disclosure significantly more after the deliverance experiences and, as noted previously in this chapter, only managed to disclose to a close friend in his early twenties when he was inebriated. Years after the exorcisms Brendon reported that he expressed his anger to Diane, the Bible Study Leader who had rejected Carolyn's advances, claiming she had abused Carolyn emotionally and had been

instrumental in Christians victimising her. Although Diane was a leader in the church at the time, she had received no formal training and Brendon reported that she had become involved in ministries that he considered to be “not right”. Part of his anger towards Diane reportedly included his distaste for her involvement in these fringe ministries. The implication of the events is that the deliverance ceremonies had significant psychological and emotional effects on both Carolyn as the recipient and on Brendon who observed.

Whilst deliverance ministries represents one response by Christians a number of other participants experienced counselling as an alternative Christian approach to addressing homosexual orientation. Hillary’s story includes both Christian counselling as well as therapy given by a trained mental health professional. Hillary attends a charismatic Christian church and is married to a man she describes as controlling. At a time of considerable emotional distress she found solace in a female friend and this eventually led to a lesbian affair. In Extract 29 Hillary explains what happened after she admitted her affair to her husband Allan and, in particular, reflects on the experience of being counselled by Christians.

Extract 29: “I had to almost grovel on the floor for forgiveness”

Hillary: I came out with it and he said (.) well we need to go and see somebody about it and (.) we booked in with this Christian couple that counselled us before (.) they asked me personal questions! (3.0) oh:: my word that was just terrible (.) I felt so hated ((emotional)) (13.0) .hh God’s not ugly (.) not like that (.) because everything they said was like (.) this is adultery and .hh you not allowed to be gay:: and it’s sinful and .hh the penalty for sin is death (.) .hh how am I meant to feel? (.) it wasn’t even about the adultery! (.) it was about who I was .hh being an adulterous with (.) that’s really it

Verity: So it was the gay:: thing that was the problem?

Hillary: It was the gay:: thing that they hit on (.) they made me feel worthless (.) I had to almost grovel on the floor for forgiveness (.) it’s sin to lie:: with another woman or with another man (.) it’s adultery (.) I mean I’m talking raised voices and I’m sitting there and I’m too timid for this (.) I can’t do this

Verity: And Allan? Was he part of the voicing?

Hillary: He never said a wo::rd (.) he just smiled

Verity: mm

Hillary: And I’m like .hhh I refuse to go back (.) I insisted on finding another marriage counsellor (.) a proper marriage counsellor

Verity: And now when you look back on that how do you feel?

Hillary: Sad (.) because I needed them (.) .hh I needed them to embrace me and say it’s okay ((emotional)) we will get through this (.) we will find out what’s right for you (.) what God wants for you (.) they didn’t do that (.) .hh I’m sure they meant good (.) but they didn’t do what was right

During the interview Hillary detailed the humiliation she was subjected to by her Christian counsellors and the nature of the humiliation itself. Hillary said she willingly went to the counsellors for help and guidance and reported that they added to her suffering by humiliating her, told her she was a sinner and forced a confession out of her. Implicit in this is a requirement for confession. At other times in the interview Hillary reported that she was distressed because she had committed

adultery. Hillary's struggle had little to do with the fact that she had committed adultery with a woman. Homosexuality then was not her issue. Yet the counsellors missed this and targeted the gender of her lover rather than the extra-marital affair itself. This means that Hillary was forced to confess to something that was not central to her struggle. She asserts that "they did not do what was right". In this way Hillary articulated her own understanding of what was right and reflected that the counsellors should have focussed on her ethical dilemma and not on the gender of the person with whom she committed adultery. The Christian counsellors failed to identify Hillary's struggle, they were partisan in their approach in that Hillary's husband was not addressed, and they failed to approach Hillary with empathy and support. Confession of homosexuality appears to have been central to the dialogue (as opposed to adultery), as is the plea for forgiveness.

It is interesting that the deliverance ministries and the Christian counselling both require a confession of sin in the narratives of Carolyn and Hillary. Following the confession the two approaches diverge. Deliverance means that the sin is ascribed to a demon (of homosexuality) and exorcism is then required to purge the confessor of her homosexuality. In contrast the Christian counsellors appear to hold the sinner responsible for the homosexuality and appear to believe that vilification will result in the sinner choosing to renounce her homosexuality.

4.6.3 Feeling okay

In the last section I stated that the participants who experienced Christian counselling did not find it useful. In this section I move to the use of therapy offered by professionally trained mental health practitioners: psychiatric nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists. Those who experienced both forms of counselling stated that psychotherapy offered by a professional was more useful in resolving identity issues. The difference possibly lies in the fact that mental health professionals have a code of conduct that states a therapist's own belief system ought not to be used in an unhelpful way (Allan, 2011), whereas Christians use their interpretation of Biblical texts as their primary resource in counselling. In addition, as explained in the Literature Review, the professional community dismissed homosexuality as pathological a few decades ago and does not view homosexual lifestyles as particularly problematic.

Of the thirteen participants six entered into some form of professional psychotherapy, and seven did not attend therapy at all. Of those who did not attend therapy, four would likely not have had the

means to afford private therapy. In contemporary South Africa the State does offer free therapeutic services, but these are limited to State tertiary hospitals. Clinical psychologists who work at these hospitals tend to deal mostly with in-patients who have become psychotic or are a danger to themselves or others. The four participants who did not attend therapy were never so distressed as to warrant admission and were not in a financial position to pay for private psychotherapy.

According to the participants strategies used by professional therapists include empathetic and non-judgmental listening, openness to dealing with the issues and protection of participants who were seriously vulnerable. They also allowed participants to begin to deconstruct Christian fundamentalism and develop resistance to social and religious homophobia. In therapy participants report feeling supported as well as challenged. Hillary's narrative is interesting because she experienced the derogatory Christian counselling mentioned previously followed by couples therapy with a psychiatric nurse. Her story continues in Extract 30.

Extract 30: "She didn't say what I did was right or wrong"

Hillary: She was a psychiatric nurse (.) I've no idea if she was Christian (.) she:: was brilliant (.) Allan made me:: explain everything (.) wo::rd for wo::rd (.) everything that I have done (.) how I'd met he::r .hh conversations we'd had (.) and Sandra said (1.0) okay (.) she's done all this for you (.) now in three days' time you're going to ask her a question (.) she's going to answer it differently and you're going to tell her she's lying to you (.) you're never going to be happy (.) you're never going to trust her (.) so:: you're punishing yourself (.) she said you're not giving her a safe place (.) she can't discuss anything with you (.) I did enjoy her because she didn't beat around the bush (.) she didn't say what I did was right or wrong (.) or vice versa to Allan

In Extract 30 Hillary's description of her experience shows that the psychiatric nurse was not partisan, was pragmatic and challenged both parties in sharp contrast to her experience of Christian counselling. Hillary also states that she did not know the belief system of the therapist meaning that the therapist's belief system did not impact the course of the therapy itself. In essence the Christian counsellors and the psychiatric nurse differed in their approach. The Christians were markedly homophobic whereas the mental-health practitioner was non-judgmental. The Christians used their individual understanding of the Bible as the means by which judgment was made whereas the psychiatric nurse was neutral toward both husband and wife. The Christian counsellors castigated only Hillary whereas the psychiatric nurse challenged both husband and wife.

Magriet also attended therapy with a professional Christian psychologist. The psychologist was reportedly employed by a large Christian church as part of their pastoral care team. Extract 31 shows an excerpt of the interview with Magriet in which she explains the results of his therapeutic approach.

Extract 31: “There’s no condemnation if you keep walking with God”

Magriet: I went for a lo::ng time of counselling an::d at the end of it the psychologist just basically told me (.) you know your life with God and your experience is like a journey and you’ll have to:: walk your journey (.) um an::d there’s no:: condemnation if you keep walking with God (.) and whatever you have to deal with yourself and with God (.) and that’s kind of the path that I then decided to take (.) hh because living the lie was more destructive within myself than living with um (.) what I knew was true (.) but I also decided that it’s not going to be without God (.) I don’t justify homosexuality as being absolutely right and if God wants to change me then I will accept that but I:: can’t live a lie (.) I think the church just should be supportive and u::m (1.0) ja! show God’s love um

Like Hillary, Magriet experienced the approach of her therapist as being helpful to her. Specifically Magriet claimed the therapy increased her self-acceptance, lifted much of her depression and assisted her in being honest with herself and with God. Unlike Hillary, Magriet states her agreement with much of Christian discourse that homosexuality is not “absolutely right”, but has chosen both to walk with God and to remain true to herself. In this excerpt (Extract 31) Magriet asserts not only that therapy was helpful, but that she has successfully managed to integrate her homosexuality with her Christian belief.

4.7 Speaking back

In this part of the analysis I discuss the resistances participants develop and how they begin to deconstruct Christian approaches to homosexuality. I have previously discussed two responses to homosexuality from essentialist Christianity, firstly that homosexuality can be resolved by deliverance from a demon of homosexuality and secondly that homosexuality can be resolved by Christian counselling. Church authority is accepted as the ultimate power over the lives and destiny of problematised homosexual people. However, it could also be argued that the reverse is true: that homophobia is the demon, and that the homophobia is evidenced in the treatment of homosexuals by Christians (Vorster, 2008). In this alternative view Church authority can be resisted by claiming that the problem lies in contemporary Christian interpretation and application of the Bible.

In this section I discuss the struggle, both internally and with the Church, which participants describe. Some of them have emerged as Christian homosexuals, with a positive identity, others have not. Many thought-provoking comments have been made about the dilemma. This includes a lack of transparency of the Church, silence, confused messages, and sometimes blatant judgmentalism.

4.7.1 The Hypocritical Church

In the Literature Review I considered how homosexuals seek to discredit the authority of the Church (Yip, 1999, 2002). In this study many participants perceive the Church as hypocritical and actively discredit some of their reasoning. Although many comments regarding this issue were made by participants, I have chosen just three for the sake of clarity and brevity (Extracts 32, 33 and 34) to illustrate their views.

Extract 32: "I know there are clergy who have extramarital affairs"

Gerda: I know there are clergy who have extramarital affairs (1.0) that's acceptable (.) but you whom God has created like this is now seen as a person who (1.0) is the evil one

Verity: mm

Gerda: I know God is okay with me (1.0) but the institution (1.0) who has accepted me now (2.0) are giving me a hard time and see me as the outcast (.) I think that's frightening

Extract 33: "Somebody who has cooked the books... still sits in church"

Karien: You know that hhh people get so emotional about gayness but not so much about somebody who has .hhh cooked the books an::d stole millions:: but still sits in church (.) and it's (.) shame he's done that but .hh let's welcome him back you know (.) he's still okay (.) and gayness is almost like this little (2.0) pet thing that people like to get emotional about (.) I don't understand the big deal about it really

Extract 34: "This one is gay so obviously he's got more sins"

Lutho: Everybody's sick everyday (.) but it's just that you see me as:: a gay person and you think I'm full of sins (.) but you don't actually look into your sins (.) .hh we sin by thinking by doing and by talking (.) so maybe n::nobody can see your sin (.) and you can pin point mine because you can see okay this one is gay (.) so obviously he's got more sins

In these comments are the seeds of resistance to Church homophobia. Participants describe hypocrisy, judgmentalism, victimisation and an unwarranted focus on the sins of homosexuality to the exclusion of other sins. This form of resistance to Church authority is far more common now amongst both homosexual and heterosexual Christians than was once the case (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007). For participants in this research homophobia has become equated with the Church's approach to homosexuality.

Inconsistencies in the attitudes of individual Christians or the Church itself can be challenged only when one possesses a positive self image to begin the process of deconstruction of fundamentalist Christian rhetoric (Yip, 1999, 2002). This implies that this oppositional phase of the coming out process generally occurs when homosexuals have confidence enough to begin to critically examine the attitudes of others. Once they see that it is homophobia (and not the Church or Christians) that

is problematic it troubles their relationship with the Church. This part of the Analysis chapter examines Church homophobia, the challenging of its legitimacy by gay men and lesbian women, the privatising of the belief and the outright rejection of Christianity.

4.7.2 Don't Ask, Don't Tell

In a previous section consideration was given to Pastor who feared the consequences should his homosexuality be discovered by those in authority over him. This section focuses on an excerpt of his story (Extract 35) in which he relates the troubling of his relationships with his Professors and Lecturers at College.

Extract 35: "What are you concerned about so that I can put your...fears to rest"

Pastor: A certain senior professor had a problem (.) had this suspicion about me (.) .hh he wasn't brave enough ever to come and ask me (2.0)

Verity: mm!

Pastor: I always said until anybody can prove it (2.0) they must prove it to me (1.0) then I left college (1.0) .hh and still nobody could prove it (.) they were still just ((whisper)) wondering (.) nobody was brave enough to come and ask me (.) I would say to them (.) now what is your concern? (1.0) I said (.) everybody is so concerned about me (.) tell me .hh what are you concerned about so that I can put your concerns and your fears to rest? (.) .hhh no we're just concerned you know (.) and I said (.) hhh do I ever ask you when you switch the light off at night and you go into the house with your wife what you do? (.) I said (.) why do you want to know what I do when I am off (.) when I'm on holiday? (.) it's got nothing to do with anybody (1.0) you know I just didn't make life easy for them (1.0) um:: because I wanted them to be bold enough to ask me

Verity: mm

Pastor: And they weren't because they knew they were opening themselves up for something which they are not ready to deal with yet (.) .hhh so the speculation was just there (.) the wondering was there

This is an interesting text because Pastor reported that he was not in a gay relationship at the time of the described event and yet he resists simply supplying the information hinted at by his lecturers. Instead he boldly challenges them to consider that, as heterosexuals, they are never questioned as to what sexual relations take place in their own private spaces, nor would there be an expectation of doing so. However, as heterosexuals they appear to lack respect in posing such questions to him. The hypocrisy and disrespect of the interrogators is thus made clear to them. He also claims that the lecturers were not ready to open a debate on homosexuality because they were not clear in their own minds as to what to do with it. Implicit in this is that the lecturers withdrew from the debate possibly because they did not have clear guidelines or the authority to enforce their own beliefs around homosexuality. In the Literature Review I argued that many mainstream denominations in South Africa do not officially accept homosexuality as a legitimate Christian lifestyle. Also in the

Literature Review I give details of the fierce debate in most South African denominations over the issue of homosexuality, possibly even an impending international split in the Anglican Church. It is therefore not surprising that, once resistance was experienced from Pastor, he reports that the lecturers withdrew from further discussion. Possibly if any one of them had been brave enough to challenge him more directly he would have been more open regarding his own position.

Sadly it transpired that the way in which this particular denomination dealt with Pastor was to prevent him from becoming an ordained minister for some time without ever discussing the real reason for doing so. It was only when a structural change in the hierarchy occurred within that denomination that a new Spiritual Director insisted he be ordained. This seems to confirm the ambivalence of the Church in how to deal with the possibility of homosexuality amongst its clergy and possibly also its members.

During Pastor's College experience the lecturers suspected he was homosexual but reportedly never identified this as the base-line issue. The College professors knew this was the issue, Pastor knew this was the issue and both parties failed to directly address it. Nobody wanted to come out of the closet. And both Pastor and the Church participated in this avoidance. In a sense they colluded to maintain the silence. The interesting nuance here is that the Professors wanted Pastor to confess since this appears to be critical to the process. Pastor had to be labelled as a sinner, thereby placing him in the vulnerable position of submission, whereas the lecturers could occupy the position of judges (Vorster, 2008). The Professors could have taken punitive measures against Pastor if he had complied and confessed. However the resistance to confession results in the Professors realising that they have no wish to open a debate about these issues (as opposed to openly applying punitive measures) and decided to remain silent. This means that everyone participated in keeping the closet door closed, not just Pastor. Pastor was both subversive and compliant. Implicit in this is that the power of the Professors appears to have been subverted by Pastor specifically because of the lack of clarity in policy and direction from the leaders of this particular denomination.

This excerpt is quite unlike Hillary's experience described earlier in which she was forced her to confess her lesbian affair. In that story Hillary complied and was subjected to condemnation and humiliation by the Christian counsellors involved. Intuitively Pastor feared a similar reaction and found an effective strategy to counter it.

In his mind Pastor's experience at College shaped his thinking of himself and who he could be within the boundaries set by the institutional Church. The professors were not open with him and this gave him license to dismiss their position in this respect since their approach was seen to lack transparency and integrity. Arguably, even though he is part of the Church and is indeed employed by the Church, he refuses to accept their judgment of him because of the way in which they failed him in this matter. If they had been affirming or at least respectful he might have responded by seriously considering his own position on his sexuality. It is not the events that led to the quiet rebellion, but the meaning Pastor gave to the Church's response. It justified a repudiation of their judgment in this particular matter. He states that heterosexuals do not receive that form of judgment. Therefore, where the Church problematises homosexuality, he responds by claiming that it is the homophobia within the Church that is the problem.

The "don't ask, don't tell" approach of the Church caused Pastor later to create a very private space around himself that Church members and hierarchy are not allowed to invade without invitation. His social circle became closed and private, particularly with respect to those who visit his home. In a sense he retreats back into the closet because he is unable to openly challenge Church homophobia for fear of the loss of his ministry (refer to Extract 19). But he compartmentalises in a subversive way. Surveillance and power are closely related. In his private space in his own home it is not possible to be scrutinised by the Church. The Church's power over him is therefore likely to be more limited in this context. Normally the closet is seen as an oppressive place but in this case Pastor's retreat into the closet likely creates a place of safety for him, an invisibility that allows him to avoid the consequences associated with the homophobia.

Pastor covertly rebelled against the homophobia of the Church, but because his response has been so private he does not present a challenge to the Church at large. He has reduced the authority of the Church in his own life and tolerates the conflict between himself and the Church by retreating back into the closet. This strategy is in agreement with findings given in the Literature Review (Barton, 2010; Levy, 2008; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001). It is a compromise position and one that both he and the Church can accept. In so doing Pastor has managed to integrate his sexual desire and his faith whilst remaining in the protective space of the closet.

There is a significant difference between the closet that Pastor occupies and that which Magriet, occupies. The excerpt of Magriet's interview (in Extract 23) Magriet describes choosing, for good reason, not to disclose her sexuality to her clients but is uncaring if a few of them make the

discovery. She argues that her professional standing is likely to be only slightly compromised. On the other hand Pastor has almost fully (re-)entered the closet in order to hide from his employers and seeks to withhold the information both from his congregants and from authority figures in his denomination. He reports that he decided his homosexuality is a private matter and, like Magriet, chooses not to discuss it with his superiors or his church members. Unlike Magriet, if a scandal arose about his sexuality the loss of his calling and his job would be a significant price to pay. Notably, both participants have managed to integrate their homosexuality and Christian belief, but they manage their contexts in different ways.

4.7.3 Biblical text strategies

In the last section I described Pastor's strategy in resisting expected punitive measures from within his denomination. Another method used to subvert negative Christian approaches to homosexuality is to refute the interpretations given to Biblical texts or to contextualise them so that they are framed as no longer being relevant in contemporary South Africa. The Church, across most denominations in South Africa but especially amongst conservative fundamentalist churches, has a particular heterotopic interpretation of Biblical texts that they claim pertains to all contexts across time. In the Literature Review I noted that there are various means of subverting the six core Biblical texts on homosexuality as found in published literature (Germond, 1997; Le Roux, 2006; Locke, 2005; Matthews, 2008; Muller, 1997; Nortje-Meyer, 2005; Otto, 2003; Punt, 2007a, 2014; Robinson, 2012). In this part of the Analysis I examine how the participants in this study interpret Biblical texts and how they respond to essentialist understandings of the texts.

Most of the participants appear to migrate easily between different denominations in South Africa and abroad and seem to view the differences between churches on the basis of different forms of praise and worship. Charismatic or fundamentalist churches are reported to have a more emotionally engaged form of worship in which a freer expression among congregants is encouraged. The actual theological differences are made clear in the Literature Review (Ward, 2004). I considered the possibility that many of the participants had no real understanding of the actual theological nuances in approach. In some of the interviews I probed participant perceptions of the differences. An excerpt of the interview with Carolyn is given in Extract 36 in which she conflates fundamentalist Christianity with the whole of Christian interpretation.

Extract 36: “I just decided that Christianity...is a construct. It’s not true”

- Verity: If it was okay to be gay was it okay to be Christian?
 Carolyn: I battled with that for a long time and (.) I can’t go back to church (.) I had it ingrained that the two are not compatible (.) so:::
 Verity: from Christians
 Carolyn: Ja (.) so::: the only way that I was able to accept myself was to:: say well the Bible was written by man (.) .hhh I mean (.) I just decided that Christianity (.) religion is a construct (.) it’s not true (.) I felt that I had to decide on one or the other
 Verity: .hhh so your experience then of Christians and Christianity .hh was (.) you are either fundamental Christian or you are not a Christian
 Carolyn: Ja
 Verity: So were there different kinds of Biblical interpretations that you came across?
 Carolyn: No
 Verity: And you did not seek those out by the time you .hh reached the point of accepting yourself as being gay? The Christian thing was done by then?
 Carolyn: Ja

In the Literature Review I described the interpretation and approach of essentialist/fundamentalist groups (Szesnat, 1997). I have also claimed that the post-apartheid Church in South Africa still holds significant sway in the public sphere. Carolyn has seemingly heard only essentialist Christian messages about homosexuality and equates that particular approach to Christianity in its entirety. She interprets this to mean that one can be a fundamentalist Christian or not a Christian at all. She could be homosexual or a Christian but never both.

Many participants report that they concur with the literalist interpretations of the six Biblical texts. They believe, like Carolyn, that all Christians interpret the Bible from the same fundamentalist paradigm and condemn homosexuality. They then form strategies to subvert that disapproval. However essentialist Christian interpretations base the judgment of homosexuality specifically on the six Biblical passages described in the Literature Review, and most participants failed to understand this. They simply accept that there is only one interpretation, that, according to the Bible, homosexuality is (correctly) condemned.

In their interviews Pastor, Magriet and Johan proved to have interrogated Biblical interpretations notably more than other participants. Johan mentioned two Bible passages, one of which is not mentioned in the Literature Review and is not considered to be core to the teaching of homophobia in the Church. In Extract 37 Johan describes his understanding of this passage from the Gospel of Matthew concerning a Roman centurion and his servant.

Extract 37: “His *pais* is saying, in modern terms, his live-in boyfriend”

- Johan: I thought now if this was such a pertinent thing and such a big sin:: .hh why did Christ Himself never say a thing about it?

Verity: [mm

Johan: Why if it was so important that people .hh propagate this hate and uh:: tell you you've got a demon in you (.) why didn't He say anything? (.) then I also did research on that and I came across uh:: .hhh the story of the Roman soldier (1.0) and his Pais (.) (1.0) which is sort of a:: a personal servant (.) but (.) speaking in that culture of a Roman soldier and his pais is saying (.) in:: m::odern terms (.) his live in boyfriend (.) it was understood as the same thing (.) he says to Him listen my pais is ():: (.) well obviously they're sexually involved .hh and Jesus didn't m::ention:: anything about their relationship (.) .hh He simply says to him (.) because you believe .hh he is cured (.) go back to him (.) okay now it's an interpretation and a lot of people would say uh-uh it's his servant you know (.) .hh but the fact is that the original Greek word pais has a lot of different understandings (.) and that started making me realise that if there is true love within a union (1.0) from what I've learned of Christ (.) He would never um:: not accept it

The point I make here is that Johan asserts that he has critically examined both Old Testament and New Testament passages and has realised that there are alternative interpretations, discrepancies and contestations. Johan seems to raise the point that there might have been a very different understanding of homosexuality at the time of Jesus Christ compared to our understanding in the contemporary context. Current understanding may therefore miss important nuances in the teaching and understanding of Jesus Himself.

Participants (other than Pastor, Magriet and Johan) did not appear to have an understanding of the verses that particularly refer to homosexuality and uncritically accepted the fundamentalist interpretations and judgmentalism. This implies that they have based their assessment of themselves and the Church on incomplete information.

4.7.4 Counter-rejection of Church authority

In previous sections I considered participants' strategies that entailed a critical examination of core Biblical texts that supposedly pertain to homosexuality, whereas this part of the Analysis examines how participants who have continued as practicing Christians and have managed to separate their relationships with God from their relationships with the institutional Church. They still belong to the Church, they still believe, but they claim that the Church rejects them as homosexuals and their reaction is to subvert the authority of the Church in respect of their sexuality. God Himself becomes their sole Arbiter and Judge. This counter-rejection and individualised approach has been discussed in the Literature Review (Ganzevoort et al., 2011; Yip, 1999, 2002) and is presented by participants sometimes in quite nuanced ways.

In Extract 38 Lutho, who attends a charismatic church, describes how he sifts the messages he receives from the preacher in his church.

Extract 38: "I can feel it when he is not spiritually led"

Verity: And you and the Bible?

Lutho: I am okay with the Bible (.) you interpret the Bible the way you want (.) to suit you (.) because the Holy Spirit reveals to you what the chapter is really saying

Verity: mm

Lutho: If I'm reading the Bible now (.) I would interpret it the way I want to interpret (.) and when I listen to: a sermon (.) when a preacher delivers the sermon (.) I don't know: how to explain it but I can feel it when he is not spiritually led (.) I'm not sure whether you understand

Verity: [I do

Lutho: .hh But you can also understand oh (.) he's just saying this to piss everybody off (.) you see? (.) if the Holy Spirit is there in that sermon (.) when he delivers the sermon (.) the Holy Spirit comforts you so that the message can have a place to stay in your heart

Lutho's argues that he carefully sifts the material presented to him and accepts only what he decides is acceptable. If the sermon does not sit well with him, he discards it, but, notably, he does not discard the preacher or the Church. If the preacher delivers a sermon condemning homosexuality he rejects the sermon, not Christianity and not the Church. Importantly Lutho belongs to the Xhosa culture in which a sense of community is deemed important. His approach to the dilemma seems to be indicative of his commitment to maintain community with God, with the Church and with his fellow Christians. In Extract 39 Magriet, who has a more Western perspective, explains how she manages her relationship with God and the Church.

Extract 39: "I dissociated the church ...from my relationship with God"

Verity: What about yourself in relation to: the church?

Magriet: I:: hh don't associate the different churches with God anyway (.) u::h and that's why hh I don't strictly: belong to a denomination (.) I'll just go to any church that's close to me and get involved there (.) because for me: (.) I define the Body of Christ um: (.) as two separate things (.) if the people in the church judge me it doesn't matter because I don't see them anymore as: u::m: (1.0) important (.) or (.) my salvation is not going to depend on the people in the church (.) so I basically: dissociated the chu::rch or the people or the judgment of the church from my relationship with God

In the excerpt of Margriet's interview (Extract 39) she explains that she has separated God and the Church and has lowered the authority of the Church and of other Christians over her life. Implicit in this (and previous Extracts) is that Magriet has deconstructed the fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible and has re-evaluated the authority of the Church in her personal life. This strategy is consistent with literature (Bosman, 2006; Maynard & Gorsuch, 2001) and reflects her fundamentalist Christian approach as well as the individualism valued by Western culture.

4.7.5 God does not abandon His people

A number of participants adopted the strategy of developing an individualised approach to spirituality as described in the previous section. Also noted in the interviews with participants is that many, at least at some stage of their lives, rejected both God and the Church. Carolyn for example has entirely rejected Christianity and has not re-committed to any particular belief system. In this research only two participants have rejected Christianity. This is in contrast to findings of a number of non-South African studies reported in the literature (Barton, 2010; Hillier et al., 2008; Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005; Wagner et al., 1994). These authors report that a significant number of their participants rejected Christianity entirely and left the Church. Arguably the Church in South Africa has been more influential in shaping the attitudes of people than is found elsewhere in the world. All of the participants who remain in or who returned to Christianity maintain that, throughout their struggles, God has never left them. Of all of the participants, Faye is possibly the clearest in explaining, in Extract 40, that she has never lost the connection with God.

Extract 40: "In spite of all...I am covered by His Grace"

Faye: I didn't feel excluded from God's Grace (.) how can it be (.) if I am:: possessed by evil spirits or oppressed by evil spirits (.) surely I would not feel a sense of God's grace surrounding:: my life overall (2.0) and I think that was the only thing that made sense uh:: to me spiritually (.) was:: (3.0) that in spite of all of this:: (3.0) there was a connectedness to God and a sense that God loves me and (1.0) I am covered by His Grace

Like Faye, many of the participants place a much higher value on their own God-experiences rather than on their Church experiences and have developed an integrated personalised theology. Notably this valuing of the individual position above the community occurred for participants of both Western and Xhosa cultures. This finding supports the research of Maynard and Gorsuch (2001) and Yip (1999, 2002), whose participants were all of Western culture. Evidence of an integrated personalised theology amongst the participants of this research is that, despite Church homophobia, ten of the participants have remained active in their church communities. This result also supports published literature (O'Brien, 2004; Ream & Savin-Williams, 2005; Yip, 2002).

4.7.6 Spaces of exception

In previous sections I have analysed the troubled relationship between homosexuals and the Church and examined how the participants have made sense of the relationship between themselves, the

Church and God. Most of them argue that the relationship with the Church is problematic. This is consistent with literature (O'Brien, 2004). However, in this section I examine those relationships that are exceptions.

In the Literature Review I describe how the Dutch Reformed Church Synod debates and research resulted in a clause included in their position statement of 2007 that allowed local congregations to make their own decisions regarding homosexual congregants (Anonymous, 2007). In this study I have seen this clause purposely used to afford inclusivity to homosexual congregants. Both Johan and Karien attend DRC churches and both have found acceptance in their local church communities, although both admit to remaining largely invisible with respect to their homosexuality. In Extract 41 Johan describes the level of acceptance he has experienced in his local congregation.

Extract 41: "Maybe it's comfortable for them as long as I don't... speak about it"

Johan: I started getting involved again:: (.) you know I'm in the:: NG Church (.) and I suppose it depends on the congregation

Verity: ja

Johan: An::d um:: (1.0) in my congregation I found an honesty (1.0) uh:: amongst the people (.) and acceptance (.) most people know that I am homosexual but I don't proclaim it (.) so:: (1.0) maybe it's comfortable for them as long as I don't' really speak about it (.) but they:: all know (.) .hh and obviously when I wanted to get married I:: went to the .hh Dominee and said ((chuckle)) I want to make a public commitment and I want it to be .hh done by the church and not just the law office (.) .hhhhh but then he:: didn't want to (.) he just said he:: has got no problem with it but concerning the whole:: church he's going to:: stone himself if he does something like that (.) I said well okay (.) I'm fine with that (.) then we found a:: civil officer

As can be seen in this excerpt Johan's level of acceptance within his own congregation is significantly higher than that offered by the institutional DRC. Interestingly though, Johan confesses that perhaps his acceptance is reliant on the fact that he is silent about his homosexuality and does not challenge his fellow believers in this way. He might well be accepted by many more congregants than he expects, but has never tested this. Alternatively of course Johan might be tolerated rather than accepted. His lack of activism might well be good for him, but he fails to challenge the Church at large. Perhaps within the wider social context in South Africa, this is the best that can be expected at the current time. It makes life bearable for the individual Christian homosexual but allows the status quo to be maintained.

Of the other participants Brendon does not mention whether he remained invisible in his congregation whereas seven other participants admit that, like Johan, they remain largely silent regarding their sexuality. The silence on the part of the homosexuals as well as that of the congregation may be due to the silence regarding sexuality in general in South Africa and amongst

Christians in particular. What is clear is that congregations other than Johan's may well display the same behaviour as his own congregation.

Aside from Johan, Lutho is the only other participant who is "out" to his congregation and is more aggressive than Johan in his approach to members of his local church. He appears to be accepted (or tolerated) by some in his congregation, although one incident with an Elder caused him to openly challenge the homophobia. Extract 42 shows how he dealt with this.

Extract 42: "I told the Pastor...so they reprimanded him"

Lutho: I remember there was a sermon this other time and the Pastor was preaching about drawing near to God so that God can draw near to you (.) now this Elder was calling an:: altar call (.) so I'm at the altar and now they started saying:: (.) .hh how can you draw near to God .hh because God doesn't want uh lesbians gays thieves and all those negative things? (.) and I thought (.) I'm here at the altar (.) obviously you're saying this to hurt me (.) it really pissed me off ((chuckle)) I couldn't do anything about it then because I was standing at the altar (.) .hh but after that I went to the:: Pastor and I told the Pastor that I felt very uncomfortable with what the Elder said (.) .hh so they reprimanded him

Verity: They actually reprimanded him?

Lutho: Yes and then he apologised in a Sunday service that God wants everybody to come

Lutho's form of overt challenge troubles the relationships with his Pastor and the Elder. Lutho, being of the Xhosa culture, is particularly concerned with community and relationships. His discussion with his Pastor would have likely centred on the relationship with the congregation which was perceived to be threatened by the disrespectful remarks of the Elder. The Elder had conflated sins like thievery with homosexuality and had given expression to his views. The Elder, having been reprimanded by his Pastor, apologised publicly for his homophobic comments. This is a significant event in that, in the Xhosa culture, respect and dignity are extremely important. The Elder was not only called upon to apologise publicly, but also accepted the reprimand from his Pastor and did so. This meant that he lost face within his congregational community, indicating that something serious and significant had occurred.

4.8 Last Words

Looking back on their experiences as gay men and lesbian women trying to resolve their sexuality and faith, participants in this study reflected that it was good to talk openly about their issues and struggles. Their resilience, insights, depth of understanding and strength of character of the participants in contemporary South Africa has been remarkable.

Even though most participants have managed to re-negotiate their Christianity in their development of positive Christian-homosexual identities, some have reportedly been accepted by neither Christians, because they are gay, nor by gays, because they are Christian (O'Brien, 2004). Magriet for example, as shown in Extract 43, describes how she lost her best Christian friend when the friend told her husband of Magriet's homosexuality.

Extract 43: "I lost my best friend"

Magriet: I lost my best friend and we still don't really have contact (.) hh u::m because of my decision to pursue:: a:: homosexual life (.) and that really hurt me (.) it didn't have an effect on:: my relationship with God really (.) it just hurt me (.) I was judged um:: (.) she didn't really ask me why o::r how do I feel about my relationship with Go::d o::r (where do I see) myself (.) it was just (.) it's wrong:: and I don't want to understand um:: because you chose this (.) so:: there's no:: further discussion um (.) so yes (.) it was a shock and yes it was a little bit of a rejection (.) and it made me very sad for a few weeks (.) but not because of my:: Christian values o::r Christian beliefs (.) it was just because I lost a:: very good friend

According to Magriet she was rejected by her close Christian friend because of her homosexual lifestyle. Johan on the other hand (in Extract 44) claims that, although he is accepted in his church, he has difficulty relating to homosexual friends because they do not want to discuss Christianity. Nor do his "ex-gay" Christian friends want to discuss homosexuality.

Extract 44: "A lot of my gay friends would not be into discussing Christianity"

Johan: People think you're going to judge them for the way they live (.) even your (.) gay friends (.) .hh because they're not Christian (.) .hh and if you say anything about their lifestyle .hh you've now become holy (.) whereas:: it's got nothing to do with that (.) I haven't become holy (.) I'm still who I am (.) but you don't have to live so self destructively (.) .hh I think a lot of my gay friends would be:: (1.0) would not be into discussing Christianity .hh so I have decided and I think okay .hh you can be:: anti Christian if you want to

Verity: [but you're not going to be?

Johan: Yes (.) I've got one friend that I'll speak sometimes to (.) he's also accepted his homosexuality and his Christianity (.) an::d .hh so with him I can sort of speak a lot about these issues (.) but like I say (.) other gay friends I have I simply can't speak (with) them either (.) .hh they've become Christian .hh and they:: completely now:: shun homosexuality (.) negating who they are (.) so they don't really want to speak to me because:: .hh I'm saying it's okay:: (.) they don't want to hear that anymore

In the face of suspicion from homosexual friends, Christians and ex-gay men, Johan, in Extract 44, asserts that it is possible and acceptable to be both Christian and gay. Johan reports that neither group accepts this. This is consistent with literature findings (O'Brien, 2004). The ex-gay Christians view homosexuals as part of an out-group that is not accepted, whereas homosexuals view Christians with equal suspicion and categorise them as the out-group. Each seeks to strengthen their own group identities without acknowledging that Johan could be both. His gay friends therefore call into question Johan's motives when he raises questions about their self-destructive behaviour.

Johan concludes that few individuals “out there” are both Christian and gay and implies that this is problematic.

As reported by many of the participants, there is often a terrible personal cost to the re-negotiation of their Christianity. It was for Johan. Some have lost friends, been rejected by family or become involved in alcohol addiction. Some have experienced demonic deliverance that left them psychologically damaged or were in therapy for years to learn to accept themselves and regain their confidence. The human suffering related by the thirteen participants has taken years to resolve. The resilience of the ten who have remained Christian is remarkable in their determination not to lose their faith whilst acknowledging the immutability of their homosexuality.

4.9 Conclusions

Homosexuals in contemporary South Africa continue to experience homophobia both within their social contexts as well as their Christian contexts. This research has investigated the meanings of experiences of homosexual men and women who were raised in Christian homes. A number of participants ascribed early cross-gendered play with early evidence of homosexual identity and all participants claimed that their homosexuality was inherent. Essentialist Christian understanding is that homosexuality is a choice. The participants’ conflation of early cross-gendered play as an indicator of homosexual identity is possibly an argument used to refute Christian claims of an ability to choose one’s sexuality differently.

Participants in this research found it difficult to acknowledge to self or to others that they were homosexual because this is viewed as counter to their own Christian beliefs and to heterosexual norms of South African society. Entry into and living in the closet was discussed as both holding advantages and disadvantages. Living in the closet could be a safe place for participants to debate internally those challenges that would later be faced when they began disclosing their homosexuality. The most significant disadvantage is reported to be the silence and isolation of not being able to discuss the struggles with significant others and the psychological distress that result from this. Silence in the community, their families and the Church was significant and made the journey to integration more difficult.

Disclosure practices of the participants of this research were found to be similar to findings of other studies (Butler & Astbury, 2008; Franke & Leary, 1991; Herek, 1996; Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007; Robertson, 2011). Two professional female participants reported that they have not disclosed their sexuality in their professional capacities. Reasons given for this decision is that they had separated their professional and personal lives, that they perceived possible negative impacts from disclosure and that heterosexual colleagues were not expected to make disclosures about their private lives. Their reasons support the findings of Franke and Leary (1991).

Participants reported that counselling or exorcism (from a demon of homosexuality) was suggested as valid means of removing homosexual desire. Those who experienced both Christian counselling and psychotherapy found Christian counselling to be less helpful than therapy given by trained mental health professionals. One participant who experienced exorcisms and another who observed the deliverance rituals claimed that they caused significant psychological distress.

The institutional Church is viewed by participants as being hypocritical, disrespectful and lacking in transparency and insight with respect to homosexuality. The personalisation of belief and resistance to Church authority is described, both for participants who retreat back into the closet and for those who emerge from it. The ten participants who have remained Christians and involved with their respective church communities appear to avoid perceived homophobic local churches. Nine participants claim that they are relatively invisible within their local churches. Only three participants had studied the six biblical texts that purport to relate to homosexuality and have contested the fundamentalist claims regarding them. The other participants accept that the Bible condemns homosexuality but have never interrogated the texts used by the Church to denounce homosexuality.

As previously reported in the Methodology section, IPA uses a “double hermeneutic” approach. In this chapter participant experiences, as related by them, have been reported, including extracts of verbatim dialogue that express the essence of how participants make sense of their own stories. This is followed and sometimes intertwined with researcher interpretations and analyses of the participant stories. Significant commonalities of participant interpretations of their experiences are also given, along with experiences that were unique to single participants.

An interesting aspect of this study is that none of the thirteen participants reported a rejection of their homosexuality or became permanently convinced that this could be done. Two have rejected

Christianity and continue to do so. One is undecided. The other ten participants have re-negotiated their positions to develop positive Christian homosexual identities. The implication of this is that it was their Christianity that was re-negotiated and not their homosexuality. In agreement with literature (Pitt, 2009; Sandfort, 2000) homosexuality was found to be the more enduring and stable disposition than was their essentialist understandings of Christianity. In a sense, the most disposable relationship was with the Church.

In the Literature Review I explained how the coming out process can be explicated using a simple three-fold process of coming out to oneself, coming out to God and finally coming out to one's Christian community (White & White, 2004). A defining feature of people who seek to integrate their Christianity with their homosexuality is the desire to be re-integrated into their church communities (O'Brien, 2004). Although a number of participants have achieved this level of integration, there are nuanced responses to this final coming out process. South African churches that remain strongly opposed to homosexuality are usually simply avoided by gay men and lesbian women. Some congregations, like the specific DRC congregations mentioned, accept their homosexual congregants as much as their denomination and congregants will allow. Others may overtly include homosexual congregants without truly accepting them. Notably, the participants who have maintained church membership intimate that they did not test the limits of the acceptance within their congregations and may well have been surprised (or possibly dismayed) at the level of acceptance of Christian congregants in South Africa.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

In the South African context, in which Christianity has been seen to promote homophobia, there is a potential to make incorporating a homosexual identity into an existing Christian identity particularly difficult. There has been some discussion over the last several years around the role of religion in fostering discriminatory attitudes toward homosexuality. However there is a dearth of reported research in English that addresses the implications for those who are simultaneously Christian and homosexual in the South African context, specifically from a psychological perspective, that focuses on the experiences of incorporating these identities. This study investigated the experiences of Eastern Cape gay men and lesbian women who were raised in Christian families and who later developed homosexual identities. This was done in order to examine how these individuals managed to integrate the two identities. In this chapter I provide a summary of the findings of this study, the conclusions reached, the limitations of the investigation and implications for future research.

In Chapter 2 (Literature Review) I briefly described how the collusion between the State and Church developed during apartheid and showed how the State promulgated laws that policed sexualities, including racial segregation and homosexuality. The process of negotiation for homosexual rights during the transition from apartheid to democracy was traced. The new Constitution, based on human rights, included a Bill of Rights that specifically protects homosexuals from unfair discrimination. This means that homosexual men and women prior to 1994 were considered criminal whereas after 1994 they were deemed equal to heterosexuals. However social attitudes toward homosexuality have changed marginally in cities and elsewhere remain strongly homophobic.

I noted that the Church in South Africa has largely maintained that homosexuality is not an acceptable lifestyle and has used a variety of means to justify its position. Homosexuals who were raised in Christian families therefore continued to experience homophobia from the Church and society, even as they were considered equal before the law. This study uses the theoretical framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to examine the struggles of thirteen participants caught in the dilemma of trying to make sense of their sexual orientation in the face of their Christian belief.

5.2 Findings and conclusions

Participants claim that, within the South African context, acknowledging one's homosexuality is difficult because it runs counter to the majority social and religious norms of the country (Roberts & Reddy, 2008). Essentialist Biblical interpretation, found across many denominations in South Africa, has a particular heterotopic interpretation of Biblical texts that these Christians claim pertain to all contexts across time. This forms the basis of a pervasive belief of homosexuals that they are not accepted by God or His Church. The new Constitution and changes in the laws notwithstanding, the general attitudes of South African society, as described by participants and supported by literature findings (Roberts & Reddy, 2008), have not shifted significantly. In some contexts, notably in urban environments, some changes have been noted.

Before explicating the details of findings and conclusions drawn in this study, two global conclusions should be noted. Firstly, some of the younger participants did not appear to have worked through all of the issues of being Christian and homosexual. Their sexual orientation had been accepted, but the struggles to integrate their sexuality and Christianity were still evident. Older participants appeared to have progressed much further and most had developed positive Christian homosexual identities. Secondly, and more importantly, amongst these thirteen participants none chose celibacy, two rejected Christianity and have not re-committed to any particular belief system, one is undecided, and ten participants who managed to integrate their homosexuality with their Christian belief did so by re-negotiating their Christian belief rather than their sexuality. Most of these Christian homosexuals claim an active participation in their respective churches, believe that their relationship with God is intact, but assert that their relationship with the institutional Church has been negatively affected as a result of the pervasive homophobia.

5.2.1 Early experiences

All of the participants explained that they were raised in Christian families and that Christian ritual, habits and principles were taught early in each child's life. This meant that conscious acknowledgment of their Christianity to themselves was not always significant. However in the context of silence around sexuality in general, acknowledgment of their own homosexuality appeared to be particularly significant and was clearly remembered.

Many of the participants reported that their early gendered play differed significantly from their peers and believed that this signalled the later development of homosexual identity. However published literature claims that gender identity develops earlier than sexual awareness by several years (Louw & Louw, 2010; McClintock & Herdt, 1996). The implication of this is that, in hindsight, participants likely conflate homosexuality with gendered behaviour and erroneously use the cross-gendered behaviour as early evidence of homosexuality. School homophobia was reported by a few of the participants. Victimisation in these cases was reported to occur as a result of cross-gendered behaviour that did not conform to the heteronormative ideal of the schools they attended.

Community, Church and family silence with respect to sexuality in general was a notable feature in the stories of many participants. One participant raised in a deep rural village noted a pervasive lack of information about homosexuality in her community. According to her the dearth of information and the lack of computer and internet facilities made the self-discovery process lonely and particularly difficult. Another participant noted that, in his town, there was a general absence of communication from the Church on matters of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular.

5.2.2 Silencing the self

This part of the study dealt with participants' initial responses to their growing awareness of homosexual desire. I noted that there was a strong motivation for participants to deny the acknowledgment of sexual orientation because some of the participants did not identify with the stereotypical representations of homosexuality that dominates much of South African public discourse. Heteronormative discourse up to the recent past in South Africa has typically depicted homosexuals as screaming queens and butch lesbians possibly because the stereotypes became all that was seen and recognised by society as being homosexual. This implies that gay men and lesbian women may not be recognised when they do not conform to the exaggerated gendered inversion. The way in which homosexuality is then presented when it does become visible has the potential to be problematic to the process of self-acceptance of South African gay men and lesbian women.

5.2.3 Living in the closet

Participants in this study found it difficult to disclose their same-sex desire because of concerns about the possible judgment of others, and of God. The closet is represented by participants as a

private and safe space to think through the types of challenge they might face once they begin the process of disclosure. But this research also highlighted the disadvantages to living in the closet. Most problematic was the silence of living in the closet that resulted in loneliness and isolation. Depression was reported to occur as a consequence of an acknowledgment to self of their sexual orientation, coupled with the melancholy of not being able to share this with significant others. The high incidence of psychological distress, even in this small sample, is in agreement with findings of other studies (Barton, 2010; Herek, 1996; Nel & Judge, 2008; Polders et al., 2008).

In discussions about the silence of living in the closet, participants noted that the topic of homosexuality is generally avoided by both by the Church and the community at large. The implication is that the silence of the closet is compounded and complicated by the Church and society not being willing to have a conversation about (homo)sexuality. Indeed the Church and community reportedly actively colluded to keep a number of the participants closeted and silenced. One of the participants was a Pastor who expressed fears of being treated irrationally by his peers and congregants should his homosexuality be discovered. He suggested that the homophobia within his church denomination could cause his ministry to stall and his calling to be compromised.

5.2.4 Breaking the silence

In agreement with Robertson (2011), private disclosure of homosexuality to others began, for most participants, in adolescence. One participant, as a result of observing Christian exorcism rituals of a lesbian friend, remained closeted until his early twenties at which time he was able to disclose his sexual orientation to a close friend only when inebriated. Robertson (2011) argues that disclosure practices occur first to friends, then siblings and finally to parents. This study is consistent with this claim. It is noted that, in comparison to the years of apartheid, contemporary South Africa has more information readily available to homosexuals as well as to their parents. Therefore parental shock at a child's disclosure for the most part appeared to be notably more moderate for younger participants.

In this study two participants reported that they have never disclosed their homosexuality to work colleagues and clients. Both claim high income-earning capacities, live in cities and have professional identities to uphold. These participants carefully considered their practical circumstances and

decided that the healthier option was not to disclose their sexual orientation in the context of their professional lives. This is consistent with the findings of Franke and Leary (1991).

5.2.5 Christian responses to homosexuality

The most prevalent reported response to homosexuality by the institutional Church was one of silence. A number of the participants claimed that this occurred at different stages of their coming out processes. Although negative responses from Christians were commonly experienced, some positive and supportive responses were also claimed. The experience of a continuum of acceptance-rejection is consistent with literature (Oosthuizen, 2013; van Loggerenberg, 2008).

Participants reported that exorcism of the homosexual demon was suggested as a valid method of removing homosexual desire. In one instance a participant was given this information by someone in leadership in her church. The perceived power differential provided the leader with the credibility to convince the participant that the interpretation of demon possession was correct. The implication made by an observer to the deliverance rituals, was that some church leaders use their position to abuse homosexuals and that this particular leader had been instrumental in the victimisation of the participant. The participant who experienced exorcism has since rejected Christianity and claims that the negative impact of the exorcisms was a significant factor in this decision.

Christian counselling was a second alternative suggested by Christians in addressing the homosexual orientation of participants. One participant related an experience with Christian counsellors who failed to identify the nature of her struggle, were partisan in their approach, and did not treat her with respect. In contrast to this, experiences with trained mental health professionals were regarded as useful and helpful in resolving identity issues. In psychotherapy participants reported feeling supported as well as challenged.

5.2.6 Speaking back

As noted in the Literature Review essentialist Christianity largely rejects homosexuality as being contrary to biblical teaching and often ascribes homosexuality to possession by a demon. However, it could also be argued that the reverse is true: that homophobia is the demon, and that this demon

is evidenced in the treatment of homosexuals by Christians. This alternative view of Church authority was proposed by a number of participants. Participants resisted homophobic labels by claiming that the problem lies in essentialist interpretation and application of the Bible.

The institutional Church is viewed by participants as being hypocritical, judgmental and lacking in empathy and understanding with respect to homosexuality. In their experience the institutional Church is seen to lack transparency and is disrespectful towards individual gay men and lesbian women. Participants describe homosexual victimisation and an unwarranted focus on the sexual sins of homosexuals to the exclusion of other sins.

In the analysis of Pastor's interview several notable conclusions can be derived. Firstly, within his denomination, he asserts that the heterosexual men in authority over him are never questioned as to what sexual relations take place in their private spaces, nor would there be an expectation of doing so. He believed he too should be afforded that respect. Secondly, he noted that the authorities in his college withdrew from confronting him on the issue of his sexuality. This implies that the professors did not have clear church guidelines or the authority to enforce their own beliefs around homosexuality and that the church itself could still be struggling to make sense of homosexuality as an identity and lifestyle. Thirdly, Pastor's professors were seen to lack transparency and integrity in dealing with his suspected homosexuality. Fourthly, he consciously limited the Church's power over him by creating a very private space in his own home that congregants and church authorities were not allowed to invade. Fifthly, whilst Pastor covertly rebelled against the homophobia of the Church, his response was so private that he did not present a challenge to the Church at large. Lastly, Pastor chose to afford ultimate authority over his life to God Himself, and not to the Church.

Most of the participants appear to migrate easily between different denominations in South Africa and appear to view the differences between churches in terms of practices of praise and worship. Many of the participants stated that they had (uncritically) accepted the fundamentalist interpretations and had never studied the actual differences in theological approach. This implies that they have based their assessment of themselves and the Church on incomplete information.

A number of participants (including Pastor mentioned above) separated their relationships with God from their relationships with the church after a period of deconstruction of essentialist interpretations of the Bible. They have chosen to subvert the authority of the Church and position

God Himself as their sole Arbiter and Judge. Most of the participants claimed that, throughout their struggles, God had never abandoned them although many of them, at least at some stage of their lives, had rejected both God and the Church. Many of the participants have developed an integrated personalised theology.

In their position statement in 2007 the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) allowed local congregations to make their own decisions regarding homosexual congregants. Possibly as a result of this concession two DRC participants report high levels of acceptance in their local congregations. However both admit to remaining largely invisible with respect to their homosexuality. Since they have not challenged their fellow believers there may be a higher acceptance level than they expect. Alternatively they might be tolerated in their Christian communities rather than accepted. In agreement with other studies some participants have reportedly been accepted by neither Christians, because they are gay, nor by gays, because they are Christian. There is often a significant personal cost to the integration of participants' homosexuality with their Christianity.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Regardless of efforts to ensure otherwise, all studies of this nature have limitations. The most obvious limitation is the small number of participants. Although I made every attempt to include a wide range of participants, limitations of time precluded an extensive group. Another limitation of this study was one of age. I specifically sought older participants because I believed that they would have negotiated the integration of homosexuality and Christianity to a greater degree than would young participants. Indeed this was found to be true.

In this study I found that I was most fascinated by the Xhosa-speaking participants' stories of their lives and culture. In some ways their experiences of homosexuality and Christianity were similar to the White and Coloured participants, but their own specific cultural overlay was found to be quite different and, in this small study, I could not do justice to those differences.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of gay men and lesbian women from the Eastern Cape who were raised in Christian families and who later developed homosexual

identities. This was done in order to examine how these individuals managed to integrate their homosexuality and Christian faith. Based on the findings of the study I make the following recommendations for future research.

Firstly the study was limited by the number of participants included. It would be interesting to repeat the study on other Eastern Cape gay men and lesbian women (and, longer term, to repeat the study in all South African provinces) to see what the results are elsewhere. Secondly, it would be interesting to study the relationships between homosexual priests (or ministers or pastors) and their South African church authorities. This would shed light on the dilemmas faced by the Church with regard to homosexuality and also would be able to reflect on the psychology of the priests and ministers of religion. Thirdly, it would be of great value to research Xhosa-speaking gay men and lesbian women, particularly those who were raised in rural villages. This duplicate study could incorporate an in-depth study of African Charismatic Churches as they function in rural communities, as well as the role of African Traditional Leaders in the promotion of homophobia in their communities.

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Appendix A

Timeline of Lesbian and Gay history in South Africa: 1920s to 2013

Date	Event or Case or Act	Comment
1927	Immorality Act of 1927	Prohibited sexual intercourse outside of marriage between black and white. Race was determined by appearance. Also prohibited prostitution
1950	Immorality Amendment Act Act No 21 of 1950	Amended the 1927 act to prohibit sexual intercourse between white and non-white persons
1957	Sexual Offenses Act: Act 23 of 1957	Repealed the provisions of the Immorality Act. Replaced it with a prohibition on sexual intercourse (or immoral/indecent acts) between white and non-white people. Penalty now 7 years imprisonment. Extended laws on prostitution. Set the heterosexual age of consent at 16 years
January 22, 1966	Forest Town party	Police raided a large gay party and arrested 9 men for masquerading as women and 1 for indecent assault on a minor. Minister of Justice PC Pelser proposed a harsh anti-gay amendment to the Immorality Act in March 1967 (deferred) and again in 1968.
1968	Select Committee of Parliamentarians on homosexuality	Amongst other things, they debated whether or not homosexuality could infect the youth. Psychologists and psychiatrists stated that homosexuality was an ingrained psycho-sexual disorder.
March 1969	The Immorality Amendment Act: Act No 57 of 1969 Section 20A of the Sexual Offenses Act, 1957	Prohibited the manufacture of sex toys. Made it a statutory crime for male homosexual acts. Also raised the age of consent for male homosexuals from 16 to 19 years (although sodomy and 'unnatural acts' were criminal anyway). Amendments to the Immorality Act were passed, including the " men at a party " clause: Criminalised any male act which is 'calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification at a party' (which was defined as any occasion on which 2 or more persons were present).
(1973)	(American Psychiatric Association)	(Removes homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, deeming it to be a natural variant of sexuality)
1977	Criminal Procedure Act, 1977	Allows police to kill a suspect if he flees from the scene of a crime, interception of postal articles and private communication allowed, persons found guilty are disqualified from receiving pensions; bail may be refused.
1987	Committee for Social Affairs of the Tricameral President's Council	Report that states homosexuality is part of the problem of promiscuity (with extra-marital sexual intercourse, prostitution, 'living together')
March 4, 1988	The Immorality Amendment Act, 1988	De-racialized sexual relations. Age of consent for lesbian sex is set at 19, previously unregulated by law. Age of consent for heterosexual sex still 16. Interracial sex is decriminalised. Homosexuality is not.
Jun – Aug 1988	Child Protection Unit, Durban	Adult men and teenage boys arrested. Durban police encouraged the link between homosexuality and child pornography/child abuse
August 26 1988	Child Protection Unit, Cape Town	Gay clubs were raided, two suspected child molesters were arrested in their homes, male sex workers and patrons were interrogated. Again, explicit connection was made between homosexuality and child abuse

continued

Timeline of Lesbian and Gay history in South Africa: 1920s to 2013 (continued)

Date	Event or Case or Act	Comment
February 11 1990	Nelson Mandela released from prison	This is accompanied by the unbanning of the ANC
April 27, 1994	The Interim Constitution	Includes a clause expressly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
December 13, 1995	Labour Relations Act 66, 1995	Unfair dismissal (which is prohibited in this Act) automatically includes dismissal on the basis of an employee's sexual orientation
November 15, 1996	South African Schools Act 84, 1996	Prohibits victimisation of teachers and learners on the basis of sexual orientation
February 4, 1997	The Final Constitution	Enshrines the prohibition on the basis of sexual orientation in the Bill of Rights
December 5 1997	Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997	Family responsibility leave includes "spouse or life-partner"
February 4, 1998	Capt Langemaat v the Department of Correctional Services, Safety and Security	High Court rules that medical aid regulations that fail to recognise same-sex partnerships are constitutionally invalid
May 8, 1998	National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Justice	Johannesburg High Court declares section 20A of the Sexual Offences Act (men-at-a-party clause) , i.e. the offense of sodomy, unconstitutional. Confirmed by Constitutional Court on October 9, 1998
October 19, 1998	The Employment Equity Act, No. 55, 1998	Employers must promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination. This includes sexual orientation
December 2, 1998	The Domestic Violence Act, 1998	Domestic relationship now includes persons of the same sex who live or lived together in the nature of marriage, whether the marriage is formalised or not.
February 12, 1999	National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v Minister of Home Affairs	Aliens Control Act, 1991 , is challenged. Cape High Court rules it unconstitutional for government to allow immigration benefits to heterosexual spouses of South Africans but not to foreign same-sex partners. Constitutional Court rules (December 2, 1999) that same-sex partners of South African citizens (or permanent residents) be treated as spouses in respect of immigration.
September 25, 2001	Satchwell v President of the Republic of South Africa	Challenges sections 8 and 9 of the Judges' Remuneration and Conditions of Service Act . Pretoria High Court rules that financial benefits allowed for spouses of heterosexual judges be extended to long-term same-sex partners of judges. Confirmed by Constitutional Court July 25, 2002 (and limits the benefits to same-sex long-term partners who have formally agreed to 'reciprocal duties of support')
September 28, 2001	du Toit and another v the Minister of Welfare and Population Development	Challenged certain provisions of the Child Care Act and the Guardianship Act . Pretoria High Court rules that same sex partners should be allowed to jointly adopt children and adopt each others' children. Confirmed by Constitutional Court on September 10, 2002
May 13, 2002	Muir v Mutual and Federal Pension Fund	Full pension benefits of a deceased Mutual and Federal employee is awarded to the surviving same-sex partner.
October 31, 2002	J and B v the Director General, Department of Home Affairs	Challenges provisions of the Children's Status Act of 1987. Durban High Court rules that a child born to a lesbian couple (by artificial insemination) be regarded as legitimate and that both partners must be regarded as the legal natural parents. Confirmed by Constitutional Court on March 28, 2003

continued

Timeline of Lesbian and Gay history in South Africa: 1920s-2013 (continued)

Date	Event or Case or Act	Comment
July 2004	Lesbian and Gay Equality Project and Fourie v Minister of Home Affairs	Launches a case in the Johannesburg High Court to challenge the Marriage Act . Supreme Court of Appeal in the case of Marie Fourie and Cecelia Bonthuys, hands down judgment that 'marriage' should be extended to same-sex marriages, the Marriage Act must be amended. Constitutional Court (December 8, 2005) rules the Marriage Act is unconstitutional and must be amended within a year to allow for same-sex marriage. National Assembly (November 14, 2006) passes the Civil Union Bill with amendments that allow marriages (civil partnerships) between homosexual or heterosexual couples. Civil Union Act 17, 2006 signed into law (November 30, 2006) by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka providing legal recognition of same-sex partnerships.
August 2006	ACDP calls for a constitutional amendment	Government rejects the call to reverse the Constitutional Court decision on same-sex marriage
November 23, 2006	Gory v Kolver NO and others	Constitutional Court rules that a same-sex life partner is entitled to inherit if the other partner dies intestate. They insert the wording "or partner in a permanent same-sex life partnership in which the partners have undertaken reciprocal duties of support" into the Intestate Succession Act, 1987 .
December 16, 2007	The Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007	Equalises the age of consent at 16 for both heterosexual and homosexual sex. The Act was not retrospective.
2008	Geldenhuys v National Director of Public Prosecutions	Inequality in the old act between the ages of consent for homosexual and heterosexual sex was declared unconstitutional.

The Immorality Act of 1927 (followed by Amendments in 1950 and 1957) became the Sexual Offences Act in 1957. Sources (Cameron, 1993, 1994; Gerber, 2000; Reddy, 2006, 2009; Republic of South Africa, 1927a, 1927b, 1950, 1957, 1977, 1977, 1993, 1995, 1996b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2007, 2007, 2012; Retief, 1994; Stychin, 1996; van der Vyver, 2000)

Appendix B

Biblical Texts Linked To Homosexuality

Texts are quoted from the New King James version, 1982.

Genesis 19:1-29

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. ² And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way."

And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."

³ But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴ Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

⁶ So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! ⁸ See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

⁹ And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! ¹³ For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

¹⁵ When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶ And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. ¹⁷ So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

¹⁸ Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! ¹⁹ Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. ²⁰ See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

²¹ And he said to him, "See, I have favoured you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³ The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. ²⁴ Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵ So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

²⁶ But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

Judges 19:16-29

¹⁶ Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites.

¹⁷ And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveller in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?"

¹⁸ So he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, ¹⁹ although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything."

²⁰ And the old man said, "Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." ²¹ So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

²² As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!"

²³ But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage.

²⁴ Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" ²⁵ But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.

²⁶ Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light.

²⁷ When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place.

²⁹ When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. ³⁰ And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!"

Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13

²²You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. ²³Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.

¹³If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Timothy 1:9-10

⁹We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Introduction

A brief introduction to the research project is given. If the information flyer had not yet been given to the participant this is done at this stage of the interview. It outlines the purpose of the study, the degree for which I am conducting the research and the associated university, recording, confidentiality, voluntary participation and my contact details. This portion of the interview process was sometimes not necessary as some participants had already received and read the information flyer via email.

Interview and recording processes are described.

Ethical issues are discussed and the consent form is signed.

After discussion and the signing of the consent forms the participant is offered the information flyer for his/her records. Most participants did not accept the flyer.

Questions

What experiences led you to become a Christian?

Through which experience(s) did you first recognise that you are homosexual? How was your homosexual identity first recognised?

What was your initial understanding of the implications of a homosexual identity for your Christian identity?

What are the experiences or events that alerted you to the possible implications of your sexual identity for your Christian identity?

What strategies are used to negotiate this?

Through which events/strategies have you attempted to negotiate being simultaneously gay/lesbian and Christian?

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX D

Participant letter of introduction

Dear Participant,

Many thanks for agreeing to participate in my research. I wanted to inform you of some important information about your participation. Please keep this letter for your own information. My contact details are given below in case you have further questions that were not covered by this initial meeting.

My research examines how people negotiate being simultaneously homosexual and Christian. The study is being done as part of a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Fort Hare in East London. I am interested in learning about your experiences and invite you to participate in of a series of three individual interviews. Each interview will take about an hour to complete.

Each interview will be audio-recorded and will be used as the basis of the study. The information given to me in the interviews will be written up as part of my thesis and some of your phrases may appear word-for-word in it. In the instances in which I use your exact phrasing I will mask your identity. This can be done by using a pseudonym instead of your real name. I will also change identifying information about any other people mentioned by you (like the names of friends, partners, and children) in the same way. I will also change other identifying information you may mention such as where you live or work.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. The topic is of a sensitive nature and may lead to discomfort. Should this happen, please alert me immediately.

Before consenting you must inform me if there is any reason you should not participate in this research: your current psychological state, information that is likely to be particularly traumatic to recall, events that you have not dealt with adequately that might be upsetting to discuss.

You will be asked to sign a Consent Form, which will be kept by me for my records. The form contains about the same information that appears in this letter. You will still be able to change your mind about participating even though you sign the form.

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the research, and your participation in it, now or at the end of this interview.

Yours sincerely

Verity Nicholas

Email address: [REDACTED]

Phone number: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX E

Participant consent form

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING HOMOSEXUAL AND CHRISTIAN

The experience of negotiating being simultaneously homosexual and Christian has not yet been reported for South African participants. This project is therefore expected to give some insight into these experiences of Christian homosexuals in South Africa.

The research is done in partial fulfilment for a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Fort Hare.

Recordings taken during interviews will be used for the purposes of this research only. Audio-recorded data will be collected during the interview process. The recorded interview will be transcribed and subjected to textual analysis. Some of this text may be used verbatim in my thesis. In these instances your identity will be protected by using a pseudonym in the place of your real name and by changing or deleting other identifying information.

The topic is of a sensitive nature and may lead to discomfort. Should this happen, please alert me immediately. Before consenting you must inform me if there is any reason you should not participate in this research: your current psychological state, information that is likely to be particularly traumatic to recall, events that you have not dealt with adequately that might be upsetting to discuss. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the process at any time. Should you withdraw the data provided up to that point will not be included in the study.

Should there be any concerns regarding participation at any time during the course of this research, the research supervisor, Dr Dirk Odendaal, may be contacted at the University of Fort Hare, at [REDACTED]

No payment is offered for participation.

Name of Investigator: Verity Nicholas

Address: University of Fort Hare, East London

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Email address: [REDACTED]

Ethical approval

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Psychology Department Research and Ethics Committee for studies involving human subjects. For research problems or questions regarding this study the Psychology Department Research and Ethics Committee may be contacted through Prof Dirk Odendaal at the Psychology Department Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Fort Hare.

Consent

I the undersigned understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to be interviewed for the purposes of this study. My consent is purely voluntarily, and I knowingly give informed consent to use this data for the purposes of this research.

Participant's name: _____

I consent to be interviewed for the purposes of this study

I do not consent to be interviewed for the purposes of this study

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Transcription Symbols used to Analyse Conversations

Simplified transcription symbols are adapted from Seale (2004).

Symbol	Example	Explanation
(0.5)	that (0.5) is odd?	Length of silence measured in tenths of a second
(.)	right (.) okay	Micro-pause of less than two-tenths of a second
:::	I:::: I don't know	Colons indicate sound-stretching of the immediately prior sound. The number of rows indicates the length of prolonged sound
_____	I <u>know</u> that	Underline indicates the speaker's emphasis stress
[T: [Well we are R: [I mean really	Left brackets indicate the point at which one speaker overlaps another's speech
=	you know=that's fine	Equal sign indicates the absence of a hearable gap between words
WORD	about a MILLION	Capitals, except at beginnings indicate a marked rise in volume compared to the surrounding talk
?	Oh really?	Question mark indicates rising intonation
hhh	I know how .hhh you	A row of h's prefixed by a dot indicates an in-breath. Without a dot indicates an out-breath. The number of h's indicates the length of the in- or out-breath.
()	What a () thing	Empty brackets indicate an inability to hear what was said.
(word)	What are you (doing)	Word in brackets indicates the best possible hearing.
(())	I don't know ((shrugs))	Words in double brackets contain author's descriptions.