

**TRAINEE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT, AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS, GAY  
AND LESBIAN LEARNERS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY**

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Science (Counselling Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, Psychology,  
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## DECLARATION

I, Alison Claire Lees (205513388), declare that this dissertation is my original work. All other sources of reference have been duly acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree at this, or any other, university.

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ALISON CLAIRE LEES

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DATE

## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to learners who have been harmed by the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of teachers in South African schools.

*“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.”*

~Nelson Mandela

*“Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.”*

~Desmond Tutu

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## ABSTRACT

This study's predominant aim was to investigate whether a correlation existed between the knowledge about homosexuality, and the attitudes towards homosexuals, of trainee teachers in KwaZulu-Natal. The scarcity of empirical data guiding homophobic intervention programs in teacher training colleges, as well as the importance of such research, led to the motivation behind this study. This study was therefore based upon the following objectives; to explore whether low levels of knowledge about homosexuality was related to high levels of homophobic attitudes, to test whether the previous attendance on a course in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus resulted in significantly higher levels of knowledge and lower levels of homophobic attitudes, and finally to make preliminary recommendations for intervention programs based on the findings of this study. This research used quantitative methodology with a correlational research design to achieve its objectives. A sample of 106 first year students at a teacher training college in KwaZulu-Natal were given questionnaires that comprised of 2 psychometric scales; Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (Harris, Nightengale, & Owen, 1995) and The Modern Homophobia Scale (Raja & Stokes, 1998). Biographic information as well as scores for each participant was obtained indicating their knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards gay men, lesbians and homosexuals in general. Findings of this study indicate that lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality are related to higher levels of homophobia. It was also found that previous attendance on a course in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus did not result in significant differences in the trainee teachers' knowledge about, or attitudes towards homosexuality. Supplementary findings of this study indicated that male trainee teachers' attitudes towards gay men are significantly more negative when compared to female trainee teachers. Furthermore, knowledge about homosexuality scores for male trainee teachers were significantly lower when compared to female trainee teachers. Another supplementary finding suggested that having close contact with a homosexual individual resulted in significantly lower levels of homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers when compared to those who did not. Preliminary recommendations for homophobia-intervention courses that were made based on this study's findings included the need to address the low levels of knowledge about homosexuality, the need to expand the scope of the course content to include broader issues of sexuality, specifically gender roles, and lastly to include contact with homosexual individuals while on the course.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The motivation behind this research was the desire to explore the underlying causes of homophobic attitudes in teachers and to work towards an intervention based on that exploration. Through the review of literature and relevant theories, the construct, knowledge about homosexuality, was presented as being closely tied to homophobic attitudes. Furthermore, trainee teachers, as opposed to qualified teachers, were frequently presented in literature as needing intervention, or already receiving intervention, and thus the focus of this study was established. This study set out to investigate whether a relationship existed between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards gay and lesbian learners in trainee teachers. Supplementing this aim, the study also set out to investigate whether the attendance of trainee teachers on a course in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus made a significant difference to their knowledge about homosexuality as well as their homophobic attitudes. Furthermore, this study intended to gain additional information about trainee teachers, over and above the aforementioned objectives, in order to make preliminary recommendations for intervention programs.

### **1.1. Research problem and rationale**

South African schools have been found to be homophobic and heterosexist environments (Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher, & Astbury, 2003; Msibi, 2012; Richardson, 2004) where learners, predominantly lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) learners, are exposed to prejudice and persecution (Butler et al., 2003). Teachers, the very individuals who should be safeguarding all learners in the school environment, have been found to not only permit homophobic acts to be conducted by other learners but also to perpetrate the homophobic acts themselves (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Rivers, 2011). The effect that this homophobic environment has on the learners is immense and, at times, fatal (McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008). The homophobic attitudes, and consequently acts, of teachers and its detrimental effect on their learners present a problem that needs addressing. Following on from this, the issue of how to go about addressing this problem emerges. This study attempted to understand aspects of homophobia in trainee teachers and therefore explore the implications this understanding presented with respect to intervention.

There are a small number of intervention programs that are currently being run in teacher training colleges in South Africa (Francis & Msibi, 2011; Msibi, 2012; Richardson, 2004) with success being reported in the reduction of homophobic attitudes in the trainee teachers. However, very little South African-based empirical support or evidence is available regarding the effectiveness of the content or methods used in these courses. The success that is reported with regards to these courses is based on the subjective, self-reported opinions of the trainee teachers who attended the courses. This study intended to therefore make preliminary recommendations for intervention course content and facilitation method based on the empirical findings of this study.

International research provides mixed evidence about whether or not courses in which homosexuality is included in the syllabus offered to trainee teachers improved their knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals (Koch, 2000). As such, this study intended to explore whether attendance of a course in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus made a significant difference to the trainee teachers' knowledge about, and attitudes towards, homosexuality.

## **1.2. Theoretical framework**

This study is grounded in the functional approach to attitudes (Katz, 1960), which proposes that attitudes serve psychological functions. This theory posits that attitudes, in this case homophobic attitudes, can serve five different functions: utilitarian, social adjustive, ego defensive, value expressive, and knowledge functions. Due to the confines of this study only one of the functions of attitudes was selected for investigation in order to explore whether or not it was a function that was evident in the sample. Since the knowledge function of attitudes was relatively measurable, this was the function that selected for exploration in this study.

The knowledge function of attitudes is based on the desire to view the world in a meaningful, constant, and ordered manner. Simplifying and arranging one's views when faced with an ambiguous or overwhelming environment achieves this (Katz, 1960). Homophobic attitudes therefore serve a knowledge function as they allow individuals to simplify and arrange their views of the various lifestyle options and sexual preferences available in the world (Yep, 1997). The perception of heterosexuality as the only acceptable

lifestyle, a form of homophobia, serves to simplify the sexuality-related information available to individuals. As a result, individuals who present with homophobic attitudes based on the knowledge function are often found to have a poor knowledge about homosexuality (Addison, 2007; Birden, 2005; Goldfarb, 2006). Katz (1960) proposes that if an attitude is to be changed, the psychological need that is met by the holding of that attitude needs to be identified and the method used to change the attitude needs to be adjusted to suit that function. According to the functional approach to attitudes, in order to alter attitudes that are serving the knowledge function, educating an individual about the inaccuracy of their knowledge is all that is needed. Due to that individual's desire for a view of the world as complete, highlighting their inaccurate knowledge will promote the correction of their ideas and thus change their attitude. Thus, informing an individual who holds knowledge-serving homophobic attitudes about their incorrect knowledge of homosexuality should reduce their homophobic attitudes.

### **1.3. Methodology**

This study made use of quantitative methodology, using a correlational research design as this method was aligned with the aims of the research. Data was gathered through the use of convenience sampling, whereby 106 trainee teachers at a teacher training college in KwaZulu-Natal completed questionnaires. The questionnaires comprised of biographical questions as well as two psychometric scales: Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (Harris et al., 1995), and The Modern Homophobia Scale (Raja & Stokes, 1998). Data obtained from this questionnaire was then captured, statistically analysed, interpreted, and discussed.

### **1.4. Plan of thesis**

Following on from this introduction, a review of relevant literature can be found in Chapter 2. This review provides an overview of the functional approach to attitudes, the theoretical framework that has been used in this study. Furthermore, it offers insight into the current international and South African education environments with regards to LGB issues and thus highlights the rationale for this study. Chapter 2 also presents significant research findings in the field while also previewing current intervention strategies.

Chapter 3 presents the quantitative research methods that were used in this study while providing motivation for the selection of the quantitative methodology. Included in Chapter 3 is a description of this research's rationale, aims, and hypotheses. It also presents the research design, sampling method, data collection procedure, method of data analysis, and previews the psychometric assessments that were used. Furthermore, Chapter 3 discusses ethical considerations that were reflected upon during the research process.

A presentation of the results of this study can be found in Chapter 4 whereby each hypothesis is addressed. Furthermore, supplementary findings over and above the specific hypotheses of this study are included as a frame of reference from which to supply preliminary recommendations for future intervention programs.

Following on from the presentation of results of this study, Chapter 5 provides a discussion on the study's findings. Here, the findings of this study are compared and contrasted with the findings made by other researchers and literature. Parallels drawn between the findings of this study, results taken from current research, as well as relevant theoretical ideology are used as a foundation from which the preliminary recommendations for future intervention programs are made. The limitations of this research as well as recommendations for future research are also presented in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter will provide an overview of literature and research in an attempt to contextualise this study's aims, hypotheses, and results.

### **2.1. Introduction**

Homophobia and heterosexism are discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes targeting non-heterosexual individuals, which often leads to acts of overt discrimination, maltreatment, and violence. Herek (2000) argues that the adherence to this prejudice is highly functional for individuals to define themselves as socially desirable members of a hetero-centric society who can uphold self-perceived good moral traditions. Homophobia and heterosexism are consistent features within the high school environment (Butler et al., 2003). This psychosocial environment is a difficult place in which to explore and establish a positive, autonomous, and mature LGB identity. Homophobic acts ranging from subtle, hetero-centric emphases to physical harassment are having devastating and, at times, fatal consequences for LGB learners (McDermott et al., 2008). Ironically, teachers, the very individuals who should be protecting learners as well as promoting positive identity development, are very often the cause of the establishment and maintenance of homophobia in the school setting (Msibi, 2012; Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995).

### **2.2. Conceptualizing heterosexism and homophobia**

The term homophobia was popularised by sociologist Weinberg (1972) to mean the irrational fear of homosexual individuals. The problem with the term homophobia is that its -phobia suffix suggests that individual prejudice is based primarily on fear. The definition of homophobia, however, has evolved over time as a result of theorists realising that the term is much more than just an irrational fear. Definitions of homophobia began to feature words such as disgust, anxiety, and anger alongside the irrational fear that Weinberg (1972) proposed. Herek (2000) argues against the word "irrational" when referring to the fear, disgust, anxiety or anger felt by individuals towards homosexuals. He believes that emotions felt towards homosexuals are in fact highly rational and functional for the individuals who manifest them. Although there are a number of contemporary definitions of homophobia in

existence, it can generally be described as a “...*fear, abhorrence, and dislike of homosexuality and of those who engage in it*” (Yep, 2002, p. 165).

The term homophobia is usually used to refer to “...*individual antigay attitudes and behaviours, whereas heterosexism has referred to societal-level ideologies and patterns of institutionalized oppression of non-heterosexual people*” (Herek, 2000, p. 19). Heterosexism can be therefore be understood as an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community (Yep, 2002). Heterosexism is based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the sole sexual orientation that is acceptable in society (Griffin, D'Errico, Harro, & Schiff, 2007) and can be viewed as a prejudice similar to that of racism and sexism (Herek, 2000). Heterosexism can cultivate, sustain, and propagate homophobia in individuals (Yep, 2002) and thus the two terms are inextricably tied to one another. Homophobic and heterosexist expressions can range from major acts of brutal anti-gay violence (Morrissey, 2013) to less obvious, innocuous assumptions regarding heterosexuality (Dreyer, 2008).

### **2.3. Origins of, and underlying motivations behind, homophobia**

Homophobic or heterosexist attitudes are not inborn. As a result of the heterosexist or heteronormative society that individuals exist in, children are socialised from birth to consider heterosexism as not only the norm, but as the only acceptable form of sexuality. Yep (2002) described heteronormativity as “...*deeply embedded in our individual and group psyches, social relations, identities, social institutions, and cultural landscape*” (p. 169). As such, children cannot escape being socialized into developing heterosexist or even homophobic attitudes. This socialisation can take place through observing and imitating the homophobic or heterosexist attitudes or behaviours of others, events or experiences (such as witnessing differential treatment of homosexuals) or through being involved in activities that are understood as gratifying (such as feeling approved of by friends when making a homophobic joke). Homophobic and heterosexist attitudes are therefore developed and upheld through one fundamental medium, communication. It is through communication, then, that these attitudes can be eliminated (Yep, 2002).

Relatively little research has been devoted to understanding the dynamic cognitive processes associated with anti-gay attitudes and stereotypes, that is, how

heterosexuals think about lesbians and gay men. Nor has extensive systematic enquiry been devoted to the underlying motivations for sexual prejudice. (Herek, 2000, p. 21). Despite this, it is understood that, as with all forms of prejudice, the underlying motivations behind homophobia are complex and multiple.

#### **2.4. Functional approach to attitudes and homophobia**

According to the functional approach to attitudes (Katz, 1960), individuals are motivated to make use of attitudes (positive or negative) in order to meet certain needs. The objective of an attitude is to mediate between an individual's internal needs and desires and the external environment (Katz, 1960). Since individuals' needs and environments are different, their use of attitudes will also be different. Homophobia can therefore be viewed as serving differing needs in different individuals. Katz (1960) claimed that "unless we know the psychological need which is met by the holding of an attitude we are in a poor position to predict when and how it will change" (p. 170). He further proposed that attitudes could be altered or promoted by ensuring that a message matches the function or the need of that attitude.

The functions of attitudes, or the needs that attitudes satisfy, can be placed into five broad categories: utilitarian, social adjustive, ego defensive, value expressive, and knowledge. Although the description of each function suggests that attitudes serve only one need at a time, it is understood that in fact attitudes can serve multiple or overlapping functions (Carpenter, 2012).

The utilitarian function of attitudes is based on the premise that individuals have a need to maximise benefits and minimize punishment in their environments (Carpenter, 2012). The utilitarian function of homophobic attitudes is to gain benefits or reduce chastisement in an individual's life. Utilitarian attitudes help individuals achieve their personal goals and needs (Carpenter, 2012). As such, homophobic attitudes, when serving utilitarian needs, are based on self-interest. For example, a school-goer may be aware of the victimisation that comes with being suspected as LGB. As a result he or she may display a homophobic attitude in order to prevent suspicions that he or she is gay and thus prevent victimisation. The learner's drive to avoid being psychologically or physically hurt by anti-LGB victimisation has led to a homophobic attitude. According to Katz (1960), in order to change an attitude,

one needs to communicate to the need that the attitude meets. In this case, it would primarily be the utilitarian need. In this instance, changing an individual's homophobic attitude would involve communicating to them about other methods of protecting themselves from potential abuse.

The social adjustive function can be described as serving a need to appear as socially desirable or to fit in to societal norms (Carpenter, 2012). The social adjustive function of homophobia serves to define group boundaries with homosexuals on the outside and the self on the inside (Herek, 1987). Essentially, this function is reflective of heterosexism. This can be seen at a societal level, where heterosexual individuals are pressured by peers and societal standards to conform to certain behavioural patterns. Compliance with social standards and defence against anxiety motivates heterosexual individuals to express homophobic attitudes (Herek, 1987). Similar to the utilitarian function, the social adjustive function can provide rewards in the form of social support and a reduction in anxiety, both of which improve self-esteem. In other words, heterosexual individuals reaffirm their heterosexual identity by expressing homophobic beliefs. This can be seen in Langa's (2008) study. He found that homophobia was present in conversational processes, with harsh words being used as a defensive function in the demarcation of two groups: "us" and "them". *"Naming homosexuality with terms such as 'gay', 'sissy', or 'uyalahla' served to disempower threatening ambivalences through projections of shame and powerlessness."* (p. 18). These negative labels regulate the borders of adequate sexuality, therefore functioning as an identity marker, rather than representing homosexual behaviour in a literal way (Langa, 2008).

An attitude that serves an ego expressive function allows an individual to protect their ego or their self-esteem from potential threats (Katz, 1960). In an ego defensive function of homophobia the expression of a homophobic attitude *"serves to deny one's own homoerotic attractions"* (Herek, 1987, p. 574). Defensiveness involves an unconscious misrepresentation of reality as a tactic for evading identification of some undesirable part of the self. Defensive attitudes towards homosexuals emerge as a result of insecurities about personal sufficiency in one's own sexual impulses or gender conformity (Pleck, 1981). This defensive expressive function works at a psychological level, where heterosexual individuals internalise societal hetero-centric and gender stereotypical standards and experience anxiety that they will fail to measure up to them. Katz (1960) described negative attitudes toward minority groups as a means of maintaining a sense of inflated superiority and reducing threats to their self esteem.

He proposed that altering negative attitudes towards minorities, such as non-heterosexuals, involves educating individuals about their bigotry in order to give them insight into the drive behind their attitude.

The value expressive function of attitudes enables individuals to openly display their core, unique beliefs (Katz, 1960). If an individual's attitude serves a value expressive function, their attitudes are used to align themselves with their values (Carpenter, 2012). Homophobic attitudes serve to express individuals' values and beliefs and characterizes the world according to ethics of good and bad, right and wrong with oneself as good and homosexuals as bad (Herek, 1987). Fone (2000) bases homophobia on "*the perception that homosexuality and homosexuals disrupt the sexual and gender order supposedly established by what is often called natural law.*" (Fone, 2000, p. 5). Homophobic reactions are therefore based upon fear and dislike of the sexual difference that homosexual individuals allegedly personify. Another source of homophobia is the fear that the social behaviour of homosexuals, instead of the sexual behaviour alone, disrupts the "*social, legal, political, ethical and moral order of society, a contention supposedly supported by history and affirmed by religious doctrines*" (Fone, 2000, p. 5). In order to address homophobic attitudes that primarily serve a value expressive function, one would need to change an individual's values.

The final function of attitudes is the knowledge function. According to Katz (1960) the knowledge function of attitudes satisfies a need to achieve a meaningful, constant and ordered view of the world. Attitudes based on the service of knowledge provide a means of simplifying and arranging people's views of an ambiguous or overwhelming environment. Negative attitudes towards homosexual individuals or homosexuality allow individuals to simplify and arrange their views of the various lifestyle options and sexual preferences available in the world (Yep, 1997). Stereotyping is an example of the knowledge function of attitudes. Stereotypes provide individuals with an easy means to simply and organise vast amounts of information (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). There are numerous stereotypes related to LGB individuals; gay men are effeminate, lesbians are butch, and so on (Herek, 2000). Viewing heterosexuality as the only acceptable lifestyle serves to limit the information on sexuality that an individual believes is necessary to understand their world. As such, individuals who are homophobic are often found to have poor knowledge of homosexuality (Addison, 2007; Birden, 2005; Goldfarb, 2006). Homophobic attitudes may be both the

reason for this deficient knowledge of alternative lifestyles as well as a means of coping with the deficit (Yep, 1997). Katz (1960) proposed that in order to change an individual's knowledge-serving attitude, one simply needs to educate the individual about the inaccuracy of their knowledge and thus their attitude. The individual's drive for a view of the world as complete will therefore promote the correction of their highlighted inaccurate knowledge. With regard to homophobic attitudes that are based on incorrect knowledge, it is assumed then that informing an individual about their incorrect knowledge will reduce their homophobic attitude.

## **2.5. Correlates of homophobia**

Correlates of homophobia have received much research attention with consensus being drawn on numerous, universal factors that are correlated to negative attitudes towards LGB individuals.

A strong correlation exists between religiosity, church attendance and homophobic attitudes (Agnew, Thompson, Smith, Gramzow, & Currey, 1993; Morgan, 2003). Furthermore, traditional Christian ideology tends to encourage negative attitudes about homosexuality, thus stimulating further opposition toward homosexual people (Plugge-Foust & Strickland, 2000). In the South African context, a strong Christian ethos exists as a result of colonialism and missionary work. This Christian ideology and tradition provides the dominant means through which homosexuality is condemned as sinful (Richardson, 2004). Attitudes towards homosexuality amongst individuals subscribing to the Islamic faith have been found to be negative (Rayside, 2011).

Studies on gender differences have shown that negative attitudes toward homosexuals are more common among heterosexual males than heterosexual females (Herek, 2000; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Louderback & Whitley, 1997; Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999). Homophobic attitudes in individuals have also been highly correlated to strong traditional beliefs about gender roles as they tend to view homosexuality as a violation of stereotypic gender roles (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Herek, 1987; Lim, 2002; Louderback & Whitley, 1997; Theodore & Basow, 2000; Whitley & Lee, 2000). Schoeman (2009) conducted research on South African high school boys and found that a moderate correlation existed

between adherence to traditional male role norms and negative attitudes towards homosexuals. These adolescent males displayed greater homophobic attitudes towards homosexual men than homosexual women. Furthermore, it was found that the rejection of homosexuals was a composite function of traditional masculinity. Homophobia as being prescribed by traditional masculinity ideology is theorised by Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, and Cozza (1992). They define traditional masculinity ideology in terms of seven dimensions: the necessity to avoid all things feminine; the command to confine one's emotional life; the emphasis on toughness and aggression; the command to be self-reliant; the emphasis on achieving status above all else; non-relational, objectifying attitudes toward sexuality; and fear and hatred of homosexuals. Deacon, Morrell, and Prinsloo (1999) found that many South African teachers tend to hold onto familiar patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality and are therefore homophobic.

According to Allport's (1979) contact hypothesis, direct contact with individuals of a minority group decreases stereotypes and negative feelings held against members of that group (Lance, 2002). The contact hypothesis can be consistently applied to the context of sexual-orientation, whereby minimal interaction with non-heterosexual individuals has been linked to higher levels of homophobia (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Herek, 1987; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Lim, 2002; Louderback & Whitley, 1997; Theodore & Basow, 2000; Whitley & Lee, 2000). Morgan (2003) found that teachers who have personally known a homosexual individual had a lesser degree of homophobic attitudes than those who did not.

Shackelford and Besser (2007) propose that negative attitudes towards homosexuality might be seen as a manifestation of a personality trait. Individuals with closed personality traits tend to rigidly cling to tradition and conservatism. They are dogmatic in their beliefs and tend to be emotionally unresponsive and behaviourally set in their ways. A closed personality trait has been found to be highly correlated with homophobia. Furthermore, individuals who hold authoritarian beliefs and who stress obedience to authority over individual liberty have been found to be more homophobic (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Herek, 1984; Wylie & Forest, 1992).

Not only has homophobia been found to be correlated to sexual conservatism (Olatunji, 2008) but Addison (2007), Birden (2005) and Goldfarb (2006) reported that a lack of sexual knowledge is associated with high degrees of homophobia. Furthermore,

individuals who lack knowledge about homosexuality, in particular, have been found to have higher levels of homophobia. Rogers, McRee, and Arntz (2009) believe that individuals who are not exposed to accurate information regarding non-heterosexuality rather “*obtain the information they do have through media put forth by popular culture, which are likely to be subject to stereotypes and misinformation*”(p. 213).

## **2.6. High schools as homophobic environments**

Homophobia has been found to exist in schools internationally (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2012; Rivers, 2011; Walton, 2004) with South African schools increasingly being found to be homophobic (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012; Richardson, 2004). The schooling experiences of homosexual learners in South Africa are marked by prejudice and persecution (Butler et al., 2003).

South African education has evolved over time from an authoritarian style of learning to that of an equitable, learner-centred environment. The modern system of education places emphasis on inclusivity while embracing diversity and the human rights of each learner. Ironically, it is in this ostensibly broad-minded and accepting environment that “*homophobia and discrimination against gays have been and remain unquestioned features of African and white schooling*” (Deacon et al., 1999, p. 169).

It was found some 35 years ago by Tartagni (1978) that homosexuality in schools was a prohibited subject. In 1982, Norton (1982) found that the presence of homosexuals in school populations was denied. In (2003) participants in research conducted by Butler et al. reported that homosexual learners simply “*did not exist*” (p. 31) in South African schools. This evasion of non-heterosexual orientations is a subtle form of homophobia that is rife in high schools across the world and particularly in South Africa. Comprehensive and correct information regarding alternative human sexuality is denied to learners in the school context. Material on homosexuality does not exist in school libraries or in the school curriculum, thereby supporting the delusion that homosexual learners do not exist in high schools in South Africa (Butler et al., 2003). Teachers and academic administrators are reported to believe that the provision of information on non-heterosexuality and the addressing of non-

heterosexual issues will promote homosexuality in adolescents (Butler et al., 2003; DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Harbeck, 2014).

Schoolteachers, counsellors and administrators are found to lack information on, and an understanding of, homosexual issues. School counsellors were reported by participants in Butler et al.'s (2003) research to be more of a burden than a help when approached for counselling regarding their homosexual orientation as the counsellors were uncomfortable with the topic and fell prey to pressures of conformity by the school. Parents have also been found to place schools under pressure with regards to promoting heterosexism and evading alternative sexual orientations. Bhana (2012) reports that an openly gay learner was removed from a South African school as a result of the pressure placed on the school by parents.

Heterosexism present in high schools extends beyond this denial of alternative sexual orientations. LGB learners are repeated victims of verbal and physical abuse by both peers and school staff (Kosciw et al., 2012). Research conducted by Kosciw et al. (2012) on a sample of North American LGB learners found that 81.9% of the learners experienced verbal abuse, 38.3% were physically harassed, 18.3% were physically assaulted and 55.2% experienced cyber bullying in the year 2011 as a result of their sexual orientation. Sexual coercion (Bochenek & Brown, 2001), peer exclusion and isolation from social opportunities (Ueno, 2005), and other interrelational problems (Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007) have also been found to exist in schools as manifestations of anti-LGB actions.

Butler et al. (2003) stated that almost every participant in their research reported daily occurrences of verbal abuse throughout their time in high school. OUT LGBT Well-being conducted research on a sample of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) youth in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Wells (2006) compiled a report of the findings. It was found that varied and pervasive victimisation occurred at schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Statistics generated from their research indicated that 63% of female, and 76% of male, learners were exposed to homophobic jokes, 42% of female, and 68% of male, learners experienced verbal abuse, 29% of female, and 39% of male, learners experienced physical abuse and 19% of female, and 20% of male, learners experienced sexual abuse or rape because of their homosexual orientation. In each of these instances it is noted that fewer females were targets of anti-LGB victimisation than males.

With the overt abuse towards homosexual learners combined with the covert evading of the existence of homosexuality and thus homophobia, schools can be a dangerous environment for LGB learners. In a sample of North American LGB learners, 63.1% of them reported feeling unsafe at school as a result of their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al., 2012).

## **2.7. Teachers as agents of homophobia**

Further to the components responsible for the homophobic environment evident in high schools, teachers have been found to be a contributing factor to homophobia in the school context. There is evidence of teachers not only evading the aggravation and abuse of learners with different sexual orientations, but also partaking in it (Kosciw et al., 2012).

Sears (1992) found that 80% of North American trainee teachers harboured negative attitudes towards homosexuality. The extent of overt homophobic actions by teachers in the school context can vary from derogatory slurs to public shaming of learners (Kosciw et al., 2012; Rivers, 2011) as well as physical harassment (Butler et al., 2003; Wells, 2006). Wells (2006) reported that of the anti-LGB victimisation that took place in schools in KwaZulu-Natal, 22% was perpetrated by teachers.

Butler et al. (2003) conducted research in South Africa on the coming out process of adolescent school goers. The learners in their study reported that teachers and principals were frequently unsupportive of their sexual orientation. It was repeatedly discovered that teachers were more of a burden than a help. In a study on the experiences of gay learners attending African township schools, one particular learner reported that his teacher:

...dragged me by my neck... He had done this to me before... He likes pushing me and shouting at me in front of other teachers... He always says he doesn't like 'izitabane' [derogatory word for gay in isiZulu]. Other teachers just laugh and do nothing. (Msibi, 2012, p. 526).

Butler et al.'s (2003) findings add to the evidence of overt homophobia in teachers. A gay male participant in the study recalls:

... there is one teacher ... he is so against gay people and he is always criticizing gay people openly in class ... Like he will say: 'What did that faggot Shakespeare do?'

and stuff like that. And everyone would laugh ... and I just burst into tears ... (Butler et al., 2003, p. 21).

Another participant reported:

Like a teacher would say something derogatory about being gay. I would feel... it would hit me hard... And I felt how am I, all by myself, going to stand up against the whole class, and the teacher, who should know better. (Butler et al., 2003, p. 22).

According to the study conducted by Kosciw et al. (2012), 56.9% of a sample of LGB North American learners between the ages of 13 and 18 heard homophobic remarks made by their teachers. Moreover, a high proportion of the sample experienced the teachers as exacerbating the anti-LGB harassment and abuse they experienced. Teachers were found to be almost entirely unhelpful in intervening in the homophobic actions. Of the sample, 60.4% of the participants who were harassed or physically abused did not report the incidents to their teachers due to the belief that the teachers would not help or that the situation could worsen. Furthermore 36.7% of the sample found that teachers who they had reported anti-LGB incidents to did nothing in response to the report.

Teachers have been accused of turning a blind eye to daily cases of anti-gay harassment and of disregarding violent homophobic acts (Butler et al., 2003). The lack of teacher intervention with regards to the witnessing and reporting of homophobic behaviour can be regarded as a form of collusion with, and contribution to, the already high levels of homophobia in the school context.

Added to the overt homophobic physical and verbal abuse and the covert avoidance of intervention addressing homophobic acts, teachers also add to the homophobic environment by creating a setting of “silencing” (Butler et al., 2003). Silencing is a mechanism through which teachers deal with sexuality in the school context. Silencing involves the judgement of topics related to alternative sexual orientations to be inappropriate and avoided in the school context. Msibi (2012) and Butler et al. (2003) suggest that this silencing is related to the imposing of hetero-centric and hetero-normative views by teachers onto learners. Teachers invest in heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual orientation and alternative forms of sexuality are thereby both denied and denounced.

Research conducted by Rivers (2011) in the United Kingdom explored homophobia in the British school setting. Aside from the overt homophobic remarks, taunts and jokes made by teachers, silencing was also evident in the schools. A participant recalls of her teachers reactions to her homosexuality that:

...nor were they supportive in the sense that they had no advice, no information, nowhere to offer. I wasn't necessarily expecting them to solve my problems, but had they – any of them – told me there was anything like a gay switchboard or a gay support group, or anything like that would have been an enormous help (Rivers, 2011, p. 166).

Kosciw et al. (2012) conducted research to evaluate the effect that a negative school climate and lack of in-school support can have on the academic outcomes on LGB youth. They found that one of the strongest indicators of a favourable schooling environment for LGB learners was the number of supportive teachers in the school environment. They predicted that supportive teachers might:

...provide the personal connection needed to help keep students in school and buffer against severe victimization. Staff also might make the environment safer and more affirming directly for these students by intervening when homophobic remarks are made and anti-LGB victimization occurs, providing support for individual students and perhaps advocating for school-wide efforts, such as affirming and protective policies and practices among staff and administration (Kosciw et al., 2012, p. 58).

## **2.8. Homophobia experienced during adolescence**

Remafedi (1990) argues that of all individuals in society, those that are hurt the most by internalised and externalised homophobia are adolescents. Establishing an identity is a key developmental task during adolescence (Erikson, 1950). Adolescents explore, evaluate, and commit to finding their identity, which includes their sexual identity. This process of exploring and establishing a sexual identity can be particularly challenging for individuals who consider that they may be LGB. The hetero-centric, or often homophobic, socialisation of most adolescents presents to them a dilemma when exploring potential LGB identities (Scheurer, 2000).

Homophobic taunts start from the primary school period, with learners making use of labels such as “faggot”, “poof”, and “queer” to insult other learners (DePalma & Jennett, 2010). Eder, Parker, and Evans (1995) suggest that these primary school goers have little or no understanding of the meaning behind the label intended for insult. However, DePalma and Jennett (2010) argue that *“it is oversimplistic to assume that the use of these homophobic taunts, even among young children, is divorced from the sexual and gender connotations they carry”* (p. 18). Once children reach adolescence however, these insulting labels not only intensify, but there is no doubting whether the adolescents understand their meanings. The pressure on adolescents to conform to socially desirable roles and sexual identities is immense (Athanasas & Comar, 2008). For adolescents who are unable to conform to the socially dictated heterosexual identity, homophobic incidents are the price they must pay.

## **2.9. Effects of homophobia on adolescent learners**

Research has shown that homophobia is present in schools in a manner which is both *“predictable and systematically damaging”* (Butler et al., 2003, p. 13). Homosexual adolescents, exposed to this homophobic culture, learn very quickly that they are negatively regarded by society (Rivers, 2011; Scheurer, 2000), the consequences of which can threaten the development of a positive, autonomous identity and be very distressing.

The verbal harassment that is a constant feature of high school life for LGB learners provides a consistent source of pain, anger, shame, guilt, hopelessness, fear, and anxiety (Rivers, 2011). Participants in a British based study by Rivers (2011) recalled the following: *“it was a real feeling of absolute panic...that things would suddenly get out of hand somehow”*; *“I didn’t feel very secure there...as a consequence I kept to myself”*; *“I don’t think anyone who isn’t gay can ever understand the complete 100% humiliation you feel because all you know is you are yourself”* (pp. 169-170).

The internalisation of homophobic stereotypes as well as a general sense of rejection leads to LGB learners developing self-image problems including low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence (Kosciw et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2012). Participants in a study conducted by Butler et al. (2003) reported persistent feelings of having something wrong with them. They attributed these feelings of being different to being victims of rumours, name-

calling, gossiping and exclusion from social events. These experiences functioned to perpetuate their low self-esteem as well as postpone their coming out to a time when they were comfortable with their sexual orientation or had moved out of the school environment. Participants reported that anti-gay provocation by teachers resulted in their inability to be openly homosexual in their school context. The choice to come out presents as a psychological dilemma, where on the one hand adolescents are threatened by persecution should they choose to disclose their sexual orientation, while on the other hand, they fear isolation by the choice to not disclose (Pilkington & D'Augelli, 1995). Rivers (2011) found that many LGB learners were excluded from peer socialising and were unaccepted by peers, which are important developmental goals in adolescence. As such, these learners would often resort to a *“denial of self and the adoption of a guise of outward heterosexuality”* (p. 175). In these cases, the LGB learners who publically denied their true sexual identities would be in constant fear of being “found out”.

Homophobic harassment by both peers and teachers in the school context has resulted in a range of academic problems for homosexual adolescents (Kosciw et al., 2012). The study by Kosciw et al. (2012) found that LGB learners frequently missed classes or were absent from entire school days as a result of anti-LGB acts in the school environment. Furthermore, learners who experienced greater levels of anti-LGB acts were three times more likely to miss school than those who experienced lower levels. Learners who experienced anti-LGB-based victimisation were found to have lower academic results and lower educational aspirations.

In addition to this, high risk sexual behaviour (Valentine, Skelton, & Butler, 2003) and substance abuse or alcoholism (O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Rivers, 2004) have been found in homosexual adolescents as a result of the stressors characteristic of the homophobic environment to which they are exposed.

Mental health problems, particularly depression, have been found to arise as a result of anti-gay victimisation that occurs in the school context (Kosciw et al., 2012; Rivers & D'Augelli, 2001). Posttraumatic stress symptoms have also been associated with LGB learners who have been exposed to sexuality-based assault and abuse (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; Rivers, 2004). Moreover, Rivers (2001) has reported that homosexual learners who are victims of homophobic harassment at school are at risk for parasuicidal and

suicidal behaviours. These adolescents resort to suicide as being their only option in a hopeless and terrifying situation (McDermott et al., 2008).

Reliable statistics on completed suicide rates in LGB adolescents are difficult to come by as death records rarely include the deceased individual's sexual orientation (Haas et al., 2010). Rates of attempted suicides by LGB youth are however available. The risk of LGB high school students attempting suicide in America has been found to be at least two to seven times greater than that of heterosexual high school students (DuRant, Krowchuk, & Sinal, 1998; Faulkner & Cranston, 1998; Remafedi, 2002; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Valentine et al., 2003). King et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 25 international studies that investigated suicidal behaviour in LGB adolescents. It was found that LGB adolescent males were about four times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual adolescent males where as LGB adolescent females were found to have attempted suicide rates that were about twice as those of heterosexual females. Furthermore, it was found that LGB adolescents were twice as likely to report suicidal ideation than heterosexual adolescents.

The study conducted by OUT LGBT Well-being in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa found that 27% of the LGBT sample experienced suicide ideation (Wells, 2006). Factors that were found to increase the levels of suicide ideation in the sample were experiencing physical, verbal and sexual abuse at school as well as the fear of the abuse occurring. The report also indicated that 17% of the sample had attempted suicide, 24% of which had made multiple attempts. The age of the youngest participant who had attempted suicide was 13 years.

## **2.10. Interventions for homophobia**

A number of courses have been run across a variety of international universities in order to address the homophobic attitudes of students.

Waterman, Reid, Garfield, and Hoy (2001) found that North American university students had significantly lower levels of homophobia after attending a course on non-heterosexuality compared to their homophobia levels upon entering the course. Wright and Cullen (2001) and Rogers et al. (2009) conducted a similar study at an North American

university whereby students participated in a non-heterosexuality course. The course attendees showed significant decreases in homophobia at the end of the course. Courses on homosexuality and sexual diversity particularly in the teacher-training syllabus can be found in America (Morgan, 2003), Australia (Robinson & Ferfolja, 2008), Canada (Bellini, 2012) as well as South Africa.

Richardson (2004) has been teaching an elective module on education, gender and sexuality (in particular homosexuality) for fourth year trainee teachers at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa since 1991. It was noted that over the years of running the course, Richardson (2004) found that the trainee teachers attitudes and knowledge were challenged and transformed favourably towards non-heterosexuality. Francis and Msibi (2011) were involved in teaching a module which dealt with heterosexism in education to postgraduate trainee teachers at a University in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A workshop, based on the work of Francis and Msibi (2011), was then developed by Potgeiter, Reygan, and Msibi (2014). Their workshop was rolled out in 2013 and exposed 800 teachers and trainee teachers to LGB issues. Feedback from the workshop attendees indicated that the training was found to be useful, informative and increased cognizance and confidence around LGB issues.

The aforementioned reports on LGB education suggest a successful reduction in homophobic attitudes in individuals following a course on LGB issues. Research focusing on the knowledge of, and attitudes towards, homosexuality in trainee teachers, however, provides mixed results with regards to whether previous training in LGB issues changes homophobic attitudes.

Research conducted by Ben-Ari (1998) in Israel on social work students and by Butler (1994) and Morgan (2003) in America on trainee teachers indicated that individuals who received academic training on homosexuality, and instruction on tending to the needs of homosexual learners, presented with more positive attitudes towards homosexual learners than individuals without the specialised training. Furthermore, in each study, higher levels of knowledge about homosexuality was found in those social work students and trainee teachers who had had LGB issues included in their curricula compared to those who had not. Koch (2000), however, conducted widespread research on 813 trainee teachers in America from a

variety of training institutions and found that previous education on LGB issues made no significant difference in the samples homophobic attitudes.

In the literature on the LGB training that participants received, little is mentioned about the content of the training received or the methods used during the training to increase the participants' knowledge about homosexuality and to reduce their homophobic attitudes. It is suggested that variety in content and method of training in the courses offered to the participants is related to the variety in the results of reduction in homophobic attitudes. Of the reported courses that listed a reduction in homophobic attitudes, the following methods were reported as being used on the course. Wright and Cullen (2001) reported that their participants not only engaged in readings and lectures but also with a "gay panel". Butler (1994) suggested that making use of cognitive as well as affective interventions was important in producing sustained positive transformations in trainee teachers' attitudes towards homosexuality.

Richardson (2004) makes great use of this suggestion and has developed his LGB intervention course over a number of years to include "*a more comprehensive discussion of the links between heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, and fluid understandings of sexuality*" (p. 153). In his course, he uses a variety of techniques to transform trainee teachers' attitudes and knowledge. He focuses much attention on the cognitive processing of the trainee teachers and constantly brings them into awareness of what is occurring psychologically for them over the duration of the course. He does this by explaining the theory of cognitive dissonance in order to better equip the trainee teachers to deal with information that may be in conflict with what they believe to be correct. He also requests that his students write reflective pieces throughout the course in order for them to be aware of their feelings and thoughts as they process new or potentially divergent information. Furthermore, Richardson (2004) makes use of film excerpts involving the stories of LGB adolescents to promote discussions and applications of themes into the lives of the students. Lastly, he invites LGB individuals as guest speakers to participate in panel discussions with the students.

The course that Francis and Msibi (2011) conducted involved five six-hour sessions which focused on developing an awareness of the impact of homophobia and heterosexism, the different levels at which homophobia and heterosexism can occur in society, the extent to which it occurs in each participant, and the responsibility that each participant has to alter

this. The course makes use of a variety of methods with which to effectively reach the trainee teachers. Video excerpts, fishbowls, small group discussions, panel discussions, role-plays and self reflections allow the trainee teachers to investigate and challenge their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about LGB issues.

Potgeiter et al. (2014) developed their workshop to comprise of four, 90-minute sessions. The first session focused on understanding social groups, identity construction, social power and discrimination. The second session was developed with an aim of creating an understanding of socialized gender roles and how they are policed by society while the third session focused specifically on LGB issues. Finally, the fourth session aimed at getting students to identify ways in which homophobia could be challenged in the school environment and ways in which LGB learners could be supported. This workshop made use of PowerPoint presentations, a video excerpt, small and large group discussions, role-plays, and self-reflections as methods for education and challenging the trainee teachers.

Hans, Kersey, and Kimberly (2012) conducted research on North American university students to investigate situations that may trigger a change in homophobic attitudes. The most common proposals to develop more favourable attitudes toward homosexuality involved creating personal contact with, or education about, gay men and lesbians. Approximately 46% of the sample proposed that interacting with LGB individuals would improve their attitudes towards homosexuality, about 20% of the sample suggested that exposure to LGB individuals and issues would improve their attitudes, and approximately 10% of the sample believed that education on homosexuality and LGB issues would develop more favourable attitudes. A number of the participants believed that a combination of contact and education would be effective in reducing homophobic attitudes. One of the participants reported; *“I think for me to become more favorable [sic] toward homosexuality, I would have to be exposed to it more and get rid of the typical stereotype I have that is portrayed in media of homosexuality”* (p. 12).

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The rationale, aims, and hypotheses of this study are presented in this chapter. Furthermore, the research design, sample, data collection technique and procedure, and ethical considerations are presented.

### **3.1. Rationale**

After conducting research on the homophobic experiences of homosexual high school goers in South Africa, Msibi (2012) recommended that The Department of Education develop an intervention program aimed at teachers in order to reduce the homophobic or heterosexist atmosphere in schools. The problems that homosexual learners experience in the high school environment, are, to a large part, caused or supported by the homophobic or heterosexist attitudes of teachers. It was believed that examining the levels of homophobia in trainee teachers, as well as the accuracy of their knowledge about homosexuality, could aid in proposals regarding potential changes that could be implemented in their training or in their future place of work: schools. If it could be identified that a lack of knowledge about homosexuality is related to homophobic attitudes, then targeting trainee teachers' lack of knowledge about homosexuality could reduce their level of homophobic or heterosexist attitudes. Thus investigating whether such a relationship (between knowledge of, and attitudes towards, homosexuality) existed provided the main rationale for this research.

### **3.2. Aims**

This study aimed to investigate whether a correlation existed between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuality in trainee teachers. It also aimed to investigate whether the formal provision of information on homosexuality during training was related to lower levels of homophobia. Furthermore, it aimed to provide preliminary recommendations for intervention within the teacher-training context.

### **3.3. Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to address the quantitative research aims of this study.

### *3.3.1. Hypothesis 1*

Trainee teachers who have poor or inaccurate knowledge about homosexuality will also have a high degree of negative attitudes towards homosexual learners.

### *3.3.2. Hypothesis 2*

Trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum, will have lower levels of homophobia.

### *3.3.3. Hypothesis 3*

Trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum, will have higher levels of knowledge of homosexuality.

## **3.4. Research Design**

A quantitative, correlational design was used for this study. This is due to the fact that it was a fairly simple and inexpensive method of data capture and analysis, as well as the fact that the aims of the research required interpretations about the degree to which the variables tended to co-occur or were related to each other. The variables of this study did not need to be manipulated and causality was not needed for inferences to be made. Thus, a quantitative, correlational design was suited to this study's purpose.

## **3.5. Sample**

The participants in this study consisted of 106 trainee teachers who were in their first year of study at a teacher training institution in Durban, South Africa. These participants were selected using convenience sampling, whereby the selection of participants was subject to the availability of the trainee teachers during the time that the data was collected.

## **3.6. Data collection and procedure**

Permission was granted by the first year teacher training coordinator to conduct the research on the sample. The participants were asked by the coordinator to attend the data collection at a particular venue on their campus and a number of first year trainee teachers

arrived on the day of data collection. Data was collected in one morning with the help of a lecturer at the institution and a research assistant.

All trainee teachers were handed information sheets and informed consent forms (see Appendix A) and were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and what their participation would involve. Furthermore, they were informed of their rights as participants (anonymity of participation, the right to withdraw from the research at any time, the right to informed consent) as per the informed consent information sheet that they were all given. After this verbal and written briefing, participants who were unwilling to participate were allowed to either leave or remain in the venue. A number of unwilling participants did leave the venue however the vast majority remained. Participants were given time to read through the information sheet and sign the informed consent forms and ask any questions before the questionnaires were distributed. Questionnaires (see Appendix B) were distributed to the participants and instructions regarding the completion of the questionnaire were given. Once the participants completed the questionnaire, a debriefing session occurred to discuss any queries or concerns about the study. The questionnaires were collected and the participants were left with the contact details of the researcher, her supervisor and the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The collected data was organised and entered into a statistical program for analysis.

### *3.6.1. Instruments used*

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data required for this study. A questionnaire was appropriate for the data collection of this study, as it allowed for a large sample group and for the measurement of required entities (degree of homophobia and accuracy of knowledge). A questionnaire, which consisted of multiple-choice questions, true and false questions, and 5-point Likert scale questions, was given to each participant to complete. The questionnaire comprised of three sections in order to obtain sufficient information: biographic items, items regarding knowledge about homosexuality, and items involving homophobia.

Using two psychometric scales, quantitative data was generated for the study. Scaled questions are useful in researching subject matter that involves subjective feelings (Delport,

2011). The two scales which this study used are The Modern Homophobia Scale (Raja & Stokes, 1998) and Knowledge About Homosexuality Questionnaire (Harris, 1998).

#### *3.6.1.1. The Modern Homophobia Scale (MHS)*

To measure the levels of negative attitudes that trainee teachers may have towards homosexuals, the Modern Homophobia Scale (MHS) was selected. It consists of two subscales, one measuring heterosexual individuals' attitudes to lesbians (MHS-L) and the other measuring heterosexual individuals' attitudes towards gay men (MHS-G). It consists of 46 statements, which require a response in the form of a five-point Lickert scale, ranging from strongly agree (scoring 0) to strongly disagree (scoring 5). The MHS contains statements which reflect personal discomfort with lesbians or gay men, institutional homophobia, and the deviance of male or female homosexuality from what is "normal" (Raja & Stokes, 1998).

Validity of MHS was originally obtained through the support of written vignettes on reactions to homosexual individuals. Thereafter, significant positive correlations were found between scores on the MHS and scores on the Index of Homophobia and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale. A greater degree of homophobia on MHS was found to be associated with a higher degree of socially desirable responding. Lower levels of homophobia on MHS were associated with having homosexual friends (Raja & Stokes, 1998).

#### *3.6.1.2. Knowledge About Homosexuality Questionnaire (KHQ)*

Knowledge About Homosexuality Questionnaire (KHQ) is a 20-item, true-false factual assessment. It was selected for use in data collection as it measures the accuracy of individuals' knowledge about homosexuality and about issues related to sexual orientation through testing factual knowledge as opposed to personal opinions (Harris, 1998). Several statements in this questionnaire were altered slightly. Table 1 indicates the changes that were made.

**Table 1****Changes made to Knowledge About Homosexuality Questionnaire (KHQ)**

Item number	Previous term/statement	Replacement term/statement	Reason for change
6	American Psychological Association	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders	More relevant to South African context
7	Homosexual males are more likely to seduce young boys than heterosexual males are to seduce young girls.	A homosexual teacher can cause adolescents to change their sexual orientation from heterosexual to homosexual.	The previous statement was thought to be too wordy, confusing and no longer relevant. *
12	Kinsey and many other researchers	Many researchers	Fear of participants not knowing Kinsey
18	National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	Lesbian and Gay Equality Project	More relevant to South African context
19	Overt behaviours	Removed from the statement	Reduce ambiguity

\* The new statement was based on the false belief that homosexual teachers will cause their pupils to have homosexual orientations. *"We cannot have it [gays teaching] because the actual survival of our country in the years ahead will depend upon a generation that will grow up straight"*(Rafferty, 1977, p. 92). *This belief is incorrect, as the sexual orientation of individuals is not affected by the sexual orientation of their teachers* (Dressler, 1978).

Construct validity for this scale has been found in the testing of an expert in sexuality, who scored 100% on the scale. Psychologists and social workers that completed the scale had significantly higher scores than nurses. Individuals with higher levels of education had higher

scores. People with higher scores on this scale were considerably less prejudiced against homosexuals (Harris et al., 1995).

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

#### *3.7.1. Beneficence and nonmaleficence*

This study did not pose any direct risk to individual participants. Participants were granted the opportunity to address any negative consequences related to the study during and after the data collection. They were also informed of counselling sites, support groups and organisations should the questionnaire or data collection processes stir any negative emotions or psychological reactions in them.

#### *3.7.2. Confidentiality*

Participants were not required to write identity-orientated information (e.g. their names, identity numbers or student numbers) onto their questionnaires. Anonymity of the participants' names as well as the institution name was maintained throughout the research process. Completed questionnaires and informed consent forms were only available to the researcher and supervisor and were stored in a secure location at all times.

#### *3.7.3. Informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from both the teacher training institution as well as each participant. Only trainee teachers who signed informed consent forms participated in the study.

#### *3.7.4. Ethical clearance*

Ethical clearance for the research was gained by the Psychology Department in the School of Applied Human Sciences, as well as the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C).

### **3.8. Data analysis**

The data collected from the participants was entered into a statistical program. A number of descriptive statistics (percentages, means and standard deviations) were used to draw inferences about the sample however the majority of the data analysis for this study was defined by the hypotheses.

The mean is a good analytical technique used to gain just one score for the entire sample or population thus enabling inferences to be drawn from the entire data set. It is calculated by adding every score in the data, and then dividing by the number of scores that exist (Terre Blanche, 2004). This technique was used for the participants' scores for the KHQ as well as the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale. Calculating the mean for these scales meant that one score for each scale was generated to represent the entire sample. This enabled inferences to be drawn about the extent to which the sample had an accurate understanding of homosexuality as well as the level of the sample's homophobic attitudes.

Another technique that was used was the calculation of Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) offers two categories of information: the strength of the relationship between two variables, indexed from zero to one, and the direction of the relationship, positive (when the scores on one variable are high, so are the scores on the other variable) or negative (when the scores on one variable are high, the scores on the other variable are low) (Lachenicht, 2004). The correlation coefficient was calculated with the mean scores of the KHQ and MHS. The coefficient was used to indicate whether the hypothesised relationship existed between homophobic attitudes and knowledge about homosexuality and whether that relationship was positive or negative. Following on from that, inferences were then drawn about the effects of a change in homosexual knowledge on homophobic attitudes.

The final technique that was used was an independent samples  $t$ -test. This was used to test for a significant difference between the mean scores of two groups on a given variable (Nunez, 2004). The independent samples  $t$ -test was used to test for a significant difference between the levels of homophobia in trainee teachers who had attended a course in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum and those who had not. Furthermore, it was used in a supplementary analysis to test for a significant difference between the levels

of homophobia in trainee teachers who had close contact with homosexual individuals and those who did not. It was also used to investigate whether a significant difference exists in male and female trainee teachers' attitudes towards gay men, lesbians and homosexual individuals in general.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis in relation to this study's aims and objectives.

The results of this study are based on the responses of 112 first year trainee teachers in a teacher training college in Durban. Of these 112 participants, six were not included in the data analysis due to invalid responses (such as incomplete questionnaires, or responding twice on a single item). Therefore, the sample that was considered for analysis consisted of 106 participants. Since the instruments that were used to measure the variables in this study were developed for heterosexual respondents, an additional ten participants were not included in the data analysis as they reported their sexual orientation to be non-heterosexual.

A significance level of  $p < 0,05$  was used for statistical analysis.

### 4.1. Participant biographical information

The sample comprised of 63 females (59.43% of sample) and 43 males (40.57% of sample). 96.22% of the sample was under the age of 24 while 3.77% was between the ages of 25 and 34. Of the 106 participants, 94 were Black (88.68% of sample), 10 were Indian (9.43% of sample), 1 was Coloured (0.94% of sample) and 1 was White (0.94% of sample). The self-reported sexual orientation of the sample was as follows: 88.68% heterosexual, 5.66% homosexual, 3.77% bisexual, and 1.89% of the sample was unsure of their sexual orientation. There were 24 participants (22.64% of the sample) who reported that they had attended a class or course in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum while 63 participants (59.43% of the sample) reported that they had not attended such a course and a further 19 participants (17.94% of the sample) were unsure about whether or not they had attended such a course. 47 participants (44.33% of the sample) reported that they had a close friend or family member who was homosexual while 59 participants (55.66% of the sample) reported that they did not. A summary of the above biographic information of the sample can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Biographic information of participants**

Demographic Data	Number of participants	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	63	59.43
Male	43	40.57
<b>Age Range</b>		
24 and under	10	96.22
25-34	4	3.77
<b>Race</b>		
Black	94	88.68
Indian	10	9.43
Coloured	1	0.94
White	1	0.94
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Heterosexual	94	88.68
Homosexual	6	5.66
Bisexual	4	3.77
Not Sure	2	1.89
<b>Homosexuality Presented in Curriculum</b>		
Yes	24	22.64
No	63	59.43
Not sure	19	17.94
<b>Close contact with homosexual individual</b>		
Yes	47	44.33
No	59	55.66

#### **4.2. Reliability of the scales**

To assess the reliability and internal consistency of the scales used, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the KHQ and MHS.

#### 4.2.1. *The Modern Homophobia Scale (MHS)*

The Cronbach's alpha for MHS, MHS-L and MHS-G was 0.94, 0.892, and 0.895 respectively. These alpha values indicate high levels of internal consistency and reliability in both subsections of the scale as well as the scale in general. Raja and Stokes (1998) reported a slightly higher level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ) for both the MHS-L and MHS-G. Since, in this study, the Cronbach's alpha value did not increase if any of the scale questions were omitted it was considered that all questions in the scale, as well as the scale in general, was reliable.

#### 4.2.2. *Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (KHQ)*

A Cronbach's alpha co-efficient of 0.124 for the KHQ was found in this study. This indicates very poor internal consistency and reliability. Harris (1998) reported a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 for a sample of health care professionals, 0.74 for a sample of college students and 0.28 for a sample of high school students.

Sijtsma (2009) suggests a number of problems with the interpretation of Cronbach's alpha when it comes to testing the internal consistency of a scale. He suggests that alpha values can be dependent on the number of questions in the scale and that the interpretation of Cronbach's alpha for a scale that comprises of one factor, such as this scale, needs to be extremely tentative. He proposes that

“A single number—alpha—that expresses both reliability and internal consistency—conceived of as an aspect of validity that suggests that items “measure the same thing”—is a blessing for the assessment of test quality. In the meantime, alpha “only” is a lower bound to the reliability and not even a realistic one. There is no clear and unambiguous relationship between alpha and the internal structure of a test... it is shown that a 1-factor test may have any alpha value. Thus, it may be concluded that the value of alpha says very little if anything about unidimensionality” (Sijtsma, 2009, p. 114).

As such, concerns around the low Cronbach's alpha value for this scale in this study were acknowledged but did not interfere with the continuation of the analysis of the data.

### 4.3. Descriptive Statistics

This study conducted a descriptive analysis using means and standard deviations on the scale scores. The total scores per participant for the scales KHQ and MHS were used to investigate the minimum and maximum scores, the mean scores, and the standard deviation for the sample. Table 3 displays these results.

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

Scale	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
KHQ	96	5	16	11.65	2.016
MHS	96	54	204	124.62	33.933
MHS-G	96	26	106	61.38	17.968
MHS-L	96	24	109	63.25	17.592

The KHQ consists of 20 true/false statements, with each possible score ranging from 0 to 20, where 0 indicates no knowledge about homosexuality and 20 indicates an excellent knowledge about homosexuality. The scores for this sample ranged from 5 to 16 with a mean of 11.65 (sd = 2.016) indicating that on average, the participants answered slightly more than half the questions correctly.

MHS consisted of 46 Lickert scale items, with each possible answer ranging from strongly agree (scoring 0) to strongly disagree (scoring 5). 22 of the items measured the sample's attitudes towards gay men and 24 of the items measured the sample's attitudes toward lesbians. The MHS generates a score that could range from 0 to 230, where a low score indicates positive (favourable) attitudes towards homosexuals and a high score indicates negative (homophobic) attitudes towards homosexuals. The MHS scores for this sample ranged from 54 to 204 with a mean of 124.62 (sd = 33.933) indicating that on

average, the participants presented moderate levels of homophobic attitudes towards homosexuals.

The MHS-G (attitudes towards gay men) generates a score that could range from 0 to 110, where a high score indicates negative (homophobic) attitudes towards gay men and a low score indicates positive (favourable) attitudes towards gay men. The MHS-G scores for this sample ranged from 26 to 106 with a mean of 61.38 (sd = 17.968) indicating that on average, the participants presented with moderate levels of homophobia towards gay men.

The MHS-L (attitudes towards lesbians) generates a score that could range from 0 to 120, where a high score indicates negative (homophobic) attitudes towards lesbians and a low score indicates positive (favourable) attitudes towards lesbians. The MHS-L scores for this sample ranged from 24 to 109 with a mean of 63.25 (sd = 17.592) indicating that on average, the participants presented with moderate levels of homophobia towards lesbians.

#### **4.4. Hypothesis 1**

It was hypothesized that trainee teachers who have poor or inaccurate knowledge about homosexuality (as measured by KHQ) will also have a high degree of negative attitudes towards homosexual learners (as measured by MHS).

It was found that a significant, negative correlation exists between the sample's scores for KHQ and MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L respectively. As can be seen in Table 4, the correlation coefficient between KHQ and MHS is -0.325 ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicating a moderate, negative correlation at a 0.01 level of significance. Furthermore, a moderate, negative correlation was found to exist between KHQ and MHS-G (-0.313,  $p < 0.01$ ) as well as KHQ and MHS-L (-0.307,  $p < 0.01$ ) at a 0.01 level of significance.

**Table 4****Correlations between KHQ, MHS, MHS-G & MHS-L**

Scale	MHS	MHS-G	MHS-L
KHQ	-0.325*	-0.313*	-0.307

\*Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

These results suggest that the sample's high scores for KHQ are moderately related to low scores for MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L. This indicates that participants who have a good knowledge about homosexuality should have an associated low degree of homophobic attitudes (towards both lesbians and gay men) and vice versa. Thus, these findings confirm the hypothesis, at a 1% level of significance, that trainee teachers who have poor or inaccurate knowledge about homosexuality will also have a high degree of negative attitudes towards homosexual learners.

#### 4.5. Hypothesis 2

It was hypothesized that trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum will have lower levels of homophobia.

Table 5 indicates the comparison in MHS scores between those participants who reported attending a course in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum and those who did not. 59 participants (61.4% of the sample) reported not attending such a course and had an average MHS score of 125.03 (sd = 32.760). 21 participants (21.9% of the sample) reported attending such a course and had an average MHS score of 116.10 (sd = 35.754). 16 participants (16,67% of sample) were unsure of whether they had attended such a course and were thus excluded from the analysis of this hypothesis.

**Table 5****MHS scores according to course attendance**

Course Attendance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
No	59	125.03	32.760
Yes	21	116.10	35.753

An independent samples t-test was run to investigate hypothesis 2 and it generated the follow result;  $t(78) = 1.048, p < 0.001$ . This indicated, at a 1% level of significance, that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of MHS between participants who reported having attended or not attended a course in which homosexuality was covered. This finding therefore rejects the hypothesis that trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum, will have lower levels of homophobia.

#### 4.6. Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis for this study stated that trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum, will have higher levels of knowledge of homosexuality.

Table 5 indicates the comparison in KHQ scores between those participants who reported attending a course in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum and those who did not. An average score of 11.42 (sd = 2.119) for knowledge about homosexuality was found in participants who reported not attending such a course. A mean KHQ score for participants who reported attending such a course was found to be 11.71 (sd = 1.617).

**Table 6**  
**KHQ scores according to course attendance**

Course Attendance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
No	59	11.42	2.119
Yes	21	11.71	1.617

A t-score of  $t(78) = -0.571, p < 0.001$  was found using an independent samples t-test. This indicated that, at the 1% level of significance, there was no significant difference in the mean scores of KHQ between participants who reported having attended or not attended a course in which homosexuality was covered. This finding therefore rejects the hypothesis that trainee teachers who have attended a course, in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum, will have higher levels of knowledge of homosexuality.

#### 4.7. Auxiliary findings

With a research aim of wanting to provide preliminary recommendations for a course offered to trainee teachers to reduce homophobia, further analysis was conducted on the data to explore the impact that gender and personal acquaintance with LGB individuals has on the trainee teachers' knowledge and attitudes.

##### 4.7.1. Gender and its impact on KHQ, MHS, MHS-G, and MHS-L scores

An investigation into whether or not there is a difference in the attitudes and knowledge of males and females about homosexuality was conducted. Table 7 indicates the comparison in KHQ, MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L scores between male and female participants. The 40 male participants presented average scores of 11.08 (sd = 2.26), 132.93 (sd = 33.74), 66.78 (sd = 19.03) and 66.15 (sd = 16.58) for KHQ, MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L respectively. The 56 female participants presented average scores of 12.06 (sd = 1.73), 118.70 (sd = 33.10), 57.52 (sd = 16.26) and 61.18 (sd = 18.14) for KHQ, MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L respectively.

**Table 7**

**Difference in male and females scores on KHQ, MHS, MHS-G and MHS-L**

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
KHQ*	M	0	11.08	2.26
	F	6	12.06	1.73
MHS	M	0	132.93	33.74
	F	6	118.70	33.10
MHS-G*	M	0	66.78	19.03
	F	6	57.52	16.26
MHS-L	M	0	66.15	16.58
	F	6	61.18	18.14

\*Significant difference at  $p < 0.05$

An independent samples t-test was run on each scale to investigate whether a difference existed in the knowledge and attitudes of males and females regarding homosexuality. A t score of  $t(94) = -2.403$ ,  $p < 0.05$  for the test on KHQ indicated a significant difference in males' knowledge and females' knowledge about homosexuality (at the 5% level of significance). On average, males had lower KHQ scores and this therefore suggests that males have significantly lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality than females.

For the test of difference on the MHS scale, no significant difference between male and female attitudes towards homosexuals was found as is indicated by the result;  $t(94) = 2.060$ ,  $p = 0.42$ . The results for the t-test on MHS-G presented a t score of  $t(94) = 2.56$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This suggests that a significant difference exists between the attitudes of males and females towards gay men (at the 5% level of significance). The male participants scored, on average, higher on the MHS-G scale compared to the female participants, indicating that they have significantly higher levels of homophobia towards gay men. Finally the t-test results for the MHS-L scale presented a t score of  $t(94) = 1.371$ ,  $p = 0.174$  which indicates that there is no significant difference in the male and female participants' attitudes towards lesbians.

#### 4.7.2. *Contact with homosexual individuals and its impact on KHQ and MHS scores*

An investigation into whether a difference exists in the scores on the KHQ and the MHS between participants who are in close contact with a homosexual individual was conducted. Table 8 indicates the comparison in KHQ and MHS scores between participants who have close contact with a homosexual individual and those who do not. The 58 participants who did not have close contact presented average scores of 11.4 ( $sd = 1.816$ ) on the KHQ and 132.59 ( $sd = 31.402$ ) for and MHS. The 38 participants who reported having close contact with a homosexual individual presented average scores of 12.03 ( $sd = 2.260$ ) on the KHQ and 112.47 ( $sd = 34.443$ ) on the MHS.

**Table 8**  
**Difference in contact scores on KHQ and MHS**

Scale	Contact	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
KHQ	No	8	11.40	1.816
	Yes	8	12.03	2.260
MHS*	No	8	132.59	31.402
	Yes	8	112.47	34.443

\*Significant difference at  $p < 0.05$

An independent samples t-test was run on the KHQ and MHS scales to investigate whether a difference existed between participants who either have or do not have close contact with homosexual individuals when it comes to their attitudes towards, and knowledge of, homosexuality. A t score of  $t(94) = -1.507$ ,  $p = 0.135$  for the test on KHQ indicated that no significant difference exists in the knowledge about homosexuality of participants who have close contact with homosexual individuals and those who do not. The results for the t-test on MHS presented a t score of  $t(94) = 2.953$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . This suggests that a significant difference exists in the attitudes towards homosexuals of participants who have close contact with homosexual individuals and those who do not (at the 1% level of significance). Thus, at a 1% level of significance, the participants who reported having close contact with homosexual individuals had, on average, lower levels of homophobic attitudes than those participants who did not.

#### 4.7.3. *The sample's performance on KHQ per item*

The question that was answered correctly most frequently was the question around the definition of "coming out". 88 out of the 96 respondents (91.67% of the sample) knew the definition for "coming out". The knowledge question that was answered correctly the least frequently was the question regarding homosexuality in animals. Only 8 out of the 96

participants (8.33% of the sample) got this question correct. Table 9 reflects each question in the KHQ in ascending order of frequency of correct response.

**Table 9**  
**KHQ responses**

Item number	Correct Response*	Knowledge tested	Percentage of respondents with correct responses
16	True	Definition of “coming out”	91,67
4	True	Some churches do condemn the discrimination against homosexuals	86,46
15	True	Heterosexual men tend to be more homophobic than heterosexual women	86,46
19	True	Definition of “bisexuality”	86,46
18	True	The function of Lesbian and Gay Equality Project	85,42
6	False	Homosexuality is not a mental illness	78,13
5	True	Sexual orientation is developed at an early age	72,92
7	False	Homosexual teachers do not cause homosexuality in learners	65,63
8	True	Gay men are more likely to be victims of violent crime than general public	65,63
1	False	Homosexuality is not something one can outgrow	61,45
12	True	That sexual identity/behaviour can occur on a continuum	59,38
2	False	Homosexual individuals cannot change into heterosexuals	57,29
20	False	Chromosomal abnormality is not an explanation for homosexuality	56,25
9	False	Molestation is not an explanation for homosexuality	51,04
10	False	Homosexuality is not a choice	40,63
3	False	Homosexuals do not want to be members of the opposite sex	35,42
17	False	Gay men have more sexual partners over their lifetime than lesbians	34,38

13	False	A homosexual's gender identity is not in conflict with their biological sex	25,00
14	False	Numerous cultures/societies have been tolerant/accepting of homosexuals	11,46
11	True	Homosexual activity occurs in animals	8,33

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\* This column indicates correct responses to KHQ items. The KHQ items can be found in Appendix B, Section 2. The correct responses in this column are not responses to the adjacent column, Knowledge tested.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter will present a critical examination of the findings in this study, as presented in Chapter 4, within the context of this study's aims and hypotheses, as well as the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2.

### 5.1. Opening remarks

The biographic statistics generated by this study reflect that the sample is roughly representative of KwaZulu-Natal in terms of race. However, little is known about the proportion of trainee teachers in KwaZulu-Natal that fall into each race group and thus it may not be a representative reflection of trainee teachers (or even qualified teachers). The same can be said for gender. The results reflected that 10 out of 112 participants listed their sexual orientation as non-heterosexual. This indicates that 8.9% of the sample of trainee teachers is non-heterosexual. No statistics can be found on the proportion of trainee teachers or qualified teachers in South Africa that are LGB and thus, it is unclear whether this sample reflects a representative number of non-heterosexual trainee teachers.

### 5.2. Knowledge about homosexuality and homophobic attitudes

#### 5.2.1. *Knowledge about homosexuality*

The highest score that was achieved by a participant in the sample on the KHQ was 16 out of 20. This indicates that not one trainee teacher out of a sample of 96 had complete knowledge about homosexuality. In fact, the result of the sample's mean KHQ score indicated that, on average, the trainee teachers had only slightly more than half of what one might consider to be complete knowledge about homosexuality. During the data collection process, once the questionnaires had been distributed, a participant asked the researcher what the term homosexuality meant. After the concept was explained, the participant responded by saying "Oh! You mean gay?" This suggests that the participant understood the concept of homosexuality, but not in formal manner. These findings indicate the sample's poor formal knowledge about homosexuality. It suggests that the sample, on average, had received poor, if any, formal training on issues related to homosexuality.

### 5.2.2. *Attitudes towards homosexuals*

The mean score for MHS in the sample indicates, on average, that the sample presents with moderate levels of homophobia. This was found in the sample's attitude towards homosexuals in general, as well as towards gay men and lesbians. There were a number of participants who displayed high levels of homophobic attitudes and those who displayed lower levels of homophobia, however no participants presented with completely positive attitudes towards homosexuals. This suggests that each participant has, to some degree, negative attitudes towards homosexuals and on average the sample has moderate homophobic attitudes. When this finding is compared to that of Sears (1992), who found that 80% of his North American trainee teacher sample harboured homophobic attitudes, it is evident that a greater amount of homophobic attitudes exists in this study's sample of South African trainee teachers.

Due to the existence of homophobic attitudes in every trainee teacher in the sample it is no wonder that teachers are portrayed in relevant literature as perpetrators of heterosexism and homophobic victimization (Butler et al., 2003; Francis & Msibi, 2011; Msibi, 2012; Wells, 2006) and are thus major agents of homophobia in schools. The accounts of numerous homophobic incidents against South African learners at the hands of their teachers as well as the covert silencing that occurs in South African schools occurs because of the teachers homophobic attitudes, attitudes which are evident while they are in training. Although homophobic attitudes were present in every participant in the sample, the extent of each participant's homophobic attitude ranged from mild to severe. This provides insight into the differing degrees of homophobia evident in teachers and their resultant behaviour in the school environment. The lower levels of homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers could explain the covert homophobic or heterosexist behaviours of teachers reported in literature. These behaviours include turning a blind eye to anti-gay harassment and disregarding violent homophobic acts (Butler et al., 2003), being unhelpful in intervening in anti-LGB victimization or not intervening at all (Butler et al., 2003; Kosciw et al., 2012), and the silencing of all things non-heterosexual (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012). The more severe levels of homophobic attitudes found in the trainee teachers could account for the overt homophobic behaviours that are reported of teachers in literature. These behaviours include derogatory anti-gay slurs and public shaming (Butler et al., 2003; Kosciw et al., 2012; Msibi,

2012; Rivers, 2011; Wells, 2006), physical harassment (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012; Wells, 2006), and the sexual abuse or rape (Wells, 2006) of LGB learners.

### *5.2.3. Relationship between knowledge about, and attitudes towards, homosexuality*

The primary aim of this study was to investigate whether a lack of trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality was related to high levels of homophobic attitudes. The results of a correlational analysis between the samples KHQ scores and scores for attitudes towards gay men (MHS-G), lesbians (MHS-L) and homosexuals in general (MHS) suggest that trainee teachers who have a poor knowledge about homosexuality will have higher levels of homophobic attitudes. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Addison (2007), Birden (2005) and Goldfarb (2006) who reported that individuals who lack knowledge about homosexuality have been found to have higher levels of homophobia.

### *5.2.4. Course attendance, knowledge about homosexuality and levels of homophobia*

Due to the correlation found between knowledge about homosexuality and homophobic attitudes, it could be hypothesised that if trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality is increased, their homophobic attitudes could be reduced. This proposal was tested by a number of researchers who ran courses for university students to educate them on homosexuality and LGB issues and found that the course reduced the participants' degree of homophobic attitudes (1994; Richardson, 2004; Waterman et al., 2001; Wright & Cullen, 2001). Furthermore Ben-Ari (1998) and Morgan (2003) found that students who had previously attended a course on homosexuality presented with more positive attitudes towards homosexuals. The theory of functional attitudes (Katz, 1960) also reinforces the proposal that increasing an individual's knowledge about homosexuality will reduce their negative attitudes. This theory proposes that knowledge is a function of homophobic attitudes and that individual's may have homophobic attitudes because they believe in or understand incorrect information about homosexuals (such as stereotypes and common myths). According to the functional attitude approach to attitude change, if an individual's homophobic attitude is to be reduced, they need to be educated about the inaccuracy of their knowledge about homosexuality.

This study investigated whether trainee teachers who had attended a course or class (in which homosexuality was included in its syllabus) had significantly lower levels of homophobic attitudes. This investigation was designed with the assumption that attending such a course or class would increase the trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality. The findings from this study however, presented results that rejected both the hypothesis and assumption upon which it was based. The findings also contradicted the research presented on increasing the knowledge of individuals to reduce homophobia (Ben-Ari, 1998; 1994; Morgan, 2003; Richardson, 2004; Waterman et al., 2001; Wright & Cullen, 2001) as well as Katz's (1960) theory of the knowledge function of attitudes. The results from this study indicate that trainee teachers who report to have attended a course in which homosexuality is covered in its syllabus did not present with significantly lower homophobic attitudes when compared to those trainee teachers who reported that they did not attend such a course.

It is important to note, however, that in this sample, not only was there no significant difference in homophobic attitudes between the two groups (those who attended a LGB-orientated course and those who did not), but there was also no significant difference in the KHQ scores between the two groups. This suggests that the courses or classes that the trainee teachers report to have attended did not create significantly higher levels of knowledge about homosexuality, as would be expected. This fact provides insight into why no significant difference in homophobic attitudes between the two groups exists. Had there been a difference in knowledge about homosexuality between the two groups, perhaps a difference in homophobic attitudes would have been found (as was the case in other research and literature). The reasons for a lack of difference in the trainee teachers knowledge about homosexuality, despite attending a course or class in which homosexuality was covered, is unclear as no enquiry into the specific aspects about the courses or classes was made. No information about the courses or classes (such as length of course, actual topics covered, method of facilitation), other than if a trainee teacher attended it, is known and thus only conjecture can be used to discuss the possible reasons behind the findings.

Out of the 96 participants in this study's sample, 21 of the trainee teachers reported having attended a course in which LGB issues were included in the syllabus. This indicates that about 22% of the sample, only, reported that they had received education on homosexuality, suggesting the rare nature of LGB-orientated education. The low incidence of

LGB-orientated education amongst this sample of first year trainee teachers reflects the poor availability of information on non-heterosexuality available to potential teachers prior to entering the tertiary education environment. This finding is supported by Butler et al. (2003) who found that comprehensive and correct information regarding alternative human sexuality is denied to learners in the school context.

Despite the reported supply of LGB-education to about 22% of the sample, this section of the sample presented with no significant difference in KHQ scores when compared to the trainee teachers who had not received the education. It could be proposed then that the homosexuality-education that the trainee teachers report to have received was not effective in providing accurate knowledge about homosexuality. The fact that almost 17% of the sample reported that they were unsure of whether or not they had attended a course on homosexuality, suggests that a large portion of the sample are unable to identify whether or not they have been educated on LGB-related issues. With such a high percentage of the sample being unable to identify whether or not they had learnt about LGB-issues, it raises the question, why? Why are these trainee teachers unable to identify whether or not they have attended a course that covers LGB issues? It is presumed that an individual would know if they have not attended a course on a topic, and therefore reporting that you are unsure of whether you have attended a course that includes LGB-issues suggests that LGB-issues may have been raised on a course but that the information received was not very significant. This may be the case when LGB-related information is given to students in an unclear manner, such as it being integrated into other sections of learning, it being brushed over by teachers or lecturers due to their own discomfort with, or lack of knowledge about, the topic, or it not being prioritised as important, and so on. Due to these reasons, individuals who attended courses or classes which included homosexuality in the syllabus may not have received accurate information.

Perhaps, if the 21 trainee teachers who report to have attended a course or class in which homosexuality was covered had received information in a more effective manner, their KHQ scores would be greater and significantly higher than those trainee teachers who had not attended such a course or class. If this were the case, it can be hypothesised that their homophobic attitudes might then be lower. However, widespread research by Koch (2000) in America suggests that the proposal of increasing knowledge to reduce homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers is not always effective as he found that previous education on LGB issues

made no significant difference in the samples homophobic attitudes. This finding conflicts with the findings of other research as well as theory of the knowledge function of attitudes. Koch's (2000) finding highlights and reinforces the complex nature of individuals' negative attitudes towards homosexuals as proposed by Herek (2000).

His finding suggests that merely addressing individuals' knowledge about homosexuality may not be sufficient in reducing their homophobic attitudes. The theory of functional attitudes further reinforces the suggestion that homophobic attitudes are complex. Katz (1960) comments that "unless we know the psychological need which is met by the holding of an attitude we are in a poor position to predict when and how it will change" (p. 170). Since homophobia can be viewed as serving differing needs in different individuals, emphasising knowledge as the sole focus of intervention could result in little change in individuals' attitudes. Furthermore, each homophobic attitude could serve different functions in each individual and thus it is important that intervention is not merely based on changing individual's knowledge about homosexuality, but also focuses on other functions of attitudes (such as value expressive, ego defensive, social adjustive, and utilitarian functions).

### **5.3. Preliminary recommendations for intervention**

#### *5.3.1. Knowledge about homosexuality*

The results of this study have highlighted the fact that this sample, on average, has received poor, if any, formal training on issues related to homosexuality. It is therefore essential that trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality be improved. This improvement in knowledge is not merely needed in order to reduce the homophobic attitudes in the trainee teachers, but also to increase their understanding about homosexuality. A quote by an LGB British learner highlights how teachers' accurate knowledge about homosexuality can be significantly helpful and supportive;

...nor were they supportive in the sense that they had no advice, no information, nowhere to offer. I wasn't necessarily expecting them to solve my problems, but had they – any of them – told me there was anything like a gay switchboard or a gay support group, or anything like that would have been an enormous help (Rivers, 2011, p. 166).

According to the correlation that this study has presented between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals, it is believed that improving trainee

teachers' knowledge about homosexuality will increase the chances of their negative attitudes towards homosexuals becoming more favourable. Although evidence of this occurring is mixed, as can be seen in Section 5.2.4, it is still recommended that trainee teachers be taught about homosexuality. The functional approach to attitudes suggests that attitudes can be altered or promoted by ensuring that a message matches the function or the need of that attitude (Katz, 1960). Altering negative attitudes towards homosexuals involves educating individuals about their bigotry in order to give them insight into the drive behind their attitude. It is insufficient, however, to merely intervene against the knowledge function of homophobia as the trainee teachers' homophobic attitudes could be serving more than one function. As such, it is important to address the knowledge function of homophobic attitudes, but also include other means of addressing other functions of homophobia.

It is recommended that this be done using a multi-method approach to intervention. This involves not just teaching the trainee teachers about homosexuality, but using a variety of techniques that will address other functions of homophobic attitudes and thus have greater success in improving the attitudes. Richardson (2004), who conducted multi-method intervention programs to address homophobia in trainee teachers, reflected on what he had learnt through running the program over a number of years. He stated that,

...Being exposed to discussions about gender and sexuality, films with lesbian and gay characters, and lesbian and gay people in a panel discussion, can have a significant impact on the espoused ideas of student teachers. As one student wrote: 'I can now look at a gay person and accept that they are just another person and did not decide one day 'I want to be gay' just as I never chose to be heterosexual.' (p. 160).

Potgeiter et al. (2014), who also made use of a variety of techniques to address homophobia in teachers, found that

The project was accepted and enthusiasm to be trained and to learn about addressing homophobia and its consequences is illustrated by the fact that we had proposed to train 200 teachers and trained approximately 800. The numbers increased as the word spread that this training was taking place, and many requests to be part of the training were entertained (p. 15).

The desire of teachers and trainee teachers to attend this course indicates the need for this training in the educational environment and suggests the positive future that could lie ahead in the reduction of homophobia in the South African school environment.

### 5.3.2. *Gendered differences in knowledge about, and attitudes towards homosexuality*

This study conducted an investigation into whether a significant difference existed between the male and female trainee teachers and their knowledge of, and attitudes towards, homosexuality. The results of this investigation proved that there was a significant difference between the attitudes of the male and female trainee teachers with regards to male homosexuality only. In fact, not only were the MHS-G scores of the male trainee teachers significantly different, they were higher, indicating higher levels of homophobic attitudes.

The existence of higher levels of homophobic attitudes in this sample's male trainee teachers when compared to the female trainee teachers is supported by the findings made by other researchers. Herek (2000), LaMar and Kite (1998), Louderback and Whitley (1997), and Schellenberg et al. (1999) too found that negative attitudes towards homosexuals are more common in heterosexual males than in heterosexual females. What is distinct about the findings of this study however is that the male trainee teachers only had significantly higher levels of homophobic attitudes towards gay males, not gay females. This result was also found by Schoeman (2009) who reported that the adolescent males in her study's sample presented with greater homophobic attitudes towards homosexual men than homosexual women. Schoeman (2009) further noted that a strong correlation existed between the male participants' adherence to traditional male role norms and negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Herek (1987), Lim (2002), Theodore and Basow (2000), Basow and Johnson (2000), Louderback and Whitley (1997), and Whitley and Lee (2000) reinforce the idea that homophobic attitudes are related to strong traditional beliefs about gender roles. Individuals who strongly prescribe to traditional ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman will most likely believe that homosexuality violates these traditional gender roles. Deacon et al. (1999) found that many South African teachers adhere to patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality, thereby adhering to the ideology around traditional gender roles. It can therefore be postulated that this study's sample of male trainee teachers, similar to that of the male adolescents in Schoeman's (2009) study, adhere to traditional masculinity ideology. Levant et al. (1992) propose that traditional masculinity ideology provides males with a powerful code by which to live. This code suggests that men must avoid all things feminine, confine their emotional life, be tough and aggressive, be self-reliant, achieve status above all else, display non-relational, objectifying attitudes toward sexuality, and most relevant to this study, abhor

homosexuals and homosexuality. Male homosexuals naturally defy the last part of this code and thus, based on their sexual orientation alone, already violate part of the traditional male role. Moreover, popular and stereotyped perceptions of gay men further violate the code (stereotypes such as gay men are feminine) and these perceived violations of the traditional gender role of men provides possible insight into why male trainee teachers have greater levels of homophobic attitudes towards gay men.

Another significant difference between male and female trainee teachers that was noted in this study was that the male trainee teachers had significantly lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality when compared to the female trainee teachers. This is a fairly novel result, as this has not been found in previous literature that pertains to this topic. As such, little investigation has gone into understanding why this may be the case. It could be proposed that the males' lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality are related to their greater levels of homophobic attitudes (towards gay males). Perhaps if men are more closed to the idea of homosexuality, they will be more closed to any accurate information that they could learn about homosexuality.

This gender-based finding has significant value when it comes to preliminary recommendations offered to individuals designing effective courses intended to reduce homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers. Understanding the differences in male and female trainee teachers' attitudes towards homosexuals of different genders is important. Incorporating sections in the training that focus on gender roles is key. Since these findings have highlighted male gender roles and masculinity as being particularly related to homophobia, bringing the trainee teachers into awareness about the powerful code that many males live by and educating them about traditional masculinity ideology and its implications for their negative attitudes is important. Furthermore, challenging the harmful aspects of traditional masculinity ideology and offering alternative ideologies with which to ascribe to could be beneficial.

A course developed by Potgeiter et al. (2014) aimed to educate teachers and trainee teachers about sexual diversity and challenge homophobia in the school environment. The course focused much attention on gender roles and the manner in which socialisation results in binary, gendered expectations in society. Feedback from the course participants indicated positive responses to the course. Many of the students reported a high level of awareness with

regards to sexual diversity after the workshop compared to the low and medium levels of awareness that they experienced prior to attending the workshop. Furthermore, a vast majority of the trainee teachers who attended the workshop: reported finding the course highly relevant and useful for their current or future school environment, would recommend the course to others, and would be interested in attending on-going and further training in the area of sexual and gender diversity. The course was not without its challenges, however, as in the initial stages resistance towards the course, mostly on the part of the male participants, emerged. This highlights the powerful resistance of many male trainee teachers towards learning about, and challenging negative attitudes towards, homosexuality and sheds light on the lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality amongst the male trainee teachers in this study's sample. However, as the course progressed, more affirmative attitudes were presented in the group resulting in a powerful comment being made by a gay male participant at the end of the workshop. He stated that the heterosexual male trainee teachers on the course "...*sit with us now*" (p. 14). Prior to the workshop, those male participants would not talk to or sit near their gay peers, but after attending the workshop, a shift in the attitudes of the heterosexual male participants towards homosexuality was noted in the form of them socially mixing with and talking to LGB participants. Other comments made by participants highlight the shift in their knowledge and attitudes after attending the course:

Actually, I did not know what is the [sic] stereotype, but now I know... I resented gay and lesbian people because of lack of understanding but now I don't... As teachers we need this kind of exposure because we are faced with these in schools and we are not sure what to do when learners are calling each other names (p. 14).

### 5.3.3. *Differences in knowledge about, and attitudes towards, homosexuality in trainee teachers with or without close LGB-contact*

Another investigation that was conducted in this study was whether a significant difference existed between the trainee teachers' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, homosexuality based on whether or not they had a close friend or family member who was gay. The results of the analysis indicate that trainee teachers who have close contact with a homosexual individual have significantly lower levels of homophobic attitudes. This finding is consistent with Allport's (1979) contact hypothesis, which theorises that direct contact with individuals of a minority group decreases the stereotypes and negative feelings held against those minority group members. Basow and Johnson (2000) and Herek and Glunt (1993)

further support this finding as their research presents that close contact to LGB individuals is related to lower levels of homophobia. Morgan (2003) reported that teachers who had personally known an LGB individual had lower levels of homophobia than those teachers who did not. It is clear to see, then, that interaction with LGB individuals plays a large role in reducing individuals' homophobic attitudes.

Interestingly, close contact with an LGB individual, made no significant difference on those trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality. What this suggests is that attitudes towards homosexuals can become more favourable without a significant change in that individual's knowledge about homosexuality. This is an important finding, as it provides large implications for recommendations for courses addressing homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers. It is not enough to merely address the trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality, but just as vital to get the students to interact with individuals who identify as LGB.

Lance (2002) conducted research on the effects that interaction with a panel of LGB individuals would have on heterosexual students' attitudes towards homosexuals after attending a sexuality course. He used a control group consisting of students that did not have an LGB panel with which to interact during the course. It was found that the students who interacted with the panel showed significantly lower levels of discomfort with LGB individuals compared to those in the control group. Richardson (2004) made use of gay panels as one of the intervention methods. Reflections of the participants made the day following the panel discussions suggested favourable shifts in their negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Comments such as *"I think it is very important to deal with gay issues in a classroom because the children will be exposed to it in life"* (p. 158) and *"If we want to call ourselves evolved human beings who have moved away from the ideas of apartheid, slavery and racism, then why on earth do we have ideas like homophobia and heterosexism?"* (p. 159) indicate the shift in attitudes in the participants.

This is supported by research conducted by Hans et al. (2012) who found that students' attitudes towards homosexuality were understood to be largely dependent on their interaction with LGB individuals. In fact, approximately 46% of these students proposed that interacting with LGB individuals would improve their attitudes towards homosexuality. About 20% of the students suggested that exposure to LGB individuals and issues would

improve their attitudes and approximately 10% of the students believed that education on homosexuality and LGB issues would develop more favourable attitudes. A number of the students believed that a combination of contact and education would be effective in reducing homophobic attitudes. Having an LGB panel included in a course addressing homophobic attitudes is therefore essential. Researchers who have included a LGB panel in their courses have reported success in the reduction of homophobic attitudes in their students (Francis & Msibi, 2011; Richardson, 2004; Wright & Cullen, 2001) and this study provides empirical support for the use of one.

#### **5.4. Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is the sampling method. Although the convenience sampling method generated a relatively representative sample of the KwaZulu-Natal population in terms of race, it is not representative of the population of South Africa. Furthermore, it is not accurately representative of South African trainee teachers. As such, the generalisation of the results of this study is limited.

The selection of first year trainee teachers also means that the knowledge and attitudes of the sample may not reflect the knowledge and attitudes of trainee teachers in more advanced stages of their training, thus limiting the generalisation of the results even further.

Due to the quantitative approach of this study, the existence of constructs (such as homophobic attitudes and knowledge about homosexuality) and the extent to which they exist in the sample are merely stated. The methodology does not allow for qualitative enquiry to evaluate why the constructs exist in the sample and thus tentative explanations for the existence of the constructs in the sample are based on literature. These tentative explanations however may not be generalizable to this sample.

The investigation into whether receiving LGB-related education or not resulted in significantly different knowledge about, and attitudes towards, homosexuality provided many limitations to the study as very little was known about the LGB-oriented courses or classes that the participants had attended. Had information about the courses or classes been obtained (such as how long the course was, the topics covered, the manner in which the information

was conveyed, and so on), a more accurate interpretation could have been made. The fact that there were only 21 participants who reported receiving such education meant that the sample size of those who had attended a course in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus was small. According to the Central Limit Theorem (Nunez, 2004), a sample of 21 participants cannot be assumed to be an approximate of a normal distribution. Hence it is assumed that had there been a larger sample of trainee teachers who had attended a course in which LGB-issues were covered (a sample more reflective of a normal distribution), the results generated from this sample may have reflected a significant difference in homophobic attitudes compared to those who had not attended such a course.

The correlational design is also limited in that it can merely indicate relationships as existing or not. No causality between knowledge about homosexuality and homophobic attitudes can be accounted for by this technique. Despite knowing that a relationship exists between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals, the research design limits the assumption that poor knowledge about homosexuality causes homophobic attitudes.

The manner in which the data was collected could also have supplied limitations for the study. Since the data was collected in a lecture hall, which consisted of all the participants at one time, the participants were very difficult to control. The lack of sufficient space in the venue meant that the participants sat very close to each other. Despite instructing the participants to respond independently and respect the privacy of their peers, incidents of participants viewing the adjacent participants responses, overt verbal and non-verbal reactions to the questionnaire, and questions asked of the examiner could have resulted in participants answering unreliably. One of the participants commented to the researcher in front of the other participants that “there are no homosexuals here” while pointing to himself and a row of 5 of his male class mates, making it very clear that he finds homosexuality to be something that is not accepted by himself or his immediate peers. Since homophobic attitudes in particular can be peer validated, reactivity of the participants to aspects of the questionnaire or to comments made by participants could have caused false self disclosure in some of the participants. It is therefore unclear whether each participant’s responses indicate unbiased, independent knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals.

The use of scales (or psychometric assessments) as a means of measuring attitudes and knowledge can be limiting if the reliability and validity is poor, or if the reliability and validity was tested on a sample that is different to that of the sample being used in this study. MHS was designed for university students. Reliability and validity scores for a sample of university students were high and the internal consistency test that was used in this study indicated that the scale had high levels of internal consistency. The Homosexuality Questionnaire, however, was designed for nurses, social workers and psychologists. The reliability and validity scores that were found by the developers were high, however the internal consistency test conducted in this study revealed extremely low levels of internal consistency. This score has the potential to provide severe limitations on the analysis and interpretation of data linked to the Homosexuality Questionnaire scores. However, due to reasons explained in Section 4.2.2, there are other explanations for the low level of internal consistency that may not hamper the interpretation of results.

Despite the limitations of this study, the results make inroads into the broader research that needs to take place in the area of teacher training and homophobia. Furthermore, it offers empirical support to the academics who have designed existing courses for trainee teachers which aim at reducing homophobic attitudes.

## **5.5. Recommendations for future research**

It is recommended that research similar to this study be conducted in other provinces in South Africa in order to gain information on trainee teachers' knowledge about, and attitudes towards, homosexuality. This will allow for samples that are more representative of the South African population and will improve the collective accumulation of data that reflects the knowledge and attitudes of South African trainee teachers. Furthermore, broadening the scope of this study by measuring the knowledge and attitudes of trainee teachers that are in their second, third and fourth years of their study, and who have been exposed to the school environment through practical teaching, will allow for a more representative sample of trainee teachers.

Although the quantitative methodology that was used in this study was suited to the aims of this research, making use of a qualitative methodology to build on the findings of this study would allow for greater access to information and therefore allow for a more in-depth

interpretation. Where quantitative research was able to obtain information about whether or not trainee teachers had attended an LGB-orientated course, qualitative methodology would allow for researchers to investigate the content of the course as well as the manner in which the course was conducted and thus explore successful methods to reduce the homophobic attitudes in the trainee teachers. Furthermore, where the quantitative method of data collection identified that male trainee teachers have significantly higher levels of homophobic attitudes towards gay males and significantly lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality, the qualitative method would allow for an investigation into why these findings may be the case.

The use of a pre-test, post-test methodology could be used in research on the effectiveness on courses addressing the homophobic attitudes of trainee teachers. Existing research on the effectiveness of such courses make use of subjective, self reported measures to evaluate its success. A pre-test, post-test or controlled trial methodology would allow for the testing of the effectiveness of a course in an empirical manner, allowing for measurements to be made as to how effective a course is, or how effective one method of conducting the course is over another, in reducing homophobic attitudes in trainee teachers.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The heterosexist and homophobic environment that exists in South African schools is extremely damaging to South African youth, particularly LGB youth. Research has indicated that of all developmental stages, adolescents are the most affected by homophobic acts. A large portion of an adolescent's life is spent in school, which is a highly homophobic environment. As a result, homosexual adolescents are denied the opportunities that heterosexual learners are offered, such as the ability to openly be who they truly are, to have access to information on homosexuality and non-heterosexual lifestyles, to seek guidance from teachers and school counsellors on matters related to homosexuality, and to feel safe, equal and assured in their learning environment.

This heterosexist and homophobic environment is very often established and encouraged by teachers, who have been found to be significant agents in the maltreatment of LGB learners. The effect that this damaging environment has on LGB youth is immense, at times even fatal, and yet very little is being done to prevent this. As such, intervention into this problem largely involves reducing the homophobic attitudes of teachers, particularly trainee teachers since they are more accessible while in college.

Possible reasons for homophobia found in teachers or trainee teachers are complex. However, correlates of homophobia provide an enlightening source of information. Most correlates of homophobia are entities that are deeply ingrained in individuals (such as religious ideology) and are therefore difficult to approach for possible intervention. The correlate, knowledge about homosexuality, however, suggests that if individuals are merely taught about homosexuality, their levels of homophobia will decrease. Furthermore, according to the functional approach to attitudes (Katz, 1960), homophobic attitudes serve psychological functions for individuals. There are five functions which homophobic attitudes can serve for individuals, one of which is a knowledge function. The functional approach to attitudes maintains that in order to change an individual's attitude, the function that the individual's attitude serves needs to be identified so that the particular function can be addressed and thus the attitude changed. This study set out to explore whether the knowledge function of homophobic attitudes is one of the functions that needs to be addressed in the intervention against homophobia for trainee teachers.

This study, therefore, had one main research objective and two supplementary objectives. The main objective was to investigate whether a correlation existed between knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuality in trainee teachers. To supplement this objective, the study also aimed to investigate whether the formal provision of information on homosexuality during training was related to lower levels of homophobia and to provide preliminary recommendations for intervention within the teacher-training context.

The average level of knowledge about homosexuality amongst the sample of trainee teachers was found to be moderate, with no trainee teachers presenting with complete knowledge scores. The male trainee teachers were found to present with significantly lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality than the females. This finding highlights the need for trainee teachers to be educated on homosexuality in order to increase their knowledge about alternative sexualities.

The average attitude towards homosexuals of the sample was found to be moderate with each participant displaying some degree of homophobia. This finding indicates that homophobic attitudes exist in every trainee teacher in the sample, thus intervention at this level is essential. The male trainee teachers' attitudes towards gay men were found to be significantly higher than the female trainee teachers. The discrepancy in the male and female trainee teachers' attitudes towards gay men suggests that male trainee teachers have a double standard regarding homosexuality whereby male homosexuality is considered to be less favourable than female homosexuality. This finding emphasizes the influence of gender roles, particularly masculinity, on individuals' attitudes.

A moderate, negative correlation was found to exist between the average scores for Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire and The Modern Homophobia Scale, indicating that lower levels of knowledge about homosexuality are related to higher levels of homophobic attitudes. This finding suggests that increasing trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality should decrease their homophobic attitudes. However, another finding in this study indicated that previous attendance on a course or class in which homosexuality was included in the syllabus resulted in no significant differences in trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals. Since the course that the sample reported to have attended did not significantly change the sample's knowledge about homosexuality, drawing conclusions about the effect of knowledge change on attitude change

could not be made. This finding did, however, highlight the complex nature of homophobic attitudes and interventions aimed at addressing them and, when considering solutions to attitude adjustment, it emphasised the need to focus on other factors in addition to knowledge.

The final finding from the study indicated that trainee teachers who were in close contact with a LGB individual had significantly lower levels of homophobic attitudes and presented with no significant difference in their knowledge about homosexuality. This indicates that contact with LGB individuals can lower homophobic attitudes, without altering knowledge about homosexuality.

A small number of programs that attempt to address homophobia exist in South African teacher training colleges. This study's findings offer empirical support for the content and methods that are used in the already existing courses and offers further content that should be considered for inclusion. Providing trainee teachers with information on homosexuality is extremely important. Despite indistinct results as to whether increasing trainee teachers' knowledge about homosexuality will improve their homophobic attitude, increasing their knowledge about homosexuality will empower them to be knowledgeable about alternative sexualities and thus reduce silencing and heterosexism in the school environment. Furthermore, providing trainee teachers with information about homosexuality alone may not be sufficient in reducing their homophobic attitudes. Rather, including other methods of intervention is key to address more functions of homophobic attitudes than just the knowledge function. Thus, it is vital that the scope of intervention programs is broadened to include other factors in addition to knowledge about homosexuality. Including discussions and information on gender roles, particularly issues around masculinity, is extremely important particularly with male trainee teachers. Finally, including contact with LGB individuals into the intervention program, such as the use of an LGB panel, is highly recommended.

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## **APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

As a 1<sup>st</sup> year teacher in training, you have been selected to participate in the following study. The study is entitled “Trainee Teachers’ Beliefs about, and Attitudes towards, Gay and Lesbian Learners: A Correlational Study.” The project aims at investigating the accuracy of trainee teachers’ knowledge about homosexuality as well as their attitudes towards homosexual people. It also aims at seeing if there is relationship between knowledge about homosexuals and homophobia.

If you agree to participate in the study you will be briefed on the topic of study and informed of your rights as a participant; you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any negative repercussions, your name will be kept anonymous throughout the entire research process (even the college’s name is kept anonymous). You will then be required to fill in a written questionnaire that will last for the duration of your lecture period. In the questionnaire you will be asked to select given responses to statements about attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and about information regarding homosexuality. Your researcher will be available afterwards for any queries or problems.

All questionnaires will be handed over to UKZN once the research is complete where they will be locked in a storeroom and disposed of after 5 years. All computerized data that the researcher enters onto her computer will be deleted after writing her report.

If there are any queries or concerns about this study please feel free to contact Alison or her supervisor on the following details.

**Alison Lees**  
[alisonclairelees@gmail.com](mailto:alisonclairelees@gmail.com)

**Steven Roche** (Supervisor)  
BA (Hons), MA (UND)  
0312607617  
roches@ukzn.ac.za

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of trainee teacher) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of teacher in training

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX B: TEACHER IN TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

### Section 1

Please circle or write your response to the following questions.

1. Are you:
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
2. Which of the following age ranges do you belong?
  - a. Age 24 and under
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. Over 54
3. What race are you?
  - a. Black
  - b. White
  - c. Indian
  - d. Coloured
  - e. Other
4. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
  - a. Heterosexual
  - b. Bisexual
  - c. Homosexual
  - d. Not sure
5. Have you ever had a class or course in which homosexuality was presented as part of the curriculum?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
6. Do you have any close friends or family who are homosexual?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

### Section 2

Please respond to each of the following statements by shading in the correct circle where:

Ⓓ means true and Ⓕ means false.

Statements	Response	
1. Homosexuality is a phase which children outgrow.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
2. There is a good chance of changing homosexual persons into heterosexual men and women.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
3. Most homosexuals want to be members of the opposite sex.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
4. Some church denominations have condemned legal and social discrimination against homosexuals.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
5. Sexual orientation is established at an early age.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
6. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, homosexuality is an illness.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
7. A homosexual teacher can cause adolescents to change their sexual orientation from heterosexual to homosexual.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
8. Gay men are more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general public.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
9. A majority of homosexuals were seduced in adolescence by a person of the same sex, usually several years older.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
10. A person becomes a homosexual (develops a homosexual orientation) because he/she chooses to do so.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
11. Homosexual activity occurs in many animals.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
12. Many researchers consider sexual behaviour as a continuum from exclusively homosexual to exclusively heterosexual.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
13. A homosexual person's gender identity does not agree with his/her biological sex.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
14. Historically, almost every culture has evidenced widespread intolerance towards homosexuals, viewing them as "sick" or as "sinners".	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
15. Heterosexual men tend to express more hostile attitudes towards homosexuals than do heterosexual women.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
16. "Coming out" is a term that homosexuals use for publically acknowledging their homosexuality.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
17. One difference between homosexual men and women is that lesbians tend to have more partners over their lifetime.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
18. The Lesbian and Gay Equality Project is an organisation founded to work with homosexual people to help achieve legal and social equality.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
19. Bisexuality can be characterized by erotic responses to both males and females.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F
20. Recent research has shown that homosexuality is caused by a chromosomal abnormality.	<input type="radio"/> T	<input type="radio"/> F

### Section 3

Please respond to each of the following statements by shading in the appropriate number where;

① = Do not agree    ② = Agree    ③ = I don't know    ④ = Disagree    ⑤ = Strongly disagree

<u>Statements about homosexual women</u>	Do not agree (1) <span style="float: right;">Strongly Agree (5)</span>				
1. Employers should provide health care benefits to the partners of their lesbian employees.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Teachers should try to reduce their students prejudice towards lesbians.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. Lesbians who adopt children do not need to be monitored more closely than heterosexual parents.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Lesbians should be allowed to be leaders in religious organisations.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Lesbians are capable as heterosexuals of forming long-term romantic relationships	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. School curricula should include positive discussion of lesbian topics.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Marriages between two lesbians should be legal.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Lesbians should not be allowed to join the military.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. I would not vote for a political candidate who was openly lesbian.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Lesbians are incapable of being good parents.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. I am tired of hearing about lesbians' problems.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. I wouldn't mind going to a party that included lesbians.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. I wouldn't mind working with a lesbian.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. I am comfortable with the thought of two women being romantically involved.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. It's all right with me if I see two women holding hands.	①	②	③	④	⑤

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. If my best female friend was dating a woman, it would not upset me.  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 17. Movies that approve of female homosexuality bother me.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 18. I welcome new friends who are lesbian.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 19. I don't mind companies using openly lesbian celebrities to advertise their products.                                 | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 20. I would be sure to invite the same-sex partner of my lesbian friend to my party.                                     | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 21. I don't think it would negatively affect our relationship if I learned that one of my close relatives was a lesbian. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 22. Physicians and psychologists should strive to find a cure for female homosexuality.                                  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 23. Lesbians should undergo therapy to change their sexual orientation.  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 24. Female homosexuality is a psychological disease.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

Statements about homosexual men

Do not  
agree (1)

Strongly  
Agree (5)

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I wouldn't mind going to a party that included gay men.  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 2. I would not mind working with a gay man.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 3. I welcome new friends who are gay.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 4. I would be sure to invite the same-sex partner of my gay male friend to my party.                              | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 5. I won't associate with a gay man for fear of catching AIDS.  | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 6. I don't think it would negatively affect our relationship, if I learnt that one of my close relatives was gay. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 7. I am comfortable with the thought of two men being romantically involved.                                      | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 8. I would remove my child from class if I found out the teacher was gay.   | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

9. It's all right with me if I see two men holding hands.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
10. Male homosexuality is a psychological disease.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
11. Physicians and psychologists should strive to find a cure for male homosexuality.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
12. Gay men should undergo therapy to change their sexual orientation.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
13. Gay men could be heterosexual if they really wanted to be.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
14. I don't mind companies using openly gay male celebrities to advertise their products.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
15. I would not vote for a political candidate who was openly gay.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
16. Hospitals shouldn't hire gay male doctors.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
17. Gay men shouldn't be allowed to join the military.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
18. Movies that approve of male homosexuality bother me.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
19. Gay men should not be allowed to be leaders in religious organisations.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
20. Marriages between two gay men should be legal.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
21. I am tired of hearing about gay men's problems.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤
22. Gay men want too many rights.      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤

## APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



10 June 2014

Mrs Alison Lees (205513388)  
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology  
Howard College Campus

Protocol reference number : HSS/0288/014M  
Project title: Trainee teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards Gay and Lesbian learners : A correlational study

Dear Mrs Lees,

### Full Approval Notification – Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above was reviewed by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, has now been granted **Full Approval**.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Mr Steven Roche  
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele  
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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