'Towards gender inclusive and diversity affirming life-orientation in Christian Schools'

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Interrogating a potential education model
for Christian schools in South Africa to facilitate diverse and safe spaces for learners to engage with
sexuality and gender identity based on a workshop by IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries).

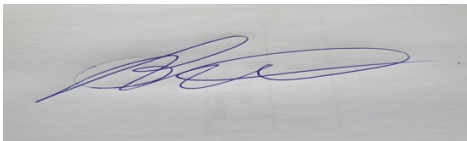Supervisor: Professor Charlene Van Der Walt

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Supervisor Signature

Date: 26 September 2020

Acknowledgment

DEDICATION

To those who are marginalised and stigmatised within their families and communities on the basis of who you are, and forced to live a shadowed – or overshadowed - life as a result. It's my fervent hope that a world where we are all accepted for our truest selves is one that becomes a lived reality regardless of gender, sex or orientation.

To James, for being my constant champion and partner on the easy and especially on the difficult paths. Thank you for your love and for accepting me as I am.

ABSTRACT

'Towards gender inclusive and diversity affirming life-orientation in Christian Schools' is focused on a model that can be used by Christian schools in South Africa to create an inclusive, diverse and safe space for learners to engage with sexuality and gender identity in a constructive and life affirming way. While South Africa's constitution is explicit concerning equal rights for all regardless of gender, sex or sexual orientation, the reality on the ground is very different and LGBTQI+ learners at school age are especially vulnerable, sometimes up to five times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight, heteronormative peers.

'Queerness' takes a spectrum of deeply personal, fluid and nuanced forms. The language around how to articulate identity is complex, especially in a country with the convergence of vernaculars, cultures and religions that South Africa faces as well as its patriarchal history. The factors influencing stigma and prejudice around those who fall outside of heteronormative ideals are as nuanced, numerous and diverse as the range of sexualities and gender identities that exist.

Schools function as a microcosm of their communities and can be catalysts for systemic transformation and disruption. In this work, they are considered as sites for change and a workshop conducted at a Christian school, focused on inclusivity and diversity, conducted by Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) forms part of this research. With a specific focus on discourse, IAM works with faith communities to make them inclusive and affirming spaces for those who are marginalised as a result of falling outside of a heteronormative ideal. The work is conducted on an invitation basis, tailored specifically for each community. Reflective praxis forms a large part of the process: critically reflecting and interrogating each of the workshops to better inform the process as it moves forward. The first school based workshop took place in 2019 ahead of a series of such workshops starting in 2020.

Research into Life Orientation (LO) teaching at schools in South Africa has been conducted extensively: it has included field work with teachers and pupils to better understand their experiences and lived realities; into school resources, communities around schools as well as the role of emotions in teaching LO within schools. Sexuality and gender identity within a school environment is an issue that has received (and requires) extensive attention. An aspect that is a factor in the research but has not been a central focus is the role that Christianity plays. That forms a fundamental aspect of this work, using the existing work as a platform for context and insight into the institutional landscape. Within South Africa, race and class play a vital intersecting role in how sexuality and gender identity are considered, how they are approached in terms of discourse and these factors require consideration. However, the primary focus for this work will be on sexuality and gender identity within a Christian schools context and accordingly, the bulk of the work will focus on that.

Framed in gender and queer theory, three methodologies are used. These include Contextual Discourse Analysis (CDA), Richard Osmer's Theory for Practical Theology and Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis. Themes including masculinity, patriarchy, sexuality, positionality, power and intersectionality are considered drivers of existing discourse. Within Christian schools, language, power and positionality are identified as dominant forces.

Six recommendations for intervention are made, followed by further research recommendations. Intervention recommendations are premised on 'meeting people where they are' and with specific attention to how power dynamics operate within social systems. The recommendations include, firstly the creation of a space that enables and encourages empathy. Empathy can diminish shame and assist with shifting the existing discourse. Secondly, creating spaces that are physically and emotionally safe for all. Thirdly, allowing for the non-linear and time consuming process of transformation is recommended. The last three recommendations are focused on resources. Fourth, resources for educators: in addition to appropriate information and emotional support being made available, educators must be provided clear guidance in terms of their responsibilities and adequate support must be provided to ensure that these responsibilities can be completed satisfactorily. Fifth, that LGBTQI+ people be consistently represented in teaching materials: textbooks, classes and in language used as part of learning. Lastly, that learners are supported: provided with emotional support in addition to resources that represent a full spectrum of sexualities and gender identities in an unbiased, inclusive manner.

CONTENTS

1.   INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the South African Department of Basic Education introduced a voluntary Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curriculum as part of schooling for learners at a small selection of public schools. In a country where homophobia, gender-based violence and sexual assault are rife, the need for this inclusion (and, ultimately, in more schools) is urgent. Some of the challenges in dismantling stigma against LGBTQI+ people in South Africa include a complex, multi-faceted society with deeply entrenched power dynamics, huge economic discrepancies between the most and least wealthy, 11 official national languages, vast race divides and cultural beliefs that shape how people see themselves and others in a way that can seem irrevocable.[1]

An area that has not been the subject of extensive research within South Africa is the role of Christianity in this space. South Africa remains a largely traditional, Christian country and teaching children about sexuality and gender identity needs careful consideration and respectful attention if any progress is to be made. As part of this research, work by the NGO Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) will be used. As an organisation, IAM operates within faith communities, working towards making them more inclusive for LGBTQI+ people. In 2019 they conducted a pilot workshop at a Christian school in South Africa that focused on addressing complexities within the environment that lead to exclusionary practices or homophobia, often tied to interpretations of scripture or of accepted norms within the school or church. IAM works within communities on an invitation basis, tailoring each workshop specifically to the work the communities are doing; IAM places huge value on a reflective praxis process as part of its work in understanding, interpreting and addressing challenges. Using existing research, interviews with the IAM workshop team, observation of a workshop and making use of materials that IAM offers as part of this work, 'Towards gender inclusive and diversity affirming life-orientation in Christian Schools' will identify key challenges that emerge and complicate the inclusion of gender and sexuality identity education at Christian schools and identify possible mechanisms for overcoming these challenges.

1.1.   Theoretical context

The broad theoretical context for this thesis is discourse-focused education on sexuality and gender identity at Christian schools, timely in the context of the introduction of CSE into selected schools across the country in 2020. The field of sexuality and gender identity within education is complicated and fraught in South Africa generally; this is evident when we consider that CSE was initially due to be introduced nationwide into all schools but was later downscaled to a handful of schools in what is now called a "trial" following pushback from parents, religious groups and lobby groups. Additionally, parents

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[1] LGBTQI+ is a widely used acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and plus, as well as for those who identify outside of a cis, heterosexual space but not within the framework mentioned. The acronym LGBTQI+ is used to describe all members of the queer community in this work. Where other work has referred to 'LGBT', I have replaced that with LGBTQI+ for continuity and inclusion.

can opt their children out of receiving instruction in CSE, provided they can demonstrate that their children are getting similar education elsewhere.

Media and popular culture approaches to sexuality and gender identity have experienced a sea change over the last few years, which has exacerbated the challenges already present in South Africa. These include cultural complexities, religious dogma and discourse shortfalls that have led to a slow rate of change and low social inclusivity of LGBTQI+ people. These complexities uphold discrimination and oppression of various sectors of society, ensuring the perpetuation of the system. In South Africa, that system is overwhelmingly patriarchal and heteronormative.

Maluleke and Nadar (2002, 14) illustrated the intersectional nature of factors in their work, calling it 'the unholy trinity'. They look at the tripod of religion, culture and the power of gender socialisation and how interpretations and enforcement of these combine to generate and underwrite a culture of violence against women. Violence is not limited to women, although Maluleke and Nadar's work on the unholy trinity was initially focused on women. They demonstrate through the narrative of storytelling how interpretations of cultural traditions and religious adherence uphold a systemically abusive system in which those in power benefit from the oppression and marginalisation of others. Conservative or 'traditional' interpretations of the Bible around aspects such as 'the man is the head of the house' or interpretations condemning premarital sex can be and are used against women to create power dynamics that might otherwise be disrupted and to reinforce a patriarchal norm where men maintain the majority of power in a social dynamic. Similarly, cultural practices such as lobola or polygamy can be used to reinforce notions of women as objects or as items with value that can be arbitrarily manipulated around issues of perceived virginity or fertility. Patriarchy is deeply embedded and women are, for the most part, viewed as inferior to men. Additionally, entrenched gender roles and stereotypes in South Africa (even if they differ from culture to culture) work alongside the religious and cultural factors to create a deeply woven, heavily intersected web of ideas and internalised norms that is profoundly difficult to disrupt.

Conscious of potential complexities within a predominantly Christian culture, challenges contextual to South Africa and within a school context will be outlined, as well as how this is exacerbated by a Christian context, including complexities that emerged from interviews with the IAM team. Additionally, the importance of a reflective praxis focused on creating a language and inclusive, empathetic environment around sexuality and gender identity will be demonstrated and how beliefs can be shifted using emotional tools of empathy and vulnerability.

This work will also critically engage the praxis reflection of the pilot workshop conducted by IAM in 2019, ahead of a series of workshops to be conducted by the organisation in 2020. IAM's work is contextual in the South African national landscape of sexuality and gender teaching in this instance. Through semi-structured interviews with the IAM team, analysis of its materials as well as observation of its reflective praxis, this work will critique the materials and drivers for the organisation that are used to develop the

workshops so as to better understand their own situatedness and perspective before they embark on a workshop. IAM is focused on working within faith-based communities to create more inclusive spaces for marginalised LGBTQI+ people and working within those environments to shift discourse, share ideas and concepts that are part of queer and gender theory with the aim of slowly shifting the dominant narrative. The pilot workshop in 2019 was IAM's first workshop within a Christian school.

1.2.   Why IAM?

Within South Africa, a number of NGO's are specifically focused on schools and communities and on creating a more affirming, inclusive space for LGBTQI+ people. Their work takes the form of activism, online platforms, helplines, workshops with leaders and communities (schools and workplaces, for example), videos and published work. These organisations understand and incorporate a knowledge about interesting factors specific to South Africa that adversely affect the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals and communities. They aim to address stigma and prejudice as well as empower those affected by it as they aim for a more inclusive society. These organisations operate from a secular perspective and incorporate a spectrum of factors into their work, including the role of parents and school governing bodies as well as the intersectional nature of the challenges that exist, with attention to race, class, economic challenges and others. IAM (Inclusive and Affirming Ministries) is an organisation with a long history of working specifically within Christian communities and spaces and was chosen for this work specifically because of their context and positionality within a Christian space. This is the beginning of their work within a school context and as such it's part of a developing programme, but their specific focus and inclusion on the Christian context is why the focus is on them. This work doesn't exclude any other work or organisations, but is specifically focused on a Christian school environment, and aligns with the work that IAM is doing. For this study, I have participated in a workshop as part of a Master's course at UKZN and observed the pilot workshop at a Christian school within South Africa, but have no outside relationship prior to this work with the organization.

1.3.   Context, concepts and influences

South Africa has strong religious influences and is predominantly a Christian (multidenominational) country. In this context, and with the added complexities of a conservative, heteronormative, patriarchal structure, generating dialogue around sexual equality, diversity, fluidity and freedom as well as sexuality and gender identity is a complex task.

> 'Anti-gay sentiment is compounded in South Africa by a strong patriarchal Christian ethic that views same sex encounters as sinful and wrong, In this context, reactions against homosexual rights are seen, for many, as upholding religious beliefs and therefore something to be proud of and actively encouraged.' (Butler and Astbury, 2005, 126-136)

South African work focused on sexual education in schools has highlighted the overwhelming role of cultural and social influences, while the Christian context adds a powerful complexity that feeds into these. Stigmas pertaining to sexuality and gender identity are complicated to unravel because they stem from a tightly wound intersection of religion, culture (patriarchal, heteronormative), inadequate and/or derogatory language, education and understanding (Tolbert, 2000, 99). Most institutions are ill equipped to navigate these changes and DePalma and Francis (2014, 1694) as well as Reygan and Francis (2015, 103-104) have demonstrated the lack of adequate support and education for both educators and learners required to create an open and understanding environment.

South African secondary educational institutions broadly have not historically invested in their approach to policy around sexuality and gender identity and now face a rapidly shifting climate in which they are under-equipped to do so. Research demonstrates that school learners who are perceived to be homosexual are five times more at risk of suicide related behaviours than their straight peers (Di Giacomo et al., 2018, 1145-1152). In other words, school pupils demonstrate suicidal behaviour or commit suicide as a result of the repercussions of being different or of being perceived as different. The exclusion that comes with being outed or with being queer is sufficiently damaging as to see pupils contemplating or going through with suicide rather than continuing to live in the environment they find themselves in. It's important that the stigma experienced by learners does not come only from peers: it is part of a wider community and societal shunning. That broader shaming has a strong influence on both the pupils who are stigmatised and those who are perpetuating the stigma. The complexities are deeply rooted and prejudice is displayed by parents, educators and learners' peers alike.

In 2018, the Gauteng Department of Education was called to investigate the case of a 13-year-old learner who was attacked for 'being gay' and his nine-year-old brother who was assaulted when he attempted to intervene. This illustrates the presence of aggression and exclusionary behaviour that begins at an early age and is not being proactively managed by schools. In this specific example, teachers did not assist and were unable to support or provide guidance around inclusivity or non-homophobic behaviour (Fuzile, 2018).

In 2018 Matthew David, a pupil at a high school in Chatsworth, Durban, South Africa, died by suicide after teachers at his school used derogatory slurs towards him, in addition to calling him 'gay' (SABC, 2018)[2]. In June 2019, first year university student Adam Seef died by suicide partly because he was struggling to come to terms with his sexuality and 'never fitting in', devastating his family and wider community (Wicks, 2019). In yet another incident, Ashkay Maharaj tried to kill himself twice in 16 years before the third and final attempt ended his life. The stigma he faced at primary school, senior school and within his wider community because he was gay meant he spent his life being either bullied or ostracised. His mother had supported and reassured Ashkay that he was loved, but the wider prejudice

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[2] Phrasing around suicide is based on media guidelines <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/June-2018/Why-Suicide-Reporting-Guidelines-Matter>

proved too much (Jagmohan, 2017). Lastly, in July of 2019, complaints were filed after a pastor at a school in Cape Town preached a sermon including the line that gay people would 'go to hell' and that those having sex outside of marriage were 'prostitutes' (Etheridge, 2019). As is evident in these stories, the stigmatising of learners who are 'different' begins early on and is perpetuated at all levels. Peers, families, churches, leaders and educators at schools all participate and contribute to ostracising those who fall outside of a heteronormative accepted ideal.

The complexities around the stigma attached to queer people are not limited to schools or to young people alone: this also manifests in society more broadly. Hate crimes against queer people, murders and suicides as well as insidious and subtle examples of homophobia abound, despite the South African constitution being one of the most liberal in the world (Mail and Guardian, 2017). It's an uncomfortable reality for many that, lawfully, all members of South African society are equal and able to live free from homophobia or stigma. Yet in practice, the culture remains biased, conservative, homophobic and patriarchal, leading to double lives, shame and duplicity in addition to the violence already mentioned.

A recent study highlighted how the legalising of same sex marriage in Denmark and Sweden has led to a decrease in suicide (Erlangsen et al., 2020, 78-83), highlighting the need for legal inclusion and how vital that is to the well-being of all individuals to express themselves and their sexualities in the way that they choose. Importantly, the article also mentions that gay people, whether married or single, still remain more likely to kill themselves than their heterosexual peers. Legal rights alone are not enough to ensure an affirming and flourishing environment for all without a daily reality that matches the legislation. The reality in South Africa is that queer people are likely to experience verbal abuse or possible exclusion from their families and communities at the very least and face extreme violence or discrimination and murder at worst. It's not hard to imagine why suicide seems the only way out for many. It's easy to see how stigma is literally killing people, sometimes by their own hand.

Fundamental to this work is unpacking the discourse around sexuality and gender identity with the view to finding a path towards a more inclusive discourse that in turn creates a more inclusive society. Breaking up the discourse and reframing it has the potential to diminish prejudice, opening new channels of communication and creating a more inclusive space for all. Only once there is a space for everyone will our society be truly free and able to flourish as individuals and as a whole. In order to do that, considerations around language, religious or cultural prejudice and the role and place of power need to occur.

Following from the above, the South African government has begun to address the urgent need for a shift in approach. The Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum introduced in 2020 includes a range of topics including consent, non-binary gender and masturbation (from Grade 7 onwards, while the CSE subject itself begins in Grade 4) (Govender, 2019). The new curriculum is not compulsory and will be trialled in a small number of schools rather than all across South Africa.

The curriculum introduced, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), has been rolled out in 21 other countries, among them Kenya, Ethiopia, Sweden, Australia and parts of North America. The reception in South Africa has not been overwhelmingly positive. Freedom of Religion South Africa (FORSA), as well as the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) have challenged the government on the inclusion of this curriculum, specifically around some of the topics that are included. Local press has reported that push back was not limited to South Africans and that far right conservative 'pro-family' American groups have successfully worked to push back against this inclusion as well (McEwen, 2019).

The push back and the reasons given for it by the 'pro-family' groups' serve to reinforce some of the complexities outlined in this paper: that a family group is considered only to be a heterosexual man and a woman in a nuclear family and that this is the only 'natural' form of kinship. The second argument claims that heterosexual nuclear families contribute economically whereas families structured within the LGBTQI+ framework are economic burdens and social threats. Following months of discussion, the pressure and response from organisations and parents has been sufficiently strong that the department of education has capitulated, allowing parents the option to exclude the CSE course work, provided they can demonstrate that they are ensuring their children get similar education that meets CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) competency requirements (Hlangani, 2019).

Academic research on sexuality and gender identity in a schools context has focused primarily on secular schools in South Africa, even if the schools may be subject to subtle or overt Christian influences; South Africa is predominantly Christian and that influence is pronounced. This research will incorporate the existing work as background and specifically include Christian secondary schools, with particular attention paid to the complexity around the intersection of sexuality, religion and culture.

At the outset, it's obvious that some Christian factions are unhappy with a focus on gender and sexuality identity teaching at Christian schools. Considerable displeasure was evident over the proposed introduction of CSE by bodies including the African Christian Democratic Party, which requested that the programme be excluded, and threatened to march and protest if it is not (Shuma, 2019). Other Christian organisations have met with the government to express concern regarding this inclusion and content including aspects such as:

> CSE programmes teach children (as young as five years old!) to masturbate…encourage acceptance and exploration of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities' (Badenhorst, 2018)

In line with the objection listed above, Christian schools face particular difficulties in adopting programmes that teach sexuality and gender identity, in many ways more so than a secular or government school would. This is as a result of a number of challenges, including some interpretations of the Bible's perspective on sex and sexuality as well as societal or cultural taboos that contradict ideas of gender fluidity, homosexuality and acceptance of non-binary concepts. Teachers themselves have

articulated uncertainty and a lack of training to guide and support learners, and frequently avoided any kind of teaching of this due to that uncertainty (DePalma & Francis, 2014, 7-8). This leads to inadequate guidance for learners in understanding and coming to terms with what is an integral part of living as an embodied human being in the heated (and often sexually fraught) journey from childhood through puberty to adulthood.

A cornerstone of this work is not just to consider the embodied reality that we all live with, but the power of the 'situatedness' of the physical body in the theological landscape. Attempting to fit sexuality and gender identity into traditional and conservative Christian discourse is part of the complexity of the conversation, and in order to upend that narrative, theories around body theology are integral:

> 'It is surely obvious to anyone who has received the gift of their lover's body in lovemaking and the gift of Christ's body in the Eucharist that there are many unexplored parallels between these two life sustaining, life enhancing, life-creating activities… both may.. be covenanted pledges of love, richly symbolic, festive and liberating...Patriarchal dualism cuts off the flow of divine grace in and through the body, by creating the expectation that divine knowledge is immaterial, abstract and confined to the soul. The rediscovery of the body as a source of spirituality is a liberation of women and men alike.' (Thatcher, 2012, 20)

Embodiment is something we share as individuals; it's an element of our humanity that binds us and is inescapably part and parcel of the human condition and can be a hugely satisfying aspect of one's spirituality. Viewing faith and the approach to sexuality from this perspective is key to addressing some of the hurdles that have long faced Christian schools in their efforts to shift the discourse around sexuality and gender diversity, particularly when we consider that embodiment already has a core role in Christianity:

> 'The body is both the site and recipient of revelation. The Christian scriptures have embodiment at their heart. From the moment Mary agrees to give birth to a special child, bodies become sites of revelation and redemptive action. Jesus' mission is begun with touch, by water and by a dove. People are touched and healed, they are forgiven and healed.' (Isherwood and Stuart, 1998, 11)

Stuart and Isherwood remind us that the dead were raised by touch and of the significance of washing, anointing and massaging of Jesus' feet, an act that still today holds significance in the Christian faith. It's not uncommon for brides at a Christian wedding to wash the groom's feet, and for ritualistic foot washing to happen during Christian church services. More publicly, South Africa witnessed a hugely significant act of foot washing during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when former security

minister Adriaan Vlok washed the feet of Reverend Frank Chikane in an act of remorse for his actions performed under the apartheid regime (BBC, 2006)[3].

Stuart and Isherwood articulate the embodied reality of the Christ described in the Bible and remind us that this embodiment was the saving of the world, rebalancing after the original sin committed by Eve. As such, the body is the site of redemption despite its flaws and vacillating emotions.

> 'Here was a man who held people, threw things in anger, cursed things making them wither and cherishes people back to life. He was an incarnate/embodied being.' (Isherwood and Stuart, 1998, 19)

The text goes on to explore how Christianity and the Church fathers have over time negatively transformed our ideas of an embodied reality and how patriarchy and culture play a role in this. Earlier in this chapter, the importance of the intersection of culture and patriarchy was mentioned, and the 'Introduction to Body Theology' (Isherwood and Stuart, 1998) outlines some of the origins of this correlation. Christian church fathers made lust the enemy and put in place a series of rules intended for 'purity' which begins to shift the notion of positive embodiment demonstrated by Christ where touch was often a catalyst for healing. The impact of this is evident in a patriarchal society but unpacking each concept or idea and finding a single original source is deeply complex.

> 'It is very difficult to assess to what degree Christianity has influenced the development of a patriarchal culture and therefore attitudes to the body. It may be that the culture of patriarchy has affected the development of Christianity…our culture holds patriarchal views of the body and our church reflects all these negative traits…Christianity and patriarchy are highly compatible bed fellows.'(Isherwood and Stuart, 1998, 19)

When we internalise something and believe it to be true, we live accordingly. Internalising a belief that supports a patriarchal, heteronormative society and is held up by interpretations of the Christian faith leads to a perpetuation of said society and creation of cultures such as 'toxic masculinity'. This perpetuation contributes to and upholds the behaviours that lead to prejudice, stigma of those who fall outside the norm, and as we have seen above can lead to exclusion, depression and suicide.

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[3]Mr Vlok was security minister in the late 1980s, a period when emergency laws granted police sweeping powers of arrest and detention against anti-apartheid activists. Rev Chikane, former head of the South African Council of Churches, told at the weekend how Mr Vlok had arrived at his office and given him a Bible with the words "I have sinned against the Lord and against you, please forgive me (John 13:15)" on its cover. "He said 'I take you as a representative and an embodiment of all the other people I should be talking to,'" Rev Chikane said, quoted by the Pretoria News. "He then asked for water ... he picked up a glass of water, opened his bag, pulled out a bowl, put the water in the bowl, took out the towel, said 'you must allow me to do this' and washed my feet in my office," Rev Chikane said. (BBC News, 2006)

In order to shift behaviours, discourse and language need to be developed to break down reasons and rationale for said behaviour. Teachers, support staff, parents and learners need to have access to the appropriate tools if this dialogue is to shift or progress. These are tools to initiate, navigate and better understand these shifts and to develop independent and practical solutions for all involved. This space needs to adequately cater for individuals and communities, enabling all members to live fuller, enriched lives without causing harm or having harm inflicted upon them.

IAM's approach and reflective praxis is heavily informed by body theology and navigates the intersectionality between sexuality, gender identity and religion at the core of its process in the organisation's work to create a shift in discourse within faith communities. This work will examine the drivers and positionality of IAM as it approaches this work, as that will have an effect on its model as well as how it is received, specifically within a Christian context where a secular approach may miss some of the important nuances that are at play in that environment.

As the only organisation of its kind working specifically in the faith sector, IAM seeks 'to open minds, hearts and doors to greater acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people within faith communities and as part of a Christian discourse' (IAM, 2019). The pilot workshop in 2019 was the organisation's first in a secondary school environment in its 24 years of doing this work, with the aim of building on this work within schools in the 2020 programme. The response to the IAM workshop, particularly by teachers, was complex and demonstrated some of the barriers to including sexuality education at Christian schools which will form part of better understanding the effectiveness of various models used in transforming discourse.

1.4.   Objectives, research question, sub questions

The objectives for this study are:
- to interrogate a model (IAM's) available to open a dialogue around sexuality and gender identity at single gendered Christian schools engaging teachers, parents and learners, using a reflective praxis as a key part of this process;
- to better understand the complexities and specific areas of difficulty around such an engagement; and,
- including some contextual work on this issue, to better understand the methods and actions that can better assist with generating this discourse as well as areas that require additional work.

1.5.   Research questions

1.5.1.   Main research question

Incorporating the existing landscape, the research question is: What model can be used by Christian schools in South Africa to create an inclusive, diverse and safe space for learners to engage with sexuality and gender identity in a constructive and life affirming way?

The work incorporates existing work (empirical research) as well as an interrogation and drivers of the case study pilot by Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) ahead of a series of workshops it will conduct in 2020. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the team who develop and conduct the workshops making use of a questionnaire, following the observation of the pilot workshop. Additionally, I participated in a workshop as part of a module within a Master's degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5.2. Research sub questions

- What informs and constitutes the dominant discourse pertaining to sexuality and gender identity within South African Christian schools? The research will comprise of aspects such as religion, culture, patriarchy, binary and privilege.
- Incorporating the discourse (from the first question), what are the contours of an intervention working within a Christian school to initiate a dialogue in a safe, informed way?
- What aspects could be used in similar workshops helping to facilitate a safer and more open, inclusive space? What are the areas that are lacking or require further support?

1.6. Methodology and theory

1.6.1. Overview

A detailed outline of the theory and method that will frame this work is available in Chapter 3 and includes a diagram to illustrate how the method and theory operate together. Together, they shape the underlying motivations for this work and as such I will provide a brief outline for context.

Three methodologies will frame this work, acting in a way that visually would represent concentric circles, encasing the research and framing or colouring it in a specific light. The methodologies are:

- Richard Osmer's Theory of Practical Theology
- Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis
- Contextual Discourse Analysis (CDA)

1.6.2. Richard Osmer's Theory of Practical Theology

Osmer's (2008) model of practical theological interpretation is concerned with four primary tasks. These are: What is going on? Why is it going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond? His

model works at initially describing the issue or challenge at hand, the 'empirical' problem as it were. This involves looking to outline clearly what the problem is as it meets the eye and identifying the challenges that are to be interrogated. The second question is more focused on an interpretive task and looks at why something is happening. It provides a more contextual, deeper look at what is happening rather than just what 'meets the eye'. To understand the context, we have to look at what is going on and follow up with a series of questions around 'why' a number of times to really understand the context. It begins to open up the opportunity for a discussion around intersectionality, that the reasons for something happening may not be simple or singly focused.

When we discuss the third question, what ought to be going on, it offers an opportunity to look at solutions within the context already outlined. So, not necessarily focused only on the symptom of the problem or a singular perspective on the issue at hand, as will be outlined in question one, but also including the context and surrounding landscape. When we say 'what ought to be going on' it invites an opportunity to include structural or surrounding issues, addressing other peripheral or root challenges leading to the initial challenge outlined in question one.

The fourth part of Osmer's Practical Theology offers an opportunity to outline what a possible solution looks like, providing a possible solution not just to the issue outlined in the first question but allowing for a system of solutions to be created that deal with other challenges as well. This method provides a thoughtful, contextual reflection of not just a single issue but the systemic reality.

1.6.3.   Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis

A feminist theory of praxis is explicitly concerned with the ethical when issues such as sexuality and reproduction, violence against women and children, relationships between men and women and relationships between human beings and nature are concerned (Ackermann, 2006, 225). A praxis is an intentional social activity and as such, feminist theologians have defined five conditions for praxis. These are accountability to the community, collaboration with others at the table, viewing all lives in relation and diversity of culture as well as a shared commitment.

Accountability to the community is focused on ensuring that all work is in the interests of those who experience oppression and discrimination. In other words, it is focused on the marginalised rather than simply those who fall into mainstream community. In this case, we are concerned with LGBTQI+ members of the community and those ostracised as a result of falling outside of the heteronormative, patriarchal hierarchy.

Collaboration with others at the table: This means consulting, considering and including those with similar aims and those who work in other disciplines as well. It means an inclusive environment, building on the first premise that enables us to be better at being inclusive. The more viewpoints and experience you have with a voice, the more information and practical solutions you are likely to have access to.

Lives in relation: A feminist theory of praxis means that nobody lives in isolation and that all work is considered as a dialogue between members of a community.

Diversity of culture includes understanding that there is no universal application of theology and that different interpretations and applications operate within different groups of people.

Shared commitment: A feminist theory of praxis is, and depends upon, a commitment to strategy and to being action oriented. (Ackermann, 2006, 225)

With the conditions in place to ensure that a feminist theory of praxis has a solid foundation and functions as an intentional social activity, there are three main areas that a feminist theory of praxis is concerned with. These three premises may seem to overlap with Osmer's theory above, but for the purposes of this research they function together, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 3. The areas for focus are see, judge and act.

See: to observe and outline what is happening and what the challenge is that you would like to address.

Judge: to contextualise the issue, understand the wider reasons around the challenges outlined in the 'See' assessment and to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening, the ripple effects as well as the causes. Very often, the solution to a problem lies in better understanding its causes rather than the visible issue itself.

Act: laying out potential actions to challenge or shift the initial issue, making sure to include the five conditions and having reflected on each contextual issue of the problem within the framework of those five premises. Will outline what can be done and what actions can be taken to resolve the challenges outlined, again making sure that the five premises for a feminist theory of praxis are upheld and remain central to all work.

Before explaining the third methodology, some detail on why both Osmer's Practical Theology and Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis will be used together: Osmer's Practical Theology allows for a clearer and more detailed analysis for the purposes of this work. However, due to the nature of this work and its primary concerns, the Feminist Theory of Praxis and its principles underline the focus, keeping it on those who are marginalised and working towards becoming more inclusive. The overt focus laid out in the core elements of a feminist theory of praxis as such are hugely important here and will be the main lens through which the research is viewed.

1.6.4. Contextual Discourse Analysis

The third method applies to the materials and interviews available from the research on the observed pilot workshop conducted by IAM as well as the post workshop reflection and interviews. This method is Contextual Discourse Analysis (CDA) and will lay the ground the research for Osmer's Practical Theology and then Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis. CDA is concerned with the role of discourse in the reproduction and challenge of dominance, where dominance is the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, resulting in social inequality including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality (van Dijk, 1993, 249- 252). These power relations may work differently and may evolve into different modes of discourse.

The principles and aims of CDA are that it should deal primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the resulting injustice and inequality. In the context of this work, that is fundamental in outlining more insidious or subtle forms of inequality. As was mentioned above, the South African constitution is one of the most liberal in the world, and yet the reality on the ground for many is very different. Understanding the dimensions of how this inequality operates will form a strong base for understanding more of the context around what is happening rather than a simple, surface understanding.

CDA is also interested in and motivated by pressing social issues that are unpacked and understood via discourse analysis. With a focus on dominance and inequality, it suits work focused on a heteronormative, patriarchal environment where those who fall outside of that norm remain marginalised. With the suicide issues outlined in this chapter, working to better understand insidious discourse and power relationships is fundamental to better understanding the landscape and the context of what is happening.

CDA theorists should also have an explicit socio-political stance, magnified by couching this work in Denise Ackermann's feminist theory of praxis making it an overarching theme in this work.

1.6.5.   Gender and queer theory

In addition to a socio-political stance, two more themes are fundamental in forming the overarching frame and theory for all of this research: gender and queer theory. The importance of both is fundamental and has been included in both the literature review (Chapter 2) and the methodology and theory chapters (Chapter 3) to support and enrich this work, but are mentioned here briefly to provide a holistic perspective of the theory and methodology.

Regarding gender theory, the postmodern perspective is the primary focus, drawing substantially on Butler and Tolbert's work around gender as politically and socially motivated and viewing it as being performative rather than innate. A modernist perspective views gender as a binary construction, determined by biological sex (Tolbert, 2000, 99). The postmodern perspective views gender as more nuanced and fluid, building on Simone De Beauvoir's notorious line from 'The Second Sex' that one

'isn't born a woman, one becomes one'. Butler's work looks at the range of what is considered a 'woman' and how vastly that differs across times, cultures and societies. Even within a single culture or society, what is considered a 'woman' can vary hugely. Her work looks at how gendered roles are heavily influenced by the society, culture, values and norms that are at play at any given time, and what role gender plays (Butler, 1990, 2-6).

The role of intersectionality in our understanding of gender plays an important role as a result of gender constructions having a strong interdependence with other social factors, due to their fluidity and unfixed natures as well as diversity within a single society (itself an example of a confluence of factors).

Queer is largely viewed as being 'outside the norm'. If heterosexuality is normal then by default, homosexuality is queer (Schneider, 2000, 206). Queer theory is a critical theory concerned principally with cultural deployments of power through social constructions of sexuality and gender. It seeks to disrupt sexual identity as a subtle signifier by focusing on it as a functional product of historical and social processes. In other words, neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality are a given within the queer frame (Schneider, 2000, 206). It's a disruptive theory focused on unpicking and unravelling what we consider to be the norm as a result of power dynamics and social constructions of sexuality and gender. As such, it frames the work that includes a (and specifically Denise Ackermann's) feminist theory of praxis, the practical theology (Osmer) and the contextual discourse analysis methodology with a specific focus on power dynamics and how they play out as a result of social norms.

The social norms will focus on intersectionality. Specifically, the intersection of religion and culture and how this intersection affects the education of sexuality and gender identity, in turn shaping our idea of 'normal'. Currently, the intersection of religion and culture in South Africa has led to a patriarchal and heteronormative structure that alienates, oppresses and marginalises LGBTQI+ people leading to incidents of suicide, murder, self-harm, rape and assault.

Both gender and queer theory are disruptive by nature and both challenge the established societal constructions - that is, established as a result of entrenched power and social dynamics. Power and social dynamics are an integral factor when we consider intersectionality in terms of understanding the 'why is this happening' aspect of this research, and as such they will form the base foundation that all the research rests on.

1.7. LGBTQI+ Terminology

The LGBTQIA+ acronym is commonly used now, as well as its shorter (and prior) iterations, LGBT and LGBTQ. LGBTQI+ terminology refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning and intersex. Some iterations add an 'A' for 'asexual' or for 'ally' making it LGBTQIA+. The + is added as a symbol of inclusivity, a reference to anyone who may not fall into the above categories but not identify as cis or heteronormative. The acronym is frequently used as a blanket term to denote those

who fall on the 'queer' spectrum and there are a number of additional letters that can be added, although the LGBTQI+ one is the most frequently used. For the purposes of this work, the word 'queer' will be used to denote inclusivity of everyone who falls under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella and to describe those who identify as 'different' even if they have not yet explicitly articulated how they are 'different'.

1.8.   Thesis outline

Having sketched the landscape and outlined the key issues as well as how they are playing out within our society, chapter 2 will take the shape of a literature review, outlining key themes that frame this work, existing academic research focused on Life Orientation (LO) teachers and curricula within South Africa as well as the role of emotions as tools that can support or undermine any transformations in discourse. The literature review includes academic research demonstrating the challenges faced structurally within the education system as well as on the part of educators and learners, setting out the landscape and challenges with teaching sexuality as well as providing guidance toward potential solutions.

As mentioned, much work has been done on LO teaching in South Africa, but very little that specifically includes the complexity of a Christian focus. In a predominantly Christian society, this is a fundamental perspective not only in and of itself but also as a result of the other areas of human sexuality, society and culture it touches. Issues of shame, flourishing, core values and tolerance versus what is acceptable become far more prevalent and relevant when we consider them from an embedded Christian perspective.

In chapter 3, theory and methodology that have been outlined here are discussed, providing details on each methodology and theory as a standalone agent before pulling them together and demonstrating that their guiding principles are fundamental and that they function best for this work.

Chapter 4 contains the research materials from the IAM pilot workshop including semi structured interviews and questionnaires as well as written and printed materials, drawing on the CDA methodology and Osmer's Practical Theology. Chapter 5 draws on the research in chapters 2 and 4 for analysis, outlining key themes that act as challenges or hurdles in the process of transformation as well as tools and opportunities for change that may be effective.

Chapter 6, in conclusion, provides a summary of the work, the potential tools available for working towards an inclusive, authentic discourse, enabling more individuals to find both their voice and their space within this society. It provides an outline of the hurdles to success and ensures that the underlying principles of the theory and the method are maintained: to disrupt an entrenched system of patriarchy and heteronormativity leading to oppression and marginalisation for those who fall outside of the

mainstream. The main focus will be on generating a discourse and beginning to understand how to shift cultural norms in such a way that nobody remains excluded.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.   Introduction

Incorporating the complexities and challenges outlined in Chapter 1 around cultural stigma, shame around ideas of being 'different' as well as the implications of a culturally patriarchal and heteronormative society, the first part of this chapter reflects briefly on five intersectional themes that inform and address this landscape. The themes provide context and locate the positional framework that informs this work. These themes are: queer theory, gender theory, sexuality, masculinity and patriarchy and then positionality and power drawing on contemporary theorists. Queer theory and gender theory have already been touched on in chapter 1, while the work on sexuality specifically includes African sexualities and their perspective on gender and queer theory and the role of Western theorists and how they have influenced this landscape. Positionality and power play a vital role in unpacking the deeply connected aspects of the contributing factors and serves as a starting point for processes around potential solutions. How these themes intersect is fundamental in transforming existing narratives around sexuality and gender identity. Particularly, the intersectional complexity around religion, culture, gender and sexuality and its implication for South Africans, touching on the unholy trinity mentioned in chapter 1.

The second section will outline the institutional landscape in South Africa, particularly existing work on sexuality and gender identity education – Life Orientation (LO) - that has been done in schools. Substantial research has been done in order to understand and unpack the complexities around teaching sexuality in South African schools, and some of this is included. Much of this work is contemporary and has consisted of extensive field work, making it particularly relevant in this context. A research gap is that the existing work has taken place in secular government schools with no specific inclusion of Christianity and the role that it plays, despite it being mentioned and often ever-present. It's often referred to directly or indirectly as part of the research while not remaining a predominant focus. Class, culture and race have a powerful influence on the nature of stigma or options available to those who fall outside of a heteronormative ideal. Extensive work has been done on these influences both within South Africa and internationally and they remain fundamental factors for consideration in this field. For the purposes of this work, however, the focus is on the influence and effect of a Christian environment and this will centre the work.

Many learners have a home life that is heavily influenced by religion and have internalised ideas and ideals from outside a school curriculum way before they are taught at school in the same way that culture, race and class influence an individual. These ideas and ideals have been instilled in them in subtle and overt ways, shaping beliefs, discourse and ideas around what is acceptable and what behaviour norms look like. Christianity in South Africa has a prominent and fundamental role that shapes the society in ways that are often subtle and hard to identify, particularly by an individual who has internalised and values those beliefs. Accordingly, the Christian context of this work is a complexity

that cannot be underestimated or ignored and must be considered as intrinsically part of the institutional landscape.

The third and final part of the literature review includes research on emotional tools that are fundamental in a discussion on discourse shift: shame and empathy. Research, most recently the much-hyped (and now on Netflix) work by shame researcher Brene Brown, has demonstrated that self-destructive behaviours (self-harm or suicide, for example) are often associated with feelings of shame and demonstrates that empathy can be a powerful tool to diminish or undermine those feelings (Brown, 2006). Some research around shame has accordingly included work focused on empathy as well as on vulnerability, which is posited as one of the ways in which we can elicit and generate empathy. Many of the structures that cause harm and oppression that remain in place are kept there as a result of shame or fear. Shame for who we are or might be perceived or discovered to be, as well as fear of being seen for the worst of what we are. On the part of those who are in power, fear of a new 'normal' that may not serve them the way the current one does often creates a similar behaviour pattern to that of shame.

Empathy is the counterbalance, as it were, to shame and, as a result, the role that it can and should play as a tool to enable marginalised people, dismantle prejudice and ingrained assumptions will be considered as one of the tools available to generate a new discourse. Empathy involves understanding and sharing in the feelings of another, and opens those who are experiencing shame to the feeling of not being alone (Brown, 2006, 47). Put another way, being a recipient of empathy can produce feelings of being seen and accepted for the best of what we are, of being of value, and not alone or shameful, an experience that can be profoundly healing for many. Additionally, for those who display prejudice or dominance, the opportunity to understand and share the feelings of the oppressed provides an insight into the need for and benefit of a shift within the system, and to dismantle some of the fear that those who operate from within the centre experience. Empathy is essential for work that seeks to transform an existing discourse where shame plays a dominant role. This section draws heavily on work by Wiseman, Brown and Rogers.

In order to create and generate a new discourse rather than enforce it, the importance of narrative including the power and use of language underpins all three sections. The words available as well as the words we choose to use both influence oppression and allow for individual agency, and in shifting language and discourse a new, inclusive narrative can take its place. With this, some of the structures that maintain intersectionality in a tightly bound form that can and does result in oppression and marginalisation must be shifted and a new perspective provided, even if the whole system is not entirely dismantled. For a system to benefit the (previously) marginalised, their own narratives and stories need to be heard and included and the agency of all members of a society needs to be considered. Put another way: 'don't speak or make rules about us, without us'. Unless we have access to the lived realities of those around us, through their own eyes and in their own words, we cannot access or understand their lives or experiences. To understand the lived experience of another, you have to fully

appreciate their position and perspective. Accordingly, a platform for hearing those narratives and better understanding them is pivotal for transformation.

Additionally, language and narrative can work to promote healing. The opportunity to hear the story of another, or to tell your own story in your own words can often be the catalyst for a huge shift both within the storyteller and the listener. Telling your story in your own words and feeling sufficiently comfortable to be vulnerable, allowing another to experience your lived reality, is an important tool for generating empathy - one of the key tools for undermining feelings of shame and beginning a process of healing and transformation (Brown, 2006, 47). Within this process of vulnerability and empathy, power dynamics are impacted and potentially disrupted or shifted.

While language and intersectionality haven't been allocated independent sections in this chapter, they underpin all of them. Queer theory, gender theory, sexuality, masculinity and patriarchy, masculinity and power are all subject to language and intersectionality. The institutional landscape is, in many ways, a product of these intersections and how they manifest while shame and empathy rely on both language and intersectionality to function. As such, intersectionality and language form a foundation on which all of the themes that follow rest.

2.2.   Queer theory

Before 'transformation of an existing discourse' can happen, it's important to consider what exactly constitutes 'discourse' and why it's important. Bearing in mind the language and intersectionality foundation outlined above, discourse can be considered to be the set of rules for the constitution of conceptual objects and the production of statements about those objects (Turner, 2000, 51). In other words, discourse is a way of speaking an object, topic, status or emotion into being. By articulating something, it moves into being. Importantly, who determines the discourse and their position of power (socially constructed or otherwise) informs the reality as well as how we understand it.

> 'We cannot know reality apart from our own particular intellectual constructions of it and
> our thinking is formed by socially-conditioned linguistic rule and metaphors. Language or
> discourse thus actually constructs reality as well as describes it.' (Ackermann, 1993, 20)

It's not just the naming itself or the 'naming words' that need to be considered, but the subtler inferences or implications that come with the naming. For instance, the situatedness of something as outside of the norm, if implied or inferred within its name, becomes hard to situate within a norm. The word 'queer' itself is inherently transgressive and seeks to disrupt and destabilise what is considered to be the norm, and as such queer theory is a powerful tool in dismantling established and normalised systems of power (Cheng, 2011, 5). Foucault reconceptualised power in the sense that power is not a specific, single 'thing' that is owned or exercised by a dominant majority but that it hinges on relationships and interactions between individuals (Watson, 2005, 70). As such, power is held and maintained by a set of

individuals but can be dismantled and shifted by others, including through the use of language and discourse.

If we understand 'discourse' as inclusive of spoken or written communication, queer theory can be seen as having shifted the 'accepted' or 'normalised' discourse substantially over the last century predominantly through theorists including De Lauretis (who first popularised the term 'queer'), philosopher Foucault, Rubin, Kosofsky Sedgwick, Butler (who deals with gender theory as well) and Weeks. This theory has influenced everything from owning the term 'queer' and taking it on as an empowering rather than derogatory term to creating a new language that has reframed words like 'gay' and 'lesbian'. Fundamentally, queer theory is a disruptive theory, focused on those who fall outside of 'the norm'. It is a fluid and shifting position that includes the appreciation that identities and 'norms' can be considered as being produced 'in relation' rather than a stable or pre-existing identifier (Watson, 2005, 71). For example, if heterosexual is the norm, then homosexual becomes queer. It's important to note that queerness does not dictate homosexuality in and of itself, but rather that neither hetero- nor homo- sexual is the given when it comes to queerness; it is the aspect of 'relational to the norm' that constitutes queer (Schneider, 2000, 206). Queer theory is in essence a disruptive, critical theory that is principally concerned with the cultural deployments of power through social constructions of sexuality and gender. That is to say, the main focus is to better understand and undermine relationships that empower some and invalidate others based on power dynamics that are structured around socially understood and created systems around sexuality and gender (not exclusively around sexuality and gender, but they have a strong role).

Queer theory disrupts sexual identity as a subtle signifier and indicator, and by association a contributing factor to a social power dynamic, by focusing on our understanding of sexuality itself as a product of historical and social processes (Schneider, 2000, 206). In other words, by interpreting sexual identity in the context of the constructions that surround it as well as the power and social dynamics that are implicated by it. Instead of assuming that sexual identity is a fixed position and that it's right or wrong or predetermined, queer theory allows us to see sexual identity for what it is, a deeply personal but also socially vital power play, and allows it to function as a tool to dismantle the structures of power that support and uphold the existing system that marginalises some members of society. Queer theory argues that sexuality is continually undergoing negotiation and dissemination rather than being a mere natural fact, and that the significance of traditional categories of sexuality and gender identity are actually social constructions (Schneider, 2000, 206). It rejects the view that sexuality is a drive that is universal and eternal (Stuart, 1997, 3). In a world where your sexual identity or orientation has implications far beyond who you are attracted to, it's important to understand what those implications are and how that system works, who benefits from it, why it remains in place and who keeps it there.

Schneider's 'Queer Theory' (2000) articulates how queer theory can serve as an adaptation of feminism. It shares with feminism a commitment to equality and the undermining of systemic social and

political power based on socially constructed norms, and in this way does function in some ways as an adaptation of feminism. In this way, Schneider claims that people

> 'who do not fit the heterosexual norm do not just live differently: they *are* different. They see differently and constitute a difference that both supports and undermines the givenness of the norm.' (Schneider, 2000, 210)

This is a hugely important statement: it touches on both the positionality and personal, lived experiences of those who are different as well as the power structures within a society. It also includes a focus on the marginalised and those who fall outside of the norm and clearly articulates that there is value in those who are 'different'. That those who are marginalised are so as a result of a systemic power structure that constructs some individuals within society as more important than others. As a result, those who are marginalised live differently, they are different, they see the world differently and aside from supporting and undermining the givenness of the norm, they offer a perspective and insight into a world that the norm does not, by definition, present immediately.

This system of power and marginalisation also introduces a fear of that which is 'other' that sustains the power structure and offers an opportunity to interrogate why those who benefit from a system of power will work to maintain it, largely as a result of fear of what is different. Schneider goes on to say

> 'The persistent recurrence of homosexuals betrays an inessential, arbitrary, produced dimension to sexual identity. At the same time, the persistence of homosexuality supports the normativity of heterosexuality by providing a reminder about what heterosexuality is not.' (Schneider, 2000)

This duality between recognising that one's sexuality, while fundamentally important for personal identity and for the self, is arbitrarily maligned within a society if it doesn't fit the 'norm' and that the presence of the other serves as a reminder of what the norm is, is incredibly powerful in its ability to undermine a heteronormative, patriarchal societal structure and to unravel that structure, revealing it for what it is.

Schneider draws on Warner's argument that queerness is rooted in and always exposes cultural systems of shame around sex. This disruption of the shame system and pushing of buttons happens because, by definition, 'queers' do not conform to the norm or the widely accepted cultural demand that sex be made invisible, and thus less shameful, through normative, normalising and naturalising practices, assumptions and assertions (Schneider, 2000, 210). Cheng (2011, 5) suggests that 'queer' is a self-conscious embrace of all that is transgressive of societal norms, particularly in the context of sexuality and gender identity. The aspect of a self-conscious embrace as well as the concept of a shame system are important in this work for two reasons. The first is that there needs to be a conscious shift towards an acceptance of queerness and an acceptance of a shift in the culture and power

structures that are at play if we are to include the marginalised or those who fall outside of the norm. In order for young people to feel less alienated, the system itself will need to change.

The aspect of shame becomes important in the shifting of the systemic discourse. Feelings of fear or of shame are often those that prevent the marginalised (specifically, queer people who are marginalised in South Africa) from speaking out, telling their stories and in so doing creating a new, different space for themselves. In many cases, it creates a feeling of shame they carry within themselves and often prevents them from being authentic even within themselves. In order for this discourse to shift, existing shame around sex and sexuality will need to be examined and disrupted. The Christian discourse aspect is important because while queer theology certainly has gained ground of its own, within a South African context and combined with the other intersectional factors, a far more traditional, conservative or Calvinist ideal remains a strong presence and ensures enduring shame around sex that doesn't happen within a specific, defined context. That is, the systems and discourses that exist and dominate around queerness and sex are largely social constructions, defined and upheld by society itself and framed by a broad spectrum of influences, upheld by systems of power and of shame.

2.3.   Gender Theory

Following on from the entrenched ideals around sexual orientation and how they fit into a society where queer theory is seen as disruptive, gender theory is equally affected by social constructionism. It's affected in the sense that nothing about the way we understand 'gender' is 'natural' in the way we have been conditioned to understand it. That is:

> 'Some men and some women may be attracted to each other at all times and in all cultures
> but how that attraction is interpreted and the repercussions of it are constructed differently
> in different times and cultures. The same is true of gender.' (Stuart, 1997, 3)

That is to say, what constitutes a woman in one society at one time is likely to be completely different at a different time or in a different society. Context matters. How we perceive women and men changes depending on the cultural, or chronological, or economic, or geographical (or, or, or) context. Similarly, over time, the accepted ideas of what constitutes gender itself have transformed. In terms of gender theory, the modernist definition of gender is described as:

> 'Innate social traits that naturally accompany biological sex. Thus, in modernist thought,
> gender becomes the universal and essential social correlative of binary biological
> differentiation.' (Tolbert, 2000, 99)

Within a modernist perspective, gender is tied to biological sex, determined by sex and demonstrated through social convention and construction. In other words, if you are born into a Westernised society with a penis, you are a boy and will be taught to conduct yourself in the ways that we understand to be

'manly' or 'masculine'. You may have a predominantly blue nursery and wardrobe until you begin to choose your own clothes. It's assumed by most that you will be sexually attracted to women when you mature and it's probably hoped that you will marry a woman when you reach an appropriate age. Conversely, if you're born with a vagina, you're considered to be a girl and will be taught to conduct yourself accordingly. You'll possibly have a pink nursery and wardrobe and it's assumed you will marry a man when the time comes. By and large, the binary is central in this context with little deviation and no accounting for fluidity or a middle ground.

The postmodern gender context shifts this biologically essentialist and binary modernist notion. It maintains that although an individual's sex has a role in gender, it is not binary as outlined above, but is a socially constructed entity with strong political roots. That is, it is a political and cultural structure that we as a society adhere to, rather than a predetermined binary determined by sex. It's a fluid interpretation that retains the element of gender as a negotiation of behaviours that are accepted and 'normal' within a society, based on the power dynamics and mutually understood negotiations that exist within that society (Tolbert, 2000, 99).

The evolution of gender theory over the last century has been a predominantly Eurocentric one, where the original Eurocentric structure viewed race and gender as two fundamental axes for exploiting people (Oyewumi, 2002,1). The obvious examples of this exploitation within a Eurocentric society are related to issues of oppression including slavery, institutionalised rape, and denial of voting rights, amongst others. Oyewumi unpacks the European understanding and construction of gender, claiming that is it particularly rooted in the western concept of the nuclear family. In the nuclear family, the centre is constructed of a conjugal unit of a man and a woman, usually of the same race and class, who have produced children. This unit usually consists of a husband who takes on the role of the breadwinner and the wife, whose role is inextricably tied to that of being a sexual partner to the husband and taking on specific 'wifely' duties within the home and caregiving environment. As such, Oyewumi contests the Western concepts of gender as structures that depend upon this Western nuclear family structure, positing that some non-Western societies operate with different power structures, removed from the western understanding of gender or gender roles. Outside of the U.S., she posits, research discussions have focused on the need to highlight the roles of imperialism, colonisation and other local and global forms of stratification and these controversies in turn have substantiated the assertion that gender cannot be abstracted from the social context, as well as other forms of hierarchy. (Oyewumi, 2002, 3).

Oyewumi's work is supported by that of other leading gender theorists including Foucault, Butler and Connell, all of who argue that gender and its dynamics are a social construction. As such, the concept of gender is a construction that depends on a common history and understanding. Connell (2002,68) posits that all social constructions are historical, and that gender itself is a historically rooted construction. That is to say, it depends on the context and also that the context can be transformed. If a construction can be created, it can also be recreated or undone, and as a result they are unstable and constantly shifting. Social structures are often created, upheld, shifted or broken-down using

language and discourse, which depend on a spectrum of mutually understood and functioning social norms that are equally stable and consistently unstable. While language is the most analysed site of gender relations, it's important to note that it is not the only site of gender relations. Gender relations happen subtly too, in dress, makeup, gestures, photography and film as well as in the impersonal forms of culture such as the built environment (Connell, 2002, 2-5). The subtler influences and impact of gender relations will be important in discussions focused on intersectionality and masculinity as well as in the discussion around shame (particularly Brown's Shame Web), but language remains one of the most powerful and relevant tools within discourse.

Gender theory and the discourse around it have evolved substantially in the last 30 to 40 years, most notably from a modernist to a postmodernist theory. How we understand both a modernist and a post-modernist representation of gender theory informs the premise for any work on sexuality and gender identity as a result of the shift in the way that gender is considered, as part of an identity rather than symbolic of a whole as well (it's a part of what you are rather than an indicator of who you are in totality) as the shift away from a binary and moving into a more fluid interpretation. Gender is not simply man or woman, relational to the other, a function within society or a way of behaving, as we have been led to understand, but can be understood to be far more fluid than simply man or woman. Additionally, just as with queer theory, roles and concepts of gender are social and political and deeply rooted in power dynamics.

This evolution primarily happened in a Western school of thought rather than an African context, with African theories and theorists only coming to the fore more recently. African sexuality representation historically is complex: participants were often fetishized or misunderstood and the power dynamics at play during research went unaddressed, leading to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. There are additional complexities around culture and language that must be included as part of this conversation: in many cases, words that are frequently used by western theorists do not have vernacular equivalents in African mother tongues; cultural norms and practices can be vastly different to those of a Western bent and are subject to a spectrum of influences that include (but are not limited to) religion in that it informs and upholds gender structures.

In terms of understanding western constructs of gender, Connell outlines four important structures that uphold the system of gender and how they function within society. These structures operate together, not individually, emphasising the importance of intersectionality in the unpacking or dismantling of existing systems. The four structures defined by Connell are power, production, emotional and symbolic relations.

Power relations refer to the patriarchal system, with men constituting the dominant sex class and women inherently subordinate. Connell outlines three categories of power relations. The first is institutional, and an example of the subordination of women as part of a power relation is one of a rape trial, where the complainant eventually becomes inadvertently the individual on trial. It's a familiar

argument focused on dress code, prior sexual behaviour, sobriety and other markers, leaving the accused effectively not tried for what he's been accused of, and the complainant in a situation where the personal cost of accusation or trial is substantial. The power relations system hinges on one gender being inherently of less value or less powerful than the other. Important here also is that this isn't necessarily a discourse related power, but frequently is more subtle and insidious and plays out in a myriad of ways that are nearly impossible to decode. This is played out even further in institutions that use bureaucratic functions to uphold the institutional status quo. Men are more likely to employ men who are like them, governments are historically overwhelmingly male dominated spaces and are not changing quickly. Systemic institutional inequalities play out in areas that favour men and a patriarchal, heteronormative environment.

There are two other features of power relations that are important; the second feature is group oppressions. Work has been done around power dynamics to examine where gay men and lesbian women fall within this dynamic that includes ideas around subordinated masculinities (Carrigan, Connell, Lee, 1985), and found that oppression of other marginalised groups is linked to the oppression or subjugation of women. Where the heteronormative structure functions as the dominant one and one group can be oppressed with a specific set of reasons, it becomes increasingly possible to subjugate others.

The third form of power relations is connected to Foucault's notions of power and that it operates 'intimately'. There is no central 'tower of power' or 'power police'. Rather, society and individuals will most often police themselves and each other. As such, power dynamics become enforced and operate close up, directly on people's bodies, identities and place in the world. They don't need to be held in place by the men within that society. A colloquial example of this is 'mom shaming', where a mother who is employed full time might be expected to feed her children home cooked, organic meals and be shamed by others around her when she doesn't or when she expects her husband to do it. Her husband may work full time and not be held responsible for this, be considered less of a dad, or shamed for not doing it (he may not even expect his wife to do it) but the power dynamics that hold and maintain the patriarchal system can be sufficiently performed within a group of suburban wealthy mothers to ensure that this system is maintained. More subtly, power dynamics can mean that speaking out or naming issues in a society can be policed: not speaking out about rape or about domestic abuse, for example. Tolerating it or knowing that it happens to someone else and not speaking up for fear of being ostracised or for fear of retribution demonstrate the darker side of power dynamics designed to uphold and maintain an existing system. Very often, it's the society itself that upholds and maintains power dynamics rather than a specific, central base.

Production relations examine the labour allocation and division between sexes. Sexual division of labour was the first structure of gender to be recognised. Still today, many tasks remain assigned to and performed by a specific gender. Interestingly, the labour allocation is not consistent between cultures and societies. Importantly, job division is not the entirety of the story, because remuneration

and the intrinsic value of domestic work versus economic or paid labour must also be considered as part of the conversation. The relationship around production and value is a loaded one and much research has been done in recent years around the unseen 'mental load' that exists when women are the primary overseers of a household, work that is taxing and relentless but remains subordinate and often invisible to men (as well as unpaid). These production relations remain in place despite small shifts where women operate in an economic space for the same financial remuneration as their male counterparts and some men are primary caregivers within a home. The overarching dynamic that upholds a system where men remain 'dominant' and women subordinate or are seen to offer less value remains in place, even where some exceptions exist and where discussions focused on these production relations and transformation happen.

Emotional relations are related to a social structure and include the sexual connection. Additionally, they relate to how we connect with each other both positively and in a hostile way, incorporating that some genders have an expected or attached emotional 'weight' or gravitas. This is demonstrated by aspects including 'likeability' or 'warmth' expected of or associated with a gender. Men, as a result of being 'more powerful' or 'more important' have less expectation upon them to be 'smiling', 'happy', or to have a 'mothering' nature. The need for them to come across as warm, kind or caring is far lower than the expectation placed on women. The 'likeability' of women plays a far stronger role in politics and in determining the 'voteability' for women than it does for men, simply because the emotional expectations on men are different to those for women; Hilary Clinton is notorious for having low likeability, and for that being an obstacle (not the only one, but certainly a factor) for her in the 2016 U.S. election. Popular culture, in an effort to highlight the emotional expectations and relations on women, has sought to replace adjectives frequently used to describe women such as 'bossy' or 'aggressive' with phrases like 'leadership potential', highlighting the ways in which emotional relationships and the language around them influence how we perceive assertive or less 'warm' traits in women, when we expect more likeability from them. The reinforcement of these relations can be as subtle as men expecting women to 'smile because you look prettier' and excusing abrupt or aggressive behaviour in men because it's seen as acceptable in that gender, as well as the implicit assumption that women are inherently more empathetic or have a mothering nature.

Symbolic relations stem from social practice involving interpretation of the world through a spectrum of symbols, gestures and meanings. This symbolic system is hard to uproot, particularly because it's so deeply embedded in how we communicate. Gender stereotypes or expectations are often subtly included in symbolic relations and can be incorporated into spoken discourse too. This symbolic relationship depends upon the masculine occupying the authoritative or privileged position and the feminine being automatically weaker. Examples of this include verbal discourse such as 'throwing like a girl'. This is incredibly difficult to uproot because of the myriad ways that symbolic traits are embedded in our environment (physical and verbal are just two examples). Additionally, symbolic relations play into the oppression of people who fall outside of the 'norm'; for example, effeminate men or masculine women. Because they are outliers in terms of the accepted or normalised symbolic indicators, they fall

prey to being stigmatised twice, as it were. Effeminate men will be stigmatised for not being 'real men' and then again for being effeminate, or inherently weak. Masculine women will be considered weak by virtue of being women, while simultaneously being 'not real women' because they fall outside of the common signifiers (fluid and variable but nonetheless clearly communicated within a society) that define 'women' or 'femininity'.

The shift from modernist to post-modern theory, incorporating an understanding of the power dynamics, the systems, the relationships and how they are constructed and upheld as well as their fluid nature has largely occurred in Western or 'First World' thinking and has faced some complexities within an African context. Two aspects of this are important when considering the African context. The first is that, for many Africans, sexuality and gender identity discussions are considered to be 'Western' constructs that are less relevant, or irrelevant, within an African context as described above by Oyewumi (2002). Oyewumi (2002) views even the construction of a nuclear family as one that is almost irrelevant in Africa due to the spectrum of forms that a family can take in different places across the continent. An indication of the level of formal engagement or acknowledgement of sexuality and gender identity diversity development on the part of African countries is evident when you consider that South Africa remains the only African country to have legalised same sex marriage and that many African countries still actively employ anti-homosexual laws. As a result many Africans, particularly those who are not queer, will find it challenging to engage with sexuality and gender identity associations or constructs outside of a binary, modernist perspective, largely because the discourse remains so heavily influenced or upheld by systemic ideals of patriarchy, hierarchy or masculinity. As a result, there has been a denial of a wider discussion, shutting it out as a 'Western construct' or something that is 'morally wrong', leaving people who identify as outside of the binary, or who fall outside it but cannot articulate why, without any discourse to operate with, particularly when it comes to language.

Because much of the work around sexuality and gender identity has been conducted in a 'Western' environment, many of the words we use to talk about LGBTQI+ topics or issues do not have equivalent words in a local African language and as such are difficult to interpret, explain or understand. The words that do exist in local languages are often derogatory or non-affirming, serving to reinforce the stigma that being queer is wrong. In an educational context, if teachers are required to work with learners explaining a topic that is frequently uncomfortable and are forced to do it either in a language that is not their mother tongue or to do it using derogatory language, it's likely that many of the benefits of their efforts will at best be lost in translation and at worst serve only to reinforce the stigma further, alienating those who are most in need of support and inclusive discourse. These complexities are only compounded when a community or parents are resistant to teaching these issues as a result of also misunderstanding or of their own prejudice and resist or protest, thus reinforcing that stigma in their own children rather than helping to alleviate it or again, support those learners who need it.

This is not to say that African work on African sexualities has been absent. That would be far from the truth, but it is fair to say that not all Africans who have previously been part of 'Western' research have

benefitted from it and are, rightly, suspicious of what has emerged as a result of bad practice with roots in objectification, power dynamics and, frequently, fetishism. Sylvia Tamale's (2011) work on African Sexualities is important as a reference point here. She includes the role of colonialism and the objectification and oppression of African people and how these play out in politics, race and power. These issues take on extra weight and become more problematic in a research or education environment. Tamale examines the oppression and stereotyping experienced by African people under the banner of 'research'. The power relationship between researchers and 'subjects' as well as stereotypes and misunderstandings that inadequately reflect the nuance and complexity within African cultures around sexuality (amongst other topics), completely missing the intersectional factors as well as the influences and nuances occurring between cultures and respective sexualities often means that the real sexualities and roles that were present within a specific group were inadequately represented or wilfully misunderstood (Tamale, 2011, 6). South Africa specifically has complexities around language where vernacular languages are devoid of literal words that exist in English such as 'gender fluid' or 'bisexual'. The word 'isitabane' is frequently used but is a loaded and derogatory word, absent of the nuances and details that accompany complexities around sexual identity (Van der Walt et al., 2019, 10).

The combination of all of the above means that, in most cases, work around shifting gender discourse within an African context is complicated and, again, relies on working across a spectrum of intersectional factors. Butler's work pertaining to gender incorporates an understanding of the complexity of factors involved; it seeks to better understand and dismantle the constructed nature of many of the factors. Her work focuses heavily on the performative nature of gender as socially constructed and continually renegotiated. In a sense, there is no firm template for gender. As with Plato's theories about forms and essential essences or purposes (telos), in the same way that there is no 'essence' of a table, that there is no such thing as the essential, perfect table, but that every table is a version of that table, moving towards or seeking perfection. It's impossible to identify the 'essence' of the perfect table: four legs don't make a table, neither does a single surface, or a flat surface, or a material that forms the table, or a colour, shape or specific size etc. In the same way, gender is a performance that is negotiated and fluid, with the requirements of that performance shifting and changing all the time rather than being focused on a single essence. It is a political and social lexicon that we learn, practise and relearn continually through our lives (Butler, 2011). It differs from culture to culture, and different classes within society have different lexicons of behaviour as well as different times having different ways of conducting oneself that relay specific messages.

Postmodernist gender arguments will form the basis for understanding and then deconstructing the ideas we harbour in areas of South African society. As a nation, many large pockets of our society exhibit homophobia, transphobia and instances of 'phobia' towards those who are 'other' or fall outside of the modernist binary ideal. A shift into a postmodern understanding as well as an acknowledgement that societal pillars including culture, religion, traditions and accepted ideas of what is 'natural', 'normal' or 'accepted' are fluid constructions that can be created and reformed through shifts in discourse as

well as focus and understanding on their systemic roots is fundamental for our society to become more inclusive and affirming.

Gender as a social construction and a political action is closely - possibly inextricably - tied to sexuality. While they exist separately, they are closely connected and, in a discussion, unpacking gender identity and sexuality as well as the language we use needs to be considered.

2.4.   Sexuality

As complicated by the intersectionality of culture, language, gender and identity as well as falling prey to far reaching stigma is sexuality. In a South African Christian context, sexuality is assumed to lean heavily toward the heteropatriarchal and in unravelling it and all of its complexities is compounded by the nuance and complexity that exists simply in sexuality itself:

> 'Sexuality is still much of a mystery. There is no widespread agreement as to what it is or how it is formed in individuals….What we can discern is that both are about relationships, about reaching out towards others and that both are essential to humanity.' (Stuart and Thatcher, 1996, xii)

Following on from the post-modern perspective that how we understand gender is largely a social construction, Weeks's work on sexuality that is argued and guided by the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of Foucault's thought will demonstrate that what we understand of sexuality is a construct rooted in history, social constructions and political trends. Lebacqz, from a Christian standpoint, outlines how historically, sex was reserved for married people, and for the sole purpose of procreation. As such 'children, the handicapped, unmarried, divorced, widowed are not to be sexual beings.' (Lebacqz and Driskill, 2010, 546): in other words, devoid of sexuality in the sense of it being in any way publicly expressed, discussed or included in public discourse on sexuality.

In contrast to a world where certain people remain excluded from a conversation focused on sexuality, Tamale, in her work on African sexualities, views sexuality as intrinsic to any discussion on gender and that the two go hand in hand. She begins with a cooking metaphor: that researching sexuality without discussing or including gender is like cooking pepper soup (a popular Nigerian dish) without the pepper. It might physically resemble the dish, may even smell the same, but the taste will be fundamentally different. For Tamale, sexuality and gender are so entwined that it remains impossible to understand or discuss the one without the other (Tamale, 2011, 11). The two are tightly aligned and often influenced by a similar set of factors.

As part of this discussion, this work draws on discussions by Weeks focused on gender and sexuality, detailing the social structures that influence and uphold ideals, norms as well as stigma around sexuality. He demonstrates that in addition to sexuality being a 'part of us', it's as influenced by culture as gender is. Our sexuality is organised around our political, economic and kin status and is heavily shaped by power which includes race, class and gender.

> 'Power operates subtly, through a complex series of unlikely practices…sexual politics therefore can never be a single form of activity….instead of seeing sexuality as a unified whole, we have to recognise that there are various forms of sexuality: there are in fact many kinds of sexualities. (Weeks, 2010, 44)

Weeks unpacks how family, social, economic, political and cultural structures operate and the influence they have on how we view and approach sexuality, demonstrating the extent to which sexuality is part of a constructed narrative as well as how it shifts when the surrounding factors shift (Weeks, 2010 2-8). Like all constructions, there are power dynamics and influences behind sexuality and how we understand and perceive them is important to understand not only how we view sexuality but how to deconstruct what seems to be a fixed element of who we are. Weeks outlines the main influences on sexuality, consisting of four elements and examines how they work together to shape and determine sexuality norms at a given time.

In setting up his argument, Weeks (2010) first seeks to set the landscape for what sexuality is and how we understand it. In working off an assumption that sexuality has something 'essential' or 'central' to it, we imply that there is a link in what sexuality is that connects all discussions around sexuality and all variations of it, whether acknowledged or not. That 'essential' or 'core' thread, as he demonstrates, is non-existent. The more we seek to understand and break down sexuality, and the more we claim to understand, the less successful we are at doing so. Despite years of research, sexuality remains a topic that 'arouses acute anxiety and confusion among many' (Weeks, 2010, 2). This anxiety or confusion does not stem from sex being something 'naughty' or 'immoral' but stems from sex by its nature being a 'focus for powerful feelings' (Cartledge and Ryan, 1983, 170). The extent of the feelings that sex and sexuality can unravel creates what Weeks refers to as a 'transmission belt' for love, anger, tenderness, aggression, intimacy and adventure, romance and predatoriness, pleasure and pain, empathy and power. How we experience the erotic is unique and subjective, susceptible to a spectrum of factors and often in ways that would seem contradictory.

Simultaneously, that sexuality is a construction and something continually shifting provides it with the ability to take on many guises and forms, rendering it a sensitive conductor of cultural influences on social, cultural and political divisions (Weeks, 2010, 4). Accordingly, or as a result of this, sexuality has become one of the focus points for ethical and moral debate between those seeking progressive reform and the traditionalists or moralists. Sex has moved into mainstream debate and closer to the centre of political concerns, particularly as a focus of social issues.

In the political sense, this is playing out as an 'affirmation of family life'. Examples of this include politicians who focus on the importance of 'family values' and families at the 'centre of society'. As mentioned by Oyewumi (2002, 3), this 'family' notion is the nuclear family, consisting of a heterosexual conjugal unit at the centre, of the same race and class, with children completing the unit. This mainstreaming of sexuality is also demonstrated in a hostility towards homosexuality and 'sexual deviance'. That is, anything that falls outside of the nuclear family and the heterosexual sex act. 'Deviance' in this context refers to sex or sexual behaviour that falls outside the 'accepted norm': homosexuality or bisexuality, for example. These structures and the exclusion of certain aspects of sexuality and practice are in fact social issues, according to Weeks (2010, 36-37); they are intricately tied to social and political power dynamics. It renders their importance in upholding a specific power dynamic incredibly important. Conversely, 'deviation' is a political and highly risky behaviour. It is especially risky for those who uphold and benefit from an existing power system, as will be demonstrated below.

Weeks demonstrates how complexities around sexuality, framed as 'social issues', in being taken up by the political frame have created powerful tools for building new constituencies for conservative policies, particularly in the U.S. but not limited to it. Broadly, across the world, 'fundamentalists' - those of all faiths who are focused on the recreation and maintenance of a traditional, conservative society - have placed the body at the centre of their efforts to recreate a past with rigid distinctions between men and women and harsh punishment for transgressions or an embrace of western secularism. These reactions or responses can be viewed in the light of the success of liberal views and values around personal autonomy and choice as well as the success of the feminist movement and the radical sexual revolution including the LGBTQI+ movement and more secular approaches to sex particularly around sexuality, orientation and the rules regarding marital sex. Traditional values and those around sexual behaviour have faced tremendous pressure over the last century and the kick back, particularly in politics, can in many ways be seen to be a direct response to this pressure and transformation.

With this sexual revolution there has been an associated shift in the ground rules for sexuality, and not just in the west. Changes, even if they are slow or subtle, in approaches to sexuality, increased awareness about the LGBTQI+ community, same sex marriage and homosexuality have begun to happen not just in places like the U.S. but across the globe into other areas where sexuality is similarly entwined with dynamics of power, domination and resistance. Particularly, the rising up of the women's movement has placed into the spotlight the myriad ways in which women are subordinated or considered to be inferior to men, from low level sexual harassment in the form of cat calling on the street to systemic and institutionalised rape, work and pay discrimination and in ways that function invisibly, including day to day language or discourse. This movement and its focus have highlighted, additionally, the deeply rooted compulsory heterosexuality that exists as a norm.

If we unpack how we understand what sex and sexuality themselves are, we best understand sexuality as something that is, at its core, a reflection of our 'natural' selves; a trait that reflects something about us that is innate and naturally 'us'. Over the last 200 years, sexuality has become part of a system of power dynamics and moved into mainstream consciousness: it is discussed, researched, holds moral value and is used to reinforce and destabilise existing systems. It has also become a reflection of ourselves, something that is viewed as personal to individuals (Weeks, 2010, 13-23).

Ideas of agency regarding our sexuality have become ingrained, and it's become a personalised facet that is part of how we consider ourselves separate from each other. If we work off the traditional Christian values around 'natural sexuality', particularly where that has been one of the stronger societal voices (South Africa), that notion of sexuality tends to imply heterosexual sex between consenting men and women, indicating that homosexual sex is therefore somehow 'unnatural'. Despite recent shifts and a more nuanced, open understanding of sexuality, much of this original perspective and focus on the core 'traditional' ideological beliefs remains embedded within both society and our cultures. This creates an environment where notions of 'male lust' and rhetoric around 'uncontrollable urges' resulting in rape or assault, denigration of women's autonomy and derision of sexual minorities or those who are 'other' form the mainstream, and for a normalising of 'traditional' ideas of love, relationships and security to retain their hold. That normalising participates in the creation of heteronormativity and patriarchy, creating and reinforcing an environment where those who fall outside the norm are further ostracised. Tamale describes the influences on gender and on sexuality as being far reaching, including ideas surrounding history, class, age, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, locality and disability. Moreover, it touches on:

> 'Pleasure, the human body, dress, self-esteem, gender identity, power and violence. It encompasses the human psyche, emotions, physical sensations, communication, creativity and others.' (Tamale, 2011, 11)

If we are to begin to understand how far reaching and deep seated our ideas around gender and sexuality are, Tamale's description is a strong start. When we look at the construction of a societal structure around sexuality that includes traditional (often Christian) values and unpack how these structures were created as well as the power, domination and resistance structures that support and maintain the status quo, it becomes evident that how we understand sexuality, even within ourselves, is a response to the world around us rather than simply an expression of what is within us. Tamale includes in her work the role of colonialism and the objectification and oppression of African people and how these play out still today in politics, race and power. Tamale outlines the oppression and stereotyping experienced historically by African people under the banner of Western 'research'. The power relationship between researchers and 'subjects' as well as stereotypes and misunderstandings inadequately reflects the nuance and complexity within African cultures around sexuality. The influence of the power dynamic means that the intersectional factors and the influences and contours occurring between cultures and respective

sexualities is completely missed (Tamale, 2011, 6). Our sexuality and its meaning is perhaps not determined, but certainly heavily influenced by the society and culture that we live in.

> 'Sexuality is a fictional unity that at one time did not exist and at one time may not exist again.' (Weeks, 2016, 7)

This is not to say that sexuality doesn't exist or that the feelings we interpret as being part of our sexuality are not real, but that the consistent sources of sexuality in the body of the mind are given their meaning through social relations or constructions. These constructions in many cases are historical and bring together a series of possibilities: mental, physical possibilities, cultural forms of gender identity, bodily differences, reproductive capacity, needs, desires, fantasies, erotic practises, institutions and values which need not necessarily be linked together and in many cultures have not been linked either historically or currently.

How we understand or apply meaning to sexuality is largely a social construction, or socially organised. It's maintained by the use of language that reinforces how we understand what sex and sexuality is, how we should experience it, and what it could be. The structures surrounding the construction of sex define how we understand what is possible and, in many cases, how we understand ourselves. Someone who has never heard of the word 'transgender', 'gay' or 'lesbian' is likely to find interpreting their sexuality and their feelings incredibly difficult if they differ from the presented narrative, and much more so articulating their feelings or experiences. The structures around language, or the discourse, have a huge influence both on individual experience as well as on the broader social and political structures that are possible. The shift of a narrative and establishment of a different kind of sexuality or a different take on it demonstrates that sexuality is in no way a given, but remains the product of negotiation, struggle and human agency. As such, sexuality can be seen as transgressive in some regards, in much the same way that queerness is.

Weeks outlines in detail the organisation of sexuality and how it's constructed. Understanding these constructions, in the context of this work, allows us to consider the mechanisms employed to create discourse as well as the intersecting factors involved with ensuring the reinforcement and continuation of a social structure. This organisation and structure of sexuality consists of and is maintained by five areas including kinship and family, economic and social organisation, social regulation, political intervention and cultures of resistance.

Kinship and family: it can seem self-evident that our ideas around the organisation of sexuality as well as social structure originate within our family unit and are reinforced by our kin structures. That is true, but those structures are not as fixed as we initially imagine. Family relationship ties differ between cultures and how we perceive our family as well as our immediate family varies greatly. Additionally, issues such as incest that are considered taboo in many cultures are not considered similarly in others, and certainly at other times in history have not been approached with the same reserve. Despite the

fluidity and variance in structures and inconsistency around what fundamental principles apply, family structures are where we shape our individual identities as well as how we determine how our desires are organised from an early stage in life and as such form a vital part of the organisation of sexuality.

Secondly, individual families and wider societal structures are hugely impacted by *economic and social relations*. Class divisions, family units and how they function as well as how they are supported, economic migration, sex tourism, labour migration as well as shifts in society related to these changes. For example, the prevalence of different cultures or accepted practices is influenced by the people who live within a society, and that is influenced heavily by economic or labour migration. The effect of economic migration has been widely publicised over the last few years in mainstream media with the influx of refugees migrating into western countries, with mixed responses. Social and economic organisation can thus be seen to have a substantial influence in how we understand the world and in terms of what we are exposed to in our day to day life in terms of the other members of our society.

Social regulation examines the shift in how society regulates itself with regard to sexuality and how this regulation shifts over time. Society has seen a shift away from a strong moral authority enforced by the church to, in some cases particularly in the west, a socially enforced morality and in some African countries a social regulation governed by communities or cultural guidelines. South Africa has a strong presence of cultural and social regulation and in some cases, individuals walk a fine line between more western influences and African cultural social practices in terms of what is considered to be acceptable. African sexuality is frequently weighed down by social taboos or silences that lead it to be highly stigmatised and, in many places, criminal if it falls outside of a heterosexual norm. As such it needs to be treated, researched and understood with care and an awareness of the intricacies involved.

Political intervention is as shifting as any other form of political regime. Mainstream and easily evident examples of political intervention are evident when we see same sex marriage being legalised in different countries, and same sex marriage or the personal safety of homosexuals being placed under threat by certain governments or presidents. Notably, the late former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe cultivated a society in Zimbabwe that was profoundly homophobic and often dangerous for people identifying as gay or lesbian. A society where one feels seen and safe to express oneself will lead to vastly different individual experiences of sexuality as well as very different expressions of it, which in turn have their own influence. Political leaders have a huge influence on the countries they govern, comparable in many ways to the power the Church wielded in centuries past, and as such their roles in structures of sexuality and its organisation are hugely important.

Cultures of resistance include oppositional, disruptive political movements that can and do have a profound influence on how sexuality is organised. Movements like the suffragettes had a profound influence on society, as did first wave feminism and the current #METOO movement, and its common placard, 'Women Don't Owe You Shit'. The disruptive and transgressive actions of those movements

often have far reaching implications and, although change may happen slowly, it is often profound for those affected.

All five of these structures are connected by a dynamic of power: they are resisting or upholding systems of power within societies. Gender and sexuality particularly, and specifically within South Africa, are deeply informed and upheld by power systems, most notably that of patriarchy. Patriarchy is systemic in South Africa and its profound influence is evident across the board. One of the key contributors as well as products of (in that it is both a result of and informs the system) patriarchy is masculinity. Masculinity shapes views and behaviours around gender and sexuality in ways that are both overtly obvious and so subtle and deeply ingrained that it is almost impossible to unpack them. They form a crucial thread in the intersecting web around gender and sexuality and have been the focus of intense scrutiny following the cultures of resistance in the #METOO movement, third wave feminism and moves to create a more diverse and balanced social structure where gender and sexuality are concerned.

2.5.   Masculinity and patriarchy

Any conversation concerning sexuality and resistance movements must include the feminist revolution and by association a discussion of masculinity and patriarchy. An attempt to define 'masculinity' falls into the same trap as defining sexuality or defining gender. In seeking the 'essential', or the single thing that is 'masculinity' it quickly becomes evident that a single 'essence' is impossible to define. Connell describes masculinity as something that we understand when used in conversation, but which is complex to define independently (Connell, 1995, 3). She describes it as something that is simultaneously a practice in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage gender and the effects of those practices on bodily experience, personality and culture. Additionally, she describes the construction of masculinities as a systematic process. (Connell, 1995, 71)

Two aspects to masculinity are important and evident, however: that it is relational and that it is constructed by a society. That is, it exists in relation to femininity and, in the same way that gender and sexuality can be seen to be social constructions, masculinity can be regarded as a construction.

> If 'maleness' is biological then masculinity is cultural. Indeed, masculinity can never float free of culture: on the contrary, it is the child of culture, shaped and expressed differently at different times, in different circumstances in different places by individual groups. Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic makeup: rather masculinity is a gendered identity into which men are acculturated and is composed of social codes of behaviour which men learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways. (Beynon, 2001, 2)

In the same way that behaviours associated with gender and sexuality are learned, so is masculinity (and femininity). In her work on masculinity, Connell asserts that all societies can account culturally for what we could class as 'gender' but that 'masculinity' as we understand it does not apply universally

(Connell, 1995, 67-68). This supports the notion of masculinity as a construction and provides the opportunity to see it as something that is negotiated, dependent upon external conditions and fluid. That is not to underestimate the power or influence of masculinity as it exists within western and African society. Masculinity has been included precisely because of the level of influence exerted and because of how we interpret it. Hegemonic masculinity is unavoidable in most western societies and has a huge influence in South Africa, and as a result is hugely important as a factor for consideration when discussing any topics that deal with sexuality or gender identity. Lionel Tiger describes true maleness and the underlying male bonding and war as a 'hard and heavy' phenomena (Connell, 1995, 68). The behaviours and traits that can be associated with masculinity particularly in South Africa are not always positive and will be further outlined below.

To give an insight into the reach of masculinity, sub-Saharan Africa and masculinity within this society has been exposed to extensive and critical interest as a result of the HIV epidemic over the last couple of decades, based on the understanding that HIV itself is a gendered epidemic. The epidemic persists and develops partly as a result of the power relations between men and women, and the dynamics imposed as a result of the presence and power of hegemonic masculinity. (van Klinken, 2010, 3).

Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) explore the relationship and relevance of power and politics in their research on South Africa. Their work examines trends in masculinity and the correlation between the behaviour of the sitting president, who could be seen as one of the most powerful examples of what masculinity or 'manhood' should look like, and the trends in masculinity broadly within the country. As such, they look at how masculinity shifts and changes subject to the dominant masculine forces at play within a society at any given time. These forces can be economic, social, religious or from a range of other sources. The point is more that there are different sources from which to draw upon and develop masculinities and that they are formed as a result of the environment as much as they are created in relation to femininity and are demonstrated by individuals.

The masculinity demonstrated by presidents Nelson Mandela in 1994, through to President Jacob Zuma's tenure starting in 2009, is laid out and examined. Different faces of masculinity are outlined and why each model appeals to society as well as what the impact of the different masculinities are is explored. Important in this work is the theme of hegemonic masculinity as something that is not essential.

Similarly to gender, masculinity is constantly negotiated, with no 'perfect norm' existing. Arthur Brittan (1989, 3) sees masculinity as a set of practices into which individual men are inserted with reference to upbringing, family, location, work and cultural influences. As such, masculinity is not shared but is made up of those aspects of men's behaviour that fluctuate over time. It differs from culture to culture, influenced by race, class, economic conditions and societal norms and trends. The nuances and aspects that form part of each culture are created and upheld within that culture or society itself. Masculinity has had a prominent role in discourse in the wake of a cultural shift towards gender equality

and dismantling of an unequal society and it is important here because of its influence on behaviour norms, including patriarchy, homo- and transphobia as well as shame and stigma associated with weakness and vulnerability and other negative 'womanly' stereotypes, among other traits. The sense of shame or threat to a power dynamic within a relationship, to patriarchy or to masculinity can lead to aggressive and damaging behaviour.

In an attempt to better understand and define how we understand masculinity, Connell's four definitions (Connell, 1995, 70) - essentialist, positivist, normative and semiotic - offer an insight:

Understanding the essence or core nature of what determines masculinity constitutes the 'essentialist' definition. Aspects including risk taking, violence and aggression spring to mind as well as the aforementioned power dynamics and sporting prowess. Upon closer inspection, however, the same problem that exists with defining a common feminism amongst women or a common sexuality or gender emerges: it's impossible to find a single, common thread between all men and all masculinities that allows for it to be defined. Masculinities shift from culture to culture, time to time and even between classes, and as such the essentialist definition swiftly weakens.

A positivist approach seeks to determine what men 'really are', building up an ideal of masculinity. Three main concerns with this theory are firstly, that without a standpoint there is no possibility for a description. All insights are derived from a specific point. Secondly, that this ideal has a presupposition of what a 'man' is. A pre-sorting, in effect, so that only men are considered in the search for understanding masculinity. This becomes a complex issue where understanding what a 'man' is remains elusive for scholars. The third complexity is related to the second in that this positivist approach excludes masculine women or feminine men. The framework for construction is too narrow to provide a credible solution.

The normative definition recognises the differences between masculinities and instead offers up a normative or aspirational ideal of masculinity. That is to say, it's what all men aspire to be and are striving towards in their own way. This allows for weaknesses and discrepancies within masculinity, but creates an unachievable, inarticulable goal that nobody achieves.

The semiotic approach is purely relational and views masculinity in opposition to femininity. What is masculine is composed of what is not feminine. This is a symbolic approach and, in many ways, seeks to find symbols of difference to articulate what masculinity is. As such, this approach flounders because of the lack of a framework of understanding of what either femininity or masculinity is.

Despite a difficulty in explaining or outlining what constitutes masculinity, it remains a much used and broadly understood reference point. The culture of masculinity that has received extensive attention in recent years focuses heavily on systemic imbalances within a society that create a hegemonic masculinity as well as negative rather than positive identifiers that exist as a result. While men who

exhibit what we understand to be 'masculinity' may be disciplined, understand hierarchy and power, have sporting ability and value the ability to be a provider, there are downsides to how these play out in society that. These downsides, as mentioned above, include aggressive and damaging behaviour. 'Damaging' behaviour can be interpreted as damaging to the self, but particularly for these purposes I will focus on damaging for women and for men who fall outside of the masculine hierarchy, predominantly gay, trans or simply queer men in this case. Patriarchy and homophobia are systemic issues, reinforced by hegemonic masculinity, and they disadvantage a vast percentage of society.

Hegemonic masculinity is important to include in this conversation because of its far-reaching nature. It's not a fixed entity that is identical in every iteration but rather is a masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in an established pattern of gender relationships. It is the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, 77). What this looks like in practice is that men who embody the established hegemonic masculinity work within a system based around power relations between the genders to ensure that men remain the more powerful gender within society. They are likely to be paid more for the same work, they are more likely to hold positions within governments, they are more likely to be quoted in newspaper articles or represented on panels, and more likely to hold higher and more powerful positions within business (to name a few). This masculinity is institutionalised, not individual, although it's held up by individual behaviours and maintained by an immovable system. Government structures, business structures, unequal pay, discrimination against women who are pregnant or who are mothers as well as deeper more insidious methods of discrimination all factor into hegemonic masculinity and in turn, patriarchy. Currently, there are moves to break down 'old boys' clubs' where men are more likely to mentor or hire men who resemble them rather than do so for women, moves to ensure that women and men receive equal pay for equal work, to examine stereotypes around masculinity and femininity and break down patterns of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy. These efforts may eventually be successful, but the progress is slow for the reasons outlined above: that masculinity is hard to define, it is relational and it's socially and culturally embedded as well as fluid, and as such is incredibly difficult to unravel.

Nonetheless, describing and pinning down masculinity, hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy is work that has received extensive attention, particularly how we construct and articulate masculinity as well as the effects of it. Christine Heward (1988) examined how respectable constructions of masculinity are developed in young men particularly at schools using team sports, academic hierarchies, discipline and uniforms (Connell, 1995, 28). Gilmore (1990) looks at how manhood is difficult to achieve and that is involves striving in a distinctly masculine realm, and as such its achievements are frequently marked by rites of entry. South African culture has extensive examples of 'rites of entry' or 'initiation'. Everything from young Xhosa men who experience 'going to the mountain' to first year students at traditionally Afrikaans, white universities forced to partake in excessive drinking and streaking rituals in order to demonstrate that they're 'men', or even 'locker room banter' about who's been the first to have sex and

with whom. Rites of passage for entry into manhood or proving masculinity are deeply embedded in our culture, regardless of your race or your class.

It's worth pointing out that part of how we interpret what 'makes a man' today almost always includes physical prowess, something we take for granted today but is a construction (Connell, 1995, 36). Men who are elite athletes are almost always considered higher up in the masculinity hierarchy than their less muscular or co-ordinated peers. They're given superior status and virtues are assumed of them regardless of whether these have been demonstrated. Current South African Springbok Captain Siya Kolisi is an easy example to consider. While there is an important race aspect to his status, he is widely considered to be 'superior' as a man (not simply as a sportsman): physically strong, capable, widely portrayed as a provider and carer for his wife and children and a physical example of what an 'African man' should be. Another aspect of masculinity within South African culture particularly is that of sexual conquest. Part of being 'a man' includes not just physical prowess but includes an inherent sexual aspect. As such, men who are not seeking sexual conquests or excelling in sport are seen to be 'lesser', falling lower down in the masculinity hierarchy. Gay men, certainly in the sexual conquest element of this, are likely to fall short of female conquests and as such it's no surprise that homophobia is inherently part of many iterations of masculinity in South Africa.

The term "homophobia" was first used in the 1970s, around the same time as patriarchy became commonly understood and used (Connell, 1995, 40). Homophobia is described not just as an attitude but as an embodied hostility that can lead to discrimination in the workplace, vilification in the media, harassment, violence, imprisonment and murder. (Connell 1995, 40-41). Immediately, we see ties with the subordination of women and effects of patriarchy. Gay men often exhibit contradictions in masculinity and demonstrate gender ambiguity, toying with bodies and identities and how we understand and interpret them, blurring the lines between how we understand masculine and feminine, straight or gay. The clearest demonstration of this is in the feminising of men who are gay and in the masculinising of lesbian women (effeminate men, butch women). This undermines and threatens masculinity and accordingly, patriarchy, of which men are the main benefactors - as such, they are inclined to resist or suppress it.

The term for the benefitting of patriarchy is known as the 'patriarchal dividend' and looks at how men benefit from structural, hegemonic patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. The benefits extend into the material and physical too: they hold greater material wealth, access to social resources and capital in the sense that they are considered 'more important'. The corollary of this amounts to a disarmament of women and of femininity that can be a physical act. Violence is part and parcel of this systematic inequality both in the sense that men use it to uphold the system and in that they feel entitled to behave in a violent manner as a result of being men. Violence sustains dominance, both physical and psychological.

Two patterns of violence result from systemic patriarchy (Connell, 1995, 83). The first is intimidation and violence against women that becomes both accepted and normalised. Everything from wolf whistling at women on the street to upskirt photos, to rape or physically or emotionally abusive relationships become normalised or accepted. An example of this is a marriage where a woman is routinely beaten by her husband. If she retaliates, she's seen as disrespectful towards her husband which reflects badly both on herself and on her family, and she is held responsible for his violence for 'deserving it'. Examples of this are common, particularly in cultures where women are viewed as having been 'paid for' by the husband.

The second example is one where violence becomes a factor in gender politics among men themselves; for example, violence against gay men. Violence becomes a way of asserting, claiming or maintaining masculinity in group struggles. Violence in this sense forms part of the system of domination as well as being an indicator of its imperfection.

In South Africa, the prevalence of violence in the role of male supremacy as well as homophobia plays a strong role in better understanding why change is slow and complex. Additionally, the South African complexities that accompany masculinity including poverty, unemployment, class divides, a culture of violence and Christian ideals surrounding sex provide a substantial insight into the prevalence of aggressive and detrimental behaviour in understanding masculinity as part of sexuality.

Masculinity in the context of work informs the societal structure, behaviours and beliefs. As such, this section is intended to inform and illustrate some of the dynamics that shape and inform gender and sexuality, and to highlight the structural ramifications of systemic patriarchy and how those tie in with positionality and power rather than a comprehensive theoretical engagement with masculinity. Masculinity in this context is a contributing thread to the core issues within this work rather than one of the areas for extensive theoretical engagement.

2.6. Positionality and power

Once we understand how sexuality is organised, it's important to contextualise it in terms of how it relates to gender and sex and how all of these are informed by masculinity. Patriarchy substantially informs our social standing in that your assigned gender offers a position within a specific hierarchy: dominant if you are male, subordinate if you are female. The effect of this system is profound, and it impacts lives at every stage, informing our positions of power as well as acceptable norms and behaviours.

The relationship between gender and sexuality, then, becomes slightly more complicated once the systemic power dynamics take hold. Our assigned sex may not determine our gender but can and often does, to some degree, inform our sexuality. In light of this and incorporating the Christian or theological

aspect of this research, we must consider the contextualised physical body, sexuality and theology using sexual theologies.

> 'According to James Nelson the difference between 'theological sexuality' and 'sexual theologies' is that theologies of sexuality have begun with the bible and the tradition and then moved in a 'one dimensional manner to discuss sexual experience. Sexual theologies…also ask how our sexual experience influences our understanding of the bible and the tradition resulting in a dialogical, two directional inquiry.' (Thatcher, 1993, 12)

Thatcher underlines the role of patriarchy as an oppressive influence on sexual experience and says that if we understand the effect of its influence, it's possible to draw a fruitful comparison between sexual theology and liberation or feminist theory (Thatcher, 1993, 12).

Patriarchy is an important aspect, and the positionality of sexual theologies as outlined above is equally valuable. In the context of any work involving gender identity and sexuality, the role of our bodies and of our own experience must not be underestimated. In other words, each individual's 'positionality' is fundamental to who they are and how they experience the world. Sexuality is a trait we all share as human beings, and it forms part of who we are and adds to aspects of our positionality. In better understanding it as an embodied reality, it becomes a tool to dismantle notions of othering. Additionally, the shame or taboos associated with sexuality (particularly in many Christian contexts) can be more easily dismantled if we work from positionality and lived sexuality, not just as something we experience, but when considered as something that 'we all' experience. The embracing and speaking about our own individual experiences and perspectives can be hugely helpful and these will form an important premise of the research.

The absence of positionality or of an appreciation that sexuality is inherently an aspect of being human (for most people) -that all of us embody a sexuality of some sort and that all of us have a valid, unique experience - is a contributing factor in hetero-patriarchy and in objectifying or othering people, alienating them and allowing for discrimination or exclusion. Heteronormative ideals, homophobia and a patriarchal societal framework, amongst others, contribute to certain aspects of sexuality being considered taboo, wrong or shameful and we are able to do that only by removing a sense of a 'shared experience of sexuality' with others.

Women as sexual objects devoid of their own sexuality aside from that which is present for male gratification is but one example. Male homosexual sexuality, bisexuality and transsexuality are different notions that have garnered less mainstream attention but are equally affected by notions and systems enforced by a patriarchal and heteronormative society. These sexualities are no less relevant than that of the heterosexual male and yet female, homosexual or transsexual independent and individual desire and sexuality is mired in shame and taboo. This can be credited to a combination of the role of cultural, social, economic, patriarchal or hegemonic masculinities or all of the above, but the effect remains the

same: that some people and some sexualities are considered 'other', made easier by a lack of empathy or of a sense of a 'shared experience'.

Conventional interpretations of the Bible can serve to uphold these hetero-patriarchal norms and in many cases reinforce both the ideals and the taboos. In order to dismantle these ideas, the biblical ideals and texts that influence notions of sexuality and heteropatriarchy will need to be examined, reinterpreted or reconsidered (one way that this has happened is through queer theology). Systemic ideals that are maintained and upheld including patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity too require reconsideration and interrogation so as to better understand all of the factors that are functioning together to maintain a system that depends on at least half of the population being considered subordinate to the other half.

In summary, sexuality and gender remain deeply complex aspects within society, informed by masculinity, patriarchy, positionality and power. Transgressive queer theory has only begun the journey toward dismantling those power systems that serve to uphold and reinforce oppressive systems that marginalising those who fall outside of heteronormative ideals and uphold behavioural norms including masculinity. Gender informs not only sexuality but influences your positionality as a result of institutional systems of power that are effective from the moment you are assigned a gender; shaping your role, position and accepted norms of behaviour in the context of the society you live in. A substantial part of how you understand and value yourself is reflected within your sexuality and your gender identity, as well as your position within a social hierarchy. All of these are influenced by language and by available discourse, shaping your perspective and behaviour and that of others regarding yourself. In a world where you are different, or fall outside of the accepted norms of gender or sexuality, a response of fear or of shame is easily understood, and will manifest in how you behave, speak and function within your social circle. This confluence of factors is part of the web of intersectionality, shaping and forming our views and behaviours.

Intersectionality is not only a means of theorising oppression but is also a mechanism for understanding race and identity (Nash, 2008, 1). Additionally, it can be seen as identifying intersecting nodes of oppression such as race and gender or sexuality and nation (Collins, 2002, 1). It examines aspects of the lived experience and how they function together to perpetuate or uphold existing systems that oppress some members of society. In terms of women's studies, intersectionality is considered one of the most important contributions thus far (Kimmell, Hearn, & Connell, 2004, 3). In the context of patriarchy being an overriding presence within South Africa, and the oppression of women being connected to that of gay people, lesbians and otherwise queer people, the context of women's studies is worth mentioning.

Intersectionality was initially used to highlight the difficulties in addressing problems faced by women of colour using feminist and antiracist thought processes, because women of colour fall between the cracks of both those schools of thought due to an intersection of factors (Crenshaw, 1990, 1244).

Crenshaw's original paper highlighted how, despite the best of intentions, unintended consequences and complexities reveal the complexities faced by groups of people as a result of all humans being multi-faceted identifiers (some of these are adopted by the self and some are imposed upon it), whether these are race, class or sex (as in the paper), or extend into gender, belief systems, age, sexual orientation or myriad others (Crenshaw, 1990, 1242-1245).

Using intersectionality, the spectrum of factors affecting pupils in a Christian schools play a vital role in determining the available and most appropriate tools for generating discourse as well as the barriers or boundaries that will influence or impact the work.

Intersectionality deeply informs how society functions and how it determines its values. South Africa is subject to a complex web of intersectionality and all aspects of gender and sexuality identity are impacted by the cross-sections of patriarchy, masculinity, queer and gender theory as well as sexuality and positionality. In the context of a school that has a Christian overtone, the complexities around this are almost magnified. With this in mind, the context of the institutional landscape of schools within South Africa will be discussed.

2.7.   Institutional Landscape

Extensive work has been done to examine the South African school Life Orientation (LO) process, from a structural standpoint well as to develop an understanding of the process from the teacher's perspective (Francis, 2012, 597-611). Additional studies have focused what tools educators have at their disposal within existing curricula for generating dialogue and to assist educators (Francis, 2017). Other work focuses on the experience, treatment and stigma of queer learners as well as the intersectionality of this and on the causes of this stigma in South Africa (Francis, 2017; Msibi 2012; Kowen and Davis, 2006; Butler et al., 2005; Francis and Reygan, 2016).

It has become abundantly clear, as a result of this work, that LGBTQIA+ pupils are widely stigmatised, stereotyped and remain regular recipients of abuse both by other learners and by teachers as well as school managers (Butler and Astbury, 2005, 134; Msibi, 2012, 526; Francis 2019, 4). Research indicates that this is the result of fear, discomfort, a lack of adequate resources and information as well as a heterosexist environment that privileges not just heterosexuality but enforces heteronormativity. It results in bullying, social exclusion and vulnerability, shame, self-harm, substance abuse (and other self-sabotaging behaviours) and, in some cases, suicide (Hatzenbuehler, 2017, 322-324). Queer learners remain at a greater risk of suicide, school dropout and alcohol abuse than their straight peers and reports of queer or gender non-conforming school pupils demonstrating a higher risk of suicide as a result of treatment by their peers or teachers is not uncommon (Russell and Joyner, 2001, 1276-1281).

As demonstrated above, South Africa has a masculine and heteronormative overtone historically, as well as a legacy of behaviour (particularly sexual) that is tightly controlled by Calvinist, Christian tradition. Existing and dominant patriarchal structures within black African culture (in no way exclusively) have contributed to violent and homophobic behaviour and 'anti' gay' sentiment that can include 'corrective' rape for lesbian or queer women who fall outside of the expected norm and initiation ceremonies or beating of men by their elders to remove 'homosexual tendencies' (Butler and Astbury, 2005, 816; Gevisser and Cameron, 1995; Isaack and Judge, 2004, 73; Louw, 2005, 144).

This overtone is shifting but the transformation is still underway and is painstakingly slow, despite a liberal and inclusive constitution. The intersection of a patriarchal legacy combined with the absence of a strong and broadly accepted dialogue around sexuality in a Christian context, ingrained cultural expectations as well as heteronormativity, race, class, sexuality, masculinity and patriarchal structures creates a perfect storm of inadequate guidance and low motivation to develop a dialogue to create a more inclusive, affirming environment for all who exist within it.

Msibi's (2012, 518) work demonstrates how naivety and stigma towards queer students is perpetuated by both teachers and peers. A lack of adequate guidance, as outlined in his work, is echoed in that of Reygan and Francis (2015); they demonstrate a discomfort and reticence on the part of teachers to engage in dialogue and discussion around sexuality as well as the emotional discomfort experienced by educators in engaging with teaching around sexuality (Reygan and Francis, 2015, 108-109). Additionally, Reygan and Francis illustrate that when these stigmas and verbal abuse are repeated by pupils and educators, they become ingrained, accepted and remain unchallenged, forming part of our accepted cultural and social lexicon (Reygan and Francis, 2015, 115). Homophobia and demonstrations of it become accepted, leading to exclusion, othering and alienation of anyone who does not conform to a heteronormative ideal, perpetuating the cycle of homophobic behaviour. This has adverse effects on pupils in that it excludes some learners and can result in violent, aggressive or otherwise anti-social behaviour, preventing a life affirming and flourishing environment.

I have divided the research findings (from Msibi's research) into five categories for the purposes of this study. The first involves cultural or societal overtones and effects; that is, the cultural or social environment that exists within and around schools and the structure that this creates for educators. The second category will be the educator perspective: personal views, support and information structures available, complexities involved in teaching LO or sexuality. The third is curriculum: tools that exist within the curriculum to better enable educators and break cultural or social stereotypes or offer support to learners. The fourth will be the queer learner experience, and the fifth is conceptualising and challenging oppression and the role of emotions in transforming sexuality and gender identity education

    (i)   Cultural or societal overtones and effects: the cultural or social environment that exists within and around schools and the structure that this creates for educators

As has been discussed, the apartheid legacy of Christian and Calvinist values as well as a systemic patriarchal, heteronormative and exclusionary culture remains, exerting substantial power within South African society. Specifically, 'social and moral hygiene' in sexual education and the discourse around the sinfulness of extramarital sex. African narratives including notions of 'western' or un-African ideas surrounding sexuality and gender identity that reinforce and sustain the existing and legacy structures continue to be at play within South Africa (Francis and Msibi, 2011; Donham, 2012). These ideals and as well as cultural and social stigmas related to queer people and the subtle forms of prejudiced behaviours associated with reinforcing those beliefs can be structured under what has been termed 'LGBT Microaggressions' (Nadal et al., 2010, 219; Nadal, 2019, 1405).

'Microaggressions' can include verbal abuse including heterosexist, homophobic or transphobic language and heteronormative behaviours. It can include stereotyping or exoticisation of homosexual or transsexual experiences (i.e. Stereotypes such 'all gays behave like women' 'all lesbians wear trousers') and pathologising of LGBT people. Microaggressions become 'contested microaggressions' when the target of a microaggression protests about the aggressing act and the 'microaggressor' denies intentionality or responsibility (Francis and Reygan, 2016).

Contextualising microaggressions within society is important in terms of understanding the 'less obvious' ways that heteronormativity, heterosexuality, homophobia, transphobia and other stigmas can play out and how perpetrators of microaggressions may not always be aware of their actions or their impact. When called out or challenged to acknowledge their behaviour, as noted above, denial or 'gaslighting' is frequently employed, further reinforcing the existing structure. It's important to note that cultural and social as well as other stigmas are not enforced only by microaggressions, nor are microaggressions the only demonstration of these stigmas.

> In a survey on attitudes towards gender and sexuality non-conformity in South Africa (HSRC 2016), seventy-two percent of South Africans responded that same-sex sexualities are morally wrong even though they believed that gay and lesbian people should have constitutional and legislative protections against discrimination (HSRC 2016). Troublingly … it is estimated that over the previous 12 months, 450,000 South Africans, both black and white, have physically harmed women who dressed and behaved like men in public, 240,000 have beaten up men who dressed as women and approximately 700,000 verbally abused (shouted at or teased) gender non-conforming people (HSRC 2016, 22). Also reported is that men between 45–54 years old, a social group socialised as young men during apartheid and currently a politically and economically powerful category in South Africa, are most condemning of same-sex sexualities. The survey highlights the inescapable legacy of apartheid and cultural heteronormativity. (Francis, 2019, 3)

Overt and outright prejudice is equally prevalent in many instances. In some cases, as will become evident below, a lack of adequate guidance in terms of alternative discourse or information is one of the reasons that the discourse persists.

In a study of LO teachers working within South Africa, Francis and Reygan demonstrated a series of themes prevailing that not only support the presence of microaggressions but provide insight into the lack of a shift in the discourse. Themes that emerged as consistent among the educators were subtle heterosexism, heteronormativity and pathology, discomfort and disapproval of LGBTQI+ lives, as well as 'culture/religion' (Francis and Reygan, 2016, 185). These themes were not necessarily related to the school curricula but emerged as ingrained, inherited knowledge and prejudice.

> 'These are the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that inform and propel the hidden curriculum which is not taught by the individual teacher alone but perpetuated by the system as a whole (Francis and Reygan, 2016, 288)

The role of the society and its cultural values, structures, hierarchies and religious beliefs plays a vital role in the agency, empowerment and ability of the educator to be a facilitator of change where certain pupils are excluded or victimised for being queer. This ability to generate change can be enhanced or curtailed by social support in the form of supportive parents or a discourse shift that is happening within the school curricula as well as within the surrounding society. An educator's power to change is also related to the support provided by the curriculum in terms of guidance, training and support offered, including that around not just the subject matter but in terms of assistance in how to manage cultural sensitivities, managing language barriers and similar complexities.

(ii)   Educator perspective: personal views, support and information structures available, complexities involved in teaching LO or CSE

As noted above, the capacity for change on the part of an educator can be profoundly enhanced via support networks and available resources to develop and maintain confidence in the subject matter (in this case, what can be fairly controversial subject matter, making the sense of confidence potentially more fragile). The ability of the educator to educate and inform is hugely influenced by their confidence and comfort with the subject at hand. This is reinforced by levels of knowledge, workshop attendance, personal comfort, belief and clarity regarding the information to be communicated as well as support from colleagues (Ahmed et al, 2009, 51). These factors are strongly correlated to teacher training and experience in the field.

Sexuality education training, for the most part in South Africa, is not uniform and comes from a diversity of fields, immediately disadvantaging educators in terms of their own ability to work with confidence and effectiveness. As will be demonstrated in an examination of the existing LO curriculum, the expected outcomes and prescribed teaching requirements are vague and as a result educators frequently consider their role to be that of a sexuality educator with a focus on values and morals (Rooth, 2005, 58). This can be seen to be rooted in the societal framework around sexuality and gender identity that ties sex and sexuality with values and morality. This impacts what and how teachers teach and is heavily

influenced by their own values and beliefs which are frequently embedded within the culture or society in which they teach, often reinforcing stereotypes and diminishing the opportunity for change (Francis 2012, 603). Subjectivity in the LO curriculum is described as, "Values around contentious issues such as sexuality education, HIV and AIDS, religion and the South African Constitution, including human rights, appear to have some influence on what and how educators teach." (Rooth, 2005, 261)

How an educator feels about, and how comfortable they are with their subject matter, has a profound influence not just in how they approach teaching, but due to the flexibility in the curriculum, on what they teach. Teachers have been shown to choose to teach abstinence in place of the role of safe sex and contraception as a result of their own discomfort and have been seen to skip conversations including homosexuality or heterosexism (Francis, 2012, 605). The influence of the teacher's own feelings as well as fears around parental or managerial retaliation has been shown to have a stronger influence than the learners' needs or experiences and leads to sexuality education that is focused around the heterosexual construction of sexuality, sex and gender identity (Reygan and Francis, 2015, 108; Francis 2017, 12-13).

In many cases, educators are in a position where their own values as well as those of their community, including the parents of learners are at odds with what is required to be taught as part of a curriculum, putting them in a position that conflicts with their own values or personal identities (Reygan and Francis, 2015, Francis 2017, 10). Educators may also feel pressured or be motivated by fear to conform to parental or community beliefs over and above either the curriculum or their own personal beliefs. This puts them under extreme pressure to remain ideologically within an existing discourse in order avoid conflict, retribution or shame in an environment where they are not supported in their teaching (Francis, 2012, 606-607). An additional reason for reticence or avoidance of subject matter has been linked to the sense, on the part of educators, that parents of learners are responsible for education around sex, sexuality and gender. This has been tied to the notions of it being a moral and values-based topic and as such more suited to home or parental guidance than left to an educator (Francis 2010, 316).

In some cases, topics included in sexuality and gender identity education are simply left out not just as a result of discomfort but because of a fear of the response by parents in the event that this teaching falls outside of cultural or societal norms or expectations (Francis 2017, 12-13). As posited by Francis:

> 'Both Bhana and Francis also show how topics related to homosexuality were not taught due to a fear of parental reactions. In Bhana's study, teachers were not so keen on teaching about homosexuality because they feared a backlash from the parents, as one teacher communicated: "It's gonna come from home, it's gonna come from home, parents are more problematic than the children ... well don't forget the [Governing Body] is run by the parents. And that has control over how the school is run, and that is a very strong ethos, particularly in our present Governing Body." In fact, Bhana cautions against the view that parents would instantly support policies that introduce measures to safe- guard gender and sexuality minorities in schools. (Francis, 2017,13)

Francis describes how when educators did choose to teach on LGBTQI+ identities they were susceptible to ingrained prejudices and norms, tending to teach in a heteronormative or pathologising manner, with little regard for inherent privileging or 'othering' that occurs in a strongly patriarchal and heteronormative society. Educators demonstrated an inability to respond to the questions, needs or demands of the learners related to sexuality and gender diversity and in some cases responded in a manner consistent with the subconscious microaggressions demonstrated by themselves personally as well as situated within the culture or society they worked in, further entrenching existing hierarchies and stigmas toward racism, sexism, heteronormativity and patriarchy (Francis, 2017).

Support for educators struggling with limited information and conflicting priorities and pressures is very slim, and the lack of training and personal uncertainty compounded by societal or communal pressures mean a frequent gap between policy and intended outcomes and practise on the ground (Francis, 2011, 318).

(iii)   Curriculum: tools that exist within the curriculum to better enable educators and break cultural or social stereotypes or offer support to learners

Life Orientation as it exists within the South African curriculum remains a sensitive topic, with open ended outcomes focused on relationships, gender and power. Educators of this subject tend to come from a range of backgrounds, and receive little or no training in terms of the sexuality and gender identity teaching that they are expected to provide. Uncertainty coupled with a lack of training often leaves a gap between policy and reality (Francis, 2011, 318).

Additionally, there is a gap between what is outlined in terms of the South African constitution which is both liberal and inclusive of sexual and gender diversity and the formal education policy, which has no specific reference to sexual diversity. There is no specific reference to sexual orientation or sexuality at all within the education policy, despite it existing within the constitution (Bhana, 2012, 315). Additionally, DePalma and Francis state:

> 'Our analysis of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for both grades 7–9 and 10–12 revealed no mention of sexual diversity, sexual orientation, gay, lesbian, bisexual, homosexual, sexualities (in the plural), gender identity, or trans.' (DePalma and Francis, 2014, 1694)

In omitting or not addressing the issue of homosexuality or sexual diversity, the Department of Education is contributing to or actively fostering the existing status quo rather than educating and changing it (Francis, 2017, 365).

Teachers, without adequate curriculum guidance and operating with limited support and within richly shaped cultural, social and religious rhetoric, have been observed to maintain a system of compulsory heterosexuality as a result. Lesson plans as part of a study of Life Orientation teachers did not include

sexual health, contraception, relationships or sexual activities but focused on heterosexual dating, sex, marriage and the family unit. Classes were not structured to include references, information or guidance to learners who fall outside of a heterosexual norm. (Francis, 2017, 9).

In terms of the curriculum itself, Potgieter and Reygan (2012, 48) in an analysis of grade 7-12 textbooks demonstrated how queer learners remained invisible: limited and incomplete references to queer sexualities were made in any of the visual or textual representations, diminishing the opportunity for a conversation structured around or focused on queer sexuality to emerge organically. They also found inconsistencies in representations, where they did appear (half of the textbooks were seen to have some representation, and half none at all): gay male identities were represented, lesbian and bisexuals were represented, but transgender identities were not represented. A heterosexual focus maintains that structure and the correlating information around dating, marriage, abstinence and safe sex does little to open a dialogue or discourse for marginalised learners or those with limited understanding who may, in different circumstances, be able to develop a wider understanding of sexuality and gender, even if not queer themselves, and as such become part of a shifting discourse.

(iv)   Queer learner experience

As learners have limited sway in terms of defining the behaviour of their educator or determining the content of the curricula, the inclusion of their experiences as part of this review is not to assist with better understanding the barriers to teaching sexuality and gender identity, but to acknowledge their experiences and the importance and role of their needs. Numerous studies have focused on the experience of queer learners, although limited work has been done on marginalised queer pupils in townships outside of Thabo Msibi's (specifically but not limited to 2012) work. Considering the demographics of South Africa, this remains a vital and unexplored element of the experiences of learners.

The profound and substantial impact of educator behaviour on learners is immediately evident with a cursory look at studies that have been performed and paints and gloomy picture. The influence of patriarchal, racist, heteronormative, phobic or Calvinist ideals has far reaching consequences in terms of self-harm and suicide on the part of learners. The impact of microaggressions or subtler forms of stigma on learners specifically within a school context that remain unaddressed by educators within schools is briefly outlined below, relying heavily on Msibi's study (2012).

Msibi's research focused specifically on queer township youth, and explored how derogatory language, fears of contagion, and perceptions about religion and culture serve to marginalise these young people, while teachers may explicitly or implicitly support these discourses or, at best, feel unprepared to challenge them. Important in Msibi's work is the element of race, which has not played a huge role in my work thus far. As a legacy of the apartheid regime, in addition to heteronormative and Calvinist legacies, that of race remains fundamental within South Africa. It impacts access to resources and cultural ideals in addition to class, race and language barriers particularly in schools. Racial incidents

are still prevalent in all educational institutions and as such learners who are black are at substantially increased risk of experiencing prejudice or stigma than their white peers. Msibi articulates that black, queer young people remain almost invisible within South African discourse and uses his paper to highlight their experiences and voices.

Msibi (2012, 523) breaks down the results of his work into four categories: language, fear, intersections and a lack of understanding. Research around harassment and stigma attributes it to peers as well as teachers in addition to a silence or lack of address within the curriculum around LGBTQI+ issues. Where educators did engage with content but did not engage with non-heterosexual sexual orientation as a valid or legitimate self-identity, they frequently inadvertently reinforced existing perceptions. In some cases, lesbians may be advised to alter their behaviour in order to avoid (corrective) rape, to stop wearing trousers and as a result that would stop the lesbianism or advise younger pupils to avoid the gay or lesbians so as to avoid also 'becoming gay'. Where teachers failed to address incidents of aggressions or microaggressions, they are frequently perceived as being complicit. In some cases, the silence of the educators and lack of support for learners was seen as taking the side of prejudice and reinforcing the stigma (Msibi 2012, 525).

Msibi's four categories of research listed above are important in understanding not just the (micro)aggressions that queer learners are subject to but may assist with understanding how to dismantle them, and are briefly detailed below:

The use of language, particularly verbal abuse, feeds into the culture and regime of heterosexism, whether intentionally or not, and places homosexuality as 'other' or abnormal, internalising it and making it the mainstream or accepted norm. He explains that it is not simply the inherent 'hate' or exclusionism that makes verbal abuse dangerous, but the unsaid possibilities, too. Eventually, the language is accepted as the norm, not called out as 'verbal abuse' or as abuse at all. Those who are abused begin to accept as a reality that they are 'other' or 'wrong', internalising their own stigma. Language and how we use it is a powerful tool and while there are overarching oppressive themes, without careful attention and effort to disrupt them, those oppressive themes will remain in place.

Fear refers not just to fear on the part of those who are stigmatised, humiliated and marginalised. Msibi indicates that fear is used as a tool to further prevent legitimisation of queerness in a heteronormative society. This is done, in this specific case, by threat of exclusion or contagion. Pupils are told they will be excluded or will contract 'gayness' if they continue with their behaviours, or potentially be exposed to (corrective) rape.

While these experiences are designed to instil fear and reinforce and normalise the patriarchal, heteronormative culture that pervades, that same fear is used on those who hold power to maintain it. As mentioned above, the presence of 'the other' reinforces the norm and as such, the fear of being perceived as 'other' or as 'queer' is yet another powerful tool employed by pupils and educators to

maintain the status quo, unchallenged, by policing sexuality and any forms of transgressive behaviour both verbally and through implicit threat.

Msibi goes on to examine the power of the intersections of language, fear, identification and discrimination and how the product and combination works to maintain the existing culture. Very often, the ways we understand gender roles or expectations are communicated subtly, through culture or religion or community and as such are assumed to be 'the norm' or to be true. In a world where all the contributing influences hold the same message, challenging that message or creating a different narrative is incredibly difficult. This is evident in struggles to shift longstanding traditions, even if they seem to be without merit in the current environment. Societies that place extreme value on tradition, culture, ancestral beliefs or religious beliefs are often complicated to unravel and shift. Msibi says:

> 'The combination of class, race, gender and sexual orientation for the queer learners in this project makes it twice as hard for them to exist and openly claim a gay identity. This is why the queer learners noted that although they had mostly come out in their schools, many other learners have remained quiet, in fear of coming out.' (Msibi, 2012, 527)

I would like to add to this, although it was not included in Msibi's work specifically, the element of silence that plays into this intersection. The role of what is 'not said' and what 'remains unsaid' is touched on in some work and, in the section above, it is evident that heterosexism is not discussed or 'made evident' in the curriculum or by the teachers, and this in and of itself can be seen to be enforcing the norm. There is one further aspect that is important here, from Francis (2017) in a discussion around learner experiences as well as absence of representation that factors into this intersection:

> 'The 18 sexual minority youth in the Butler et al. (2003, 17–19) study also communicated the lack of information and curriculum in high schools for gay and lesbian youth. Participants reported that they had great difficulty obtaining literature and information about being gay and lesbian in high school settings and their school libraries. Similarly, there was a complete lack of curriculum content regarding information about same-sex desire, love, and relationships.' (Francis 2017, 11)

The absence of information available to learners, even for them to access independently and privately, will contribute to the sense of alienation as well as to the prevailing heterosexual norm, creating another layer within the already present intersecting factors.

The combination of the above factors can also result in a profound lack of understanding, and Msibi accounts for the fact that in many cases, it may not be that teachers intentionally intend to be homophobic, but that inadequate information as well as misinformation regarding homosexuality, combined with a heteronormative environment, led to potentially inadvertent or unintentional homophobia or stigma. On the back of hostile language, fear and intersections of a

spectrum of factors, poor understanding can frequently lead to prejudice that leads to unnecessary complexities that become incredibly difficult to unravel, even if the intention may be present.

> (v)   Conceptualising and challenging oppression and the role of emotions in transforming sexuality and gender identity education

Francis and Reygan draw on Kumashiro (2002, 31) in seeking ways to conceptualise and challenge oppression. This method looks at four ways to do this and can be applied in an effort to uproot deeply held prejudices focused on queer people. They are: education for the other, education about the other, education that is critical of othering and privileging and finally, education that changes students and society through curricular and pedagogical reforms and which explores the complexities of anti-oppressive education through developing concepts such as resistance, partiality, crisis and unknowability in terms of teaching and learning.

Education for the other is premised on improving the experiences of learners who are in some way othered or oppressed, such as LGBT students. Providing more rounded support and the presentation of a narrative that allows for space to be queer as well as support in the face of prejudice would provide learners the space to feel safe and more affirmed. An acknowledgement that they are not 'other' at a pivotal and often fraught time in their lives, and advice on sex, sexuality and gender identity that pertains to them rather than serving only a heteronormative ideal would challenge even their own internalised ideas of oppression.

Education about the other focuses on curriculum and what all students (both privileged and not) know and should know about the other. The institutionalised homophobia and enforced, internalised heterosexuality as a norm functions against queer people or any sexual minority that remains prejudiced within the South African educational system. The first principle of education about the other would enable the address of the 'lack of understanding' that Msibi highlights above, as well as the complexities that educators face when they experience uncertainty or fear concerning their subject matter when teaching LO or CSE. Msibi (2012, 528) articulates how educators have in some cases asked learners for information about 'being gay', and information around this would enable a dismantling of some of the prejudice and oppression that educators inadvertently perpetuate. Education about the other would begin with educating the educators themselves in a more substantial, supported manner that then allows them to educate their learners and begin to shift a discourse.

Education that is critical of privileging and othering maintains that it is important to know not just how some groups are othered and oppressed but also how certain groups are privileged as well as how this dual process is legitimised and maintained. As long as a system is maintained with specific uses of language and a pervading sense of fear, a critical view of privilege and othering is impossible. Only once those who are othered begin to have a voice and agency can the existing systems be dismantled,

and that process can begin only with a shift in dominant language and with a discourse focused first on awareness and then on dismantling systems of oppression.

The fourth step involves education that changes students and society through curricular and pedagogical reforms and which explores the complexities of anti-oppressive education through developing concepts such as resistance, partiality, crisis and unknowability in terms of teaching and learning. This fourth step hinges on the first three being in place and will require not just time but community and parental support. Without critical education that highlights and dismantles privileging and othering, resistance, partiality, crisis and impartiality are concepts that remain out of reach. Francis and Reygan posit that all four steps should be included within the educational system and that they are necessary for a complete shift in discourse. It is possible that the steps happen consecutively rather than concurrently, allowing for adequate resources and information to be available and preventing further harm.

When looking at disrupting systems of oppression and existing norms within the context of preventing further harm, Reygan and Francis (2015) have presented a study specifically on the role of emotions and the pedagogies of discomfort in the context of South African schools and focused on sexuality and gender identity, its teaching as well as the social and cultural structures at play. Earlier studies (Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012, Lupton, 1998, and Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990) have demonstrated that emotions are embedded in relations of power and are vital in terms of the development of social norms. Transformation of social norms requires engaging with the emotional attachment to them (Ahmed, 2013). If we take the social norms in this case to include ingrained sexism, racism, heterosexuality, homophobia, patriarchy as well as subtler values attributed to morality and religion or culture and the emotional responses to challenging these, it becomes apparent that understanding and working with, rather than against, emotions and pedagogies of discomfort can play a fundamental role in shifting these norms.

Reygan and Francis work off a previous study (Francis, 2012) consisting of interviews with life orientation teachers and their approaches to teaching sexuality diversity. In their focus on emotions and pedagogies of discomfort, they analyse and unpack the emotional baggage that informs teachers' behaviour and decisions and how teachers manage those emotions. Emotions can range from fear to anger, denial or dismissal, among many others, and each has a profound impact on the approach of the teacher.

Reygan and Francis seek to interrogate whether the key to shifting knowledge (specifically in this case around sexuality diversity among teachers at schools) lies in emotions. They reported that the main feelings expressed by teachers were discomfort, disapproval and fear. Furthermore:

> 'They generally carried with them an inherited and bitter legacy of prejudice, denial and
> the silencing of non-normative sexual and gender identities. This inherited emotional

knowledge proved a significant barrier to the teaching of sexual and gender diversity, which few engaged with in class in any meaningful manner. Our quest in this study was to explore the role of the emotions in the perpetuation or challenging of inherited, bitter knowledge(s) around non-normative sexual and gender identities. What we found was that participants had strong emotional attachments to old bitter knowledge(s) that severely curtailed their ability to critique and abandon inherited knowledge in favour of a new, social justice curriculum that reflects more accurately contemporary realities in South Africa. (Reygan and Francis, 2015, 115)

When we consider 'bitter knowledge' and its impact on prejudice, denial and the silencing of non-normative sexual and gender identities and a focus on the binary, there are parallels with those effects and that of conservative theology or 'toxic theology'. Toxic theology, negative interpretations of scripture and conservative or very traditional theology have similar effects on language, fear and the intersection of factors including identification and discrimination, particularly with regard to identification and discrimination. Masculinity and patriarchy have powerful influences within the Church and sexual identities outside of a heterosexual, married union are complex in an environment governed and heavily policed by these factors. Existing research on schools does not include a specific focus on the impact of religion on the themes reflected above, but when considering these themes in the context of this work, understanding the powerful effect and deep influence that Christianity has on all of them and just how profoundly it shapes much of South African society is vital.

In the research focused on teachers' emotions and pedagogies of discomfort (Francis and Reygan, 2015) amongst other work, the effect of the emotions of educators on their approach to LO teaching is obvious and profound. Considering the contributing factors to negative emotions around the subject of sexuality and gender identity as well as the emotional realities of the learners, a discussion of shame and empathy provides an additional resource for unravelling some of the complexities of sexuality and gender identity within schools. Reygan and Francis's analysis of teachers and their emotional responses is not an indictment on the teachers themselves: there is a cognisance that we need to meet teachers 'where they are' emotionally if we are to unravel layers of fear or of 'bitter knowledge' that is held and often transmitted from teacher to pupil or parent to child.

In research around shame and empathy, 'meeting someone where they are' and allowing them to feel seen, able to be vulnerable and to be heard is a catalyst for diminishing feelings of shame and associated behaviours. A vast proportion of the factors contributing to complex issues around sexuality and gender identity are emotional, both for the educators and for the learners. Providing a space where the understanding of the role of emotion and how to transform the feelings of those with the most power to influence is one of the ways in which discourse could possibly be transformed. The next section will reflect on shame and the associated behaviours as well as its counterpoint, empathy, and the role that it can play in diminishing shame.

2.8.   Shame and Empathy

2.8.1. Shame

The decision to include aspects of shame and empathy in the literature review follows the systemic nature of the complexities and intersectionality of aspects including heteronormativity and patriarchy that have been outlined above as well as work around the role of emotions in our approach to sexuality and gender identity education (Reygan and Francis, 2015).

This section will illustrate how shame and empathy can play substantial roles in the way that individuals behave and respond to each other. It will also demonstrate how shame can lead to behaviours that reinforce oppression on the part of both the oppressed and the oppressors. Empathy can play a powerful role in beginning to shift behaviours exhibited as a result of feelings of shame or fear, and in order to begin to change any discourse, the role of empathy will have to be considered.

Feelings that have been used to describe shame include 'devastating, noxious, excruciating, small, separate from others, rejected and diminished' (Brown, 2006, 43), amongst others. This is by no means a cover-all solution but the research on both shame and empathy are pertinent to much of what has been outlined in the literature review above and I would argue that this research should be considered and included as a potential contributor to shifting the landscape. Shame has been described both as 'an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging as well as 'the preeminent cause of stress in our time' (Brown, 2006, 43).

At the outset, it's important to differentiate shame from guilt. Guilt has been determined to be a feeling that results from behaving in a flawed or bad way, rather than being a flawed or bad 'self'. Similar to the explanation of understanding (homo) sexuality as something that you 'are' versus something that you 'do' (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2008, 277), guilt is experienced as a response to behaving in a flawed or bad way, while shame is associated with 'being' flawed or bad, inadequate. It describes who you are, how you are in the world, rather than a feeling emanating from something that you have done. It's characterised as a flaw in your person or your moral makeup rather than a lapse in judgement, making it far more personal and associated with one's being, rather than simply a flaw that can be attributed to 'being human'. It's directly related to identity. Ferguson, Eyre and Ashbaker (2000,135) argued that an 'unwanted identity' is the quintessential elicitor of shame. More specifically, an unwanted identity that has been placed upon you or created for you, or one that you fit into that you do not value or like.

Brown (2006) developed a Shame Resilience Theory through research specifically focused on women, identifying what constitutes shame and examining its causes. The theory aims to tackle three dominant feelings that, combined, create the experience of shame: feeling powerless, trapped and isolated. Each of the three feelings is important, but the concern that emerges is best understood as an intersection of all three and that is what makes it such a powerful and complicated emotion to unravel and overcome.

Powerlessness is relevant where power is understood to be the ability to act or produce and effect. The feeling of being powerless for an individual emerges with three properties: consciousness, choice and change. Often, people do not have the awareness or the language to articulate what they are feeling or experiencing. Shame can present in a spectrum of ways, ranging from confusion to fear or rage as well as judgement of others or their decisions or a need to hide oneself. When facing these intense and often overpowering emotions, it can be difficult to consciously manage them or to articulate what these feeling are, and even more so, articulate that at the heart of these feelings might be a sense of shame that is triggering them. Even in situations where individuals are able to identify their feelings as being those of shame, the secretive, silencing nature of it makes it hard to identify and act on the choices that would facilitate a shift or be a catalyst for change.

Trapped is best described as having two dominant properties that function together to maintain the entrapment: options and expectations. Feeling trapped means that the options available to you are, or are felt as, extremely limited.

> 'Situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation' (Jacobson, 1998, 147)

The experience of being trapped expands into a double bind concept by combining limited and punitive options with layers of competing expectations to form a complex, trapping layer. The sense, or reality, where one feels the pressure of a myriad of expectations with few options for meeting them only serves to increase the pressure and the sense of being trapped.

The third feeling that works to generate shame is the sense of isolation. Individuals experience isolation when there is disconnect between their communities around them, or a lack of consciousness and choice or possibility of change, increasing the sense of powerlessness.

> 'We believe that the most terrifying and destructive feeling that a person can experience is psychological isolation. This is not the same as being alone. It is feeling that one is locked out of the possibility of human connection and of being powerless to change the situation. In the extreme, psychological isolation can lead to a sense of hopelessness and desperation. People will do almost anything to escape this combination of condemned isolation and powerlessness.' (Miller and Stiver, 1997, 72)

Already, the intersectional nature of shame and how it created as well as how it manifests has become obvious, as well as the complexity around dismantling it. Additionally, there are common themes in the causes or catalysts for shame. While Brown's work focuses specifically on women, the categories that emerged as the most likely to trigger shame apply to this work, in the context of the behavioural indicators and feelings experienced. As such, in the context of a South African Christian landscape,

there are parallels to be drawn between Brown's work and the causes and associated behaviours of shame and, accordingly, its role in the discourse around sexuality and gender identity.

Some of the categories that have emerged as the most important in terms of triggering shame are sexuality, body image, religion, speaking out, surviving trauma, mental and physical health, and lastly, family (Brown, 2006, 46). These themes all relate to those that influence the complexities of sexuality and gender identity in South Africa, particularly if we reflect on the landscape outlined in chapter 1 and the institutional landscape section prior to this one.

Moving on from understanding the common triggers for feelings of shame as well as the individually experienced emotions or responses that generate shame, Brown unpacks the personal, social and cultural influences and contributors to feelings of shame. She articulates this in her research as a psycho-social-cultural construct. Very importantly, none of the people she researched could articulate shame as something that could be individually a psycho, social or cultural construct. Shame, for all participants, was a combination of all three influences. Because of this complexity of factors, understanding the research around shame is a fundamental tool in unpacking the systemic issues described above. The psycho-social-cultural construct of shame is unpacked below.

The psychological element of shame describes the emphasis on emotions, thoughts and behaviours around the self. It relates to self-perception and how we see ourselves both as an individual and in terms of how we fit in the world. Negative feelings focused around our thoughts, appearance, sexual proclivities or desires all contribute to the detriment of individual psychological wellbeing. Additionally, feelings about being 'different' from our peers or not being accepted by one's family as a result of perceptions of who we are reinforce negative psychological thought processes, feelings of isolation and negativity towards our being.

The social element examines how shame is experienced in an interpersonal context, tied to relationships and connection. Connection is fundamental and directly contributes to emotional wellbeing. The absence or sudden removal of that sense of connection or of fundamental relationships has a devastating effect on an individual, particularly if it comes as a result of something said, done or revealed about oneself. If you are shunned or excommunicated for something that is fundamentally or intrinsically related to who you are, the sense of personal shame around that is likely to be acute. As social beings who exist in an ever more connected society, heavily governed by social norms and acceptance, a disruption or rejection within this system can be devastating for an individual.

This cultural aspect deals with cultural expectations and the real or perceived failure of meeting them. This correlates with the patriarchal and heteronormative aspects of culture that have been covered, as well as traditional cultural norms within society. It can include everything from expectations around adolescent initiation and marriage practices, childbearing, dress codes (for example, women wearing only dresses or skirts to church and not being permitted to wear trousers) and be as difficult to identify

as including simple gender based behaviours like sitting with crossed legs or a specific gait and extend into aspects such as expected household chores.

It's important that these three aspects all contribute to shame and that they work together to allow shame to flourish, because the complex nature of the construction of shame also gives an indication of how complicated it will be to unravel in order to shift the discourse. Additionally, these simple explanations above have not included other factors that play into our psycho, social and cultural constructions that further complicate and exacerbate shame, often subliminally, intensifying the emotion. To address this in more detail, Brown has constructed a 'Shame Web' outlining the factors that contribute to shame and how they operate together: These images are copyright of Brown and used here purely for illustrative purposes:
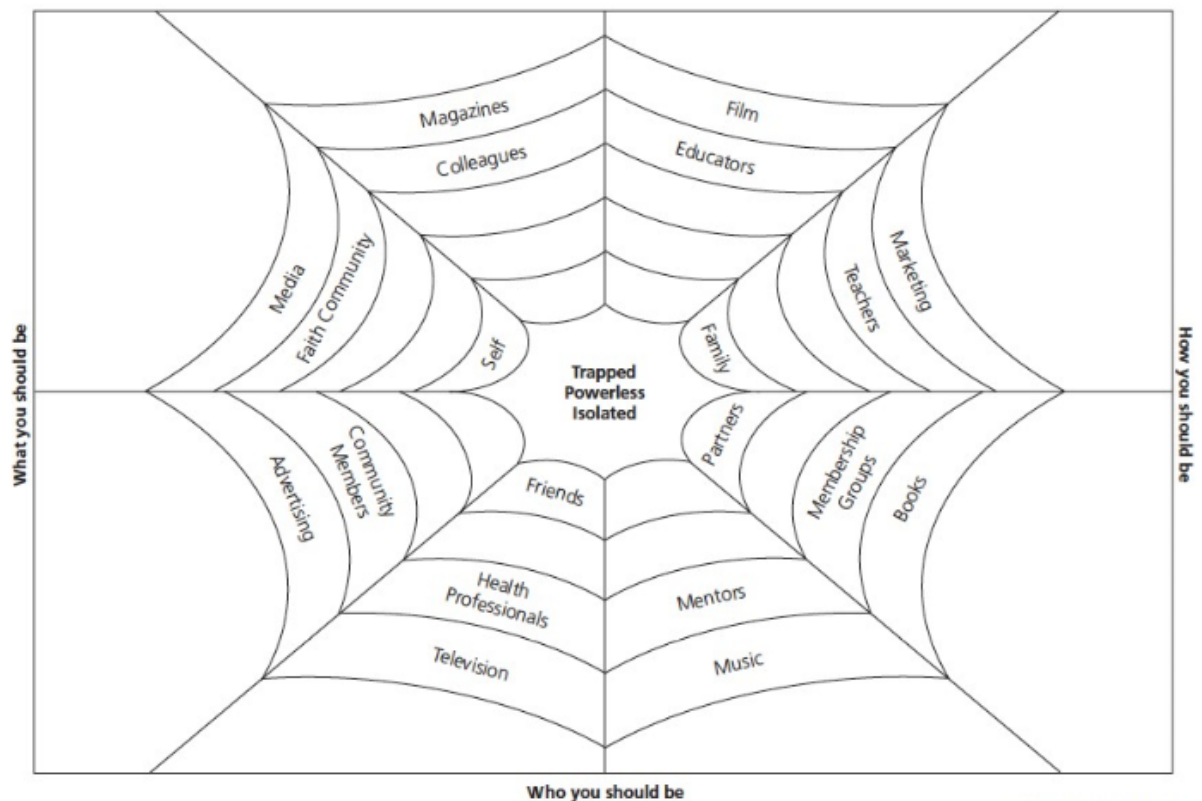
(Brown, 2006, 45)

Using this web, Brown examines mechanisms for becoming resilient to feelings of shame – what she calls 'Shame Resilience Theory'. In her work, resilience is composed of four components: the ability to recognise and accept personal vulnerability, acritical awareness around social and cultural expectations and how they play into shame, the ability to form mutually empathetic relationships that facilitate reaching out to others and the ability to speak shame.

She makes use of a second diagram that demonstrates how these four components play into the systemic nature of shame to work with dismantling them:

SHAME | Shame Resilience | EMPATHY
Trapped / Powerless / Isolated — 0 3 6 9 12 — Connection / Power / Freedom

=

Confusion / Judgment / Fear / Anger / Blame — Acknowledges Personal Vulnerability — 0 1 2 3 — Recognition / Awareness / Protection / Support

+

Reinforcing / Individualizing / Pathologizing — Critical Awareness — 0 1 2 3 — Demystifying / Contextualizing / Normalizing

+

Remain alone / Feed shame with secrecy and silence / Limits poosibilities for change — Reaching Out — 0 1 2 3 — Indentify and name common experiences / Share knowing laughter / Create change

+

Limited understanding of shame / Limited options/ strategies for developing shame resilience — Speaking Shame — 0 1 2 3 — Increased understanding of shame / Increased options/ strategies for developing shame resilience

(Brown, 2006, 47)

Most important for this work is the shame resilience cline that counterbalances with a focus on empathy. In the research with the team from IAM, in response to the question around what the single contributing factor to the fastest and biggest shift in how people perceive each other is, participants responded with 'empathy'. Many of the behavioural traits and triggers outlined in the work around shame apply in this research and one of the most profound tools available to individuals to precipitate a shift in discourse and enable people to speak to their experiences, articulate their emotions and reduce stigma and shame will be human connection and empathy.

2.8.2.   Empathy

'Being understood is a basic human need and it's only through being understood and accepted that humans are able to change and grow.' Rogers (1957, 96)

Burnard (1988, 389) defines empathy as the ability to see the world as another sees it, or to enter into another's frame of reference. As with shame and guilt, empathy has a close but not equal partner: sympathy. If we see sympathy as the ability to feel sorry for another person or to imagine how we would feel if we were experiencing what is happening to them, empathy is the experience of trying to imagine what is it like *being that person* and experiencing things *as they do*, not as *we would*. Experiencing empathy from someone means feeling seen, feeling less alone, feeling like one is supported and immediately less powerless. All of these responses immediately address some of the contributing factors that make up feelings of shame.

Extensive work has been done around empathy, both to measure it and to establish what the requirements are for empathy to take place. Interestingly, in this case, empathy does not need to be a conscious desire. It can be something that 'just happens' and does not need to be intentional (Wiseman, 1996, 1163). For those who experience an empathetic response, their sense of connection and power is often increased, restored or strengthened. Additionally, evidence indicates that the most powerful response to empathy is in response to empathy from another, but that self-empathy can play a role in shifting feelings as well.

Wiseman identifies four components of empathy: to see the world as others see it, to be non-judgemental, to understand another's feelings and to communicate the understanding of another's feelings (Wiseman, 1996, 1165).

(i)   The ability to see the world as others see it is to be able to put yourself in the shoes of another as it were, understanding their perspective and the complexities involved with how their view on the world is shaped.

(ii)   To be non-judgmental is the ability to really see the world through someone else's eyes rather than through your own eyes in their position is important, and thus to really appreciate the complexity of feeling and not to judge behaviours or responses that might be quite different from how you think you would behave. The experience of shame incorporates real or perceived expectations and value judgements of others, and the ability of a listener to engage without judging offers a substantial opportunity for connection and validation on the part of the individual experiencing shame.

(iii)   To understand another's feelings. That is, to really understand and feel the experiences and the emotions of another, even if your own responses would be (and are) different.

(iv)   To communicate the understanding of another's feelings. Importantly, the response that indicates one's understanding is vital for empathy. In order for it to have its greatest effect, the person displaying empathy has to communicate their understanding of the experience and feeling of another. Without the fourth step, the possibility exists of the other person feeling uncertain that they were heard, seen and/or understood, and the full impact of the expression of empathy is entirely lost.

Wiseman draws on work by Tshuldin to outline a spectrum of skills necessary for displaying empathy that is in line with Wiseman's and includes self-awareness, communication skills, perception of feelings within the self and others as well as hidden feelings and lastly, not judging others (Wiseman, 1996, 1164).

(i)   Self-awareness is the ability to understand oneself and one's own vulnerabilities as well as prejudices.

(ii)   Communication skills, listening in particular: in order for the other person to really feel heard and valued, the ability to listen and give attention freely is a key component in creating empathy.

(iii)   Perception of feelings both within the self and within others as well as hidden feelings: being able to recognise and interpret feelings both of another and of oneself play a role in creating a 'safe' space for the person feeling shame. The ability to recognise and decode feelings, even when they are unsaid or are essentially 'hidden', in order to unpack what is really going on is fundamental to de-escalating the negative feelings, shifting the discourse and creating feelings of empowerment rather than entrapment.

(iv)   Not judging others: a non-judgmental position where one is legitimately listening to the other and experiencing what they are talking about, and legitimately engaged in a non-judgmental, non-confrontational way is important. It's possible that the empathiser's perspective through dialogue can shift and as such they move from a more to a less judgemental space during a conversation, but that absence of judgement remains an important part of the conversation.

Also important for this research is that empathy is a fluid state. There has been debate about whether empathy is a trait or skill, in the sense that one either has it or that one has to learn it. Certainly, it would seem that for some it is an easier skill than for others, but the fact that it does not need to be intentional and that it remains fluid and shifting, with specific facets that increase or decrease its effectiveness indicate that it's possible for empathy to occur in most situations when the necessary conditions are met. Regardless of whether empathy is a trait or a skill, it remains fundamental in shifting discourse and the power dynamics leading to those who experience shame as a result of falling outside of an accepted

discourse or system are likely to be marginalised. In order to generate acceptance and inclusion as well as a shift in dialogue and discourse, empathy is fundamental.

The institutional landscape of South African education and its challenges as outlined in section two of this chapter is deeply informed and shaped by queer and gender theory, sexuality, masculinity and patriarchy as well as positionality and power as outlined in the first section. In the research that follows, the effect of the influences and the landscape will inform how a response should be shaped, particularly when considering the role of Christianity and how it informs all of the influences on the institutional landscape. Understanding how shame and empathy play overwhelmingly important roles in upholding the status quo will almost certainly offer some guidance into some of the potential solutions in terms of meeting people where they are emotionally as well as in shifting the discourse to transform deeply ingrained ideals and prejudice.

3.   THEORY AND METHOD

3.1.   Outline

Due to the deeply contextual and complex nature of the subject matter in this work, a combination of methodologies will be used in conjunction so as to allow for a contextual analysis and to ensure the appropriate framework for discourse that shapes and informs the nature of the work. The complexities around religion, culture, language, fear, discrimination and their intersection as well as a focus on the destigmatising and demarginalisation of queer people must be included for consideration. Accordingly, drawing from the strengths of three key methods and encompassed overall by the lenses of gender and queer theory, a mixed methodology will be the best framework for this study.

The three methods are contextual discourse analysis (CDA), the methodological approach developed for practical theological inquiry by Richard Osmer, followed by Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis.

3.2.   Practical Theology, Richard Osmer

Richard Osmer's Practical Theology operates around four key questions or principles that examine what is happening, why it's going on, what ought to be happening and how we might respond. This methodology will be used to direct the enquiry and to shape its direction.

Addressing the first and second questions, the key issues and elements of the problem, and who is affected have been outlined in the first two chapters of this work. Systemic complexities that cross race and cultural barriers, affecting all South African learners regardless of their social circumstances, are evident.

To address what should be happening (what ought to be going on), we must take into consideration the issues at hand as well as the contextual complexities outlined in the second question. What could happen that would account for these issues and work to create healthy environment enabling those within it to flourish? The core issues of complexities around sexuality and gender identity education within schools as a tool for diminishing prejudice, stigma and harm to queer minorities is the core focus of this work. What should be happening is deeply connected to the principles that uphold a feminist theory of praxis (more detail on that follows in the section focused on a feminist theory of praxis) that allows for those who are marginalised to become 'de-marginalised' as it were and to have access to adequate, inclusive education and safe spaces that celebrate not just diversity but each individual for who they are, allowing them to flourish regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

Understanding not just what is happening from a headline level, as detailed in the introduction where school pupils are far more likely to commit suicide or attempt to, but also why it is happening, and the

wider repercussions of this, is crucial. As a result of being better informed around the nuances of why something is happening, we are better able to articulate 'what ought to be going on' in a way that can more accurately incorporate all of the aspects and detail of the causes, right from the base, of something that is happening and more effectively respond to it. In this case, one of the strongest underlying causes of what is happening is connected to abusive, systemic power structures of oppression. Specifically, patriarchy, toxic masculinity, toxic theology, racism and heteronormativity. In placing white heterosexual men in a position of almost absolute power, marginalisation or exclusion of women, queer people and black people (as the easiest and most obvious examples) is one resulting effect. As will be demonstrated below, exclusion can be overt or covert and serves to reinforce and maintain systems of oppression.

Richard Osmer's process of unpacking and better understanding the deeper context of an issue is set up in a constructive, articulate and ordered manner, ideally focused for the purposes of this research.

This allows us to delve deeper with each question, uncovering more about the issue at hand. The use of this methodology allows not just for the information to be interpreted and focused but also for potential responses to be outlined. When we examine the 'why' of what is going on, it allows an opportunity to incorporate the landscape that exists and look at possible reasons for what is happening and manage the spectrum of those answers in a response. In the South African context specifically, issues of culture, religion, patriarchy, hegemony and ideals around the binary are likely to play a strong role in this as well as in what any potential responses include. Osmer's Practical Theology is detail oriented and as such allows for a thorough and complex analysis of the information and context presented which is ideal for this work.

At first glance, there would seem to be an overlap in the Practical Theology Method and the Feminist Theory of Praxis (that works off three principles: 'See, Judge, Act'); this would suggest that there is a need for only one of the methods. Despite both having a similar or comparable framework, the driving premises and standpoints of both methodologies allows for better alignment with the fundamental aims and goals that drive this study, and, in this case, they operate better together. Richard Osmer's Practical Theology allows for a clear and detailed outline and a logical analysis of the issues, as does a Feminist Theory of Praxis. The key difference in this case is that a Feminist Theory of Praxis is specifically driven and underpinned by a focus on the marginalised and a push for gender equality. This frames the focus of the work, providing a position from which to work. The driving premises for Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis are clear and provide a position from which to operate and frame this work.

As will be outlined below, Ackermann's theory is based upon a commitment to the community one is working in, a focus on joint collaboration ensuring that the marginalised and not just those in power are given a voice, as well as a central theme of diversity of community. These features are fundamental to this work because the exclusion of the marginalised to the point where young people are vilified, bullied or self-harming for reasons beyond their own control leads to a breakdown of communities as a whole

and happens in all communities across the board in South Africa. That in itself is a unique binder in this country, so divided by race, poverty, class, culture, sex: that homophobia and bullying of those who fall outside of a heterosexual norm is the leading cause of self-harm and suicide in high school pupils.

Osmer's work is detail oriented and well suited to empirical research. Empirical research design entails four elements (Smith, 2010, 103-4):

Firstly, the purpose of the project or basic research question. This should be a brief, clear outline of what the research aims to achieve and include two or three accompanying, supplementary questions that follow on from the basic research question. There are a number of specific purposes of research and Osmer lists five, but most important work falls under the category of general research and has, as its main purpose, a focus on contributing to fundamental knowledge and theory.

The second element is the strategy of enquiry. This refers to the methodology that will be used as part of the study and looks at how the research will be laid out and the process through which it will be interpreted. Osmer looks at three potential strategies of enquiry: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodology (this methodology has become more accessible only recently as the methodologies were considered separate and distinct before). Once the methodology has been established, Osmer outlines six types of research that can fall under these methodologies. These are: narrative (a telling of stories of individuals as a study); case study: (conducting a detailed study of a small number of cases); ethnographic research: (of a cultural or social group); grounded theory: (developing a theory in relation to a specific phenomenon); phenomenological: (seeking to understand and articulate the essence of experience for an individual or a group) and, finally, advocacy research in which the researcher contributes to social change with an explicit political agenda (Smith, 2010,104).

This work will make use of a mixed methodology and falls firmly into the advocacy research category, and, as is written further on in this chapter, a focus on social change with an explicit political agenda is a requirement for both Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis and contextual discourse analysis. As such, all three methodologies support this work.

The third element is the research plan. This outlines where the work takes place, what is researched and when, framing exactly how the details for the work will fall into place. It details specific methods for gathering data, who will do that work as well as the sequence and time frame of how the work will be carried out in the proposed time frame.

The final element incorporates what is called 'metatheoretical assumptions' on the work. Osmer refers to this as 'reflexivity' and it refers to considering the work itself as well as the complexities around it (Osmer 2008, 241). Empirical research faces two challenges. The first relates to representation and factual accuracy. The nature of observation research is that the researcher is never impartial or unbiased, and as a result the results are never factual. The second challenge is around legitimation:

the criteria for legitimacy differ depending on the research and 'its guiding purpose'. Researchers need to be aware and reflect on the nature of each reality as well as on knowledge and on science.

The nature of this thesis is concerned with the lived daily realities of marginalised people and has real consequences where the underlying complexities and challenges are not addressed with the specific focus on rebuilding that community and giving a voice to those who are unheard or ignored and allow them to flourish and thrive, not simply survive. This the reason that Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis provides an additional layer of context and should be the final frame through which this work is considered.

3.3. A Feminist Theory of Praxis, Denise Ackermann

Denise Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis is encompassed by the 'see, judge, act' series of questions that is an inherently intentional social activity. This will be applied as follows:

See: as part of the 'see' process I will incorporate both existing work by other scholars that outlines the educational landscape within South Africa for context as well as materials made available to me by IAM as part of its pilot workshop in 2019, including and feedback and reflections on this. These materials will be documents as well as a questionnaire and a verbal, semi structured interview.

Judge: The 'judge' aspect of this will be to incorporate key theorists and to interpret the information available to me regarding the premise for the workshop and its preparation, as well as the reflective praxis on the workshop itself and the reflective praxis by the team that follows the workshop. In order to contextualise the 'judge' aspect appropriately the theorists form a fundamental base for understanding where South Africa is situated currently in the dialogue around sexuality and gender identity within Christian schools.

Act: The 'act' aspect will include reflections and analysis on the research and also present potential courses of action that may serve to challenge the barriers that exists. I will also outline areas that will need further support and research in order to gain a better understanding.

Ackermann's work on feminist theory of praxis articulates a focus on a deep contextualisation, followed by a consideration of relevant theory and then a focus on the impact of the context and theory combined. As a feminist scholar, and in terms of the material that will form the focus of this work, this framework will be fundamental.

Feminist theologians have defined five conditions for praxis. These conditions are accountability to the community, collaboration with others at the table, a commitment to 'lives in relation', a commitment to diversity of culture and finally, a shared commitment (Ackermann, 2006, 227).

(i)   In terms of accountability to the community: all praxis is accountable particularly to marginalised members within a community, with a focus on work that benefits and is fair to all members. It hinges on the interests of those who experience oppression and discrimination and is accountable to them.

(ii)   The work is inclusive, collaborating with others at the table and taking into account other similar aims, and with those in other disciplines so as to be contextual and intersectional, making it more far reaching.

(iii) All human experiences are subjective and lived in relation to another story which is also a lived and real experience. No person within a community lives or experiences their world in isolation. Taking all lives in relation to each other and working consciously to incorporate the notion of connectedness and the importance of that connectedness is key for a reflective praxis to work.

(iv)   The feminist premise of the reflective praxis inherently means that the minority members and marginalised individuals in a community are included: there is a commitment to the diversity of culture. Not that they are brought into the centre, or the central ideals, but that their views and experiences are included in the praxis and that the circle that holds the centre is made bigger, moving to include the minorities rather than their becoming part of the centre, as it were. Being fair, inclusive and diverse so as to not to exclude anyone who functions as part of society, regardless of how marginalised they are. Including differing ideas of culture and perspective, validating and providing spaces for the variety that exists within the spectrum of society if we are open to looking. There is no single universal application of theology and as such, diversity is fundamental for any meaningful work.

(v)   A feminist theory of praxis is strategic and action oriented, based on a shared commitment to a goal. It works to understand the issues at hand and commits to putting forward potential action steps that could shift and discourse toward a more inclusive and equal community and culture.

A central theme for the feminist theory of praxis incudes a concern about ethical issues particularly around sexuality and reproduction, violence against women and children, relationships between men and women and relationships between human beings and nature. As a framework, the focus on the importance of everyday life and human 'bodiliness' in order to overcome the dualisms that arise with individuality and community-based existence as well as 'body-soul' or 'matter-spirit' conflicts. The focus is on alleviating oppression, developing communities of endurance and hope as well as new understandings around what constitutes human suffering. The foundational principles of this praxis are sound and affirming in that only when everyone is included and our communities are inclusive, without discriminating against the individuals are we fully able to flourish and only then do we live full, rich lives

(Ackermann, 2006, 227). These premises are the framework and context for this work are the the focus of the work on sexuality and gender identity; the goal is to create an environment that is affirming and inclusive for all people within a Christian schools context, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. In a society where some are discriminated against, all members of that society are poorer for it. An additional context of intersectional feminism needs to be considered for this thesis, although it's not part of Ackermann's initial theory of praxis.

3.4.   Intersectional Feminism

Intersectional feminism as a concept evolved into mainstream conversations after a feminist theory of praxis was developed, and as such it's not included as part of Ackermann's work. It does, however, fall within the margins of what the theory hopes to achieve and its primary principles in that it looks towards becoming more inclusive for those who are marginalised, is focused on equality as well as understanding more deeply the context and relational impact of a situation, and of how important the role of intersectionality is. In a South African context specifically, as mentioned in the introduction, intersectionality is fundamental to a fuller understanding of the complexities at play within a given situation as a result of factors including heteronormativity, patriarchy, homophobia, and religious conservatism, amongst others. Very few people share a spectrum of experiences within this country and the presence of race, economic, patriarchal, cultural and religious factors plays a huge part of this. As such, I would like to include the principles and proposals specifically related to gender that form part of intersectional feminism.

Tolbert (2000, 101-103) articulates the underlying premises for intersectional feminism and three proposed alternatives to the conventional postmodernist understanding of gender.

The first proposal is to move away from the binary gender construction. The fluidity and diversity that accompanies gender construction not only between time frames or societies but even within societies indicates that there are a number of possible variations on the way we understand gender. For example, it's self-evident that to be a woman in Ancient Greek or Roman times is very different to what it means to be a woman now. It's also true that to be a woman in North Korea today is likely to be a different experience from that of a woman in North America, and then different again if you are a woman in rural South Africa.

If you take this further and assume that being a white woman in North America is a different experience to that of a Hispanic woman in North America, the possibilities for variation in experience become a little clearer. If you're a woman who lives in rural South Africa, your life will be very different if, for example, you are the young wife of the Zulu king or are a middle aged unmarried lesbian woman. Even within a single society, the lived reality of being 'a woman' can be vastly different. It's in that vein that the single, binary notions of gender is proposed to be replaced with a more fluid, experiential idea of exactly what 'gender' entails.

The second proposal builds on the non-binary ideal and moves into understanding the importance of transforming, fluid experiences as well as coalitions between people specifically for the purpose of feminist politics. Fuss's 'Essentially Speaking' is fundamental for this, as she argues that we should interpret the word 'woman' not as a specific gender identifier, but as a reference to a position within a hierarchy (Fuss, 2013, 12-19). It assumes that the position is fluid and dependent on a spectrum of intersectional factors rather than being prescriptive about what that relationship within the hierarchy looks like. As such, it's a political position, a position in a power hierarchy, and is as fluid and situation dependent as politics and power are. So, even if your experiences as a Hispanic American woman differ greatly from that of a white American woman, it remains possible that we could find areas of shared experience or sentiment on something or on some point. Because of the political, power and fluidity factors, what may work as a coalition today may not work tomorrow. Crucial in this second proposal is the fluidity of what it means to be considered a 'woman'.

Repeatedly, people who have sought to better understand gender and feminism or women in particular using identifiers or aspects that are present in the lives of all women have failed. Despite the existence of shared empathy between women, outlining clearly what connects 'all' women has proved to be complicated, if not impossible. As a result, one of the ways we can understand what binds women is by leveraging the concept of coalitions.

The third proposal builds on the second: the premise that coalitions are formed by groups of people who have a shared need for a particular period of time and fall away once that need has ceased to exist. These people do not need to have a continuum of shared values or experiences for an unnatural period of time.

The power and role of coalitions is important in the discussion around understanding gender. While these proposals are looking to destabilize and challenge conventionally understood notions of gender, we must bear in mind the aspects that bind people. It's in group activism and connection that change happens and it's one of the ways we are most likely to 'make the circle bigger' as it were and include more people as part of a movement or group.

One way to consider this is through Sartre's 'Groups and Series' concept (Tolbert, 2000, 201-103). This is illustrated by a number of commuters waiting for a bus. If asked, they would be unlikely to identify with each other in any way other than 'we are commuters' and, as a result, they are considered to be a series. They identify themselves as individuals rather than identifying with each other, despite their common goal (in this case, to catch a bus). If the bus is delayed and does not arrive, it's possible, perhaps likely, that the commuters will band together and form a group. They will all identify similarly as 'delayed commuters' with a common goal, venting frustrations, discussing options available to them, a strategy and possibly assigning a person to go and contact the bus company to find out more information. In this instance, the series becomes a group. They're able to act constructively as a group

and share their joint experiences, ideas, possible solutions, concerns or frustrations. In a similar way, if we understand that the idea of 'women' is intersectional as well as fluid and transforming, it's possible to understand that groups will band together for specific purposes (for example, political activism around unequal pay or unequal treatment) even if all of their experiences of being a 'woman' are not shared. Even if their backgrounds and lives are extremely different, it remains possible that there are some shared experiences which can be leveraged to create a group for a period of time.

The creation of a group depends on self-identification, which is pivotal. In the bus example, the commuters *choose* to use that as their connection to others. In terms of intersectional feminism or when discussing what determines a 'woman', the same principle applies. Some women may choose to identify as mothers, black women, providers or lesbians and choose to identify as part of that 'group' rather than that of women. As such, the concept of coalitions that work for periods of time is key in that it allows for fluidity as well as the intersection of a spectrum of identifiers without necessarily negating the others.

3.5. Contextual Discourse Analysis

A contextual analysis outlining the intersecting factors contributing to the core issues is vital to situate this discussion in terms of the landscape and the key influences. Contextual Discourse Analysis (CDA) is focused on the role of discourse in the reproduction and challenging of dominance, working off the premise that power and dominance of groups are measured by their control over access to discourse (creating, generating, establishing and overturning the discourse) (van Dijk, 1993, 249). This methodology considers and examines how discourse creates, enforces and challenges existing social structures of hierarchy. This work will examine how language and contextual factors influence structures of hierarchy and hegemony that lead to oppression or exclusion specifically of young people in a South African Christian school environment when they are queer or assumed to be queer.

Dominance is generally understood to be the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups that results in social inequality including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality (van Dijk, 1993, 150). The exercise of power, or of dominance, can be used in such a way that the oppressed come to accept these ideas and act in accordance with the beliefs of the oppressor of their own free will and in this instance, that shared and accepted mind set becomes known as hegemony (Hall, Lumley, and McLennan, 1977, 48). These notions of power do not always function in a single or set way but can take a spectrum of shapes and 'modes of discourse'. Power is generally understood to involve the control of one group over another and the major function of discourse is precisely to manufacture consensus, acceptance and legitimacy of dominance (van Dijk, 1993, 244-255).

Two of the key methods of controlling power are to control context (van Dijk, 1993, 256-258), for example, not allowing those who are not in power specific access to platforms, meetings, information. I consider the two ways to be the 'overt' way and the 'covert' way. The obvious example of the overt

way is South Africa's apartheid regime in which black people were legally not granted access to a number of spaces and were forced to use a different entrance or set of facilities to white people, physically excluding them from that space. There are more intrinsic ways of doing this, which involve looking at context as well as spoken words ('text') around these issues. The 'covert' way of controlling power is, for example, not telling people about meetings that they should be attending, not including them in invitations or otherwise excluding them from arenas they would, under different circumstances, have access to. A visual example of what the 'overt' method looks like is the image below, taken in South Africa during the apartheid era. Two women looking after a young child sit on the ground, alongside a bench that may well have been a far preferable place to sit, because the bench was for white people only and excluded them. The child, white, plays near and around the bench.

(The World's Children's Prize, n.d.)

The second, 'covert' way of shutting people out is more passive and insidious and follows on from the first. If you are excluded from a meeting or a conference you will be less visible, 'unseen', and likely, 'unheard'. An obvious example for me is this image below, retweeted tens of thousands of times, of a panel put together by CNN in 2017 to discuss the 'Women's March':

This panel is ostensibly put together to discuss the 'Women's March', a movement aimed at raising awareness of gender inequality and of issues faced by women in the United States in a patriarchal society that substantially disadvantages women, particularly women of colour. The entire panel bar one is constructed of men. Accordingly, the opportunity to hear the perspective of women regarding their focus around the movements, interests or challenges faced is almost nil. It's a prime example of access being passively blocked. In this panel (manel?), women are not adequately represented, will be barely quoted (and a single source at that), almost unheard and any potential for a gender balanced perspective is removed here. The passive exclusion of parts of a society is not only reflected in a popular news conversation but applies widely across a range of platforms. When that lack of representation is reflected in medical research, policy creation, thought leading groups or other areas, the impact has been shown to be far reaching, as was outlined in the introduction chapter. Without the input and impact in a spectrum of ways of those with a different perspective, interests or values, it's easy to forget that they exist and are an equal and important part of society. Additionally, it becomes very easy to create an environment suited to one specific group of individuals, often at the cost of the others.

It is in this light that the research will be considered, particularly in the case of IAM. Specifically, for IAM's workshop and approach, the research and findings will be divided into three components. Firstly, IAM's method, its key drivers, ethos, positionality and motivation as an organisation will be identified and how this informs its workshops. Secondly, the organisation's process in designing workshops at varying institutions while being mindful of its self-identified method will be interrogated. Thirdly, its process and work in order to illustrate the complexities within the landscape around sexuality and gender identity dialogue at single gendered Christian schools will be considered. A perspective of the contextual landscape of the educational sector in South Africa as well as overarching themes including the binary, patriarchy, hegemony, homophobia, heteronormativity will be included in the consideration

as these all hugely influence the dynamics at play both in day to day life and within a learning environment.

In order to obtain the information for this research, two datasets will be used: organisational material supplied by IAM, related to its method and practice and interviews conducted with the workshop team.

> (i)   Organisational materials

The data set will comprise of information provided by and requested from IAM – these will include manuals, learning packs, online resources, CD's, theories and exercises. Information provided by IAM that details its own process and background as well as materials it has developed for this process so as to outline its positionality and desired outcomes will be incorporated. These will be discussed and articulated, framed by a focus on Osmer's Theory of Practical theology as well as Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis.

> (ii)   Semi-structured interviews using a questionnaire

The interview schedule for this section of the methodology includes verbal semi structured interviews with the IAM team (3 people) who are responsible for creating and conducting the workshops using a questionnaire as the template for the questions in the interview. A questionnaire was used as a basic structure for the interview, with questions for each team member (see Appendix 2). The questions incorporate their method and format as well as pre-planning, workshop and reflections on these. (Appendix 1 to this work deals with consent, Appendix 2 with the questionnaire, Appendix 3 with informed consent and Appendix 4 with the gatekeeper approval from IAM).

All relevant data that emerges from the above has been included and detailed and will form part of a thematic analysis to be completed after all the research has been completed. This thematic analysis and other information will be used to develop the outcome and conclusion.

3.6.   Connecting the Dots

The process outlined by Richard Osmer in Practical Theology and the feminist theory of praxis articulated by Denise Ackermann are the lenses for interpretation, encompassing work that has been subject to CDA. As a visual representation, CDA is the central core of the research, encompassed by Richard Osmer's Practical Theology, and the whole framework is supported by a feminist theory of praxis.
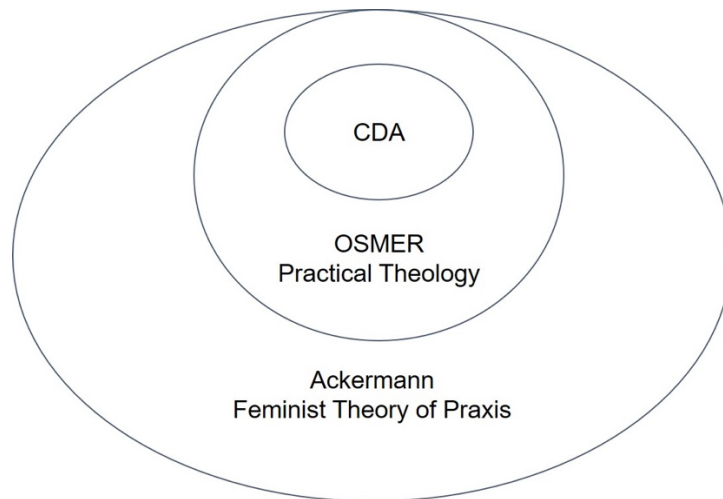
The research methods for this function with CDA as the central source of information and analysis, followed by the lens of practical theology to examine and unpack the wider implications of the research and to ask relevant questions of it, couched in Ackermann's feminist Theory of Praxis which contextualises the research and findings in the South African Christian education landscape, incorporating the nuances of those who are marginalised, complexities that accompany 'bodiliness' as well as communities, culture, patriarchy and heteronormativity and a focus on inclusivity and a disruption of the power narrative as a gateway to flourishing and living rather than existence.

4.   INFORMATION AND DATA

4.1.   Introduction

For the next section, information has been obtained in four ways: participation in an IAM workshop as part of a MTh in Gender, Health and Religion course, observation of the pilot workshop at a Christian school in 2019, observation and participation in the reflective praxis and semi structured interviews based on a questionnaire with the team who conduct workshops for IAM. The methodology as outlined in the previous chapter will frame and focus the data analysis, particularly the principles underlying a feminist theory of praxis. These include a focus on the marginalised and an ideological perspective. In response to Richard Osmer's question concerning 'what ought to be going on', this section will outline the basis and background that shapes work conducted by the faith based organisation, IAM, that seeks to create an inclusive and affirming space for queer people within faith communities. Taking into consideration interventions in the mainstream school environment that have taken place to address the vulnerabilities, marginalisation and stigma that young queer people face particularly in a school environment, specific attention will now be paid to the faith sector. Religion is one of the areas that has not been specifically addressed within schools despite its powerful influence over both educators and pupils as well as its role in justifying exclusionary practices, reinforcing heteronormative ideals and toxic masculinities.

With regard to Osmer's four questions: 'what is going on?' has been demonstrated earlier within this work when outlining the challenges faced by queer school learners. Extensive work has been done to articulate the specific difficulties faced by queer learners in South Africa. Queer learners globally are subject to stigma and are more likely to self-harm or attempt suicide, but the complex web within South Africa that includes systemic cultural, religious, societal, economic, patriarchal and masculinity confluences mean that queer learners in South Africa face specific and complicated challenges that remain largely unchallenged by the education system or the educators themselves. Challenges that exist within society as a whole - and include sexual harassment, assault, murder or those that seem comparatively benign such as exclusion, bullying or a lack of adequate language (something as simple as words to describe oneself that are not derogatory) - are magnified in a school environment, making schools a breeding ground for toxic, harmful behaviours.

'Why is it going on?' has been detailed in the literature review and includes complexities around religious, cultural, power related, economic, heteronormative and systemic patriarchy. Pupils who are perceived by others to fall outside of the heteronormative ideals or who identify themselves as queer (whether this is a public or purely personal self-identification) are more likely to experience bullying, harassment or assault as a result of stigma perpetrated because of systemic cultural ideals, power dynamics, heteronormative and patriarchal ideals. They are also more likely to self-harm or to attempt suicide. In a society dominated by a heteronormative overtone, falling outside of that specific heteronormative ideal can be complicated and dangerous for school learners. South Africa's patriarchal legacy (broadly) consists of a masculinity with fairly structured ideals of strength, virility, sexual

conquest, a specific emotional vocabulary, household and family responsibility. Women are not exempt from this, expected to fulfil specific roles within society and the home as well as behavioural norms that can and do include physical mannerisms and appearance. In some cases, wearing trousers is considered 'unladylike' as trousers are specifically 'for men'. (Msibi, 2012, 526). Women are most often the subject of gender-based violence and as such, many behaviours are modified so as to diminish the likelihood of such violence or to appear to be more in line with the 'female ideal'. As such, women who are overt outliers (i.e. those who are overtly gay or disregard specific behaviour ideals) are more likely to receive negative attention or to be harassed or bullied, frequently out of fear of challenging the norm as a result of patriarchal power dynamics being enforced in combination with ideals of masculinity. Culture, religion, race and economic position have powerful influences on behaviour within South Africa and as a result of being underpinned by systemic heteronormativity and patriarchy frequently display as aggressive or damaging displays of power.

At the extreme, examples of power displays in South Africa include murder and what is known as 'corrective rape'. Men rape women who have come out as gay or who are deviating from the accepted norm (this can include dressing in a way that is deemed masculine or something as innocuous as rejecting the advances of a man) to 'make them straight' or to 'cure them'. Often, other forms of physical violence, battery or murder accompany rape. Cases such as Eudy Simelane, the openly lesbian footballer who played for and was a star in women's national team and came from a township called KwaThema are well known, but corrective rape is both prominent and pervasive. It's not limited to those names we are familiar with and the stories that make the news headlines. With one of the highest rates of rape in the world, women across the country are hugely aware that a perceived slight or deviation from accepted norms of behaviour can result in extreme physical abuse. Corrective rape is pervasive, deeply entrenched in a culture where masculinity and heteronormativity retain a powerful hold on society. It's just one of the myriad reasons a woman can be in danger of assault or rape. A patriarchal system that places women in a position far below that of men on the value scale means that despite a series of protests that gained traction toward the end of 2019 (prompted by the rape and murder of a student at a post office in Cape Town, Uyinene Mrwetyana), systemic abuse, assault, rape and murder remain a feature in a country where these 'demonstrations of power' form part of what defines a successful masculinity.

'What ought to be going on?' is the next question. Based on the first two questions in this theory, examining what the challenges are (what is going on) and why they exist, what ought to be going on is one of the drivers behind this work. This is also informed by Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis: the five premises for the praxis give an indication of the direction for focus in terms of what should be happening (community accountability, collaboration, lives considered in relation, diversity of cultures and a shared commitment). Inequality, exclusion, stigma and injustice shape the reality of what is happening. Conservative Christian interpretations of scripture and the positions of many churches enforce and sustain norms or perspectives, upholding inequalities. Conservative churches and conservative perspectives also support societal or cultural norms, even if they're not directly attributed

to faith through the web of intersectionality. These interpretations and positions contribute heavily to upholding the existing systems, and while the 'toxic' interpretations of theology that go against an inclusive, affirming society remain in place, dismantling these structures remains challenging.

For this work, 'what ought to be going on' is inclusivity, affirmation and the opportunity for all members of society to be treated equally and with compassion, regardless of sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity, within the bounds of those that do no harm to others.[4] For people to be treated with dignity and be able to participate within communities of care and to be accepted for who they are, able to express and develop fully into the most authentic version of themselves, free from the constraints of ideologies that result in physical and mental harm. Societies are enriched when all individuals are able to flourish and to fully express themselves without fear, participating as equals within their community.

IAM seeks to address this through its work, focusing on working within communities that are not inclusive and that face substantial challenges where justice and equality are concerned in terms of sexuality and gender identity diversity. Faith communities are particularly vulnerable to the complexities outlined above, and more so because of ideals based on interpretations of religion or of scripture, and IAM sees this as a powerful area for transformation:

> *'Faith plays a huge role on this continent and faith leaders are very powerful in shaping people's beliefs, their identities…so, if faith leaders, all faith leaders, not just Christian…were to start talking diversity... More black lesbians would live, less countries on the continent would criminalise being homosexual. Faith is key because they hold a lot of power when it comes to influencing governments – and they are not always clergy. Sometimes they are just powerful individuals in churches.' IAM South Africa Programme Manager*

What motivates facilitators may not be simply disruption or transformation. For them, this work is real, with visible and tangible roots and consequences:

> *'My responsibility is to those who are not there. When I go in there, I remember those bodies that are brutally killed, cut up, thrown into a dustbin and discarded. Those are the images that I see when I walk into that space…I ask the question, what should the world ought to be? The question of justice. So it's a fine difficult balance…and it is always, always, as an activist to say to heteronormativity and homophobia, sorry but you will not have the last voice.' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 1*

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[4] Obviously, sexual orientations that veer into challenging and harmful practices such as pedophilia or bestiality are in no way included in this. These orientations and sexuality refer only to consensual, adult relationships where all participants have their own agency.

Destabilising heteronormativity and homophobia is a substantial aspect of the work that IAM does, and it works on three key areas to achieve this, firstly by forming relationships with those who hold power and generating change agents in churches and faith communities, secondly by conducting workshops within faith communities and thirdly by offering alternative, contextual interpretations of scripture to these communities in order to generate conversations and thought processes that can act as a catalyst within a faith space. This information is available online as part of their 'Wheel of Change' focus and emerged through the interview process with the programme directors.

Up until 2019, IAM's work was focused specifically on faith-based organisations and communities, working within them to create an environment more accessible and hospitable for people who identify as queer. As is evident in work by Butler and Astbury (2005), Francis and Msibi (2011), and Msibi (2012), Christian faith communities can be complex and complicated spaces for queer people. Within Christian schools, the barriers remain and are further emphasised by additional complexities of culture, teacher reticence or discomfort (Zembylas, 2005, Richardson, 2008, 67, Reygan and Francis, 2015, 108, Msibi, 2012, 524 and 527) as well as pressure from communities or parents (Msibi 2012, 527, Francis, 2011, 320). Extensive attention has been paid to Life Orientation and Sex Education within schools, often overlooking the weight and power of religion in perpetuating ideals of masculinity, driving homophobia and offering a catch-all or an excuse for exclusionary, derogative behaviour that is extremely damaging for those on the receiving end of it. Race, class and culture have all been under the microscope in a 'new South Africa', forcing society to consider how they speak and the language they use, evaluate their decisions and prejudices and reshaping school environments. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the role of religion. Taking into consideration that StatsSA calculated almost 70% of South Africans are of Christian faith (Schoeman, 2017, 73), including Christianity when considering the drivers of behaviours including homophobia, stigma, patriarchy that exist across the board within South Africa regardless of colour, class, location or economic status is vital. IAM is aware of this as well as of the long-term ramifications of these complexities within Christian schools when pupils leave and become members of society. This forms one of the considerations in the decision to expand its work into a schools environment:

> 'When the discourse is heteronormative, so heteronormativity will employ all the means necessary to enforce the dominant narrative. At many times these Christian schools are private schools, and that is where the web of power, and institution and discourse and discursive practice then perpetuates, because at many times these people become the captains of industry, social and political and economic opinion makers, and the hidden social discourse and discursive practices become embedded in our life systems.' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 1

In the light of the ongoing challenges and resulting damage to queer learners both in school and outside of it, IAM will begin work within Christian schools and address these challenges in 2020. Ahead of this,

it conducted a pilot workshop within a Christian school as part of its process, aimed at better understanding and better serving the specific needs of a school during 2019.

For the purposes of this work, I attended a workshop hosted by IAM as a participant, observed its pilot workshop at a Christian school as well as staffers' reflective praxis after the workshop, and also conducted interviews with the team who create/curate and host the workshops themselves. Information on IAM in this chapter comes from these sources as well as from the organisation's website, and an essay written by the South African Programme Manager and Professor Charlene Van der Walt in 2019 (Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 95-111).

Resources were analysed using the CDA method. CDA is focused

> "…on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination". (van Dijk, 2001, 96)

Power abuse and domination correlated to language and power, two of the key issues that are discussed here. In analysing the research materials from IAM as well as the interviews, the context of IAM's work and the landscape is fundamental. The role of language and of that of power is front of mind for all the materials for analysis, and structures of power, whether overt or covert as considered throughout the analysis. Wording and phrasing is important in understanding the context for materials as well as the dynamics that shape the systems that we are interrogating. Having outlined the power structures and dynamics that are at play within South Africa, this is considered to be the context for all the materials used as part of the research.

Before analysing IAM's (upcoming or pilot) work within schools or communities, the drivers, principles and motivations that underpin and inform IAM and their processes as well as the resources available to them and made available by them will be outlined. As has been demonstrated, the complexities in the landscape are difficult to unravel and doing so effectively is not a linear or a simple process. Accordingly, not all the resources would work in all situations and a 'fix all' solution is unlikely. However, IAM has been working in this field for over 20 years and as such is an organisation well versed in the complexities facing sexuality and gender identity inclusion.

Comprised of a team of eight, broken down into five women and three men, the team is racially diverse, diverse in sexual orientation and come from a range of backgrounds. Some members are ordained ministers, practicing ministers, activists, some are human rights advocates. Some are a combination of all these. The vision is 'of faith communities in Africa that are welcoming and affirming; where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people can participate fully and be strengthened in their spiritual, psychological and sexual identity as human beings'. (IAM, 2019). IAM works towards this vision through programmes that support and empower the LGBTQI+ community, parents, family and friends and people living with HIV and AIDS to stimulate dialogue in building welcoming, affirming and inclusive faith communities.

IAM focuses on three main programmes for their work, including transforming denominations, LGBTI/PFF transformation and empowerment and African regional partnerships. In order to transform denominations, IAM works closely with the leadership and the congregations of certain South African denominations, encouraging movement towards an environment that is both inclusive and affirming of sexual diversity, gender identities and those living with HIV (this has not been covered in this work but those who are HIV positive are frequently exposed to the web of stigma not dissimilar to those whose sexual orientation or gender identity falls outside of the heteronormative). As part of this programme, IAM also works with incoming or next generation church leaders to create awareness and demand for inclusion and transformation within the churches themselves.

The second programme that IAM focuses on is to actively support and aid development of LGBTQI+ people, including those who are living with HIV, working to enable them to assert themselves and embrace a range of diversity in a spectrum of contexts based on the integration of their faith and an understanding of their own and others' diversity.

The third focus in terms of progress concerns partners across Africa. IAM is aware that the contextual complexities that exist within South Africa may be particular to this country in some cases, but that identical complexities exist across South Africa's borders. IAM seeks to create partnerships and allies across the continent to create a support and solidarity network, increasing the visibility and legitimacy of local movements for LGBTI members of communities as well as those living with HIV. Partners make use of some of IAM's materials including its Wheel of Change methodology that includes sharing of life stories, contextual Bible studies and dialogue focused on generating inclusion and embracing diversity, taking into account the contexts of each country. IAM works with partners both through trainings and workshops and indirectly by supporting the implementation of change methodologies with their partners.

As part of this research, the team who conduct the workshops for IAM agreed to a semi structured interview process designed to outline how they construct, create and conduct their workshops as well as what the key drivers of transformation are. For the purposes of the interview, the focus was specifically on the pilot workshop conducted at a single gendered Christian school but included context from IAM's work within faith communities. A copy of this questionnaire is attached as part of this work and transcripts or audio recordings of the interviews are also available. Reflections from the interviews are included in this chapter.

4.2.   Workshop Structure

IAM conduct workshops only in instances where it is invited. It tends to be invited to address a specific, outlined set of challenges where the institution (a faith community or a school) deems its process and experience to be a valuable tool in addressing their complexities. Invitations usually follow substantial time invested in relationship building with the brokers of power within an institution, which is why part

of IAM's work is structured around building relationships and partnerships. It engages with steps that have already been taken by an organisation to begin transformation (even if it's not specifically related to sexuality or gender identity) as well as the areas that are emerging as challenges for an organisation. As part of the workshop itself, facilitators urge participants to articulate what they would like to take away from the workshop using post-it notes placed on a board in the room, and consider and reflect on those notes throughout the workshop, adding and amending the contents of the workshop to work with the organisation and its specific needs.

IAM's work is focused on transforming faith communities, and its praxis is informed by this. Following each workshop, the team reflects on this as well as the workshop itself, working towards better unpacking the complexities that exist in their environment and their tools for addressing it. This analysis of the complexities and the potential tools available informs the praxis of the workshop almost in its entirety.

Workshops last around four days and consists of intensive workshopping for the organisation, with a limited number of people in a single room. The numbers are limited to ensure that all people within the workshop have the space to speak and to be heard and to ensure that the complexities within the space can be managed with adequate attention in the time frame available. The workshop is laid out with chairs facing the centre of the room without any barriers such as desks or podiums present, and note taking is not encouraged to make sure that participants remain engaged and there are reduced physical barriers, creating a vulnerable, open space that feels enclosed.

As important as the room set up itself, is the presence and focus of liturgical symbols so as to retain the focus on the space as a liturgical one at its core. Two Christian symbols are used in this space: a light (often a candle that is lit and remains alight through the workshop) and a cross symbol. These are deeply symbolic within the Christian faith and designed to deepen the focus on theological reflection within the workshop. Workshops culminate with the symbols of bread and wine as a physical symbolism of the sharing of each other's experiences (often sharing in what are bodily, physical experiences for those in the group) and that the group will continue to journey forward in an embodied way.

The first step in the process of the workshop, focused on 'opening minds' is premised with the creation of a space that is safe or 'brave' and is perceived by participants to be non-threatening for all. IAM conducts a series of exercises in order to make that space happen before moving into awareness of diversity itself. Some of the exercises are outlined below. IAM tailors and creates each workshop specifically and refers to its skillset as a 'toolbox'. Specific tools, exercises or sessions will be used for different sections of people and the below list is not intended as a holistic guide to every exercise IAM does at all workshops, purely as an illustration of their process in the workshop. After the exercises are completed and participants are seated again, they are asked to reflect out loud honestly on their answers, thoughts and experiences with the proviso that the environment is a non-judgemental one.

Exercises include (This information is available online and was also part of the workshop I participated in, observed and questions on the exercises themselves was included in the interviews with the programme directors) :

Taxi-Taxi: Participants randomly group themselves into subgroups of three to four people each. The premise is that this group could be people waiting together in a queue for a taxi, and they are given a question or a statement and asked to discuss amongst themselves. Questions could include 'what if God was a black lesbian?', or 'The local female Sunday school teacher has just announced that she is in a relationship with a wife and mother who also attends the church, who will separate from her husband. What do you think?' or 'A friend arrives at your son's fifth birthday with a life size newly born baby doll for him, what is your response?' or 'You are at Home Affairs and the woman next to you, who has a small baby, exposes her breast in public to feed her child. What is your response?'

Groups will discuss for a few minutes before being asked to form another group with people they haven't partnered with and discuss a new question. This is usually three to five questions per game. This approach, encouraging an open discussion, immediately reveals areas and spaces of contention. Individuals shy away from expressing opinion in some cases, and in others, some feel overly confident in sharing a view, assuming it will be shared or viewing it as a singular truth. These discussions can quickly heat up and become contentious: the language used can be difficult and in some cases, views are difficult to express because of an inadequacy of available language. Because this exercise is treated as a game, it moves on quickly and the participants tend to be able to treat the matter in a light hearted manner, even if they are complex issues and are felt deeply.

Knee to knee: Participants divide into pairs (ideally someone who isn't their friend within the space) and sit facing each other with knees touching. They are asked to stare into each other's eyes for a few minutes without looking away. They are then asked to communicate a series of messages of their choice using only their eyes, mouth, facial expressions or hands at any one time. In the reflection that follows, what those messages were intended to be as well as how they were perceived is discussed, and the experience of the sustained eye contact, which can be extremely emotional for some. In some cases, people respond by feeling deeply 'seen' for the first time in a world where they articulate that the focus mainly on 'seeing' and 'looking outward' or 'being looked at' rather than 'being seen'. The complexities around intent, communication, perception and being seen frequently emerge from this exercise.

The importance of this experience, of 'being seen' for who you are, proves to be invaluable in this workshop. Participants appear to 'soften' and to develop an almost immediate capacity for increased empathy, both for themselves and for each other. In situations where participants are aware that their partner (for the exercise) doesn't share their views or where they have an already existing area of disagreement, that tension seems to dissipate and the ability of participants to simply 'see' each other is a powerful driver of connection even amidst established and often complex differences.

Drawing: In this 'Pictionary-esque' exercise, participants are grouped with people sitting near them, given a sheet of paper and some pens and tasked with creating a drawing together. Each group is given a different word to draw, and the word is known only to that group. Once the drawings are complete, each drawing is presented to the workshop group who have to provide the word that was given to that group. Words like 'sangoma', 'lesbian', 'church musician', 'trans man' are used. In the discussion that follows, many stereotypes and ideals are discussed and begin to become clear to the group for what they are: stereotypes rather than a reality.

This exercise provides a profound and quickly obvious example of the power and the limitations of language. How words are interpreted by different people as well as the stigma and prejudice that we internalise about certain people or words. It provides an insight into the complexity that our ideas can often overlook and into the importance of how we use language, being mindful not just of the meaning of words but also their nuance and connotations. In this exercise, again, the inadequacy of language becomes apparent in the discussions around different people and what we expect them to embody or look like and what messages those expectations hold.

Once the dialogue around stereotypes and perception as well as individual thoughts and positions becomes clearer, each individual within the group is asked to move their seat to anywhere they choose within the room or space. They are instructed to be mindful of their position and to consider their space as a place from 'where they will speak' and 'from where they will hear'. This is an opportunity, along with placing oneself on the wheel of change that begins to prod thoughts around positionality for each individual. It's a well timed exercise, as participants are increasingly mindful both of their own positions (ideological and physical) as well as the role and effect of that positionality and how they form part of a group rather than act as a single agent. Participants, once they are in place, are asked to reflect and share the story connected to two questions:

'When was the first time that you realised you were attracted to someone?'
'How did the church help you to discover/explore your sexuality?'

The reflections in this exercise range from being amusing and funny to extremely personal and painful for some and it's often the point at which minds begin to open and the humanity or the lived, embodied realities of the others in the space become alive for the group. It requires bravery and trust to tell your story if it's something that is painful or is likely to cause offence or uproar because it's not 'the norm'. The work that has come before this forms the groundwork for understanding different experiences, and the shift into different experiences being personal experiences is important.

Once these 'groundwork' exercises are complete, there are two cornerstone elements of a workshop that helps to shape and shift participants. These are designed to incorporate the multiplicity of experience, using the existing co-created shared space to take people to areas they may be unfamiliar

with and to begin to really engage with the safe space in terms of the dialogue that is to take shape: both in the sense of being respectful of it and in the sense of being free to actively use the safe space to speak out.

The first exercise is the 'Binary Box' or 'Sexuality Grid' and generates a broad conversation around sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and sexual practice. A grid is drawn up for participants with a word in each quadrant: sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and sexual practice. Participants are asked to fill in words that fall into each category and discuss among themselves what each word means, either in groups or as a whole. For example, this grid will entail a distinction between sex and sexual practise as well as sexual orientation and gender identity, complex and complicated definitions for many. An image of the grid is below:

Sex (biology)	Gender Identity (social construction)
- Man - Woman - Intersex	- Masculine - Feminine - Androgyny - Transgender - Transsexual - Trans-man - Trans-woman
Sexual Orientation (attraction/love)	Sexual Practice
- Lesbian - Gay - Bisexual - Asexual - Pansexual - Heterosexual - Queer	- Sexual penetration as an example - Oral sex as an example

(Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 104)

Often, it becomes evident that in faith communities many people who fall outside of binary ideals have been excluded from discussions around sexuality and their bodily experiences ignored. In most faith communities, no conversation on sexuality is taking place. (Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 105).

This discussion, with the guidance of the IAM team, allows for the interrogation of dominant ideas around the words in the grid and leads to a greater appreciation of the nuance and complexities of these as well as deeper, more reflective conversations within the workshop based on the inclusion of the bodily and lived experience of those who might have been previously ignored. For many, they access language that they didn't know existed to articulate aspects of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity. In cases where words are used that are derogatory or are used as 'slang', they are unpacked, discussed, their roots, meanings, usage, implication and in some cases, abuse, are interrogated. This exercise is built on the foundation of the exercises that have gone before it and depends on the self awareness and vulnerability and empathy that has been generated in the exercises before it. Often, this exercise is painful for many and generates many feelings of shame: people are embarrassed to talk about the words that are going into the columns or uncertain about their meanings. The discussions

around these are often informative but can be complicated and the theme of stigma or shame, particularly seen through a Christian lens, is recurrent. The toxic and often singular interpretations of theology and scripture become a strong theme in this discussion, with many of the words or acts deemed to be 'wrong' or 'against what the Bible says'. Strong themes around the language that we use and how we use it as well as how we understand it, and the interpretation and role of scripture and Christianity become clear.

The second cornerstone exercise within the workshop is a contextual bible study within the workshop. The Bible 'plays a prominent and important role in the negotiation of ethical issues... It is evident in conversation in both the church and the public spaces that are occupied by people for whom the Bible is a primary source of ethical reflection.' (Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 105-106) As such, texts from the Bible and their interpretation form an important element of a workshop focused on inclusion and on delegitimising stigma or prejudice that is often attributed to interpretations of scripture.

> 'Contextual reflection of "ordinary readers" and insisting on the epistemological privilege of the poor as described by Gerald West and others have a long and powerful history. Readers always bring their context to the text through the questions and concerns that inform their interpretation. Our contexts, therefore, always shape our reading practice. Contextual Bible Study provides readers "access to unfamiliar texts" that are historically "suppressed by their church traditions", but have to remain part of the reading and interpretive world of biblical scholars. It also provides access to "unfamiliar literary units" in texts that are otherwise familiar. Lastly, if 'provides ways of reading familiar texts in unfamiliar ways.' (Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 106)

The contextual bible study challenges traditional readings of texts and offers new interpretations or understandings of texts. It offers participants the opportunity to consider the context of those who wrote and interpreted the texts as well as the time that the texts came into being, and whether the texts would be different, even with the same sequence of events, in a different context or with a different interpretation.

A frequent point of resistance from the faith community to sexuality and gender identity diversity is that 'the Bible says so' and in a safe space, the opportunity to reimagine or challenge understandings about texts opens up a dialogue as well as generating a space for those who may not have been seen or heard with a conventional understanding. The use of the Bible study is integral within a faith community and is as important as maintaining the space as a liturgical one. The maintenance of the space as fundamentally faith focused throughout offers a safe grounding for people to test and challenge their beliefs. The contextual bible study is not without its own challenges and is a complex, complicated aspect of the workshop that is frequently contentious for participants. It does, however, offer an opportunity to see a connection between the open mind experience with real, embodied experiences

that formed the start of the workshop and the faith that is often the barrier to living that as part of a faithful, Christian life.

Once the bread and the wine, embodied closing ceremony of the workshop is completed, the IAM facilitating team debriefs those who invited them and follow that up with their own reflective praxis both as a group and individually.

Debriefs take shape both formally and informally in that there is specific working time allocated to the process and in that the facilitators debrief over a meal in the evening after a workshop, sharing experiences and reflections on what was successful and areas that may have been more challenging. The team leader writes a formal debriefing after each workshop, articulating the difficulties or areas of improvement or barriers to entry as well as areas that were successful. Workshops are conducted not once but are relationship based and they are viewed as continuous learning processes, with participants not moving in a linear fashion and potentially benefiting from the experience of a change agent in their environment or through other means that may eventually shift the discourse rather than from the once off workshop. Change agents within spaces are fundamental, and as the South African Programme Manager puts it:

> *'We are eight staff members, it's impossible and we'd have Messiah complexes if we though that we could get everyone, that we could change everyone…So, we just open up the spaces and our whole thing is to offer language to those change agents, so that change agents are able to say if there is a different way to read the text, there is a different way to do this. I am not there to try to convince people, I am simply the facilitator.'*

In addition to the workshops, a spectrum of resources are available, including videos, written testimonials from LBGTQI+ members of faith communities, interpretations of biblical texts, guides to conducting contextual Bible studies, amongst others. These all represent aspects of transformation that come to life within a workshop and form part of the set of tools that IAM use to transform a community. As will be outlined below, the workshop structure is specifically laid out and consists of specific tools and exercises designed to provoke certain responses. In instances where IAM is not present but change is possible within a faith community, online resources are available for use and can form a placeholder or a guide in that space.

Resources include publications, videos and church policies that are publicly available. Texts include testimonials of gay and lesbians from around the globe. These represent sexual minorities and their communities globally. Also available online is a guide for trainers who work with faith leadership to better understand sexuality and gender identity and how it's represented in sacred texts and two guides to a contextual bible study, which forms a key part of the IAM workshop as will be demonstrated below. Texts on the Bible and homosexuality, manuals of sexuality and spirituality as well as a copy of a text around the evils of patriarchy in the church, society and politics, are available. 'Slavery, homosexuality

and women: texts in context' provides further contextual Bible study analysis; the first African dialogue on Christian faith and sexuality is also available. These resources are closely tied to the content of workshops when conducted by IAM and provide a guide into what informs the foundation of how IAM structures its process of change

4.3.   The IAM Process of Change

The change process and how it's understood and implemented by IAM underpins the structure and format of its work. It is based on the 'Behaviour Wheel of Change' (Michie S, Atkins L, West R., 2014) and has been adapted by IAM to inform the drivers and structures of its work. IAM outlines its three key drivers focused on generating inclusion as 'Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors' and focuses on a detailed wheel of change to focus specifically on these areas. A visual of its wheel of change is below:

(IAM, 2019)

The diagram illustrates IAM's approach to change and the structure it uses to implement radical change in an incremental, steadfast rather than immediate way. An awareness that change takes time and is incremental as well as difficult to begin underlies its work, and it focuses not just on the work from the wheel but also on preparing teams, individuals and organisations for the work with an appreciation that what they are focusing on and aiming to achieve is difficult, complex, work that can take a prolonged period of time. The South African Programme Manager explains this as:

> 'Our work has always been relationship work. We will rather go slower, postpone a training to a workshop for a few months or a year to maintain the relationship or to first cement the relationship before we continue.' IAM South African Programme Manager

Even within the workshop itself, timing is a fundamental consideration, and the team focus on ensuring a deep, profound workshop experience rather than a linear one that fits neatly into a specific and

designed process. People respond differently and at different times, and this awareness is key to the work:

> *"We don't rush to finish whatever our training schedule is, but rather take it, go slower and deeper in order to get people at a point where they are able to understand 'what does this concept mean to me, what does, how does, how do I relate to my sexual orientation and faith and this process that is being presented to us as a methodology from IAM?'" IAM Process Co-Ordinator 2*

There is an understanding of the complexities of this work and that it can be difficult for participants to engage and that even the first step of being ready is complex. Once participants are ready for this process and can participate, the five steps outlined in the wheel of change articulate the process and the mechanisms that IAM use to generate change, aware that the process is not linear and is likely to take time, with movements towards and away from change during the process itself. There may be more workshops and some work may need to be repeated before any real transformation happens. Participants are invited to position themselves on this wheel of change during a workshop, and to re-examine and reconsider their position throughout the workshop, mindful and reflective on any shifts in positionality base on three questions: What am I feeling? What am I thinking? How have I repositioned myself? (Boonzaaier and Van der Walt, 2019, 102)

IAM articulate the five positions on the wheel as diversity awareness, dialogue in safe space, empower people, change agents and inclusive, affirming faith communities. These five positions inform the structure of the workshops as well as the content. Exercises that form part of the workshop are specifically structured to engage with participants on a specific level and are aimed at being catalysts for change in a non-confrontational, non-judgemental, easy to understand framework.

(i)   Diversity Awareness (Opening Minds)

This is part of the 'open minds' part of IAM's main driver element and is demonstrated by participants being prepared to listen and to learn. It's heavily related to language and the words used in discourse around a better understanding of diversity. Participants will be open to learning new language and words in order to better engage in the dialogue that will generate a better understanding of what diversity is.

As part of the interview process for this work and following research focused on the landscape within South Africa, the team was asked about the role of language within their work during their interviews. Responses demonstrated powerfully that aside from being the starting point, it is deeply complex for many people they work with and further complicated by aspects like a spectrum of languages to work with, negative connotations associated with known words as well as the context of the individuals present.

'We consider language quite a lot because when it comes to concepts like being gay, lesbian, being trans identified or gender non-conforming, those concepts do not…there are not one-word concepts within indigenous languages. And what is offered is normally a sentence of describing…What I do when I facilitate is that I provide or create a space where people can use their own indigenous knowledge around certain terms and concepts, because then that way we're both learning from it. So, for myself, I will bring in the terms…that are negatively loaded and use in terms of breaking down the terms, what do they mean.' Process Co-Ordinator 2, IAM

Deconstructing interpretation or meaning itself is not the single barrier within the language framework and here intersectionality through factors like geography, economics, and class as well as the constantly shifting boundaries of these becomes a complexity that must be included:

'Look, in every situation language is very different. So, even in contextual vernaculars, when there is complexity, is it urban, peri-urban or deep rural. So, those subtle nuances of vernacular are already there because it's been influenced through globalisation, through politics, through a wide variety of identity shapers…And I think that's the parameters that we live in, meaning that language never stays the same, it changes. The language adapts and changes and so forth.' Process Co-Ordinator 1, IAM

Language operates in this case as a foundation or entry for understanding not just the terms themselves but what is implied inferred or culturally or socially interred. In unpacking terms it becomes easier to begin to unravel prejudice and complexities in a more dialogue focused, objective, non-confrontational fashion.

(ii)   Dialogue in safe spaces (Opening Hearts)

IAM views dialogue in safe spaces as participants being prepared to engage actively in dialogue and co-creating safe spaces in which diverse voices, stories and experiences are heard. During the interview process, it emerged that IAM has shifted its own in-house terminology away from the notion of a 'safe space':

'We usually need to address stigma and discrimination, cultural practices, that type of thing… We usually start with, we used to call it safe spaces but now we call it brave spaces, because safe spaces are never safe when people have to really become vulnerable…Even with the team, the safety of the team is critical to us, so whenever we go into a space, we start the training with saying "this is a collaborative space". So we are all held accountable for the safety of the brave space.' IAM South African Programme Manager

In a safe or brave space, a participant is more likely to be able to be vulnerable and share individual experiences, opening up within that environment not only to the other participants within the workshop, but opening up also to the content of the workshop itself, potentially creating the environment for shifting of pre-existing ideas or feelings. Being able to experience the vulnerability and embodied, lived experience of another is one of the catalysts for change as observed by IAM facilitators:

> *'The thing is human connection. The thing is human connection but not just human connection, human connection from out of your own vulnerability. When you deconstruct power in a space and the heterosexuals are now equally vulnerable and also speaking about human sexuality and not speaking about the queers, you've got people sharing their stories.' South African Programme Manager*

Human connection and openness are challenging to achieve in a group who do not have the same ideals. Sharing and being vulnerable within a space may not always feel 'safe' and will almost always require that one gives of oneself and is 'brave'; the usage of the phrase 'brave space' is important here. Opening up in a workshop requires substantial investment on the part of an individual, as well as trust and vulnerability, but has the capacity to break down existing barriers and to really see another person:

> *'So we have audiences who are more in their heads than in their minds, where it's more… I mean people who are well read up and are around the theories, yet distance their own bodily experience and they are and how they experience the world to whatever reading matter it is. So it becomes an "us and them" sort of thing. You find that people will reach out and help the person if it touches their heart. In our training we try to not create a space where people other, where you see the difference of oh, it's the transgender people, it's the gay people and us. It's about seeing the face and acknowledging that this being can be your child, can be your mother, can be your sister, it's humanising. Because when it's still othered it's easy to problematise and distance yourself, but when it touches your heart and you can see that this is who this person is, you find that people respond in a more honest manner.' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 2*

The discussion around opening hearts and its association with vulnerability has some ties to earlier research around vulnerability and its ability to shift behaviours. In becoming vulnerable, participants are able to see others in a more connected, human way. In a space where people are able to be vulnerable, the opportunity to express and receive empathy becomes more possible and with that, feelings of shame may begin to shift.

(iii)   Empowering people

Empowered participants are part of the process once they are in a position where they have been empowered through language and listening to diverse experiences. A key factor in the workshops

related to power is in identifying where power exists and decentring the power dynamics in order to empower others. The concept of empowering people is connected to IAM's focus on relationships, which will be further detailed shortly and relates to how individuals feel their own sense of space and power within a workshop, growing from there. Feeling validated and seen is fundamental to being empowered, which is what happens during the process of being vulnerable in a brave or safe space.

The process of destabilising the power dynamics encompasses everyone at the workshop, and while part of that process is overt, a big element of the facilitator role is to understand where the power is held in a space and to understand how it operates:

> *'Our work is about decentring power, allowing people to be vulnerable in the space sharing their own stories where it doesn't matter your sexual orientation…The people with the most power, those whose power is upheld by the rest of the group. You wouldn't think it's going to be a woman or that it's going to be a young person. Sometimes in a space it would be a young woman, but you don't know that her father is a Bishop, that kind of thing. As a facilitator you don't always know beforehand who the person with the power is going to be, you would only find it out if someone tells you specifically or you figure it out, who the person is with the power but you don't always know why they have the power. It's not always the old men.' IAM South African Programme Manager*

Hierarchical structures contribute to power dynamics and can often reinforce certain dynamics, and this is true not just for the workshop participants but for the facilitators as well. Perceptions from participants can reinforce or create a power dynamic and in this case, subtly diminishing power dynamics is part of how the team functions within a workshop:

> *'We don't bring in our titles to a workshop because we are very aware of power within the space and we try not to create a space where there is that inequality when it comes to power.' IAM Process Co Coordinator 2*

Power is not only a physical, human presence. Because this work and these workshops are embedded in faith communities or Christian schools, there is an additional, far more complex power structure at play:

> *'The sandpaper, the sticking point (in all workshops) is power. It's actually who holds the power, because it's (the power is) scripture, it's authority of scripture and then it's culture and all of that, but it's actually power, who holds the power.'*

The issue of scripture as a pillar or source of power is crucial in faith communities but within South Africa, that key element has to be considered in conjunction with the other interwoven complexities:

'Our biggest hurdle is misconceptions and myths around cultural understandings, traditions and cultural bodies. And the fact that [Zulu monarch] King Zwelethini made the speech of saying, oh being gay is un-African, which in itself is historically wrong, and... He's a man of power and revered as the king. That one sentence led to corrective rape and high instance of trans murders you know. So, my thing would be, you find often and especially the men have this thing around gatekeeping tradition and the custom, but they themselves do not have a good understanding…they have one sided story. The biggest hurdle, where you have one sided stories around culture of bodies and misconceptions and they get hidden behind this curtain of "but it's cultural, it's tradition".' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 2

Transformation and inclusion is a slow, non-linear process and people's positions on the wheel of change may move around at times:

'If a person stands up and that person is changed and would tell you in December what has changed for them, it will be one thing. Come again in June, I think (a different) realisation would come and in that process of realisation that suddenly you realise that it is a long, deep process. I would say that it is the process that underlines, that is what I am interested in. The process contributes to the things, and that's the hidden hand...the soil of preparation.' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 1

Mindful of the slow process of change, IAM's staff see themselves not as facilitators for transformation over the period of one workshop, but as a team who focus on creating the environment for change that is enabled by the 'brave space', creating the 'soil of preparation' that then depends on change agents to continue the process and meet individuals where they are periodically:

'So, when people enter into dialogue with each other, that connection happens between them, then we can say people's hearts are open. This process doesn't take one training. That person might remain in that stage for years, where she realises okay, there are other people in the space. And then we say through dialogue and through open minds, and through all our training and all our staff, we empower people and then we create change agents. The change agent is not me, the change agent that has a relationship with that person might be able to shift her a little further (along the wheel). IAM South Africa Programme Manager

Change agents are an integral part of the work that IAM does which is demonstrated by its focus on relationship building and maintaining:

'A lot of our work goes into finding the right allies who have the right ears for the right conversations, A lot of our work does not go into training but into conversations with

leadership, with people who have influence, people who are connected with the right allies.' IAM South African Programme Manager

Awareness of the intensity of the wheel of change process as a literal wheel, beginning with opening of the mind, moving on to an opening of the heart and then empowering of people, including a decentring of power dynamics followed by the radical shift to a change agent and then to inclusive and affirming faith communities offers an opportunity to see this work as part of a spectrum, and allows participants to move at their own pace. Change agents, which is the next step on the wheel, become fundamental tools in the wheel of change, offering opportunities for engagement and potential change outside of a workshop environment and allowing a non-linear shift in conditions where change agents are able to meet people 'where they are'.

(iv)   Change agents

At this point, participants are empowered and are actively participating in transformative programmes and projects that lead to inclusive and affirming faith communities (step five). Important as a part of this and connected to the decentring of power is that the change agents, in many cases, do not have to be those who are perceived to be those who hold the most power in any given situation. Individuals respond to different catalysts in order to become change agents, they can be motivated differently and function differently in each situation, for example:

'When a parent comes to the point of acceptance and they have experienced the turmoil and the difficulty that the child has gone through, but also as a parent, they know this child is going to experience difficulties. In this regard the parent has a deeper insight and within that insight and agency an activist and a change agent is born. Sometimes they don't understand everything, at times the sexuality and gender, those things that identify and express differently. I think this person who wasn't a champion becomes a champion because at the end that particular parent love(s) their child and it's because of that (that you see a change agent).' IAM Process Co-Ordinator 1

Change agents operate at different levels, with different understandings, and need to meet people where they are at in order to move others further along the wheel towards creating an inclusive and affirming environment, building on the slow, periodical work that happens within a workshop. Change is driven within communities themselves, at different levels and at different times in order for it to genuinely transform, not just from the outside in terms of legislation and social order but to generate change for individuals from within in terms of their own sense of acceptance, understanding and compassion.

(v)   Inclusive and Affirming Faith Communities

At the centre of the wheel is the point at which participants celebrate diversity. That's the fundamental goal for IAM and the work that it does with individuals and communities. A celebration would include adequate, non-derogatory language and discourse and acceptance of a spectrum of sexualities and gender identities. As one co-coordinator put it:

> ''It's important that we work towards a society that is normal, and I say this tongue in check, but what the hell is normal? I think if I say normal, it is a society where people who can truly be, if people can truly be, but be on a continuous process of self-discovery, I think that's why we, all of us at IAM in our own multiple ways just works and wants to see a society that is less harmful to LGBTI people.'

A community where all people, regardless of culture, class, race, sexuality or gender identity are free to be and to evolve on their own journey of self-discovery is at the centre, literally, of the process that IAM has in place.

4.3.1.   Emerging themes

Research included in this chapter is framed with contextual discourse analysis (CDA), Osmer's Practical Theology and both of these were underpinned, shaped and informed by Ackermann's Feminist Theory of Praxis. CDA considers and examines how discourse affects social structures, contributing their longevity or dismantling those structures. Language and context are two factors that feature and contribute heavily in a South African Christian context, often acting as a microcosm within a school environment. This was evident in the work focused on clarifying meaning of words and in the effort to 'find the right words' to articulate complex issues of sexuality and gender identity. Language barriers as a result of a number of vernaculars in South Africa as well as the absence of words that are present in 'Western discourse' and complicated by cultural and religious ideals that are powerful and ever present in South African society. The games that are used at the outset of the workshop quickly demonstrate an inability to express or articulate complex issues of sexuality and gender identity, and in many instances, where articulation is possible, it's often derogatory or unkind.

Language drives and upholds other key themes that have emerged from the research, informing and maintaining the system in a myriad of ways, forming a complex intersecting web. Language that is exclusionary, inadequate or derogatory deeply informs and serves to maintain a systemically heteronormative environment by making those who fall outside of it invisible. Language can serve to create and uphold a system of power , ensuring that those who fall outside of the remain excluded from the conversation.

Context is informed by language, but is also influenced by embodied reality, ideology and is reinforced when there is a lack of diverse, challenging perspectives operating with power. Positionality and power contribute substantially to the experiences of the individual, whether it's in an affirming, inclusive system or not. One's ability and willingness to engage with ideals that are substantially different from one's own

is often deeply shaped by one's position within a power hierarchy: how much you have to gain or lose through your position within the power hierarchy is an important factor in whether you choose to engage with ideas that fall outside of your own, as well as where you are situated within that hierarchy. In a Christian context such as this, scripture interpretation and 'toxic theology': that is, singular and often damaging interpretations of scripture serves, in many cases, to shape and uphold existing systems of power and positionality. Many ideas or positions are maintained for the sole reason that 'that's what the Bible says', without any critical thought or interrogation of other possible interpretations. Combined with a complex and challenging mix of cultural and language barriers, an environment that actively doesn't meet people 'where they are' or 'see them' for who they are is upheld and maintained in many cases.

The research and information, based on online resources, workshop participation, observation, reflective praxis observation and interviews framed within the premises for a Feminist theory of Praxis as identifying what 'should' be happening demonstrates key themes that emerge as pivotal during the process of change and these will be discussed in the next section.

The four themes that emerge consistently within a Christian faith community environment (school and faith communities, in this case) and that act as barriers as well as catalysts in this transformation are language, power, positionality and toxic theology.

4.3.2. Language

Language empowers transformation as a tool when it is used from a place where all participants understand the meaning of the words being used and where people are empowered through the language available to them. South Africa has a complex number of official national languages, and many of the words used in English to describe LGBTQI+ people or words associated with biological sex, gender, orientation and sexuality do not exist in other South African languages. Additionally, words that are available often have negative connotations or associations or are used to undermine or antagonise people.

In a Christian context, reinterpretation or contextualising of language that is used in the Bible through a contextual Bible study that includes shifting the meanings of words has the power to shift how people view a powerful, guiding force and pillar of their faith.

4.3.3. Power

Within all spaces, not just workshop environments, power is operating both overtly and covertly. Decentralising the systems that uphold power as well as where that power is situated and its impact enables a shift in the way people interact with each other and themselves. Power is pervasive and takes a spectrum of forms from the overt (titles pertaining to seniority) to entrenched systems such as power or position due to age or family position. Power is shaped by scripture, culture and tradition, amongst

others, and shapes how we see ourselves and the world around us and affects how we behave within any environment.

An individual's ability to be vulnerable is often directly related to the amount of power that they hold or perceive themselves to hold. In a position where you have more power, you are more likely to feel like you can 'be brave' or 'tell your story', which is where vulnerability takes shape. Where people are vulnerable, it creates an environment that can generate empathy and understanding, shifting positions both in the person being seen and in the person witnessing the vulnerability.

4.3.4. Positionality

Understanding positionality, both ideological and embodied, is fundamental in any change process. It's often tied to both language and power as well and can be deeply affected by expressions of vulnerability in addition to being subject to feelings of shame or of empathy. In the same way that one's positionality can be tied to language and power, these are tools that can be used to shift positionality. Additional resources in the form of language or being exposed to the lived, embodied realities of others have the power to change how one sees oneself and the world, even if that shift is not instantaneous.

A key factor of positionality and a powerful factor in the success of any change is the process of being 'met where you are'. Huge changes and transformations are not instantaneous and are put in to place in an environment where one feels safe and heard, or 'met where they are'. This is relevant both in an embodied and ideological form. People's opinions and lived realities are complex and built up over time, becoming complex and often painful processes to transform.

One way to explain this is to consider the process of physical fitness. Expecting someone who is a couch potato and does no exercise whatsoever to run a marathon in the space of a few weeks is unrealistic but meeting that person where they are can be a completely different process. If one begins with slower, shorter changes and works consistently, in an environment where that individual feels motivated and makes the required effort to get fit, means that within a year it's possible that they could do a short course race and eventually run a marathon. In an ideal world where this metaphor correlates directly to the matter at hand, the former couch potato eventually forms a small group of other couch potatoes and heads up a running group, motivating and championing the others. One step at a time, however. Transformation takes time, and for someone's positionality to shift fundamentally is a slow, non-linear and complicated process that relies on a spectrum of intersecting factors.

4.3.5. Toxic Theology

The inclusion of the role of scripture, the Church as well as theology and the way that it operates within society is informed by all three of the above: language, power and positionality. In faith community or a Christian school, the role of theology and toxic theology in particular cannot be overlooked. Theology

in this sense includes the way we consider scripture, the way we think about God (frequently, God is a white man, for example) and how this influences the way Christianity plays out within communities and families. When faith forms a central pillar of how people perceive and operate in the world, as it does in South Africa, and in the context of this work, specifically focused on Christian schools, addressing the role of toxic theology is fundamental. Faith, when shaped by toxic theology draws directly on the systems of power, on positionality and on language, functioning as a catalyst for marginalisation, prejudice and inequality. At its worst, faith can be seen as the main driver for all of these, and in the process of shifting the theology underpinning them (which is part of what IAM seeks to do through decentring power, deconstructing language and focusing on positionality), the opportunity to create an environment with a space for all to flourish is created.

The three themes that emerge from the research are language, power and positionality, all informed and shaped in some way, specifically in the context of this work, by toxic theology. The IAM process is focused on gradual transformation and on a progressive shift in discourse rather than on a single, total transformation that happens as a result of an event. The workshops are focused heavily on how language, power and positionality inform the environment in which they work as well as what impact a transformation could have and what it might look like. The following chapter analyses and discusses the research focused on the inclusion of sexuality and gender diversity education within Christian schools with specific attention to the above three themes.

5.   ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1.   Introduction

This chapter will analyse and discuss the outcomes and challenges surrounding IAM's work within a Christian schools context, conscious of the landscape that exists within South Africa and the challenges evident within the institutional landscape. The research above was framed and informed by CDA as well as using Osmer's Practical Theology. Three themes that have emerged as most influential in terms of transformation however are language, power and positionality. The vocabulary you use, whether you can articulate that you have heard and correctly understood someone as well as shape a tone and influence the responses to specific topics. How power dynamics play out and influence social structures affects all who fall within that society and destabilising these are crucial if those who are marginalised are to be included. Positionality affects all of us. Your lived reality, both embodied and ideological, informs your belief structure, responses and behaviours. Specifically in South Africa and within the schools context, these themes and how they influence and affect teachers and pupils is profoundly important.

Additionally, I will briefly discuss the role of toxic theology: it's a pertinent addition that colours all three themes in that they feature within a specifically Christian context for this. For the analysis, context from the reflective praxis are included as well as personal observations from the pilot workshop as well as a workshop that formed part of the MTh Gender and Religion 2019 course at UKZN that formed part of this Masters course.

5.2.   Meeting people where they are

Before analysis of the three key themes, one element that runs through them all and must be considered as crucial to any effort at transformation is that of 'meeting people where they are'. Within the workshop that I participated in, the pilot workshop that I observed, the reflective praxis as well as the interview process with the workshop team, the aspect of 'meeting people where they are' is crucial. This applies within the workshop itself but is aided and assisted during and after the process by literature and other resources available online. IAM's resources include testimonies from queer people around the globe, articulating their lived realities and experiences, as well as detailed information about the Bible and homosexuality, a manual about the journey of spirituality and sexuality as well as a number of contextual bible studies that allow for varying degrees of engagement. In a process of non-linear transformation that can be challenging to manage in a single session, literature or a spectrum of alternative resources allow for transformation and engagement of a different kind, in a non-confrontational way that enables re-engagement over a period of time which can enable a shift in perspective and interpretation. It also enables participants to engage and consider new material in their own time and on their own terms, in a way that can be interpreted vastly differently over time to the way new material is received in the brief time frame of a workshop.

Transformation is radical, and affects a spectrum of areas within one's life, often with unintended or unexpected consequences. As will become obvious, each of the four themes highlighted is inextricably tied to the other three. A shift in one area affects all the others and, in many cases, anticipating the shifts and changes is complicated. It's crucial to approach any change slowly, to allow for the ripple of waves of change to spread through the other areas and take shape. For those driving the change, there is a responsibility to provide the context, support and space for an individual to adjust to these changes, aware that no change happens in isolation. Moving too abruptly or approaching people from a radically different position risks alienating them or creating a defensive response that results in fear and in the creation of yet more barriers to change. Beliefs that are held close can be painful to shift and the experience of doing so is challenging, frequently frightening and sometimes impossible, for most. Our positionality and our sense of self is tightly woven to our beliefs; shifting them takes time and can be a destabilising experience, especially if it's rushed. Feeling seen or supported through the process of transformation is vital for your original feelings to be validated. It's pivotal that any changes in beliefs come from the individual and from a feeling of safety and support in order that the transformation is not based on fear or from a feeling of being pushed. In a study focused on a cross cultural contextual Bible study and requiring participants to bridge cultural and contextual barriers, learning and better understanding each other, Kool noted in her conclusion:

> 'Participants discover that their self-understanding and their worldview are created not only by interaction with others in their immediate surroundings but also by interaction with a more extensive community of the faithful. This transformative interaction does not involve exchange of knowledge so much as commitment between participants. They share together what they find important to their lives and to those around them…to use the words of Paulo Freire, they can develop a dialogic attitude towards life: "Being dialogic is not invading, not manipulating, not imposing orders. Being dialogic is pledging oneself to the constant transformation of reality." This may be the hardest task for participants: to be able and willing to meet the other as the other.' (Kool, 2004, 374)

This theme of being 'met where you are' will come up a number of times in this chapter and is a vital ingredient in the 'essence' of successful transformation. It's imperative that facilitators and change agents are mindful at all times of where people are mentally and emotionally, taking that on board when working toward any change. Meeting people where they are is one of the cornerstone features of empathy which was outlined in the literature review as a fundamental tool for dismantling prejudice and stigma. Brown (2006), Wiseman (1996), Rogers (1957) and Carkhuff (1969) all touch on the ability to engage with the other and to be sensitive to their experiences, able to understand what the other is experiencing. Empathy and vulnerability are fundamental to better understanding the feelings and emotions associated with stigma and prejudice as well as the tools to dismantle it. In order to be able to see where someone is and to understand their position, to meet them where they are, both parties need to be both vulnerable and empathetic. This emerged in research focused on the role of empathy

and the effect that it can have; the original quote below is from research conducted in 1957 and was reused in 1996:

> 'Being understood is a basic human need. It's only through being understood and accepted that humans are able to change and grow.' (Wiseman, 1996, 1164)

It emerged in interviews with IAM workshop co-ordinators in response to a question around what the catalyst for transformation within and between people is within a workshop:

> *'The thing is human connection, but not just human connection: human connection from out of your own vulnerability. When you deconstruct power in a space and the heterosexuals are now equally vulnerable and also speaking about the human sexuality and not speaking about the queers and you have got people sharing their stories around….it's about decentring power, allowing people to be vulnerable in the space.' IAM South Africa Programme Manager*

Feeling understood and feeling 'met where you are' happens in myriad ways and the mechanisms or tools for signalling that you understand someone as well as those for destabilising power dynamics will be extensive and vary in different situations. IAM makes use of a series of exercises designed to engage elements of empathy and vulnerability in participants so as to increase the ability to 'see' others and to 'be seen'. The exercises including 'knee to knee' and positioning of chairs in the space for different discussions serve to force participants to forcefully reflect not just on their own 'seen-ness' but also on what their own gaze holds. This is key to unpacking the complex themes of language, power and positionality in a way that is constructive and affirming rather than fractious and confrontational, allowing for a constructive transformation in discourse.

5.3.   Language

In the work around sexuality and gender identity transformation, language shapes much of how we understand and approach these topics. In South Africa, we are affected by language in terms of the words that we have available, prejudice related to some words as well as how we understand and interpret some words.

For words that are available, in many cases, the words that could describe or articulate aspects of sexuality or gender identity simply do not exist. For some, this can be taken to mean that the concepts outlined by certain words are 'un-African' or are 'Western', originating and brought in from European or Western cultures to an African context where they previously did not exist. The prejudice about a

concept being imported is upheld when there is insufficient language to dismantle it in a vernacular language (in this instance, vernacular is not considered to be English).

5.3.1. Language as a weapon

In cases where words do exist, they are frequently loaded, used as insults, to insinuate immoral, poor behaviour or to malign those whom the words are aimed at. When the words and their implications are unpacked and contrasted with their literal meanings and cultural or social power is dismantled, the opportunity to de-escalate issues around sexuality and gender identity presents itself. Where the power of stigma and prejudice can be taken out of the words themselves, the process of dismantling change can begin. In 'Stabanisation' (Van der Walt et al., 2019), reclaiming specific, loaded words in order to create a safe and real space for LGBTQI+ people within faith communities is outlined, along with lived experiences of those people within faith communities and the kind of ostracisation that can happen as a result of specific words or phrases being employed to categorise, marginalise or single out individuals. Van der Walt et al. interrogate the use and appropriation of words aimed at queer people; not just that they are frequently used in a derogatory way, but that the complexities and diversity of the experiences and lived realities of queer people are not realised where the vocabulary is absent:

> "Nasi lesizitabane or lezizitabane," which literally translate into "here comes these homosexuals, lesbians or gays" are words we often hear being uttered to LGBTI people walking the streets in local townships. Isitabane (singular) or Izitabane (plural) is the Zulu word most frequently used in communal spaces to discriminate, undermine and shame LGBTI people. This word is applied to both gender non-conformance and same sex desire and at times is used interchangeably with words such as Ungqingili (singular) or oNgqingili (plural), Inkonkoni (singular) or Izinkonkoni (plural). The term Isitabane originates from conceptual engagements with intersexuality and articulates something of the understanding of intersex people as people who possess both sexual organs traditionally associated with being a female or male. The term is consequently often applied to gays, lesbians and transgender people and insinuates the notion of an individual possessing both sexual organs and someone that subsequently does not conform to the heteronormative orientation and gender identity. Despite the populist argument, especially from African leaders that so-called 'homosexuality' is a Western import, historical research has highlighted that in the Southern African context ubutabane relationships were well established and documented.' (Van der Walt et al., 2019, 10)

Even words that do not carry the weight of stigma or prejudice carry other weights and hold their own power. In many cases, the language used within a community or society influences the behaviour and the structure of that group. Words inform power and positionality, reinforcing or undermining existing structures.

In a workshop context, IAM addresses the challenge of words as weapons in the exercises and discussions including the drawing of a stereotype and the sexuality grid. Unpacking the derogatory words to their most basic meaning and openly talking about what they mean, where they come from as well as their connotations serves to reveal the words and the power they have for what they are. Importantly, the words are not described as 'wrong', rather unpacked and discussed in order to de-weaponise them within a social and cultural environment. Reframing or claiming terms is an important part of disrupting a discourse, but how that discourse is shaped and comes about has a fundamental impact on those who it speaks into being. Ferguson, Eyre and Ashbaker (2000,133-157) argue that an 'unwanted identity' is the 'quintessential elicitor of shame'. Shame is described as an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging (Brown, 2006, 45). As such, working with language to diminish the associated shame and to interrogate the connotations that accompany many of the words that are used as weapons is a key part of undermining and reducing some of the harm they can cause.

5.3.2. Words in Scripture

Scripture and biblical texts are not exempt from interpretation and from inference. Extensive work has been done and is still being done through contextual bible studies and queer theology, among others, to unpack and better understand our interpretations of scripture. Usually, scripture is presented to communities and to churches as a specific, one dimensional text with a singular interpretation. Little attention is given to the context of when the Bible was written, the society that existed when it was written and who would have written it. Who would have had the authority to write a sacred text? Who would have had the skills to write? What position and power did they hold and who gave them the information used to write a sacred text? Under what conditions, for what audience and for what reason was the text being written? What was omitted from a text, and why? How many meanings were attached to each word in its original form in the text, and how can we tell which meaning was intended in each case? What power dynamic was the author intending to uphold, or what power and belief system did they adhere to? These are questions that are rarely, if ever, addressed within faith communities, and as such, much of the nuance and the multiple interpretations that could exist of Bible texts is swept under the carpet. King (1995,15) and O'Connor (1989,102-104) identified the challenges in 'toxic theology interpretations', interrogating the influence of both the research and subject matter as well as the attitude of a researcher when interpreting scripture. In an essay drawing on Francis Coppola's 1974 film 'The Conversation', Van der Walt traces the storyline within the movie to demonstrate how a singular, unchallenged interpretation of a text can leave a reader blind to alternative versions or other insights that would be self-evident to others with different perspective or experience (Van der Walt, 2016, 1-12). Quero (2006, 81-110) demonstrates a 'Queer Reading of Mary of Magdala'; offering an alternative, contextual take on a story that traditionally lends itself open to little or no interpretation. Quero refers to the mainstream, or widely accepted version as forming part of a system of 'normalising';

'What is at the base of this process of normalisation is a hetero-patriarchal binary thinking that sets humanity within a masculine/feminine straight sexuality (good), while all the other experiences and practices of sexuality (bad) are to be condemned in order to maintain its hegemony. In this way the notions of decency and indecency control the behaviour of human beings in society.' (Quero, 2006, 82)

In a culture where much of the language pertaining to sexuality and gender identity is shadowed with prejudice and stigma, much of the language in the Bible can be skewed to reinforce this prejudice, upholding and maintaining systems of power within the Church that flourish on the presence of patriarchy and heteronormativity and the replication of this power balance within a community. Language and context are crucial when it comes to language, and as such form a fundamental aspect of shifting discourse, opening up new avenues or perspectives for those who take much of their guidance from scripture, and understanding that multiple interpretations are not only possible, but potentially permissible and compatible with a Christian faith.

From an individual perspective, language as part of a narrative is key to being able to articulate your experiences, to understand them and to provide them with context. Just as the stories that exist within the Bible might be different if they were contextualised today, individual narratives shift over time. Having the language to engage with and to make your stories come alive is as important if we are to share them with others as it is if we are to understand the stories of others and to understand how these stories change over time. Inadequacy of language results in overlooked intentions or meanings and a gap in understanding that can have far reaching consequences.

In including a contextual bible study as part of their workshop, IAM is able to bring their work around language right to the epicentre of one of the key driving forces of power within a Christian context. Experiencing scripture in a different light is often a challenging, perhaps in some ways traumatic experience for those participating in a contextual bible study as part of an IAM workshop: the transition from words and language as something abstract or as a thought process is abruptly more real when it's applied to a biblical text or scripture that they are familiar with in a different context. This experience can elicit feelings of anger or of insecurity. In some cases, participants feel like the IAM team are infringing on something that is sacred for them. This process needs to be considered and performed carefully, with adequate time allocated to it. For the workshop that I observed as part of this work. The process was shortened due to a lack of time available by the school and many of the participants did not have an opportunity to feel sufficiently 'heard' or to engage with the content in a way that de-escalated their own emotions with the renewed positionality, power and meaning of the scripture.

5.4.   Power

In many cases, power systems work together rather than as a standalone. These systems can be and are manipulated by those in power to retain that power in a way that marginalises or diminishes others

within the system. Systematic unravelling of power structures over time allows for a deconstruction and decentring, for more people within a community to be included and to 'feel seen', to find their own agency and to come into, and express, their own power. With a more diverse inclusion of people comes unique narratives, perspectives and experiences as well as new challenges to existing systems.

In an IAM workship, systems of power are identified as part of the workshop and participants are encouraged to consider where the power dynamics within their own systems lie, and who benefits from them. In a heavily patriarchal environment like South Africa, power within the Church is often held by male leaders of the church and maintained by them and by those around them. This is one of the big hurdles for an IAM workshop: those who hold the power often shape the direction of discourse, and frequently create and environment where those who could disrupt the power structure are marginalised, silenced or shamed in order to maintain the hierarchy. Additionally, even in a situation where a power dynamic can be temporarily disregarded (for instance, in a workshop), once that time period is over, the power structure remains. IAM manages this by making use of change agents and by focusing on a long term gradual change rather than transformation as a result of a single workshop. However, systems of power are difficult to disrupt as a result of existing at the apex of a number of intersectional factors, particularly in a South African Christian context.

5.4.1.   Systems of power

Patriarchy remains an overwhelmingly powerful force within South African society and within the church. Its pervasiveness can often render it invisible and we stop seeing how it influences every aspect of our lives: we may not notice that only men head up a church or that it's men who are determining structures and rules within a society, and be oblivious to an environment where some are marginalised or considered 'other' because of how that has been normalised.

Masculinity and heteronormativity are the close cousins of patriarchy, operating to uphold and maintain the system, reaching aspects of society and touching individuals where patriarchy doesn't reach. 'Toxic masculinity' has been a buzzword for a while, and the masculinity that emerges from a patriarchal church and toxic theology, combined with complicated language challenges and the economic, racial and class issues faced by South Africans certainly translates into a masculinity that can be considered toxic. When patriarchy is the default structure in a society, ideals of masculinity are focused on domination, conquest and virility with those who fall foul of these ideals quickly called up on it, in many cases in a violent way. This reinforces and perpetuates standards of behaviour.

Heteronormativity is one of the results of the combination of patriarchy and heteronormativity. If a society mirrors the church, and the church structure is based on a patriarchal interpretation of scripture that has men and women in specific ideological roles, when society conforms, there is little space for those who fall outside of it. Punishment for deviation can be harsh whether it's overt or covert (for example, being publicly shamed and excluded from a family or community or covert, subtly maligned,

excluded or mocked) leading to secrecy and shame for those who are apprehensive about coming out as queer, and bullying or shaming for those who do.

If we see school environments as microcosms of society and of culture, the presence of patriarchy, heteronormativity and masculinity are all there. Christian schools are particularly vulnerable to structures that mirror the surrounding society as well as the church and doctrines based on specific interpretations of scripture that uphold and maintain these power structures. Challenging the structures that exist and dismantling power relations based on patriarchy within a school environment is a two-pronged fork that challenges existing societal and cultural systems as well as the systems that reflect power dynamics within the church.

Power dynamics are never about one thing (for example, patriarchy). At any given time, all people have a spectrum of agendas and goals at play and each is working to maintain or shift power within their own sphere. This is no different within a school environment. Within a hierarchy, it's in your interest to remain in favour with the person above you in that system. IAM works to dismantle these power structures, even when it's difficult to understand the nuance or dynamic at play, as was evident within the interviews. The person who holds power is not always immediately obvious. A number of aspects in terms of individual power dynamics are challenging in this environment. The first is that, once the workshop is over, the power dynamics at play within the school structure itself remain. For example, the person who determines pay increases is still responsible for that job after the workshop, and as such, destabilising that power dynamic within the workshop is complicated because it's not rooted in that workshop. One co-ordinator put it as:

> *'If you need a form signed, and the Bishop is the person who signs your form, we can destabilise the power all we want, but tomorrow you still need your form signed and the Bishop is still the person who does it.'*

Power is deeply, deeply entrenched and cannot be shifted overnight.

The other power dynamic refers to the earlier research around teachers' responses in interviews around teaching sexuality. Apprehension about responses or repercussions from other teachers or from parents or from the community that the teachers live and work in is indicative of power dynamics that exist within a school hierarchy, even when the people who hold the most power are not in the workshop itself or are not directly associated with teaching sexuality or teaching at the school. In the observed workshop, another dynamic was at play. The school was a private, top tier school in South Africa, and in the reflection after the workshop, one co-ordinator observed that the pupils themselves were custodians of power in that space. Their parents pay hefty fees to have their children in that space and would respond with their pockets if they were displeased. Within the workshop space, the learners themselves were the proxy power holders. This placed educators in a vulnerable position and reduced the opportunity to be legitimately vulnerable or to elicit empathy. The dynamic where the educators

could quickly move into a space where they were 'held hostage' as a result of something they'd said or as a result of a belief that they hold is a complicated nuance that should be addressed as part of workshops moving forward, perhaps in the context of splitting learners and educators and offering separate workshops as an initial step.

5.4.2.   Scripture and power

In a Christian environment, scripture acts as a power almost in and of itself. Once an interpretation is accepted and considered true, alternative variations of sacred texts are unlikely to be discussed within a church and accepted interpretations of scripture are used to uphold, reinforce and maintain existing norms, even in the face of compelling evidence to demonstrate that an alternative interpretation can exist. Decentring or shifting the power of scripture would, for many, be considered sacrilege and to go against the grain of what most Christians think is the appropriate, 'Christian way'; even if that 'way' consists of prejudice, shame, stigma and exclusion.

IAM works within its workshops during the contextual Bible study to present alternative insights into sacred texts and to reinterpret existing scripture for participants. This is a deeply complex experience for many and 'meeting them where they are' can be challenging. Particularly in the workshop that I observed, it was deeply emotional for some participants to accept the interpretations offered by the team and it was hard to see how these participants were being 'met where they were' and going to be in the short space of time that had been allocated by the school for the workshop. The shifting of a belief that is held aloft and considered sacred, as is the case with scripture, is unlikely to be transformed in a single experience and will require substantial reflection and consideration, dialogue and engagement before it becomes a reality.

Power dynamics influence everyone within a social structure: everything from social standing to labour expectations, remuneration, rights and access to social (and other) capital, all are influenced by dynamics of power. If any transformation is to happen within a society or culture, power is one of the most crucial to disrupt as a catalyst for change. The third influential factor in this context is positionality which is also deeply influenced by power dynamics and can be far more difficult and take far longer to disrupt.

5.5.   Positionality

In as much as power dynamics shape behaviours and social hierarchies within social structures, positionality informs belief systems and context. In a school environment and where sexuality and gender identity are the main focus of attention, positionality is deeply shaped by power systems including patriarchy and heteronormativity. In the case of Christian schools that doctrine, and specifically toxic theology, heavily inform both ideological and embodied positionality. Because of the context of this work and the influence of toxic theology, a brief note on how that influence operates will

follow before continuing the specific contours of positionality within a school environment and within an IAM workshop.

5.5.1. Toxic Theology

Toxic theology is not limited to churches alone. It flows from the church and into daily lives: into our schools, our workplaces, our families, society and culture. It colours and shapes our feelings and our behaviours, often insidiously. It is informed by our language, by power dynamics and it informs our positionality and responses to positionality, both ideological and embodied.

However, toxic theology can be considered to be a substantial contributor to challenges within Christian faith communities. It influences language, power and positionality, relying on all three to remain in place. Dismantling toxic theology remains uniquely challenging when, for many people, an assault on their faith beliefs is an extremely destabilising, quite frightening experience, upheaving all of the accepted norms they use as the building blocks in their central pillar of faith, underscoring the entirety of their lives. It informs practices and ideals, upholding systems and systemic practices. Toxic interpretations or readings of scripture mean certain ideals are upheld and maintained, despite having no basis within scripture when that reading is contextualised or differently read (for example, that marriage is something that should exist only between a man and a woman).

Toxic theology can be reflected in how sacred texts are interpreted: frequently without context or nuance; God is frequently understood (overtly or covertly) as a white, perfect, heteronormative man but is himself without sexual expression or sexual weakness, without an equal or partner and as a perfect being is far, far removed from what we experience and can related to in lives lived as embodied, sexual, flawed human beings. Sexuality as part of our embodiment is hard to reconcile with a non-physical, perfect creator who is, in principle, a white man. It's common for interpretations of sacred texts to infer that homosexuality or a 'deviation' from a heterosexual relationship goes against what it outlined in the Bible, using texts and interpretations of these to bolster the argument. Queer theology is one tool focused on shifting the dynamic of toxic theology. Cheng (2011, 9) has called queer theology a 'transgressive theology' giving it three transgressive interpretations: that queer theology is LGBTQI+ people 'talking about God'; That it is queer people 'talking about God' in a self-consciously transgressive manner, especially in terms of challenging societal norms about sexuality and gender. Thirdly, he sees queer theology as 'talk about God' that challenges and deconstructs the binary categories of sexual and gender identity. Closer to home, Gunda (2013, 21-32) uses a reinterpretation of biblical texts to examine how we understand and interpret masculinity and our ideals around sexuality based on how we view scripture, in this case a reading of Luke 10:1-12. His focus is on masculinity within a heteropatriarchal Zimbabwe and how alternative interpretations of scripture could shift the dynamics of how we understand masculinity as well as sexual relationships. Kessler (2004, 454) breaks the reading of texts down to a simple duality that in and of itself allows for multiple or differing interpretations and readings of scripture:

'Understanding of the text is influenced or conditioned not only by the author but also by the hearer or reader of the text. The author puts his or her intentions into the text as the author's contribution to understanding it. Readers of the text, however have their own ideas that they bring with them when they read the text.' (Kessler, 2004, 453)

The lived and embodied realities that affect all people and could be used to contextualise a text are almost entirely excluded from a church setting, despite being a vital part of theology:

'To remain credible and vital, religious people must continuously reinterpret their religion and its sources In this process of interpreting and coming to new understandings, cultural, social and psychological factors and – as an extension of these- the values and standards that people recognise, all play a role. Together, these factors ensure that people living in different times, contexts can attribute different meanings to the same Bible story.' (Kool, 2004, 301)

Context and positionality shape how we can interpret and apply theology, and not including them or reinterpreting them on a regular basis contributes substantially to experiences of toxic theology that exclude and marginalise some within a church or Christian community because they don't fall within the accepted norms.

5.5.2.   Embodied Realities

Embodied realities are affected by power dynamics resulting from patriarchy, heteronormativity and masculinity among others. Your lived experience as a white, heterosexual male is likely to be vastly different from that of a black lesbian, as will your relationship with power and position within a power hierarchy. As a white heterosexual male, shifts in the existing power dynamics are likely to be perceived as a threat to you and will shape how you experience them. If you identify as queer and have been shamed or abused as a result of this, your responses within spaces of transformation will be equally, but differently, affected. You may feel reticent to speak out, experience an emotional response or a physical feeling of panic or you may feel comfortable for the first time in sharing your lived reality and experiences, which will provoke its own set of emotional responses. Responses to a threat to power or a proposed shift in dynamics can be hugely shaped by our positions of power within a society based purely on our bodies. Control, power, shame, vulnerability, openness, secrecy and your responses to the threat of any aspects of your lived reality are all shaped by how you experience the world in an embodied way and what that experience has been for you historically. Those who hold power are likely to be more resistant to change in that power while those who do not may be uncertain about how to shift it or fearful of any repercussions should they challenge those who hold power.

In a workshop environment, this shift to a queer theology or to a bodily theology that includes sexuality as a healthy, glorious expression of your Christianity proves complex for some: heterosexual women

and queer people particularly have been excluded historically and the transformation to include and value those voices as equal is deeply complex and takes time to shape. This will be discussed shortly in a reflection on the observed IAM workshop process.

5.5.3. Ideology

Ideology is informed by lived experiences but additionally by what we are taught. Toxic theology plays a part of ideologies that contribute to stigma, shame and prejudice in South Africa alongside culture and social norms, and this is no less prevalent in a school environment. If the texts and interpretations we have been taught to accept as true as Christians mean an exclusion of sexuality and gender identity or that being gay is 'ungodly', having these ideologies challenged can be extremely complex emotionally. An additional element that reinforces our ideological beliefs is that of confirmation bias. If we believe something to be true, we are often more likely to find reasons to support our beliefs and to further bias us in that direction. This is true for biblical texts too: that 'God says being gay is wrong' is regularly doled out, despite not being written down as such as a text. Ideological beliefs can often be reinforced and sustained by this unconscious confirmation bias and a challenge or counter argument to this belief can seem to be a huge, incomprehensible blow when it comes.

While a school environment often encompasses the breaking down and building up of ideals, to do this to what is often the 'ideology of the school' in the sense that a sexual theology or a reinterpretation of the text goes against what the ideologies of the school are, would be extremely challenging for both the school and the workshop participants. Christian schools, because they operate from a specific Christian template, can exclude those who fall outside of the norm as dictated by their theology, complicating the process of transformation and inclusivity. As has been discussed, to transform ideals that people hold to be deeply personal and, in many ways, consider to be a reflection of themselves is extremely complicated: it takes incredible sensitivity, empathy and often is possible only over a prolonged period of time.

5.5.4. The power of meeting people where they are

In the observed workshop, particularly during the contextual Bible study, toxic theology was an overwhelming presence. The contextual bible study exercise is one of the last within the workshop and is aimed at disrupting accepted toxicities within a Christian community, interrogating through processes and positionality, unpacking preconceptions, fast held ideas and beliefs.

In this exercise almost more than anywhere else, 'meeting people where they are' and appreciating, understanding and empathising with their positionality is fundamental. Participants who felt threatened, affronted or afraid made clear that their theology did not account for accepting gay people, and that any acceptance was wrong on all fronts because their Christianity 'said so'. There was an aggressive push back to assertions made regarding texts that led to negative reflections on discussion topics that had

been used within the workshop. A discussion that focused on whether God could be a 'black lesbian' and what that would mean had a huge effect on some participants. They experienced a profound sense of insecurity and anger as well as a loss of faith in the co-ordinators: the co-ordinators just seemed to be coming from too far away for their context to be acceptable to the participants. A second participant criticised the daily opening ceremony at the workshop: during the workshop, the mornings began with the lighting of a candle and a reading, and a minute of silence, ostensibly for personal reflection. This participant criticised a lack of a structured 'prayer', wanting to know how the IAM team could claim to be doing Christian work when there was no 'opening prayer' for the day. The strict, immoveable ideals put in place not just for what constitutes an acceptable belief but also what constitutes an acceptably 'Christian' opening ceremony and what constitutes a 'prayer' are heavily influenced by specific, concrete interpretations of theology, allowing for minimal negation or change. Deviations are viewed as a threat and a deeply unsettling one.

In a discussion around what the hardest aspect around transformation was in a Christian context, the IAM South Africa Programme Director responded:

> 'It's who holds the power, because it's scripture, it's authority of scripture and then it's culture and all of that. But it's actually power and who holds that power'

Toxic theology reveals itself not just in interpretations of scripture itself but in immovable practices, structures and ideas of what is acceptable and not and what is sufficiently 'Christian' or not. Exclusionary ideals or practices are not limited to aspects such as overt idealism or represented by structures such as homophobia, but can be observed in instances such as those above where any deviation from a very specific, rigid notion of what constitutes acceptable behaviour is considered 'less than', or inadequate.

Not meeting people where they are when it comes to transformation or a shift in discourse is profoundly ineffective. Treading the line of radical change while ensuring that those who are within a workshop space are alongside you, opening their minds and eventually their hearts, is deeply, deeply complex. During the observation, and due to a lack of time remaining for the workshop, it was difficult to see how participants who were most affected by the contextual Bible study would be able to engage or reflect on this experience in a positive way. The complexities of the toxic theology combined with the power dynamics, language available and positionality was simply too much to manage in the space of the two days that were allocated.

In this case, the timing for the workshop was laid out by the school itself. As mentioned above, IAM plans its workshops to last around four days ordinarily and places a huge value on ensuring sufficient time is spent with their participants on any given topic. The constraints of the school timetable drastically impacted the time available for the workshop and the repercussions of this constraint were obvious to see. Challenges for the team for working within a school environment in future will include fitting in with

their schedule and ensuring that all participants are able to allocate enough time, both physically and emotionally to invest in and benefit from the workshop. Participant presentation and time availability will better enable them to engage with material and to embark on what is a challenging, complicated journey that touches on many aspects of their lives. Going slower, and conducting repeated workshops using only a single text and allocating extensive time around the deconstruction of ideals is fundamental to any transformation. In order to enable people to open up and to engage with ideas and interpretations so vastly different to what they are accustomed is not easy work, requiring extreme patience and empathy in the face of hard line, immoveable ideals.

## 6.	CONCLUSION

### 6.1.	Introduction

Complexities focused on sexuality and gender identity and associated prejudice and stigma are prevalent within South Africa and deeply rooted in systemic patriarchy and heteronormativity, upheld using murky and often poorly understood references to culture and by unquestioned, accepted social norms. Prejudice, misunderstanding and phobias focused on queer people are maintained by structures of power, positionality and language constructions (and constrictions) and reinforced by the custodians of power within South Africa. The impact of this stigma on queer people of school going age is that they are more likely to self-harm or to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers in addition to being at risk of verbal, physical and sexual assault or murder from those around them.

If we consider Christian schools as a microcosmic representation of their surrounding society and church, the dynamics and complexities that exist within those surrounding structures are likely to hold or at the very least, substantially influence that of the school and its teachers. The language complexities, power dynamics and positionality that inform how a church or society functions are likely to be reflected in a school that exists within that community, substantially influencing not just the structure of the school but often reflecting the values and accepted norms within that environment.

Fundamentally, however, schools are spaces where learners should be both safe and exposed to new, challenging information. The physical and emotional safety of learners should be considered of paramount importance, and when queer learners are stigmatised or excluded to the point of self-harm, it is evident that the emotional and physical well-being of these learners is not assured. School is a space to learn and be exposed to ideas and information that one may not experience outside of school and that inform and shape your views. It's a transformative space, one where shifts within society and around ideals that can include sexuality, masculinity and power can begin to take shape or dissolve:

> 'The idea that masculinity is the internalised sex role allows for social change…. Since the role norms are social facts, they can be changed by social processes. This will happen whenever the agencies of socialisation- family, school, mass media etc. transmit new expectations.' (Connell, 1995, 23)

Schools in South Africa have played a role in transforming social processes or constructions within. When apartheid ended and democracy took over, schools were one of the first spaces to become racially diverse and to begin to redefine the narrative around race: that it is possible for us to not simply exist but to flourish in a racially diverse and integrated environment.

In the context of this work, the main focus and the research question has revolved around the models that can be used by Christian schools to effect transformation of a sort and to create an inclusive, diverse and safe space for learners to engage with sexuality and gender identity in a constructive and

life affirming way in the belief, shared with Connell, that schools are one of the spaces in which transformation can be profoundly effected.

6.2.   Addressing the research question

In seeking to answer the research question, the institutional landscape and the intersection of factors that influence a Christian school environment within South Africa have been considered, as well as the contours of an intervention: specifically, in this case, considering and interrogating workshops conducted by the NGO IAM which historically has worked within faith communities to create a more inclusive and safe space for queer people. In 2020, it begins a series of workshops within schools that follows on from their first pilot workshop at a Christian school, conducted in 2019.

Before a model for transformation can take place and before the solution for the research question can be formulated, one specific aspect stands out: that the South African curriculum does not include specific reference to using representative and clear language to inform and guide teachers' practices. The curriculum itself makes reference to shaping the lessons around the frame of the (very inclusive) constitution but leaves much of the detail open to interpretation (DePalma and Francis, 2014, 1690). If change is to be seen as fundamental and as a priority for educators, clearer guidance and specific language surrounding and representation that details what is to be included must be made available to educators in order to both educate and empower them in their role. The importance of language has been discussed at length in this work and as part of that, the formal curriculum should make adequate allowance and specify the language that is to be used in order to shape and support an inclusive, affirming discourse.

When we review the underlying, intersectional factors that influence and inform prejudice and stigma within Christian schools in South Africa (more detail on this will be outlined shortly), it becomes apparent that transformation and change is a complex issue that does not have a single, once off solution. Based on the method employed by IAM and the profound effect of the emotions and their associated behaviours around shame and empathy that influence both the educators and pupils within a school environment, a workshop model that can allow for transformation that incorporates all the nuances and complexities of the spectrum of influences that inform and reinforce the belief system is an effective tool in this situation. A workshop model allowing for engagement in a less formal environment that can be repeated and reinforced over time rather than a once off intervention or immediate, radical 'blanket' shift that is surface level only is a more effective one for transformation. A workshop model allows for people to engage outside of their comfort zones and to manage difficult and life changing transformation in short bursts that can be more effective than a single, frightening shock. Additionally, it allows for a shift in the power dynamics that exist in the regular, day to day world. The destabilising of power dynamics is fundamental to shifting the discourse and creating a more inclusive environment and, as such, a workshop where this can be done in a controlled manner is one of the ways to catalyse change.

6.3.   Research sub questions

The research sub questions for this work included what informs the dominant discourse, what the contours of an intervention look like and what can be included to facilitate an inclusive and diverse space as well as what areas require further interrogation and attention.

In terms of what influences the approach to sexuality and gender identity education in South Africa within schools that is inclusive of LGBTQIA+ learners, the factors are deeply societal and not specific to South Africa alone or specific to sexuality or gender identity alone:

> 'Things that impact gender relations also influence the sexual lives of men and women. I.e. history, class, age religion, race, ethnicity, culture, vocabulary and disability. In other words, sexuality is deeply embedded in the meanings and interpretations of gender systems.' (Tamale, 2011, 11)

The South African dominant discourse is deeply informed by all of these and in this case, that of the Church is one of the more profound of the influences. All of the above factors can be divided into three core influences namely that of language, of power and of positionality for the purposes of this work and based on the IAM workshop model that is being interrogated.

Language in the South African Christian schools landscape includes that which is used in the curriculum or syllabus outline, as mentioned above but also extends to the actual words that are available. Because many of the words and interpretations around LGBTQI+ learners are mainly in English (and even then, they are not always adequately understood), when the educators or pupils are using words in their second or third languages to describe orientations, practices or identities that have no adequate words in their mother tongues, often the default is to use words that are loaded with stigma and prejudice. A lack of information and of understanding serves only to reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes and an environment that marginalises any who are 'other'. Access to adequate, non-discriminatory language as well as an understanding that some language others and discriminates could begin a process of undermining existing dominant structures that serve to reinforce heterosexist, patriarchal ideals.

Heterosexist and patriarchal ideals are effects of power systems at play within South African society. A patriarchal overtone informs a specific ideal of masculinity as well as heterosexist ideals that is maintained and upheld by those who benefit from the system as well as by the available discourse around that system. In a Christian context, the power dynamics are often deeply informed by scripture and biblical interpretations including that of toxic theology. Fear plays into these dynamics: fear of being revealed for being 'other', fear of a transformation of power that leaves those who were the main power holders in a different situation and fear of retribution for going against the power system.

Aside from societal or cultural power dynamics that are influenced by religion, age, class and others, in a school system there are additional dynamics at play. Schools are frequently microcosms of the society in which they exist, and in an environment where an educator expresses a view or teaches something that is seen to be 'morally wrong' or 'outside of the realm' of what they are expected to be teaching, some were apprehensive about recrimination or reaction from parents that could adversely impact their jobs (Francis, 2012, 607). As such, educators remain disempowered in addition to having inadequate access to discourse and reinforce and uphold existing norms often at the expense of the learners who fall outside of the accepted norms.

Positionality informs not just behaviour but the response to an intervention designed to disrupt or transform a norm and is fundamental for consideration in any attempts at shifting existing discourse. Positionality is informed by culture, religion, class and age as well as the lived and embodied reality of each individual. To ignore the positionality of anyone is to fail to understand where they are coming from and as such to fail to address their own context: without meeting them where they are, or understanding where they are coming from, you remove the possibility of any transformation or change as a result of not addressing the root cause of the system of beliefs or of the lived reality of an individual. Positionality must be treated with the same reverence as power and language because it holds the key to unlocking an individual and their systemic reality. Without that, no fundamental transformation can take place.

6.4. What do the contours of an intervention look like?

The contours of any intervention within a Christian school space must include a focus on 'meeting people where they are', focused on generating a space where all who are present feel seen and included. The space needs to be a 'safe' or a 'brave' one, allowing participants to express vulnerability and enabling expressions of empathy which can serve to diminish feelings of shame and begin the process of understanding 'the other'. It must include all variations and perspectives on positionality and ideology if all participants are to feel 'seen and heard', which is the primary focus of the workshop in order to generate vulnerability and empathy, In addition to this, resources need to be available for both educators and learners: to empower educators in terms of their access to language and the safety of their own position as an educator. They need to understand the importance of shifting the stigma and exclusion of queer people as well as their own power to do so, and feel protected from recrimination or retaliation on the part of principals, school managers or parents.

In the context of any intervention in this space, attention needs to be paid to the power dynamics that exist within that environment and to attempt to transform those. The presence of change agents as an influence within a space outside of the 'workshop space' or 'intervention time' is also fundamental: change agents serve to uphold and catalyse transformation, working within the system to shape power transformation in an upward direction within a system (influencing those who hold power) as well as outward in a system in the sense of acting as a representative for those who are in the process of

transformation, demonstrating that change is possible, positive and an opportunity to be exposed to a new lived reality and reducing the 'othering' of those who fall outside of the norm in terms of sexuality or gender identity.

6.5.   Recommendations for intervention

Based on the research focused on contributing factors to the complexities of teaching sexuality and gender identity within Christian schools as well as the workshop process demonstrated by IAM, there are six recommendations for an intervention within schools. These recommendations are in addition to the existing process of a workshop, which includes a focus on language (access, interpretation and usage) and the role of power and how it is dismantled as well as an interrogation of scripture and insight into toxic theology and its effects.

The six recommendations on top of the existing work are: a focus on inclusion of a space that generates empathy; meeting people where they are; a consideration of the amount of time available for the contextual Bible study; an expansion and development of the resources available for educators and the process of empowering them; resources that include references (written and visual) of LGBTQI+ people; finally, the provision of support and resources that should be made available to learners.

(i)   The inclusion of an environment or a space that generates empathy within an intervention will have an influence on the rate of change and ability of participants to better understand the lived realities of another. In Reygan and Francis's (2015) work focused on the role of the emotions of educators in response to sexual and gender diversity, the role of the feelings of the educators themselves as well as inherited 'bitter knowledge' influenced their teaching as well as their understanding of sexual and gender identity. In order to begin to unravel and reshape the experiences and knowledge of the educators, an opportunity for them to experience empathy and to feel understood rather than inadequate, which could emphasise or ignite feelings of shame, is important. Shame in a patriarchal and Calvinist society with a strong overtone of toxic theology is a powerful cocktail that needs to be carefully managed.

In interviews with IAM coordinators, one of the keys for transformation that they have observed is in 'feeling seen' by another; in other words, feeling the empathy of another. Creating safe spaces where participants experience empathy can serve to catalyse and generate change in a space that will, by its nature, be a complicated and fairly tense one.

Additionally, educators should be taught and encouraged to create an empathetic and safe space within their schools or teaching environments: to foster spaces that are safe for learners and allow them to feel seen and understood as well. The feeling of being understood for learners is likely to enable them to interrogate and analyse their own feelings

in a space that is not immediately stigmatised or shameful, lessening the possibility for self-harm or suicide. It's possible to use Christian principles and ideals to do this, without compromising on every belief that learners and educators hold on to and it's something that could be considered as part of the process: to ensure that spaces are brave and rooted in the core, guiding Christian principles of kindness and acceptance of one another.

(ii)   The second recommendation is tied to the first and is a response to the observed pilot workshop: to meet people where they are. By withholding empathy or not meeting people where they are or understanding their views and positions, participants are alienated and hold on even more tightly to their views as a space that is 'safe' for them. In doing so, transformation and change possibilities are hugely diminished and reinterpretations of scripture (as in the contextual Bible study) will be met with hostility and fear rather than a process of engagement (even if that engagement is complicated). Challenging someone's deeply held views without creating a space where they feel safe and heard could possibly cause more harm and reinforce existing beliefs rather than generate positive transformation. Great care and time needs to be taken in the process of meeting people where they are, and an acceptance that 'where they are' may change. The process of transformation is not linear. Empathy and vulnerability are key tools in understanding the perspective of another and allowing oneself to truly meet the other where they are.

(iii)   Thirdly, being mindful of the complexity of the process of a contextual Bible study in a tightly wound and complex situation means that the allocation of time for a profoundly challenging exercise should be carefully considered. Individuals respond at different rates and in different ways and rushing a difficult exercise that undermines one of the power structures that fundamentally informs the system being dismantled (toxic theology) is to result in little or no change and substantial anger and confusion. In the observed workshop, the time allocated for the contextual Bible study was insufficient and it remains challenging to see how many of the participants would have re-engaged with that exercise after it was over in a way that was meaningful or positive: for the most part, the more conservative participants were outspoken about feeling angry, hurt and unheard, reinforcing their own perspective of the 'rightness' of their belief system.

(iv)   The final three recommendations are focused on resources. Firstly, resources need to be provided to educators: focused on empowering them and guiding them within their role as educators around sexuality and gender identity. A deeper understanding of the impact of their teaching and direct influence they have on the lives of queer pupils may serve to empower them in their role and challenge existing dynamics. Additionally, the curriculum needs to be specific about what educators should include in terms of language and subject matter. This will serve to uphold their decisions and their conduct in the face of challenges

by school managers or by parents and enable them to focus on meeting the needs of the curricula rather than meeting the needs of those who maintain existing power structures.

(v)   The second focus on resources, (the fifth recommendation) is that LGBTQI+ people be represented within any resources for educators and for learners. Visual and text references to those who are currently 'othered' serves to create an opportunity for discussion as well as begin the process of normalising those who fall outside of a heterosexual norm. It enables LGBTQI+ learners to see that a space does exist for them and that they are not alone and are not entirely outliers. It allows those who fall within the heterosexual norm to interrogate their ideals and their stigma and to see that those who fall outside of what is 'normal' exist and not just 'in the playground'.

(vi)   The final recommendation is for learners themselves: that the resources available to them are not just visual and in text but are also emotional and psychological. At the root of this body of work, outside of discussions around power, discourse, language and positionality is that reality that learners who are queer or who are considered queer are up to five times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers, and that queer learners are subject to extensive physical and verbal abuse, sexual assault and sometimes murder. Learners need support in the form of verbal allies, such as support staff who are able to listen to concerns or fears on the part of queer learners and offer guidance in times where they are being abused or are feeling isolated, whether at home or at school. As a first step, this may help alleviate feelings of being alone and could begin a process of learning about ways to diminish incidences of self-harm and abuse. If we listen to those who need to be heard, they may tell us what they need.

The process of destigmatising sexuality and gender identity in a country as complex as South Africa and with the barriers that exist in terms of religion, language and power is a slow one. If we begin by focusing on compulsory transformation of the institutional dialogue that exists in institutions of power and allow for individual processes of change over a long period of time, reinforcing new ideals and new ideas, reframing existing mindsets and dealing with the systemic contributors rather than the surface behaviours, the possibility exists that change and transformation can take place. A similar transformation happened in South African schools at the end of apartheid: schools became microcosms of mixed-race communities where language and power dynamics were abruptly turned on their heads in favour of an inclusive community. Hate speech became punishable, history lessons and languages for teaching were hotly contested and schools upheld ideals of mixed race classes in the face of concern, fear or anger on the part of parents. The transformation has not been smooth, and it remains incomplete and evolving. It is, however, the start of a template that could eventually shape the dynamic for transformation in terms of sexuality and gender identity diversity.

Timing and process as part of this are hugely important considerations. South Africa has been transforming from a racially segregated country for over 25 years and the process is far from complete and does not follow a linear progression. Contextualising the complexities around gender and sexuality identity education is imperative and needs to form part of any curriculum plan in order to give learners the opportunity to better understand the influences and factors that contribute to their inherited and institutional knowledge. Learners need to be enabled to consider and challenge existing beliefs and to be exposed to new information that they may have been excluded or shielded from before.

New information and context needs to be provided in a way that meets learners and their educators 'where they are' and accounts for existing structures of belief, allowing those to be slowly dismantled and examined rather than reinforced by existing stigma or new ideas hammered home in such a way that learners feel disempowered or disenfranchised by new information.

In order for the above to happen, educators and parents need to be empowered and placed in a position not governed and driven by fear. Educators need adequate support in terms of resources available to them, physical and emotional, and the resources available need to be representative: those who are designing curriculums, teaching them, illustrating them, supporting students both emotionally and administratively need to be diverse and representative of a spectrum of men, women, races, genders and sexual orientation. Diversity in ideas and representation will breed that diversity within a culture, enabling schools and the structures around them to see individuals for who they are and not as an abstract 'other' that represents a spectrum of fears.

6.6. Further research recommendations

Any work with a focus on the Christian schools landscape and gender and sexuality identity education could benefit from an improved understanding of power dynamics within schools themselves and how to transform those as well as discourse shift, and an improved understanding of the role of emotion in transformation.

Power dynamics and fear play a huge role in how LO teaching is approached and, in better understanding how they operate and can be disrupted, transformation can begin. Communities and parents need to be involved in wider research as they too play a role in the power dynamics around schools due to their locality within communities and their serving of the community. These power dynamics are especially powerful in a Christian context where the church is a primary holder of power and where many decisions are made in deference to the church or because 'it's in the Bible': even when these decisions and beliefs and power structures serve to create intricate complexities and cause unnecessary harm. Disrupting and diminishing fear related to power is an important part of transformation because as the power dynamics are transformed, so is the ability to 'other' those who fall outside of it.

Research focused on discourse transformation, specifically in the complex context of South Africa where numerous languages and cultures collide on a regular basis would assist with destigmatising LGBTQI+ individuals. It would also enable a better understanding of fundamental terms and concepts that would in turn undermine existing fears and stereotypes. Much of the fear and stigma around LGBTQI+ people is based on a lack of adequate vocabulary and understanding of existing vocabulary. Specifically, in cases where words exist in English but not in a different mother tongue, research focused on how to address this and to reshape the language that does exist would empower transformation and pave a way to begin inclusion of the marginalised.

The recommendation for further research relates to how transformation happens and the role of emotions including shame, empathy and vulnerability and their associated behaviours can play, in addition to other emotions not discussed in this paper and not researched. A better understanding of the role that specific emotions play could provide a spectrum of tools for transformation that are not yet fully comprehended or in place. If we can understand the behaviours associated with shame, and understand that these tend to be related self-harm or self-sabotage; and furthermore, if we can conclusively tie these to the feelings prompted by the stigma and prejudice around sexuality and gender identity, it provides a concrete emotion to focus on in terms of working with those who are marginalised.

Sexuality and gender identity is intrinsically 'you': it's part of who you are at your core and how you are in the world. To experience shame around those aspects of oneself is a debilitating, crippling experience. If empathy and vulnerability are the keys to diminishing that shame and to transforming that experience, a clear opportunity to work with LGBTQI+ people within South African schools exists and to examine ways in which empathetic and vulnerable spaces can be created in order to minimise shame and by association, the negative behaviours that accompany it.

Finally, in the spirit of 'do not make decisions about us, without us', research into resources that would be most useful for educators and learners, as told by the teachers and learners is key: understanding their physical and emotional needs. Asking educators and learners about their specific needs, fears and gaps in resources may provide information that is not immediately evident from the outside. Understanding what the problems are is one thing, but speaking to the people who live within the frame of power dynamics, discourse restraints and who are the 'keepers of the keys' for transformation may result in ideas and in suggestions that are difficult to conceive of from the outside, particularly if those who are marginalised or who are stigmatised form part of the network of change agents. Having marginalised people as part of the teams who work on transformation (who are the listeners and who work at designing the tools that have been requested by educators and learner) as well as on the part of the educators: that is, having the views of marginalised people who are teachers themselves could offer a perspective that would be invaluable and would inform the process of change in a way that those who remain in the centre or who are not stigmatised are unable to.

6.7.   To close

Despite the South African Constitution's insistence that all South Africans be allocated equal rights regardless of their gender or sexual identity, the reality on the ground remains far removed from that. The transformation and destigmatising of those who are queer would result in fewer instances of physical, verbal and emotional abuse perpetuated by educators, learners and parents as well as reduce the incidence of self-harming or suicide as a result of perceived or real prejudice. Schools have a fundamentally important role to play in this transformation as one of the core social spaces for learning and engagement. Without this shift, those who fall outside of a patriarchal, heterosexual norm will never be valued as much as those who fall within it, thus maintaining and upholding an untenable societal dynamic. These ideals of inclusion and embracing diversity should be an imperative goal for everyone and are, after all, one of the core Christian guiding principles: to love one another.

7.   BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **Born this Way**

Name of Researcher: **Toni Parsons**

Please initial all boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the consent form and details of this study dated **30/10/19** for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that the research on this project will include a written questionnaire as well as interviews conducted by the researcher.

4. I agree to my answers being used as part of the research

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Person   Date   Signature
taking consent.

Consent form date of issue: **[DATE]**
Consent form version number: **[VERSION]**   Page 1 of 1

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for 'Born this Way' Thesis

Premised on IAM Workshop and Praxis Reflection

1. What informs the structure of your workshop?

2. How do you determine what data and tools to include?

3. How do you describe your own positionality within IAM?

4. How relevant is your audience with regard to your workshop?

5. What are the core components for your workshop?

6. Do you modify the workshop as you go, and if so, when and how?

7. How do you manage/manipulate/transform the workshop as it happens, and what responses prompt this?

8. Are there any key themes or complication/hurdles you have observed in your work?

9. What is your role at IAM and in a workshop?

10. What is IAM's role in sexuality and gender diversity in the single gendered Christian school community?

11. What are the key areas that you have observed are complex during a workshop?

12. Are there any areas you cannot include in a workshop? Why?

13. How important do you think this work is and why?

14. Are there recurring themes or hurdles you have observed?

15. What, in your opinion, could help the work you do?

Appendix 3

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 12 November 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Toni Parsons from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, in the Theology Department doing work on Gender, Health and Religion, contactable on Mstoniparsons@gmail.com and +27820831133 working under the supervision of Professor Charlene van der Walt.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research into sexuality and gender diversity teaching at Christian schools. The aim and purpose of this research is to understand how sexuality is taught and what barriers may exist within Christian schools for teaching this topic. The study is expected to enroll three participants who work as part of the team at IAM. It will involve the following procedures: a questionnaire and a semi structured interview.

The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be one hour for an interview plus a written schedule.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: that you will discuss your work and experience in a confidential environment and discuss aspects that may be uncomfortable or sensitive. The researcher must disclose in full any appropriate alternative procedures and treatment etc. that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_TBC____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

BREC UKZN Oct 2008 1

INCLUSIVE & AFFIRMING MINISTRIES
Durbanville, Western Cape, South Africa
+27 (0)21 975 8142
info@iam.org.za

Registered as Nonprofit Organization with the Department of Welfare. Reg. no. 012-328
PBO Reg no. 18/11/13/337

To Whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, Michelle Boonzaaier, in my position as gatekeeper and Program Manager and on behalf the team at Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) give permission for :

Toni Parsons
Student Number: 219094966

Working on the Master's thesis titled:

Born This Way: A critical praxis reflection, contextualising the NGO 'Inclusive and Affirming Ministries' (IAM) workshop process focused on the dialogue, vocabulary and discourse development around sexuality and gender identity for learners at South African Christian schools.

To critically reflect on our praxis of the workshop conducted earlier this year as well as our preparation materials. I also give permission for Toni to conduct open ended interviews with the team, conditional on them giving their consent via the consent forms she will provide ahead of time.

Signed

Name: Michelle Boonzaaier
Title: Program Manager

Appendix 5

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

05 December 2019

Ms Toni Rosslyn Tatum Parsons (219094966)
School Of Rel Phil & Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Parsons,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000879/2019
Project title: Born This Way A critical praxis reflection, contextualising the NGO Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) workshop process focused on the dialogue, vocabulary and discourse development around sexuality and gender identity for learners at South African Christian schools.

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 27 November 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year from 05 December 2019.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/dd