

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOMOPHOBIC  
ATTITUDES OF FEMALE GRADE 12 STUDENTS AND PARENTAL ATTITUDES**

by

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**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree at another University .

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**ABSTRACT**

Prejudice can be defined as the possession of negative attitudes or beliefs that have the potential for people to behave in a discriminatory or hostile manner toward a person because they belong to a certain group. It is believed that attitudes are passed on and communicated inter-generationally. In this context attitudes were examined in a sample of Grade 12 pupils and their parents to establish whether there was a relationship between adolescents and parents attitudes toward homosexuals. Results support the hypothesis that parents' attitudes impact on daughters' attitudes but more specifically that daughters' attitudes are more closely related to mothers' attitudes than they are to fathers' attitudes. Findings for the Attitude Toward Lesbian and Gay men scale revealed that respondents demonstrated more negative attitudes toward gay men than they did toward lesbians, with male respondents (fathers) being more homophobic than females (mothers and daughters). These findings are discussed in terms of their implications for research, education strategies, and legislative amendments.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Prejudice can be defined as the possession of negative attitudes or beliefs that have the potential for people to behave in a discriminatory or hostile manner toward a person because they belong to a certain group. It is believed that attitudes are passed on and communicated inter-generationally. Adolescents are the products of the social environments in which they are developing. It is therefore posited that there is likely to be a socialisation effect on adolescents from their parents with regard to prejudice. The aim of the present study was threefold; (i) to compare the levels of homophobic attitudes toward lesbian and gay men in a sample of female scholars and their parents in South Africa, (ii), to investigate and compare whether female scholars' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were different from those of their parents, and (iii), to establish whether mothers' or fathers' homophobic attitudes impacted on their daughters attitudes.

It was decided to address the theory of the development and socialisation of prejudice from a Social Psychological perspective. Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory were combined within the context of Intergroup Relations to try and explain this phenomenon. These were placed within the broader framework of Social Constructionism in an attempt to try and illustrate how western socio-historic constructs of sexuality have contributed to the normalization of heterosexuality and thus the development of prejudice toward homosexuals.

Chapter 2 to 6 comprise a review of the literature providing a background to the development of prejudice of a sexual minority. Chapters 7 to 9 consist of the research study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 outlines historic eras from classical antiquity to the present that contributed to the western social construction of sexuality and heterosexuality being established as the norm. Chapter 4 outlines the concept of homosexuality and how it has been affected by different periods in history and the contribution of social institutions. A brief overview of the South African situation is provided and the chapter concludes with some suggestions on how prejudice can be reduced. Chapter 5 covers factors that impact on the sexual socialisation of adolescents that may

contribute to the development of prejudicial attitudes. Educational strategies that may assist adolescents develop a healthy sexual identity and reduce prejudice toward others have been described. Chapter 6 summarises the literature reviewed. Chapter 7 outlines the aims and the hypotheses of the study, giving an account of the methodology used in data collection and analysis. Chapter 8 contains the results and discussion of the study as well as implications of the research. Chapter 9 summarises and concludes the study.

## 1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are certain terms that are used in this research that would be useful to define from the outset so as to avoid any misunderstanding. *Sexuality* refers to a socially constructed personal sexual identity. *Gender* is defined as male or female, and is based on the biological / genital makeup of the individual and *sex* refers to the activity of genital stimulation that has the potential to produce orgasm. The term *Homosexual* is used to describe either gay men or lesbian women, and refers to an individual of either gender who becomes erotically aroused or is emotionally attracted to someone of their same gender. *Homosexuality* therefore relates to a person's sexual identity, where their object(s) of desire would consist of people of their same gender. *Homophobia* is defined as prejudice against lesbians and gay men or negative attitudes and reactions toward homosexuals.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONSTRUCTION OF PREJUDICE (THEORETICAL MODEL)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

By analysing the psychosocial phenomenon of prejudice (people's negative attitudes), it is hoped that some understanding may be gained regarding how and why beliefs about groups of people develop, exist and are maintained within people's cognitive structures. The theoretical framework to be employed for the following analysis combines Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory (Allport, 1954; Baron & Byrne, 1994; Brewer & Miller, 1984; Brown, 1995; Campbell, 1992; Louw-Potgieter, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The majority of research referred to was developed in order to try and explain racial prejudice. It has been necessary therefore to select those studies or aspects of specific studies that can be adapted or used in their entirety to explain and give meaning to the nature of prejudice within the context of sexual minorities.

Within the context of the current research project, both the outcome of prejudice and the feelings of individuals effecting prejudice as well as the way in which it develops as a group or social phenomenon involving and affecting individuals will be addressed. Negative attitude formation or prejudice can be deconstructed to some extent using the social psychological framework of Intergroup Relations. The theoretical framework used in this research consists of the development and maintenance of self-esteem utilising stigmatising mechanisms within Social Identity Theory, which has been combined with the process of categorisation and stereotyping within Social Categorisation Theory. These intergroup processes are relevant only within the social situation, including the cultural context, in which they take place.

#### 2.2 INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Intergroup Relations can be described as the inter-and-intra-relationships between the individual and society, a combination of the effect an individual has on others, including

institutions within society, and their effect on the individual (de la Rey, 1991; Foster, 1991). Intergroup relations has been described as consisting of two interrelated paradigms, Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory, that coexist on a continuum dependent on the social context or type of group to which one belongs (de la Rey, 1991; Tajfel, 1978). Intergroup Relations, simplistically explained, comprises relationships perceived as being made up of two groups (in-group and out-group), within the context of the individual and social dynamics that combine to create and maintain these groups. An individual would belong to their specific in-group and 'others' would belong to the out-group. Intergroup Relations is not a static notion in that individuals simultaneously fulfil different roles both personal and societal (domestic, vocational, political, etc.). Someone who, for example, is part of the in-group in a certain situation because they belong to the same educational institution, may support an opposing political party and thus be considered part of the out-group in another situation (Tajfel, 1978).

### 2.2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory involves the construction and development of an individual's perception of self, either positive or negative, based on their membership of different social groups (Brown, 1995; Campbell, 1992; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994; Louw-Potgieter, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Any social interaction that takes place between two or more people consists of two interrelated processes that can be located at different points along a personal / social continuum. The first involves the personal qualities of the individuals concerned, and the other is related to the individual's membership of particular groups. An individual's social identity is made up of those socially constructed groupings to which they belong, such as race, class, gender and numerous other sub-groupings (de la Rey, 1991; Tajfel, 1978).

Individuals have a need to perceive themselves positively and part of our self-image is constructed from the groups to which we belong. It is therefore fundamental that our personal in-groups be judged more positively in comparison to those to which we do not belong. A threat to a person's social identity is likely to elicit a response whereby the person will try to set their group apart by classifying it in more positive terms than other groups. Relationships between groups of people tend to be organised according to differing degrees

of status and power that leads to a continuous state of flux in which groups attempt to establish some form of stasis. Groups that are advantaged in that they have status and power tend to have minimal identity problems (Brown, 1995; Oakes et al, 1994). Heterosexuals as a majority group, for example, have pre-established distinguishing attributes that enables group members to share in the eminence and the resultant positive self-image.

Groups possessing inferior status, such as homosexuals, may attempt to utilise a number of methods in order to improve a group's status or even an individual's concept of self. An individualistic method is where a member of a negatively perceived group chooses to leave that group and enter another more elevated group. This is a common strategy used by homosexuals, who are able to use this method as often little or no evidence exists to suggest that they belong to an out-group. They are therefore able to successfully integrate themselves within the more prestigious heterosexual in-group (Brown, 1995).

Movement between groups is not always possible. Boundaries of groups may be fixed by physiological attributes (gender and race). Identity would then be based on the membership and preservation of that group rather than individuality. Other groups with similar negative status would then be evaluated comparatively in order to appraise them more negatively (Brown, 1995; Tajfel, 1978). Another strategy to bypass those elements used previously to comparatively evaluate themselves negatively would be to distinguish more positive aspects of their group and evaluate themselves accordingly thereby improving their social identities (Brown, 1995).

A more confrontational strategy, and one that has been used historically and is still used by homosexuals and other minority groups, is the process whereby the less prestigious out-group attempts to politically provoke the prominent in-group in order to try and precipitate social and economic change. The intended outcome of this type of strategy would be a more equitable status between groups, and democratic power sharing relations. As a more radical and psychologically risky method, it is more likely to be used when boundaries between two groups are not very flexible, the status differences are fairly precarious, and the discrepancies are inequitable and the product of bias (Brown, 1995). Internationally and locally, the Gay Liberation movement has been politically motivated to change the power dynamics that exist in order to create equality for homosexuals based on the argument of basic human rights.

The principles contained within Social Identity Theory are pertinent to the development of prejudice toward homosexuals. Homosexuals and other minority groups have successfully used certain methods contained within the principles of Social Identity Theory to establish a more positive group identity, or to improve their own concept of self. Social Identity Theory combined with Social Categorisation Theory is particularly applicable to prejudice and homosexuality where the majority group, heterosexuals, develop negative attitudes or prejudice based on the process of categorisation and stigmatisation as a result of having their position of power threatened.

### 2.2.2 Social Categorisation Theory

'Categorical differentiation' is a human cognitive process whereby objects and people are classified into groups. This procedure simplifies the complexity of the environment (experienced by human beings) by classifying it into discrete categories so that similarities within a category, and differences between categories, tend to be magnified (Tajfel, 1978). Social Categorisation can be therefore be described as an essentially cognitive-psychological process that takes place within an individual whereby people are classified into groups (Stephan, 1999).

We live in a social environment that is in constant flux. Much of what happens to us is related to the activities of groups to which we do or do not belong; and the changing relations between these groups require constant readjustments of our understanding of what happens and constant causal attributions about the why and how of the changing conditions of our life. (Tajfel, 1978, p.424)

The above quotation illustrates how individuals constantly analyse and interpret their world and the meanings of everything that goes on around them. This process whereby social categories are created takes place on two levels, cognitively within the individual, as well as within the social context. The cognitive component of Intergroup Relations therefore refers to an individual's identification with a particular group - the *feeling* of belonging and thereby tacitly agreeing to be labelled accordingly, either by oneself or by others. By the nature of the aforementioned process, there thus exists that group with which one compares one's own group. This is usually facilitated by the methods of generalisation and oversimplification of

common attributes of the group or members of that group, which either actually exist or have been projected onto them (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1978).

According to Allport (1954), five main features make up the process of categorisation;

1. Large, substantial groups and associations are formed as a way of simplifying our existence and decision-making processes. This is a cognitive process whereby everyday life experiences are categorised according to similarities and differences. When an individual experiences something new, they attempt to find familiarities in the experience in order to assimilate into an already established category.
2. Categorisation enables as much information as possible to be incorporated into one pre-established group. This requires the ordering of as many experiences, related events, and thoughts into a category that already exists, rather than creating a new category for each new experience as this would lead to an overload of information.
3. One of the functions of the category is that it allows individuals to recognise an affiliated object or experience in a short period of time. Objects (people and events) possess certain identifying features that predispose them to being classified under a certain specific generalised heading.
4. A category possesses a particular ideological and emotional quality that tends to infiltrate and imbue all that is contained within that category. An inanimate object such as a tree, in that it has no emotional component would be classified as a concept. A member of categories where there is an emotional association regarding an object or experience (race, religion, nationality, sexual preference etc), is more likely to be prejudged by the pre-established criteria of that category.
5. Some categories are constructed according to accurate and factual information, which is reinforced by exposure to repetition of similar related experiences. Other categories may be created from fictitious information, accentuated by a lack of knowledge, and emphasised by a social or group imagination. There is frequently a considerable emotional component to this form of categorisation and evidence contrary to common beliefs is therefore often disregarded.

Where the person categorising lacks knowledge or is ignorant of the facts about a particular group in question, they are more likely to seek out and identify those characteristics based on myths and stereotypes. Those characteristics contrary to the stereotypes are ignored or classed as an exception to the rule (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1978).

The process of social categorisation has been pertinent to the socio-cultural context of research in South Africa where historically the apartheid system was constructed on the basis of differences between groups of people, based on an unequal sharing of economic resources and political power. Some of the social categories into which people were, and still continue to be, divided are class, gender, language and political party membership. These may overlap to the extent that they contribute toward maintaining repressive powers in place, through a means of divide and rule (de la Rey, 1991).

### 2.3 STEREOTYPES

Stereotyping is both part of, and an extension of, the process of categorisation carried out by human beings in order to simplify their existence (Oakes et al, 1994; Tajfel, 1978). According to Tajfel (1978) a psychological difference exists between on the one hand, impartial categorisation or concept formation, and biased stereotyping on the other, which serves to place people into discrete emotive categories and thereby exaggerates the differences between them. Prejudiced stereotyping according to Tajfel (1978) is made up of two components. Firstly, the characteristic being evaluated must be relevant specifically to the 'other' group and serve to accentuate the differences rather than the similarities between the two groups. Secondly, the classifier specifically seeks out and identifies these characteristics because they have a vested emotional interest in making such a prejudgment. Tajfel (1978, p.427) thus defines stereotypes as follows:

In the case of large-scale social groups (e.g. national, racial, religious, etc) the resulting social 'images' are referred to as 'stereotypes', i.e. sets of fixed ideas and beliefs held by members of one or more groups about members of another group.

The process of stereotyping according to Tajfel (1978) involves the following;

- I. People are readily inclined to define groups by means of generalised judgements on the basis of exaggerated commonalities that may or may not exist.
- II. Stereotypes remain constant over prolonged periods of time and are often continued intergenerationally.
- III. Social, political and economic factors often precipitate minor changes in stereotypes over time.
- IV. Group relations impact heavily on stereotypes in that they become more dominant should groups be in conflict.
- V. Children are prone to using stereotypes as a form of loose classification prior to them being able to associate them with any one particular group.
- VI. The most difficult time to try and change or rectify a stereotype is during group conflict.

Within the realm of Intergroup Relations stereotyping or assigning generalised group characteristics is more likely to take place according to the simplification precept, more specifically, when little or nothing is known about the individual being categorised. The group classificatory system is more flexible and open to change should contrary information be presented when group conflict or competition for power or resources is absent. When the situation is such that the process is emotionally charged, contrary information is likely to be denied in an attempt to accentuate the negative group components and thus increase the divide between the two opposing groups. Many stereotypes are created and entrenched becoming socially accepted through the institutions of politics, law, and religion. These are assisted by mass media in the form of radio, television and films as well as reading material such as magazines, novels, and non-fiction history texts. The simplest children's stories contain culturally specific constructs of good and evil and what is socially acceptable and what is not (Allport, 1954; Oakes et al, 1994; Tajfel, 1978).

Allport (1954, p.109) suggested that stereotypes are not the only reason behind prejudice or the rejection of specific groups; they are however 'primary images' used by individuals to justify their prejudice. Stereotypes can be described as a negative or positive accentuation of group traits that some members (not all of the group) may possess. More often stereotypes are completely fictitious and have been constructed and perpetuated through myths, and others are the exaggeration of an overgeneralisation. By assimilating and believing these myth-based, non-fact stereotypes, people are hyper-sensitised into anticipating that a member of the stereotyped group will behave in a particular stereotypic manner or possess some of the stereotypic attributes associated with that group (Allport, 1954; Mohr, 1992; Tajfel, 1978).

It has been demonstrated that social categorisation is a process whereby individuals classify others in order to simplify their existence. There is however a tendency for people to oversimplify the procedure by placing individuals into discrete pre-established categories rather than evaluating them individually. Stereotypes are the products of this form of oversimplification where a certain behaviour or trait common to a few members of a group is over generalised to the group as a whole. Having outlined the process whereby individuals evaluate and categorise others, the following section will explain how stigmas develop.

## 2.4 STIGMA

When individuals meet and interact with people for the first time, they tend to assess that person, placing them into very large stereotypic categories. Initial visual impressions and cognitive perceptions are evaluated and correlated in order to categorise individuals according to their 'social identity'. This involves both their personal attributes, for example, whether they appear honest or not, as well as structural characteristics such as race, gender and social status. As people get to know a person better they assimilate the knowledge that they accumulate during the interaction, moving away from the larger categorisation and individualising the person through the real rather than the imagined attributes that they possess. A stigma would therefore represent an observed or non-observable characteristic that would be judged different from, and unacceptable to an individual (Goffman, 1963; Page, 1984). Stigma is defined by Page (1984, p.1) as follows; "Whether it is a visible mark

or an invisible stain, stigma acquires meaning through the emotion it generates within the person bearing it and the feeling and behaviour toward him of those affirming it.”

There may be discrepancies between an individual's personal identity and their social identity. Although aspects of these identities should overlap, by managing information about oneself, a person's social identity may not correspond with their personal identity. This is particularly possible where, for example, an individual does not wish to reveal, and is capable of hiding information that may lead to them being stigmatised. Being classified as 'normal' rather than 'stigmatised' has positive compensations, therefore those people who are able to conceal their stigmatised identity, will, when appropriate, choose to do so (Goffman, 1963).

A negative consequence of identity concealment is the necessity to live a double life, as there are those persons who are aware of an individual's stigmatised status and those that do not know. This can lead to anxiety as individuals have to remain constantly cognisant of the amount of knowledge the different people with whom they are interacting possess, in order to maintain the *status quo*. Those concealing their stigma may therefore find themselves confronted with different options for concealment or revelation depending on the social situation in which they find themselves. Firstly, in places where, were their stigmatised status revealed they would be unwelcome; it would be advisable for them to conceal their stigma. Secondly, in places where they would be tolerated despite their stigma, they may or may not choose to reveal their stigmatised status. Thirdly, there are places normally amongst people with the same stigma, or those to whom the stigma has already been revealed, which are safe. Here, they would be accepted despite, or because of, their stigmatised identity (Goffman, 1963).

Information control is particularly relevant in relationships, especially close friendships or intimate partnerships. The more time people spend together, getting to know each other, the more information they need to share. The hiding of pertinent facts about oneself could lead to the termination of such a relationship, should they be discovered. Another dynamic of information control is created when the stigmatised individual, being able to hide their stigma successfully, migrates between categories. The less distinguishable stigmatised persons are from non-stigmatised persons, the more likely they are to perceive themselves as non-stigmatised, especially when the stigma is not visibly identifiable. Feelings of ambivalence

can result when individuals are split between two groups especially when they attempt to dissociate themselves from the members of their own stigmatised group.

Stigmatised people are, after all, products of their culture and their society and the normalisation processes that take place within their culture in society. This normalisation process has the potential to lead to an individual disapproving of and feeling negatively disposed toward his or her own stigmatised group. Their loyalties can become divided between the stigmatised and non-stigmatised categories, leading to feelings of guilt, and resentment toward one or both of the groups and its members. Furthermore, there is a need for the stigmatised individual to continuously keep updating their concealment strategies to prevent their methods of deception from being identified and their stigmatised status detected (Goffman, 1963).

According to Goffman (1963) there are two categories of individuals who are less likely to alienate the stigmatised individual, and will even try to assist them. Firstly, there are those who have the same stigma. Stigmatised individuals often form groups, organisations and sub-cultures that serve to unite them both socially and politically. The other type of people who accept stigmatised individuals include those individuals who know the stigmatised individual personally, having often gone through a painful process of change to accommodate the stigmatised person and who are in turn accepted by them. These often include those related to the stigmatised individual either familiarly (parents or siblings), socially (friends or partners), or vocationally (colleagues and peers). The counter effect of a person associating with stigmatised persons could be the potential to be given the same negative label (Goffman, 1963).

Goffman (1963, p.157) posited that stigma is the product of, "ordinary deviation from the common", rather than "uncommon deviations from the ordinary". What this would suggest is that societies are made up of individuals who, as a group, create a set of norms as well as ideals. Deviation from these norms and ideals are punished either institutionally through regulatory structures such as policing and the law, or covertly by excluding the 'deviant' from the privileges associated with being 'normal'. Thus Goffman (1963, p170) refers to the "normal deviant" in that the stigmatised individual is deviating from a socially constructed norm.

## 2.5 ATTITUDES

No common definition of attitude appears to have been agreed upon within the domain of Social Psychology. Attitudes cannot be observed, but they are capable to some extent of determining behaviour. Attitudes can therefore be described as a cognitive state of being, often expressed in certain behavioural traits. Social psychologists originally situated them somewhere between stimulus and response. Jaspers (1978) describes attitudes as an, 'acquired behavioural disposition' created by the remnants of historic experience contributed to by socialisation and reinforcement.

From a Social Constructionist perspective, these behavioural expressions of an internally held cognitive state are not only found within individuals. They are also found in groups of people in varying degrees amongst different cultures and may infiltrate large numbers of an entire society. These attitudes have been developed and perpetuated over time. Attitudes have been measured by assessing individual's responses to questions about their likes and dislikes, as well as evaluating their observable and implied attitudinal responses to specific situations. Social psychologists measured attitudes in an attempt to try and predict behaviour. This was largely unsuccessful due to methodological problems, and also because attitudes are not the only causative criterion in behaviour (Jaspers, 1978).

Theorists in the late 60s came up with a three-component structure of attitudes that consisted of the cognitive, affective and conative. The cognitive and affective refer to the representation, or mental picture in a person's head about which they feel something emotionally (affect), either positive or negative. The third aspect, conative, refers to the behaviour or action the individual takes when faced by the object stimulus. Fishbein's extension of this theory in Jaspers (1978) elaborates the cognitive and affective aspects. He emphasised that the perceptual process consists of an evaluative process in which the object or an issue is evaluated according to associations often consisting of preconceived generalities (Jaspers, 1978). One such negative social attitude is Prejudice.

## 2.6 PREJUDICE

The word prejudice evolved from the Latin noun *praejudicium*, which has come to acquire the meaning to judge without sufficient evidence or to sentence without trial, thus resulting in negative or positive emotions (Allport, 1954). Allport (1954, p.7) defines prejudice as; "...an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group".

Allport's definition, by isolating the person or their membership to a specific group, individualises the phenomenon of prejudice. This individualisation is further illustrated by the implication, inherent in Allport's definition, that only a single person's feelings are involved, and that these feelings are a product of that person. Brown (1995) expands on Allport's definition by proposing that to examine prejudice, specifically negative prejudice, it is necessary to treat it as a group process wherein individuals are the main role players. These individuals bring into the situation their own unique emotions, ways of thinking, and ways of doing things. Brown (1995, p.8) therefore defines prejudice as; "The holding of derogatory social attitudes or cognitive beliefs, the expression of negative affect, or the display of hostile or discriminatory behaviour towards members of a group on account of their membership of that group."

Within a social psychological framework, Brown's (1995) definition addresses prejudice as a group phenomenon, stressing that groups are made up of individuals. Prejudice is therefore explained as a negative response to a particular group rather than toward the individual. However, individuals of a group may be targeted. When this occurs, it is more likely to be their belonging to the prejudiced group that led to them being ostracised or becoming victims of abuse (Brown, 1995).

A large portion of a specific society often share a particular prejudice, including its various cultures and sub-cultures, whose members base their opinions on commonly held negative stereotypes of the out-group. Thus prejudice can be expressed as the negative feelings and responses of one group toward another specifically negatively perceived group, normally within the context of power relations based on either competition for resources, dissimilar status, or disparate numbers within the opposing groups (Aronson, 1992; Brown, 1995).

Prejudice may also evolve from other socio-cultural situations such as economic exploitation, gender inequality, fear, differing values and intrinsic belief systems (Allport, 1954). All of these can be further compounded through ignorance and a resistance to acquire further knowledge (Tajfel, 1978).

## 2.7 REDUCING PREJUDICE

### 2.7.1 Contact and Attitude change

The following section aims to illustrate a way in which members of an out-group can attempt to reduce negative attitudes toward themselves. Lesbian and gay men are representatives of a stigmatised group and as such have the potential to change the stereotyped perception of the group as a whole. Attitudes have been defined as an inward disposition or cognitive status, socio-historically constructed and common to a significant proportion of a group of people at a specific point in time that may contribute to people's behaviour (Jaspers, 1978). As Jaspers (1978, p.263) states, "Most attempts to change people's feelings about certain issues by providing them with new information about the issue are based upon the implicit idea that cognitive and affective components of attitudes are positively related". Thus where negative attitudes exist that are based on an individual's as well as the sub-cultural assimilation of negative stereotyped beliefs, so too exists the need to seek attitudinal change in order to encourage democratisation of existing power hierarchies and the inclusion of marginalised minorities.

Familiarity may not always have the positive effect of reducing prejudice. Often negative attitudes are retained, especially when they have been ingrained in an individual or within a particular society over long periods of time and there is no motivational reason to change them (Goffman, 1963). Humans are also very selective about the information they retain; that is, should they be exposed to contradictory examples regarding a preconceived categorisation, it is more likely that this information will be classed as an exception and thus disregarded. Should the information fit the categorisation it would be more readily accepted (Allport 1954).

Homosexuals, because of the stereotypes that have developed and been perpetuated over time, are a negatively perceived group. Their otherness tends to lead to fear and ostracisation. As illustrated by Clark (1987, p.10),

Because we represent change we are viewed as a threat by some. Because we are unknown to many we seem foreign and therefore frightening or dangerous. Because some view us as dangerous we agitate the deeper fears that lie hidden in their personal insecurity. It is inevitable and necessary that the larger community get to know us as the individuals we are, rather than the stereotype they have learned to believe us to be.

To assist in eradicating these negative feelings it is necessary that a form of individualising process take place. Recent empirical research (Cahill, 1998a; Herek, 1988, 1997; Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Herek and Glunt, 1993) has shown that interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians does in fact improve an individual's attitude toward gay people in general. According to research findings (Herek and Glunt, 1993), people who are more open to the disclosure of a person's negatively perceived status are generally more educated, politically liberal, and female.

#### 2.7.1.1 Stigma and contact

Goffman (1963) suggests that in a formal contact experience between people who do not know each other, it is more likely that they will classify each other on the basis of stereotypical categories. As they get to know each other better, this categorized assessment is diminished and more attention is paid to the individual's unique characteristics. A stigma such as homosexuality is concealable in that there are no overt, physical signs revealing a person's sexual identity (Goffman, 1963).

Herek and Capitanio (1996) propose that the extent to which a person is able to hide their stigmatised status, correlates with the level of prejudice to which they are exposed. When a person's stigma is evident, such as skin colour, in-group members assess that individual within the context of their out-group status. These stereotyped ideas regarding the stigmatised group negatively affect the impression of an individual from that group. It is therefore possible and favourable for a homosexual person who is able to successfully hide

their out-group status to be judged on criteria other than their negative stereotyped group affiliation.

Social Identity theory postulates that people are more likely to want to be evaluated from the more agreeable position of being part of the majority group, individuals are thus more likely to hide their minority status. Those individuals who choose to reveal their stigmatised status, do so to a select few. According to research (Brewer and Miller, 1984; Herek and Capitano, 1996), if the person to whom the information is being revealed already has a positive perception of the individual, they may individuate and personalise other members of the stigmatised group, thus reducing their prejudice toward the minority group as a whole.

Historically, research on attitudes, prejudice and Intergroup Relations has addressed evident stigmas such as that of race. Herek and Capitano (1996), however, focus on intergroup contact and attitudes between heterosexuals (majority group) and homosexuals (concealable stigma group). Homosexuality, in that it is an aspect of an individual's identity that is not externally manifested, enables gay men and lesbians to be perceived and evaluated on certain occasions as heterosexual. In some instances homosexuals themselves, unaware of their own sexual orientation, have fulfilled the societal / heterosexual norm by marrying or being in a relationship with someone of the opposite gender (Clark, 1987). Many people therefore only become aware of a family member or friend's homosexuality when they are either informed by the homosexual person themselves or by a third party (Herek and Capitano, 1996).

#### 2.7.1.2 The Contact Hypothesis

Allport (1954, p.267) proposed that, "...many forms of prejudice can be reduced by equal-status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals". The theoretical basis of research into Intergroup Relations pertaining to improving individuals' attitudes toward homosexuals is located within the framework of Social Identity Theory and based on Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis. To elaborate, the Contact Hypothesis postulates that an individual's behaviour and attitudes toward members of an out-group will become more positive after personal interaction with them. As there is no clear dividing line between groups because sexual orientation is not visible, homosexuals tend to move between the two identities to avoid stigmatisation, possibly only disclosing their potentially negative status to close friends and family members (Goffman, 1963; Herek & Capitano 1996).

According to Allport's (1954) hypothesis, where group differentiation in intergroup relations predominates, a number of features have to be present to enable members of different groups to develop positive regard for out-group members and effect a positive change in attitudes. These include:

1. The individuals from both groups need to be of equal status. Furthermore, the contact experience should take place within an atmosphere of "egalitarian intergroup association" that promotes group equality. This refers to the type of shared values that individuals bring to the situation or obtain from it, which should be based on both the equality of all the members as well as the individuality of each member that may lead to a positive self-identity.
2. The individual representing the out-group must possess attributes that are different to the previously held stereotyped beliefs held by the in-group member. Sufficient information regarding the out-group member needs to be revealed to enable them to be perceived as an individual rather than a member of the stereotyped out-group (Amir, 1969; Brewer & Miller, 1984).
3. Prevailing stereotypes regarding the out-group need to be removed. Individualising out-group members depends on the amount of contradictory information regarding stereotyped images to which an individual is exposed. Unfortunately, information "encoding" and memory biases exist which make it difficult to change existing stereotyped assumptions and therefore an out-group individual who does not conform to the stereotype is more likely to be categorized as an exception to the rule. A need therefore exists for access to numerous exposures to contradictory information, spread over numerous group members.
4. The contact experience should take place under amiable conditions. Amir's (1969) research indicates that should contact take place within "unfavourable conditions" it could result in intergroup tension and increased prejudice.
5. Members of both groups need to have reason to depend on each other to some extent, for example, cooperating with one another to achieve joint goals. This apparently reduces hostility towards, and increases friendships between, members of the groups.

According to Brewer and Miller (1984) equal status interaction is difficult to achieve as differences in status that already exist tend to permeate new situations. It is also not possible to remove status as overall status boundaries become less distinct, and high status group members are likely to resist in an attempt to try and recreate their group's positive identity. Other status criteria of positive social identity that would permeate category membership would need to be introduced.

Other factors that need to be taken into consideration in intergroup contact include those processes that have preceded the contact situation. These include, length and extent of intergroup conflict, 'ethnocentric value-systems', individual personality variables, and previous experience. According to Brewer and Miller's (1984) theoretical perspective, the most important factors are those that allow for an individual's exposure to information regarding other people and that person's ability to assimilate that knowledge.

Research findings (Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Herek and Glunt, 1993) reveal that heterosexuals who reported having personal contact with homosexuals indicate more positive attitudes towards gay people than do heterosexuals who report having had no contact. A number of factors affect the relationship between contact and attitudes, one being that people who have had multiple contact experiences with homosexuals display more positive attitudes, even though knowing one homosexual had a more positive result than not knowing any. It has also been revealed that, "degree of intimacy and direct disclosure" were positively correlated and that having a close friendship with a homosexual individual most often led to disclosure regarding their stigmatised sexual orientation. Herek and Capitanio (1996) therefore relate these findings back to the Contact Hypothesis: "Interpersonal relationships characterised by intimacy, shared values, and common goals are more likely than superficial or distant relationships to be associated with favourable attitudes toward gay people as a group".

### 2.7.1.3 The outcome of Contact

Herek and Capitanio (1996) point out that most heterosexuals know very little about gay people and in general hold negative attitudes. They suggest that there are 3 possible responses to a heterosexual person learning of an acquaintance's homosexuality. They could, (i) attach pre-existing anti-gay stereotypes and attitudes and possibly assess past experiences

involving that person in a negative way consistent with those prejudices; (ii) maintain positive feelings toward the person regarding them as different from the rest, i.e. an atypical case that is not representative of the larger gay population; or (iii) still have positive feelings toward the person and thus positively personalise the general homosexual category. The authors speculate that the third option is the least likely outcome.

It is possible then that the disclosure of personal information to the heterosexual from a close homosexual friend or family member could be of positive benefit to them both as it may include an improvement and better understanding in their relationship. A more important outcome from an intergroup perspective is that the heterosexual, having been exposed to information contradictory to their previously held stereotypical attitudes, may individualize members of the group (homosexuals) and therefore perceive homosexuals in general more positively (Herek and Capitano, 1996).

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

The theoretical model used to explain the construction of prejudice has been a combination of Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory within the context of Intergroup Relations. These two theories combine psychological and social processes that facilitate the simplification of environmental information. The outcome is the development of stereotypes whereby generalised group characteristics, often constructed on myths and fictitious exaggeration, are assigned to all members of a particular group. A stigma, or general negative perception develops whereby all members of the group are perceived to possess the negative characteristics that have been assigned to that particular group.

Attitudes as a cognitive schema have been created by memory traces of historic experience and are contributed to by socialisation and reinforcement. Prejudice has been described as a negative social attitude that may lead to hostile or discriminatory behaviour being expressed toward a member of a particular group within the context of power relations. Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis, although originally formulated on racial prejudice has also been used to address the reduction of prejudice where attributes, be they positive or negative, are not visible, such as in the case of homosexuals.

Within the context of interpersonal contact with homosexuals, family and friends of gay people, through disclosure, will have been exposed to individualised aspects of the minority group. Research findings suggest that this has the potential to facilitate a positive attitude formation regarding the group as a whole. Furthermore, it allows homosexuals to be perceived as individuals in their own right in spite of their social categorisation within the stigmatised minority group. Thus disclosure or "coming out" is part of a suggested solution to reducing prejudice toward individual gay men and lesbians, and homosexuals in general. The next chapter will address the socio-historic construction of sexuality whereby heterosexuality has been entrenched as the norm.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will attempt to illustrate how the Western conception of sex and sexuality are socially constructed. The social construct of sex and sexuality appear to have been influenced by different periods in history which led to change, although not necessarily progressive change. An ideology is not necessarily left behind in a previous epoch, especially if it is to the advantage of the dominant power structures. Rather, it is reformulated throughout history and becomes entrenched via institutions whereby binaries are created representing what is 'normal' and what is not. Heterosexuality, as the norm is one such doctrine. Thus sexual identities and sexual activities are strictly confined within, and defined by, the explicit and implicit socially constructed boundaries that have been put in place.

#### 3.2 SEX AND SEXUALITY

To address the topic of sex and sexuality from a Social Constructionist perspective is not an attempt to generalise or deny the role of the individual. Groups are made up of individuals whose feelings, experiences and behaviour constitute the group's meanings. Sex and sexuality are intensely private issues, although their meaning has been constructed within a public context. They are subjects that cause nervousness and apprehension, for they have the potential to produce both pleasure and anxiety (Giddens, 1992; Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985). These factors make sex and sexuality very difficult to define and even more difficult to generalise about, as their meanings have developed over time, in different socio-economic, political and historic contexts, and are as individual and personal as the person who experiences them (Padgug, 1999; Vance, 1999). As stated by Vance (1999, p.43),

Because a sexual act does not carry with it a universal social meaning, it follows that the relationship between sexual acts and sexual meanings is not fixed... Cultures provide

widely different categories, schema, and labels for framing sexual and affective experiences. These constructions not only influence individual subjectivity and behaviour, but they also organize and give meaning to collective sexual experience through, for example, the impact of sexual identities, definitions, ideologies and regulations.

### 3.2.1 Individual sexuality

Sex, has been defined as the activity of genital stimulation that has the potential to produce orgasm and facilitate energy catharsis, whereas sexuality is the socially constructed sexual aspect of an individual's personal identity involving the object(s) of desire that have the potential to arouse them sexually. Psychological well-being has been described as the outcome of being able to succumb to, and enjoy the pleasure of sex (Reich, 1973).

Authors (Giddens, 1992; Padgug, 1999; Reich, 1973) describe the subjective importance of the human capacity 'to love' especially within the context of relationships. Giddens (1992) asserts that sexuality, both personal and social, needs to be revolutionised. Individuals need to be freed from power structures and institutions such as religion and the law that have historically dominated and oppressed sexuality to the benefit of patriarchal power. The outcome of such freedom would be to produce large-scale liberation (Giddens, 1992). 'Plastic sexuality' is the phrase used by Giddens (1992) to describe the ideal toward which one should strive. He describes it as follows,

Plastic sexuality is decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction...Plastic sexuality can be moulded as a trait of personality and thus is intrinsically bound up with the self. At the same time - in principle - it frees sexuality from the rule of the phallus, from the overweening importance of male sexual experience. (Giddens (1992, p.2)

### 3.2.2 Sex and Sexuality as social concepts

Sex, as an activity, may be described as an individual experience taking place within a particular historically and culturally constituted context to which a group meaning is attached. The essence of sex although defined by a shared meaning of words, is as

diversified and as individualised as the infinite number of human beings that exist, whether they partake in the activity or not. Some of that meaning in that it has been constructed historically may be shared by members of particular cultures and sometimes more broadly within and between societies (Lear, 1997; Vance, 1999).

Sexuality as a term developed from the word sex and came into existence in the nineteenth century. As a social psychological phenomenon, one's sexual identity can be defined as the persons to whom one relates both physically and psychologically within a sexual context (Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985). Lear (1997) defines human sexual behaviour as a form of communication in which individual participants are part of a socially constructed activity. This activity can be described in different culturally contextual terminology that possesses its own unique particular meanings. Weeks (1985, p.3) states;

Sexuality is as much about words, images, ritual and fantasy as it is about the body: the way we think about sex fashions the way we live it. We give supreme importance to sex in our individual and social lives today because of a history that has assigned a central significance to the sexual. It has not always been so; and need not always be so.

Weeks (1986, p.15) refers to sexuality as an "historical construction" and a "fictional unity". This means that the concept of sexuality was constructed and developed from a certain point in history. Prior to this, sexuality as a concept did not exist, and at some future time the concept may not exist again. This illustrates the dynamic and transformational nature of the subject in that it has been developed historically according to socio-cultural group meaning, is epoch specific, and continues to change over time. This requires narrowing down studies of sexuality to periods within relevant socio-cultural time frames (Bristow, 1997).

### 3.3 ERAS IN HISTORY THAT CONTRIBUTED TOWARD THE CONSTRUCT OF SEXUALITY

There are eras in sociological history that are specifically pertinent to the contemporary western construct of sexuality that favours heterosexuality as the norm. These eras have led to the development of certain terminology and some of its associated meanings have created

dualisms within the concept of sexuality. Strong feelings, both positive and negative, have been elicited by these dualisms and these continue to influence sexual identities, sexual behaviour and the interpretations thereof. The right to choose one's sexual identity has, from a particular point in history been regulated and these socially constructed regulations are bound within legislation and have been used to regulate sexuality and punish those who stray from the constructed norm of heterosexuality (Greenberg, 1988; Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985).

Before the Middle Ages, sex, along with other life functions such as eating and drinking, was believed to be the basis of human existence. Sexual passion in whatever form, heterosexual or homosexual, was seen as good, and necessary for a healthy, prosperous and long life (Padgug, 1999). The emphasis was not on the object of desire, but rather the role the individual played, whether active or passive within the process. Male 'active' behaviour was considered the ultimate in healthy virility. The role of women, boys and slaves, which was perceived as being passive, was not as highly regarded (Hawkes, 1996).

The writings of the late Greeks and early Romans illustrate the introduction of a cautionary element. It was alleged that excess sexual activity would lead to cognitive and physical deterioration and therefore the free expression of male sexual desire was discouraged. The introduction of sexual circumspection also appears to denote the origin of the myth regarding the uncontrollability of male sexual desire (Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985, 1986).

The Romans were influenced by the philosophy of Stoicism that defined two types of love. *Eros*, which included virtuous characteristics such as honesty, constancy, companionship, intimacy and restraint; and *aphrodisia*, which was believed to be the product of lust and base sexual desire. Conceptually separating these two aspects of love provided the source of the quandary about sex that the early Christian church adopted for regulating sexual pleasure. The positive healthy attributes of sexual pleasure inherited from the philosophy of the Stoics were negated and emphasis was placed on the need for self-control and celibacy. The only context in which it became appropriate to express sexual desire was in a monogamous relationship, for the purpose of procreation. Heterosexuality was validated and raised in status, whilst repudiating all other forms of sexuality (auto-erotic, non genital and same gendered), which had historically been acceptable (Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985).

During the Seventeenth century urbanisation and industrialisation brought with it not only urban development and mechanisation, but also the negative side-effects of overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions. A great emphasis was placed on the regulation of individuals. Strict codes of conduct regarding personal behaviour were introduced, with the result that in scrutinising others, individuals became more aware of themselves. This self-awareness led to feelings of shame and embarrassment particularly with regard to bodily functions, including sexual activities. Sex, formally an aspect of social life, was removed from public scrutiny and hidden within the newly sequestered 'private' bedroom. Freud is said to have written of the era of modernity that an irreconcilable divide had developed between civilisation and sexual enjoyment. To enable the civilisation of mankind, humanity and animality had to be separated which impeded the uninhibited and fulfilling expression of sexual behaviour (Foucault, 1978; Weeks, 1985).

The Christian dominated negative formulation and link between sex and sin was reappraised in the eighteenth century, leading to a more secular construct of sex and sexuality that attempted to rekindle and promote sexual pleasure. Male dominated patriarchal power was promoted and advanced locating sexual pleasure within the bounds of monogamous heterosexuality. Enlightenment discourses attempted to promote both sensual and sexual expression. Sex manuals that focused on educative information were published and made available to those who could read. Large quantities of erotic and pornographic material were also disseminated. Control was maintained over the content of this material that placed emphasis on social order, promoting monogamous heterosexual relations rather than sexual activity merely for the alleviation of sexual frustration, or lust (Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985).

During the eighteenth century a shift also occurred in the perception of homosexuality, specifically male homosexuality. The sexual act of sodomy became negatively linked to bestiality and condemned, and the person performing the act was defined in accordance with their sexual behaviour. This further justified 'natural' sex being defined as heterosexual penetrative intercourse to effect procreation. Female homosexuality in this time period was however essentially ignored unless it threatened the socially accepted patriarchal order where, for example, women dressed as men (Greenberg, 1988; Weeks, 1985).

Class based fanaticism, and an explicitly male dominated and orientated focus during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed to the emphasis of acceptable sex being

confined to heterosexual intercourse. Industrialisation, combined with technological advancement and changes in the methods of production, resulted in overcrowded urbanisation caused by a protracted population explosion and contributed to a distinct class divide. The wealthy minority bourgeoisie, inferior to the aristocracy but considerably more elevated than the larger working class, made up a powerful middle class who brought about the Victorian era of sexuality. Masturbation, childhood sexuality and women's sexuality were the issues that generated the most anxiety during this epoch and still continue to do so contemporarily. Demoting women's sexuality facilitated male supremacy, and not only in the realm of sexuality. Previously assumed male domination was under threat and women were becoming more politically organised as their contribution to the new factors of production gained them more economic independence and they started to challenge their disparate status (Hawkes, 1996).

The dichotomised Madonna / whore stereotype further accentuated the class divide. Bourgeois women were depicted as pure and self-controlled whereas working class women were depicted as promiscuous and disease infested. The poorer working classes, perceived to be the carriers of disease, were equated to animals, and so too, their sexuality. In an era where good health and hygiene were emphasised, extensive fear developed regarding the contraction of contagious diseases such as cholera, typhoid, syphilis etc. Sex therefore became negatively depicted as potentially life threatening rather than life enhancing. The objective behind advancing puritan bourgeoisie sexual standards was part of a larger scheme to ameliorate the working class both morally and culturally. Promoting heterosexuality whilst repudiating and legislatively regulating all forms of non-procreative sex, especially homosexuality, was a consequence of Victorian sexual morality. In the mid-nineteen century the phrase sexual deviant referred to female prostitutes, male homosexuals and lesbians, who were understood to embody active, excessive and autonomous sexuality that was potentially disruptive to the *status quo* (Hawkes, 1996).

Sexology, or the science of sex, was a field created within the realm of the Natural Sciences and Medicine to study sexual behaviour in humans. It came into existence in the late nineteenth century and was classified as a science and sought to create appropriate categories into which different sexual activities could be placed (Bristow, 1997; Hawkes, 1996). Through this process a new language was created, a set of specific words to describe

individuals (heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual), and how they had sex (Bristow, 1997; Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985).

A forensic psychiatrist and physician, Krafft-Ebing was one of the original founders of the concept of sexual pathology. His book *Psychopathia Sexualis* covered the emotional and physical components of sexual behaviour specifically describing pathological behaviours such as 'sexual neuroses' and 'nymphomania'. Chapters documented case studies on fetishism, sadism, masochism, and homosexuality that he purported were widespread disorders, affecting men. He concluded his treatise with the legal regulations necessary to curtail sexual behaviour likely to result in 'immorality'. An important cultural and historically specific theme that he expanded on was the potential danger of the uncontrollability of human passion. Furthermore, in his work, monogamy and heterosexuality were emphasised as the basis of a healthy family existence. Sexual pathology according to Krafft-Ebing and his contemporaries was the result of heredity. He expanded on this determinism when he defined homosexuality as a pathology, however he also includes possible cultural and environmental factors that he believed may impede an individual's desire, in the supposed 'normal' process of being heterosexual (Bristow, 1997; Hawkes, 1996; Weeks, 1985).

Havelock Ellis, another of the original sexologists of the late nineteenth century, wrote *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* in 1899. In this work he detailed the restrictions on sexual behaviour focusing on the contributions of nature and cultural differences in formulating the distinctions between normal and abnormal. With regard to homosexuality Ellis distinguished between what he perceived as two different types of inversion, these being either hereditary or acquired. Two other contemporary European sexologists that contributed to the scientific discourse of sexology were Hirschfeld and Bloch. Hirschfeld founded the first Institute for Sexual Science in 1919. His main focus was the study of homosexuality and he has been recognised for his pioneering work in which he differentiated between inversion and transvestism (defined here as cross-dressing). Bloch attempted to address some of the problematic issues of sexuality of the earlier nineteenth century including masturbation and sexual perversion. However areas that remained problematised were women's sexuality and auto-erotism. Homosexuality continued to be an area of study engendering ambivalence due to its defiance of the heterosexual norm (Hawkes, 1996).

Particular eras in history have contributed to the contemporary notion of sexuality. The anxiety pertaining to the topics of masturbation, childhood sexuality and women's sexuality developed historically and are still evident up until today. The outcome of these particularly Western historic eras is that sexual behaviour is only considered 'normal' within the narrowly defined parameters of monogamous, procreative heterosexuality. In response, feminists have questioned the dominant patriarchal paradigm of heterosexualism, especially questioning the inequitable power distribution between men and women. Feminists as a political body have attempted to deconstruct the ideology that has led to the oppression of women and sexual minorities.

### 3.4 ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

#### 3.4.1 The Feminist Perspective

Contemporary feminist writings (Carabine, 1996; Hollway, 1996; Jackson, 1996; Jeffreys, 1996; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993; Maguire, 1995; Richardson, 1996; VanEvery, 1996) have attempted to deconstruct the patriarchal power dynamics associated with the continued enforcement of heterosexuality as the blue print of human sexuality. Patriarchy has contributed to the continued disempowerment of women and marginalisation of sexual minorities (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993; Weeks, 1989). Heterosexuality is not questioned it simply exists. It is the assumed normativity around which identities are formed (or challenged) and everyday lives are lived. It is not class or race specific, but has been institutionalised and inculcated universally over time. Richardson (1996, p.2) states;

Heterosexuality is institutionalised as a particular form of practice and relationships, of family structure, and identity. It is constructed as coherent, natural, fixed and stable category, as universal and monolithic.

Authors (Maguire, 1995; Richardson, 1996) assert that heterosexuality gains its power and structure from creating and maintaining the binary divisions of gender, and the inequality of women. Infants are socialised during infancy into prescribed gender roles is one of the processes that maintains heterosexual hegemony. This is particularly pertinent with regard to women who have traditionally structured their identities in relation to their partnerships with

men, and the economic and social status, or lack of status they have gained from this position. In their editorial discussion, Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1993, p.2) assert:

...heterosexuality is simply assumed as natural, ...obscuring the overt and covert violence with which 'compulsory heterosexuality' is forced upon us,...the socialization of women to feel that the male sexual drive is a right, the idealization of heterosexual romance, rape, pornography, seizure of children from lesbian mothers in the courts, sexual harassment, enforced economic dependence of wives and the erasure of lesbian existence from history and culture.

Discriminated groups of individuals are oppressed to varying degrees within different cultures. These include those sidelined due to skin colour, gender, sexual preference or even disability. Gender, according to Jefferys (1996) is a fundamental element through which the dominance / submission, male / female binaries operate to develop and maintain heterosexuality for the benefit of male pre-eminence. According to Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1993), there would be no debate without gender. The binary opposition of male and female is based not only on genitalia, but what that genitalia represent: power and submission. The consequence is that the oppressed acquiesce to the lesser status of their subnormal categorisation. Heterosexuality is both privileged and rewarded by non-discrimination and acceptance, its majority status undisrupted (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993).

#### 3.4.2 Kinsey's model of sexuality

Due to the difficulty conceptualising something as complex and dynamic as sexuality as a fixed entity, either one thing or the other, Kinsey placed sexuality on a continuum. This accommodates erotic preferences from exclusively heterosexual (0) to exclusively homosexual (6), with varying combinations of the two in between, the mid-point (3) representing bisexual. Approximate figures quoted in Hyde (1994) allege that 80% of men and 90% of women are unequivocally heterosexual, and 2% of men and 1% of women unequivocally homosexual, the remaining 7% having varying degrees of both gender preferences.

Kinsey's model of sexuality whereby homosexuality and heterosexuality are defined as sexual identities which co-exist on a dynamic continuum has been recommended as a format

whereby sexuality can be defined more accurately (Clark, 1987; Hyde, 1994; Richardson, 1981). Rather than separating the two identities and creating a binary which perpetuates the dualism that already exists, this framework serves to illustrate that an individual's sexuality does not have to be restricted to either end of the continuum and contained by the categories termed 'normal' or 'deviant'. A person's sexual identity can occur at any point along the sexuality continuum and may not remain fixed throughout an individual's lifetime. Sexuality is however fairly stable, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual and any possible change, however small, can cause serious disruption of an individual's personal identity and self esteem (Richardson & Hart, 1981).

Erotic feelings are stirred when they are stirred; one does not decide in advance who will stir them. The only decision you may choose to make in advance is whether you will act on those feelings with erotic behaviour (Clark, 1987, p.21).

The choice that the majority of people make is to act on heterosexual feelings rather than homosexual feelings. Sexual identity is likely to be influenced and determined to a large extent by the dominant societal paradigm, in this case, heterosexuality. Homosexuality has been pathologised and perceived as the abnormal opposite of heterosexuality. It would appear that sexuality can however no longer be perceived as something fixed. It should rather be seen as a fluid, dynamic, personal identity located at some point along the heterosexual / homosexual continuum (Clark, 1987; Hite, 1987; Richardson & Hart, 1981).

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

In an attempt to understand the development of the meaning of sex and sexuality, it was necessary to trace back through different eras in history. Starting with Classical Antiquity when sexual activity was perceived positively as an ordinary bodily function. Thereafter differing degrees of circumspection were introduced and sexuality later became validated by its outcome, penetration for the benefit of procreation. Reproductive heterosexuality was thus elevated, demoting previously condoned homosexual and autoerotic behaviour.

Monogamous heterosexuality continued to be promoted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and became specifically class based and male orientated during the Victorian era.

The anxieties that developed during this era were associated particularly with masturbation, childhood sexuality and women's sexuality. All forms of non-procreative sexual activity were proscribed, including masturbation as well as male and female homosexuality. In an attempt to objectify and classify sexual behaviour during the positivist era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sexologists tended to further facilitate the pathologising of specifically non-procreative behaviour.

The above culturally specific, historic eras represent time frames that have contributed toward the normalisation of heterosexuality. Anxieties developed regarding the uncontrollability of sexual urges and the negative consequence thereof. Acting on sexual desire was compared to the ungoverned behaviour of animals. The result was the restriction and repression of the free expression of sexual desire and behaviour. Sex became validated only within the context of its outcome, procreation. The characterisation of women's sexuality as submissive and chaste, plus the negation and pathologising of all other forms of non-procreative sexual expression, rendered women and all those participating in auto-erotic or homoerotic behaviour, inferior to men, thereby leaving the male dominated power structures in place.

More recently however, feminism has questioned the domination of heteronormativity and exposed sexuality as the site of a major long-term political struggle. Ideologically it is hoped that over time women will gain equality and sexual minorities such as homosexuals will no longer be marginalized. Sexuality can be seen as a flexible characteristic of self: a link between one's body, self-concept, and norms created by society. Society, and not the individual, defines the boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, creating categories that include labels such as 'deviant' (Weeks, 1989). One such stigmatised category is homosexuality.

## CHAPTER 4

### HOMOSEXUALITY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality can be defined as a negative social-historical construct. In an attempt to find a reason for the cause of homosexuality factors such as genetics, environment and parental influence have been implicated. However when defined as a social construction, it would appear that institutions such as religion and the law have contributed to producing and reproducing the negative construct. As people are part of an environment with which they interact and which in turn interacts with them, they are active participants and recipients in their social structure and as such they have the ability to create and change their realities. This 'reality' is most aptly described by Sullivan (1996, p.21-22),

The most common view about homosexuality - both now and, to an even greater extent, in the past - has an appealing simplicity to it. It is that homosexuality is an aberration and that homosexual acts are an abomination. It is that homosexuality is an illness that requires a cure, and that homosexual acts - meaning sexual acts between two people of the same gender - are transgressions which require legal punishment and social deterrence. All human beings in this view, are essentially heterosexual; and the attempt to undermine this fundamental identity is a crime against nature itself.

#### 4.2 DEFINING & QUANTIFYING HOMOSEXUALITY

The definitions of 'homosexual' appear to place emphasis on describing individuals and the type of sexual activity in which they participate rather than describing issues of sexual identity. It has been argued that this type of definition is unrealistically broad and homogeneous (Goffmann, 1963).

A homosexual can therefore be defined as an individual of either gender with a same gender preference. Their sexuality or personal sexual identity, based on their object(s) of desire

(which have the potential to arouse them sexually), is comprised of members of their same gender. In defining homosexuality as an identity illustrates that it does not necessarily have to involve sexual activity. Goffman (1963, p.171) states; "...an individual can retain membership in the gay world and yet not engage in homosexual practices". When referred to separately homosexual male and females are typically termed gay men and lesbians respectively.

There is general agreement that homosexuality does not occur in substantial numbers of the population. This may be a form of social rationalisation whereby homosexuals are further marginalized in that they are perceived to be the exception rather than the rule. There is a logistical problem in trying to quantify erotic preference that is a subjective psychological phenomenon (Hyde, 1994).

Kinsey originally measured homosexuality according to the total number of sexual experiences an individual had engaged in with members of the same gender over a certain time period. These statistical findings may not have been accurate and are probably over-inflated because of the type of sample used by Kinsey. Furthermore the study is measuring behaviour, which is not necessarily an indication of sexual preference or identity. Subsequent self-report surveys have indicated a much lower percentage than previous findings, however these data could reflect the reverse methodological problem in that the type of information the researcher would be trying to obtain is highly personal. A figure that is commonly quoted is 10% of the general population is homosexual. Recent research data indicates that this figure may be a bit high but not too far off the mark (Hyde, 1994).

#### 4.3 THE WESTERN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Certain laws in Britain in the 1800's were originally brought about to deter certain sexual activities, rather than to condemn a certain type of person. Homosexual activities were perceived as unacceptable non-procreative heterosexual behaviour. Thus the implementation of laws against buggery (sodomy) would have been an attempt to encourage and enforce 'normal' reproductive sex within the context of marriage (Weeks, 1989).

The focus shifted in the late 1800's, same gendered activity became a new subject to be observed from the positivist perspective with the potential for psychological and medical classification. As stated by Foucault (1978, p.43), "The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology". This was in keeping with the new empiricist paradigm and the prominence of the medical model. In categorising the homosexual the focus changed from an individual consciously partaking in a somewhat bizarre sexual activity, to one suffering mental illness.

Sexology gained legitimacy by aligning itself with Medicine (Weeks, 1985, 1991). The medical model has subsequently been held responsible in the discipline of psychology for bringing about the classification of distress as illnesses and mental disorders. A view that still prevails is that homosexuality in that it is perceived to be 'abnormal' should be diagnosed and classified as a mental illness (Hyde, 1994). Silverstein (1991, p.103) states;

Homosexuals...suffered because they were taught to suffer, first by their society at large, and then by the "scientific" community that confirmed the societal condemnation by inventing a medical illness to explain their "immoral" behaviour. A primary purpose of psychiatric diagnosis, therefore, is an attempt by society to control those people whom it fears.

The sexologists of the 1900's portrayed homosexuals either as someone suffering moral insanity, or more scientifically linking homosexuality to congenital factors such as the effects of hormones on sexual differentiation. They tried to describe homosexuality as a particular personality profile. According to Weeks (1989, p.105), "The sickness theory of homosexuality was to have profound social resonance from the 1930's onwards...many homosexuals themselves had a deeply rooted belief that they were sick". Despite the removal in 1973 by the American Psychiatric Association of homosexuality as a mental disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the sickness model is still markedly apparent in contemporary societies perception of homosexuality.

Focusing the location of the fault within the individual as either genetically predetermined or environmentally triggered contributed to the intensity of the numerous debates about whether homosexuality could be cured or not. 'Corrective' treatment included surgical, chemical and

behavioural training interventions. Unsuccessful surgical procedures on homosexual males in the early 1900's involved the removal of one testicle and the transplantation of testicular tissue from a heterosexual man (Silverstein, 1991). Brain surgery introduced and performed in the 1960's involved the removal of part of the brain. The findings of these types of experimentation did not reveal any success in changing the sexual orientation of the unwilling and often non-voluntary participants. It was reported that the lack of post-operative change in sexual behaviour necessitated complete surgical castration. The chemical treatments that were used were justified on the basis of the stereotypes that developed that male homosexuals are too feminine and lesbians too masculine. Gay men were therefore injected with androgens in order to 'correct' their endocrine system (Silverstein, 1991).

Psychiatric and psychological interventions have followed the historical development of the disciplines. Aversion therapy a form of operant conditioning based on punishment strategies in an attempt to rectify unacceptable behaviour was introduced during the period when Behavioural Therapy was popular. A homosexual person was presented with an erotic stimulus and when they became sexually aroused, an electric shock or a nausea inducing substance would be administered (Bootzin et al, 1993; Carson & Butcher, 1992). In the 1970's the popularity of this method diminished and it was replaced by more humane therapeutic techniques (Silverstein, 1991).

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) (1994, p.1) criteria for a psychological problem to be considered a mental disorder, "it should either regularly cause emotional distress or regularly be associated with clinically significant impairment of social functioning". After consulting scientific data and literature the APA found that homosexuality did not meet with the criteria of mental illness. It was therefore removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders II on December 14, 1973 (APA, 1994; Carson & Butcher, 1992; Silverstein, 1991; Weeks, 1985). Although no longer technically classified as a form of psychosexual pathology or perversion, many heterosexuals and even some homosexuals themselves still consider homosexuality deviant and morally unacceptable (Clark; 1987; Giddens, 1992; Weeks, 1989). This illustrates the power of stereotypic social constructs created and reinforced over time.

Socially and historically, the condemnation of homosexuality would appear to be linked to preserving social morality and the sanctity of marriage. In the 1900's, the concept of

sexuality although essentially private and something it was assumed took place between married couples came under public scrutiny. Anything that diverged from this norm required according to Weeks (1989, p.107), "...ever more refined definitions and control - and ever more discussion and debate and analysis".

The goal of this particular type of social categorisation, contextually linked with the relevant positivist methods of experimentation and classification, was the creation of universal generalisations. The increased knowledge about homosexuality led to more distinguishable homosexual identities, which ultimately had a positive effect in that it led to elements of resistance. Resistance can be an indication of discontent with the power relations and often represents an attempt to change the *status quo*, not necessarily through revolution, but through critical assessment and transformation.

#### 4.4 CHRISTIANITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The text of the Bible, which embodies the discourse of the Christian religions, could be a possible source of negative constructs pertaining to homosexuality. Discourse has been defined as the combination and synthesis of words in sentences that have the ability to produce universal meaning. Critically analysing discourse entails isolating 'distorted communication' that can be associated with power and methods of control which eventually get integrated into general belief systems or ideology (Morrow, 1994). Ideology is used here to refer to a doctrine containing the beliefs and values that misrepresent reality in order to endorse the position, and be to the advantage of a particular group (Haralambos, 1980).

The institution of Judeo-Christian religion via the discourse contained in the Bible in the Old and New Testaments has developed a powerful ideology. It has created a fixed belief system based on a universal code of conduct and laws established centuries ago, enforced by the fear of eternal damnation. Furthermore the Bible has the potential to be subjectively interpreted or misquoted as a means to an end. As stated by Levan (1995, p.1); "The Bible can be like a mirror, reflecting back whatever is projected into it...the challenge is to suspend our preconceived biases and recognise when we may be reading into the text what isn't actually there".

Brown (1983, p.103) states that one of the problems with the concept of homosexuality from the perspective of the church is that, "...realism must always mean the ideal, and so anything less than complete abstinence merits unqualified condemnation and theoretically at least, exclusion from the community". Realism in this statement would refer to heterosexuality within marriage as the ideal, toward which one should strive.

The following explanations are not meant to negate the value of the Bible for those who practice any of the Christian religions. It would appear that the arguments accepting (Haas, 1997) or rejecting (Brown, 1983; Sullivan, 1996; Turner, 1997) the translations of the Bible are mainly based on hermeneutics and the associated intricacies of semantics.

Translations of the Bible depict homosexual intercourse as a sin against God, punishable by death. The most renowned story associated with homosexuality from which the term sodomy originated is 'The Destruction of Sodom' in Genesis 19. A similar version of the story can be found in Judges under the heading, 'The crime of the men of Gibeai'. Genesis 19:22-24 states;

They had not gone to bed when the house was surrounded by the townspeople, the men of Sodom both young and old, all the people without exception. Calling out to Lot they said, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so that we can have intercourse with them.

Levan's (1995) interpretation of this passage is that it was most likely that the men referred to were heterosexual in orientation and wanted to use the threat of anal intercourse as a method of humiliating and having power over the strangers. Other analyses of these stories (Brown, 1983; McIntyre, 1997; Sullivan, 1996); assert that the failure of the citizens to fulfil certain common hospitality rites is the reason for the condemnation and destruction of the town by fire, rather than the inference of sexual intercourse between men, which never took place in either of these stories.

Stronger proclamations against homosexuality, although few, are found within the New Testament. Interestingly, there is no direct mention of homosexuality within the four Gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. However Paul's condemnation of homosexual behaviour focuses on God's laws, which he declares have to be kept to avoid the abandonment by God. Contemporary authors (Sullivan, 1996; Turner, 1997) claim that Paul's intention could have been an attempt to contrast homosexuality with the naturalness of

heterosexuality in the sense that any extra-marital behaviour would be condemned and prohibited. By his statements Paul thus assumes that heterosexuality is inherent and that homosexual behaviour is a conscious choice to defy the norm. Sullivan (1995) asserts that persons using Paul's letters to the Romans to substantiate an argument condemning homosexuality would have to verify that all people are attracted to the opposite sex, something numerous research data dispute.

Another passage (Timothy 1) illustrates how homosexuals within the context of this discourse came to be perceived as criminals. This passage indicates the undesirable type of people for whom the laws were devised. Consequently homosexuals were categorised together with other lawbreakers such as murderers. Conflicting interpretations of terminology illustrate how translations have revealed different meanings of the words used. In Timothy 1, the words *pornoi* and *arsenokoitai* have caused consternation in interpretation. Some authors (McIntyre, 1997; Turner, 1997) are in agreement however that the terms were used in this passage with reference to male prostitutes rather than individuals with homosexual predilections.

Although the number of passages referring to homosexuality in the Bible is few, they illustrate to what extent within the context of this discourse it was vehemently discouraged, to the point of being criminalized and the ultimate penalty, death. From an interpretation of these verses, biblical laws were formulated and these influenced the international legislation within Western cultures especially those that followed Judeo-Christian traditions. These laws tacitly implied that same sex desire was a matter of free choice rather than predisposition and anything other than heterosexual relations within marriage was sinful and to be avoided for fear of God's wrath.

Within the historical context, the church's doctrines focused on the unity of man and woman within the convention of marriage for attainment of procreation. Thus as homosexual relations cannot bring about children naturally, "...it is not in accord with the divine intention in creation" (Brown, 1983, p.106). Thus interpretations and beliefs about homosexuality that are structured on Christian teachings are an attempt to rationalise prejudice against, and condemnation of those who are not bound by heterosexual desire and may partake in other forms of sexual expression (Hawkes, 1996; Levan, 1995; Maret, 1984).

Within the context of discourse, interpreting words and their essence unconditionally can be problematic in that there is a chance that they have been mistranslated or misinterpreted. Moreover meaning cannot remain fixed over time. The social, political and cultural contexts relevant to a specific epoch will have changed making it necessary to critically assess and reinterpret meanings of statements made so emphatically thousands of years ago. The above section reveals that homosexual practices are condemned within the discourse of the Judeo-Christian teachings. From a social constructionist perspective the intention of an overriding institution such as religion would be to create a construct that benefits the majority power structures. Heterosexuality has therefore been validated and promoted by Christian ideology and has ultimately contributed toward the negative attitudes individuals have toward homosexuality.

#### 4.5 HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia has been defined as a powerful, irrational fear of homosexuals (Hyde, 1994). The phrase 'irrational fear' tends to pathologise individuals who ascribe to a widely held belief system (Herek, 1991). It may be more appropriate to replace the word fear with antipathy or aversion as although the concept of homosexuality or a homosexual person might be anxiety provoking; it is more likely that individuals are repulsed and disgusted rather than fearful. The comprehension of homosexuality and what it represents appears to be based on the internalisation of the negative socio-cultural construction (Dollimore, 1991). This construct is sustained by myths and stereotypes pertaining to homosexuals and what their sexual behaviour entails. This has led to the categorisation, stigmatisation and exclusion of homosexuals as 'abnormal'. Homophobia can therefore be more appropriately defined as, "personal and institutional prejudice against lesbians and gay men" (Herek, 1988\*\*), or as fixed negative attitudes and reactions toward homosexuals (Hyde, 1994). There has been an endeavour to move away from a term incorporating the psychological concept of phobia as this psychological term used incorrectly individualises and pathologises socially constructed commonly held beliefs. A more politically correct contemporary term, used synonymously with homophobia, is anti-gay prejudice (Herek, 1991; Hyde, 1994).

The suggested cause for an increase in homophobic attitudes is that the media has made AIDS extremely high profile and people tend to incorrectly classify AIDS as a specifically

homosexual disease. Single people have been found to be more homophobic than married people (Kunkel & Temple, 1992). Homophobic individuals are more likely to ascribe to some form of orthodox religion (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitely, 1996). An explanation posited is that homosexuality is condemned on the basis that it is considered by many religions a religious offence (Kunkel & Temple, 1992).

Research findings (Herek, 1988, 1991) seem to suggest that homophobic heterosexuals tend to share such personality traits as higher levels of authoritarianism and associated personality features with those who have negative attitudes toward other stigmatised minority groups such as Jews or Blacks. They have also been found to possess other distinct psychological, social and demographic determinants.

According to Herek (1991, p.65); individuals expressing anti-gay prejudice are more likely to;

1. possess a strictly defined, conventional concept of gender roles;
2. not admit to having participated in homosexual activities or to identify themselves as gay men or lesbian;
3. believe their peers possess the same negative attitudes;
4. not had interpersonal contact with homosexual people;
5. be older and be not very well educated
6. live in areas where prejudicial attitudes are common;

Numerous research findings (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992) have found males to be more homophobic than females, and more negative toward gay men than toward lesbians. Herek (1991) suggests that perhaps culturally an association has been created between heterosexuality and masculinity. It is more likely therefore that males will condemn male homosexuality in order to assert their own masculinity and remain unperturbed by lesbianism. Research has also found a sex difference with regard to the expression of defense mechanisms in that males who tend to project their aggressive feelings outward seem to have more negative attitudes towards gay men (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitely, 1996). Maguire (1995, p.104) summarises the contribution of gender roles toward homophobia as follows,

Cultural ideals of masculinity obviously vary between cultures and over historical time. But if the society around us dehumanises and denigrates women and 'femininity' and idealises men, then our psyches will continue to reflect this. Men who for cultural or personal reasons are more 'feminine' than the cultural ideal may find themselves being treated with a fear and contempt usually reserved for women...The cultural repudiation of femininity may well have a profound impact on gay relationships. It certainly fuels homophobia.

#### 4.6 MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES PERTAINING TO HOMOSEXUALS

The outcome of the socio-cultural construct that heterosexuality is the norm is the commonly held belief or myth that all human beings are innately heterosexual. Should an individual not conform to this perceived norm it is then considered a conscious alternative the individual has chosen. In normalising heterosexuality, homosexuals have become a marginalized minority and to maintain their marginalized status certain stereotypes based on myths have developed. With regard to homosexuality, stereotypes are promoted by anxieties surrounding the topic of sex and sexuality, and lack of knowledge (Hyde, 1994).

1. Homosexuals as distinguishable: Homosexuals can be identified by the way they look and by their mannerisms: that all gay males are effeminate, despise being masculine and talk with a nasal twang, and conversely that lesbians try to behave like men, have short hair and wear men's clothes. Research data reveals that the majority of homosexual people look and behave just like anyone else. One of Kinsey's studies revealed that only 15% of self-disclosed gay men were distinguishable by their mannerisms and appearance. Further data that contradicts these stereotypic ideas was acquired from a sample of male university athletes who, according to the current stereotype under discussion, would be considered heterosexual. Forty percent acknowledged having engaged in some form of homosexual sexual behaviour to the point of orgasm within the previous two years (Hyde, 1994). The construction of this stereotype according to Hyde (1994) is based on confusion between gender identity, a personal sense of genderedness, and sexual orientation. By defining homosexuals' sexual identity in terms of (sexual) attraction toward a member of the same gender does not refer to confusion in their sense of maleness or femaleness.

2. Role playing heterosexuality: The gender-confusion myth is the basis of the role-playing stereotype based on the heterosexual norm stereotype. Homosexual relationships are allegedly mirrored on heterosexual relationships. One of the partners in a homosexual relationship supposedly assumes the more dominant 'male' role whereas the other takes on to the more submissive 'female' role. This myth is also projected onto homosexual sexual behaviour, where the inserter supposedly assumes the active male role whilst the recipient of penetration is regarded as the passive female (Giddens, 1992; Hyde, 1994). This stereotype is embellished by another heterosexualised myth that assumes penetrative sex to be the norm, to the exclusion of other sexual practices. Data quoted in Hyde (1994) acquired from a sample of gay men revealed that 46% of them alternated their roles during sexual activity whereas 20% preferred one particular role. Within the context of relationships, homosexuals appear to be more democratic with regard to domestic task allocation, and in general share duties historically assigned to males and females interchangeably (Hyde, 1994).

3. Homosexuals as child-abusers: Another commonly held belief is that homosexuals are more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexuals, particularly gay men abusing young boys. A common scenario is where a schoolteacher is discovered to be gay, especially within a coeducational or all boys' institution and the community appeal to have the person removed from his teaching position. An interesting point is that parents do not seem concerned about their children's heterosexual teachers abusing their young daughters, when data indicate that 80% of child sexual abuse is carried out by heterosexual males, the victims being young girls. Statistics quoted from one study reveal that 93% of the gay men interviewed had never had sex with anyone under the age of 12, and the statistic for lesbian women interviewed was 98%. Further studies reveal that adolescents report having been introduced to homosexual sexual activity by a teenage peer, which is contrary to the common belief that they were more likely to have been seduced by an adult (Hyde, 1994).

4. Homosexuals and AIDS: The discovery and publicity of HIV and AIDS brought with it general panic. In an attempt to find a scapegoat, misrepresentation and exaggeration within the media and the opportunity for public condemnation of homosexuals, resulted in the phrase 'The Gay Plague'. Internationally, AIDS is being spread heterosexually as well as homosexually. A view that is prevalent in many Western societies, however, is that AIDS is the result of a debased and degenerate sector in society. Haemophiliacs are perceived as blameless victims whereas homosexuals apparently inflict AIDS on themselves (Weeks,

1989). Propaganda of this type is constructed in an attempt to instil calm in the general population and confidence in those in power. It also helps perpetuate and reinforce myths that stigmatise minority groups such as homosexuals. Another result is the development of the widespread faulty belief that 'it won't happen to me' because 'it only happens to "them"' (Joffe, 1993). This has contributed toward some of the major problems experienced in implementing AIDS education strategies that try to promote the avoidance of high-risk behaviour (Bygate & Cahill, 1996; Visser, 1996).

Another associated myth that has developed within Western cultures is that 'All Homosexuals Have AIDS'. In North America gay men have been the biggest group infected with the HIV virus. Epidemiological studies indicate however that heterosexuals are the group influencing the rapid increase in the disease. In Africa heterosexual women are at greatest risk of being infected by the HIV virus. (Bygate & Cahill, 1996; Whiteside, 1996) These women are most likely to have been infected by male sexual partners, as female-to-female transmission of the virus is very rare.

#### 4.7 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The premise of contemporary South African writers (Elder, 1995; Gevisser & Cameron, 1995) is that no fixed, predetermined 'gay identity' exists in South Africa. Gevisser & Cameron (1995) illustrate the diverse, multifaceted nature of the homosexual subcultures. These range from coloured drag queens and political prisoners, black township youths to white men on the mines, lesbian sangomas to rich white suburban entertainers. The apartheid system has contributed to the geographic and demographic variance that exists in South Africa. First world concepts of sexual liberty and gay communities have co-existed with a restrained, policed, uniquely South African underground homosexual movement (Elder, 1995; Gevisser & Cameron, 1995). The unique South African homosexual identity is described by (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995, p.5) as follows,

Homosexual experience in South Africa is unique, precisely because of our history of division and resistance. Our identities have been formed by our countries history of racial struggle...Apartheid legislated who we were, what work we could do, where we could live, who we could associate with, what we could read and see and what kind of sex we could have.

To understand something as complex as the particular social historic construct relevant to South Africa, requires comprehension of the intricate power relations functioning interdependently within the autocratic racist regime of the past. Historically a white minority formulated legislation to reject and exclude whoever they believed to be lesser persons, whether it was the majority Black population, or sexual deviants. This was influenced by the Western culture's socio-historic constructs of sex and sexuality, within which religious, specifically Christian condemnation, impacted on the laws and myths that have been constructed and reconstructed over time to reinforce the major power structure's domination.

#### 4.7.1 Homosexuality in South Africa – a brief historic perspective

Two major homosexual stereotypes that developed and have been maintained to this day from the 50s are those of child molester and drag queen (Elder, 1995; Gevisser, 1995). The State, in an attempt to rid the country of homosexuality, outlawed it whereby homosexual activities were criminalized and policed. A statement made by a Durban magistrate in 1956 when sentencing 30 men charged with indecent assault illustrates the general standpoint at that time of those in power: "Your type is a menace to society and likely to corrupt and bring about degradation to innocent and unsuspecting, decent-living young men..." (Gevisser, 1995, p.18).

During the 60s amendments to the Sexual Offenses Act of 1957 were made under the banner of the Law Reform. In 1966 the South African police raided a large private gay party in the suburb of Forest Town in Johannesburg. It was reported that in the region of 300 allegedly homosexual men were observed dancing, kissing and making love on the premises of this private property (Retief, 1995). No clear reason has ever been identified for the more direct strategy against the gay subcultures that was embarked upon, they were no more visible than in the past. A suggestion based on conspiracy theory put forward by contemporary authors (Gevisser, 1995; Retief, 1995) was that this was part of the government's tactic to put an end to any form of liberation movement that was perceived as a threat to the dominant white political minority power structure.

After 10 men were arrested at the Forest Town party, for 'masquerading as women', a loophole was found in the legislation whereby sodomy and other homosexual activities that were considered 'unnatural offenses' were only illegal if performed in public. Thus even

more stringent anti-homosexual legislation was proposed in the late 60's as amendments to the Immorality Act. The submission put forward advocated the criminalisation of both male and female homosexual behaviour, with the mandatory penalty being three years imprisonment. A statement made in a House of Assembly Debate in April 1967 shows how the condemnation of homosexuality was being fostered through the creation of a negative construct, based on religious grounds, as an attempt to promote the 'true' purpose of civilisation. P.C. Pelsler stated,

And who can deny that this was also the canker that afflicted the Biblical Sodom? No, Sir, history has given us a clear warning and we should not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that we may casually dispose of this viper in our midst by regarding it as innocent fun. It is a proven fact that sooner or later homosexual instincts make their effects felt on a community if they are permitted to run riot...Therefore we should be on the alert and do what there is to do lest we be saddled later with a problem which will be the utter ruin of our spiritual and moral fibre (Retief, 1995, p.99).

This type of submission and the attempt to outlaw homosexuality resulted in cohesion amongst different gay and lesbian subcultures. The paradoxically named Homosexual Law Reform Fund was set up by a small group of gay professionals in order to raise funds to lead a case against the proposed legislation. The Select Committee, after evidence was presented, moved to drop the proposed legislation and rather adopt three restrictive amendments. These included raising the age of consent for male homosexual intercourse from 16 years to 19 years; the prohibition of dildoes; and introducing the 'men at a party' clause (Cameron, 1993; Gevisser, 1995; Pieters, 1995).

In the 70s in South Africa particular gay subcultures became more visible. They were geographically confined to specific areas within major centres and defined as "pink areas" such as Hillbrow in Johannesburg, where homosexuals co-existed with local residents, without the fear of being reported to the police. This decade also marked the beginning of the politicisation of homosexuality in the country. Organisations such as GAIDE (Gay Aid Identification Development and Enrichment) were formed, members of which went on to found GASA (Gay Association of South Africa) in the 80s. GASA, as a national organisation later split into smaller independent provincial organisations whose task it was to concentrate either on political activism or social support services (Gevisser, 1995).

The international media hype surrounding the discovery of HIV and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in the 80's caused a number of problems for the newly 'de-closeted' gay movement. The media reported that AIDS was being spread exclusively by homosexuals, and termed it "The Gay Plague" (Gevisser, 1995). Recent research carried out at a South African University (Bygate & Cahill, 1996) on AIDS education and students' perceptions of the disease, indicated that these myths were still in existence. According to these findings, a majority of the student sample surmised that in South Africa homosexuals were at greater risk of getting AIDS than were women; whereas in fact, recent epidemiological statistics cited by Whiteside (1996) revealed the converse, that women are more at risk in South Africa.

The 1990s saw the rise of lesbian and gay politics that had aligned itself with ANC politics in an attempt to put forward gay rights as human rights, based on the ANC's Freedom Charter. Around the same time black lesbian and gay subcultures that had for decades been secretly restricted to the townships, started to emerge. This emergence was met by a backlash reaction from prominent black liberation parties. The underlying motive for this backlash was based on the idea that colonialism had emasculated and feminised black men and that homosexuality was "un-African" (Gevisser, 1995).

Apartheid capitalism and the migrant labour system were also used to deny the existence of black homosexuality. Homosexual activity at the mining hostels was documented as circumstantial homosexuality, similar to the type of homosexual behaviour that is prevalent in prisons. Thus it was portrayed as an outlet of sexual energy necessitated due to the absence of women. However, the existence nationally of underground gay subcultures illustrates that on the mines and within the subcultures there had always been men who preferred to have sex with men rather than with women. As Gevisser (1995, p.73) states, "the sometimes violent censure of homosexuality within black cultures must not be confused as evidence for the non-existence of homosexuality: the very fact of censure indicates that it exists".

More recently in the 90s there have been some positive outcomes for homosexuals in South Africa. These have come about mostly as a direct result of the gay liberation movement within the country. The most relevant to date is the inclusion within the country's constitution of a clause which stipulates that a person may not be discriminated against on the

grounds of their sexual orientation. Although a landmark victory, gays and lesbians will have to wait and see what the long-term consequence of this type of inclusion will be. Contemporary media in South Africa, especially television, have also attempted to project a more positive image of homosexuality, portraying homosexuals' as ordinary people; "...not of freaks and perverts, but of people who just happen to be attracted to members of the same gender." (Gevisser, 1995, p.77). It would seem however that the gay emancipation struggle within the framework of the South African liberation struggle seems to have historically gained some ground.

#### 4.8 THE LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

As a hegemonic institution the legal system has amongst other things developed a set of rules governing sexuality. As stated by Stychin (1995, p.1), "...law may be (and has been) a repressive force, it also is a regulatory one which plays a role in constituting and maintaining coherent sexualities". Legal discourse, in designating sexual practices to categories such as normal or deviant and levelling punishment at perpetrators not adhering to the heterosexual norm has assisted in the construction of sexual identities and thereby consolidated the heterosexual / homosexual dualism (Stychin, 1995).

According to Rivera (1991) laws are created on the basis of majority consensus to the exclusion of marginalized minorities. This legislation, she states, is seldom based on scientific fact but rather is the product of societal 'common sense' thus reflecting myths and prejudice common to that particular society (Rivera, 1991). Since colonisation, South Africa's legislation is said to be based on Christian ideals and to espouse Christian values. Ideology according to Haralambos (1980, p.22), "is a set of ideas and values which express the interests of a particular group...a viewpoint which distorts reality and justifies and legitimates the position of a social group". Thus it is plausible that our legal system has been constructed and is based on the myths, stereotypes and prejudice surrounding sexuality in general.

##### 4.8.1 The South African legal system

The South African legal system is based on Roman Dutch Law. The laws pertaining to

sexual misconduct were situated within the infamous Immorality Act, which historically prohibited cohabitation along racial lines and which was later renamed the Sexual Offenses Act.

The traditional attitude of intolerance towards gay sexual conduct seems to be deeply ingrained in our legal history. All sexual acts not directed at procreation, even those between men and women, were prohibited under our common law, but our legal system has pronounced these non-homosexual crimes obsolete. But by a historical anomaly - one which cannot be rationally justified - the common law crimes targeting gay men have been preserved. (Cameron, 1995, p.93)

At the beginning of this century, non-procreative sexual behaviour was condemned and punishable by death. The restrictions included male-female sodomy, sexual intercourse with animals, and male - male sexual activity that were classified as 'crimes against nature', and, Cameron (1995) suggests, that this proscription would presumably have included sexual acts between women. Legislation prohibiting homosexual behaviour may have a continued psychological effect on gay and lesbian individuals. Even when laws are not enforced, the mere fact of their existence reduces homosexuals to 'unapprehended felons'. Furthermore homosexuals are exposed to anti-gay prejudice and violence against them, which are justified according to the anti-homosexual prohibitions contained within the law (Cameron, 1993, 1995).

#### 4.8.1.1 Legislative amendments affecting homosexual persons

In the late 60s, as mentioned above, three amendments were made to the Sexual Offenses Act of 1957; instead of the proposed complete banning of homosexuality. These legislative changes appear to have been constructed around the myths that homosexuals are all potential child sexual offenders, and that homosexuals mimic heterosexual roles (Cameron, 1993, 1995; Mischke, 1995). The two pertaining to male homosexuals, seem to be as a direct result of the Forest Town party incident.

1. The age of consent for sexual intercourse applicable to homosexual males was raised from the heterosexual age of sixteen years to nineteen years. This was in effect an attempt to prevent teenage boys being defiled by supposedly predatory adult gay men.

2. Dildoes were prohibited. This amendment has no obvious explanation, so it can only be assumed that this was an attempt to curb lesbian activity (never previously prohibited), as an extension of the myth that sexual intercourse is not possible without some kind of phallus to bring about penetration.
  
3. Clause 20A of the Sexual Offences Act entitled, 'men at a party' proscribed as stated, 'any male person who commits with another male person at a party any act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification, shall be guilty of an offense'. 'Party' being defined as, 'any occasion where more than two persons are present'. The 'men at a party' clause is self explanatory although labelled "curious" by Cameron (1993), who asserts that the legal system has had problems implementing it due to the obtuse definition of party (Cameron, 1993; Gevisser, 1995; Mischke, 1995; Pieters, 1995).

In 1988 a further amendment was made that extended the age of consent legislation relevant to male homosexual activity to that of lesbians. Thus the age of consent for sexual intercourse for male and female homosexuals became nineteen. There has been a constant contradiction within this legislation, because although the age of consent for male homosexuals is nineteen years old, sodomy has always been upheld as a criminal offense under South African Common Law (Cameron, 1993; Gevisser, 1995; Lotter, 1994; Louw, 1994; Mischke, 1995; Pieters, 1995). These amendments have however had the desired effect of criminalizing the homosexual and entrenching the negative socio-historic construct still prevalent today.

#### 4.8.1.2 Common Law Prohibition of Sodomy

Male homosexual intercourse involving anal penetration between two consenting adults in private has been a punishable offense (Cameron, 1993; Gevisser, 1995; Louw, 1994; Mischke, 1995; Pieters, 1995). Convictions and prosecutions for contravening this section of the Act have been numerous in the lower courts. As reflected in the figures compiled from the Annual Reports of the Department of Statistics, these have ranged from 400 prosecutions and 250 convictions in 1985 and 1986, to 476 prosecutions and 294 convictions in 1990 and 1991. Unfortunately from the statistical data it is not possible to ascertain the age of the parties involved, or whether they were both consenting (Louw, 1994).

In 1993, the case *S v H* pertained to a 23 year old male who was found guilty of sodomy and handed down a twelve-month prison sentence became the case that assisted the demise of the law of sodomy (Louw, 1994). A sentence of incarceration for a first offense was queried under review. It was ascertained and stated that both men were adult, consensual and that the activity took place in private. However it was not the conviction that was being challenged but rather the sentence (Louw, 1994; Mischke, 1995). According to Alheit (1995, p.80) the Court during the case review remarked that; "the entrenchment of the right not to be unfairly discriminated against on grounds of sexual orientation will probably result in common-law or statutory offenses prescribing 'unnatural offenses' between consenting adult men being struck down." The sentence was altered and replaced with one of caution and discharge (Alheit, 1995; Louw, 1994; Mischke, 1995).

On May 8th 1998 Judge Heher of the Johannesburg High Court proclaimed that the laws that have historically criminalized sex between men were unconstitutional. These included the common law crimes of sodomy and unnatural offenses and Section 20A of the Sexual Offenses Act. In his interpretation of the equality clause, he argued that the expression of homosexuality and heterosexuality were equivalent and as such required the same amount of consideration and acceptance (Achmat, 1998).

#### 4.8.1.3 The Age of Consent

One of the discriminatory laws still remaining, even after the landmark achievement of the equality clause in the South African Constitution is the Sexual Offenses Act, 23 of 1957 as amended in 1969 and 1988, specifically Section 14. In brief this section of the law stipulates that heterosexuals may consent to have sexual intercourse at 16 years old whereas homosexuals have to be 19. The conviction of a male or female found guilty in terms of these sections of the law leads to a fine up to R 12000 and / or being sentenced to six years imprisonment (Pieters, 1995).

The age of consent for homosexuals is therefore discriminatory and a lot higher than most Western legal systems (see Table 1). There is also a difference in the qualitative nature of the sexual act being prohibited, that is, the heterosexual act is limited to '...having or attempting to have unlawful carnal intercourse...', whereas homosexuals have the additional, '...committing or attempting to commit with any under-age girl or boy an immoral or indecent

act...'. This means that the heterosexual person, committing or attempting to commit with an under-age youngster of the opposite sex, an '...immoral or indecent act...' is beyond the law unless it can be proved that the child was paid or somehow bribed (Cameron, 1993; Pieters, 1995). A comparative table adapted from the Mail and Guardian, (Achmat, 1997, p.25) illustrates the discrepancy in our legislation and how it compares with that of other European countries.

TABLE 1 : Comparative ages of consent for sexual intercourse for heterosexual and homosexual males and females

Country	Heterosexual Male / Female	Homosexual Female / Female	Homosexual Male / Male	Equal since
France	15	15	15	1982
Germany	16	16	16	1994
Greece	15	15	15	1987
Iceland	14	14	14	1992
Ireland	17	15	17	1993
Italy	16	16	16	1889
Spain	12	12	12	1822
Sweden	15	15	15	1978
U K	16	16	18	-
S A	16	19	19	-

The discriminate age of consent has been formulated on stereotypes based on myths that have been rationalised and entrenched by legislation. These include the child sexual offender myth, that homosexuals are more likely to abuse children sexually than heterosexuals. Recent research reveals findings contrary to this myth. Another myth related to this issue, is that homosexuality is contagious or can be foisted upon unsuspecting children by predatory homosexual adults. Research pertaining to homosexual adolescent sexual activity and identity formation reveals that youths are more likely to be introduced to homosexual

behaviour by a peer rather than an adult (Hyde, 1994). McLean & Ngcobo (1995, p.161) in their discussion on the development of sexual identity in a typically South African township setting, state,

We didn't find anyone who was 'made into a homosexual' by an older 'pervert'. Those who spoke about such experiences had either discovered their attraction to males and their bodies before, or recognised quite quickly when it happened that it was what they were after.

Thus sexual orientation is not something into, or out of which an individual can be converted against their will. As stated by Achmat (1997, p.24), "Criminalisation, stigma and discrimination deny lesbian and gay youths the right to enjoy romance, courting and sex", those aspects important to healthy personality development enjoyed by heterosexual young adults. Thus, an age of consent that is different for these two groups needs to be addressed from a non-judgmental, unbiased, knowledgeable perspective rather than one based on social hysteria.

#### 4.8.1.4 Constitutional Protection

Published prior to the promulgation of the South African Constitution, Cameron's (1993) article in the South African Law Journal illustrates the historic process of change that has taken place within the legal system. Proposals have been made over time in favour of sexual minorities by individuals and organisations attempting to facilitate change. Cameron (1993) suggests that Constitutional protection and the equality clause entail addressing four areas in which homosexuals in South Africa are still experiencing discrimination. He suggests that the decriminalisation of homosexual persons is therefore necessary in both common and criminal law. This would entail,

1. The law of sodomy that has historically disallowed consenting adult males the right to sexual expression needs to be upheld.
2. Section 20(A) of the Sexual Offenses Act 1957, "Two men at a party", should be removed.

3. The Age of Consent for heterosexual and homosexual sexual intercourse should be equalised.
4. Cameron (1993) further suggested:
  - Non-discrimination needs to be legally enforced especially within the economically relevant areas of, employment, tenancies, provision of public resources, and insurance. According to Cameron (1993), there is a growing trend that gay males, because they are stereotypically perceived to be high-risk candidates for contracting the HIV virus, are being blacklisted by insurance companies.
  - Homosexuals should be granted the rights to free speech, including the removal of censorship of publications within the jurisdiction of the public decency laws, which would also allow the unrestricted public distribution of information and opinions. With regard to free expression, gay men should be allowed the right to cross-dress in public, without public or legal censure.
  - Homosexuals should also be allowed equal rights with regard to commercial association.
  - Homosexuals should have the right to have their relationships recognised as permanent domestic partnerships. This does not mean mimicking heterosexual ceremonies or unions. However a legally recognised contractual situation in which a homosexual partner would be recognised in the same way as a marriage partner, for benefits such as medical aid, pension, insurance, and immigration. This would also extend to couples being evaluated objectively with reference to fostering or adopting children as well as custody rights. (Cameron, 1993)

The Constitution was developed in order to encourage a more fair justice system in which historically marginalized persons or groups would no longer be discriminated against. The South African Constitution states that, "...no person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour or sexual orientation.", furthermore, "...each person has the right to privacy."

The new constitution created a window of opportunity for groups and persons previously oppressed, silenced and ignored to speak out, to cease the fearful and neurotic whispering of whichever closet South African society had banished them to, not only to claim the passing attention of the fickle media, but also to talk about what they are, what they want and how they think about achieving their aims. (Mischke, 1995, p.34)

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

Homosexuality has been defined as a negative socio-historic construct and a homosexual person is defined and conceptualised according to their perceived deviant sexual activity rather than according to a unique personal sexual identity. These definitions have developed within the larger social construction of sexuality that has normalised heterosexuality. Within the context of the Natural Science, Medicine has sought to classify, cure or control any person deviating from the norm. Major social institutions such as religion and the law have assisted with the negative perceptions of homosexuals and attempted to regulate their behaviour. These factors have contributed to the development of anti-gay prejudice that has been fuelled by myths and stereotypes and which provides a basis for the continued marginalisation of homosexuals.

Homosexuality within the South African context was depicted in this chapter both historically and presently, and local legislation was examined in order to uncover some of the discrepancies within the law that has been put in place, based on negative stereotyped attitudes. These contradictions seem more blatant and prejudicial now that the South African constitution stipulates that no person may be discriminated against on the basis of their race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour or sexual orientation.

## CHAPTER 5

### ADOLESCENCE

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter describes elements of the developmental time period termed adolescence. Most texts on adolescence contain comparisons of the different theories such as biological, behavioural and social learning, psychoanalytic, and cognitive theories, that have been developed to make sense of this particular chronological developmental phase. As much as these are useful in explaining aspects of adolescent behaviour and development, no one theory has all the answers (Nielsen, 1996). The purpose of this chapter is therefore not to give a theoretical overview, but to provide an outline of some aspects pertinent to the developmental phase known as adolescence that may have contributed either directly or indirectly to the development of prejudice.

Adolescence as a chronological time span is difficult to isolate as it is related to the different cultures from which the individuals come. It would appear that in general, over time, the age at which adolescence begins has decreased, whereas the age at which it ends has increased. The beginning of adolescence is characterised by mainly physiological and emotional changes associated with puberty, whereas its termination is accepted once certain social, psychological, economic and legal goals have been attained (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993).

Socially, the individual is expected to take on adult roles and responsibilities such as parenthood. Psychological maturity entails the development of autonomy, a self-reliant identity where the individual has developed their own set of norms and values independent of their parents, and are able to initiate and maintain adult relationships that are based on healthy attachment, intimacy and friendship. From an economic perspective, an individual is said to have attained adult status when they are economically independent of their parents, are able to pursue a vocation, and support themselves financially (Gouws & Kruger, 1994).

In South Africa, as in other countries internationally, the attainment of adulthood is to some extent legally demarcated. For example, a person has to be 18 years old to vote, at 21 years old they no longer require parental consent as well as having independent contractual competence and liability (Gouws & Kruger, 1994).

The journey through adolescence to adulthood features many forms of development. These include, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, motivational and goal orientated, as well as moral and spiritual development. These take place within a certain socio-economic and cultural environment as well as more often than not in some form of educational setting, which combined provide the atmosphere and foundation of an individual's development (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993; Nielsen, 1996).

## 5.2 ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

The core issues historically explored with regard to the topic of adolescent sexuality have been associated with the negative implications thereof, these include teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, even more so now, that the world focus is on HIV/AIDS a mainly sexually transmitted fatal viral infection. In order to address these matters effectively, there is a need to understand the nature of adolescent sexuality, which cannot be generalised in that it varies from individual to individual and is affected by factors such as the different socio-economic, religious, cultural, political, and educational background from which the adolescent originates (Katchadourian, 1990).

Central to theories on adolescent development is sexuality. It is one of the major features of moving from childhood to adulthood and is important in that the adolescent is required to incorporate personal sexual values, beliefs and needs into a positive self-identity within a specific social context. The process consists of combining and integrating biological, psychological, and social features.

Biologically, many physical and physiological changes take place rapidly. Puberty, which marks the onset of adolescence is characterised by changes in growth and sex hormones which leads to the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics, such as the maturation of the sexual reproduction organs, and an increase in the sex drive, as well as

physical changes in height, mass and proportion (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993).

Psychologically, changes take place with regard to a preparation to take on adult roles outside the family of origin such as becoming involved in relationships that may include sexual activity. Socially, the process of biological and psychological maturation take place within a specific broader context and are impacted on by the socially accepted values and beliefs associated with sexuality as well as gender roles (Moore & Rosenthal, 1993).

### 5.3 SEXUAL SOCIALISATION

Theoretically, the biological sex drive theory that posits that hormonally induced sex drive gets directed into socially constructed patterns has given way to the more contemporary idea that the socio-historic environment and culture are more likely to mould sexual behaviour. The sexual socialisation that takes place over an individual's lifetime, and especially during adolescence, gives rise to an individual's sexual identity and their sense of self. Sexual identity encompasses both the idea that one is a sexual being based on attractiveness as well as attraction to others, plus sexual orientation and gender identity.

#### 5.3.1 Parental influence

Katchadourian (1990) states that the function parents have in the sexual socialisation of their children is not often questioned. It is not clear how parents communicate their attitudes on the topic of sexuality. It is thought however that as direct communication between parents and adolescents is not usually good, that sexual beliefs and values are transmitted implicitly through modelling. Although many people believe that parents should be the main role players in sex education, studies reveal that not much significant or helpful sex education is achieved within the context of the home.

There are numerous reasons cited for parents not communicating directly about sexual issues. These include that parents themselves do not have precise information or that their own sexual values are not clear. Many are embarrassed and feel uncomfortable discussing the topic with their children. This may derive from the opinion that by talking about sex it might

lead to a loss of innocence and encourage the adolescent to become sexually active or possibly even make them scared. Avoiding the topic may be connected to the incest taboo where talking about sex amounts to a sexual interaction. Another explanation may be timing. Parents of adolescents are often facing their own developmentally specific transitional sexual anxieties, which might make it difficult to broach the topic (Katchadourian, 1990; Nielsen, 1996; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999).

Studies (Nielsen, 1996; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999) reveal that fathers seldom get involved in sexually educating their children and that both boys and girls seem to direct their questions (mainly relating to pregnancy and childbirth) to their mothers. Rosenthal & Feldman (1999) found that mothers communicate more with their daughters about sexual topics than with their sons and one of the topics covered in the mother-daughter dyad was gay and lesbian issues. A more important feature regarding sexual socialisation is that the adolescent girl's female caregiver communicates her own values and beliefs implicitly to the teenager. According to Nielsen (1996, p.502-503),

Mothers, stepmothers, or other women who assume a nurturing role in a girls life influence her sexual decisions by what they say and do with their own lives. Without ever discussing the topic with her directly, these women continually convey attitudes about female sexuality and sexual relationships.

### 5.3.2 Peer influence

Peers may either complement or contradict the family's influence in the sexual socialisation of the teenager. However over time, the influence of peers becomes stronger and therefore sexual attitudes and knowledge is more likely to coincide with those of their peers and peers are more likely to influence their behaviour. Adolescents spend a lot of time together share ideas about matters they cannot discuss with parents or teachers. These matters include issues such as personal problems, sex, drugs, alcohol, contraception, relationships etc. The peer group therefore becomes an important source of reference and feedback (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Nielsen, 1996).

It is not easy to predict adolescents' sexual behaviour from their attitudes. It would appear to be a developmental phase where they are attempting to sort out some of the contradictions

that develop due to inconsistent information received from external influences such as parents and peers and correlating this with their own beliefs tends to lead to the need to find out for themselves (Katchadourian, 1990).

### 5.3.3 The process of emancipation

The peer group facilitates a move away from total dependence on their parents and are forced to become more independent and self-sufficient (Gouws & Kruger, 1994). As Kopp (1991, p.13) states;

The teenager must make a clean break with the parents' values to return home someday as a person in his or her own right. The transformation is painful for everyone concerned, but the attachment must be broken if an adult-to-adult connection is ever to be made.

During this process of individuation the peer group provides a source of feedback on the individual's personality appearance and behaviour, thus they are able to acquire knowledge and insight about themselves, as well as the ability to evaluate themselves leading to a sense of individual identity. Rejection from the peer group at this stage can lead to long-term repercussions as the individual's self-concept and sense of identity may be seriously jeopardised. The peer group provides an arena to form friendships to practise their social skills and, through acceptance, gain support during the process of individuation (Gouws & Kruger, 1994).

### 5.3.4 Sexual orientation in adolescents

Debates on adolescent sexuality have focussed mainly on issues that pertain to heterosexual youths, most of which homosexual youth share in common such as relationships, parental influence, school attendance etc. Statistics quoted in Nielsen (1996) reveal that 50% of all teenage boys participate in some homosexual behaviour, although about 8% of adult males are exclusively gay and 3% of adult females are exclusively lesbian. Homosexual youths have added difficulties facing their developing sexuality in societies that are heterosexualised. Should they expose their stigmatised status they risk being ostracised, ridiculed and picked on by their peers at a stage in their lives when peer acceptance is so important (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Nielsen, 1996, Stafford, 1988).

Asking the question, “What makes someone gay?” often reveals the underlying motivation that were a reason to be found then homosexuality could be cured. There is however no definitive answer, just as there is no answer to why people are heterosexual, although that is rarely questioned as it is taken for granted. Biological factors and environmental theories have been developed and accepted with varying amounts of enthusiasm during different time periods. What research has revealed, however, is that homosexuality is not related to race, class or religion, nor is it related to parental influence. Homosexual sexual identity is not something an individual chooses or can change. It is not uncommon however for a homosexual adolescent to try and be accepted in a heterosexual milieu by dating people of the opposite gender, rather than be ridiculed and ostracised for their minority status (Nielsen, 1996).

According to Nielsen (1996), teenage males are more homophobic than teenage girls. As supported by research, males have more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians. A suggested reason for extreme negative feelings or homophobia in males is that they are trying to repress or cover up their own homosexual feelings or experiences. As stated by Katchadourian, (1990, p.336), “Despite the recent liberalisation of social attitudes, many adolescents (boys more so than girls) continue to disapprove of homosexuals, and some are quite hostile to them. Lesbians are viewed with more tolerance.”

### 5.3.5 The broader social context

#### 5.3.5.1 The media

Printed material such as magazines and fictional literature, music videos and CD’s convey messages about sex and relationships. Television, cinema and videos often contain sexually explicit material or sexual themes. Most media formats present stereotyped and idealised images of sexuality and relationships thus providing problematical constructs and role models as examples to adolescents (Moore & Rosenthal, 1993). The Internet is another format that adolescents have access to that contains easily accessible pornographic and other sexually orientated sites.

### 5.3.5.2 Religion

Research (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitely, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992) has shown that religious affiliation impacts on attitudes. Sexual conservatism has been linked to religious following. This link has been found to be related to the orthodoxy with which an individual follows a particular religion, rather than isolating any one particular religion.

### 5.3.5.3 School

As described by Entwisle (1990) the school represents a small society, a microcosm of the macrocosm and therefore contains and facilitates the development of the cultural and political mores of the larger society. A teacher's personality and flexibility impact on the students' ability to integrate knowledge and learn problem-solving techniques. School size, class size, ethnic and cultural diversity, public versus private schools, co-education versus single sex schools, are organisational and demographic factors that impact on the adolescent. Combined, these are thus likely to affect the adolescent's social development and value system and therefore have some bearing on the type of attitudes they develop. As stated by Stephan (1999, p.xiv),

Intergroup relations that occur in schools are a reflection of the intergroup relations in society and are based on the inequality of power that exists between different socio-economic and political groups. Thus by altering beliefs and attitudes of adolescents, it is hoped that in the long term it may correct some of the imbalances of power that exist in societies in that adolescents will eventually play a role and contribute toward the different social institutions.

## 5.4 SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

### 5.4.1 Sex Education

The school and the family are both environments in which adolescents are likely to learn appropriate sexual values and information although both have limitations. Within the context of the school, Katchadourian (1990) suggests that sex education needs to become better integrated into the school curriculum and presented to scholars as any other subject that

would be taught. He suggests that sex education should be facts based rather than restrictive or inhibitory as they were in the past and should incorporate decision making programmes, family communication and peer related programmes. Taking into consideration that adolescents are striving for autonomy, they should be provided with knowledge and decision-making skills that will facilitate them making responsible sexual decisions.

As stated by Stafford (1988, p.42);

Given that a significant proportion of young people will grow up to be homosexual, the education provided by our schools should see both to equip them to live their lives to good effect and to instil in others a conscionable degree of understanding and acceptance of them.

More importantly the aim of education programmes in South Africa should be to encourage an understanding of difference in general as well as to focus on adolescent's need to accept their own developing sexuality. Aims of sex education programmes as proposed by Stafford (1998) should,

1. Educate those who are homosexual that they are not sick, perverted or abnormal, in order for them to accept their sexual identity.
2. Allow those who are not homosexual to understand and accept the concept of homosexuality in others and thus reduce the idea of otherness that leads to stereotypes and prejudice.

According to authors (Katchadourian, 1990; Stafford, 1988), the topic of sexuality should be addressed from the perspective of respect for others, within the context of relationships, based on love and friendship with the ultimate goal a structured home life. Sexuality as a concept should not be presented as a dualism of homosexuality and heterosexuality but rather as a spectrum that includes both situated at each end.

In order to reduce anti-gay prejudice, it is likely to help if the ethos of the school is such that it discourages anti-homosexual behaviour, as it should any other discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour. Another change that may be useful within the education system would be for

homosexual teachers to reveal their homosexual status, which would provide positive role models for homosexual youths. The 'coming out' of teachers is unlikely to occur, as they would then expose themselves to the risk of being targets of discrimination, mostly relating to the myth that homosexuals are child abusers. A parent who believes this myth is unlikely to want their child to be exposed to the socially perceived deviant sexuality of a homosexual teacher. There is also a need to increase the amount of materials available to teachers and students especially materials aimed at a younger readership for students (Katchadourian, 1990; Stafford, 1988). In South Africa these materials would benefit from being specific to the country's multicultural dynamic.

Homosexuality must therefore be actively recognised and constructively dealt with by moral educators. They must provide reassurance that it is a common, natural and healthy condition and that it is no less possible for homosexuals than for heterosexuals to have happy and fulfilling relationships (Stafford, 1988, p.54).

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter on adolescents concludes the literature review and has illustrated some of the factors that may contribute toward the development of prejudice toward homosexuals. Adolescence is a developmental time period when issues regarding sexuality are pertinent due to their own developing sexuality as well as being stage marked by the need to develop independent autonomy. It has been found that parents and peers are the main influences on sexual socialisation and that the media, religion, and the school environment are factors within the broader social context that have an effect on adolescents. In an attempt to find ways of reducing prejudice and allow adolescents to develop a healthy concept of sexuality, authors (Katchadourian, 1990; Stafford, 1988) have suggested the potential positive effect of curriculum based sex education programmes.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEWED

The literature reviewed has attempted to provide a context for the proposed study that seeks to establish whether there is a correlation between female grade 12 scholars' attitudes toward homosexuals and their parents' attitudes toward homosexuals. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the literature that was to be reviewed and described the topic under research.

It was decided to address the theory of the development and socialisation of prejudice from a Social Psychological perspective. Chapter 2 therefore describes a theoretical approach that combines Social Categorisation Theory and Social Identity Theory within the context of intergroup relations. The development and maintenance of prejudice are also examined from an intergroup perspective looking at the development of stereotypes and how these contribute toward the perpetuation of negative attitudes and discrimination.

Chapter 3 looks at aspects of the western social construction of sexuality. A broader Social Constructionist framework was used in order to illustrate how western socio-historic constructs of sexuality have contributed to the normalization of heterosexuality and thus the development of prejudice toward homosexuals. The feminist perspective that illustrates the entrenchment of heterosexuality as the norm is briefly outlined, and Kinsey's continuum of sexuality is presented as an alternative model to the heterosexuality / homosexuality dualism.

Homosexuality is defined and quantified in Chapter 4. A western socio-historic perspective is once again used to illustrate the development of the negative perception of homosexuals. In this chapter aspects of Christian discourse and the Law are outlined to illustrate how two major social institutions have attempted to curtail homosexual behaviour. Homophobia is defined and some of the myths and stereotypes that exist are described and explicated. An outline of the specific South African context is presented illustrating the change and impact of legislation over time and concludes with some of the contradictions contained within the current legal system based on the equality clause within the new constitution.

Chapter 5 completes the literature reviewed by addressing the topic of adolescence. Although an immense topic, only aspects that appear pertinent to this particular developmental timeframe that may impact on their sexual socialisation have been focussed on. These include parental and peer influence during a stage where the adolescent is attempting to become an independent individual as well as how the media, religion and the school environment impact on the potential for developing prejudice toward a minority group. Specific school programmes are suggested that may help adolescents develop a healthy sense of their own sexuality and create an environment wherein 'otherness' would be accepted and thereby reduce anti-gay prejudice.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE RESEARCH STUDY

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS has impacted on the number of studies in the human sciences that have emerged recently and drawn attention to the fact that not much is known about sexual practices. In particular very little is known about sexual practices in general, but more particularly those of young women. Most information previously sought was with regard to the number and type of sexual encounters an individual had participated in, which does not provide the qualitative data about psychological or social issues. Attitudes, feelings and experiences have been underplayed and would be interesting in understanding more about how individuals negotiate, perceive and understand sex. These factors may lead researchers closer to finding answers not only to current debates around HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, but just as importantly from a feminist perspective, may facilitate a renegotiation of the socio-historically entrenched power imbalance between men and women (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe. & Thomson, 1999).

Prejudice according to Allport (1954) is a product of social categorisation. Social Categorisation is defined as an integral part of human nature that individuals utilise to systematise their world, thus simplifying their existence and allowing for survival. Allotting people to specific groups identifies those that belong and those that do not, a process that consequently leads to stereotyping. Homosexuals, as a sexual minority are an example of a category of individuals that has been discriminated against as a result of prejudice, perpetuated through myths and stereotypes, evident in legislation such as the discrepant age of consent.

#### 7.2 ISSUES IN RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE TOPIC OF SEXUALITY

Past research into attitudes toward homosexuals reveals the concept that homosexuals tend to be perceived in terms of their assumed sexual activity. Thus individuals are defined and

categorised according to their (stereotyped) behaviour or what they allegedly do with each, sexually. Research into attitudes toward a minority form of sexuality has tended to coincide with research into sexual behaviour rather than individuals with a particular sexual identity.

As Weeks (1985, p.3) states, "sex exists in a moral vacuum". Sex is regulated by people, and people are products of the ideology put in place by commanding institutions (legal and religious). Individuals themselves thus perpetuate the prevailing norms. In western societies the moralistic position of these socially constructed norms has become entrenched through legislation that has historically been advised by religion, specifically the Judaeo-Christian religions. Disapproval appears to be directed at those behaviours that do not fall within the boundaries of heterosexual, monogamous, procreative coupling. These negative attitudes toward marginalized sexualities are often justified using embroidered religious arguments.

Prejudice has been defined as the possession of negative attitudes or beliefs that have the potential for people to behave in a discriminatory or hostile manner toward a person because they belong to a certain group. Homophobia or anti-gay prejudice has been defined within the context of this research as; "personal and institutional prejudice against lesbians and gay men" (Herek, 1988), or fixed negative attitudes and reactions toward homosexuals (Hyde, 1994). It can therefore be regarded as a socially constructed aversion toward homosexuals, which has been entrenched via societies institutions such as religion and the law. It is believed that attitudes are passed on and communicated inter-generationally. The objective of this study was to find out whether there was a correlation between parents' and daughters' subjective disposition toward homosexuals and whether parent's attitudes affect their daughter's attitudes.

It was therefore decided to carry out a survey-method research project where questionnaires were distributed to a sample of Grade 12 (Matric) scholars at an all-girl high school and to their parents. The survey method is a more direct way of obtaining thoughts, feelings or attitudes toward a topic. It consists of a form containing a number of predetermined questions that require personal responses, and as a questionnaire of this sort is self-administered, it does away with interviewer bias. The questionnaire can be the most effective method when used for research that deals with sensitive, personal issues, although it is limited in that it is unable to obtain in-depth feelings and thoughts from the respondents (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1994).

## 7.3 AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

### 7.3.1 Aims

The aims of the study were to ascertain:

1. The level of homophobic attitudes toward lesbian and gay men in a sample of female scholars and their parents in South Africa.
2. Whether female scholars' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were different from those of their parents.
3. Whether mother's or father's homophobic attitudes impacted more on their daughter's attitudes.

### 7.3.2 Hypotheses

Researchers have found in assessing attitudinal scales that males are more homophobic than females (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite 1984; Kite & Whitely, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992). It was therefore hypothesised that:

1. Male respondents (fathers) would be more homophobic than female respondents (mothers and scholars);
2. Respondents would possess more negative attitudes toward gay men than they would toward lesbians.

Within the unique context of this research study, a further set of hypotheses were posited:

3. Adolescents' attitudes would be less negative than their parents;

Furthermore, based on research (Nielsen, 1996; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999) that found that adolescent girls are more affected by communication regarding issues of sexuality that comes from their mothers, that;

4. Adolescent females' attitudes would more closely resemble the attitudes of their mothers.

## 7.4 METHODOLOGY

### 7.4.1 The sample (subjects)

An all-female high school in the Greater Durban Area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa was approached and permission was granted to carry out a study on attitudes toward homosexuals. The utilisation of scholars and parents from this one particular school was based on the permission granted. It was hoped that many of the Grade 12 (Matric) scholars and their parents would participate. A total of 630 (210 scholars, 420 parents) questionnaires were handed out and 282 were completed and returned.

### 7.4.2 Measurement and Instrumentation

#### 7.4.2.1 Mode of data collection

##### 7.4.2.1.1 The Covering Letters

Two covering letters (see Appendix A) were designed and were placed inside an envelope for the scholars to pass on to their parents. One was written on a University of Natal letterhead and explained the motivation for the research and the value of each respondent's possible contribution to the debate that is currently taking place concerning changing legislation and policy formation in South Africa. Confidentiality was ensured based on anonymity, the certainty that as the questionnaire required no revealing demographic data to be divulged, none of the respondents could be personally identified. To stress the importance and legitimacy of the project and in an attempt to encourage participation, the researcher had the letter countersigned by a senior lecturer from the Psychology department at the University of

Natal, Durban. The second letter was written on the school's letterhead and outlined the reasons behind their motivation to participate in the research project. It also stipulated that if respondents did not wish to participate in the study, that they should simply return the unanswered questionnaire. The sample was requested to return the completed and non-completed questionnaires to the school sealed in the envelopes provided.

#### 7.4.2.1.2 The Research Questionnaire

Two questionnaires, one for parents and one for scholars (see Appendix B) were constructed. These contained a preliminary section that required the participants to furnish specific demographic information. The main content of the questionnaires were based on Herek's (1988) short form, 10-item, Likert format, Attitude Toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG) scale.

##### (i) Demographic data

The demographic information requested from the participants pertained to their age, gender, race, and vocational interest (scholars) or profession (parents). These data, excluding vocation, were to be entered as independent variables to find out their impact on homophobic attitudes and the acceptance or rejection of a differential age of consent.

##### (ii) Assessing homophobic attitudes

Herek's (1988) short form ATLG is a 10-item scale in Likert format, with two 5-item subscales: Attitudes Toward Lesbians (ATL-S) and Attitudes Toward Gay Men (ATG-S). The Likert scale was made up of a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and was scored by summing scores across items for each subscale. Reverse scoring was used for items 2 and 4 on the ATL and items 9 and 10 on the ATG. Total scores on the ATLG range from ten (extremely positive attitudes) to fifty (extremely negative attitudes); and from five to twenty-five on each of the two subscales. In the current research total scores were computed on the separate subscales to ascertain whether there was a gender or a parent / scholar difference with regard to the level of homophobic attitudes toward either gay men or lesbians.

#### 7.4.2.1.2.1 Validity & Reliability

Herek (1988), the originator of the ATLG scale reported that the Alpha coefficients for the scale and subscales indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency (alpha = .90 for the ATLG, .89 for the ATG, .77 for the ATL). Cahill (1998a) carried out a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha test that revealed similar levels of internal consistency.

According to Herek (1988) the construct validity of the short form ATLG is supported by its significant correlations with other measures. These include the following.

1. Attitude Toward Women Scale
2. Traditional Family Ideology scale
3. California F-scale
4. Frequency of attendance at religious services
5. Membership in a liberal religious denomination
6. Religious Ideology Scale

#### 7.4.3 The Procedure

The scholars' questionnaires were given to the class teachers during school time to distribute to the scholars for them to answer and return to their teachers after completion. An envelope that contained a covering letter stating the objectives of the study, a letter of permission from the school, and a questionnaire was attached to each student's questionnaire. The scholars were requested to take the attached envelope home in order for their parents to read the letters and complete a similar questionnaire. The scholars were requested to return their parent's questionnaires to the school as soon as possible.

#### 7.4.4 Ethical considerations

##### 7.4.4.1 Risk

As stated in Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, (1994) there is an element of risk in all research.

They define minimal risk as the amount of damage or discomfort caused by the research being less than or equal to the amount experienced on a daily basis. It was hoped that by creating research that was pertinent to the scholars and their parents and making it as informative as possible that the amount of risk would be minimalised.

#### 7.4.4.2 Informed consent

As explained by Kimmel (1996), informed consent is the necessity for the researcher to explain to a potential participant all aspects of the research that may affect their decision to involve themselves in the project. This concept may be interpreted as somewhat problematic within the context of this research as the procedure did not allow for the scholars to have much option in choosing whether they would participate or not. It could therefore be construed that the researcher took advantage of a formerly autocratic and pedagogic system to benefit the study. There are a number of exceptions to informed consent and one of these includes that the researcher has a good reason for withholding information and is able to explain the reason for proceeding in that particular way (Kimmel, 1996). Within this research context it was felt that a lengthy explanation prior to the administration of the questionnaire was likely to engender discussion amongst the participants that would ultimately affect the results. Furthermore, neither exposure to the questionnaire or the participation in the research project was likely to affect the participants in any adverse manner.

#### 7.4.4.3 Privacy

Privacy is a concept whereby individuals have the choice to decide how and what information about themselves they would like to be communicated to others (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1994). The questionnaire required participants to reveal subjective feelings or attitudes toward a marginalized group of people, homosexuals. As the research contained questions that pertained to personal feelings about a sensitive topic, it was necessary to assure anonymity and this was facilitated by the participants not having to reveal their names or any other personally identifying information. Confidentiality was thereby guaranteed and this was in an attempt to encourage participation.

#### 7.4.4.4 Feedback

No formal agreement was negotiated either with the school or with the participants regarding feedback of the results. It was however stipulated at the end of the covering letter that the results of the research would be made available to the school, and it was hoped that this would be achieved by the end of the year.

## CHAPTER 8

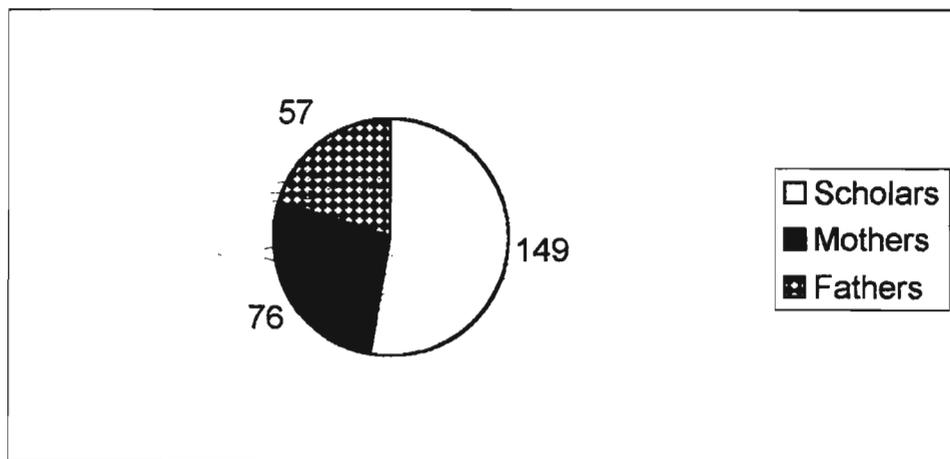
### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 8.1. PARTICIPATION RATE

##### 8.1.1 Sample size

The number of questionnaires handed out amounted to 630 (210 scholars, 420 parents). Of these a total of 282 usable questionnaires were returned, this constituted 149 scholars, 76 mothers, and 57 fathers (see Figure 1.). A total of 35 complete daughter-mother-father triads were produced from these responses (a total of 105 questionnaires).

**FIGURE 1. :** Response distribution of Questionnaire



#### 8.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

##### 8.2.1 Age

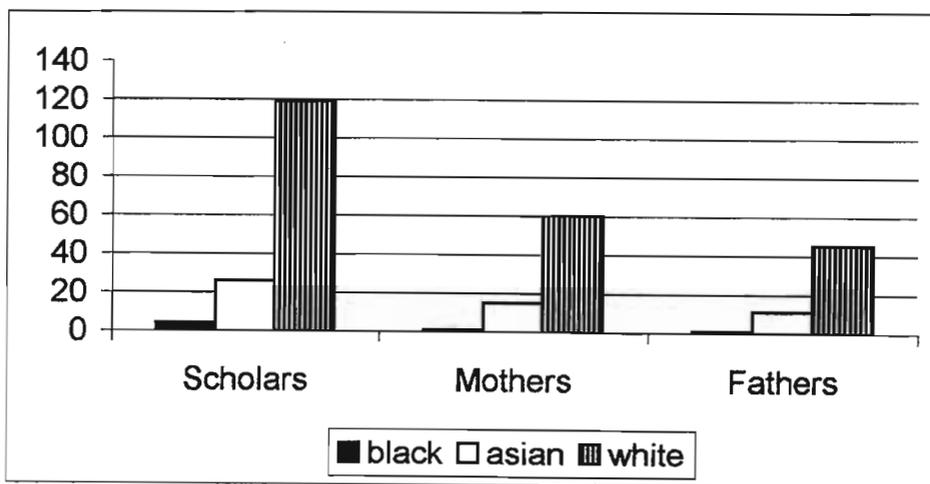
The ages differed according to the sample category (scholars, mothers, fathers). The ages of the entire sample ranged from 17 years to 59 years. The mean age of the scholars was 17.34

years, and ranged from 17 to 18 years. The mean age of the mothers was 44.92 years, and ranged from 27 to 58 years. The mean age of the fathers was 48.09 years, and ranged 38 to 59 years.

### 8.2.2 Race

Of the 282 respondents that completed the questionnaire, 6 (2.1%) were black, 52 (18.4%) were asian, and 224 (79.4%) were white. The racial distribution of the scholars who responded was as follows; 4 (2.7%) were black, 26 (17.4%) were asian, and 119 (79.9%) were white. In the parent sample, 1 (1.3%) black mother, 15 (19.7%) asian mothers, and 60 (79.0%) white mothers responded, whereas 1 (1.8%) black father, 11 (19.3%) asian fathers, and 45 (78.9%) white fathers responded (see Figure 2.).

FIGURE 2. : Racial distribution of Sample



## 8.3 ATTITUDES TOWARD LESBIANS & GAY MEN

### 8.3.1 Scholars' and parents' attitudes compared

The data were analysed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in which respondent identity (scholar, mother, father) was entered as the independent variable and

scores on the Attitude Toward Lesbians and Attitude Toward Gay Men scales were entered as dependent variables. The MANOVA yielded a significant effect for respondent identity, Wilks Lambda = 0.88,  $F(4,202)= 3.34$ ,  $p<0.02$ . One-way ANOVAs indicated that this effect was significant for the Attitude Toward Gay Men Scale, but not for the Attitude Toward Lesbians Scale (see  $F$  ratios in Table 2)

Newman-Keuls post hoc tests indicated that the mean score for fathers on the Attitude Toward Gay Men Scale were significantly higher than the mean scores for both scholars and mothers.

TABLE 2 : Comparison of Mean Scores Obtained by Scholars and their Parents on the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and the Attitudes Toward Gay Men Scales

Scale	Mean scores			$F(2, 102)$
	Scholar ( $n = 35$ )	Mother ( $n = 35$ )	Father ( $n = 35$ )	
Attitudes Toward Lesbians				1.90
Mean	12.69	14.17	15.51	
Standard deviation	5.21	5.97	6.91	
Attitudes Toward Gay Men				4.43*
Mean	13.74 <sup>a</sup>	14.91 <sup>a</sup>	17.80	
Standard deviation	5.19	5.96	5.39	
MANOVA (4,202)				3.34*

Note. MANOVA = Multivariate Analysis of Variance

<sup>a</sup> Significantly different from father's scores

\*  $p<0.02$ .

### 8.3.2 Parents attitudes as predictors of scholars attitudes toward lesbians

A Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted in which maternal and paternal attitudes toward lesbians were entered as independent variables and daughter's attitudes toward lesbians was entered as the dependent variable. This analysis produced a multiple  $R^2$  of 0.47,  $F(3,32) = 16.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , which suggests that 47% of the variance in daughters attitudes toward lesbians can be accounted for by parental attitudes. Maternal attitudes toward lesbians emerged as a significant predictor of daughter's attitudes ( $Beta = 0.81$ ;  $t = 4.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Paternal attitudes toward lesbians did not, however, account for a significant proportion of the variance in daughters' attitudes ( $Beta = -0.13$ ,  $t = -0.69$ ,  $p = 0.49$ ).

### 8.3.3 Parents' attitudes as predictors of scholars attitudes toward gay men

A Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted in which maternal and paternal attitudes toward gay men were entered as independent variables and daughter's attitudes toward gay men was entered as the dependent variable. This analysis produced a multiple  $R^2$  of 0.53,  $F(3,32) = 18.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , which suggests that 53% of the variance in daughters attitudes toward gay men can be accounted for by parental attitudes. Maternal attitudes toward gay men emerged as a significant predictor of daughter's attitudes ( $Beta = 0.82$ ;  $t = 4.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Paternal attitudes toward gay men did not, however, account for a significant proportion of the variance in daughters' attitudes ( $Beta = -0.14$ ,  $t = -0.83$ ,  $p = 0.41$ ).

## 8.4 DISCUSSION

This study had three main aims. First, to ascertain the prevalence of homophobic attitudes in a sample of female scholars and their parents in South Africa. Second, to establish whether female scholars' negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were different from those of their parents. Third, to identify whether mothers' or fathers' homophobic attitudes were more likely to affect those of their daughters.

#### 8.4.1 The Research Hypotheses

##### 8.4.1.1 Gender Differences in Homophobic Attitudes

The study findings provide partial support for the hypothesis that there are gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals. The hypothesis posits that male respondents (fathers) are likely to be more homophobic than female respondents (mothers and scholars), although these findings are only significant with regard to homophobic attitudes toward gay men and not homophobic attitudes toward lesbians. These findings are consistent with research that has found that males are more homophobic than females (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992). Research has found that a gender difference exists with regard to the expression of defense mechanisms in that males who tend to project their aggressive feelings outward seem to have more negative attitudes towards gay men (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996).

##### 8.4.1.2 Homophobic Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

The results are consistent with the hypothesis that individuals are more homophobic toward gay men than they are toward lesbians. It must however be taken into consideration that the finding was not significant but was in the predicted direction. The direction of this finding is congruent with previous research findings that illustrated that individuals are more negative toward gay men than toward lesbians (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992). Herek (1991) suggests that culturally there is an association between heterosexuality and masculinity. Males, for example, who condemn male homosexuality apparently do so in order to assert their own masculinity and thus remain unperturbed by lesbianism. Patriarchal western culture is essentially heterosexualised. Masculinity is elevated and therefore individuals may be more negative toward men who do not conform to their expected gender role. Female sexuality has historically been rendered invisible. It is therefore possible that this invisibility has extended to lesbians. AIDS has been publicised as a homosexual disease, specifically a gay male disease, gay men may therefore be more negatively perceived as possibly being the perpetrators of a life-threatening disease.

#### 8.4.1.3 Adolescents Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

The data provide qualified support for the hypothesis that adolescents' attitudes would be less negative toward homosexuals than their parents. The adolescents' attitudes do not differ significantly from their mothers' attitudes, but do differ significantly from their fathers' attitudes, specifically with regard to negative attitudes toward gay men. Herek (1991) stipulates that his findings reveal that individuals who are negatively predisposed toward homosexuals tend to be older. These data may also be consistent with the adolescent developmental process of emancipation whereby adolescents are more likely to question or openly reject their parents' values as they move away from total dependence on their parents and are forced to become more independent and autonomous (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Kopp, 1991). As the adolescents attitudes more closely resemble those of their mothers and are different to their fathers, it is also possible that the gender difference in attitudes toward homosexuals is also potentially relevant in this finding (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992).

#### 8.4.1.4 Parental Influences on Adolescent Females Attitudes

Findings of this research study revealed that the daughters' attitudes were more closely related to those of their mothers' attitudes than those of their fathers' attitudes. This is in keeping with research quoted in Nielsen (1996) that found that an adolescent girl's female caregiver communicates her own values and beliefs implicitly to the teenager. This finding may also be related to Rosenthal & Feldman's research (1999) that found that mothers communicate more with their daughters about sexual topics such as gay and lesbian issues than they do with their sons. The findings may also be related back to the research that has revealed gender differences in homophobic attitudes whereby females are less homophobic than males (Cahill, 1998a, 1998b; Herek, 1988, 1991; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Kunkel & Temple, 1992).

### 8.5 LIMITATIONS

Before proceeding on to the implications of this research it is important to note that the findings of this study are not generalisable to the general population. The biases noted are,

response bias (sample size) and social desirability. A number of problems arise from using such a restricted sample. In using a sample drawn from one school, the problems that are likely to be encountered include issues pertaining to gender, race and social class.

#### 8.5.1 Response bias

Sexuality, in that it is a topic that generates anxiety, impacts on research in that refusal or non-response rates to questionnaires are often high. Information is thus obtained from those participants who are willing to answer questions on a relatively sensitive topic. These volunteers may possess certain commonalities and possibly differ from those who were not willing to respond. It therefore makes it difficult to generalise the findings to an entire population in that the findings could be biased and that could potentially skew the overall results.

#### 8.5.2 Social desirability

Researching a topic that is reactionary, especially where the participants are aware that their responses are being recorded, has led to situations where the sample may have responded as they thought they were expected to, rather than how they actually felt (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1994). Social desirability is a possible feature of this research design that incorporates attitudes toward a socially constructed emotive subject such as sexuality. The probability is fairly high that respondents may have answered in a manner that would be socially acceptable rather than truthful and this would skew the results toward a more favourable outcome.

In an attempt to reduce the effects of response bias and social desirability, the survey method was chosen. This particular type of survey ensures that complete anonymity can be achieved. All the respondents were made aware that no specific demographic data was required, thus ensuring that it was not possible to trace the replies back to a particular respondent. It was hoped that this would achieve a relatively large response rate as well as decrease the likelihood of bias caused by social desirability.

### 8.5.3 Bias of gender

The sample was drawn from an all-girls' school. The results can only be interpreted from the perspective of a female scholars' sample and generalisations cannot be made for adolescents of both genders, as adolescent males are not represented. Within the parent sample, more mothers answered the questionnaire than fathers, thus making females in general over-represented within this particular study. Although if one were to assume that some of the responses were from single parents, it is more likely within the South African system, that women are more likely to have custody of their minor children, especially if they are daughters. However as it is not possible to obtain data on dual and single parent families represented either in the sample or at the school, it would be safer to acknowledge an over-representation of women and not generalise the findings further than the study.

### 8.5.4 Bias of race

Historically in South Africa inadequate economic and educational opportunities were rendered to individuals of 'colour'. A sample drawn from a school that was historically a 'whites only' school and one that is in the process of equalising its racial distribution is still likely to have an over-representation of whites, and under-representation of blacks and asians. This is particularly so as the zoning for the school included the surrounding middle class suburban white area, and only since the abolishment of certain racial laws such as the Group Areas Act have other racial groups been able to reside within the zoned area.

### 8.5.5 Bias of social class

Individuals from higher socio-economic groups, especially middle class individuals, are likely to be over-represented in a sample drawn from a school within a residential area that caters to middle-to high-income groups. This type of sample is likely to represent individuals (parents) who have had access to adequate secondary and possibly tertiary education. It is therefore possible that the majority of the sample originate from middle-to upper-middle-class status.

## 8.6 IMPLICATIONS

### 8.6.1 Research

This research has touched on daughters' and their parents' attitudes toward homosexuals. It may be useful to carry out research that is more specific to attitudes in general, for example, the socialisation effect of racial attitudes would be pertinent to the South African situation. Other questions that may be useful to address would be at what age or stage of development mother's attitudes begin to impact on their daughters. Furthermore, although research indicates that a mother's communication regarding sexuality in general affects her adolescent daughter more than the father's communication, a replicative study of a matched all-boys school would therefore be useful to ascertain whether a father's attitudes toward homosexuality would impact on his son's attitudes.

### 8.6.2 Education

Homophobic attitudes appear to be based on myths and stereotypes regarding homosexuals. This type of prejudice appears to develop due to a lack of appropriate knowledge. A possibility exists that stereotypes can be corrected if individuals are provided with information that contradicts their personal beliefs, as long as the information is presented in a meaningful way within a relevant context. The school and the family are both environments in which adolescents are likely to learn appropriate sexual values and information. It is therefore suggested that these two areas be addressed specifically with regard to education programmes.

#### 8.6.2.1 Parental influence

As it is not clear how parents communicate their attitudes on the topic of sexuality, it is thought, that sexual values and beliefs are transmitted implicitly through modelling. Parents, especially mothers, need to be made aware of the impact they are likely to have on their teenagers developing sexuality. Knowledge-based education programmes directed at parents need to be developed that allow them to clarify their own beliefs and values, in order for them to impart the facts about sex and sexuality clearly and non-judgementally to their children.

### 8.6.2.2 Schools

The majority of adolescents spend most of their time at school interacting with their teachers and their peers. It may be advisable then to centre educational programmes and remedial measures in an environment that is likely to reach the bulk of adolescents. Four proposed interventions within the context of the school are suggested.

Firstly, it would be useful if the ethos of the school were such that it publicly discouraged anti-homosexual behaviour. Secondly, that schools would encourage gay and lesbian teachers to reveal their homosexual status, having provided parents and other caregivers with accurate information that would dispel certain myths, such as that homosexuals are child abusers. It is hoped that this would provide homosexual youths with exposure to appropriate positive role models. This has the added advantage, based on the Contact Hypothesis (which postulates that an individual's behaviour will become more positive towards a member of an out-group after personal contact with them) of reducing anti-gay prejudice in non-homosexual teenagers and teachers in the school. Thirdly, that schools should provide adequate literature regarding healthy sexuality (including the spectrum and diversity of sexuality that encompasses both heterosexuality and homosexuality), to both teachers and pupils. It would be useful in South Africa if the material provided was based on local research and information and addressed the country's multicultural diversity rather than providing an American or European overview. Fourthly, that adolescents are provided with critical thinking skills that would allow them to analytically evaluate the implicit and explicit messages that are being conveyed to them through the media.

### 8.6.2.3 Sex education

A further issue that needs to be addressed within the context of the school is compulsory sex education. Sex education needs to become an integral part of the school syllabus and taught in the same format as other subjects. It should be both facts-based to provide the adolescent with knowledge and decision-making skills that will facilitate them making responsible sexual decisions, and it should incorporate family communication and peer-related programmes. More importantly the aim of sex education programmes in South Africa should be to encourage an understanding of difference in general and should be addressed from the perspective of respect for others. They should focus on communication, conflict resolution

and compromise, encouraging relationships based on love and friendship, as well as taking into consideration an adolescent's need to accept his or her own developing sexuality.

### 8.6.3 Legislative Reform

Sexual behaviour is defined within the socially-constructed, assumed heterosexual paradigm and labelled either normal or deviant. The law, as a hegemonic institution, has attempted to regulate sexuality by punishing those who do not observe the heterosexual norm. The biased nature of South African legislation, in that it marginalizes those with a same gender preference, appears to uphold the western socio-historic construct of sexuality. This research has not addressed the law pertaining to the discrepant age of consent (Section 14 of the Sexual Offences Act of 1957 as amended), that specifies a different age of consent for sexual intercourse for heterosexuals and homosexuals. It is this legislation that affects adolescents and as such requires review as it is inconsistent with the equality clause within the constitution that stipulates that no person should be discriminated against on grounds of their race, gender, ethnic or social origin, colour or sexual orientation.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

Perceptions of homosexuals and homosexuality in general appear to be based on myths and stereotypes that have developed over time within a specific western context that has resulted in heterosexuality being assumed as the norm. Homosexuals, rather than being perceived as individuals, are categorised according to what their sexual behaviour is thought to entail and are classified as deviant. The manifestation of this negative classification is prejudice toward homosexuals, which is termed homophobia or anti-gay prejudice, and has resulted in violence and discrimination toward gay men and lesbians.

Prejudice can be defined as the possession of negative attitudes or beliefs that have the potential for people to behave in a discriminatory or hostile manner toward a person because they belong to a certain group. Attitudes tend to be passed on and communicated from one generation to another. The main aim of this research was to establish whether there was any correlation between the attitudes of daughters and their parents. The Attitude Toward Lesbian and Gay men subscales were used to measure attitudes toward homosexuals in a sample of Grade 12 female pupils and their parents. Findings for the Attitude Toward Lesbian and Gay men scale revealed respondents demonstrated more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians, with male respondents (fathers) being more homophobic than females (mothers and daughters). These data were further analysed to establish whether there was a relationship between adolescents' and parents' attitudes toward homosexuals thus suggesting a socialisation effect, that is, that a parent's attitudes affected their daughter's attitudes. Results provided some support for the hypothesis that parents' attitudes impact on daughters' attitudes, more specifically, that mothers' attitudes are more closely related to their daughters' attitudes than to their fathers' attitudes.

These findings suggest a need for future research that addresses the possible socialisation effect of other prejudicial attitudes; such as racial attitudes; the age or stage of development a mother's attitudes begin to impact on her daughter's attitudes; and a replicative study of a matched all-boys school to ascertain whether a father's attitudes toward homosexuality impacts on his son's attitudes. Within the area of education, communication-centred and

knowledge-based programmes are recommended for teachers parents and adolescents; policy changes and suggestions are made that it is hoped would facilitate a more tolerant atmosphere within the school environment; compulsory sex education is proposed as an attempt to normalise the topic of sex and sexuality. Finally, legislative amendments are proposed that would take the equality clause of the constitution into consideration and make legislation toward homosexuals equitable.

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**APPENDIX A**



UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

Durban

Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Psychology  
Durban 4041 South Africa  
Telephone +27 (0)31 260 2527  
Facsimile +27 (0)31 260 2618

7th September 1998

Dear Parent

There is currently a fervent debate, both nationally and internationally regarding the legislation concerning the age of consent for sexual intercourse. As a postgraduate student in the Psychology Department of the University of Natal, I am currently carrying out research on attitudes toward homosexuals as they pertain to the current legislation regarding the age of consent. Should the findings of this multidisciplinary study be significant, your contribution as parents could make a difference with regard to policy change in South Africa

The nature of the questionnaire, in that it does not require your name or address, is such that complete confidentiality is ensured. As your input in this research is extremely valuable, I have enclosed two copies of the questionnaire so that at least one parent, preferably both, can complete it. The completion of the questionnaire should take approximately three minutes. I would be most grateful if you could please return both copies, whether completed or not, via your daughter to the school, sealed in the University envelope before the end of the week.

Thank you for your contribution to what I believe will be ground breaking research.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Cahill**

B. Soc. Science Hon. (Psychology)

**Dr Steven Collings (PhD)**

Senior Lecturer Psychology Department

**P.S.** The results of this survey will be made available to the school by the end of the year, please return the questionnaires before the *end of week* to enable me to start correlating the replies.



## WESTVILLE GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

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WESTVILLE ROAD, WESTVILLE • TELEPHONE 86-1258  
P. O. BOX 286, WESTVILLE 3630 • FAX 2660930

30 April 1998

Dear Parents

A Masters student at the University of Natal and ex Westville Girls' High pupil has requested that we assist her in a study which focuses on the current legislation regarding the age of consent.

We believe in assisting where ever possible in areas of research and have, hence, agreed to distribute the accompanying questionnaire. We, however, do **not** want you to feel obliged to complete the anonymous form and ask you to simply return it unanswered if you so wish.

Thank you for assisting us in this regard.

Yours sincerely

**MRS J LELLO**  
School Counsellor

**MISS J M JOHNSTONE**  
Principal

**APPENDIX B**

## Questionnaire

1. Age in years: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender:  Female  Male
3. "Race" / Ethnic group  African / Black  Coloured  Indian  White  Other: (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What field of work would you like to be in, when you finish studying? \_\_\_\_\_

The law regarding the age of consent for sexual intercourse in South Africa is different for heterosexuals and homosexuals, that is, in brief, a male and female may with the consent of each other have sex at the age of 16 years old, whereas homosexual males and females have to be 19 years old.

5. Do you think this is appropriate, ie should the law remain as it is?  Yes  No

i.a. If **yes**, why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

i.b. If **no**, what age of consent do you think would be reasonable?

Heterosexual Males \_\_\_\_\_ yrs      Heterosexual Females \_\_\_\_\_ yrs

Homosexual Males \_\_\_\_\_ yrs      Homosexual Females \_\_\_\_\_ yrs

6. The following items reflect common beliefs and attitudes toward homosexuals, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with them.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Lesbians just cannot fit into our society.					
2. Laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behaviour should be loosened.					
3. Female homosexuality is a sin.					
4. Female homosexuality in itself is not a problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem.					
5. Lesbians are sick.					
6. Lesbian couples should be allowed to adopt children					
7. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.					
8. Male homosexuality is a perversion.					
9. Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.					
10. Homosexual behaviour between two men is just plain wrong.					
11. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.					
12. Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach in all-boy schools					
13. Homosexual males and lesbians should not gain custody of their children should they leave a heterosexual relationship for a same-gendered relationship					
14. Homosexual males and lesbians are more likely to commit acts of child sexual abuse than heterosexual males and females					

## Questionnaire

1. Age in years: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: 

Female	Male
--------	------

3. "Race" / Ethnic group 

African / Black	Coloured	Indian	White
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 Other: (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

The law regarding the age of consent for sexual intercourse in South Africa is different for heterosexuals and homosexuals, that is, in brief, a male and female may with the consent of each other have sex at the age of 16 years old, whereas homosexual males and females have to be 19 years old.

5. Do you think this is appropriate, ie should the law remain as it is? 

Yes	No
-----	----

a. If **yes**, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

b. If **no**, what age of consent do you think would be reasonable?

Heterosexual Males \_\_\_\_\_ yrs      Heterosexual Females \_\_\_\_\_ yrs

Homosexual Males \_\_\_\_\_ yrs      Homosexual Females \_\_\_\_\_ yrs

6. The following items reflect common beliefs and attitudes toward homosexuals, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with them.

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7. I think male homosexuals are disgusting.					
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11. Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned.					
12. Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach in all-boy schools					
13. Homosexual males and lesbians should not gain custody of their children should they leave a heterosexual relationship for a same-gendered relationship					
14. Homosexual males and lesbians are more likely to commit acts of child sexual abuse than heterosexual males and females					