

**Title: The Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Limpopo Province**

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## **Declaration**

With the submission of this PhD, I declare that the entirety of this work is my original work. I am the sole author thereof, unless otherwise stated. I have referenced all sources, and to my knowledge, have not plagiarised.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

South African has constitutional protection for the human rights of all its citizens. However, black lesbians in South Africa suffer physical, emotional and psychological abuse. This qualitative study aimed to elicit the social and emotional experiences of black lesbians living, as same-sex partners, in a township setting. The design of the study was exploratory in nature and used a purposive sample of ten couples (twenty women). The investigation was underpinned by Social domain theory (SDT) which allowed for an understanding of the judgements people make in different social settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each couple in order to collect data. The data were analysed using thematic content analysis (TCA) which gleaned ten themes namely, age and sexual orientation, suicide, education, lack of support, hate crimes, substance abuse, stigma, mental health, parenting and discrimination. In the discussion it was found that these themes echoed those in other local and international studies. However, corrective rape is peculiar to South Africa and was experienced by some participants in the study. In one case a brother, with the mother's support raped his sister repeatedly. This took place in a country which has a progressive constitution and laws. Social norms in the township allows black lesbian couples to suffer this type of abuse and have daily experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation. Recommendations included a quantitative more far reaching study (as well as longitudinal studies) and more workshops and campaigns spreading knowledge about sexuality.

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## GLOSSARY

AI: Artificial Insemination

AIDS: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

ANC: African National Congress

CEDAW: Convention of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

DSM 111: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

FEW: Forum for the Empowerment of Women

GALCK: Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya

GLOW: Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand

GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network

HIV: human immune-deficiency virus

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Intersex

LLPO: Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out

NCGLE: National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality

NCGLE: National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisations

NPA: National Prosecuting Authority

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress disorder

SAHRC: South African Human Rights Commission

SAPS: South African Police Service

SDT: Social Domain Theory

TCA: Thematic Content Analysis

UFS: University of Free State

USA: United States of America

VPU: Visible Policing Unit

WHO: World Health Organization

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction to the study

During the past decades a positive improvement has been seen regarding the attitudes of the heterosexual public towards homosexuality (Mwaba, 2009). However, there are still negative and discriminatory attitudes in many different forums, including schools and universities, with particularly emphasis on traditional African communities (Saraç, 2012). According to Munoz-Plaza, Quinn and Rounds (2002), Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) youth face extreme discrimination within educational settings which includes tertiary institutions. Prevailing literature suggests that LGBTI youth are at great risk for a number of health issues, including suicidal ideation, para-suicide, bullying and harassment, substance misuse, homelessness and poor scholastic achievement (Saraç, 2012).

This research investigates the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province. The researcher focused on black lesbian couples as it is an under-researched topic in South Africa. The investigation details their day-to-day lived experiences which affects their overall health, well-being and life in general. A review of current literature indicated that no such study has been conducted in Seshego Township, Polokwane. The researcher has attempted to fill the gap by conducting the present research. This study hopes to expand societies' understanding of lesbian couples, from their family identity to their community identity. This includes the way patriarchal heterosexism is expressed in the everyday lives of black lesbian couples.

### 1.2 Background

Martin, Kelly, Turquet and Ross (2009) state that in the last decade almost all cultures have witnessed an increased frequency of openness in terms of individuals revealing their homosexuality. As a result, more and more organisations protecting LGBTI rights have emerged. Nonetheless, there is still much social discrimination towards gays and lesbians in Africa (Saraç, 2012). In terms of lesbianism, The Convention of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by South Africa. This agreement obligates the removal of discriminatory barriers and the free exercise of rights by all women. It covers

attitudes that include the stereotyping of gender roles. This encompasses hostility towards gay women that motivates many men to commit corrective rape (Martin et al., 2009).

### **1.2.1 Rationale of the study**

The rationale behind conducting this research study was prompted by a review of relevant literature (for instance, Bhana, 2015; Kotch, 2014; Martin, 2012; Moyo & Okyere-Manu, 2016; Saraç, 2012), and recent homophobic attacks in Africa. In South Africa prejudice and hatred is strengthened by irresponsible, homophobic statements and attacks for example, Eudy Simelane (a lesbian), was raped and murdered in April 2008 at KwaThema.

A further example of discrimination and stigmatisation is related to a finding by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2007) who reported that the South African Christian Arts Academy in Bloemfontein would not allow known gay and lesbian persons to attend lectures (Littauer, 2013). Black lesbian couples are increasingly living together and are likely to experience such discrimination in their social and educational environments. It was thus considered relevant to investigate the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in a South African context.

### **1.3 Research problem**

Martin (2012) indicates that many black lesbians and transgender women are caught in a spiral of poverty, powerlessness which includes routine victimisation and institutionalised violence. This happens despite their right to equality, human dignity and the right to be free from all forms of violence as promulgated in the South African constitution. Black lesbians in South Africa are raped, tortured and murdered because they refuse to conform to dominant heterosexual, patriarchal norms and values (Saraç, 2012). In many parts of the country, despite constitutional provisions for protection, homosexuality is still considered a sin and *unAfrican*.

According to a study carried out by Bhana (2015), at the University of Free State (UFS), students were reported as fearing exposure to homosexual peers due to the belief that homosexuality is contagious. Moyo and Okyere-Manu (2016) suggest that there is a common belief in rural African schools and universities that homosexual people are linked to the Devil (Christian religion) and evil spirits (Ancestors). He also notes that despite the fact that most people infected with HIV in South Africa are heterosexual LGBTI individuals, particularly



black lesbians, are still thought of as carrying the infection. As a result, they experience much discrimination, bullying and harassment.

No research could be found on the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples living in peri-urban townships in South Africa. The current research, as stated, intends to fill this gap.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the study and the research questions**

The main purpose of this study is to explore the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, in the city of Polokwane in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Overall research questions of the study are:

- Which social experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province?
- What emotional experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo province?
- What are the impacts of these experiences on their psychological well-being?
- How do these experiences impact on their day-to-day living?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The research study explored the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, in the city of Polokwane in Limpopo Province, South Africa. This will benefit the following stakeholders:

- **Lesbian couples**

The couples in this study were made aware of positive coping strategies and counselling through feedback received from the researcher (a clinical psychologist).

- **Seshego community**

The study will help the community in having a better understanding of the challenges that black lesbian couples encounter through feedback, given (and will be given) at various clinics and meeting places from the researcher.

- **Policy Makers**

The final dissertation, and publications arising out of it, will allow policy makers in the area to understand the challenges experienced by black lesbian couples. Relevant parts of the dissertation and any journal article published out of it, will be provided to them by the researcher (an article is under review, August, 2018).

- **Non-Profit organisations**

Civil societies in Limpopo Province, particularly those involved with LGBTI activism, will also be provided with a synopsis of the results so that they can understand the challenges that black lesbian couples encounter. This will aid them in terms of providing intervention and knowledge workshops.

## **1.6 Breakdown of chapters**

**Chapter 1:** Introduction: this chapter provided an introduction and background to the study.

**Chapter 2:** Literature review: in this chapter a comprehensive review of literature pertaining to the topic (older and newer) is presented. Literature was reviewed from academic and other sources.

**Chapter 3:** Theoretical Framework: The social domain theory (SDT) is the theoretical framework for the study and it is presented in this chapter.

**Chapter 4:** Research Methodology: a comprehensive overview of how the research was undertaken and how it was completed (the different steps) is presented in chapter 4.

**Chapter 5:** Presentation and discussion of results – in this chapter the results are presented and discussed in terms of the study questions.

**Chapter 6:** Research strengths, limitations, recommendations and an overall conclusion to the research is presented.

## **1.7 Summary**

This chapter introduced the study and noted the background and motivation for it plus its purpose and overall research questions for the investigation. It further motivated how the research facilitated an understanding of the challenges faced by black lesbian couples, who live in Seshego Township, Polokwane. Chapter 2 focuses on literature relevant to the topic.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction to the literature review

This chapter focuses on literature about LGBTI persons generally and, more specifically, on lesbians and lesbian couples. Factors that shape individual attitudes about same-sex relationships are discussed, including the socio-environmental context of the families of lesbians. International, African and South African literature on the topic is presented. The literature was searched for through the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) resources using their library; books, journals (for instance, Google Scholar, Ebsco Host, Science Direct and Pub Med) were used as well as authentic internet sites. When the researcher carried out the searches she used key words such as: lesbian, black, couples, homosexual, same-sex marriage and corrective rape.

#### 2.2 Brief account of homosexuality in history

According to Allias (2013), Greek males had relationships with men but were still expected to marry and have children. Some of these men were gay and others heterosexual. This was an accepted part of life. Fundamentally, it was due to power or control relationships within the military or religious contexts or, as there was no way to prevent pregnancy, homosexual relationships were a way of relieving wives from 'childbirth.' In ancient Rome the same things occurred, though to a lesser extent. The Romans fought long wars and often wives or 'women' were not able to join their military expeditions as a result, homosexual relationships were considered acceptable (Williams, 2010).

In ancient Japanese culture same sex male relationships were commonly practised and male teachers had relationships with their students. There were names used that normalised this practice such as *nanshoku* (a term for the beauty of this kind of relationship) and *wakashudō* (the way of the youth). The latter term referred to the practice of sexual relationships between teacher and student. The teacher or 'master' was responsible for his student's education in all areas of life. This happened in the theatre and some religions (for instance, Shinto). In 1872, because of western influence, homosexuality was outlawed but the law was repealed six years later. Today, in Japan homosexuals cannot marry or be

partners in civil relationships however, many live together. It is not common practice to be openly gay, even though there are no laws on the statute books that discriminate against homosexuals, and most who are do not 'come out' to their families. Osaka, a large industrial city in Japan has the biggest gay culture and nightlife in the country. This is not advertised or widely known to heterosexuals in the country or internationally. At present (2017) there is one openly gay woman politician (Kanakano Otsuji) who highlights LGBTI issues in the country (Alliases, 2013).

According to Evans (2015), the Victorian era is important in the perception of homosexuality. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), the writer and poet, lived during this period. He was known to be homosexual, although he married to satisfy the values of the day. He was 'caught' in a same sex encounter and spent time in prison because of this. Wilde was sentenced to three years hard labour, served two years and was then exiled to Paris, France. He died in Paris at the age of forty-five years (the prison experience ensured his mental and physical deterioration). Although rarely talked about in the Victorian era, homosexuality was perceived as against patriarchal notions of masculinity which threatened family structures and went against what was thought of as being fundamentally British. Homosexuality was still against the law in England until the 1970s, it was also considered a mental illness.

As a result, discussion in all layers of society about homosexuality was minimal as Victorian citizens tended to ignore the concept of males having sexual relations with other males (and could not even consider women having sex with other women). The famous playwright, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) claimed in his letters:

“It was impossible for men to express anything other than ignorance of the phenomenon or the deepest condemnation and personal distancing from it” (Lalor, Mills, & Sanchez-Garcia, 2016, p.121).

There were some instances where publications about gross indecency made their way into society and situations arose where society could not avoid discussing them. When these situations arose, the men in question were detested, vilified, and thought of as highly unusual deviants that were not acceptable representations of masculinity (Lalor et al., 2016).

### **2.2.1 Homosexuality and religion**

Christianity has a long history of discriminating against, or vilifying, homosexuals. In the Christian bible the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Bible Old Testament, Genesis 19) or Saint Paul's condemnation of what he termed *unnatural relationships* have cemented this line of thought into many who follow the faith. However, other Christians feel that all relationships must be looked at in the overarching message of love and of mutual love, lived out in the context of commitment to God. The issue of homosexuality, they argue, must be viewed in the light of the all-embracing Christian message of love and understanding as this is the message which underpins biblical texts. Consequently, homosexuality is a debated and diverse topic within the Christian community (The Pluralism Project, 2017).

In the last three or four decades the issue of homosexuality has become a key matter in every Christian denomination. It appears that many who follow the religion are not prepared to allow those who are homosexual their place in the church, which is a discriminatory practice. According to Grabowski (2013), in the Catholic church homosexuality is an objective disorder unless it is acted on as it is contrary to the so-called law of nature (in other words a homosexual can be accepted and forgiven but may not practice sexual relationships). In the view of the Catholic church marriage can only take place between a man and a woman thus two men or two women bringing up children is frowned upon and viewed as harmful to society. However, in some parts of North America and Europe there are members of the Catholic church and its clergy who feel that LGBTI persons should have the same rights as heterosexuals (including the right to marriage). At present, part of the catechism in the Catholic church presents homosexuality as an act of depravity and suggests that homosexual acts are against God and thus intrinsically wrong.

Carroll (2016) reports that it is not only the Christian church which denounces homosexuality as according to Islamic views, same-sex intercourse carries the death penalty in five official Muslim nations namely; Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen. Homosexuality formerly carried the death penalty in Afghanistan under the Taliban, and in Iraq under a 2001 decree by Saddam Hussein. The legal situation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is unclear. In many Muslim nations, such as Bahrain, Qatar, Algeria or the Maldives, homosexuality is punished with jail time, fines or corporal punishment while in other Muslim-majority nations, such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, or Mali, same-sex intercourse is not

forbidden by law. Islamic law requires a certain number of male and female witnesses to an homosexual act in order to testify in a court of law. However, Islam places a strong value on the right to privacy in the home and thus homosexual relationships that occur in private are theoretically outside the bounds of the law.

### **2.3 An historical overview of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) persons in medicine, psychiatry and psychology**

Before the shift towards empirically based psychiatry following the publication of DSM-III (1980), prevailing psychiatric theory ascribed homosexuality as pathological. This view was later revised because of a lack of empirical evidence and dropped from the DSM-III. In the past homosexuality was associated with elevated rates of specific psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety. However, there is no evidence from controlled scientific studies that gay and lesbian individuals suffer from character pathology or from more mental illness than the heterosexual population (Mbele & Ndabeni, 2013). Furthermore, studies of character profiles and defence mechanisms have found no differences between homosexuals and the general heterosexual population. Additionally, the theory that male homosexuality was caused by overly close mothers and hostile, or distant, fathers is not supported by empirical evidence. Rather, non-clinical groups of gay adults, especially males, appear to have childhood histories of gender nonconformity. It is likely that their family relationships are the result, rather than the cause, of gender nonconformity (Chinoko, 2012; Zucker & Wood, 2011).

According to Chinoko (2012), scientific studies have demonstrated the healthy and adaptive functioning of the vast majority of gay and lesbian adults. This paved the way towards the removal of homosexuality as an illness from the DSM-III in 1973. Homosexuality is now acknowledged as a non-pathological variant of human sexuality. Although the broad majority of gay and lesbian individuals have normal mental health, as a group they experience unique stressors and developmental challenges. As a consequence of these challenges, adult and adolescent members of sexual minorities develop depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and suicidal rates which are elevated in comparison to those in the general heterosexual population. Psychosocial distress may account for the different rates in depression, hopelessness, and higher suicide rates seen in LGBTI adolescents as compared to their heterosexual peers (Mbele & Ndabeni, 2013).

The homosexual debate has gained more intensity the world over in the last several decades. According to Chinoko (2012), gay generally refers to male homosexuals but is sometimes used in a broader sense to refer to all homosexuals. Furthermore, the author states that in the context of sexuality, lesbianism denotes only female homosexuality. Contrary to popular opinion, the word homosexuality was not invented by psychiatrists or scientists, but by a person who was fighting for homosexual rights. It was first seen in public print in 1869 when it appeared in two anonymous pamphlets. These pamphlets were published when the fight against the criminalisation of homosexual sex took place in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Journalists, in the first part of the twentieth century, adopted the term and it became accepted into everyday use. However, in psychiatry and psychology the term sexual perversion was used (Chinoko, 2012).

Chinoko (2012) states that the word homosexuality can be traced to a Greek and Latin hybrid with *homos* deriving from the Greek word for 'same,' thus implying sexual acts and affections between members of the same sex, including lesbianism. Nonetheless, according to Obasola (2013), although term 'homosexual' was not created until the end of the nineteenth century same sex love has been practiced since the beginning of civilisation (Ahmadu, 2001; Chinoko, 2012). In ancient Greece and Rome, the pairing of same sex partners during the act of love making was not considered out of the ordinary. The disapproving subtexts attached to homosexuality began to enter into the thought patterns of Roman society just prior to the emergence of Christianity. As Christianity flourished, the expression of sexuality for any reason other than procreation was considered sinful which led to the persecution of homosexuals (Ahmadu, 2001; Chinoko, 2012).

Dynes and Donaldson (1992) suggest that the term 'sodomy' first came into use to describe homosexual love during the Middle Ages. It was regarded as an ancient phenomenon and was designated as a 'crime against nature.' Furthermore, there were three methods by which these crimes could be committed: a) firstly by obtaining pleasure with a member of the opposite sex by criminally raping them; b) secondly having sex with an individual of the same sex for pleasure and c) bestiality which meant engaging in sexual activities with animals (Distiller, 2011). Fundamentally, same sex relationships were criminalised whether consensual or not.

In western and central Europe these crimes were punishable by death until the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, the term ‘sodomy’ embraces more than just homosexual sex it actually meant a death sentence thus homosexuals were terrified of being ‘caught.’ Nonetheless, Obasola (2013) and Chinoko (2012) suggest that gay relationships occur in about ten percent of the population worldwide both in an historical and contemporary context.

#### **2.4 Psychosexual development and homosexual orientation**

According to Smetana (2011), children display aspects of sexuality from infancy, and develop sexual feelings almost universally by adolescence or earlier. Although the general population is predominantly heterosexual, some develop primarily same-sex attractions and fantasies in, or before, adolescence. Most boys, whether hetero or homosexual, experience a surge in testosterone levels and sexual feelings in puberty, and almost all begin to masturbate then; subsequently, most girls experience more gradually increasing sexual desires. However, the majority of girls, although it is a smaller majority than among boys, also begin to masturbate, and they do so over a broader age range.

Leibowitz and Spack (2011) state that erotic fantasising often accompanies masturbation, and may crystallise sexual orientation. Whether heterosexual or homosexual, most men experience more frequent interest in sex and fantasies involving explicit sexual imagery, whereas women’s sexual fantasies usually involve romantic imagery. Female sexual behaviour with others typically begins in, or after, mid-to-late adolescence although the age of onset of sexual activity, number of partners, and practices varies.

Tonya and Sarah (2011) postulate that one possible developmental pathway of male homosexuality proceeds from same-sex erotic fantasy to same-sex experience, then homosexual identity (self-labelling as gay), and finally a homosexual social role (identifying oneself as gay to others). In comparison with those who first identify as gay in adulthood, those who identify as gay in adolescence are more likely to self-label as gay before a same-sex experience and to achieve the preceding gay developmental milestones earlier. This developmental path appears to be more common in recent cohorts than it once was. It is likely that this reflects a consolidation of a gay identity earlier in life through recent generations as the result of the increasing visibility of gay role models for adolescents.



Developmental pathways may be more variable in females; whose sexuality is generally more fluid than that of males.

According to Humbulani (2016), compared with men, women are more likely to experience homosexual as well as heterosexual attraction across the lifespan. This may occur only in youth, may emerge in adulthood, or may be stable through life. Certainty about sexual orientation and identity (both homosexuality and heterosexuality) increases with age, suggesting “an unfolding of sexual identity during adolescence, influenced by sexual experience and demographic factors (p.15).” Although it may be difficult to tell which developmental path a particular adolescent is on at any given moment, a consistently homosexual pattern of fantasy, arousal, and attraction suggests a developmental path towards adult homosexuality. Retrospectively, many gay men and lesbians report same sex erotic attraction from their youth onwards (Leibowitz & Spack 2011).

## **2.5 Development of gender role behaviour**

Todd, Barry and Thomassen (2016) suggest that boys and girls generally exhibit different patterns of gender role behaviour. These are quite distinct from erotic feelings and involve such areas as toy preferences, play patterns, social roles, same sex or opposite-sex peer preferences, gesture, speech, grooming, dress and whether aggression is expressed physically or through social strategies. For example, most boys engage in rough-and-tumble play as compared to girls. Many boys exhibit aggression physically, whereas girls do so through verbal and social means. When given a choice, most boys are more likely to select conventionally masculine toys such as cars, trains, and adventure or fighting games, whereas most girls more frequently select conventionally feminine toys (such as dolls, jewellery, and nurturing games). Most children exhibit a preference in middle childhood for same-sex playmates, or sex segregated play. However, the effect of socialisation on how these behaviour(s) are exhibited cannot be ignored.

Social, psychological, and biological factors, including genetic and environmental ones, interactively influence childhood gender role behaviour and gender identity. Sex differences exist at multiple levels of brain organisation, and there is evidence of neuro-anatomic differences between gender-typical and gender-atypical individuals. At the same time, part of a developing child’s cognitive understanding of gender can be a continuum between aggressive and empathic and masculine and feminine which is always related to the societal norms he or she is brought up in. As science has progressed, the complexity of the

way in which factors relate to gender role behaviour such as genes, hormones, and the environment (including the social environment) interact have come to be better appreciated (Collaer & Hines, 1995).

According to Collaer and Hines (1995), psychological experience is reflected in brain structure and function and one may influence the other. Previous questions about the roles of nature and nurture in causing childhood gender role differences have come to be understood as overly simplistic, and have been replaced by models showing biological and environmental factors. These have been shown to influence one another directionally during critical periods in neurodevelopmental processes these are sometimes modifiable and sometimes fixed.

## **2.6 Individual issues in homosexuality**

Despite increasing tolerance, gender and sexual minority youth may experience criticism, ostracism, harassment, bullying or rejection by peers, family and others, even in relatively tolerant, cosmopolitan settings. These can be associated with significant social problems, distress and psychological symptoms. They may be shunned or disparaged when they long for peer acceptance. A poor developmental fit between a child's gender nonconformity or sexual orientation, and parental expectations, can result in distress for both parent and child (Triangle Project, 2014).

### **2.6.1 Internalised sexual prejudice**

Cohen-Kettenis, Streensma and de Vries (2011) report that even when not personally threatened, homosexual youths may be indirectly or overtly disparaged by family or peers. They may also observe other gay people experiencing disrespect, humiliation, lower social status, or fewer civil rights. This experience may create difficulty reconciling their simultaneous developmental needs to form a sexual identity on the one hand and to feel socially acceptable on the other, a typically painful developmental conflict for gay youth. They may identify with others who are emotionally important to them but sexually prejudiced, leading to a syndrome of self-loathing (internalised sexual prejudice, or 'internalised homophobia'). This may adversely affect their self-esteem, lead to denial of same-sex attractions, cause difficulty identifying with other gay people and prevent formation of healthy relationships (Triangle Project, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Revealing a homosexual orientation to others**

Many gay and lesbian youth hide their sexual identity from others. The dilemma over whether to reveal a homosexual orientation *to come out of the closet* or *come out* is a unique aspect in the psychological development of sexual and gender minority youth. They must decide whether to hide their sexual orientation or risk rejection. Coming out is usually a highly significant event that is usually anticipated with dread. There is no single answer to the question whether a particular gay youth should come out, or to whom. This requires judgment about their maturity and ability to cope, as well as the social context. For some, *coming out* brings great relief. Others in hostile environments may *come out* with bravado before it is safe and suffer serious consequences (being bullied or worse). For these youth remaining *closeted*, or in denial, may be adaptive (Triangle Project, 2014).

For black lesbians couples, the process of *coming out* is a complex process. They are not likely to be out to their extended families even when they are out to their mothers. Glass (2013) found that black lesbian couples were frequently out to their mothers and sisters, but not to the extended family. Community, religion, family connections, and the group (other than lesbians) they most identify with can influence black lesbian couples' *coming out* process. Being black and not being accepted by white gay and lesbian groups makes some black lesbians feel they are met with overt racism.

Religion can play a central role in the lives of black individuals. The focus on religion in black families and communities makes the difficult issue of *coming out* even more distressing for black lesbian individuals and couples. Because of the power and centralisation of black churches in black communities, the notion of the *sin* of homosexuality is real and powerful to many black lesbians and their partners (Glass, 2013).

### **2.7 Circumstances encountered by youth with sexual and gender minority which increases psychological risk**

Generally, LGBTI individuals are faced with many challenges particularly in the black community. Being a lesbian in a conservative rural environment is considered as extremely challenging. This is because the majority of people in rural communities still hold the traditional belief that same sex marriage is immoral (Obasola, 2013).

### **2.7.1 Bullying**

According to Obasola (2013), LGBTI and nonconforming (LGBTI) youth are frequently exposed to hostile peers. Victims of peer harassment experience serious adverse mental health consequences including chronic depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Sexual and gender minority youth may benefit from support for coping with peer harassment. In terms of the aforementioned, school programmes including no-tolerance policies for bullying have proved effective.

Family therapy may be useful when sexual and gender minority youth are harassed in their families. Psychotherapy may help to avert or alleviate self-loathing related to identification with the aggressor. Environmental interventions such as consultation or advocacy with schools, police, or other agencies and institutions promoting enforcement of zero tolerance policies to protect youth who may be victims of harassment or bullying should be mandatory at all levels of civil society (Cohen et al., 2011).

According to Humbulani (2016), although the gay and lesbian experience has been addressed in the research literature, investigations of black women who identify as lesbian and their connections with the black community are very limited. There is potential stress associated with being black and potential stress associated with being lesbian. When both occur together there is bound to be a severe degree of emotional conflict when interacting with family and community of origin. These stressors are likely to be severe and can cause depression and other disorders.

### **2.7.2 Suicide**

Rates of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among gay, lesbian, and gender-variant youth are elevated in comparison with the general population. The developmental interval following same-sex experience, but before self-acceptance as gay, may be one of especially elevated risk. Suicidal thoughts, depression, and anxiety are especially elevated among gay males who were gender-variant as children. Families, adult caring, and school safety are highly significant protective factors against suicidal ideation and attempts in these minority groups (Tonya & Sarah, 2011).

According to Subhrajit (2014), LGBTI people are at greater risk of family conflict and rejection by family and friends particularly after *coming-out* for instance, attempted and successful suicide, mental illness, substance use and abuse, homelessness, victimisation at school, playing truant and not completing school. The dynamics of family relationships of LGBTI people often make it difficult for young people to feel safe about their sexuality. They prefer to keep their feelings hidden which can result in suicide ideation and attempted suicide.

Amongst other things, reasons for increased rates of suicide among LGBTIs has been attributed to disapproval by family, peers and teachers and societal and internalised homophobia. The risk is believed to be particularly high for adolescent and youth who identify as LGBTI at the time of acknowledging their sexual orientation, which is aggravated by being subjected to community violence, loss of friendships or familial rejection. While there appears to be a link between sexual orientation and suicide risk it should not be assumed that this will lead to mental illness as sexual orientation is not, in itself, a determinant of mental health (Swain, 2010).

### **2.7.3 High-risk behaviours**

According to Tonya and Sarah (2011), unique factors promoting risk-taking among gay and lesbian youth include maladaptive coping with peer, social and family ostracism, emotional and physical abuse, and neglect. Fear of rejection may lead some youth to be truant, run away, become homeless, be sexually exploited, or become involved in prostitution.

Leibowitz and Spack (2011) suggest that positive coping skills and intact support systems can act as protective factors. Lesbian youth have higher rates of unintended pregnancy than heterosexual females, perhaps due to anxiety about their same-sex attractions and a desire to 'fit in.' The assumption birth control is unnecessary for young lesbians is thus incorrect. Heterosexual behaviour in lesbian youth is deeply rooted in psychological conflict. These behaviours should be monitored closely and guidance given when appropriate.

### **2.7.4 Substance abuse**

Some adolescents explore a gay identity in venues such as dance clubs and bars where alcohol and drugs are used. These individuals are at heightened risk of substance abuse because of peer pressure and the availability of drugs. Lesbian and bisexual males and

females who describe themselves as ‘mostly heterosexual’ (as opposed to unambiguously hetero- or homosexual) are at increased risk for alcohol use (Leibowitz & Spack, 2011).

A sub-group of gay youth displays higher rates of use of alcohol and drugs including marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, designer and injectable drugs. This group may use drugs and alcohol to achieve a sense of belonging or to relieve painful affects such as shame, guilt, and a lack of confidence associated with their romantic and sexual feelings (Tonya & Sarah 2011). Furthermore, Subhrajit (2014) reports that the majority of homosexual individuals are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than the general population and are less likely to abstain from using substances. Young homosexuals report higher rates of substance abuse and are more likely to continue heavy drinking into later life. They use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs for the same reasons as others, but their likelihood for doing so is heightened by personal and cultural stressors resulting from anti-gay bias. Dependence on bars for socialisation, stress caused by discrimination, and media targeting (particularly for alcohol and tobacco use) in gay and lesbian publications are all believed to contribute to increased pressures on homosexuals to engage in substance abuse. Internalised homophobia is a form of self-limiting, self-loathing and is an important concept to understand in developing substance abuse services for this population.

In addition, anti-gay bias also results in frequent hate crimes adding to the stress of homosexual youth as it is an assumption that heterosexuality is the preferred norm for everyone. Since the early 1980s AIDS-phobia also contributed to stressors related to homophobia for many homosexual individuals. The following risk factors were identified by Subhrajit (2014) as contributing to substance abuse by gay and lesbian individuals:

- sense of self as worthlessness;
- lack of connectedness to supportive adults and peers;
- lack of alternative ways of looking at life;
- lack of access to role models;
- lack of opportunities to socialise with other gays/lesbians except bars or places where alcohol is sold;
- and the fear of contracting HIV.

## **2.8 Homosexuality and the law**

According to Humbulani (2016), homosexuality still remains one of the most controversial issues in the world. The United Nations Foundations (UNF, 2013) and other human rights bodies have postulated that all laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation violate human rights. However, despite this, many African countries still maintain laws that discriminate against homosexuals.

In many African countries homosexuality is viewed as abhorrent and unnatural. This is because sexuality is highly value laden in terms of religions such as Christianity and Islam. In many African countries, such control is evident in the way in which same sex desire continues to be legislated against. While many countries in the western world have addressed outdated laws pertaining to same-sex relationships most African countries re-inforce such legislation. Homosexuals are oppressed, or executed and/or put in jail so that their voices are silenced and patriarchal norms embraced (Blandy, 2011).

Blandy (2011) reports that in thirty-eight of the fifty-three African states homosexuality is illegal. Countries like Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal and more recently Uganda impose harsh sentences against individuals convicted of engaging in same-sex relationships. The punishments used to discriminate against those who engage in homosexuality in Africa arise out of anti-sodomy laws promulgated in the colonial era (many arising from the Victorian period). A number of these laws remain largely unchanged in post-colonial Africa.

### **2.8.1 South African law and homosexuality**

Humbulani (2016) states that the apartheid social and legal system did not protect minority sexualities. In this era homosexuality was condemned and homosexuals excluded and punished in criminal, civil and family law arenas. With the advent of a constitutional democracy in 1994 the new constitution gave homosexuals the same rights as heterosexual couples. Before this they had begun to organise themselves openly (in the mid-1980s), with the creation of Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). However, GLOW's membership consisted of predominantly wealthy gay whites, in spite of its founder who was Simon Nkoli a black South African, and a well-known anti-apartheid activist.

The preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 provided that:

“Whereas there is a need to create a new order in which all South Africans will be entitled to a common South African citizenship in a supreme and democratic constitutional state in which there is equality between men and women and people of all races so that all citizens shall be able to enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, p17).

According to Humbulani (2016), in December 1996, thousands of people gathered at Sharpeville stadium to watch President Mandela assent to the final Constitution of South Africa. About ten lesbians, gays and their supporters held up the banner of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) inscribed with the slogan ‘Equality for All!’ This same need for equality is affirmed in Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The pursuit for equality is well captured in Chapter 1, the founding provisions which are:

- (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, p7)
- (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, p3).

Humbulani (2016) postulates that equality is a deeply controversial social idea. At its most basic abstract, the formal idea of equality is that people who are similarly situated in relevant ways should be treated equally. Some argue that people who are not similarly situated should not be treated in the same way. In all the above-mentioned provisions, the South African Constitution indicates that persons cannot be discriminated against whatever their circumstances. The new constitution ended apartheid and it was the first in the world to protect the rights of homosexuals. Lawmakers made history by writing sexual orientation into the national non-discrimination clause, protecting gay rights in the supreme law of the land. This constitution, however, did not reflect the attitudes of many South Africans, who do not support gay rights. The government created a gap between its tolerant laws and the conservative social attitudes of its citizens. The Constitution, under Section 9, draws a clear principle, it provides that: “Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, p7)



On 1 December 2006, South Africa became the fifth country to legalise same-sex marriage (Ilyayambwa, 2012). Despite developments made by the South African legal system, LGBTI persons still experience discrimination on one or more of the listed grounds of the Constitution (Isaack, 2007). Studies have revealed that lesbians are subject to more physical violence and abuse than heterosexual women (Child Information Gateway, 2011).

## **2.9 An overview of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons have received increasing attention in the literature in various disciplines in the social sciences (Moyo & Okyere-Manu, 2016). Gay and lesbian couples were historically denied recognition as compared to heterosexual couples. This changed in 2005 when a high court judge, in South Africa, ruled that same-sex relationships are no different from heterosexual ones (Butler & Astbury, 2005). Nonetheless, in South Africa lesbians experience much violence in social situations (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2010).

According to Currier (2011), it has also been found that socially constructed negative attitudes and myths, together with stigmatisation of alternative sexual orientations are adopted by homosexuals in terms of internalisation of discrimination and stigmatisation. This causes distress, anxiety, depression, social isolation, relationship difficulties, substance abuse and other mental health problems (Lynch & Van Zyl, 2013; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2004). Furthermore, studies have revealed that gay men and lesbian women are more likely to experience verbal abuse, physical abuse and discrimination on tertiary education campuses than heterosexuals (Currier, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Lynch & Van Zyl, 2013).

Higher levels of psychological distress, including social and emotional challenges, have been found to accompany homophobic hate crimes (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). Their study conducted in the United States of America (USA) concluded that gays and lesbians who experience hate crimes reported more symptoms of anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anger than individuals who experienced non-sexual hate crimes.

According to Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg (2011), lack of communication and misunderstanding between parents and their homosexual children increases family conflict. These problems with communication and lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to fighting and family disruption. This sometimes results in an

LGBTI adolescent being removed from, or forced out of, their familial home. Many LGBTI youth are placed in foster care, or end up in juvenile detention centres or on the streets, because of family conflict related to their homosexual identity. These factors increase their risk for abuse and serious physical and mental health problems. Research indicates that LGBTI youth who are rejected by their families because of their sexual identity have much lower self-esteem than heterosexual youth. They also have less familial and peer group support (Boss & Van Balen, 2010).

Bos and Van Balen (2010) suggest that LGBTI youth are more isolated in all spheres of life for instance, in educational and workplace environments. Most LGBTI teenagers that are rejected by their parents and caregivers are at high risk for health and mental health problems when they become young adults. They have poorer health than LGBTI youth who are not rejected by their families. They have more problems with drug use and feel more hopeless which leads to depression. These youngsters look for love and, as a result, are much less likely to protect themselves from HIV or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in relationships. This behaviour puts them at higher risk for HIV and AIDS.

## **2.10 Different contexts and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) concerns**

Much research regarding LGBTI issues has been conducted since late 1970s focusing on the factors that affect homosexuality. Religion, gender, education as well as race are some of the factors that play a significant role in determining attitudes towards LGBTI individuals (Martin et al., 2009). Some of these contexts and factors are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **2.10.1 The educational context and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues**

Educational environments for gays and lesbians are perceived as generally negative which causes them much emotional and social torment. This is likely to lead to mental illness such as depression and attempted (or completed) suicide (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). Violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals takes place in all tertiary environments (D'Augelli 2006; Letsoala, 2016; SAHRC, 2007). Many studies have found that lesbian and gay students experience their learning environments as unsafe because of their sexual identity

(GLSEN, 2010). Additionally, both male and female homosexuals perceive their social contexts more negatively than heterosexuals as they do not receive support from fellow students or community networks (D'Augelli, 2006; GLSEN, 2010).

Currier (2011) suggests that LGBTI individuals are faced with many challenges in the educational environment, especially in black communities. Within this environment, gay and lesbian youth may feel that the safest option is not to disclose their sexuality. Being a lesbian registered at a rural university campus is considered as extremely challenging, mainly because the majority of students in rural university communities still hold the traditional belief that same sex marriage is a taboo. Therefore, culture plays a significant role in perpetuating these challenges. Negative views towards homosexuality have been part of the culture of many religious traditions for instance, Christianity and Islam, which adds to the discrimination and harassment of LGBTI individuals.

### **2.10.2 The international context of homosexuality and education**

According to D'Augelli et al. (2006), educational contexts are often the first sites of victimisation for LGBTI youth. A study carried out in New York in the United States of America (USA) found that, most LGBTI scholars perceived schools as unsafe because of their sexual orientation, and over one-third felt insecure because of their gender identity (GLSEN, 2010). There are numerous studies on sexual orientation and heterosexuality that have found that children internalise homophobia and navigate the pressure of heterosexuality as early as primary school. Similarly, homosexuality and gender nonconforming youth reported their experiences with schooling in a negative manner, often citing their inability to concentrate in class because of bullying. Furthermore, harassment and bullying directed towards boys who do not identify as heterosexual has been found in American educational settings (Gadin, 2012).

There is a shortage of literature on homosexual students in higher education which investigates their experiences and emotions relating to issues such as homophobia and harassment (Gormley, 2017). Studies such as these are useful for gaining a relative understanding of how accommodating homosexual students experience their educational environments (Patrick, 2014).

According to Gadin (2012), there have been numerous studies at tertiary institutions that report a negative campus climate for LGBTI students, where homophobic sentiments were even stronger than racial or gender intolerance. Those that were open about their sexuality experienced more harassment than those who were not. Harassment included verbal insults, verbal and written threats, homophobic drawings, pressure to hide their sexuality and physical assaults. Gormley (2017) reports that there is a lack of attention to LGBTI students who come from minorities in academic literature and few studies address the intersection of sexual orientation and race.

### **2.10.3 The South African context of homosexuality and education**

D'Augelli et al. (2006) note that both male and female homosexuals are more likely to perceive their campus environments negatively than heterosexuals. This is because they receive less support from their fellow students and staff members. Furthermore, Msibi (2012) states that it is apparent that educational environments for gays and lesbians are generally negative in nature. Negative educational environments pose a potential risk for the development of mental (psychological) illnesses for gays and lesbians. They are at an increased risk for depression, suicide, stress and substance abuse due to negative societal attitudes and bias. It has also been found that socially constructed negative attitudes and myths, together with stigmatisation of alternative sexual orientations, are adopted by homosexuals in terms of internalisation of discrimination and stigmatisation which causes distress, anxiety, depression, social isolation, relationship difficulties, substance abuse and other mental health problems (Lynch & Van Zyl, 2013; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2004).

In addition, various research studies have reported cases of homophobic violence, rape and harassment targeting LGBTI persons who challenge so-called normal gender roles in educational arenas (Human Rights Watch, 2003; Lynch & Van Zyl, 2013). Students who are lesbian or gay are more likely to hear negative comments from their peers. These can be names such as *Zetabane*, *Moffie* or *Fag* (Gay and Lesbian Network, 2010, p. 35). According to Msibi (2012), in a study in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, black high school gay and lesbian scholars were discriminated against by both their peers and teachers. Other studies have found that lesbians and gays suffer victimisation and discrimination in both educational and social contexts (Ngcobo, 2007).

Ngcobo (2007) stated that in South Africa, the majority of students in rural educational institutions view tradition as an important aspect of their lives. Opinions are

sometimes expressed through various forms of discrimination towards homosexuals and can have a detrimental effect on the health, biological, psychological and spiritual well-being of homosexual people. While education provides a variety of opportunities for students these are limited for those who are scared to enter classrooms because of their sexual orientation. This leads to an individual being distracted, due to harassment and discrimination, and they are unable to concentrate on their studies.

According to Bhana (2015), learners fear exposure to homosexual peers due to the belief that homosexuality is contagious. This is a common belief that exists in many rural communities. According to a study by Moyo and Okyere-Manu (2016), LGBTI individuals are linked to evil spirits in educational settings and are feared by students and teaching staff alike. Furthermore, despite the fact that most people infected with HIV in South Africa are heterosexual, LGBTI individuals are still viewed as the carriers of the disease (particularly gay men).

However, some universities have become more aware of the challenges facing LGBTI individuals because of interventions by government and non-profit organisations. Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out organisation has initiated and revised policies such as domestic partner benefits and non-discrimination policies for homosexuals (Msibi 2012). Negative attitudes exist towards LGBTI students in university communities regardless of the efforts of government and other organisations that acknowledge, and uphold, their human rights.

According to Msibi (2012), heterosexual students in Gauteng universities have negative attitudes towards LGBTI students. Furthermore, gender roles, religious and cultural beliefs have a negative influence on attitudes towards LGBTI students. The situation is even more pronounced in rural universities and surrounding communities where there is much abuse and victimisation of LGBTI persons. As a result, the LGBTI community often find it difficult to *come out* and access support and health advice at rural and university clinics.

Azwihangwisi and Makombo (2014) report that LGBTI students in universities report that lecturers enter the class and start talking about homosexuality stating that it is a sin. They state that these individuals are infested by demons. Gay and lesbian students, in the study, reported that because of this they stay away from lectures. Malamba (2012) suggests that there is also an undercurrent of hostility and violence against LGBTI individuals in South Africa. For instance, LGBTI bashing and the prominence of rape is not uncommon in higher institutions of learning which indicates high levels of sexual assault. Therefore, regardless of

the fact that the South African constitution has extensive human rights protections LGBTI individuals do not receive respect and are discriminated against.

#### **2.10.4 Culture and homosexuality in the African context**

Culture is one of the major reasons that most African governments have rejected homosexuality. According to Malamba (2012), homosexuality in Africa is virtually unknown and Africa is rigidly heterosexual. Scholars in agreement with this have argued that homosexuality is a cultural practice from the west which was brought to Africa (during colonialism). However, over the years this idea has been challenged by many scholars. Some scholars reject the claim that homosexuality is Eurocentric but attribute current prejudice and the marginalisation of homosexuality to the colonial missionaries who condemned the practice. Moreover, the author suggests that when missionaries came to Africa to spread Christianity, they preached against homosexuality, hence the existence of homophobia in Africa today (Anderson, 2007).

There are others, beside those in leadership in Africa who feel that homosexuality is totally *un-African* and that it denies all the traditional values of a typical African. Thus the reactions of Africans may take the following forms: that homosexuality should not be accepted, it is not the plan of the (Christian) God, it is completely bad and it does not originate from Africa, it is satanic and controlled by evil spirits. Furthermore, homosexuals should be disenfranchised in Africa and they have no right to be respected. Additionally, homosexuality is a curse that God should punish (Alexander, 2011).

Moreover, there was a concern in Malawi that the media (television in particular) are responsible for the increased number of homosexuals in the country. Traditional leaders identified the advent of technology, where people can watch other cultural behaviours on television (and social media), has led some people engaging in same sex relationships. The media in this case, is regarded as one of the factors that has led to increased cases of homosexuality in Malawi (Malamba, 2012).

Evaristo (2014) seeks to dispel the myth of African homosexuality being a culture from the west. He says the 'the white man' was most probably the source of African homophobia that perpetuates contemporary persecution. Anderson (2007), on the other hand, argues that colonialism may have brought Europe's concept of homosexuality to Africa, but it did not introduce the continent to same-sex eroticism. There is evidence that homosexuality

existed in Sub-Saharan Africa long before colonisation which disputes the claim that homosexuality is an import from the west. Anderson (2007) makes a fascinating and insightful distinction between woman-to-woman eroticism and the western concept of lesbianism. She uses the example of Lesotho women, in a culture where there is no concept or social construction equal to lesbian. Thus, while the western concept of lesbianism is usual in Lesotho, in the absence of the western lesbian construct this behaviour was not, and is not seen as sexual or an alternative to heterosexual marriage (Evaristo, 2014). According to Malamba (2012), culture is at the centre of debating issues relating to homosexuality. Furthermore, he states that in Africa agreed same-sex relationships are foreign to African culture. He indicated that if homosexuality was not foreign in Africa, then, same-sex relationships would not be an issue and would be legal. There is a belief stated by traditional leaders that same sex relationships originated from the west, hence they are *unAfrican*. Moreover, African children grow up learning that a relationship is between a man and a woman not otherwise. The lack of support from the African countries, regarding homosexuality, signifies that the majority of Africans do not accept same-sex relationships.

#### **2.10.5 Family and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons**

According to Ilyayambwa (2012), parental sexual orientation has no effect on gender development in general. This is true however, tolerance for gender nonconformity is more common among lesbian parents than amongst heterosexual ones. Furthermore, boys raised by lesbian couples demonstrated greater gender role flexibility such as helping with housework than those raised by heterosexual parents.

In addition, Leibowitz and Spack (2011) report that sexual orientation in adolescents, who were raised by same-sex parents as compared to the general population, revealed no differences in sexual attraction. However, the large majority of adolescents raised by lesbian couples identify as heterosexual. Furthermore, in the minority of cases when they do experience same-sex attractions, adolescent girls raised by lesbian parents appear to experience less stigma about acting on those feelings than those raised by heterosexual parents. They are also more likely to identify as bisexual. Data on children raised by gay male couples is lacking, but preliminary evidence appears to be consistent with the findings on children raised by lesbian couples.

According to Leibowitz and Spack (2011), exposure to homophobic attitudes can induce shame and guilt in those growing up gay, leading them to suppress their gay identity or same sex behaviour(s). Conversely, well-adjusted gay or lesbian adults can provide positive role models for youth. There is no rational basis for depriving gay youth of such role models, as stereotypical views of homosexual adults as being more likely to commit sexual abuse of minors is not supported by evidence.

## **2.11 The African perspective of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues**

Obasola (2013) states that there is no doubt that the issue of homosexuality has elicited deep and often extreme reactions in Africa. Many see the phenomenon as *un-African* and against African social and religious heritage where homosexual lifestyles are perceived as against nature. Traditionally, Africans place high premium on procreation. Marriages are first and foremost expected to fulfil the divine mandate to replenish the earth (with people), and homosexuality is a direct negation of this divine imperative. As a result, the homosexual preference is considered unnatural and against sexual ethics among the majority of African people. Their view is that homosexuality is not normal, but rather a challenge to the norm which they justify by stating that human bodies were designed for reproduction. Arguably therefore, homosexuality is an adaptation, not an inborn characteristic. Homosexuality, in African experience, strikes at the very root of creation and threatens the ultimate survival of humanity on the continent.

Despite the self-reported morality that has generally characterised leadership in Africa, it is interesting to note that most African leaders have denounced homosexuality as evil, unnatural and incongruent to African culture. A brief survey of some of their views is revealing: ex-president Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe compared homosexuality to bestiality and ordered his police force to raid the offices of the Gay and Lesbian societies in that country. In fact, Mugabe claimed that homosexuals were worse than pigs and dogs. Namibian President, Sam Nujoma was more antagonistic and vitriolic in his attack of homosexuals. He declared that the Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality or lesbianism as it is unnatural. Police were ordered to arrest, deport and/or imprison homosexuals. Nujoma stated that homosexuality is against God's (Christian) will and sexual acts in homosexuality show



that the devil is at work. Namibia's Home Affairs Minister, Jerry Ekandjo urged the police to eliminate gays and lesbians from the face of Namibia (Obasola, 2013).

There are others in African leadership who feel that homosexuality is totally *unAfrican* and that it negates all the cherished values of a typical African. It is believed that homosexuality should not be accepted as it is not the plan of God, is completely evil and controlled by evil spirits. Obasola (2013, p. 83) is of the view that:

“Homosexuals should be burned in Africa as they have no right to be respected. It is a curse and God should punish them like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

### **2.11.1 Views on homosexuality in Nigeria**

Homophobia in Nigeria is a criminal offence punishable by the death penalty in some states. According to the Human Rights Report on LGBT people in Africa (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2014), homosexuality has been criminalised in Nigeria since the British colonial era. There are some Nigerian states that have adopted a Sharian law code which includes the death penalty for same-sex relationships. In January 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan passed new legislation that further criminalised same sex relationships and created obstacles to LGBTI advocacy. Within days of the law's signing dozens of LGBTI Nigerians were rounded up and arrested, and several men were publicly whipped. Health workers further report that the new anti-homosexuality law is leading to a decline in HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention as those who go for treatment are perceived as gay. This is of course a fallacy as the HIV/AIDS pandemic is largely heterosexual. The societal stigma against LGBTI Nigerians is intense, with eighty-five percent of citizens stating that homosexuality is morally unacceptable.

The last Primate of the Anglican Communion in Nigeria, was in the news because he supported laws against homosexuality in Nigeria. The Archbishop was forthright in condemning homosexuality as revealed in the following paragraph.

“From the very beginning, we see in the word of God the God created the world and when He created the world. He also created man in His own image (male and female) He created man, so going by the order of creation, that is, the divine arrangement man and woman. In Africa, when you talk of a man cohabiting with another man, it is an abomination, it is unheard of. When you go back to the Bible, you have specific

directives, urging people of God to abhor such relationships. In fact, the word of God is so strong on this matter that whole city was destroyed. The Bible says this is an abomination before the Lord, don't do it "(New International Bible, 2017, p.30).

Mujuzi (2011) states that in Nigeria, homosexuals face many social, cultural and institutional barriers. Many are still in the closet, perhaps because of the strong cultural aversion towards homosexuality. However, some homosexuals are gradually coming out of the closet to assert their constitutional rights. They want people to recognise them and respect their sexual orientation. They do not want to be regarded abnormal because of their sexual preference. In the Christianised west homosexuals and lesbians are usually publically accepted and definitely accepted in terms of law. This has led to a strong reaction to the gay activist groups effort to stall a bill seeking to ban same sex marriages in Nigeria. According to Kamor (2009):

"The sensationalist act of these individuals (the so-called Human Rights activists) and their supporters show that the face of Nigerian culture is changing, but only for the worse. The singular impact of their shame was to demonstrate that homosexuality is here and that it is a normal sexual orientation that is neither a defect, a disturbance, a sickness, nor a malfunction of any sort. However, the truth is that homosexuality is an illness and can be anything but normal" (Kamor, 2009, p.152)

Ewins (2011) suggests that ninety seven percent of Nigerian residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept. This was the second-highest rate of non-acceptance in the forty - five countries surveyed. The public reacted strongly in support of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, with many religious leaders even questioning the reasons behind giving individuals who engage in same-sex relations an opportunity to comment. The former foreign minister, Ojo Maduekwe, informed the United Nations (UN) that there were no individuals who engaged in same-sex relations in Nigeria. Similarly, former President Obasanjo stated that homosexuality is unnatural, unGodly, and *unAfrican*. There is extreme intolerance to same-sex individuals from the leadership to all strata of society in Nigeria (Collaer & Hines, 1995).

In 2014 Nigeria's anti-gay law was promulgated into law by President Goodluck Jonothan, it effectively criminalises same sex relationships, bans gay marriage and contains

penalties of up to fourteen years in jail for homosexual acts, further escalating the trend to homophobia in Africa (Reuters News Agency, 2015).

### **2.11.2 Perceptions of homosexuality in Malawi**

Malawi like most African states has a penal code that makes same sex relationships illegal. Despite pressure from civil society organisations and the international community the Malawian government still cites that legalising homosexuality is against Malawian customs. To cement its position, the government has recently enacted new laws that further forbid same-sex relationships (Jimu, 2011).

In Malawi the issue of homosexuality was not in the public domain until recently after the arrest of a gay couple in 2009. In reaction to the arrest, the government, religious leaders, traditional leaders condemned same-sex relationships. They asserted that homosexuality is against Malawian culture and is ultimately against the ‘Will of God’. (Christina) Since the arrest, there has been an intense debate between the Malawian Government and some civil society organisations (and donors) on whether to legalise homosexuality or not (Jimu, 2011).

The Malawian constitution states that discrimination of any form is prohibited and all persons are, under any law, guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, politics, ethnicity, disability or birth or any other status. The Constitution of Malawi also states that:

“The inherent dignity and worth of each human being requires that the State and all persons shall recognise and protect fundamental human rights and afford the fullest protection to the rights and views of all individuals, groups and minorities whether or not they are entitled to vote (Malawi Constitution 20 of 1994, Section 12, IV, p. 36).”

Malawi is also party to regional and international instruments that promote non-discrimination of people conversely however, the constitution of Malawi prohibits same-sex relationships. This has led to a verbal conflict between the government of Malawi and civil society organisations. As a result, the question of legalising homosexuality in the country was not addressed through parliament (Jimu, 2011).

In 2012 President Banda suspended laws that criminalised homosexuality and stated that Malawi would no longer arrest people for homosexuality. In 2015 however, the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Law was promulgated and did not mention homosexual marriage. It did however, state that gender is assigned at birth and does not allow for transgender people to marry. The bill also compares gay sex to rape and sexual harassment (Payton, 2015).

### **2.11.3 Perceptions of homosexuality in Uganda**

Uganda has a long pre-colonial history of same-sex relationships among men and women. In the state of Nilotico an agricultural community called Lango, which is north of Lake Kwanai, there are many men who assume alternative gender status (in modern parlance transgender). These men are treated as women and can marry other men (Blackstone, 2003). Similarly, among the Iteso, who live in communities in northwest Uganda, same-sex relations exist among men who felt like women and became women for all intents and purposes (Ewins, 2011).

According to Ewins (2011), there are communities in Uganda where instances of same-sex relationships have been reported. Historically, King Mwanga II, the Baganda monarch (*kabaka*), engaged in sexual relations with other men. He made sexual demands on his male servants and was enraged when they started refusing to accede to his advances on the grounds of their Christianity. His response was to order the killing of those who converted to Christianity. These deaths are now called the *Uganda Sacrifices*. The King's same-sex activities were falsely represented by western colonialists in order to suggest that all his people (the Baganda) were disgusted by them (same-sex practices). This helped the colonial pastors spread the Christian religion in the country (Adamo, 2011).

An anti-homosexuality bill was proposed in Uganda which could have seen homosexuals being convicted to prison and even death (Ewins, 2011). In addition, the bill proposed that Ugandans outside the country could be extradited back for engaging in same-sex relations (however, it is unlikely that most countries would extradite on the basis of homosexuality, although it is possible in some African states). The bill was passed in 2014 with some changes. It is called the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act (2014) which because of media outrage had some changes for instance, the death penalty is now a life-sentence. This is still extremely problematic as it legalises the right to discriminate on the basis of sexual

preference (Caldwell, 2014). However, homosexuality in that country is generally perceived in a negative manner in the country. Msibi (2011, p.66) states that:

“Same-sex attraction is not an innate and unchallengeable characteristic,” and wishes to “protect the cherished culture of the people of Uganda, legal, religious, and traditional family values of the people of Uganda against the attempts of sexual rights activists seeking to impose their values of sexual promiscuity on the people of Uganda”

Such fundamentalism is obvious in the role played by eager organisations who pushed the bill forwards. These organisations thrive throughout Uganda and have been instrumental, not only in initiating homophobic sentiments, but also in spreading them (Ewins, 2011).

#### **2.11.4 Perceptions of homosexuality in Botswana**

According to WHO (2014, p. 12), in Botswana, homosexuality is a crime in that, “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature.” Those found guilty are subject to five years in prison or less. There has been a surge in anti-LGBTI sentiment in the country where political and religious leaders publicly opposed LGBTI rights calling homosexuals demonic and unacceptable. In June 2014, Botswana backed a call by the African Union’s highest human rights body to protect the human rights of LGBTI individuals. However, it did not commit to repealing its own laws criminalising same-sex relationships.

Furthermore, according to the state of human rights campaign (WHO, 2014) anyone engaging in homosexuality is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years. An attempt to engage in homosexual relations is also an offence, and punishable on conviction to a prison sentence. Homosexuality is viewed as against the order of nature and is therefore prohibited.

##### **2.11.4.1 Botswana legal code.**

The following extract indicates how LGBTI individuals are still discriminated against in Botswana (Botswana Government Gazette, 1964, p.102).

**Section 164. Unnatural offences.** Any person who-

(a) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; [or]

(c) permits any other person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature, is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.

**Section 165. Attempts to commit unnatural offences.** Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in section 164 is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

**Section 167. Indecent practices between persons.** Any person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another person, or procures another person to commit any act of gross indecency with him or her, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any person with himself or herself or with another person, whether in public or private, is guilty of an offence.

**Section 33. General punishment for offences.** In this code no punishment is specially provided for any offence, it shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or with a fine, or with both.

Previously, the law only applied to men. However, a Botswana court found this to be discriminatory and stated that the law should apply to women as well. The researcher looked for recent prosecutions under the law but could find none. It is evident that although the laws still exist they are not acted on.

In 2015 the law was challenged by pro-gay lobby in Botswana as being unconstitutional however, it has yet to be changed. The gay rights group 'Legabibo' however, won a landmark case when the government tried to ban them. The High Court judge stated they had a right to exist so some headway in the country is being made with regard to LGBTI rights (Caine, 2014).

#### **2.11.5 Perceptions of homosexuality in Kenya**

According to the state of Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2014), the legal status of same-sex relationships in Kenya is a criminal offence and is punishable with up to fourteen years in prison. According to a recent Pew Poll (2014), eighty-eight percent of Kenyans feel that homosexuality is morally unacceptable. Since the passage of the Ugandan anti-homosexuality law in 2014, LGBTI Kenyans have been fearful that similar legislation could

be introduced in their country. Already, members of parliament have formed a committee to fight homosexuality. Although there are active LGBTI organisations in the country, they often face harassment by the police and the government.

While, historically, same-sex conduct has rarely been prosecuted under the penal code, the criminalisation of homosexuality is used to justify a wide range of rights violations, including: harassment by police and state officials; torture, inhuman and degrading treatment; undermining one's right to privacy; blackmail and extortion by security agencies and other non-state actors; denial of employment; violations of housing rights; interference with the right to education; poor access to health care; and medical research abuse. Without the right to official identification that reflects their gender identity LGBTI people are especially vulnerable to abuse. Members of the Kenyan Parliament have urged a much harsher enforcement of the penal code that makes homosexuality a crime, including calls for citizens to arrest suspected gays and lesbians where the police fail to act. Other officials have defended Kenya's prosecution, persecution of LGBTI people and likened homosexuality to terrorism (Lalor et al., 2016).

In 2013 gay rights groups were informed they would be able to register but it is unclear if this is the case. The Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK, 2017) was formed in 2006 but it still appears to be an 'unofficial' organisation. A website has recently been started that states it is fighting for gay rights in the country – interestingly no names of contact people are available (most likely because of possible prosecution and harassment).

#### **2.11.6 Perceptions of homosexuality in South Africa**

Ilyayambwa (2012) states that on 1 December 2006 South Africa became the fifth country to legalise same-sex marriage. The apartheid social and legal system did not protect the sexual preferences of LGBTI individuals. In the apartheid era these individuals were condemned, excluded and even punished by the law in the criminal, civil and family law spheres. With the advent of a constitutional democracy LGBTI individuals, many of them (at that time, 1990s onwards) from white middle and upper classes organised themselves openly. These groups organised themselves from the mid-eighties and were well equipped to fight for protection under the new constitution. One of the first groups to organise themselves properly and to fight for equal rights was the Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW).

According to Ilyayambwa (2012), in December 1996, thousands of people gathered at Sharpeville stadium to watch President Mandela assent to the final Constitution of South Africa. There were few banners displayed, a small section of the crowd was singing and the general mood was sober. About ten lesbians, gays and supporters held up the banner of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) inscribed with the slogan 'Equality for All!' This same need for equality is affirmed in Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the pursuit for equality is well captured in Chapter 1, the founding Provisions which are: (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms and (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism. It was the first country on the African continent to protect the rights of LGBTI individuals.

The Constitution of South Africa No, 108 of 1996, under Section 9, states a clear principle that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is unconstitutional.

“Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (1996, p.1247)”

The progressive government and constitution however, did not reflect the attitudes of most South Africans, who did not support gay rights. As a result, this created a dissonance between the country's tolerant laws and the conservative social attitudes of most of its citizens (Ilyayambwa2012).

According to Humbulani (2016), most African countries are similar with regard to homophobia. In South Africa, homophobia has taken different forms compared to other parts of Africa. This has largely been owing to the constitutional protection offered to those who engage in same-sex relationships. Unlike other African countries, where expressions of homophobia are violations of the law and homosexuals can be jailed in South Africa those who harass or discriminate against LGBTI individuals, in anyway can be prosecuted.

A study by the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW, 2005) found that of 46 lesbian women who participated in the research from Johannesburg townships, 41% had been



raped, 37% had been assaulted, and 17% had been verbally abused. As well as these statistics at least 30 lesbian women are murdered because of their sexual persuasion every year. The aforementioned figures are exceptionally high and demonstrate the extent of gendered, homophobic violence in South Africa, where gays and lesbians are denied cultural recognition and are subject to shaming, harassment, discrimination and violence, in spite of the country's constitution which recognises human rights for all. Humbulani (2016) reports that violence against lesbians is increasing and many township couples are brutally attacked. This violence is largely driven by gender, with men asserting their authority over women, and over other men who do not identify as heterosexual. Their rationale is that men must behave like men and 'love' women and women trying to behave like men must be punished and/or corrected (usually through violent rape).

According to Thoreson (2008), homophobic expressions in South Africa, in spite of the constitution, are not state-sanctioned. Jacob Zuma while he was the Deputy President of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), declared that same-sex marriage was a "disgrace to the nation and to God" (p.26) and that when he was growing up, a gay man would never have stood in front of him, as he would literally knock him down. Zuma has since apologised to the gay community for these statements, but his views continue to be held by many people. Lulu Xingwana, a former minister of arts and culture in South Africa, walked out of an art exhibition portraying affection between lesbian women; she did so stating that the exhibition was immoral and went against nation building and social cohesion.

## **2.12 Violent hate crime in South Africa**

Msibi (2012) states that violent hate crime affects the lives of many individuals in South Africa, where some people are targeted for violence for reasons including their race, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or religion. Following a major outbreak of xenophobic violence in 2008, that resulted in at least 62 deaths and the displacement of a hundred thousand people, incidents of hate crimes against migrants and refugees continue to be reported in various parts of the country. In addition to this trend, LGBTI persons have been the targets of vicious violent attacks, and lesbians or women perceived to be lesbian are targeted for murder or corrective rapes in which a victim is chosen based on her real or perceived identity (Ilyayambwa, 2012; Msibi, 2012).

An investigation (SAHRC, 2007) into the wave of xenophobic violence (which also mentioned violence against homosexuals) produced a set of concrete recommendations, some of which the government has acknowledged and begun implementing. The South African Police Service (SAPS) has taken some steps to improve their response to cases of mob violence targeting foreign nationals and gay and lesbian persons with the Visible Policing Unit (VPU) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) monitoring such cases (Msibi 2012).

Recently, to address the safety of LGBTI individuals, the government has created a national task team responsible for developing an action plan for combating sexual orientation and gender-based hate crimes by raising awareness about the issue. The authorities are also in the process of laying the groundwork for specialised hate crime legislation that will strengthen enforcement and prosecution of homosexual hate crimes. The signatories of this submission called on the government of South Africa to execute the following tasks (Martin et al., 2009).

- Consistently condemn any and all acts of violence motivated by prejudice or bias toward the victim's identity.
- Endorse specialised and comprehensive hate crime legislation and strengthen state response to bias-motivated violence.
- Collect and publish official data on hate crime incidents, and work with global partners in the international forums and through bilateral engagements to share best practices, technical advice, and capacity building programme on combating hate crimes.

This proposed 'hate crimes' bill was opened for public comment in 2016 (Mpondwana, 2016). However, at the time of writing this thesis (2017), it had still not been promulgated into law

Violent attacks on individuals because of their race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, or other attributes, or a combination therefore are very serious abuses of the right to life, liberty and security of an individual. Violence threatens an individual's fundamental rights and freedoms. States have an obligation to respond to such abuses by prosecuting the perpetrators of these abuses and

upholding the equal protection of the law, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and state obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Ilyayambwa 2012).

There are no official statistics on the number of cases of hate crimes in South Africa, although human rights groups have documented a disturbing pattern of violent attacks, ranging from race-related attacks and targeted mob violence in residential and commercial districts occupied by foreign nationals, to severe beatings of LGBTI individuals. They have also reported corrective rape and murder of lesbians as well as arson and graffiti incidents targeting houses of worship that accept same-sex persons into their congregations. It is widely believed that many incidents, particularly lower level violence and harassment go unreported because of the populations mistrust of the police and a consistently high levels of crime and violence in the country (Ilyayambwa 2012).

Mufada (2014) reports that South Africa's constitution guarantees a wide range of rights for LGBTI individuals. However, the day-to-day reality for many of these individuals remains negative due to ongoing harassment, intimidation, and violence motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity bias. The author reports that lesbians are terrified of going to bars in urban townships as they are often targeted for the heinous practice of 'corrective' rape, in which victims are targeted with the specific goal of 'curing' them of homosexuality. Openly gay men and women, as well as human rights defenders working to promote the rights of LGBTI individuals have been targeted across the country due to their visibility. Over the past years, notable incidents have included Nontsikelelo Tyatyeka, whose body was found in a dustbin in Nyanga, Cape Town in what is suspected to be a case of homophobic violence and murder. Nqobile Khumalo was attacked and murdered in Kwamashu township in Durban. Her ex-boyfriend later confessed to the crime, stating that he had killed her because he could not accept that she left him for a woman. According to media reports, in addition to being severely beaten, Khumalo was raped prior to her death. Furthermore, Nokuthula Radebe's body was discovered in a playground in Soweto. The 20-year-old victim's face was found covered in plastic and she was strangled with shoelaces. Non-governmental groups believe the openly lesbian woman was a victim of 'corrective' rape as she was sexually assaulted before she was murdered. A case has been opened at the Thokoza police station, although no arrests have been made as a 21-year-old, was attacked at a bar in Thohoyandou. She survived the attack and told media that she was attacked by a man who harassed her because she is openly gay (to-date no one has been arrested for the crime).

Violent crimes are different to other forms of crime not just because of the motive, but also because of the traumatic effect hate crimes have on their victims. International studies, as well as those in South Africa, on violent crimes, specifically hate crimes have shown that victims suffer consistently higher levels of psychological distress. The psychological impact of hate crimes includes a range of symptoms of distress, such as depression, anger, sleep disturbances, nightmares, diarrhoea, headaches, relationship problems, increased substance abuse, mistrustfulness, as well as feelings of being unsafe. Loss of faith in the system that has failed them, numbed general emotional expression and stress symptoms that are chronic, all have a potentially negative effect on the victim's personal well-being. This is one reason why hate crimes require specialised psychological, legislative and policy responses and prioritisation (Msibi 2012).

Hate Crimes are a form of violent crime that are seen as message crimes. A victim is often seen as a symbol of a broader group of people. The priority internationally given to hate crimes is not on the basis of prevalence, but rather the severity of the emotional and psychological impact that extends beyond the individual victim to the group to which the individual belongs (well as to the broader community or society at large). When individuals are attacked because they are seen as representing a broader social group, this social group feel vulnerable and are frightened of similar attacks. Hate crimes often take place in an environment where discrimination against particular groups is socially accepted, such as non-nationals or LGBTI persons in South Africa. Although hate crimes can occur against anyone, it is often the more marginalised groups that suffer and are vulnerable for instance, LGBTI persons. In South Africa black lesbians bear the brunt of these crimes (Mufweba, 2014).

### **2.12.1 Corrective rape and its consequences**

The phenomenon of corrective rape has been much reported in South Africa in all parts of the country amongst township-dwelling black lesbians (Mufweba, 2014). This has led to the murder and rape of many of them (Tonya & Sarah 2011; Triangle Project, 2006). It is also true that homosexual hate crimes are strengthened by patriarchal norms which punish anyone who transgresses prescribed gendered roles, and who deviate from heterosexuality (Currier, 2011). Patriarchy, which is the common paradigm in Africa, facilitates prejudice

motivated hate speech and victimisation of black lesbians (Mitchell, Howarth, & Kotecha, 2008).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people are regularly targeted as victims of hate crimes and violence. This group experience stigma and discrimination across their life spans and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes. Additional factors that may impact on the mental health and well-being of LGBTI people include the process of *coming out*, gender transition, internalised oppression, isolation and alienation, loss of family or social support, and the impact of HIV and AIDS (Subhrajit, 2014).

Lesbian women are not only at risk of becoming victims of sexual violence, but also of experiencing corrective rape due to their gender identity. The term 'corrective rape' as a form of hate crime is considered usual in South Africa. In the case of lesbian women, particularly butch lesbian women, rape is used to demonstrate that as a woman they are subject to the power of men. Curative rape (another name for corrective rape), is motivated by the belief that lesbian women pretend to be men and is designed to prove that they are women and that all lesbian women need to become heterosexual (Ilyayambwa, 2012).

In South African lesbian women become victims of rape due to their sexual orientation, especially those from the townships. The extremely brutal acts of rape against lesbian women can have diverse psychological and physical consequences. Not only PTSD, which occurs frequently in victims of corrective rape, but also HIV/AIDS. Although the HIV/AIDS pandemic is one of the most severe problems faced by South African society today, there is no national or international data that exists about the spread of HIV among lesbian couples. It is often assumed that the risk of transmitting the virus through lesbian intercourse is generally low. The primary source of infection amongst lesbians in townships is unprotected heterosexual intercourse which they engage in for diverse reasons, such as family or peer pressure, economic gain, confusion about their sexual identity or rape, including corrective rape (Anderson, 2007).

Despite the lack of an official reporting mechanism for hate crimes civil society has observed clear trends regarding certain types of these crimes in South Africa. Mathebani (2012) defines corrective rape as the rape of lesbian women by men whom perceive it as cure for their deviance. Butch or masculine lesbians disobey social gender norms and are thus both visible and vulnerable. Their masculine gender expression signals their sexual orientation and

they seldom need to *come out* and tell people that they are lesbians. Feminine lesbians tend to blend into conventional feminine norms and are not immediately recognisable as lesbians which offers them a measure of protection. However, when they are with their partners they are also predisposed to being ‘correctively’ raped.

Black lesbians in South Africa have increasingly been seen as victims and survivors of corrective rape and hate crimes. Most of the lesbian led organisations in South Africa, have reported numerous cases of black lesbians being raped because of their sexual orientation. This type of rape is a very specific form of sexual torture and violence that is aimed at ‘cleansing’ lesbians of their sexual orientation and identity and making them heterosexual (Martin et al., 2009).

### **13. An overview of the challenges encountered by black lesbian couples**

Generally, LGBTI individuals face tremendous difficulties growing up in a society where heterosexuality is presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as abnormal. They continue to face discrimination and exclusion across the world in all spheres of life. For lesbian couples, homophobic violence and abuse occur on a regular basis (Subhrajit, 2014).

In most countries around the world, same-sex couples do not enjoy the same rights and protections as heterosexual couples, and as a result suffer from discrimination when they try to access social protection schemes, such as health care and pensions. Young lesbian couples are the most vulnerable individuals as they often experience estrangement from family and friends and suffer harassment at school and in the work place. When they are at school this can lead them to underachieve and there is a higher tendency for them to drop-out of school and/or university and suffer mental health problems and homelessness. As a result, lesbian couples tend to experience high rates of social marginalisation and exclusion (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

Although gays and lesbians of colour are becoming more recognised in psychological research black lesbians are still under-represented, compared to other minority groups and to gay men. Post the politically active gay and feminist movements in the 1970s perceptions of women changed, they were seen as career-oriented and assertive. However, although there was much research on male homosexuality (by male homosexuals) research into how lesbians

experienced life was scarce. Lesbianism was mostly examined from a heterosexist viewpoint by heterosexual researchers, this is beginning to change (Subhrajit, 2014).

### **13.1 Marginalisation and social exclusion**

Marginalisation is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling and full social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. People who are marginalised have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them. Lesbian couples are usually stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited and they often develop low self-confidence and, as a result, become socially isolated. Social policies and practices may mean they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as health services. Exclusion and discrimination may have a negative impact on lesbian couples lives which can result in them leaving home and their families, being ignored in communities and living in isolation. This can cause depression and other psychological problems and even suicide (Cowan, 2012; Farr & Patterson, 2013).

### **13.2 The impact of family reactions on lesbian couples**

In the past, very few adolescents *came out* to their families or told others they were same-sex orientated. Most lesbians waited until they were adults to talk about their identity to others (even family and friends). Fear of rejection and serious negative reactions kept many lesbian adults from openly sharing their lives until the late 1990s. Until recently, little was known about how families react when a young lesbian *comes out* during adolescence. It is also true that even less was known about how family reactions affected a lesbian adolescent's physical and mental health. Family and caregiver attitudes have a major impact on their children's well-being. As children grow into adolescence and say they are homosexual many parents believe that it is just a stage and with time it will fade away. As time goes on, and as young lesbians mature, and have partners then become a couple their families are less tolerant, as they realise that this is not a phase. It is during this part of a young lesbian's life that problems in living become more challenging (Suckling, 2010).

According to Swain (2010), most families' reaction to the relationships of their lesbian children is rejection, particularly with black lesbian couples. The family believes that the best way to help their children survive, and thrive in the world, is to help them fit in with their heterosexual peers. As a result, the families try to block access to their child's lesbian

friends. They believe their actions will help their lesbian child have a good life, whereas the child feels like their parents want to change who they are. As a result, the child thinks their parents do not love them, and sometimes they feel hated.

Furthermore, lack of communication and misunderstanding between parents and their lesbian (or other diverse sexuality) children increases family conflict. These problems with communication and lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to fights and family disruption that can result in an LGBTI adolescent being removed from, or forced out of the home. Black lesbian couples who are rejected by their parents and caregivers are at very high risk for physical and mental health problems when they become young adults. They tend to have more problems with drug and substance abuse generally, they tend to feel more hopeless and depressed and are much less likely to protect themselves from HIV or STIs (Subhrajit, 2014).

Many black lesbians who question their identity feel like they have to hide who they are to avoid being rejected. They hide so that they will not hurt their parents and other family members who believe that being gay is wrong and sinful. However, hiding their sexuality has a cost, as it undermines a lesbian adolescent's self-esteem and sense of self-worth, increasing risky behaviours. It also affects their ability to plan for the future, including their ability to have career or vocational plans as they tend to be directionless and see no hope for the future. The majority of lesbian adolescents are unable to see a future where they have a family and children (Subhrajit, 2014).

The concept of family and what makes a family 'normal' and functional has changed in recent years. The traditional nuclear family (a legally married, two-parent, heterosexual couple) is no longer considered to be the only viable family form (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Other family forms have been found to exist and for example, same-sex families (gay or lesbian headed), single-parent families and step-families. One of these family forms is the planned lesbian family which is a relatively recent social phenomenon. A lesbian family is defined as a lesbian couple who is either engaged, lives together, or is married. Lesbian families do exist in significant numbers which is directly linked to the increased development in reproductive technology and access to reproductive facilities, as well as legislation in some countries being amended to allow lesbian couples to adopt children (Subhrajit, 2014).

South Africa has also seen an increase in lesbian families. A recent amendment to the Constitution allows lesbians access to reproductive clinics and renders them eligible to adopt



children (Perlesz et al., 2010). This has paved the way for lesbian couples to create their own families, without having to take part in heterosexual activities in order to conceive a child or be excluded from adoption due to their sexual orientation (Woodford et al., 2010). The number of lesbian families in South Africa is currently unknown due to the fact that in the 2014 census there was no column to indicate same-sex families as a result, there is no current estimate for same-sex families in South Africa.

According to Perlesz et al. (2010), although the number of lesbian families, both nationally and internationally has increased rapidly in the recent past, there is still a lack of research on this family form. This has left lesbian couples largely invisible and voiceless within psychological and sociological literature. The literature on lesbian parenting in particular is scarce in the field of family therapy. As a result, psychologists, family therapists and counsellors are placed in the difficult position of not being informed about the lived experiences of lesbian couples, in relation to family life. This relative lack of psychological research might emanate from homophobic or heterosexist attitudes held by psychologists. It might also be due to a lack of interest and fear of stigmatisation (if the professional is associated with homosexual issues they may be discriminated against). Research regarding lesbian couples and their families may help psychologists better understand the challenges and problems such couples experience (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Currently in Limpopo Province, South Africa there is only one clinical psychologist who renders services to LGBTI individuals, including couples.

Farr and Patterson (2013) suggest that most lesbian couples and their families are not accepted because of dominant patriarchal notions of motherhood. Negative responses from their parents towards them, as a lesbian couple and family, are reported as a very painful experience. However, parents seem to be more accepting after the birth of a grandchild. Most lesbian couples reported that they anticipated that their children would be exposed to homophobia when they are older, especially in a school setting. In anticipation of this, they not only planned to prepare their child to be able to handle homophobia, but also try to reduce their child's risk of exposure to such encounters by enrolling them at more liberal schools who address sexuality appropriately.

### **13.2.1 Homelessness**

According to Suckling and Swain (2010), one of the primary problems facing black lesbians is homelessness, including a lack of housing and services that meet their specific

needs. In black communities, lesbians are found living on a street because they are thrown out of their homes as they refused to separate from their partners. They run away to escape from an abusive situation. Although shelters may be available for the homeless across the country, they are not available for homeless lesbian couples and gay same-sex couples. Most domestic violence shelters do not accept lesbian individuals or couples. If they find a shelter that will take them they are subject to discrimination and sometimes violence in a place that is supposed to support them. Homeless lesbian youth are without economic support and often engage in drug use and risky sexual behaviours and, as a result, they develop mental health disorders. Furthermore, more than half of homeless LGBTI youth report experiencing discrimination from heterosexual peers who are in positions that are supposed to provide support (Humbulani, 2016).

### **13.2.2 Survivors of hate crimes and violence**

Most LGBTI people are targeted as victims of hate crimes and violence however, black lesbians usually experience the worst kind of violence as it is perpetuated by males (rape and corrective rape). Black lesbians experience stigma and discrimination across their life span and, as couples, they are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes. However, lesbian couples' experiences of violence and discrimination differs depending on a number of factors including race, gender, income, immigration status and language barriers. White lesbians appear to experience less hate crimes than those who are black. It is also true that middle class lesbians of all races are less likely to experience hate crimes than working class lesbians (Suckling, 2010).

Lesbians who survive hate crimes often do not report their assaults to the police as they find that police have little empathy and there is a small chance of conviction. Those who do report their assault to the police often become embittered as the perpetrators are often not charged and/or if they are they get very 'light' sentences (1 – 2 years). This occurs worldwide which means lesbians have to support one and other in order to survive hate crimes (Suckling, 2010).

## **14. Lesbian couples as mothers**

Lesbian couples can now access reproductive technology in many countries (including South Africa), in the form of donor insemination which provides them with the

opportunity to conceive their own child (Bos & Van Balen, 2010). However, it is a costly process and in South Africa many lesbian couples do not have access to artificial insemination (AI) because of the cost. Studies have also found that lesbian couples experienced insemination procedures conducted at fertility clinics as impersonal, with home inseminations (not available in South Africa) they experienced AI as more personal and comfortable (Steele & Strattman, 2006).

In AI there is access to a pool of donors however, using donors from a sperm bank also holds legal implications as donors are anonymous. In some countries a child born of AI can try and trace the father but this is not the law in South Africa. Medically assisted insemination (home or clinic) also ensures that the sperm is tested and the procedure is carried out correctly. Some lesbian couples stated that their reasons for choosing to do home inseminations using someone known to them is that they have information about the biological father. However, these are risky because sperm is not tested so any genetic disorder the father (or mother) might carry is not tested for. Health risks such as contracting STIs and hepatitis are also problematic if doing home inseminations without medical advice (Steele & Strattman, 2006).

Cowan and Cowan (2012) state that for lesbian couples' motherhood is a conscious decision and it is always chosen as opposed to falling pregnant. The lesbian couple made a joint decision to have a child which has implications for the potential dedication of both mothers. Partners appreciate one and other as mothers and make rational decisions in deciding when would be the best time to start a family. There is an emphasis on biological motherhood in deciding between donor inseminations and adopting a child. Lesbian couples who choose donor insemination want a child to be biologically theirs and to experience pregnancy and birth. The decision about who the biological mother is, in most cases, a rational one, with both partners agreeing. Pregnancy is typically a joyous process for both partners due to the fact that the pregnancy was planned. After the initial excitement, couples always make great efforts to be prepared for the birth of their child (Bos & Van Balen, 2010).

Lesbian couples who choose to adopt a child do not place a high emphasis on their child being biologically related to them. Adopting a child also provides both lesbian couples with equal parental claim. This mitigates any problems in the future with one partner claiming to be the best or the real mother. The process of adopting a child is experienced as

lengthy, anxiety-provoking and uncertain. When the adoption is finalised couples experience happiness and relief (Cowan & Cowan, 2012).

Lesbian couples tend to view motherhood as a shared venture with a fair division of labour. They are flexible in their roles rather than adhering to prescribed gendered roles. Couples experience motherhood as involving different emotions, from profound joy and excitement, to feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and worried which mirrors heterosexual parents experience. However, due to stronger co-parenting, lesbian couples appear to experience less isolation and loneliness than mothers in heterosexual relationships. They place a high emphasis on the self-fulfilment and the psychological well-being of their children (Bos & Van Balen, 2010).

Initial arguments against lesbian couples suggested that lesbian parents have a direct negative effect on various aspects of children's development, such as the development of their gender identity, psychosocial adjustment, development of peer and parent relationships as well as the potential for social stigmatisation. Recent research does not support this and lesbian couples do not have any negative impact on children's development (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

## **15. Lesbian and Gay Marriage in South Africa**

In South Africa the Department of Home Affairs released a list of offices across the country that will provide marriage services to homosexual couples. According to the list, only 117 of the 409 offices nationwide welcome gay or lesbian couples who would like to get married under the Civil Union Act 17, 2006 nonetheless this is a step forward in recognising homosexual rights (Suckling, 2010).

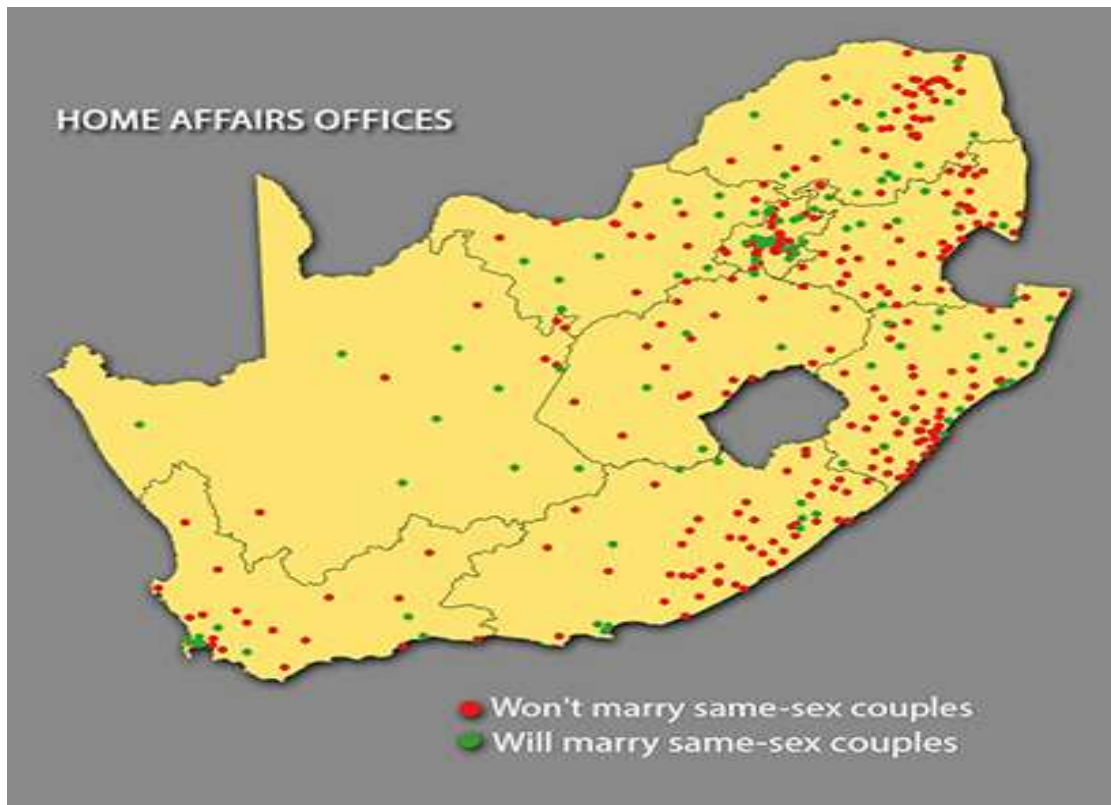


Figure1: Home affairs offices in South Africa that will marry homosexual couples.

According to Suckling (2010), in Gauteng, only 17 out of 57 offices will conduct same-sex marriages, along with 10 out of 59 in the Eastern Cape, 5 out of 28 in the Free State, 10 out of 58 in Mpumalanga, 16 out of 61 in Limpopo and 10 out of 34 in the Western Cape. In the Northern Cape, the number is 9 out of 22, in KwaZulu-Natal it's 29 out of 68 and in North West Province, 10 out of 22 offices will assist same-sex couples.

The release of the list aimed to alleviate the ongoing problems faced by same-sex couples who have been turned away by some Home Affairs offices. This list is provided to help same-sex couples avoid humiliation and discrimination. It does highlight the reality that same-sex couples are not equal under the law (although they are supposed to be) in South Africa in what appears to be an ongoing denial of their constitutional rights. Heterosexual couples can marry in any office so it should be the same, in terms of human rights, for homosexual couples (Swain, 2010).

## 16. Lack of research on lesbian couples

International and local research on lesbian couples and how they function, including their challenges, remains limited. There is still a silence around these families and their

experiences within mainstream every-day life. In South African psychology literature there is a vast gap in the literature on lesbian couples, especially black lesbian couples and their families. There are currently only a few studies focusing on the lived experiences of lesbian couples and fewer on black lesbian couples. As international research findings cannot always be generalised to the South African context this gap needs addressing (Suckling, 2010).

To address this gap in psychology research, this study addresses the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province and has tried to provide an understanding of the challenges of South African black lesbian couples

### **17. Summary**

This chapter discussed the challenges of LGBTI generally and lesbians and lesbian couples specifically. It also focused on perspectives towards lesbians internationally, in Africa and Southern Africa. The following chapter will highlight the role of theory in the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The research used social domain theory (SDT) as a framework for the study. The theory gives a foundation for understanding differences in people's beliefs about homosexuality and the manner in which they behave towards LGBTI individuals. It also helps to give an understanding of issues that are related to the differences in people's judgments and thinking about homosexuality. The central idea of SDT is that, social judgments are multi-layered and draw from several conceptual frameworks or domains of social reasoning (Turiel, Hildebrand, & Wainryb, 1991). The original theory has been used as more up-dated theories (linked to SDT) are not as comprehensive.

Social domain theory (SDT) suggests that when judgements are made in everyday situations individuals combine personal, conventional and moral issues in order to arrive at a judgement of the situation (Smetana, 2006). According to Turiel et al. (1991) differences in social judgments pertaining to LGBTI are related to an individual's factual assumptions regarding homosexuality as a form of sexual expression. This means that, some individuals regard homosexuality as psychologically deviant and unnatural, while others view it as a natural form of sexual expression.

Central to this theoretical framework is the role played by information and/or factual assumptions in generating judgments (Turiel et al., 1991). In the case of homosexuality for example, individual's judgements about whether or not homosexuality is right or wrong is based on concepts regarding homosexuality as a natural or normal expression of human sexuality. This is, in turn, informed through the individual's adherence to particular religious or cultural ideologies (Turiel et al., 1991).

Social domain theory (SDT) thus makes allowance for a better understanding of the issues being studied as it outlines different concepts relevant to the interaction of individuals with their surroundings and environment.

#### **3.1.2 The role of the theory in research**

Social domain theory (SDT) suggests that when judgements are made in ordinary situations individuals combine their personal worldview and morality in order to arrive at a conclusion or judgement about the situation (Killen & Rutland, 2011; Smetana, 2006; Tufford, 2010). According to Tufford (2010), differences in social judgments pertaining to

homosexual individuals are related to an individual's factual assumptions towards homosexuality as a form of sexual expression. Fundamentally, some individuals think homosexuality is wrong and others think it is a natural sexual expression.

Social domain theory (SDT), at its broadest level, is a conceptual framework for investigating how individuals reflect on, evaluate, construe, categorize, and understand the social world. It has a three-domain conception of the organisation of social knowledge. Specifically, over thirty years' worth of evidence indicates that individuals (children, adolescents, and adults) reason about social events and interactions from three qualitatively distinct domains: the moral (for example: harm, fairness, rights), societal (for instance, group functioning, traditions, customs), and the psychological for instance, personal choice and individual prerogatives (Smetana, 2011).

The theory arose from a constructivist theoretical perspective (Turiel, 1983), which, in its most basic form, proposes that individuals construct knowledge from experience. Kohlberg (1963) stated that a stage theory for moral development occurs when the theory recognises that very young children are focused on the self (psychological or personal knowledge), older children and many adults focus on societal expectations and conventions (societal), while only a few adults focus on universal ethical principles (Smetana, 2011). One of the outcomes of SDT was that the empirical validation of the model also demonstrated that even very young children are capable of making moral judgments. Empirical research based on judgments and observations of social interactions has shown that individuals co-ordinate domains of knowledge when evaluating social situations (Killen & Stangor, 2001; Smetana, 2011; Turiel, 2002).

The moral, societal, and psychological domains influence how individuals evaluate who to include or exclude in group activities and to judge when exclusion in a social context is legitimate or illegitimate (Tufford, 2010). One difference between prototypic and multifaceted scenarios is the number of domains that could be considered during act evaluation (moral, societal, and psychological). Social domain theory (SDT) research has framed the cognitive complexity involved in evaluating multifaceted issues as coordination of different considerations, or weighing of diverse components. What is still unknown, however, is precisely how individuals weigh the different domains when evaluating such complex scenarios (Smetana, 2011).



Research that can give an in-depth view of cognitive processes help advance SDT by providing greater insight into the precise ways in which individuals make social judgments. Central to this theoretical framework is the role played by information and factual assumptions in generating judgments (Tufford, 2010). In the case of homosexuality individual judgements about whether or not homosexuality is right or wrong is based on social norms pertaining to homosexuality which are informed through the individual's adherence to specific religious or cultural ideologies (Tufford, 2010; Turiel, 1999;).

According to Tufford (2010), SDT is a conceptual framework for investigating how individuals reflect on, evaluate, interpret, categorise, and understand the social world in which they live. This theory is thus seen as an appropriate one with which to underpin the proposed study.

In SDT there is an element of luck in individual's lives in which people are often brought together through an accidental gathering of events that set in motion reciprocal interplays of influence that shape the course of their lives. It can be considered that the most important determinants of life paths often arise through the most insignificant circumstances. In these instances, seemingly minor events have an important and continuing impact on the courses that lives take (Bandura, 1986). In the context of this research the decision on whether to *come out* or not and meeting other lesbians (for instance, at a tertiary institution) can be considered part of this 'luck.'

The societal determinants of the impact of accidental encounters concern the holding and shaping power of the environments into which people are unexpectedly initiated. Individuals become attached to groups that provide value benefits and rewards but abandon those that have nothing to offer them. Unexpected induction into a group also provides a new symbolic environment designed to build affinity, harmony, and shape ideological perspectives on life. The belief system of environments and their reach and degree of closeness operate as other formative environmental factors (Tufford, 2010)

Individuals are said to be agents when they act on the environment but objects when they reflect and act on themselves. In their daily transactions, people formulate courses of action, anticipate their likely effects, and act on their judgments. While acting on their environment, they are also evaluating and reacting to themselves. Furthermore, they monitor

and analyse how well their thinking and corresponding actions have served them and change their strategies accordingly. An individual is just as much an agent monitoring and reflecting on his or her experiences and exerting self-influence as in acting on the environment. When individuals are the object of external influence, they are not just passive recipients of stimulus inputs as they act on that influence in cognitive, affective and behavioural ways that enhance, neutralise or subvert that context. Rather than splitting the self into object and agent SDT treats this as a dynamic system of interlocking functions (Bandura, 1986; Tufford, 2010).

### **3.2 Summary**

This chapter focused on social domain theory (SDT) as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory was defined and explained. The following chapter discusses, in detail, how the research was conducted.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research methods utilised when the study was conducted. It includes a broad outline of the research procedures that were used to complete the investigation.

## **4.2 Research approach**

The research utilised a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is concerned mainly with developing explanations of social phenomena. It aims to help us to understand the social world in which we live and why things are the way they are. It emphasises the social aspects of our world and is particularly useful where the research question involves the experience of people, their views and challenges (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2012).

Qualitative approaches are concerned with understanding human behaviour from the perspectives of the people involved, therefore they use language to record aspects of social reality (Welman et al., 2012). Furthermore, qualitative research is broadly defined, as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Welman et al., 2012, p. 212).

### **4.2.1 Research design.**

A research design is a set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analysing data specified in the research problem of a research study. It is the framework that has been created to find answers to research questions (Welman et al., 2012, p. 212). Qualitative approaches and exploratory research designs have been used in studies exploring the experiences of lesbians (Chapman et al., 2012; Walter, 2011), thus the approach and design were regarded as appropriate.

A qualitative approach utilising an exploratory research design was used to gain an in-depth understanding about the social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

## **4.3 Sampling**

Sampling in the study is discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **4.3.1 Sampling area**

The sample for the study was found in Seshego Township, situated in the City of Polokwane, in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Seshego Township was utilised as the researcher knew Black lesbian couples in the area thus was able to draw her sample from this area.

### **4.3.2 Sampling**

Welman et al. (2012), state that sampling means taking any portion of a population as representative of that population. In this study, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique, which is a form of non-probability sampling. In non-probability sampling, the probability of each element in the population being selected in the sample is unknown. Selection chances may be influenced by factors such as availability, convenience and study objectives. According to Welman et al. (2010), purposive sampling is a procedure that enables the researcher to use his or her own judgment when selecting study participants who possess the characteristics required by the investigation and the knowledge the research intends to unearth. The study consisted of participants who are lesbians and are currently (at the time of the study) residing together as partners in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province. In this case the sample consisted of ten Black lesbian couples which is an appropriate number for a qualitative study. The researcher identified a lesbian couple (known to her) and was able to meet other couples through this couple (which is a purposive sample but also a form of snowball sampling as individuals introduce researchers to individuals who fill the criteria).

### **4.3.3 Inclusion criteria**

The following inclusion criteria were used.

- The study was made up of participants who identify as lesbians and are couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, in the Limpopo Province.
- The lesbians couples were all black.

### **4.3.4 Exclusion criteria**

The following exclusion criteria were used.

- The study excluded other sexual identities, such as gays, bisexuals, intersex and transgender people. Furthermore, lesbians who were not Black were not included in this study.
- Lesbian couples who do not reside in the township of Seshego, Limpopo Province were also not included in the study.

#### **4.4 Research Instrument**

The study used an interview guide as a data collection instrument. This is a questionnaire written to guide interviews. An interview guide provided the researcher with a set of pre-determined questions that were used as an appropriate instrument to engage the participant and designate the terrain (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Providing a guide or schedule beforehand enabled the researcher to think explicitly about what she hoped the interview might cover and allowed her to retain the interview focus. The following areas were covered in the interview guide: demographics, social and family experiences, sexual orientation issues, community and any violence experienced.

#### **4.5 Entry negotiation**

The researcher negotiated entry into the research setting, in this instance Seshego Township. Because data collection in qualitative research is generally lengthy and in-depth, it involves more than a casual relationship between the researcher and participants. Thus, how the researcher enters the setting and makes contact with participants is extremely important. The method the researcher uses to do this influences the relationship between the researcher and the participants. In this process, the first obstacle faced in gaining entry is getting permission to carry out the research in the desired field setting (Welman et al., 2012).

For the purpose of the study, data was collected in a township called Seshego after getting ethical clearance through the University committees. The township is large and not under the control of a specific village leader thus entry was negotiated with each couple. The researcher had to prepare to answer questions prior to each interview pertaining to for example, the purpose of the study and what would be done with the results. Through the entry negotiation process, the researcher had to clearly highlight from the beginning what her true intention was and, what she was trying to find out. The purpose and content of the study was

clearly explained to each couple and they were ensured of confidentiality (which is discussed under 4.10.1 ethical considerations). Furthermore, the researcher emphasised the fact that participants in the study would not get any payment or other form of compensation.

#### **4.6 Pre-Testing**

According to Sieldman (1998, p. 32), in this part of the investigation a researcher is trying out their interviewing guide with a small number of participants. This helps the researcher with some of the practical aspects of establishing access for instance, making contact, and conducting the interview. This process helped her reflect on her own interviewing skills. De Vos et al. (2005) report that the main reason for pre-testing is for the researcher to determine if the research instrument will measure what it is supposed to, in this case if the right questions were asked (in order to answer the research aims and objectives).

For this study, pre-testing was carried out with one black lesbian couple (who did not take part in the final research) in order to ensure that the nature of questions was appropriate and that the phrasing and wording of questions was logical. This ensured that the questions in the interview schedule yielded relevant information. No questions were changed as all were found appropriate.

#### **4.7 Data collection and data collection tool**

A semi-structured interview technique was used. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to probe for information in relation to the topic. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research. It is a method of research used most often in the social sciences. The guide consisted of open ended questions which allowed new ideas to be brought up during the interview, as a result of what the interviewee said. The interview guide helped the researcher focus on the topic of the interviews without constraining her to a particular format. This freedom helped the researcher tailor her questions to the interview context and to the couples that she interviewed (Welman et al., 2012).

An audio recorder was used to record the participants' experiences. These recordings were transcribed as soon as the interviews were over. Appropriate demographic questions relating to age, ethnicity, religion, education and occupation were asked first, followed by appropriate open-ended questions (See appendix 1). The researcher conducted the interviews in a quiet and relaxed setting in which the participants felt safe. Participants were given appointment times which were suitable for them. There was no money offered, as a form of incentive, to participate in this research study.

The data was collected as follows. Demographic questions were asked to obtain relevant background information followed by questions that were expected to glean in-depth information of the participants' challenges and experience of being black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province. After the interview participants were debriefed, which gave them the opportunity to share their recent experiences with someone who was willing to listen and empathise without judgement or criticism (Tufford 2010). The researcher asked questions in either Sepedi or English (See appendix 1). The study was conducted in Seshego Township where the predominant language is Sepedi. Each interview lasted from 60-90 minutes. After the interviews were transcribed a follow-up appointment was made with the participants so that they could verify the transcribed notes to ensure the true meaning of what was said was captured.

#### **4.8 Data analysis**

The method of data analysis chosen for this study was thematic content analysis (TCA). Thematic content analysis (TCA) has been defined as:

“an analysis technique for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Thematic content analysis (TCA) was used to elaborate on themes through the interpretation of the in-depth experience of participants. To support valid and reliable inferences, TCA involves a set of systematic and transparent procedures for processing data (Tufford, 2010). It is a widely used qualitative research technique. Rather than being a single method, current applications of content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative. All three approaches are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data and thus adhere to the naturalistic paradigm. The major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. The authors delineate analytic procedures specific to each approach and techniques addressing trustworthiness with hypothetical examples drawn from other literature (Babbie;

2010). The following steps adapted from Braun and Clark (2006) were followed when using TCA in this research.

#### **4.8.1 Familiarisation with the data**

This phase of the analysis involved reading the data over and over again while searching for patterns or themes. It was important for the researcher to read the overall data at least once before beginning to code, as ideas, identification of possible patterns were shaped as the data was read. The data was then transcribed into written form (Braun & Clark, 2006)

The researcher was involved with a repeated reading of the data. The data were read in an active way – this included searching for meanings, patterns and themes. It was important to read through the entire data set before coding began so that identification of possible patterns was shaped as the researcher read through. It was considered important to be familiar with all aspects of the data as this stage underpinned the rest of the analysis (Babbie, 2010).

During this phase, the researcher took notes and marked ideas for the subsequent coding process. After this process was complete the researcher carried out the more formal coding process. Fundamentally, coding continued and became more defined throughout the entire analysis.

#### **4.8.2 Generating initial codes**

This part of the process involved familiarisation with the data. At this stage, the researcher identified codes which featured in the data. It was important to ensure that all actual data extracts were coded, and collated together within each emergent theme.

This stage began when the researcher had read and familiarised herself with the data. She then generated an initial list of ideas about what was in the data and what was interesting about it. It involved the production of initial codes from the data. Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that was interesting to the researcher and refers to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that was assessed in a meaningful way (in terms of the phenomenon under scrutiny). The process of coding was part of the analysis where the researcher organised the data into meaningful groups. It must be noted that the coded data differs from the units of analysis (themes) which were (often)



broader in content ( Babbie, 2010). At this stage, the researcher acquainted herself with the data collected on Black lesbian couples' experiences and coded them.

#### **4.8.3 Searching for themes**

When all data were coded and collated the researcher sorted out the different codes and identified them into potential emergent themes. All the relevant coded data extracts were then collated within the identified themes. The researcher analysed the codes and considered how different codes combined to form an all - embracing theme. The themes were arranged into themes and sub –themes (Tufford, 2010).

This phase began when all data were initially coded and collated. The researcher had a long list of different codes identified across the data set. This phase re-focused the researcher at the broader level of analysis of themes, rather than codes. This involved sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. Basically, the researcher analysed the codes and considered how different codes could be combined to form over-arching themes. It was helpful at this point to use a visual representation (in this case a spider chart) to sort the different codes into themes (Tufford, 2010).

#### **4.8.4 Reviewing themes**

This part of the process involved reviewing and refining themes that emerged from the data. The researcher read all the collated extracts for each theme, and considered whether they formed a coherent pattern.

This stage began when the researcher devised a set of initial themes. It involved the refinement of those themes. During this phase, it was evident that some candidate themes were not really themes (for instance, there was not enough data to support them, or the data was too diverse), thus they were collapsed into each other (for instance, two apparently separate themes formed one theme). Data within themes were reviewed to ensure that each theme was cohesive and meaningful and there were clear and identifiable distinctions between the themes (Babbie, 2010).

This phase involved two levels of reviewing and refining the themes.

- a) Level one involved reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts. This meant the researcher needed to have read all the collated extracts for each theme. She also had to consider if they formed a coherent pattern. When the candidate themes appeared to form a coherent pattern the researcher moved on to the second level of this phase (Babbie, 2010).
- b) Level two involved a similar process in relation to the entire data set. At this level, the researcher considered the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also decided if the thematic map ‘accurately’ reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole. In this phase the researcher re-read the entire data set for two purposes. The first was to ascertain whether the themes ‘worked’ in relation to the data set and the second was to code any additional data within themes that had been missed in earlier coding stages. The need for re-coding from the data set was expected as coding is an ongoing, organic process (Babbie, 2010).

#### **4.8.5 Defining and naming themes**

The researcher, at this point defined and further refined the themes. Defining and refining refers to identifying the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of theme was captured (Tufford, 2010).

It was important not to try and get a theme to do too much or to be too diverse and complex. The researcher did this by going back to collated data extracts for each theme and organising them into a coherent and internally consistent account, with an accompanying narrative. It was important that the researcher did not just paraphrase the content of the data extracts presented but also identified what was interesting about the theme (Babbie, 2010).

#### **4.8.6 Producing the thesis**

This involved the final analysis and writing of the thesis. The researcher provided a coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story emerging out of the data, within and across themes (Tufford, 2010).

This stage began when the researcher had a set of fully worked-out themes. It involved the final analysis and write-up of the thesis. The task of the write-up of TCA is to tell the complicated story of the data, in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis. It was important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provided a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell, within and across themes. The write-up therefore provided sufficient evidence of the themes within the data. The researcher attempted to choose particularly vivid examples and extracts which captured the essence of the experiences of the lesbian couples but without unnecessary complexity (Babbie 2010).

## **4.9 Quality Criteria**

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. To ensure reliability during the research, two concepts from Lincoln and Guba (1985) and four criteria of trustworthiness were used, as adapted from Shenton (2004) and Babbie (2010).

### **4.9.1 Credibility**

To ensure credibility the researcher adopted a well-recognised research method, debriefed participants and also described the phenomenon under scrutiny (Shenton 2004). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) state that research credibility can be demonstrated through showing the in-depth planning of the research design. The research design for the study is thus explained clearly in this chapter.

### **4.9.2 Confirmability**

The researcher was aware of her beliefs and assumptions which ensured that they did not affect the research process she also (with the aid of her supervisors) recognised any short comings in the study methods, and their potential effects and attempted to minimise them (Babbie, 2010; Shenton 2004).

### **4.9.3 Validity**

Creswell and Miller (2000) and Babbie (2010), suggest that validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and his or her choice of paradigm. The researcher did the following in order to enhance validity a) gave a description of the method used and the way data was collected in order to allow comparisons with existing studies; b)

mentioned the number of participants in the study (sample size) and the number of researchers involved in the study (in this case one researcher conducted the study with guidance from a supervisor and co-supervisor) and c) and reported the length of the interviews.

#### **4.9.4 Bias**

The research study was qualitative in nature thus some bias was inevitable. According to Shenton (2004), bias means that a researcher may influence results in order to portray a certain outcome, thus steps must be taken to ensure as little bias as possible. Cresswell and Miller (2000) state that the researcher has to have an in-depth understanding of the research and a good grasp of the study's objectives and his or her prejudices to help guard against bias. In this study, to minimise bias, the researcher was as objective as possible and use 'bracketing' which according to Babbie (2010), is a technique which involves the identification and temporary setting aside of the researcher's own assumption(s). The researcher also utilised de-briefing sessions with her supervisor to help recognise any biases or prejudices that she had.

To minimise bias during this study, the following was ensured a) the researcher did not assist nor give cues as to how she (the researcher) would like questions answered; b) the researcher also adhered to ethical standards when interpreting data, as well as during the interview sessions; c) the researcher consulted with her supervisors from time - to - time for guidance; d) the interview sessions, for each couple, took place at the same time (on different days) to avoid separate time intervals that may have impacted the research process; e) the researcher listened attentively and wrote down everything that was said by all participants (she also used audio recordings, with participants permission).

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are critical as they guide the researcher in terms of not causing harm to participants. Research ethics involves the application of fundamental ethical principles to a variety of topics involving research. There are many ethical issues that need to be taken into serious consideration for research. Researchers need to be aware of having the responsibility to secure permission and look after the interests of all those involved in the study. They should not misuse any of the information discovered and there should be a certain moral responsibility maintained towards the participants. There is a duty to protect the rights of people in the study as well as their privacy and sensitivity. The

confidentiality of those involved in the study must be carried out keeping their anonymity and privacy secure. All of these ethics must be honoured unless there are other over-riding reasons not to do so - for example, any illegal or terrorist activity (Babbie 2010).

#### **4.10.1 Informed consent**

According to Babbie (2010), where information is to be collected from human participants, other than in very particular circumstances informed consent must be obtained. Furthermore, where the research exposes participants to a risk of harm, the researcher has an ethical obligation to consider these risks, even where the participant has consented to participate in a study.

All of the aforementioned points were taken into account by the researcher in terms of the participants rights. The participants (Black lesbian couples) were informed about the nature of the research. They were informed about the purpose of the study and how the gathered data was going to be utilised. Participants were able to make informed decisions about whether to participate or not. The participants filled in an informed consent form before any research was undertaken.

#### **4.10.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Researchers should ensure that confidential information is protected and further ensure the integrity of research and the open communication with research participants and protect sensitive information obtained in research. When gathering confidential information, researchers must take into account the long-term usage of the information, including its potential placement in public archives or the examination of the information by other researchers (Babbie, 2010). The participants were made aware of all these issues before they signed the consent form.

Before they agreed to take part in the study, participants were assured that the data was collected with full confidentiality and anonymity. They were also told that they were free to end their participation at any time. No physical or psychological harm was anticipated towards participants. However, they were de-briefed after interviews and referred to an appropriate psychologist or counsellor if they experienced emotional difficulties. The participants, as stated, signed an informed consent form. Although some participants became emotional during the interviews the researcher, a trained Clinical Psychologist, was able to

de-brief them. One participant however, was referred to a psychologist at the local hospital for ongoing therapy as the interview brought back traumatic memories. The researcher has kept in touch with this participant to ensure that she is getting the help she needs.

#### **4.10.3 Deception**

Researchers should respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people and take care to do no harm in the conduct of their work. In their research, they have a special obligation to protect the rights, welfare, and dignity of research participants throughout a study. The researcher should be sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences to groups of people with distinctive characteristics. Researchers should at all times strive for honesty in all communications, honesty in reporting data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status. Under no circumstances should the researcher fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data, nor deceive participants (Babbie, 2010). The researcher adhered to these concepts when she carried out the research.

The researcher did not deceive participants. The true nature of the study was explained honestly and any risks explained. The participants were informed that there was no material benefit for participating in the study. They were informed that the thesis will be published in the University of Limpopo library (however, their names will be kept confidential and not be found in the study). They were also informed that a journal article, or articles, could be published out of the research and that no names would be made public.

#### **4.10.4 Voluntary participation**

Rationale for participation in this study was clearly stated to the participants and it was emphasised that the research was for academic purposes. The participants were not forced to participate in this study and could have withdrawn at any time as it was purely voluntary participation (Babbie, 2010). No participants withdrew.

### **4.11 Summary**

The research design, approach, area of the study, population, sampling, data analysis and data collection and data collection tool were outlined in detail in this chapter. The following chapter presents the research results.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data and a discussion of the results. This chapter is aimed at presenting the data in terms of the themes that become apparent or were revealed to the researcher through analysis. The breakdown of data in this study was aimed at interpreting meanings from the original transcripts. The interpretation is conveyed through a thorough understanding of an analysis of the experiences reported by the participants'. Thematic analysis, was used as it is a method which works to reflect reality and to disentangle the meanings of an individual's surface reality, it was used in this research to *wrap* and *interpret* the data emerging out of the study. A transcript of the original interviews can be found in appendix C.

#### 5.2 Presentation of research findings

Demographic information will be presented first in a tabular format followed by a summary of the emerging themes with a brief discussion. Appropriate themes are also discussed in terms of the study objectives questions namely:

- Which social experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province?
- What emotional experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo province?
- What are the impacts of these experiences on their psychological well-being?
- How do these experiences impact on their day-to-day living?

The following table summarises the demographic data of the participants (table1).

**Table 1: Biographical information of participants**

Participants		Age	Marital status	Number of years living together	Educational qualifications	Occupation
Couple 1	Masculine	27	Co-habiting	1 year	Grade 12	Unemployed
	Feminine	21			Grade 11	Unemployed
Couple 2	Masculine	30	Engaged	2 years	Nursing diploma	Professional nurse
	Feminine	28			Grade 12	Sales consultant
Couple 3	Masculine	30	Married	3 years	Honours degree	Student
	Feminine	37			diploma	Director
Couple 4	Masculine	36	Co-habiting	1 year	Grade 12	Self employed
	Feminine	39			Grade 12	Sales consultant
Couple 5	Masculine	38	Engaged	2 years	Nursing diploma	Professional nurse
	Feminine	28			Grade 12	Student (Public administration)
Couple 6	Feminine	30	Co-habiting	6 years	Teaching diploma	Teacher
	Feminine	29			Honours degree	Intern
Couple 7	masculine	35	Married	5 years	Diploma	Administration officer
	Feminine	33			Higher certificate	Unemployed
Couple 8	masculine	30	Co-habiting	2 years	Grade 12	Sales consultant
	Feminine	27			Grade 12	Student (diploma)
Couple 9	masculine	37	Engaged	2 years	Diploma	IT technician
	Feminine	35			Diploma	Manager
Couple 10	masculine	31	Engaged	4 years	Chef	Self employed
	Feminine	28			Grade 12	Receptionist



### **5.2.1 Background and demographic information provided by participants**

The background information for the participants is given so that their socio-economic context can be properly understood. It was decided to use numbers instead of pseudonyms as they are less personal and a pseudonym could inadvertently be based on participants' characteristics which might reveal their identity. All participants were de-briefed after the interviews and some were referred to a counsellor as re-living their experiences brought up memories that were uncomfortable.

It must also be stated that in lesbian circles many females identify as either the 'feminine' one (lady partner) in the relationship or the 'masculine' one (or butch partner). It is also true that two 'feminine' lesbians are often in relationships but it is very unusual for two 'masculine' lesbians to be in a relationship. This information was either reported (and/or confirmed) by all participants in the study.

- **Couple 1**

Couple 1 comprised of two black female lesbians. Participant A referred to herself as the 'male' partner and participant B said she was the 'female' partner. They were aged 22 and 27 years of age respectively. They defined themselves as Christians with participant B having a Grade 11 education and participant A having a Grade 12 educational level. At the time of the research they were in a committed relationship for two years and live together in Seshego Township in Zone 5. Both are unemployed and survive on part-time work and social grants. They both stated that they were aware of their lesbian orientation in their high school years.

Both have heterosexual friends, however, participant B indicated that they are very judgemental and she prefers to keep her distance from them. On the other hand, participant B indicated that her heterosexual friends had never asked her about her sexuality and she just left it at that. She feels that they know she is a lesbian because of the way she dresses. She refers to herself as being 'very butch.' This couple stated that they had never been supported by their family who do not want to hear anything about 'homosexuality.' Their families say they are possessed by demons which led to the couple changing their place of worship. Both participants indicated that they have been exposed to violence, discrimination and stigma as a

result of their sexual orientation including physical assault and being stigmatised and discriminated by their families and their peers. Participant A indicated that she uses substances excessively, especially marijuana which helps her cope with day-to-day life experiences and challenges.

It is apparent that the social, emotional and day-to-day living challenges faced by couple 1 are numerous. They do not work, one abuses marijuana and they are cut-off and isolated from their family. In terms of the theoretical framework underpinning this study (SDT) they are judged by the society they live in and excluded from social domains and support networks (Tufford, 2010). This means they are isolated and do not have any protection (physical, psychological or social support) from any type of stigmatisation and/or physical assault.

- **Couple 2**

Couple 2 comprised of participant A who is 30 years old from Botlokwa and participant B who is 28 years old from Musina. They have been in a relationship for 5 years and at present cohabit in Zone 3 in Seshego. They are engaged to be married. Participant A has a nursing diploma and is a professional nurse, while Participant B has a Grade 12 educational level and is employed as a sales consultant for a local company. She is the mother of a 7-year-old son who gets on well with her partner. She tried heterosexual sex but did not like it and later realised she was a lesbian.

Both participants stated that they did not have any heterosexual friends as they found them judgemental and some, in the past, had used use hate speech against them. Furthermore, they both indicated that they are scared when they are in the company of heterosexual men and women. They find that male heterosexuals call them names and always make loud comments about them. The couple further indicated that they have experienced hate crimes. Participant A was beaten while participant B watched. The male perpetrators forced Participant B to kiss one of them after that they stole their cell-phones and ran away laughing. Both participants indicated that they had no support from the South African Police Services (SAPS) when they reported this incident they were just laughed at and sent away. The couples' families had tried to 'cure' both of them by performing traditional rituals and, when those did not work, they tried religious methods. Both participants were emotional during the

interview and expressed pain with participant B, indicating that she feels unloved by her family especially by her mother.

Both participants have attempted suicide, with participant B having attempted suicide four times and participant A admitting to one attempt. These suicide attempts they attribute to the negative experiences and challenges they experience on a daily basis. The both indicated that it is difficult for them to go to church as a couple, without being judged or discriminated against, as a result although they are Christians they rarely go to church.

Couple 2, in terms of SDT, are extremely isolated from all kinds of social and family support and struggle to exist in a heterosexual society. This is apparent from the numerous suicide attempts. They live a sequestered life and are 'afraid' of heterosexuals particularly men. The moral and social domains they live in do not accept them (Smetana, 2006).

- **Couple 3**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> couple consisted of a 30-year-old female who identifies as 'butch' (Participant A masculine) and a 37-year-old female who identifies as the 'lady' in the relationship (Participant B feminine). The couple are both black and state they are Christians. Participant A is a master's student at the University of Limpopo and participant B is the director of her own company with a Diploma in Marketing. The couple has been together for 5 years and were married in 2015. Participant B indicated that she is the mother of two daughters and both she and her partner have a good relationship with them. They know about her sexual orientation and accept it. She had sexual relationships with men when she was young as it was 'expected,' and at that time she was 'confused' and did not understand about lesbianism. Participant A, in this relationship, has always identified as a lesbian.

Both the participants indicated that they do not have heterosexual friends as they feel that they are judgemental about homosexuality and lesbians in particular. The participants indicated that they can relate to male homosexuals, but prefer the company of lesbians as they are not judgemental. They both stated that they feel safer with lesbians (and Gays) than heterosexuals as they are always scared they will be 'picked on' by the latter (as even female heterosexuals will engage in verbal and physical abuse against them if they are in groups). Participant B indicated that she lives her life in fear because of all the hate crimes that happen

in the area, most of which are not reported to the police (because of their judgemental and dismissive behaviour).

Participant A indicated that her family still has a problem with her sexual orientation particularly her mother, although things are getting better as her mother ages. Both participants indicated that participant B's family is supportive however, they both indicated that hatred from participant A's family causes them much emotional pain and stress. She further indicated that most heterosexual individuals are not friendly with them but tolerate them. The couple indicated that they cannot go to church without being called names and being discriminated against. They are called 'evil,' and 'possessed by the Devil.' Participant B indicated that she experiences hate speech every-day of her life, especially when she is with her wife as people (Black ones not White ones) make hurtful remarks about them. Both participants indicated that healthcare professionals and police officials also discriminate against them and, as a result of this, they feel hopeless. Participant A said she had attempted suicide on two different occasions.

- **Couple 4**

Couple 4 consisted of two black lesbians aged 36 (Participant A who identifies as the masculine partner) and 39 (Participant B who identifies as the feminine partner) years of age. They have been together for 4 years and have been living at Seshego Zone 1 for the past three years (they rent a house). Both participants indicated that they are Christians but rarely go to church. They are educated to Grade 12 as neither had the funds to be educated at tertiary level. Participant A indicated that she is self-employed and participant B stated that she is a sales consultant in town (Polokwane). The couple both realised that they were lesbians during their high school years. Participant A who is 'butch' stated all her peers at school knew she was a lesbian however, participant B indicated that she was in the 'closet' and only 'came out' when she was an adult, and independent financially from her family. She further indicated that she is a mother of a 14-year-old boy who has a good relationship with her (and her partner). She had tried sex with males before she 'came out' and did not like it, but is not sorry because she has her son. The couple plan to have participant B's son live with them as soon as they are completely financially secure as they intend to buy a house (they do not want him with them at present as they want him to stay at the school he is enrolled in as he is doing well).

Both participants indicated that they do not have heterosexual friends and that they feel safer with other homosexuals. They both reported that when they are with heterosexuals there is always someone who discriminates against them or calls them names (hate-speech). Participant A experienced hate crime in the form of a physical assault and no one assisted, even though there were many people around. They both indicated that the police had offered no help or support and neither did family health care service providers. Participant B further indicated that she was seen as a 'curse' and the 'black sheep' of the family. Furthermore, she is isolated from her family who discriminate against her. The couple stated that they abuse substances (drugs and alcohol) as a way of coping with their stressors. Participant A indicated that she had used cocaine which is expensive however, she had been able to stop 'doing' this drug. At the time of the research she indicated that she used marijuana and alcohol to help her relieve her anxiety and stress. Both participants indicated that they have attempted suicide, with Participant A indicating that she had attempted to commit suicide twice.

- **Couple 5**

Couple 5 comprised of black lesbians who hail from Malamulele (Participant A) and Giyani (Participant B). Participant A is 38 years old and identifies as 'masculine,' while Participant B identifies as 'feminine' and is also 38 years old. They have been in a relationship for 3 years and have lived together for 2 years (they have been engaged for 2 years). They live in Zone 1 Seshego. Participant A has a nursing diploma and is a professional nurse while participant B is a student studying Public Administration at the University of Limpopo (2<sup>nd</sup> year). Participant A is the mother of two children and was married to the father of her children however, the marriage did not work out because of her sexual orientation. The marriage was turbulent and they do not get on at all well today. The couple are Christians but do not go to church because they get called names and are stigmatised and discriminated against.

Both participants indicated that they knew about their sexual orientation during their school years. Participant A indicated that she knew she was different in her early primary school years while participant B stated that she really understood that she was a lesbian in her high school years because she was not interested in boys. Both participants indicated that they do not have any heterosexual friends as they feel judged and stigmatised by heterosexuals. The couple stated that even the community around them discriminated against them. Participant A indicated that some of her family did not support her and none of them

really understand her lesbianism. However, she did state that her mother and siblings are able to cope and are 'okay' with her sexual orientation. Additionally, she was happy that her fiancé had a good relationship with her children. On the other hand, participant B indicated that her family does not support her relationship nor approve of her sexual orientation at all. She further indicated that her mother wants nothing to do with her fiancé and does not support their relationship.

Participant B also added that on several occasions she was assaulted by her brother on the instruction of her mother, who was trying to separate her from her fiancé and stop her from dating girls. However, when she fought back and he stopped. Both participants indicated that participant B's mother called the police to arrest participant A because she was 'causing trouble.' Furthermore, Participant A indicated that she was gang raped in her old house and the perpetrators told her that they wanted to remind her how good it feels to have sexual intercourse with men (corrective rape). The rape was unreported as 'no one will do anything,' and she has to live with the trauma. Participant B indicated that she is the victim of hate speech on a day-to-day basis in the community.

Participant A indicated that her sexual orientation is also affecting her child as the school administrators, and teachers, perpetuate hate speech and discrimination against her (and other lesbians). The couple stated that they felt tired and helpless as they had no support system and even health professionals (and psychologists) in the area discriminated against them. They cannot attend church so there is no spiritual leadership (because they are discriminated against by the pastor and congregation). They have both attempted suicide, with participant A having attempted suicide 3 times.

- **Couple 6**

Couple 6 comprised of two black participants, who identify as lesbian. The participants are aged 30 (Participant A) and 29 (Participant B) years of age and both identify as 'feminine.' Participant A is a professional teacher with a teaching diploma and participant B in an intern who is studying towards her master's degree. The couple have been together since 2012 when they studied at the University of Limpopo. They are both from Ga-Mothapo Village but are currently cohabiting in Zone 3, Seshego.

Participant A indicated that she first discovered that she had feelings for girls in her early primary school years however, she stayed in the 'closet' until her university years.

Participant B said her story was similar, although she noticed feelings for women during her high school years. Participant A stated that she does not have heterosexual friends, whereas Participant B indicated that she does have heterosexual friends who do not know she is a lesbian as still in the 'closet' to them. She is only 'out' amongst her lesbian friends and as she is very feminine, and her partner is feminine people think they just rent together. She had not experienced discrimination as people do not know her sexual orientation. She further indicated that she is scared of coming out as many of her lesbian friends have been attacked physically (and raped) because of their sexual orientation.

Both participants indicated that they are still in the 'closet' in terms of their families who do not approve of homosexuality. Participant B indicated that her family were aware she had a girlfriend but thought it was a phase and also thought they had broken up in 2012. Participant A stated that her siblings tell her that her mother would die (take her life) if she discovered that she is a lesbian.

This couple indicated that living a double life is hard as they cannot be 'free' around their families or other people in the community. In addition, both participants said that they do not feel safe in their home (Ga-Mothapo Village), as they know that lesbians experience a lot of discrimination. Participant A indicated that she has experienced hate speech from her 'butch' lesbian so-called friends when she has been out at taverns. These so-called friends seem to think that she should be more butch and that two 'feminine' lesbians should not be together (as who is the man?). This irony had not escaped the couple. The hate-speech was reported to the police but they did not get any assistance.

- **Couple 7**

Couple 7 is a 35-year-old black woman who identifies as masculine (Participant A) and a 33-year-old black woman who identifies as feminine (Participant B). Participant A is an Administration Officer, who has a Diploma in Public Administration. Participant B, was unemployed at the time the research took place, she has a Grade 12 education. The couple have been staying together for five years and are originally from Malamulele (Participant A) and Thohoyandou (Participant B). They reside at Seshego (Lethuli Park, phase2) and were married officially in September 2017.

Both participants indicated that they were aware of their sexual orientation during their high school years. They both indicated that they do not have heterosexual friends because of the discrimination and verbal abuse they receive from heterosexuals. The couple stated that they relate to homosexuals not heterosexuals, especially other lesbians. They further indicated that they have support from participant A's immediate family members, including the mother and the siblings. However, participant A indicated that her mother is very old and she was not sure that she understands her sexual orientation. Participant B indicated that her family had 'cut her off,' to the extent that they no longer communicate. Furthermore, her brother had beaten her up on different occasions with the support of their mother, in an attempt to separate her from her partner. She further indicated that on more than one occasion her mother had attempted to open a criminal case against her partner. The police had come to their home with the intention of arresting her partner. This had not happened as the charges (stealing) were not supported and the police had realised the 'real' problem and left them alone. She indicated that she had not communicated with her mother for 4 years but sometimes she calls her mother's phone just 'to hear her voice.' She puts the phone down and does not speak and always phones from a number her mother would not recognise.

Participant B indicated that she does not feel safe in her community as her partner was assaulted (by male heterosexuals) when she was out with friends. Participant A further indicated that her perpetrators continued to harass and intimidate her and her partner, and although this was reported to the police, no action has ever been taken against them. The couple said they felt hurt and angry about the way they were treated by people generally. They said they often felt hopelessness in terms of the justice system, which did not help them, and sad about how the community treated them. Participant B indicated that she had attempted suicide. She reported that she felt very angry about religion as she felt that the Christian religion perpetuates hate and stigma against homosexuals. Participant B was also hurt and angry about the lack of support from her family.

- **Couple 8**

The 8<sup>th</sup> couple who participated in the research consisted of a black women aged 30 (Participant A: masculine) and her 27-year-old partner (Participant B: feminine). They are both atheists as religion has 'not done anything good,' for them. Participant A has a Grade 12 education and participant B, at the time of the research, was studying towards a Diploma in Public Administration. Participant A works in sales and participant B was a registered



student. They indicated that they had been together for 3 years and had been living together for 2 years at Seshego, Zone 4. Participant A is originally from Ga-Mothiba, Ngwanamago and participant B from Sekhukhune District.

Both participants indicated that they became aware of their sexual orientation during their high school years. The couple agreed that their friends had experienced discrimination from heterosexuals (reportedly) however, they both indicated that they had not experienced any animosity or discrimination themselves from heterosexuals. Participant B's heterosexual classmates were aware of her sexual orientation however, they were accepting and did not judge her or pass discriminatory remarks. Participant A reported similar experiences.

Participant A said that she does not have any support from her family and has no contact with them. Participant B indicated that her parents did not know about her lesbianism but her siblings did. She indicated that she is planning to inform her parents as soon as she has completed her education as she did not want stress and worry while she was studying. She remarked that she had observed the challenges that other lesbians had undergone when 'coming out,' to their families.

Participant A stated that she was hurt (emotionally) by her family who would not talk about homosexuality and her girlfriend. She was hurt physically when her mother instigated her rape (by her brother) on many occasions to correct her sexuality. Participant A was very emotional at this point in the interview which was immediately terminated. The participant was referred to the Seshego hospital for therapy with a psychologist (set up by the researcher). A follow up interview was not possible as participant A had to cope with this distressing past-trauma.

- **Couple 9**

In this lesbian relationship Participant, A identified as masculine (37 years old). She was born in Gae La Batho. Her partner is 35 years old and identifies as feminine, she hails from Blood River (Participant B). The couple have been in a relationship for 3 years and have been engaged for 2 years. They reside in Seshego Zone 2 and both identify as Christian although they no longer attend church. Participant A has a Diploma in Information Technology and participant B has a Diploma in Banking. At the time of the research they were both employed by local companies.

Both participants indicated that they discovered that there were homosexuals during their high school years. Participant B indicated that she got married but kept cheating on her husband with girls. She divorced him shortly after her daughter was born, which caused a lot of problems with her family. Participant A indicated that she has heterosexual friends and that they treat her well, without any discrimination. However, heterosexuals who were not her friends or acquaintances who passed her in the street, swore at her especially when she was walking with her fiancé. Participant B reported that after she 'came out', she lost a lot of friends including those from her work, as they started distancing themselves from her.

They both indicated that their families seem to have no problems with their sexual orientation. Participant B indicated that she is the breadwinner in her family which she thinks might be the reason they are 'okay' with her sexuality. Her feeling was that they tolerated her lesbianism because of the money they received from her. Participant B also indicated that her siblings tolerate her but sometimes made comments 'hinting' that they 'hated' her sexuality. Participant A indicated that she was expelled from high school after she was caught kissing a girl. The other girl was 'feminine' so she was not expelled as it was thought that participant A had 'influenced' this girl (who stated she did not agree to the kiss). She felt this was unfair but accepted it. Both participants indicated that they feel safe in the community (Seshego) that they live in and had not experienced any violence there.

- **Couple 10**

The 10<sup>th</sup> couple were black female lesbians aged 31 (Participant A: masculine) years and participant B who identifies as feminine and who is 28 years old. They both come from different zones in Seshego and are currently residing in a residence at Seshego Zone 2. They have been together for 6 years and have been engaged for 4 years. Participant A indicated that she believes in God although does not attend church. Participant B indicated that she is also a Christian but does not attend church because of the 'hate speech and discrimination she experiences. The couple are both employed, participant A is a self-employed chef and Participant B works in an administrative capacity at a local company.

Participant A indicated that she had never been attracted to males as she realised she was attracted to girls in her early primary school years. Participant B indicated that she realised that she had feelings for girls when she was quite young (cannot remember exactly when), but she did not act on them until she was in high school. Participant B indicated that she does not have heterosexual friends. Participant A does have heterosexual friends who she

gets on well with. She reported that she drinks (a lot) with these friends. When asked why she drinks so much she stated that she thinks using alcohol is a coping mechanism. Furthermore, that the drinking helps her deal with the challenges and stressors she encounters as a lesbian woman. Participant B indicated that her family accepts her lesbianism more than that of her partner's family. Furthermore, participant A stated that her family is not supportive. She noted that her mother looks at her with disgust and ill-treats her (hits her and verbally abuses her). Additionally, she added that her mother treats her adopted siblings much better which she finds very hurtful, as a result she has very little communication with her mother and family. She stated that she used to get angry with her mother but now she is used to the treatment and has learned how to live with it. Participant A indicated that she had tried to commit suicide, more than once. They both indicated that they had never experienced any animosity in their community as a result of their sexual orientation, although they had stopped going to church because of the animosity from the congregation and no support from the pastor.

Participant B indicated that she is the mother of two children and that she and her partner have a good relationship with them. She reported to having sex with males to 'see' if she could be changed and to 'fit in' however, this had not worked. She was glad to have her children though

### **5. 3 Presentation of themes arising out of the data**

Themes that emerge out of the data are presented in this section. The responses are colour coded in terms of the themes they are categorised in. Themes that emerged arose naturally out of reading and re-reading the transcripts. The transcripts were verified, in a second shorter meeting, with each couple to ensure that the researcher recorded their answers, thoughts and/or experiences correctly. The data gleaned from responses to the questions were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). The researcher read and re-read the data which is how she familiarised and engaged with the process of TCA. Themes were induced and primary themes were found each was coded to ensure that the theme was appropriate. The themes were further reflected on and refined and are presented with an appropriate discussion.

Responses in the themes have been edited (by the researcher) in terms of grammar, sentence construction and meaning. Some of the participants gave parts of their responses in

the vernacular and these were translated into English. However, most of the interviews were conducted in English as participants were comfortable and fluent in that language.

### **5.3.1 Reflexion by the researcher**

It must be stated that it was, at times, quite harrowing for the researcher as participants spoke about their experiences, especially those of supported rape (one by a brother). Reflexion was engaged in and support from the researcher's supervisor(s) was needed in order to overcome emotional hurdles. These women participants are all mature but do not get support through family, legal or health structures as reported in the previous section, which was also difficult to hear. The researcher had to come to terms with this and offer any help and support that she could through referring participants to clinics where she knew help and/or other types of support could be found.

### **5.3.2 Theme 1: Age and sexuality**

According to Smetana (2011), children display aspects of sexuality from infancy, and develop sexual feelings almost universally by adolescence or earlier. Although most people are predominantly heterosexual, some develop predominantly same-sex attractions and fantasies in or before the adolescence stage.

*During my primary school years, I realised I did not like boys and preferred girls.*

*I knew I was someone that liked girls in my late primary school.*

*It has been a while. I had my first girlfriend when I was at secondary school then  
Later I came out of the closet during my tertiary years.*

*I always had feelings for women, though was ashamed to act on them.*

Humbulani (2016) reports that compared to men, women are more likely to experience homosexual as well as heterosexual attraction across their lifespan. This may occur only in youth but may emerge in adulthood, or may be stable through life (some women like both men and same sex relationships). Certainty about sexual orientation and sexual identity increases with age, suggesting "an unfolding of sexual identity during adolescence, influenced by sexual experience and demographic factors" (Humbulani, 2016, p. 5).

*It has been sometime that I knew [I was a lesbian]. I think I was in secondary school.*

*During my high school years [I knew I was a lesbian] though I could not act on my feelings for other women because I was scared.*

*Even though I am older I still get called names – just like at school.*

Although it may be difficult to tell which developmental path a particular adolescent is following, a consistently homosexual pattern of fantasy, arousal, and attraction suggests a developmental path toward adult homosexuality. Retrospectively, many gay men and lesbians report same sex erotic attraction from their youth onwards (Leibowitz & Spack, 2011). All of the participants indicated that they realised their attraction to same sex during their primary and secondary schooling years. In this study, masculine lesbians seem to have discovered their sexual orientation at an earlier age than feminine ones. It also appears as if age does not lessen discrimination and bullying.

### **5.3.3 Theme 2: Suicide**

Tonya and Sarah (2011) report that rates of completed suicide and suicide attempts are higher among gay, lesbian and gender-variant (LGBTI) groups as compared to the general population. This is supported by findings from this study where many of the couples reported to trying to commit suicide on more than one occasion. This is underpinned by responses such as the following.

*I have attempted twice because I was tired of being hurt. I guess that is why I don't care anymore about what people think.*

*I have attempted [suicide] more than twice. The pain is just too much to handle all the abuse from my family, community, church sometimes... I think is all just too much.*

*Yes, I have I have tried to commit suicide. The only reason I am alive is because of the support of my partner.*

*Yes, I tried to commit suicide a lot of times. At some point I even attempted twice [in a short period of time]. It was my partner who found me.*

The challenges that lesbians face in terms of community and social problems (for instance, keeping their same sex feelings hidden) makes it difficult for them to ‘fit in’ with social norms which results in high completed and incomplete suicide (Subhrajit, 2014). According to this author all LGBTI people are at greater risk of completed and incomplete suicide because of conflict and rejection by family and friends particularly after ‘coming-out.’

In this study the difficulties the couples experienced in their day-to-day lives within their communities and with their families led to many incomplete suicide attempts which were very likely cries for help. The findings in this study underpin those in other studies in which a link between sexual orientation and suicide risk was found (Swain, 2010). The emotional experiences faced by participants, at different stages in their lives, resulted in them trying to commit suicide. In the long term it is likely this had a very negative psychological impact on their emotional well-being.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 3: Education**

Educational environments for gays and lesbians are perceived as generally negative which causes them much emotional and social torment. This is likely to lead to mental illness such as depression and attempted (or completed) suicide (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). Violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals takes place in all tertiary environments (D'Augelli 2006; Letsoala, 2016; SAHRC, 2007). Many studies have found that lesbian and gay students experienced their learning environments as unsafe because of their sexual identity (GLSEN, 2010). Additionally, both male and female homosexuals perceive their social contexts more negatively than heterosexuals as they do not receive support from fellow students or community networks (D'Augelli, 2006; GLSEN, 2010).

*From the time I was in high school and I was caught kissing another lady ...that led to me having to change schools. I had to change and was taken to a boarding school.*

*At high school as I was forced to wear a skirt, which [for me] I was very uncomfortable. I did not like skirts or girly things.*

Currier (2011) suggests that LGBTI individuals are faced with many challenges in the educational environment, especially in Black communities. Within this environment, gay and

lesbian youth may feel that the safest option is not to disclose their sexuality. Being a lesbian registered at a rural university campus is considered as extremely challenging, mainly because the majority of students in rural university communities still hold the traditional belief that same sex marriage is a taboo. All participants who took part in the study experienced stigmatisation and discrimination in their educational environment which impacted on their emotions in different ways for instance, lack of trust, feelings of sadness which impacted on their general feelings of well-being. This infers that educational status or achievement does not stop bullying, stigmatisation or discrimination.

It was also found, in this study, that the children of the lesbian couples were bullied at school if their peers (and/or teachers) knew their parents were lesbians. This has also been a theme in international literature (Obasola, 2013).

*I fear so much for my children because they are in government school. I changed his (son) school. He got bullied because they know I am a lesbian.*

*My son is in high school doing Grade 10 and I know is very hard on him and he is being picked on and bulled very much by other children and at times the teachers instead of making an intervention and reprimanding the other children.*

#### **5.3.5 Theme 4: Lack of support**

According to Bos and Van Balen (2010), lesbians (and other gender marginalised groups) are more isolated and have less support than heterosexuals who are accepted by their families. This lack of support which includes disapproval, lack of economic support and rejection by family, teachers, police and society in general leads to internalised homophobia. As a result of little or no support they are at greater risk of being isolated socially. This makes them at a higher risk for depression and other mental illnesses than their heterosexual peers. This finding was echoed in responses from participants in the study.

*My cousins are not even talking to me and we always fight. My parents do not even want to hear anything about my sexuality (lesbian).*

*Instead of assisting me, they (South African Police) were laughing at me and asking that since I am a man, why didn't I fight them back [those who assaulted her]. They*

*were calling each other to come and see that I am a woman that looks and behaves like a man.*

*My brother once said [that] since I am a man, I should fend for myself. Sometimes, he used to beat me up saying that I think that I am a man, until one day I got tired and I fought back.*

*Even at our engagement party, none of my family members were there. We got no help with money.*

*My mother wants nothing to do with me because I am homosexual. If I need money she won't help. So I guess I gave up trying to please her.*

*Her family [partner] don't want me at all and my family don't want her [partner] at all. Her mother hated me until she died. She even called me one day and told me that I will never marry her child and she will never approve of our relationship.*

*I lost my family simply because I married another woman. It is hard and very painful.*

*Most mental health care workers don't have knowledge of LGBTI. It's like you become an experiment now to the psychologist. One even attempted to pray for me. I think it is a waste of time going there because they also judge you and tell you how you should change as being homosexual is not good and unholy [the psychologist in question was an African lady from the same community].*

In African communities very little support is given to homosexual couples (either lesbians or gay men) and their so called gender non-conformity gives rise to discrimination and hostility (Chinoko, 2012). The findings in this study overwhelmingly support this premise as support from friends and family was very sparse and amongst teachers and police officials did not exist. The lack of support and understanding from health professionals particularly the psychologist who noted that lesbianism is 'unholy,' is very disturbing.

The lack of support experience by participants ensured that they were isolated emotionally, psychologically and in some cases physically (for instance, from their families) and economically which led to a negative impact on their overall well-being.



### 5.3.6 Theme 5: Hate crimes

According to Ilyayambwa (2012), lesbian women are not only at risk of becoming victims of sexual violence, but also of experiencing corrective rape due to their gender identity. Corrective rape is as a form of hate crime and happens to all lesbians but more so to butch (masculine) lesbian women. These women are raped to correct their sexual orientation and the way they present themselves. Corrective rape is used to demonstrate that woman are all subject to the power of men. This type of rape is also called ‘curative rape’ and is motivated by the belief that lesbian women are pretending to be men. It is designed to prove that these lesbians are women who have not experienced what it is to be a true woman, in other words a heterosexual woman.

*I was again gang raped. I don't know [who] the perpetrators [were] because they wore balaclavas, but as they raped me they said they were reminding me of how good a penis feels.*

*They started touching her breast and wanted to touch her private parts saying say she is a women and should stop sleeping with other women. As we tried to intervene we were beaten.*

*Three guys followed me and they beat me up and took my stuff (cellphone and money) saying that they don't want our kind at that we must take our place as women and not take their women. I remember we were so scared of going back through that place.*

*Each time she went home, her brother would rape and her mother would tell her brother to continue. Telling the brother that he must do it again so she would stop dating women.*

*In my everyday life, I think I encounter hate speech, mostly when [I am] with my wife. It's like people just hate us so much they can't even pretend. They shout at us the most hurtful words.*

Lesbians or women perceived to be lesbian are targeted for violence or ‘corrective rape.’ The victim is chosen based on her real or perceived lesbian identity (Ilyayambwa, 2012). The lived reality for many lesbians is difficult, as according to Mamba (2012), ongoing harassment, intimidation, and violence motivated by a sexual orientation or gender

identity bias is an every-day occurrence. This is supported by the responses received from participants in this study as all of them have experienced some form of violence in their lives which at the time of the research was ongoing. It is clear that hate crimes led to harmful social experiences which impacted negatively on the social, psychological and emotional well-being of participants in the study.

### **5.3.7 Theme 6: Substance abuse**

Subhrajit (2014) reports that the majority of homosexual individuals are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than the general population and are less likely to abstain from substance abuse. Young homosexuals report higher rates of substance abuse and are more likely to continue for instance, heavy drinking [alcohol] into later life. They use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as coping mechanisms for the personal and cultural stressors they experience as a result of anti-gay bias.

*It makes me forget all my problems just for a little while. You see I drink alcohol but I prefer Dagga over anything else. It makes me feel better.*

*I smoke the one called skank. It is very nice and stronger as well [than Marijuana].*

*I used to use drugs (cocaine) but I stopped some time ago. Now I am on Dagga and it helps me so very much. Especially when I am angry. Every time I get a call from home, I need Dagga because I know I will be hurt or angry after the call.*

Drug use amongst homosexuals is higher than in the general population as for instance, Marijuana and Cocaine (as well as other hard drugs and substances) are used as coping mechanisms. Homosexuals use drugs and substances as coping mechanisms in order to deal with rejection from friends and family and to help give them feel more confident and/or dispel the hurt they feel (Subhrajit, 2014; Tonya & Sarah 2011). These statements are supported by the findings in this study which indicate that participants used substances to cope with the negative emotions that they experienced on a day-to-day basis which negatively impacted on their overall well-being.

### **5.3.8 Theme 7: Stigma**

Stigmatisation because of alternative sexual orientations (from societal norms) is internalised by homosexuals (Alexander, 2011). According to Anderson (2007), when missionaries came to Africa to spread Christianity, they spoke out against homosexuality which is one reason for the existence of homophobia in Africa (Anderson, 2007). As no written discourse exists before this time it is difficult to identify if any form of homosexuality was permitted on the continent before it was colonised. However, traditional African societies were patriarchal in their make-up thus it is unlikely. Alexander (2011) states that homosexuality is considered by many traditional African societies as totally *unAfrican* in that it denies the traditional values of African society. He also reports that homosexuality is considered satanic and controlled by evil spirits and it did not originate in Africa. Homosexuals should be disenfranchised in Africa and they have no rights to be respected. Homosexuality is a curse that God should punish (Alexander 2011; (Saraç, 2012). Many studies carried out in South Africa support this statement as, although the constitution protects LGBTI rights, it is still considered by many as evil and *unAfrican* (Bhana, 2015; Moyo, Okyere-Manu, 2016; Saraç, 2012).

*They (community members) don't like us at all. They (neighbours) don't even want their children near us because they think that we will make their children homosexual. One parent even reprimanded her child about talking to us saying that they should not because the child might become like us and go straight to hell.*

*It's like I have an illness that is contagious. They shout at us and call us names.*

*We go to the shops; they stare at us like we are from another world. They stare at us and they look at my wife with so much hate perhaps because they feel that she changed me into a lesbian [the feminine partner].*

*It seems like I will infect the. It seems that it [being a lesbian] is worse than having HIV because. It is evil, you know like when I hold my girlfriend's hand or kiss in public, or even when we just walk together.*

*They are very judgemental [the community]. It seems like they want to change me into a heterosexual.*

*As we entered [the police station] one of the policemen said: “Guys the lesbians are here,” and they started laughing. I got so angry so we just left.”*

*She (the pastor) said she would pray for me and deliver me from homosexuality as it is an evil thing.*

Obasalo (2013) states that despite leaders in Africa stating that they are moral and ethical it is interesting to note that the majority of them have denounced homosexuality as evil, unnatural and not congruent with African culture and morality. There is no doubt that the issue of homosexuality has elicited deep and often extreme reactions in Africa. Many see the phenomenon as *un-African* and against African social and religious heritage which depicts homosexuality as against nature (Bhana, 2015; Obasola 2013). According to Bhana (2015) most heterosexuals fear exposure to homosexual peers due to the belief that homosexuality is contagious which is a common belief that exists in many rural communities. The apparent stigmatisation of the Black lesbian couples who participated in the study ensured that they suffered emotionally.

#### **5.3.9 Theme 8: Mental health**

According to Tonya and Sarah (2011), there are higher levels of mental health disorders in lesbian communities because of the social and emotional challenges that homosexuals experience. Post-Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), depression, higher rates of suicide and attempted suicide occur in homosexual groups than in heterosexual groups. Research indicates that LGBTI youth who are rejected by their families because of their sexual identity have much lower self-esteem than heterosexual youth and this increases their risk for serious physical and mental health problems (Boss & Van Balen, 2010; Tonya & Sarah, 2011).

*I think I am angry at a lot of things. At times I think I don't have control of my emotions anymore. It is like I am a ticking time bomb.*

*I know that I am a very angry woman. It is like people treat you like you don't have feelings and you develop so much hate. I ask God why he made me so different. You now if I was heterosexual perhaps I would not be dealing with all this emotions, so much hate. It depresses me.*

*But then I suppose, if our families can't accept us, then how do we expect the rest of the world to love us. It is very stressful.*

*It scares me very much. I live my life in so much fear because in spaces that we are supposed to feel safe like churches and clinic they say the cruellest and stupid things. I don't feel safe at all and I have trust issues because the people who are supposed to understand are the ones who make matters worse.*

*No. I just don't think that they would even help me. It's very depressing and stressing and there is no one who can help. The pastors couldn't help, my uncles made it worse. So there is no one who can help us...who we can talk to.*

*This hate from families also causes us emotional breakdowns. Is so painful to be hated from home. We are more likely to be depressed and we struggle with a lot of things like psychological problems because most of us develop this emptiness, we just want to be loved..... you long for it. It becomes easier to turn to substances just to deal with the problems we encounter, especially not being loved at home.*

*I think I am suffering with depression, my confidence and self-esteem has deteriorated. If we were a heterosexual couple, I don't think we would feel so much pain. My wife spends most of her time fighting and defending our marriage instead of us enjoying our life.*

*It is very scary as sometimes I wonder what I will do if they try and hurt us. It's like I am always in a defensive mode. It is tiring and depressing.*

Gartrell et al. (2010) note that lack of communication and misunderstanding between parents and their homosexual children increases family conflict. These problems with communication and lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to fighting and family disruption which is supported by the research findings. This resulted in the Black lesbians participating in this study being predisposed to mental health problems such as depression and incomplete suicide which negatively impacted on their global well-being.

### 5.3.10 Theme 9: Discrimination

According to Msibi (2012), in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa many Black gay and lesbian students are discriminated against by both their peers and their teachers. Other studies have concluded that lesbians and gays suffer victimisation and discrimination in both educational and social contexts. Even though the South African constitution has extensive Human Rights protections, LGBTI individuals do not receive respect and are discriminated against (Mamba, 2012; Tonya & Sarah, 2011). This is supported by the following statements by participants.

*Some of them (heterosexuals) judged me and said things and then started distancing themselves from me. They made me feel so uncomfortable.*

*They [peers, community members] are very judgemental. It is like they are trying to change me to be heterosexual. I well, just get tired of explaining myself and my sexuality to others.... they don't want us in their homes or their churches.*

*I can't even go to church with my fiancé and that makes it bad for us. If we go we get talked about so we can over-hear, we become the topic of the day.*

*The fact that we cannot even go and worship and be thankful to God, without being judged and called names.*

*Heterosexuals think that they know everything and they are much better than us. They are very judgemental.*

*They [community members, family and heterosexuals] think they are entitled to pass judgement on me, especially when I am with my wife. They make us feel that we always have to explain ourselves.*

*The community at large I feel they don't respect us; they discriminate us.*

*I think is a waste of time going there because they [psychologists] also judge us and tell us that we must change as being homosexual is not good and un-African.*

Farr and Patterson (2013) report that most lesbian couples (as well as other gender variant individuals) experience discrimination across their life span which renders them very

vulnerable to all forms of stigmatisation. Lesbian couples, because of this, tend to experience high rates of social marginalisation and exclusion which is apparent in this study.

#### 5.3.10 Theme 10: Parenting

Lesbian couples tend to view motherhood as a shared venture with a fair division of labour. They are flexible in their roles rather than adhering to prescribed gendered roles. Couples experience motherhood as involving different emotions, from profound joy and excitement, to feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and worried which mirrors heterosexual parents experience. According to the participants, none of the couples planned to have a child/children together. They all found their partners with children in their lives. Most of them indicated that they do not reside with their children, citing economic problems as a challenge. They indicated that they do not have money to get a bigger space which would enable them to live with their children. Most of the participants also stated that they have good relationships with the children because the children accept them, as found in international studies (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

*My children and my lesbian partner they have a good relationship and hey, they get along.*

*My child, yes he gets on with my partner – they do a lot together.*

Initial arguments against lesbian couples having children suggested that lesbian parents have a negative effect on various aspects of children's development, such as the development of their gender identity, psychosocial adjustment, development of peer and parental relationships as well as the potential for social stigmatisation. Recent research does not support this and lesbian couples do not have any negative impact on children's development (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

The participants indicated that their family members try to 'poison' their children against them using their lesbianism as an excuse. They noted that this causes a lot of tension in their relationship with their families and partners. Moreover, the children of these couples seem to be discriminated as a result of their parents' sexual orientation, which is not in line with international studies.

*My family keeps telling him bad things about my sexual partner and my sexual orientation and that puts a lot of pressure on us. He [my son] barely gets along with my partner, basically because what he was told about homosexuality, but I hope someday things will be fine.*

*I remember my son came back home from Sunday school and he was crying. He said that the Sunday school teacher told him that he needs to pray for us because the bible is against homosexuality. I got very angry and my fiancé wanted to go and confront the teacher at the church but I told her to just let it go.*

*They don't even what their children near us because they think that we will make them homosexual.*

*One parent even reprimanded her child about us saying that they should not be like us because we are going straight to hell.*

It appears that most children raised by Black lesbian mothers in the township of Seshego are discriminated against as a result of the sexual orientation of their parents. It is evident that their social functioning is also affected as they experience bullying and have little support from teachers and peers.

#### **5.4 Tabular format of emerging themes**

The themes are presented, as a summary, in a tabular format to help clarify the aforementioned results. See appendix C for a verbatim transcript of colour coded responses.

**Table 2:** Emerging themes arising out of the data

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<b>Theme 1: Age and sexuality</b>	This theme addressed the age at which the participants first realised that they were romantically interested with the same sex.
<b>Theme 2: Suicide</b>	The theme suicide arose from the responses which indicated that participants thought of committing suicide (with most actually attempting suicide more than once).

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Theme 3: Education	This theme indicated that the participants' educational environment was impacted by the sexual orientation.
Theme 4: Lack of support	The theme emanated from the responses which described no emotional support was received either from participants family members, friends and/or police officials.
Theme 5: Hate crime	Hate crime emerged as a theme as most participants indicated that they had experienced violence often on a daily basis as a result of their sexual orientation.
Theme 6: Substance abuse	As a way to cope with their challenges, most participants indicated that they had used different substances. This theme underpins their responses.
Theme 7: Stigma	This theme arose out of most participants feeling that they were stigmatised because of their sexual orientation.
Theme 8: Mental health	In terms of the mental health theme, most participants felt that they were not assisted when they consulted mental health workers.
Theme 9: Discrimination	This theme arose as participants felt they were discriminated against by heterosexuals, in different contexts. This theme emanated from their responses.
Theme 10: Parenting	This theme arose out of the responses which reported some of the challenges that participants had encountered as lesbian mothers – and the impact it had on their children.

### 5.3 Overall Discussion of results

Results are discussed in terms of literature, the SDT and the following objectives.

- Which social experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province?
- What emotional experiences do black lesbians face in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo province?
- What are the impacts of these experiences on their psychological well-being?
- How do these experiences impact on their day-to-day living?

The study underpinned many results found in previous research on lesbian, homosexual and LGBTI issues generally. Themes noted in previous research were found in the data of the present study which indicates that black lesbians in the study experience many challenges in their daily lives which impact on their overall social, physical and psychological well-being in a negative way. The following discussion, underpinned by SDT and relevant literature highlights the findings of this study.

Results pertaining to age and sexuality in this study revealed that the participants reported that they realised they were attracted to 'girls' in their primary and early high school years. This concurs with findings in international literature where sexual identity is found to unfold during the teenage years (Humbulani, 2016). However, many of the couples had children from previous heterosexual relationships, or marriages, which suggests that, at least in some of the participants' homosexuality emerged later in life (Leibowitz & Spack, 2011). It may also be that some were forced into marriage, or having male partners because of the patriarchal, traditional nature of the society to which they belong as they fear exposure as homosexual (Bhana, 2015).

Suicide is a theme which was worryingly commonplace during the interviews. Most participants had tried to commit suicide once, or more than once, because of the poor-self-worth and depression they felt because of their rejection (by peers and community). This is a typical finding in all literature pertaining to lesbians (Subhrajit, 2014; Swain, 2010), which is echoed in this research. As a consequence of these challenges the suicide rates are higher than those of the heterosexual population (Mbele & Ndabeni 2013). There is no doubt that this study underpinned previous findings that there are high suicidal thoughts and attempts amongst LGBTI persons (Tonya & Sarah, 2011).

Mental health is related to suicide however, it was separated as a theme as anxiety, stress and other disorders might not necessarily lead to suicide attempts. There are very high levels of stress, anxiety and other mental health disorders in lesbian communities as they face social ostracism (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). This underpins findings in this study as participants reported anger, fear, not being loved, depression, no self-confidence and pain. All of these, if not treated, can lead to more serious disorders such as alcohol or substance dependence, major depression, and may even lead to the onset of psychotic disorders (Boss & Van Balen, 2010). Additionally, these research findings are supported by Subhrajit (2014) who reports

that many same-sex couples are at a much greater risk of family conflict which results in their being rejected by their family. They also tend to be rejected by their friends and peers (as well as their communities) after they reveal their same-sex attraction making them prone to depression. This is underpinned by Msibi (2012) who reports that any negative environmental factors (educational or familial) put homosexual persons at risk for the development of mental illnesses.

Educational environments the world over are not sympathetic to homosexual students (Currier, 2011) which is a common thread in this investigation. The researcher found that from school to tertiary institutions both peers and lecturing staff were unsympathetic, and often openly hostile, to the participants interviewed in the study. This underlines a lack of support for lesbians and other non-mainstream groups, and their isolation and non-acceptance by family, community and peers (Bos & Van Balen, 2010). Fighting within the family was a usual topic which distressed participants. It is quite shocking that mental health workers are also found lacking by the participants which was not found in other literature. Furthermore, many gay and lesbian students perceive their educational environments in a negative way as they experience much emotional and social torment during their years in academe (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). This is reinforced by Azwihangwisi and Makombo (2014) who state that non-heterosexual students in tertiary institutions are bullied by both lecturers and peers.

Sexual violence against lesbians is found in other countries but it is not condoned as it often is in South Africa and African contexts (Illyayambwa, 2012). This is because on the African continent patriarchy and traditional thinking about female role norms are heterosexual, anything 'other' is considered deviant or *UnAfrican* (Bloese, 2015; Illyayambwa, 2012). In this study rape by a brother, condoned by a mother, was reported which is both tragic and appalling. It is likely that this goes on in other South African contexts. Gang rape, by more than one male was also reported in fact, all of the participants had either been raped or sexually abused or harassed (touching or verbal abuse). In American and European contexts this is not always the case but it is prevalent in Africa and South Africa (Mamba, 2012).

Martin et al. (2009) report that black lesbians in South Africa are, more and more, the targets of corrective rape and hate crimes. There have been many cases of this type of rape reported to the police and activist groups in the country. This type of rape is a form of sexual

torture and violence that aims to purify lesbians and helping them to ‘come right’ and become heterosexual which has been well-documented in this research.

The type of abuse documented above often leads to substance abuse and participants noted that they had, at one time or another, tried different substances. Homosexuals generally report higher substance abuse because of not ‘fitting in’ to a heterosexual world (Subhrajit, 2014). One of the participants looked for ‘Dagga’ every time her family called her because she knew she would become upset. The participants used drugs to help them cope with their feelings but unfortunately people become reliant on them and their problems worsen (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). The results of the research are further supported by Leibowitz and Spack (2011) who report that same-sex people are at a high risk for alcohol use as well as drugs (such as marijuana and cocaine) than the heterosexual population (Tonya & Sarah, 2011). The latter authors report that using substances gives LGBTI persons a short-lived sense of self-confidence which reinforces findings in this research.

Any people who are different from the norm are socially stigmatised, the same is true for lesbians (Alexander, 2011; Tonya & Sarah, 2011). The findings in this study support international studies as the stigmatisation of Black lesbian couples was described by all of the participants. They were stigmatised by their churches (who should support them), their families and their neighbours. Lesbianism is considered ‘evil’ in many traditional African households (Moyo, Okyere-Manu, 2016), a ‘curse’ or the ‘devils work’ (Bhana, 2015), which cannot be tolerated. The same is true for discrimination, which in this context is akin to racism. Tonya and Sarah (2011) report that the discrimination of lesbians starts at school, through tertiary education and is lifelong. The sample of participants all reported discrimination at work, by their families and from their heterosexual peers. Research by Subhrajit (2014) underpins these conclusions as LGBTI people experience stigma and discrimination throughout their lives and are the subject of discrimination, stigmatisation and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes (Mamba, 2012).

Several of the couples in this research had children from heterosexual relationships and found that they, like international studies have shown, shared the task of parenting (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Many of the participants do not live with their children (who live with the father’s family) however, they have good relationships with them. Their children accept the same-sex relationship and only get upset when a friend or peer (or teacher) teases them

or tell them it is unnatural. However, unlike most international studies the children of black lesbian couples in this study experience discrimination and stigmatisation from their peers and teachers.

In terms of the study objectives the above-mentioned discussion indicates the negative social and emotional experiences black lesbian couples face in Seshego township. The influence of these experiences on their day-to-day living has been shown to impact negatively on their psychological functioning. Social domain theory (SDT) posits that judgements are made in terms of the social norms of any social context. In the context of Seshego, which is a per-urban area in Polokwane, South Africa norms are patriarchal and traditionally African. These norms, in terms of traditional culture, as well as religious ideology regard lesbianism as *unnatural*, *evil* and *unAfrican*. Essentially, in this community homosexuality is considered as deviant and not a natural sexual expression. As a result, black lesbian couples experience social exclusion and isolation as their behaviours are not in line with the social and moral norms of their community. This results in black lesbians having day-to-day problems in living emotionally (for instance, depression), socially (isolated from family) and physically (violence and corrective rape). Overall this creates a negative impact on their overall physical and psychological well-being as reported in other studies (Bhana, 2015).

As a researcher I found conducting the research was very interesting, particularly exploring the literature. I found that there is much discrimination and stigmatisation against lesbians internationally. It was disturbing to discover the challenges that lesbian women go through as a result of their sexual orientation. In some-way this prepared me for the interviews as I understood that it was likely that many experiences faced by participants were likely to be echoed by those found in international studies. I found that during the interviews I was professional because of my training as a clinical psychologist. However, afterwards I did feel emotional because of some of the disturbing experiences that I was party to. The worse thing was the heart breaking accounts of the pain that they experienced as a result of their sexual orientation. The accounts of 'corrective' rape were particularly distressing and I needed to debrief. I debriefed with my supervisors who assisted me so that I could continue with the research which was emotionally draining.

As I write up the last paragraph of this research I am able to reflect on it in a positive manner, although it was difficult and emotionally draining. I feel that allowing these accounts

to be ‘heard’ through this thesis and through giving reports to various bodies and writing a journal article (as indicated in chapter 6) I have, in a very small way, been able to highlight the plight of Black lesbians living in a township in Seshego township, Limpopo Province.

#### **5.4 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter presented the results of the study and reported the themes that were gleaned from the data. Tables summarising demographics and the themes were also used to make it easy for the reader to understand the ‘entire’ picture. An overall in-depth discussion of findings was also entered into. A final reflection was also given by myself, the researcher. The following chapter presents the research strengths, limitations and recommendations arising out of the study and a short conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This study was exploratory in nature. The intention was to focus on the social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, in the city of Polokwane in Limpopo Province, South Africa. This chapter will focus on the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research will be presented and finally, concluding remarks regarding.

#### **6.2 Strengths of research**

The major strength of the study was the use of the qualitative data collection method which allowed rich narrative accounts to be collected. A qualitative research design also allowed for self-disclosure which enabled trusting relationships and eliciting more in-depth data. In addition, the other strength of the study is geographical location, with couples residing in one location (Seshego) in South Africa. This enabled the researcher to get more data in a relatively short period of time which kept the costs of data collection down. The research also used an appropriate mode of analysis and framework for the study namely Thematic content analysis (TCA).

#### **6.3 Limitations of research**

The major limitation of the study was difficulty in getting couples to participate, as they were scared that what they said would be repeated to their communities and their identities would not be protected. They also feared further victimisation. However, when the research was explained to them 10 couples agreed (many more did not). Another limitation was that the study focused only on Black lesbian couples, omitting other ethnic cultures in South Africa, such as Whites, Indians and Coloureds. Furthermore, the whole of Limpopo

Province was not included in the study as it focused on only one area. If different areas (locations) and groups had taken part in the study results could have been different. A focus group was at first thought as an appropriate tool, as well as individual interviews. However, preliminary research made it clear that due to the aforementioned fear Black lesbians did not want to participate in a focus groups but only as couples. It is not clear why focus groups were not acceptable however, the researcher thinks it might be because they thought that other group members would gossip about them.

## **6.4 Recommendations arising out of the research process**

The following recommendations are made:

### **6.4.1 Institutions**

The increase in black lesbian couples, some of whom are married, calls for the education system to begin incorporating LGBTI topics into the curriculum, as well as sending educators on seminars (pertaining to the topic). This will aid educators to be more understanding of sexual diversity in our country. Graduate and postgraduate education in psychology should be more inclusive of LGBTI issues allowing students to become more familiar with, and informed about, LGBTI challenges. Service providers, such as healthcare, police just to name a few, also need to become more inclusive by allowing access, without prejudice to their ranks. They also need to be sensitive towards the specific needs of Black lesbian couples.

Mental health care professional should be sensitised to LGBTI issues relating to their mental health care needs. This should also include other stakeholders including the community in general. Workshops and knowledge sessions should be given by the Department of Health through clinics, hospitals and other community venues. Community imbizo's should be held on a regular basis to engage with diversity, in terms of sexual orientation. Civil society organisations should also assist communities and engage with government and community structures spreading knowledge about LGBTI issues and helping resolve any community based problems that emerge.

A journal article or articles should be written out of the research in order to highlight the challenges experienced by black lesbians in a township in Limpopo Province. In some



way this may focus the attention of authorities on their challenges. A publication is currently under review and if it is accepted will be sent to the provincial government of the province.

#### **6.4.2 Future research**

A larger quantitative study should be conducted as well as ongoing qualitative studies in order to gain more representative data, in relation to LGBTI challenges. Samples that are more representative should be encouraged, and the recruitment of larger and more diverse samples would provide more systematic data. This would also increase the generalisability of findings. Future studies should also focus on one aspect that is a challenge for black lesbian couples in order to gain more in-depth, and focused information. There is also a need for longitudinal studies as the experiences of lesbians, throughout Limpopo Province, could change over time. As these changes occur a more complete picture of the lives of Black lesbian couple in townships areas could be described.

#### **6.5 Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to elicit data to increase knowledge about black lesbian couples social and emotional experiences in Seshego Township, in the city of Polokwane in Limpopo Province, South Africa which it has done. It has also served to give a voice to black lesbian couples within psychological literature through this dissertation and articles that arise out of it (one has been sent for possible publication). This study also produced information that might be useful to black lesbian couples with similar challenges and also the registered activist organisations in Limpopo Province which advocate for their rights. The researcher is in the process of giving feedback to the participants and advocacy groups.

The participants in this study discussed their social and emotional experiences. They allowed me into their homes and shared their personal experiences with me which allowed me to gain insight into their experiences. It is apparent that the black lesbian couples in this research struggled to get support from both their family and communities. They were also unable to get help spiritually as their churches were not same-sex friendly. However, they did display extraordinary resilience and continued to function in their communities which are patriarchal and homophobic. Despite South Africa's progressive constitution and laws

societal response to black lesbian couples is, in terms of this research, judgemental, stigmatising, discriminatory and often violent.

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## **Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide (English and vernacular)**

The researcher will identify herself to the couple prior giving the couple an opportunity to introduce themselves. This will give participants a smooth, welcoming and comfortable environment and will enhance rapport between the researcher and the participants. The researcher will then introduce the topic and briefly elaborate what the research is all about.

Interviews elicit a lot of information; of which some may need a lot of time to analyse and by so doing the researcher will conduct the research with this in mind. The researcher will also probe where necessary in order to get clarity and elicit further relevant information.

The questions were developed using the Turiel, Hildebrant and Wainryb (1991) Social Domain Theory) as a guide.

**Questions (probing will take place dependent on the answers which are forthcoming).**

### Part A: General demographic questions.

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Ethnicity
4. What religion do you follow?
5. What academic level?

## 6. Occupation?

### **Section B: experiences**

The couples will be asked the following questions – probing may be necessary to clarify what the student means.

1. Have you always been a lesbian?
2. How long have you been a couple?
3. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?
4. How heterosexual treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)
5. How do other homosexuals treat you regarding your sexual orientation?
6. Do you have any support from your families?
7. So, how does the family interact with you? Do they understand your sexual orientation?
8. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?
9. Do you feel welcomed in the community to live in?
10. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?
11. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?
12. Is there anything you would like to ask me?



## **SEMAMARETŠWA SA B**

### **Semamaretšwa sa B: Tlhahli ya potšološišo ya seka-popego**

Monyakišiši o tla itsebiša go batšeakarolo pele a fa sebaka sa go itsebiša. Se se tla fa batšeakarolo tikologo ye botse ye e amogelelago mme ya hlola botshepegi magareng ga monyakišiši le batšeakarolo. Monyakišiši ke moka o tla tsebiša hlogotaba le go hlalosa gore nyakišišo e mabapi le eng.

Dipotšološišo di utulla tshedimošo ye ntši, fao dingwe di ka nyakago nako ye telele go di tlhatholla ka lebaka leo monyakišiši o tla nyakišiša mo thutong ye ka mogopolo o bjalo. Gape monyakišiši o tla tsoma mo go hlokegago go humana tlhakišo le go nyakolla tshedimošo ya tlaleletšo ye maleba.

Dipotšišo di hlakilwe go lebetšwe Turiel, Hildebrant le Wainryb (1991) le Tufford (2010) Social Domain Theory) bjalo ka tlhahli.

**Dipotšišo ka Sepedi (potšišotlaleletšo e tla dirwa go ya le dikarabo tše di fiwago).**

### **Karolo ya A: Dipotšišo tša temokerafi ka kakaretšo.**

1. Bogolo
2. Mohlobo
3. O latela tumelo efe?
4. I fihleletše dithuto dife tša godimo?
5. Mošomo?

## **Karolo ya B: Maitemogelo setšhabeng**

Batšeakarolo bat la botšišwa dipotšišo tse di latelago-potšišotlalelletšo e ka no ba bohlokwa go hlakiša seo moithuti a se bolelago

1. Na ke kgale o le lesepiene?
2. Na o na le bakgotse ba bantši ba bongbobedi?
3. Na ba bongbobedi ba go swara bjang ge o le bongbotee?
4. Na banna le basadi ba bongbobedi ba a go amogela?
5. Na banna ba go ratana ka bong ba a go amogela?
6. Na o humana thekgo go tšwa lapeng la geno?
7. Na ba lapa ba ikgokaganya bjang le wena?
8. Na ba kwešiša tshekamelo ya gago ya bong?
9. Na tshekamelo ya gago ya bong e tsenegare mabaka a mangwe a bophelo bja gago?
10. Na o humana o amogelelega setšhabeng se o dulago le sona?
11. Na o kile wa itemogela tlhorišo mo setšhabeng se o dulago naso ka lebaka la tshekamelo ya gago ya bong?
12. Na tumelo ya gago (ge o na nayo) e bohlokwa go wena?
13. Na o bona okare tumelo ya gago e thulana le mokgwaphelo wa gago?
14. Na go na le yo a ratago go oketša se sengwe ka hlogotaba ye re bego re bolela ka yona?
15. A go na le se le ratago go mpotšiša?

**Appendix 2: TREC Ethics forms and permission**

**APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE**

Date: 24.11.2016

**FORM B – PART I**

**PROJECT TITLE: Social and Emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.**

**PROJECT LEADER: M R Maotoana**

**DECLARATION**

I, the signatory, hereby apply for approval to conduct research described in the attached research proposal and declare that:

1. I am fully aware of the guidelines and regulations for ethical research and that I will abide by these guidelines and regulations as set out in documents (available from the Secretary of the Ethics Committee); and
2. I undertake to provide every person who participates in this research project with the relevant information in Part III. Every participant will be requested to sign Part IV.

**Name of Researcher:** M R Maotoana

**Signature:**.....

**Date:**.....

**For Official use by the Ethics Committee:**

Approved/Not approved

Remarks:.....

.....  
.....  
Signature of Chairperson:.....

Date:.....

**FORM B - PART II**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

**PROJECT LEADER:** MR Maotoana

Protocol for conducting research using human participants

1. Department: Psychology
2. Title of project: Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.
3. Full name, surname and qualifications of project leader: Mpho Rose Maotoana; Masters in Clinical Psychology.
4. List the name(s) of all persons (Researchers and Technical Staff) involved with the project and identify their role(s) in the conduct of the experiment:

Name:	Qualifications:	Responsible for:
MR Maotoana	Masters Clinical Psychology	All Research
5. Name and address of principal researcher: Ms M R Maotoana, 56, Unit C, Mankweng.
6. Procedures to be followed: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
7. Nature of discomfort: Re-living experiences associated with sexual experiences may be stressful and cause anxiety.
8. Description of the advantages that may be expected from the results of the study: A better understanding of the experiences of lesbian couples in Seshego Township.

Signature of Project Leader:.....

Date:.....

## **PART II**

### **INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

#### **PROJECT LEADER: MR Maotoana**

1. You are invited to participate in the following research project: Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.
2. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project (without providing any reasons) at any time.
3. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project, although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the project might prove advantageous to others.
4. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader and her/his staff will gladly answer your question. They will also discuss the project in detail with you.
5. You may feel upset, anxious or stressed during the interview designed to help you explore your experiences before, during and after reorientation therapy. If you do please inform me immediately or as soon as you feel able. You will be referred for counselling to appropriate professionals to help you resolve these feelings.
6. Should you at any stage feel unhappy, uncomfortable or is concerned about the research, please contact **Ms Noko Shai-Ragoboya at the University of Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, tel: 015 268 2401.**

## **PART IV**

### **CONSENT FORM**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

**PROJECT LEADER:** MR Maotoana

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following project: Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province.

I realise that:

1. The study deals with experiences of sexual risk taking behaviour amongst adolescent boys.
2. The procedure /treatment/interview may hold some risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage.
3. The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.
4. The research project, i.e. the extent, aims and methods of the research, has been explained to me.
5. The project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research, an explanation of the anticipated advantages for myself or others that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.

6. I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation.
7. Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.
8. Any questions that I may have regarding the research, or related matters, will be answered by the researcher/s. You may contact my supervisors at: 015 268 2944 or Kathryn.Nel@ul.ac.za and/or Saraswathie.Govender@ul.ac.za or myself MR Maotoana maotoanam099@gmail.com if you need more information or feel uncomfortable with the research process at any time.
9. If I have any questions about, or problems regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact a member of the research team or Ms Noko Shai-Ragoboya.
10. Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.
11. If any medical problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person and/or I will be referred to my doctor.
12. I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHED PERSON

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

SIGNATURE OF PERSON THAT INFORMED  
PARENT/GUARDIAN  
THE RESEARCHED PERSON

SIGNATURE OF

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

## **Appendix 3: Transcript of participants' responses**

### **Couple 1**

#### **Part A: General demographic questions.**

##### 1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 27 years

Participant B (feminine): 22 years

##### 2. Ethnicity: both African

3. What religion do you follow? Both Christians

##### 4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): grade 12

Participant B (feminine): grade 11

##### 5. Occupation? Both unemployed

Residential location?

Participant A (masculine): Seshego zone 1

Participant B (feminine): Seshego zone 5

Have been together for two years and have been living together for a year now at Zone 5.



## **Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A: (masculine) high school level around grade 10

Participant B (feminine): high school level around grade 8

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): yes

Participant B (feminine): yes

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant B (masculine) I guess they are fine with my sexuality as they never asked me anything, so I think that they presume that I am a lesbian

Participant A(feminine): Eish, most of not all of them had a problem with my sexuality and their treatment towards me changed. Even a few years back, because I have children, they treated me very badly and some of them judged me a lot and some started distancing themselves from me. They feel so uncomfortable.

**Probe: What do you mean they presume?** Perhaps due to my dress code and the fact that they always see me with women. I think they don't understand me and I also never took the time to explain myself to them. I see that most males, they do have a problem with me although they haven't said it, but I do see and hear rumours of that they think that I am a lesbian.

4. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): Well, I don't have many friends, but I do hang with heterosexuals some times, especially guys when smoking and drinking. Though it doesn't happen all the time

Participant B: the females and they are very uncomfortable round me. It not the same as before, they are not as free around me and others think that I even may want them or want to have sex with them.

**(Probe) How does that make you feel?**

Participant B (feminine): Is like I am having an illness that is contagious. I feel so dirty around them, like I will infect them is worse than having HIV because it is not visible like holding my girlfriend's hand or kissing in public, or even just walking together.

5. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): They don't have a problem.

Participant B (feminine): Well, I don't have gay friends, but we get along well.

6. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A(masculine): I can talk to my sisters about my sexual orientation.

**Probe: Everyone in the family understand your sexual orientation?** I think so. I think they heard from others from the family and I was open to my elder brother about my sexuality, though I never spoke to the rest of my family about it as I think they know. So I don't see the need.

Participant B (feminine): No. at first I had to introduce my partner as my friend as I was forced to be in a heterosexual relationship by my family, so when I started going back to date girls, it was a big issue. Even now, my cousins are not even talking to me and we always fight. My parents do not even want to hear anything about my sexuality.

7. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (masculine): We are just okay I suppose. Like I said, we don't talk about my sexual orientation. If a lady comes, they know she is there for me, however they never talk about it, but we just live like all is well. Just like when my sister bathes, I won't go in and the same to them and my brothers. Everyone does their own thing, though sometimes I feel they are punishing me we don't have parents and they don't take care of me, is like I have to fend for myself.

**Probe: You think that is due to your sexual orientation?** Yes i think so. Also because I am masculine, my brother once said, since I am a man, I should fend for

myself. Sometimes, he used to beat me up saying I think that I am a man, until one day I got tired and I fought back. Since then he stopped beating me as he always says I think I am the man of the house, especially when he is drunk.

**Probe: Have you ever thought of suicide?** I have attempted twice because I was tired of being hurt. I guess that is why I don't care anymore

**Probe: have you consulted a professional?** No. I don't even think they can help me with anything.

Participant B (feminine): We just live like nothing. We avoid talking about the topic.

8. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I don't think they they understand. I think they think is because of the hardship that had faced growing up. Again, I think that my eldest brother thinks that since I am the last born, I want to take my mother's house, that why I am a lesbian as he thinks that I am a man according to him.

Participant B(feminine): My family think I am possessed. They think is a phase that would pass.

9. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): yes. Particularly at high school as I was forced to wear a skirt, which I was very uncomfortable with until I spoke to the teachers and they allowed me to wear girl's trousers which also they were uncomfortable, though a bit better and I got used to that as time went. It was much better that the skirt.

Participant B (feminine): eish, it is was and still is my family because we are not in good teams due to my relationship. Again, I think that since I dated guys some while back, perhaps not everyone knows about my sexuality.

10. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): in my location (zone 5), the community is here are gossipers (ke bo tswatswi). They are always after people's lives. There is this corner as you exit my house, just on the opposite street, those guys there smokes dagga and

they know everything happening at this location. At times I even go there and smoke with them, but most of the time, I smoke my room.

**Probe: So you also smoke dagga?** yes I do. I started when I was high school.

**Probe: How does dagga help you?** well, it makes me forget all my problems just for a little while. You see I drink alcohol, but I prefer dagga over anything else and it makes me feel better.

**Probe: How much dagga do you smoke a day?** I smoke the one called skank. It is very nice and stronger as well. I buy it for about R20 to R50 and it last me for 2 days if it is for R20 and 3 and a half day for R50. It also depends on my mood, if I am very angry, can finish the R50 one from within two days.

Participant B (feminine): when my partner is not around, I don't feel same at all. I even prefer to stay in the room and not go out.

11. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): Very much

Participant B(feminine): yes

12. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I have been lesbian for a long time; I think currently I honestly don't care anymore. If I feel like going to church, I do go. Again, I can see that people would be gossiping in church and some starring and gossiping. Currently I go to ZCC church.

**Probe: So you changed churches due to your sexual orientation?** I guess ZCC is where I feel comfortable. Though still those who know me still get shocked when they see me in women's attire and I wish we were allowed to dress as we are comfortable because I only have one skirt, which I use that day when I go to church.

**Probe: So you don't go to church regularly?** Nah I don't. I normally go to church, when I want some light as u know there are prophets there. So I go there if I have some trouble in life or strange things happen to me. So I go there to get protection, direction and clarity of that is happening.

Participant B (feminine) Yes, because those who know that I am dating other women at my church; they make me feel uncomfortable going to church. They look at me like some kind of disease and at the same time, they gossip with other members of the church about me and I don't like that. Some even confront me, especially the elders and tell me to continue praying and that all shall be well. At one time, one elder of the church even approached my mother and told her to take me to an all-night prayer when a certain pastor was coming to Seshego stadium, so she could pray for me and deliver me from homosexuality as it is a spiritual thing.

13. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A(masculine): No

Participant B(feminine): No

14. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A(masculine): No

Participant B(feminine): No

## **Couple 2**

### **Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A: (masculine): 30 years, from Botlokwa

Participant B (feminine): 28 years. From Musina

Currently, staying together at Seshego, zone 3. Renting a room.

2. Ethnicity: Both Africans

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A: (masculine): none

Participant B (feminine): Christian

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A: (masculine): nursing diploma

Participant B (feminine): grade 12

5. Occupation?

Participant A: (masculine): sales consultant

Participant B (feminine): professional nurse

### **Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are a lesbian?

Participant A: (masculine): it has been a while. My first girlfriend I was at secondary school then was then later out the closet during my tertiary years. I think I was at my first year, during the second semester.

**Probe:** why during the time of your tertiary institution? I guess it was easier as I was seeing more homosexuals like me. Had friends who were from different places and was easy to understand each other.

Participant B (feminine): I always had feelings for women, though was ashamed to act on it. I then later started dating during my matric and got pregnant and though I was stuck. The first female I loved was in 2009 and we dated for about 3 years, then I met my fiancé in 2012 and have been with her since then.

**Probe: why here you ashamed?** Because my family suspect that I might be dating women as they would always see me with my girlfriend, who was masculine and I would always say that she is a friend. They would **always say bad things about homosexuality**

**Probe:** so you have a child? You have any relationship with the father of your child? Yes, I have a baby boy that is a blessing to my life. He is my everything and I have no relationship with his father. His father has no relationship with him, since he left me during my pregnancy.

**Probe: How does your son relate to your fiancé:** they have a good relationship and they get along although sometimes I wonder if he understands that his parents are homosexuals.

**Probe: How do you feel about the child [Participant A: (masculine)] :?** I love him. I have grown to see him as my own because when I first met his mother, he was just about two years of age and he has been part of my life since then.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A: (masculine): not really

**Probe: why is that?** They are very judgemental and is like they are trying to change me to be heterosexual. Just get tired as well of explaining myself and my sexuality to other people. So prefer those who are like me. (Lesbians)

Participant B (feminine): no. I also think that they are judgemental and think that they know everything.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Both: like we are possessed or have a contagious disease.

Participant A: (masculine): I feel like I am a target for them to attack me. Especially the guys. They always tell me that I think that I am a man and they will show me one day that I am a woman and that I have a female private parts. They say I always take their women and what do I do to the women because I don't have a penis.

**Probe: How does that make you feel?** Scared and also very cautious. Especially when going out at night with my fiancé. Which is why I pushed to buy a car, for our safety because we were attacked one day when we were at a club at night and was waiting for a maxi-taxi and the two guys approached us and hit me then took both our phones and money. They also forced to kiss her, telling her that she needs a real man. One of them even beat me up and when I went to the police station they just laughed at me and told me that I should stop making myself a man. One of the officials even said that we should stop going out at night and stay at home as the community is tired of the madness and the demon of homosexuality.

**Probe: How did you feel:** that really hurt me a lot. I was very helpless and luckily one of my friends arrived and we went home. I also thank God that those guys did not hurt me physically or even rape us.

Participant B (feminine): Ai, I don't even trust them after the incident that happened to us. Well I know that not all of them are against LGBTI people, but most of them eish. I just don't trust them

4. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): well my parents passed away so I am left with my siblings, 3 sisters and 1 brother. So not all of the support me. Even at our engagement party, none of my family members were there. Most of them are against our relationship saying that my fiancé loves me for my money and that she is not even my type. Some say that my I need to have a traditional ritual done for me to appease the ancestors, while other tried to take me to church and other spiritual intervention.

**Probe: how does that make you feel?** Angry and hopeless. I am grateful that I don't ask them anything. I an independent and have my own money. So, I guess I am used to surviving without them.

Participant B (feminine): my mother is a pastor and she doesn't approve of my relationship or my sexual orientation. She hates my fiancé and that lead us to moving out of home and staying together. Just to have a peace of mind.

**Probe: how do you both feel of the lack of support from the families?**

Participant A: (masculine): I honestly don't care anymore. Is not an easy thing, but I guess I am used to it by now.

Participant B (feminine): is very hard. I miss my mother very much. Every time we talk, we end up fighting. Just wish we could for once just get along and stop the fighting and that she can support me (Emotional). Just wish she could just love me for me.

**Probe: So you feel unloved?** Yes I do. (Crying). Is like she is so disappointed in me. Sometimes I think she wishes that I was dead.



**Probe: Have you told her how you feel or perhaps get a mediator to assist?** My mother wants nothing to do with me, as long as I am homosexual. So I guess I gave up trying to please her.

5. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (masculine): we don't have any relationship at all. We meet at family functions like funerals and we hardly even speak.

Participant B (feminine): we are three at home and I am the second born. My family (siblings) stick with my mother, except my older brother. We get along and he tried to talk to my mother, but he failed. So that is the only one that I get along with. My extended family are the worst. They keep making matters worse between me and my mother. They always tell her how she is lenient on me and she should beat the lesbian out of me.

6. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I honestly don't even care. I think they they hurt me so much. I don't even want to talk about my family it hurts me very much.

Participant B (feminine): I tried explaining a lot of times, but I think they are just not interested. So I don't know what else to do.

7. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): yes. Mostly spiritually as even now I can't go to church where I feel welcomed. Even social, like I said earlier, I am very cautious of going parting until late. Especially around the location (Seshego). In town is a bit better as they are enough security. Here as soon as you go out, the guys are behind you and they follow you to either rape or just rob you and torment you. Even wish can move and stay in town as I think the places there are safer than here.

Participant B (feminine): yes. Going out with her at night we mostly are attacked, either verbally or physically at the extreme. You get in a club and sometimes guys would just spank my bumps or try and pull me towards them. Our police services, here at the location are just useless when coming to homosexuality or LGBTI issues. But then I suppose, if our families can't accept us, then how do we expect the rest of the world to love us.

**Probe:** that is quite deep to say don't you think? But is true. My family wants nothing to do with me, so is likely unlikely that other people would love us.

**Probe:** has any of you ever had thoughts of suicide? Participant B (feminine): yes I have and have even attempted more than 4 times. I think my son and my fiancé are the reasons that I live.

Participant A (masculine): I have attempted once.

8. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): not really. I think that also because of the way that I dress, that is why they think I am a man. That's why I changed the locks in our room and even ensure that there are security doors and windows.

Participant B (feminine): I sometimes do feel safe when I am alone, but the time I am with her, especially at night I get scared for her especially since most man or guys attack us swearing at her or trying to pull me to them aiming at making her angry.

9. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): a lot because now I am still struggling to find a church that I can go to and feel safe and comfortable in, where people won't be staring at you and pointing fingers at you and ultimately the pastor wants to deliver you and pray for you. So I decide to not go to any church as I am tired of turning into a victim there.

**Probe:** how do you feel about that? Makes me very angry. I can't even go to church with my fiancé and that makes it worse as we then would be the topic of the day. One day the elders even approached us after church at zone 2 and told us that we need to be delivered and accept God. That was not the last time I ever set my foot that church nor does my fiancé.

Participant B (feminine): is very difficult for us to go to church as a couple and I think is not right. I used to go alone but it wasn't easy as mostly after church I would then be told how I am possessed by my fiancé.

10. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): a lot

Participant B (feminine): in the most painful way. The fact that one cannot even go and worship and be thankful to God, without being judged.

11. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): no

Participant B (feminine): I wish that this study would assist the families and our communities of LGBTI issues.

12. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A (masculine): no

Participant B (feminine): no

Couple 3

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 30

Participant B (feminine): 37

2. Ethnicity-both black

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): Christian

Participant B (feminine): Christian

4. What Educational level have you achieve

Participant A (masculine): honours degree

Participant B (feminine): diploma

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): masters' student

Participant B (feminine): director

**Probe: How long have you been staying together? We have been together for 5 years, staying together for 3 and married for 2 years.**

### **Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you were lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): during my primary school years. Around the late 1990s

Participant B (feminine): I was sound the age of 13 in my late primary school years

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): mostly colleagues, not really friends. Heterosexual thinks that they know everything and they are much better than us. There are so much judgemental.

Participant B (feminine): not really, just those that I work with. Most people that are close to me are homosexual.

**Probe: Why is that?** I feel safer with other homosexuals, with no discrimination, judgement and also I am free to be myself and it is also a very comfortable space for me. I can kiss or even hold my wife's hand and no one will ask me anything or stare at me. I actually hate it when guys make moves on me.

**Probe: Why do you hate it?** Most males presume me trying to prove a point that perhaps I am not lesbian and that annoys me, so I prefer to hang out with homosexuals.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): they are so judgemental and they always try to make moves on my wife and telling that how bad I am. Worse some would even attempt to fight me saying that I am making her (my wife) a lesbian.

Participant B (feminine): is so annoying. They (heterosexuals) feel that they are entitled to pass judgement on us, especially when I am with my wife. They feel we

always that I have to explain my self and worse that my wife is masculine is like they need to rescue me from homosexuality. Is like she is passing her homosexuality (lesbianism) to me simply because of my dress code and that scares me a lot that they may actually attack my wife at any time simply because I should be with him that my wife, simply because of how I dress.

4. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): not at all, especially the males. They hate me very much basically because of the way I look and dress. Is not only about being lesbian but I think is about me being masculine and also the way I dress.

Participant B (feminine): I think is not acceptance, is more like tolerate. Most of them they hate homosexuals. I remember when I came out; I lost a lot of friends as they felt uncomfortable around me. All heterosexuals think that they are perfect and holy that us simply because of our sexual orientation. Males are even worse, because the fact that they can't have you makes them angry but get angrier because you are homosexual. I think even when they rape homosexuals, they do it in a most cruel way, like putting objects in your genitals and even if they were to kill you, is in the most cruel and brutal way. And for some reason, these man always attack the face, they disfigure the face. I don't know why, but they make sure that your face is disfigured.

**Probe: How do you feel?** It scares me very much. I live my life in so much fear because in spaces that we are supposed to feel safe (forums) they say the most cruel and stupid things. I don't feel safe at all and I have trust issues because the people who are supposed to understand are the once who make matters worse. We go to the shops, they stare at you like you are from another world. They stare at us and they look at my wife with so much hate perhaps because they feel that she is changing me into a lesbian.

5. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): I think they are okay. Outspoken and I think that being gay as a man you are able to protect yourself against other men unlike us.

Participant B (feminine): I think that they are very much free spirited and they are fine. But they go through the same struggles that we do as lesbians, if not worse.

6. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): my in-laws are fine. I think they went through the journey with my wife some while back, unlike mine. Eish, they are still struggling a lot and I think the fact that I am married and isn't easy on them, especially my mother. I married an older women with two kids; I think that is mostly what they are struggling with. Though I think that things are better because back then, yoh, my mother and I were not even in talking terms. Though it feels good that we are able to go to both our homes and visit.

Participant B (feminine): from my family, a lot. Through it hasn't always been this easy. I think they were shocked and it took some time, but they just eventually came around.

**Probe: What helped them to come around?** I think the love of my mother, played a big role because when she started to accept me the whole family came around. They no longer could attack my mother and I then started educating her of my sexual orientation and she also did her own research about LGBTI. In addition, I think that if LGBTI people where accepted at their homes, it would play a huge role and eliminate the hate on the street and around the communities. I am the only girl child and 4 boy siblings and always as I go out I go out with them and they are very supportive. If they were for example to be saying that they hate me or speak bad about me because of my sexual orientation, I would more likely to be attacked.

This hate from families also causes emotional breakdown. Is so painful to be hated from home and we are more likely to be depressed and we struggle with a lot of things and psychological problems because most of us develop this void just to be loved and you long for it and it becomes easier to turn to substance abuse just to deal with the problems we encounter, especially not being loved at home.

My in-laws, yoh, my partner is very masculine and I thought it would be easy for them to understand it, but they are struggling very much with her orientation. I think they tolerate my wife so much simply because she is educated and the breadwinner. I think if she was not educated, she would most probably be a street kid. I feel she pays her family to be loved and accepted.

7. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (masculine): my in-laws are fine I think pertaining to LGBTI issues. My family I think they are also coming along although I think there is still a lot of work to be done.

Participant B (feminine): I think my wife's family is so confused and I am not sure how to assist them. The fact that she is a bread winner, I think is worsening things. I think that they tolerate her accept her step-father. I think he is trying to be supportive and understanding of us that the biological people around my wife. I think that with my in-laws, is just a very sad story and very draining. My in-laws, still feels like my wife would one day be heterosexual. Looking at my wife, she is very masculine, actually looks like a man. Initially I thought that they hate me because I have kids or that I am older than my wife, but eventually I realised that it not even about me, but my wife's orientation. We fought to get married, from paying lobola to having a wedding was difficult. Now I understand why most lesbians don't get married, but rather engage and cohabit without even the blessings or consent of the families.

My brother in-law also doesn't give me any problems. He never seemed to have a problem with the sexual orientation of my wife or me. But my sister in-law, understand us when it suits her.

8. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): in every aspect, socially, religiously and other wise. Is very hard for me to go to church or even attend a meeting and not worry about other people staring at me or gossiping about me with other colleagues. Is very painful to feel so contagious and like everyone should just be very cautious of you.

Participant B (feminine): yes in every aspect of my life. My marriage in particular, my in-laws would make you feel like nothing. I think if I did not love my wife I would leave, they (my in-laws) are so mean is like I don't even exist to them. I think I was at peace with my orientation, until I got married. I think I am suffering with depression, my confidence and self-esteem has deteriorated. If we were a heterosexual couple, I don't think we would feel so much pain. My wife spends most of her time fighting and defending our marriage instead of us enjoying our life.

9. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): Not at all. I feel that I am in so much danger simply because I am masculine and married to a woman.

Participant B (feminine): I am not really sure as I get into the car and go wherever I want come back home and lock my house. My neighbours would always just stare at us and that makes me feel creepy. We are then stigmatised, like that is the house of lesbians and that makes me feel vulnerable to be attacked. "It's a lesbian house". The community at large I feel they don't respect us, they discriminate us. Like they call us lesbians than our names. Is like, the house of heterosexuals, they would call the house by the surname (that is smith's house), but because we are homosexuals, they would say that is the house of those lesbians.

**Probe: how does that make you feel:** very very angry. Because I feel that people don't have respect for us and they treat us differently from others. Some neighbours would not even enter the house, is like they don't even respect us. Some won't even greet me at times and they would call my wife without even greeting me. And my wife is the head of our home and I feel they don't respect us.

10. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): a lot. In my everyday life, I think I encounter hate speech, mostly when with my wife. Is like people just hate us so much they can't even pretend. They would be shouting most hurtful words. And it is very scary as sometimes I wonder what I will do if they try and hurt us. Is like I am always in a defence mode, especially during late afternoons.

**Probe: Have you tried to report?** The police officials are not helpful. I once went there to report after was attacked and robbed of my phone and was nearly psychically assaulted but managed to escape and get home. Instead of assisting me, they were laughing at me and asking that since I am a man, why didn't I fight them back. They were calling each other to come and see that I am a woman that looks and behaves like a man.

Participant B (feminine): that is an everyday thing. We get discriminated against and mostly hate speech. Is like is a norm and it happens mostly when I am with my wife, they would say so much hurtful words. I wish that we could be treated the same way that everyone else is being treated. With respect.



11. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): very much. At some point I felt that I am also possessed by the evil spirits. I also felt that I need to be delivered and I tried so much to be heterosexual and make my mother proud.

Participant B (feminine): very much

12. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): a lot. As in most churches, pastors would use the Bible against our sexual orientation.

Participant B (feminine): I think is more of the people that religion itself because I don't get the chance to embrace the religion that I love so much because people use it to attack me. Like now, I love church and I would go there and be told that God doesn't love me and he hates homosexuals, instead of preaching about God's love.

**Probe: How do you feel about this?** I think I am angry at a lot of things. At time I think I don't have emotions anymore is like I am a ticking time bomb. I know that I am a very angry woman. Is like people treat you like you don't have feelings and you develop so much hate. I ask God why he made me so different because if I was heterosexual perhaps I would be dealing with all this emotions, so much hate.

**Probe: Have you tried consultation a professional?** Most mental health care workers don't have knowledge of LGBTI. Is like you become an experiment now to the psychologist. One even attempted to pray for me. I think is a waste of time going there because they would also be judging you and telling you how you should change as being homosexual is not good and unholy.

13. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): no, thank you

Participant B (feminine): I wish people can realise that as much as we are homosexuals and married, we are human being. Some days I can't even face the world, can't even get out of bed. Some days I feel like I can just die. Is like everywhere you go, they all take a piece because I am married to another women. Is like heterosexuals don't realise that we have our own life with its own challenges. I wish they could just stop the abuse, financially, sexually; emotionally, I struggle

because I am a woman, black, and lesbian. I feel the struggles are a lot for one person and they are enough. Sometimes, is even easier to just kill yourself

**Probe: Have you ever thought of suicide?** I have attempted more than twice. The pain is just too much to handle from the family, community, church, marriage. I think is all just too much and can only imagine and feel for those who have no support at all.

Couple 4

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age: Participant A (masculine): 36

Participant B (feminine): 39

2. Ethnicity : Both black

**Probe: Where are you staying and for how long?** We are at Zone 1 and have been dating for 4 years and leaving together for a year now.

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): Christian but rarely go church

**Probe: Why do you go to church rarely?** Is not nice going to church as they judge me, I think is because of the way I dress. They look at me like I am lost or something. Like I am cursed. So just stay away.

Participant B (feminine): Christian

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): grade 12

Participant B (feminine): grade 12

## 5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): self employed

Participant B (feminine): sales consultant

### **Section B: experiences in communities**

#### 1. When did you realise that you are a lesbian?

Participant A (masculine): it is been a while. I think I was at my secondary school, perhaps in grade 7.

Participant B (feminine): during my high school years, though I could act on my feeling for other women because I was scared. I dated though it was in secrecy and by the time my mother found out, she got so angry and I then had to remain in the closet for some time. So, when I started working, I moved to Polokwane and it became easier as I was far from home and independent. I have a son who is 14 years now and he understands my sexual orientation and I have spoken to him about it but my family keeps telling him bad things about my sexual partner and my sexual orientation and that puts a lot of pressure between us. He barely gets along with my partner, basically because of that which he told about homosexuality, but I hope someday things will be fine. Actually, we were even thinking of taking him to come and stay with us, once we have settled and have a bigger space.

#### 2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): Eish no. most of our friends are homosexual. I think is much safer as heterosexuals, Eish most of them they hate us very much. Especially us the masculine lesbians.

Participant B (feminine): I agree, is much safer when we are with other homosexuals that heterosexuals. Is safer and also less judgemental. We don't have to keep explaining ourselves to others. Although sometimes we go out with other homosexual friends and we meet heterosexual and most of them they are so cruel. They say very nasty stuff like we need to deliverance. Even someone who is very drunk will tell you how we need to be saved (delivered) and that what we are doing to very wrong.

One time, my girlfriend was attacked in the toilet, when we were out with friends by some guys who waited for her and attacked her at the door and no one assisted her. They beat her up and we just saw a commotion and as we went closer I noticed that it was her, but no one helped up and she was bleeding. Not even the owner intervened; we just took her and left because we were with 3 other couples. The one thing the owner said was hit him/she outside, not inside my place. And I was so angry. We then left to the hospital and because it was late, the nurses there were asking us question about her sexuality before they gave her attention. They asked us why we choose to date lesbians. Like what went wrong with me as I am a very good looking girl, why did I date a lesbian. That make me so angry, and we left and went home until we took her to a private doctor in the morning, which was helpful but also very curious of our sexual orientation.

3. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): not at all. The males hate us so much and they say we take their girlfriends. At the same breath, the females are so curious and some of them approach me and want to date me. I think they are just curious and want to experiment having a homosexual relationship. Most are really just curious and I think that is also what fuels the hate of heterosexuals towards masculine lesbians.

Participant B (feminine): yes and it is vice-versa. The males they want us (feminine), while the women hate us. But I think that at least the females are not as violent as the males. The females are much better, the males are so violent.

4. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): gays are gays (laughing). I don't think they have a problem with us as I think we are part of the same thing (LGBTI). The day I was attacked, a gay guy assisted me as well. So I don't think they have any problem.

Participant B (feminine): gays are fine. They don't have any problem and they have never given me a problem at all.

5. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): no. not at all. Her family don't want me at all and my family don't want her at all. Her mother hated me until she died. She even called me one day and told me that I will never marry her child and she will never approve of

our relationship. She even said that I was turning her child into a lesbian. My family on the other hand, also don't approve of our relationship. I am not even sure why they hate her, but they say she is not good enough for me. I think it's because she has a child so they think that she is not lesbian enough. They always say that she is using me and he loves man, which is why she has a child.

Participant B (feminine) (emotional) my mother died two years ago. At that time were where not even in good terms. Not even in good speaking terms because of my sexual orientation. That pains me so much because her hate for my sexual orientation and partner made her so angry towards me. She even hated me and sometimes I feel so guilty, like I was the cause of her death and some members of the family blames me because my mother had hypertension and diabetes. It is so painful and it kills me every time I even think about it. My girlfriend goes home alone because her family doesn't want me, although she goes when they are functions and comes back the same day. It used to bother me, but honestly it doesn't anymore. My own mother didn't love me, so I can't force another parent to love me. I think that as homosexuals we are used to not being loved by our families at some point you get immune to it. Like we expect it and is normal.

**Probe: Do you wish things were different with families? Participant A (masculine):** Yes I would love that, but can't force it. Like my girlfriend said, we are used to not being loved or accepted. Although it's painful but I think we get used to it and survive. Built a new life without family and have you own. And this is so depressing, that is why most homosexuals use substances to cope with all this emotions. I for one drink a lot and also use other form of substance just so I don't have to feel the pain.

**Probe: Use substance like? Participant A:** I used to use drugs (cocaine) but I stopped some while ago. Now I am on dagga and it helps me so very much. Especially when I am angry. Every time I get a call from home, I need dagga because I know I will be hurt or angry after the call. Sometimes I don't even answer their call, because I would be so angry. Especially my mother, when she calls I normally don't answer her calls and even when I have to go home for a funeral or something like that, I like to leave immediately after that. I don't understand how parents would just not love their kids simply because they are homosexual. I don't get that really.

**Probe: have you ever thought of taking your life?** Yea a lot of times. At some point I even attempted twice and was assisted by my partner who found me.

**Probe: You still have those thoughts?** No, rather I just smoke and forget all my troubles and go drink. Makes it very easy and much better.

**Probe: Have you tried seeking professional help?** I honestly don't see how that can help because my partner went there at some point and instead of assisting her she was questioned what happened that resulted in her dating me. So I don't see the point. Also, at the time she was referred to psychologist in the public hospital, she attempted suicide after an argument with her mother.

6. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I don't think they are even interested.

Participant B (feminine): I agree, they are not interested because they don't even give you a chance to explain. As soon as they know you are homosexual, they start to then call family meetings to tell you how wrong you are, how you bring disgrace to the community and pastors to come and pray for you. They tell you how the community is talking about them because of your orientation. The community is talking very bad and saying that they need to be cleansed because of the stigma I bring to the family.

7. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): I don't think I care of how the community feels anymore. They just pretend and I do the same. Here in Seshego is much better thought that where I come from (Venda), because to some extent everyone seem to mind their own business. They do things their own way, while at home you go to the tuck shop, you meet your neighbour on the way and they start asking why I chose to be a lesbian and again I have to then start explaining myself. I hated that about villages.

Participant B (feminine): I agree with what my girlfriend is saying. Although I think is dangerous here that at home (Lebowakgomo) because here you are scared that they might even break into our room. I just feel safer because we don't live alone in yard, though some of the guys here are so scary and also say hurtful things. That is why we are planning to move to a safer place and affordable.

8. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): a lot. Like I said, I stopped going to church as a result of the stigma there.

Participant B (feminine): I grew up going to Dutch; since I came out I can't even go there without being judged by some of the church members. Worse when I went there with my partner, it just was not as spiritually fulfilling anymore. After church one day, my siblings called me aside to ask me why I bring my girlfriend to church and that it is very embarrassing to the family and that I should come alone. So, that led me to stop going to church there and ultimately I stopped going at all.

9. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): no. I know that things will never change and we would always be seen as anti-Christ and unholy seeing that some pastors and churches add so much fuel to the hate already going on in relation to homosexuals. As a result, our family hate us, the community hate us. So I doubt if the stigma will ever go away

Participant B (feminine): no.

Couple 5.

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 38 years, from Malamulele

Participant B (feminine): 28 years. Giyani

Have been in a relationship for 3 years, engaged for 2 and have been living together for 2 years in zone 1 Seshego.

2. Ethnicity: both African

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): Christian

Participant B (feminine): don't follow any but would like to think that I am Christian.

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): nursing diploma

Participant B (feminine): currently doing the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of public administration

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): professional nurse

Participant B (feminine): student

**Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): it has been long. I think I always knew that I was homosexual from my lower primary years although I didn't know that I was called lesbian or homosexual. I just knew that I loved women than men. I was forced to get married customary and I had two kids in my marriage. But I never stopped cheating with other woman, even when married. I then left my marriage and bought I house in Seshego and stayed here since with my children until I met my fiancé.

Participant B (feminine): although I don't remember I think it has been long time, maybe in high school. I remembered that when I started dating girls, my mother found out and took me to church so the pastor can pray for me, but I continued with girls in secrecy until a few years ago.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): no, I think they are colleagues that friends.

Participant B (feminine): no

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): you know, homosexual think that they are perfect than us. They are so judgemental and think that they know everything and how the world should be.



Participant B (feminine): no. they are so full of themselves. I agree with my fiancé and I think I feel much safer with some homosexuals because I know that we won't be attacked or beaten.

4. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): like I said, they don't like us at all. Even here were I leave, some of my neighbours don't even talk to us at all. They don't even what their children near us because they think that we will make their children to be homosexual. One parent even reprimands their child about us saying that they should not be like us because we are going straight to hell.

Participant B (feminine): and that made me so angry I went to that parent we had a verbal fight. I just hate that we have to forever defend ourselves, if not from the families, is the community... is tiring.

5. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): gays, I think they are fine. Although I don't have gay friends. We meet at social gatherings and I don't think they have a problem.

Participant B (feminine): I also don't have gay friends. We normally go out with other lesbian couples.

6. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): after I moved from my marriage, my family were so angry with me, but my mother understood because I explained to her. I am surprised because she is very old, around 70, but she has given us her blessings and I am happy. Uncles and other family members, they gave me a hard time, but it doesn't matter because my mother and my siblings have accepted me and my decision. My fiancé gets along with the children and they love her very much. They know that they have two mothers.

**Probe: Do they have a relationship with their father?** No. I used to try to get him involved like having him to spend time with the children on weekends, but he would promise go come and never pitch. He would promise them things and never buy them,

so I decided to cut him off. I did not even take him for maintenance; I take care of my family myself.

Participant B (feminine): my in-laws are fine, but my family especially my mother wants nothing to do with my fiancé. She used to come here with my brother to forcefully take me back home. I remember when we met my family knew about us, they one day took me home and beat me up. They took my cell phone and took me to Gauteng to stay there with the aim of separating us. But they said they are taking me to school. On arrival there, they weren't talking about me school anymore and I was in the house taking care of my sister's child and there was no talk of school anymore. I then called my fiancé using a public phone and told her that she should send me money I want to come back. In less than a month, I came back because she sent me money using money market and I came back. At some point my mother called the police saying that she has kidnapped me and we just saw the police coming with my bother and they wanted to arrest her, but they had no case because the police said I was an adult and they can't open a case because I am here on my own will, although they kept saying that what I was doing is very wrong.

7. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (masculine): my family is fine, but my fiancé's family on the other hand, they are very difficult. I remember one day, her brother attacked me and slapped me and he used to do that each time we met or he could just come to my house and slap me until one day he slapped me and I fought back. I also hit him and I even broke a bottle in an attempt to stab him. To date, he doesn't like me but he doesn't hit me anymore.

Participant B (feminine): my mother used to call and bad mouth my fiancé saying the she is using me to raise her children. She would say that my finance should pay lobola if she really loves me and I told her that she won't get her money because she doesn't accept her. She would call and ask me money, although she knows that I am not working and that my fiancé is the one who provides everything for me and she doesn't want her, but wants her money. One day, she came and took all my clothes and shoes saying that she has bought them and since I am staying with a lesbian, she won't do anything for me. Most of the clothes she took, my fiancé bought for me

including my matric certificate. She even took my identity book and I had to go and redo everything

**Probe: How does thing make all of you feel?**

Participant A (masculine): I think that I am just tired of fighting. I have no more strength left. I am just numb, so if things change that would be good, if they don't, well life goes on.

Participant B (feminine): I think I am very angry at the world. I don't know, but I get very angry especially when it comes to my family. I get angry and I can't even hide it.

8. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I doubt it but don't care.

Participant B (feminine): no

9. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): you know at work, is like they just tolerate me. They pretend yet gossip about me and my orientation and yet others they try to make a move on me and have a relationship with me. Is funny, before I met my fiancé I dated a lot of my colleagues and some of them even want me back even now and they are married. Is like they just want us to have sex, I guess they enjoy sleeping with other women.

Participant B (feminine): I think so and in a big way. That is why I say I am always angry and I am always ready to attack and defend us because I know my fiancé is soft and let a lot of things go. I fight back so much.

10. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): before I met my fiancé, I was gang raped at my 1<sup>st</sup> house, I even sold it. Just after I ended my marriage I bought I house in Malamulele and I was

again gang raped. I don't know the perpetrators because they wore balaclava, but as they raped me they said they were reminding me of how good a penis feels. I remember I fought back and they also hit me until I lost consciousness. Luckily that night my children were at my mother's house as it was a weekend and most weekends they would go visit. As I woke up it was a Sunday and I was even bleeding. I called my sister and she came and was taken for medical care. The doctor treated me well but the police; they asked me very stupid questions like why I left my husband. Why I chose girls and how do we have sex because we are both girls with same genitals.

**Probe: did you receive counselling?** I arranged to see a psychologist and I attended and at first she was okay until she learned that I am homosexual. She then started telling me how excited she is because I was the first homosexual client that she has ever had. She then started asking how I knew I was homosexual and moved from the main reason I was there. I never went back and I personally think that it is a waste of time and money to see them. I think they are helpless.

Participant B (feminine): apart from my family physically abusing me in many occasions, I never was beaten up by people. Accept the hurtful words that people around me use, like demon, setabane, etc. Those who call me demon or evil or that I am possessed, I tell them I learned that from their mother. If they want to beat me, I run because I know that I am fast. Get into my house and lock. At one point I even called the police because two guys at the street were saying that I need to be raped real good with a penis then I will stop running after girls. I told them they should go and sleep with their mothers real good and they chased after me. I was scared they would rape me and as I got home, I called the police and also my fiancé who came in about 5 minutes because she doesn't work far from home and they left.

11. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): very much and used to attend Assemblies of God, but I don't go anymore because each time we were there, they would be gossiping about us and some would even stare at us.

Participant B (feminine): I think I just don't care. Even the church issue, I was the first one who stopped going because I hated the way the congregation would look at us and sometimes I wished that I would just confront them.

12. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): yes a lot. Like I have explained in the past and I have kids. I have to teach them of the bible and the church is a good way but then is difficult. I remember my son came back home from Sunday school and he was crying. He said that the Sunday school teacher told him that he needs to pray for us because the bible is against homosexuality. I got very angry and my finance wanted to go and confront the teacher and the church but I told her to just let it go. Although I was very hurt.

Participant B (feminine): that day I was so very mad I wanted to go there and tell the teacher a piece of my mind, but she stopped me. I remember that day, she cried so much in our bedroom and she was in a lot of pain.

13. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): I fear so much for my children because they are in government school. My son is in high school doing grade 10 and I know is very hard on him and he is being picked on and bulled very much by other children and at times the teachers instead of making a intervention and reprimand the other children, they make it worse and start asking my child why I became a lesbian and what happened between me and his father. They even asked him that why he doesn't tell me how much trouble I bring him because of my orientation and that I was selfish. I think this happened about a year ago and I changed him schools.

Couple 6.

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (feminine): 30

Participant B (feminine): 29

2. Ethnicity: both black

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): Christian (Z.C.C)

Participant B (feminine): Christian

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (feminine): teaching diploma

Participant B (feminine): honours degree in arts

5. Occupation?

Participant A (feminine): teacher

Participant B (feminine): student (Masters) intern as communication officer

**Probe: How long have you been leaving together?**

Participant A (feminine): we meet at university while we were in the second year and we co-habited in varsity during my 3<sup>rd</sup> year in 2012

Both from Ga-Mothapo village, currently renting in zone 3 Seshego.

**Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): I always knew that I was homosexual I think I started dating girls when I was in lower primary but I was in the closet until my years in high school. When I was at the university, I then was free to be who I was and not feel ashamed of it.

Participant B (feminine): I started having feeling for women during high school but never acted on them. During my tertiary, that was when I started exploring my feeling and dating girls. My girlfriend is my second lover.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (feminine): no, I mostly hang out with homosexual friends I met at the university and those that I played soccer with.

Participant B (feminine): yes I do have heterosexual friends.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (feminine): well, most of my friends are butch (masculine) and have noticed that they get attacked due to the way they dress. One night while still at the university with my friends, we went out drinking and that night as I was in the toilet, about 3 guys followed me and they beat me up and took my stuff (cell phone and money) saying that they don't want our kind at that place as we take their women. They told me I should take my friends and go, I remember we were so scared of going back to campus because it was a walking distance and we asked some of our male heterosexual friends to accompany us as they had a car. And they took us back to school.

Participant B (feminine): well I am not yet out of the closet with my sexuality but for those who know, some don't feel comfortable around me especially when my girlfriend is around and they even told me. Some of them also want to date lesbians and tell me that I should try and hook them up.

**Probe: Would you identify yourself as a lesbian?** Yes I am a lesbian. Just that I have had friends who were attacked due to their orientation and I am scared I think of coming out. Well, those around me they know, but others think that we are just friends. I think is because we are both feminine in terms of the way we look, but I would like to think that she is masculine in that feminine dressing.

4. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): well, my family suspect that I am homosexual. I told my siblings and I suspect that they told our cousins. My mother suspects, although I don't have the guts to tell her. She is old and medically unhealthy. I think I am scared how she would handle it. My sister once told her and I denied it, although I see she doesn't

trust me. At home they know my girlfriend to be my friend, except my siblings, only my mother although I have noticed that she suspects it because she keep saying that we are very close and in most times asks when am I going to get married or when am I going to have a child. Eish and it is very hard to keep lying to her. Is very depressing. One time even a lady from the village once asked her, what happened that I date girls and when she asked me again I denied it.

Participant B (feminine): my family is totally against lesbianism. I told my elder sister and she told me stop because is wrong. She went and told my mother, and she was so angry even called a family meeting with my uncles and I think it was in 2013. Since then, they think that we broke up; I am even scared what will happen when they find out because they are bound to discover it soon.

5. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (feminine): I think they are fine, although my siblings think that I would outgrow being a lesbian and I don't know how to tell them that I even want to marry my girlfriend. We get along fine although my elders sister keeps telling that if my mother knows that I am lesbian, she would die given that her heath isn't good. Is heavy carrying this on my shoulders and feels like a very heavy burden.

Participant B (feminine): I think that they do suspect that we are still together because they keep talking about marriage, kids and that I should find a man. One day my sister came to visit and my partner had to leave and go visit her friends until they left.

6. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (feminine): I think that they don't and my biggest fear is that if my mother was to die, I am more likely to be blamed. I don't even think that they want to know anything about lesbianism.

Participant B (feminine): my family and lesbianism don't even mix. I learned that during the meeting we had and I honestly don't know what to do. I think that we should even move to another province far from home where I think we can just be free to express our emotions.

7. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (feminine): a lot because now I feel that I am leaving a double life and it is so difficult.



Participant B (feminine): I agree with my partner because now when we are around other family, we always have to remember that we are friends and we have to keep hiding ourselves. And it is so tiring and depressing.

8. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (feminine): my home village, not at all. You feel so judged and stigmatized. I remember when I had some of my friends came for my graduation party and they were mostly butch (masculine), the following day my mother was asked by the neighbour if I also do things that those once do (lesbianism). They even asked her why lesbians came and also how do I even know them. Some family members asked my mother on the same day of the party if I was also lesbian and if I also do satanic things like lesbians. Some of my friends were even asked by my family members for who they came to the party and how do they even know me. I remember a few of my friends even left the party because they were so angry of the way my uncles treated them. I understand that they were told that they should not pass their demons on me.

Here I feel very safe, a few people know that we are a couple, like she said, I think is because we are both feminine so they think we are friends than a couple and I think is safer for the both of us.

Participant B (feminine): I think I do feel safe here because people thinks that we are friends than lovers. Although at I hate that guys approach us trying to date us, even those who knows that we are dating they keep trying their luck and it annoys the very much. They would tell us we are wrong for each other and we both beautiful girls and should get ourselves men and that scares me at the same breath making me very angry.

9. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?

Participant A (feminine): most of the violent accidents I encountered was when I was with my butch (masculine) friends. In most cases, we would be told vulgar worse and beaten up at taverns.

**Probe: have you ever reported any physical violence?** No, I think is because one time a butch friend of mine was raped, when were where still at varsity and when we

got to the police station, the police officials made it sound like it was her fault saying, why she dresses like a man. Didn't she take the guy's girlfriend because they know that lesbians think that they are man and take people's girlfriends, So, I honestly don't see the importance of going to police station as a homosexual.

Participant B (feminine): mostly is some discrimination from my friends those who know of my sexual orientation. Sometimes, just hate speech from around the community

10. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (feminine): very much. Although going to ZCC was for my mother and I know that made her very happy. I do love church, though I don't think ZCC would be my choice.

**Probe: Why is that?** It sound like most of the choices you made are for your mother: yes I think I just want to make her happy and deep inside I know that when she learns of my sexual orientation it will be hard on her. The day she asked me about it, there was so much disappointment and hurt on her face such that I honestly don't want to see that face again.

Participant B (feminine): I think Christianity plays a very vital role in once life and I do go to church, although I feel that it contradicts with my orientation. Sometimes I feel that I am wronging God at the time don't understand why He gave me such strong feelings for woman because I truly love my partner and I feel so happy with her that I ever was. I tried dating guys but I was just not connecting nor loving them as I do now.

11. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (feminine): no

Participant B (feminine): no

12. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A (feminine) no

Participant B (feminine): no

Couple 7

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 35

Participant B (feminine): 33

2. Ethnicity: both black

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): none

Participant B (feminine): none

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): diploma in public administration

Participant B (feminine): higher certificate

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): administration officer

Participant B (feminine): unemployed

**How long have you been leaving together?** Is has been 5 years now, we currently moved to Seshego (Lethuli park phase 2) a few months ago due to work. We got legally married in September 2017.

Probe: where do you come from originally?

Participant A (masculine): Venda (Thohoyandou)

Participant B (feminine): Malamulele

## Section B: experiences in communities

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): I has been a while, but I think it was around the time I was doing standard 4 (grade 6), that was when I had my first female crush and we dated, but didn't go anywhere because we were young I think.

Participant B (feminine): I was in high school; I think was doing grade 10.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): nah, I mostly hang out with homosexual friends and mostly couples as well.

Participant B (feminine): I don't have many friends. Mostly we are with other homosexual couples or we are at home together.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): homosexuals are so judgmental. I see them at work at some point they would even discriminate you simply because of your sexual orientation. And they talk a lot of bad things; I think is also because of how I dress. The guys, especially from where I used to work back at home; they would make fun of me and at times ask how I sleep with my wife or if I have a male private part.

Participant B (feminine): no. I don't.

**Probe: is that perhaps due to your sexual orientation?** I think so. I think in the past when I came out, I lost a lot of my friends because they did not approve of my orientation or their families would say they would be like me.

**Probe: what do you mean be like you?** Be lesbian.

**Probe: How do you feel about that?** At first it hurt me very much because I have been through a lot with some of my friends and I felt like they were being judgemental instead of supportive. Some even persuaded me to be a born again to that I would get delivered from the demon attacks that they believed I had.

4. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): gays we meet them at social functions of example, at Limpopo pride, and they don't seem to have any problems with us. I have never heard or seen them attack any lesbian.

Participant B (feminine): they have never given us a problem.

5. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): well, particularly my mother, they are fine although I know that she doesn't understand entirely. My mother is old, above 80 years of age. My siblings on the other hand they are very supportive, though I know that some aren't happy. We are 9 and I am the 7<sup>th</sup> born and 4 of my siblings are fine. My extended family is the once that gives us a problem because they like to say that my mother is spoiling me and she should take me to my father's side so that they should perform a ritual for me so that I can be heterosexual.

**Probe: how do you feel about that?** I think I am used to it and it doesn't bother me anymore. I guess in life you can't please everyone, as long as my wife and mother is happy, then I am fine.

Participant B (feminine): since I met my wife and we leaved together, the family has cut me off completely. They haven't spoken to me in about 4 years now. My mother told me to choose between my family and my wife and I chose her.

**Probe: How do you feel about that?** It's hard because I miss them. My youngest brother, we keep in contact and he is supportive of us. I call my mother with a restricted number just to hear her voice, and then I hang up because I do miss her a lot, but I used to call and when she would hear that it's me, she would hang up.

I remember when she was admitted to hospital and we went to see her, she chased us away like dogs saying that I want to finish her off because already my sexuality is killing her. She called us all sorts of names and it was very hurtful. (Crying)

6. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): like I said, I think my mother doesn't fully understand but my siblings and other members they do. I just think that they are not interested.

Participant B (feminine): I don't know if they are ignorant or just don't understand. But then how do I explain to them if they are not interested. Just hope that someday, God will intervene and that they would understand.

7. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (feminine): I'm not sure, although I do feel that I am not free in life. I feel like I am caged and there is nothing I can do about it.

Participant B (feminine): I lost my family simply because I married another woman. It is hard and very painful. Is like I am the black sheep of my family. I wanted to further my education but because I date women, my mother refused to pay my tuition fees.

**Probe: have you tried to consult a professional?** No. I just don't think that they would even help me. Is very depressing and stressing and there is no one who can help. The pastors couldn't help, my uncles made it worse. So ai, there is no one who can help.

8. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): yes, there are two other lesbian couples staying here, so we mostly hang out together and we look out for each other. We are like one family.

Participant B (feminine): more than anything, I think sometimes I get scared she goes out with some of the other lesbians who are like her (masculine) because they get attached here at the location. There we once beaten very badly and she was admitted for about a week if I remember. So, eish, I don't really like for them to go out around here or at night.

9. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): like my wife has said, I was beaten a few months back while at a tavern with 3 of my lesbian friends. We played snooker with some other guys there and the problem then started when one of the guys was proposing my friend then they started touching her breast and wanted to touch her private parts saying say she is a women and should stop sleeping with other women, as we tried intervening, we were beaten until the owner intervened and assisted us. I sustained I broken rid. We laid charges but nothing was done, none of the guys were arrested and they even promised to rape us. To date, we don't go to that tavern again.

**Probe: how do you feel about that, especially that there were not arrested?** It pains me very much. Sometimes I meet them on the road and they swear at me. They even say that sometime they would rape my wife and I because what we are doing is very wrong and we are both women and we need to get a man to sleep with us hard.

Participant B (feminine): we tried to follow up with the police but they keep sending us from pillar to post. They always tell us stories and we just got tired, and is not right because the police are supposed to help all of us the same way. The last day we went there, as we entered one of the police said, guys the lesbians are here and they started laughing and I got so angry but we just left.

**Probe: Has any of you ever thought of killing themselves?** Participant B (feminine): yes I have and I think because of her support I am still alive.

10. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (feminine): yes, but we don't go to any church because I feel that the church is not assisting us in anyway. We used to go to Assemblies church but we no longer go there. I can't even remember the last time I went to church. You go to church then a few days Sundays later, the pastor came and preached about homosexuality and how bad it is, the whole church was staring at us and pointing fingers. That was the last time I went to church.

Participant B (feminine): I remember that Sunday because I cried so much when we got home. We were still in Venda at that time and I was so broken. It hurt me so very much.

11. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I don't know, but I do know that God loves us the same and equally.

Participant B (feminine): yes, because instead of these pastors to make peace in our homes, they add the fuel. When my mother cut me off, the pastor did not even do anything and he was there. He just looked at us and looked down. He didn't even get a scripture or anything, not even a prayer. I don't see their significance on earth and yet they come and say that we are bad.

12. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (feminine): no

Participant B (feminine): yes, I think that these pastors should attend workshops about LGBTI issues so they can help us, than just add fuel to the petrol and making things worse for us at our homes, or they should just then don't even try and intervene.

13. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A (feminine) no

Participant B (feminine): no

Couple 8.

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 30

Participant B (feminine): 27

2. Ethnicity: both black

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): none

Participant B (feminine): none

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): grade 12

Participant B (feminine): grade 12- currently doing a diploma in public administration

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): sales consulted

Participant B (feminine): unemployed



How long have you been leaving together? Is has been 3 years now, staying together in zone 4 for 2 years now.

**Probe: where do you come from originally?**

Participant A (masculine): Ga Mothiba (Ngwanamago section)

Participant B (feminine): Sekhukhune

**Section B: experiences in communities**

The participants will be asked the following questions – probing may be necessary to clarify what the student means.

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): I think I was in high school

Participant B (feminine): yeah, me also I think it was high school.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): yes a few. Not even more than 5.

Participant B (feminine): most are my classmates and we do hang out. So yes, I think I can call them friends.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): I haven't had any challenge with them, except those who would try and judge me and ask me weird questions, like why I am a lesbian and stuff, but those who give me attitude I also give them as well.

Probe: so there are those who give you attitude? Yes. Mostly there are strangers and they would look at us especially when I am with my girlfriend and stare and I ask them why they stare.

Participant B (feminine): my class mates they are fine. Even those who know of my sexual orientation, they are okay with me.

4. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): I think apart from that which I said earlier, they are fine. Even here, they don't give us problems.

Participant B (feminine): males, some make moves on me, even those who know of my sexual orientation. But I think they just try their luck although is annoying at times for those who are close to my girlfriend.

5. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): I have only one gay person that I am close to and he is fine. We drink together, party together and at times we even share the same bed and nothing would happen.

Participant B (feminine): the only gay I know is her friend. And he is fine, likes to cook, drink and party. But he has never given us any problems.

6. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): no, I don't have any support from my family. Not in communication with any of them and I don't want to talk about it.

**Probe: is okay, sounds painful though:** I don't want to talk about it

Participant B (feminine): my family doesn't know of my sexual orientation. Just my siblings and they are okay with it. Just need some strength to tell my parents but I am planning to do that once I have completed as school.

**Probe; what makes you so nervous?** I think I have seen the challenges that other lesbians go through with their families, is scary. Including the way my girlfriend's family is treating her, is very sad.

Participant A (masculine): please like I said, I don't want to talk about it at all so please let us change the topic before I leave this interview.

**Probe: is okay, I am very sorry.**

7. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): yes, I have not experienced anything challenging here that when I was still home. I find Seshego more accommodating than where I come from.

**Probe: so the community here is much better?** Yes. Back home you are hurt more by your own family, like you are not part of them.

**Probe: did they beat you up at home?** Eish, it is worse (crying)

Participant B (feminine): she was raped by her own brother continuously.

**Probe: must have been painful.** It happened even when she is grown and each time she went home, her brother would rape and her mother would tell his brother to continue, telling the brother that he must do it again so she would stop dating women.

**Probe: has she seen a psychologist or a trauma counsellor?** No, she doesn't want to. I think we should take a break.

Participant A (masculine): can't continue with the interview.

**The interview was terminated and the participant was sent to the nearest hospital for mental health care assistance and an appointment was made post consultation.**

## Couple 9

### Part A: General demographic questions.

#### 14. Age

Participant A (masculine): 37 years, from Le Gae la Batho

Participant B (feminine): 35 years. Blood River

Have been in a relationship for 3 years, engaged for 2 and have been leaving together for 2 years in zone 2 Seshego.

2. Ethnicity: both African

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): Christian

Participant B (feminine): Christian though we don't go to church

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): diploma, information technology

Participant B (feminine): diploma in banking

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): IT technician

Participant B (feminine): IBS Implementation manager

### **Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): it has been long. When I grew up I just started having feelings for women and I didn't know that they call it homosexuality though. I thought maybe I was a man, until I think during my high school I learn the term lesbian. But I always dated females; I think I only dated one guy I think it was due to the pressure from my peers though or curiosity, but I always dated female.

Participant B (feminine): the feeling for women started while I was a boarding school but then I thought it was just for fun, ultimately I got married to the father of my child, I then left him for a woman shortly after my daughter was born.

**Probe: why did you decide to leave him?** I kept cheating with women until I got tired of leaving a double life. I moved back home and my family was angry with me although I didn't tell them the reason I left, he told then I was dating women but I denied it and told them I don't love him anymore.

**Probe: didn't you tell them the real reason you left?** I was scared and because in the past we fought about this I didn't want to fight them again. I guess also I wasn't ready as well.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): yes I do. Have a couple of friends that I do hangout with some times.

Participant B (feminine): not really. Most are my colleagues than friends.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): they don't really give me a problem. I hang out with a few guys, I think I have two guys who are my friends and they we are fine.

Participant B (feminine): apart from my colleagues at work I don't have heterosexuals friends and besides they don't treat me well.

**Probe: what is it that happens at work?** Shortly after I came out as a lesbian and my fiancé would come and visit me I the office, some colleagues started to distance themselves from me. Those who I thought were my friends, started to distance themselves from me and even when we were booked in hotels working outside, they no longer came to my room like before and I realised that perhaps is because of my sexuality and I heard from others that they are not comfortable with anymore.

4. Do heterosexual males and females accept you?

Participant A (masculine): like I said, my friends are fine, just that others they are bad especially those who don't know us, they swear at us or just say we are cursed or we need a man to sleep with us, mostly is man who say that. Females on the other hand, they are very curious and keep proposing me and causing my wife and to fight (laughing).

Participant B (feminine): heterosexual females, want her very much and it makes me so angry. I think they are just curious, nothing more, but I hate it because this one (partner) is not trustworthy.

5. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): I don't have

Participant B (feminine): I also don't have gay friends. We normally go out with other lesbian couples.

6. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): my mother doesn't have a problem only the extended family. We are two at home and I am the last born. My elder's sister got married and I was left with my mother alone. My father is a chief and also doesn't have a problem with my sexuality.

Participant B (feminine): my mother is old and I am the breadwinner at home, they don't give me a problem. My mother is law didn't like me first as first saying that a not good enough for her daughter, I think that even now, she doesn't like me.

**Probe: being a bread winner helped with your family support?** I think so because I think that my siblings tolerate me than anything else. They sometimes hit the hatred they have for my sexuality and it used to make me angry until now I am used to it.

7. Do you think your family understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): my mother is a teacher and she isn't that old. So I think that she understands, though others don't because they told her why she allows me to be a lesbian.

Participant B (feminine): I am not sure as I did say that my mother is old. I'm not sure if she understands completely, though she does know that I am engaged to a woman.

8. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): not really. I went to good schools and was taken care of, so I don't think so. Oh, expect for the time I was in high school, I was caught kissing another lady and that led to me having to change schools. The principal told my mother that I had to change the school I was studying at and was taken to a boarding school.

Participant B (feminine): I'm not sure. But I don't think so.

9. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in?

Participant A (masculine): yeah. I have never had a problem nor ever experience a problem. Just people would sometimes stare and guess they are mostly just curious, but I have never been or anything like that as a result of my sexual orientation.

Participant B (feminine): at my home location, no. I don't feel safe there; there is just a lot of violence there, although I have never experienced it first-hand. Where we stay now, I think is fine. We haven't had any challenge or being attacked or anything like that. Though, I wish that would stop calling us lesbians but use our names, because lesbian is not our names.

10. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): we don't even go to church. So I stopped going way before I even met my fiancé. I was made to believe that something is so wrong with me by the people that I would go to church with. So I stopped a long time ago.

Participant B (feminine): I also stopped going to church for a while now because people would be looking at you like something is wrong with you. As if you are lost or something like that. Like you need deliverance you know.

11. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): yes hence I am not going to church but I do believe that God loves as I am.

Participant B (feminine): a lot. Is like we are made to believe that we are the biggest sinners of all simply because of our orientation.

**Probe: how do you feel about that?** It hurts. I was told once that I am going to hell if I don't repent. It is such things that are so painful.

12. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): no.

Participant B (feminine): no thank you

13. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A (masculine): no. Just good luck with your studies.

Participant B (feminine): yes, good luck

Couple 10.

**Part A: General demographic questions.**

1. Age

Participant A (masculine): 31 years- Seshego (zone 1)

Participant B (feminine): 28 years. Seshego (zone 8)

Have been in a relationship for 6 years and have been living together and engaged for 4 years currently staying in zone 2.

2. Ethnicity: both African

3. What religion do you follow?

Participant A (masculine): believe in God, but don't attend church.

Participant B (feminine): Christian

4. What Educational level have you achieved?

Participant A (masculine): chef

Participant B (feminine): grade12

5. Occupation?

Participant A (masculine): self employed

Participant B (feminine): receptionist

### **Section B: experiences in communities**

1. When did you realise that you are lesbians?

Participant A (masculine): I have never dated a male since I started dating. I have always been with girls and dated girls. I think I was at lower primary when I had my first girlfriend.

Participant B (feminine): I had feelings for women when I was young but never acted on them. Think I was confused at that time and my first girlfriend I was in high school.

2. Do you have a lot of heterosexual friends?

Participant A (masculine): yes I do and most them are my colleagues or just those which i grew up with.

Participant B (feminine): I don't have many friends. We always hang out together with people who are her (girlfriend) friends and they are also lesbian or we are alone.

3. How do heterosexuals treat you as a homosexual (lesbian)?

Participant A (masculine): they are okay. Most of the time, we would be drinking and partying.

**Probe: do you drink a lot?** Very much I think it helps me to cope a lot with all the staff that people are saying about lesbians.

Participant B (feminine): I honestly don't know, though I think that they are fine. We drink together, almost every day.



**Probe: does any of you smoke?** Yes we smoke together daggar.

4. Do gay males accept you?

Participant A (masculine): I don't know any gay people. Would just see them as we meet in parties and they are fine.

Participant B (feminine): I don't have any gay person that I know. Actually, most people that I know are my girlfriend's friends she is such an extrovert so most people I know them through her.

5. Do you have any support from your families?

Participant A (masculine): I don't think so. My mother and I never really got along. She has always treated me differently from my siblings including those she adopted from her sister after her passed away. I have always been like the black sheep of the family. I remember one time one of my cousins was on drugs and she made sure that he goes for rehabilitation and he was fine, took him to school and all. Even when buying us clothes, she would buy clothes for all and exclude me or just buy me one trouser.

**Probe: Do you think that your sexual orientation contributed the different treatment?** At first I thought maybe it had to do with my father. I thought that she hated my father a lot and took it out on me, but my youngest sister is also my father's child and she took her to the best schools so I think it is as a result of my sexual orientation. At times she looks at me with disgust and each time I ask her she says that she doesn't want to talk about my sexuality. One day she was sick and she said I want to kill her so I can take her money and eat it with my girlfriends. Is painful but we do not have a relationship at all.

Participant B (feminine): I think my family is just fine. I think that they were just confused but they do know about us and that we are a couple. I think that my family is much better than hers as they do treat us much better than hers.

6. So, how does the family interact with you?

Participant A (masculine): like I said, we hardly talk. Even my siblings, most of them rely on my mother, so I guess they can't say anything against what she is

saying. We talk just some times and we meet at clubs and family gatherings, later then I go home.

Participant B (feminine): like I said, all is well. Is also better to have a relationship with one part of the family is suppose and we have a better relationship with my family, than hers.

7. Do they understand your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I don't know because we don't talk about it.

Participant B (feminine): I honestly don't know if they understand. I have two kids, so I think that confuses them, or perhaps they think that I was hurt by man and that I went for women.

**Probe: where are your kids:** they are staying with my parents back at home, because we don't have enough space. They do come visit us during school holidays and some weekends if we are not working.

**Probe: how do you (participant A) relate with the kids:** I am used to them and they are fine. Both still in lower primary and I think that they are good kids.

8. Has your sexual orientation interfered with any aspect of your life?

Participant A (masculine): I think so, because my mother is financially stable, but she doesn't want to assist me in any way. She helps everyone expect me, including strangers. That is the most things that hurt me very much. I have to always hustle when my mother can just help me like she does with others.

**Probe: how does that make you feel?** I used to be very angry, but I guess that I got used to it. Can't keep forcing to be part of someone's life when clearly they don't want to be part of yours

Participant B (feminine): I don't think so, no.

**Probe:** has any of you ever had thoughts of killing yourselves?

Participant A (masculine): yes, I have attempted, still think about it sometimes, think that my partner is the main reason haven't tried again.

9. Do you feel welcome in the community you live in

Participant A (masculine): I think so, although most of the time is like we are not even wanted in this very world. I don't feel any threats or anything, I do feel safe. And was never attacked, I think also because we are always in a car, especially at night.

Participant B (feminine): yes I do.

10. Have you experienced any form of violence in the communities you live in as a result of your sexual orientation?

Participant A (masculine): no. I have never and even when stay here with my girlfriend, we have never experienced any violence.

Participant B (feminine): none.

11. Is your religion (if you are religious) important to you?

Participant A (masculine): yes it is. Though because of all this things about how bad we are and unholy as lesbians, I stopped going to church. I just know that God loves me a lot. I used to go to Lutheran church, but I stopped while young

**Probe: does that have to go with sexuality?** I don't know, but I dint think so. I just stopped with no reason. But now can't go back mainly because of my sexuality because most time at church, u feel so unwelcomed and like u are lost. They look at you with a pitiful eye.

Participant B (feminine): yes it is. Though I haven't been to church in a while. We go to apostolic at home and that is where I used to go but now I feel like I don't belong there. We never even went to church together.

**Probe: why haven't you gone together to church?** I think we are just not yet comfortable to go there together.

12. Do you feel that your religion is in conflict with your orientation?

Participant A (masculine): I don't know. But just don't feel comfortable at church.

Participant B (feminine): I also don't know, but what I know is that I love my girlfriend and if it is wrong, then why did God give me such strong feelings for her?

13. Would anyone like to add anything about the topic that we have been discussing?

Participant A (masculine): no

Participant B (feminine): no

14. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Participant A (masculine): no

15. Participant B (feminine): no



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**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 31 August 2017

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/222/2017: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Social and emotional experiences of black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Polokwane, Limpopo Province  
**Researcher:** MR Maotoana  
**Supervisor:** Prof K Nel  
**Co-Supervisor:** Dr S Govender  
**School:** Social Sciences  
**Degree:** PhD in Clinical Psychology

  
**PROF TAB MASHEGO**

**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

## Appendix 4

**Mr Louis Montcrieff Nel: PTC (Graaff-Reinet TC), DE (Paarl TC), BA Ed (UPE/NMMU), English Higher and Afrikaans Higher (DOE)**

21.8.2018

I declare that I, Louis Montcrieff Nel, have proof-read and edited the research proposal entitled: The Social and emotional experiences of Black lesbian couples in Seshego Township, Limpopo Province.

The research thesis was generally well written. Several minor grammatical errors and APA-6 referencing errors were corrected.

- Some layout/technical/APA-6 errors were sent to the student so that she could rectify/or not depending on the context (in terms of the Department of Psychology requirements). For instance, the use of ellipses and italics (she has used both to highlight specific words which, although unusual is not entirely wrong).
- Apropos of the aforementioned, 1.5-line spacing and sub-headings as used by the Department of Psychology were adhered to (not automatically APA-6 format).
- The University also require no date on the cover page.

The student has her own unique way of writing so that has not been interfered with thus sentence construction was not corrected.

Louis Montcrieff Nel taught (and lectured) in primary, high and tertiary education environments for a period of 30 years

*L M Nel*

Signed date: 1.9.2018

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