A PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY INTO CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES

THAT EITHER SILENCE OR PROMOTE GAY VOICES

by

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Declaration   Student number: 742-573-2

I declare that **A PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY INTO CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES THAT EITHER SILENCE OR PROMOTE GAY VOICES** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature   Date
(Mr P B Otto)

ABSTRACT

This study is an inquiry into discourses which influence gay people's lives. Foucault's ideas regarding knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality form the epistemological background enabling a social constructivist-deconstructive analysis of these concepts in relation to the problem of homosexuality. The theological origins of influential discourses form the focus of one chapter. Additional discursive fields – such as psychology, education, the military and legislature – are also investigated.

Besides the research initiator, three other participants shared their experiences of being gay in a conservative religious context. The narrative analysis spawned five themes of discourse ranging from homophobic discourses - which invite oppression into silence - through reverse-discourse, to those discourses which encourage free expression of gayness. The study seems to support a Foucauldian view that there are various influential power-relations which contest for the right to define human sexuality. Judging from the study, homosexuals do not appear to be powerless or completely silenced at all.

Homosexuality / Homophobia / Post-modern / Discourse / Narrative analysis / Participatory research / Theology / Foucault

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1 Introduction to the love that dare not speak its name

The expression for homosexuality as "the love that dare not speak it's name", was encountered in Opffer (1994:298). The background of this study is the historical existence of people who prefer sexual / intimate relations with others of their own gender, or "same-sex desire" as it is referred to in *Foucault and Queer Theory* (Spargo 1999:9). In particular, such a preference has been widely viewed as opposite to (or rather outside of) the mainstream, or dominant sexual preference, which apparently is the heterosexual inclination. Due to the minority status of same-sex sexual orientation, many homosexual / gay / queer people have lived their sexual preference in silence, obscurity and secrecy. This study hopes to investigate both those discourses that encourage, and even require, same-sexuals to remain silent about their sexual preference, as well as those discourses that enable same-sexuals to be (-come) open about it. For Foucault (Fillingham 1993:1-151) the main concepts are knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality - I am interested to find out how these concepts, which will be discussed in chapter two (2.2 – 2.6), converge into discourses that produce silence about gay people's queer sexual preference. In addition, I think it may be enlightening to discover some discourses that empower queer people to live and speak their gay lives openly.

Because this first chapter is also an overview of the project, it will include an introduction to the research theme: homosexuality and the discourses that influence gay people's lives. Thereafter the reader can expect a brief background to the so-called problem of homosexuality, as well as a statement of the (preliminary) purpose of the study, including the motivation for doing this particular project. The initial planning and preparation for the research process, the preferred / central epistemological positions as well as the research approaches supported by the research initiator will also be introduced.

At the onset of this report, your attention needs to be drawn to an unusual aspect regarding the dissertation. It involves the difference between the planning and preparation phase of the project, and the actual research process as it unfolded. Instead of merely writing chapter one (particularly the sections on purpose, 1.4 / planning, 1.5 / approaches, 1.7) in retrospective past tense, I thought it both useful and interesting to attempt it in future perfect, and to include detail such as the rhetorical questioning that was going through my mind during the early stages of project development. Proper retrospective balance is achieved with the inclusion of chapter five which describes the actual research process as it happened. Such an approach allows for

acknowledgement of the unpredictability and flexibility of social research, and, in my opinion, adds more transparency to the spaces where the academic / theory and our three-dimensional realities meet.

1.2 Research theme: Homosexuality and the discourses that influences gay people's lives

I thought it useful to attempt a brief discussion of the terms homosexuality and discourse at this early stage in the dissertation, especially since this study focuses on the societal discourses that contribute to encouraging a culture of silence about sexuality amongst homosexual people.

In order to provide a tentative "definition" of what the term homosexuality means, I will start with the following description: Homosexuals are people who are erotically attracted primarily to members of their own sex - whether or not they act accordingly (Looy 1997:499). A more personal way of saying what homosexuality means would be: I am a man who prefers to appreciate all the aspects of maleness / masculinity (the physical / sensual as well as the spiritual, psychological and emotional aspects) within an intimate relationship with another man. Elsewhere in this dissertation, various other descriptions of homosexuality are referred to. They are mostly, though not exclusively, definitions that (ex-) claim the deviancy / unnaturalness / abnormality of the gay phenomenon.

For the purpose of this study, I want to approach the notion of (a) discourse through the work and ideas of post-structuralist, Michel Foucault. Without attempting a comprehensive exploration of the subject, for which this project is much too limited, the following few things can be said about discourse: Foucault treats discourses as bodies of knowledge, and not as text-grammar-linguistic-structuralist formulations. He proposes that we look at the rules and criteria for the transformations of statements in order to come to an understanding of how groups of statements (discourses) can either constrain or enable what we know, and how these rules and criteria may change to establish different knowledges ("truths") in the different eras through history (McHoul & Grace 1993:27). I did not attempt to explore the rules and criteria of discourses as a primary goal in this particular study. Instead, I focussed on the existence of influential discourses, as well as the influences / effects of the discourses on people's lives.

Foucault reminds us of the discontinuities as well as the dependencies within and between discourses over time. He seems to want us to notice the diversity of systems and the "play" of discontinuities in the history of (a) discourse (McHoul & Grace 1993:48). He seems to be saying that since knowledge, or what counts as "truth", changes over time, we need to keep this in mind while dealing with any described phenomenon – such as homosexuality. It should be mentioned that certain knowledges or "truths" do become the dominant

discourses by claiming to be the *necessary* discourses (Rogers 1996:2). My position is that the heterosexist discourse became dominant, and that homosexuality gets abnormalised and problematised within it.

1.3 A brief background to the so-called problem of homosexuality

I am a man who prefers intimate relations with men / a man. In this historical era that I have been born into such a preference has been described in mainstream psychology as a homosexual orientation and has been labelled as deviant from the "norm". In other words, homosexuality was abnormalised as opposed to heterosexuality which has been sanctioned – maybe even sanctified? – as the normal, acceptable, sexual orientation. Kotzè (1994:129) uses Kitzinger's term - the pathologising of homosexuality - to describe its abnormalisation. My interest in this is based on the experience that homosexuality as an orientation and lifestyle was cast in a particular social construction in which it was regarded as wrong and threatening to society in general. In terms of a social constructivist paradigm, all meanings - and thus knowledge - are historically situated and constructed through the medium of language (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:455). The "right" or "wrong" of knowledge is determined by the perspective which people choose to assume (Kotzè 1994:29). As such, homosexuality has been problematised in language (Andersen & Goolishian 1997:371). In his second volume of *The History of Sexuality – The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault (1985:14) even earlier had used the expression 'problematised' in connection with homosexuality. In the first few pages of chapter two he indicates how the Christian tradition historically contributed to "condemnation of relations between individuals of the same sex" (Foucault 1985:15), which eventually added to the "deeply negative intensity of this stereotype" (Foucault 1985:18). Some of the (in-) famous Christian religious discourses and positions on homosexuality will be covered in chapter three of this report.

The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1 (Foucault 1978:43) suggests that homosexuality became a "personage...of a singular nature" in the nineteenth century. Foucault (1978:43) mentions a famous article by one Westphal in 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" when he reminds us:

> We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised…as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of inferior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul.

Thus, homosexuality as a perversion was created. Homosexuality was to become a madness, an aberration and a crime (Rabinow 1994:138-144). It would seem therefore that prior to the nineteenth century the notion that people might have a definite sexual identity (homosexual, heterosexual or otherwise) was not (yet) widely held in the Western world. Apparently, the gradual shift toward a perception that homosexuals

differed from heterosexuals coincided with the rise of the status of the medical profession and its scientific explanations of human behaviour (Looy 197:499). And, as d'Augelli (1991:216) mentions, "The historical process which has eventuated in the creation of 'homosexuality' allows for the expression of justifiable social concern about how to solve this 'social problem.'" As a result, gay people ever since have been expected to heal, normalise, or to do whatever it takes to be (-come) so-called 'normal', to be (-come) heterosexual, so that the rest of society can be at ease.

In addition, modern (social) science and religion have contributed hugely to discourses that have made it extremely difficult for queer people to live and love, as they would prefer - to live openly and spontaneously gay. These scientific disciplines adhered to the medical-historical description of homosexuality as abnormal / deviant, and as sinful and wrong. In fact, social science, medical science and theology have mostly been overtly on the side of discourses and opinions that would subjugate, castigate, silence or "heal" homosexuality – apparently even more so during the modern era. I came to suspect that anti-queer discourse works through disciplinary powers that become effective through the normalising judgement of *the gaze* and constant surveillance, as described by Foucault (Shumway 1989:53). During the development of medical science when corpses were opened up to study the human anatomy, this practice contributed to the power of informed, or knowledge-able observation, later described by Foucault as a specialised kind of scientific gaze (Fillingham 1993:71-74). Such an all-knowing gaze – or, an all-seeing act of knowing - upon the patient, put the doctor in an almost untouchable position of power-over the patient and students. Thus, the culture developed wherein the good doctor possessed the voice of truth, and the subject-patient become practically voiceless / powerless in the process of treatment. Social and medical scientists, theologians, and society similarly scrutinise gay people with dominant heterosexist moral "gazes" expecting them to heal, convert or conform. Maybe one can refer to the particular surveillance-focus on homosexuals, whom are considered "sick" people, as the *gaze* on the *gays*.

It did not surprise me that Foucault refers to the sciences as scholarly disciplines which engineer the individual, through techniques of normalisation and control (White 1990:75), to become what he calls "calculable man" (McHoul & Grace 1993:26). My understanding is that the calculable man would fit the descriptions of normality, which is to conform. If not, he/she must go underground, and remain silent.

More often than not, whole communities contribute in problem making. I believe what Madigan (1995:54) refers to as those "restrained…and conservative…unchecked…community discourses" about homosexuality, contribute to "the discursive power relationships which influences how we have come to know ourselves as part of a culture, gender…and problemed person / group" (Madigan 1995:53). In other

words, both the scientific and theological 'communities' have long been in unquestioned privileged positions, and have misused their "authority" to restrain the potential of many queer people to live freely as they would prefer. I have been wondering for a long time how many homosexual men and women have been silenced and even abused, due to the 'abnormal- and sinful' discourses about gayness? More recently, I have also become very curious about how some homosexual people manage to create pro-gay discourses to live by.

I will be arguing that besides the historical descriptions of homosexuality within the fields of psychiatry (and eventually in psychology), the same-sex/gender issue has also received specific attention from mainstream religion, in particular Christianity. Christianity happens to be the religious culture I have been born into and in my view, the attention to homosexuality was not favourable. In the name of modern science and religion, therefore, same-gender sexual preferences have been abnormalised, labelled, marginalised, shunned, discriminated against and oppressed. At least, the effort was to do so. Consider how homosexuality was included in the DSM -III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) of psychiatry (or *spy*-chiatry) and the lasting effects of this inclusion within social sciences. Or consider how specific texts from the Bible have been assumed to refer to the sinfulness of homosexuality. For instance, Leviticus 18:22 has been quoted and used against gay people and/or their wrong and sinful lifestyle. Other Biblical references receive coverage in chapter three, paragraph 3.2.

According to my present understanding of Western-modernistic approaches to human "conditions", the rules of duality (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:460) would apply. Under such circumstances particular human "conditions" will either have to be right or wrong, normal or abnormal, acceptable or unacceptable, natural or unnatural, lawful or unlawful etc. No prizes for guessing on which side of these dichotomies the term / condition homosexual was placed: on the wrong side - the opposite side - of heterosexuality. So, although there could be a huge range of sexualities other than heterosexuality, homosexuality as obvious opposition received most of the scrutiny and the punitive attention. Surely our "category" of homosexuality deserves special discrimination and warnings into silence, especially because we appear to be the most obvious or extreme threat to the norm? In a sense, heterosexuality is matter-of-factly normalised against the abnormalised homosexuality within the dichotomy of heterosexuality-homosexuality (Halperin 1995:44). Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997:411) refer to this effect as heteronormativity. Other sexual deviancies in general, for the purpose of silencing and discrimination, might have been conveniently included under the category "homosexual". But what if heterosexism and not homosexuality is the problem, as some post-modern theologians like De Gruchy and Germond (1997:4) would have it? But more about that later.

1.4 Preliminary purpose of the project, and the motivation for the study

For most of our lives gay people have been on the receiving end of messages from our culture that our sexual preference is not good, not "natural", not acceptable, not normal, not to be announced, not to be enjoyed or celebrated, not to be encouraged and certainly not to be promoted in education, let alone in religion or in the church. No doubt there are many people who have experienced homophobia and discrimination, as well as their intersection. The purpose of the project involved finding out which discourses sustained the silence that sometimes confines queer people.

I became more and more interested in what the more recent discourses about being homosexual might be, especially among the gay population. Because Andersen and Goolishian (1992:28) remind us that "we live in and through the narrative identities that we develop in conversation with one another", I had a few preliminary questions in mind that I thought could direct research in this area. The questions also allude to the purpose of the study. Some of the questions were: What does the language-as-meaning-making-vehicle look like at present with regard to gay people, and on issues surrounding homosexuality? How do gay people's conversational descriptions of self reflect a more modernistic or postmodernist paradigm on gayness? How does their language still indicate the outdated dichotomy of heterosexual-homosexual, or a move beyond it toward multiple sexuality? How can homosexuality be part of a diversity of realities within a *multi*verse, instead of a so-called *uni*verse? I thought it important that while we remember that "All conversations of our community … are us, affect us, and are participated in by us" (Madigan 1996:52), we should be asking if there could be remains of internalised homophobic discourses in our gay communities.

Significant progress has been made to question the scientific paradigms on homosexuality (Brown 1997:295-307). It can also be said that many liberating developments have been achieved toward a more free and fair existence of gay / queer people both locally, and world-wide. Yet my position remains that although homosexuality has been "legalised" in South Africa, I suspect (as a gay man) that there are still many discourses that are in place to discourage if not prohibit queer people from being openly gay, or "out of the closet" in queer lingua. I felt that the growing liberty of queers is still restrained by silencing discourses. Hence this inquiry.

One of the main purposes of this study was to ask questions that explore the discourses that are exercising influence on the lives of homosexual people. For a long time I have been asking myself a lot of questions regarding discourses surrounding homosexuality. For instance, I was wondering how many parents would be (un-) disturbed if they were confronted with a question about their children being queer? I have also been

wondering about the possible reactions of teachers, religious and other "leaders" in society if they should be asked about the embrace-ability of gayness in schools, churches and in society in general (Rabinow 1994:136 & 145). Which internalised discourses contribute to the assumption that children are / will be heterosexual? Which discourses can be connected to the apparent relief of parents once they have confirmation that their child is (fortunately) "straight"? Most of all, I am wondering about people who are queerly inclined but muted, not voicing, not feeling safe enough to come out. Maybe some of them are selectively "out of the closet"? The question that remains is what requires some queers and other alternative sexual preferences to stay fully or partially underground? Which discourses makes it worthwhile for any queerly orientated person to remain silent about their sexuality?

I was wondering how some of the silencing discourses were circulating within the frameworks of informal and formal education (families and schools), religious texts and communities, and certain other socio-political arenas like the military. Maybe some of the pre-modern and modernist discourses were alive and well in our cultures, maybe some discourses have mutated or were posing/going disguised? There could be new anti-gay, or pro-heterosexual discourses too, and I wanted to find out what and who they were serving, and about "the way in which centralised discourses on homosexuality constitute people's lives..." (Kotzè 1994:125).

Furthermore, as far as the purpose of the study went, I wanted queer / gay women and men to consider questioning the hegemonic reproduction and maintenance of dominant queer discourses that are silencing in their effect – if it transpired that they were also interested in such an outcome. I hoped that we, together, could discover, re-discover and re-create alternative discourses that may be more liberating than silencing in their effect. I was not disappointed in entertaining such hope.

The purpose and motivation for the project was also influenced by the point of view that our meanings with regard to homosexuality have been constructed in language-discourse, and may also be deconstructed toward a new or alternative self-narrative of gayness (Kotzè 1994:36 & 41). I hoped that deconstructing the stereotyping of gays and lesbians could be part of the result of this narrative-participatory research project. In addition, social conditions became more favourable for openly saying what has not yet been said about homosexuality. In my opinion some "adjustment of power relations with regard to sexuality" (Kotzè 1994:43) has taken place through South Africa's constitution, the "normalisation" of homosexuality in psychology, and to a degree in broader society with judge Edwin Cameron as first openly gay judge to be appointed. I became interested in finding out how such developments have influenced contemporary gay-discourse.

Besides the anti-gay discourses that originated (or survived) in a number of scientific fields (attended to in chapter four), homosexuality has also been problematised within the narrative context of culture and everyday social environment where conversations take place. In a conversation where for instance, a degrading homo-joke was cracked, often as "languaged tradition" (Madigan 1996:59), the question could be asked: what does it say about the culturally created discourses on gayness? Or, how does it *not* consider whether a gay person may be present in that gathering, expecting such a person to remain silent and "in the closet", so to speak? I recently had the experience of a typical Afrikaans patriarch asking me the question: "When are you going to get yourself a wife?" He was alluding to my age and my apparent lifestyle that did not fit with how he views the world. As far as I am concerned the assumption that lies behind remarks like that is that either I am, or I have to be (-come) heterosexual. Indeed, the question that followed on his first was: "Do you have some kind of a problem, can we help you?" This was not the first time that I have been exposed to the subtle sarcasm of dominant heterosexist patriarchy, as a normalising judgement / gazing effort. My commitment was, and is, to expose discourses that make such injustices possible.

By now it should be evident that I was, and am, interested in exposing some of the silencing discourses that remain active and relatively effective in an age of transformation / emancipation / diversification in the South African context. Hopefully, the naming of such discourses as "bodies of knowledge" (McHoul & Grace 1993:26) could take place, as well as the exposure of some of the structures and power relations they rely upon to be influential and life constituting.

I wanted to involve people who have experienced the effects of silence on their preferred sexuality - and / or people who were still experiencing it - in conversations about homosexuality and its influential discourses. I presumed that these conversations could provide a space and witnessing context for their voices to be heard and for their (untold) stories to be narrated (Benkov 1995:56). I hoped for the discussions to open up new ways for the participants to speak on their own behalf, or to produce "reverse discourses", as referred to in *Foucault and Queer Theory* (Spargo 2000:10). Possible reverse discourses include an "out and proud" attitude, or ways of referring to queer "family" as preferred and good. "Family" is a well-known expression amongst gays, which usually refers to the community of homosexuals, and a person's belonging to such a group. I wondered whether the study would be able to deconstruct some of the discourses that may be suffocating the articulation of queer people's preferred ways of being, as well as to create space for the construction of new / alternative / resistant discourses.

I was also thinking about the possibilities that the conversations and accounts that may evolve could contribute to gay or pro-gay literature, or could become means of encouraging others with similar

experiences. I saw the potential purpose of touching the lives of queer people who where struggling with an internalised secret of shame, that may yet become out and proud (Spargo 2000:20). I hoped that the study could contribute, even in a small way, to embracing diversity of lifestyles and intimate expressions of queer people's preferences. I imagined that the potential influence of such work could be support for queer communities to find additional ways of resisting limiting and intimidating prescriptions of normalcy in what can be considered a new age. In the light of this, I considered myself committed to change and transform society and gay lives.

Another motivation for the study was the potential scope for myself to be influenced, even transformed, by the whole project – an aspect that will be attended to in the final chapter of this dissertation. Furthermore, I wanted to be led and influenced by the participants, their accounts and the process as it unfolded. I wished to be changed by what transpired and to negotiate the ways that the study was to be documented and used.

From my personal experiences and some witnessing of experiences of gay people like myself, I have also become very curious about the following:

- How some gay / queer women and men have perceived, understood and experienced society's ways of referring to queer sexual preferences, and the descriptions of it within the different social contexts they find themselves in.

- How dominant discourses about homosexuality, as found in the social sciences, religious studies, and in society in general, contribute to the silencing effect. I wanted to find out how these discourses are influenced by homophobia in the South African context.

- How the silence has affected homosexual people, and how they have managed to live amidst and despite of it, and /or how they have used resistance against its influences.

- How do queer people find a voice for their preferences, how do they use it and how would they like to use it differently? What would make it difficult for gay people to live their preference, and what would set them free?

I did hope that included in the "results" or influences of the project there will be a modified consciousness, even praxis, at least a deconstruction of certain silencing discourses. I also hoped for the research to be what Kaye (1990:35) refers to as a generative inquiry, "as productive rather than reproductive, creative

rather than representational" in terms of collaborative meaning construction and possibly more preferred ways of understanding, describing, experiencing and living queerness within society. In other words, the research could open up alternative (less restrictive, less subjugated) ways of story-ing and doing gay. I expected some of the anticipated influences to become valid for myself as insider-participant research-facilitator, at least in the sense of greater self-reflection about my gayness as being voiced or silenced in different social contexts. You will be able to read more about actual "results" as well as my hopes and anticipations in chapters five and six, but especially in the final chapter.

To summarise: The purpose and motivation for this project was to find silenced queer voices / living texts, and to find and expose some discourses that contribute to the silencing influence. Furthermore, to challenge the silencing discourses through participating conversations with these muffled voices, with the possibility of weakening the influence of silencing discourses, strengthening the participators' own voices and even creating alternative and pro-gay discourses. As far as I am concerned, all silenced and marginalised lives call for continuous investigations similar to this study.

1.5 Planning, and preparing for the research process

As indicated, I planned to research the societal discourses that contribute to encouraging a culture of silence amongst gay people regarding their sexuality. Instead of unilaterally deciding on the exact purpose or specific discourses that I may suspect, I had in mind to approach a number of openly gay or in-the-closet queer-oriented people, with a preliminary construct of what the research may look like. The idea was to ask them questions about what they would consider important social conditions that may influence their complete or selective silence on their sexuality, and to give an indication of what a research process could consist of. I hoped to elicit some responses that would guide further steps into the research project.

During the initial phase of preparing for the research project, I thought of the potential research participants in terms of living texts who would be involved in a process of sharing lived gay experiences. The research was envisioned to become a process of "reading and hearing living texts" as well as possibly analysing and (re-) creating living texts.

The idea of text as metaphor is related to Shotter and Gergen's (1989) views on the social construction of identities as textual. According to these authors, the medium within which personal identities get created is at the same time linguistic and textual (Kitzinger 1989:82-95). As such, identities can be viewed as textual in the sense that already existing / culturally established forms of communication are used to describe them (-

selves). In the editorial review of Shotter and Gergen's book *Texts of Identity* (1989) they say: "People are ascribed identities in the ways in which they are embedded and afforded a voice within a discourse…. Such culturally established texts furnish their 'inhabitants' with the resources which both enable and constrain their construction of their selves." I therefore imagined that part of the research would include looking at ways in which identities are formed, constrained and delimited within the discourses of a culture, and I wanted to approach gay identities as texts that can be affirmed where appropriate, or reviewed, deconstructed and recreated.

The research process therefore, was approached in the text-metaphor. Even the steps in the research process were to be considered as textual 'chapters', which I will briefly refer to, in the following paragraphs. The expected timeframe for the actual process was from April to July 2003.

The first phase or "chapter" if you will, involved finding participants - (hidden) texts of queerness, finding muffled and muted voices of silenced or selectively silenced homosexual people. The idea was to approach a number of homosexual people and invite them to participate in the study in various possible ways: either through individual interviews, focus group interviews (conversations and discussions), and exposure to deconstructive literary material with follow-up conversations. The idea was also to negotiate with them regarding the most helpful and transformative way of doing the study.

I considered a number of possible ways of selecting or approaching potential research participants. Some of the possibilities were to invite gay friends to participate, or to place an advertisement in gay-oriented or gay-friendly paper or magazine. The idea of using a gay website and "chatroom" also became attractive for a number of reasons. Firstly, the research project could then be introduced through the electronic medium in a to and fro process of correspondence. Gay people, who might be interested in participating, could be invited to do so through a process of negotiation and clarification of how the project may unfold. This way of starting the process may have the "advantage" that potential participants, who may want to remain anonymous, may easily do so. Of course it would also be interesting to hear if and when such anonymous "texts" may start to speak out. (The idea to approach candidates via the Internet was eventually not followed up, as will become clear in chapter five.)

During this stage when participants were to be selected, ideas about the purpose and inspiration for the study would be disclosed. Some of the questions that I planned to ask were: "Would you be interested in conversations about why and how gay people keep their sexual preference and/or gay lifestyle a secret? Are

you curious about the influences of homophobia and what keeps it alive? Would you be interested in participating in conversations / correspondence about such issues and the effects thereof in your life?"

The initial idea was to "select" between four and six participants to accompany into the next chapter / phase of the process. The participants' cultural background was preferably to be white, Afrikaans speaking and from a Dutch Reformed Christian tradition. The reasons for selecting these criteria are that they are identical to my own background, and because I have come to realise how influential the cultural discourses are in the lives of gay people from this background.

In order for the report to make sense I will have to disclose, at this stage, some detail about who eventually took part in the project. The first participant was a 38-year old gay man whose father used to be a Dutch Reformed minister: his name is Org. The second participant was a 38-year old female gay person who used to be the wife of a Dutch Reformed minister. Her name is Grethie. The third participant was a practising Dutch Reformed minister who was interested in participating, and who eventually voluntarily joined the group of participants. As the latter participant preferred to remain anonymous, for the purpose of this report we will therefore refer to him as the minister / dominee or the theologian. (If you prefer to read the detail now about how the participants were eventually "found" and included, please go to chapter five, paragraph 5.2.)

The assumption was that those participants who entered the second phase, already knew that they were entering a research project that may at a later stage involve focus group interviews. Therefore, the negotiations on the possible format of these interviews were supposed to start early. I somehow imagined that the interviews would take on the format of informal conversation, whether it was via the electronic medium or in actual meetings with the participants.

A number of questions and / or statements would be forwarded / presented to the participants for their consideration in order to prepare them for further interviews and conversations. The following are examples of questions:
- How / when did you discover that you were homosexual / gay / queer?
- How / when did you realise how such a position is viewed in broader society?
- What was / is your personal experience of being gay in your communities?
- Are you / do you feel free or safe to be open about your 'sexual orientation'?
- What do you think makes it possible / impossible, difficult / easier to be open?
- If there are situations / places / people that seem to discourage openness, how would you describe these?

- What are some of the sayings that are going around about gays/homosexuality? What is the influence of that on your life?
- How was/is homosexuality described / considered / viewed / judged / discussed in the social context that you were born into, and where you currently live?
- Do you mind sharing some examples of societal opinions or events in your life that contributed to your remaining silent about your homosexuality?
- How have you managed to live your life in spite of having to stay quiet about your preferred sexuality?
- If you can imagine a world where such silence is not required, what would you be able to tell the world about yourself and your sexual preference?
- Are you 'out' in some contexts but not in others? What determines where you can be 'out' and where not?

By asking the participants what issues or questions they would prefer to become part of the project, the questions thus became part of the negotiation of the research agenda. Some of these questions would also serve as guidelines for the focus group interviews that would take place at a later stage. Questions more directly related to religion / spirituality may include the following:

- Are you religious, or spiritually inclined? Why / why not?
- Are there ways of being gay and religious / spiritual / Christian?
- How has the religious culture that you were born into influenced your views on queerness?
- Has your acquired religious culture contributed to silence about queerness, and if so, how / why?
- What is Christianity / your religion's point of view on homosexuality? (Have you found that it differs from context to context?)
- Do you experience a need to discuss examples or phrases from the Bible or other religious texts that seem to relate to gay discourses?
- Are you able / willing to share real life experiences of how religion / theology have affected / influenced you and / or people that you know?
- How have you been supported and / or marginalised due to religion / theology?
- As a gay person, how would you prefer to practice your religious / spiritual beliefs?
- Have religious views in church circles contributed to your self-acceptance and / or to your silence?
- What do you consider important to change in order for gays / queers to become socially freer in terms of religion / theology / spirituality?

(The above mentioned questions, as well as those listed in the previous paragraph, were all eventually used in the form of a questionnaire-guideline. Refer to addendum A)

I surmised that chapters or phases may overlap, and that the process should allow for a weaving of the different stages as they unfolded. As the third phase / chapter I envisioned a sharing of discursive text-of-self on "quiet-about-queer" / muffled voices. During this interactive phase I wanted to direct the conversations toward silencing discourses and practices, as well as to explore pro-gay discourses if and when they were mentioned.

During the planning phase, I hoped that the discussions and conversations would take place via e-mail or in the 'chat room' of a website, and that I would mainly use questions regarding how, why, when, where silence is required on queerness. Actually, I wished to involve participants who use the gay website and 'chat room' as their 'out' community, largely because they have to remain silent about their sexuality in most other contexts. These participants were expected to have experienced the silencing discourses in their lives more profoundly, and I wanted to learn from them. (As mentioned earlier, this idea was not followed through). I was not sure whether the group of participants was to consist exclusively of 'in the closet' or 'out of closet' gays. I thought it could be advantageous to have a group with a broad range of experiences, especially if some 'in the closet' participants could later become beneficiaries of exposure to 'out of the closet' stories, in that they would become supported and even encouraged or liberated in the process of sharing.

During the following (fourth) stage / chapter, the plan was to deconstruct texts – or to unpack those cultural discourses that promote silence on queerness. I expected that it might also invite an unpacking of those discourses that encouraged homosexual people to speak out and be open about their sexuality. I thought that it would be really interesting to push the textual deconstruction ideas more into the foreground when the actual meetings (focus group interviews) took place. I expected this part to simulate the 'statement of position map' as it is described in the narrative work of Michael White (Morgan 2000:44 & 70). In narrative therapeutic process, there comes a time to consider *why* the influence of a problem is not "welcome anymore". In this instance it could be useful to consider why the silencing discourses have limiting, oppressive and unwanted effects on participants lives (if that was what transpired), and why these may not be "welcome" / acceptable anymore. (Chapters five to seven indicate that these expectations were accurate, at least to a degree.)

Some of the important questions I thought should be considered at this point included: Whom do the silencing discourses serve, and why? Should it be different? Why? Which purposes does it serve to remain quiet? What could happen if the silence is broken? Why? How could it change the text? How could changed - or voiced - text influence us, our communities? How could it re-write communities? Can some discourses

be named or re-named? Have some discourses that promote silence been uncovered, rediscovered, or exposed?

In addition, appropriate articles that relate to gayness, social discourses and "coming out" could be forwarded for comments, discussions and maybe critical conversations. Participants could "…communicate / enter into dialogue with the texts which they read" (Jones 1990:8). Throughout the project I wanted to remain sensitive to participants' choices or decisions of their particular position on a spectrum of 'in-the-closet – out-of-the-closet'. Participants were not to be coerced into any form of "coming out" whatsoever. Maybe the process would gently nudge a different kind of consciousness and action (praxis) amongst some of the participants. (Articles were supplied, and eventually it did seem to influence the consciousness and behaviour of some of the participants – refer to chapters five to seven).

The next phase / chapter (five) would encompass a reflection on shared living texts thus far. A possible question at this stage might be: How does the process influence participants so far?

If they have not met earlier, the participants would be invited to meet personally at this stage of the project. It was regarded preferable that the influence of the research process be inquired on continuously, but more specifically at this later stage. Possible questions that were expected to facilitate reflection on the effects of the research were: Have the participants-as-texts been affected or influenced? How have they been affected or influenced? What can be done with the influences / effects? What can be done about the discourses? Have any possibilities opened up whereby to render silencing discourses transparent? How can the gay person move into the future carrying the effects of the research project? How will it influence the future life of each participant? Have any new or changed voices appeared? How can it be carried in the group as well as outside the project? Should extra support and therapy be available to participants?

Reporting the research project would become the penultimate (sixth) phase / chapter. The co-creating of a (new) research- text about shared living texts would now become the focus. I thought it would be necessary to explore together how the research data – consisting mostly of recorded interviews, conversations and discussions – would be stored and used. (For instance, whether it would be decoded and categorised, or not?) Once again negotiations had to take place as to how the related, created, and changed texts were going to be written, in which format and to which purpose. I hoped for all participants' voices to be audible and present "in the text" - in other words, that all participants became the co-narrators of the written accounts (Jones 1990:4). This was considered important because, according to Lewis and Simon (quoted by Jones 1990:3), "forms of discourse that do not allow an answer to the question 'where is my body in that text?'

silence us." Participants were supplied with full translations of the transcriptions of their accounts as these appear in chapters five and six. Their commentaries were incorporated in the final text.

As the final and seventh stage of the research process, I wanted to endeavour a re-reading (re-authoring?) of my personal self-as-text: a reflection on my own story.

In this regard the following statement by Jones (1990: 5) is apt: "At the heart of my attraction to post-modern discourses in social inquiry is the thematic element of self-reflexivity. Postmodernism celebrates the constructiveness of accounts thus opening a gap for authors to reveal themselves in their work…" She also reminds us that "for feminists self-reflexivity is a political and not just an epistemological issue" (Jones 1990:7). This research project was expected to influence not only the invited participants, but also myself as the initiating participant. I wanted to consider the influences / effects of research on the self-as-text, and to be able to ask questions about how my personal discourses and internalised social discourses have been influenced. From a critical stance, I would like to ask: Has any transformations or conscientization taken place? Will it lead to a different form of praxis in future? I planned to indicate some differences and similarities between my notions about silencing discourses (as well as empowering / liberating pro-gay discourses) and those that transpired from the other participants. (Aspects of self-reflexive reflections can be found in chapter seven – the final chapter – more specifically under headings 7.7 and 7.8. Suffice to say at this point that I was deeply touched by the project, and it transformed a number of notions that I held regarding gay-related discourses).

1.6 Introduction to some epistemological positions, including a theological-pastoral position

I consider the French historian-philosopher Michel Foucault's views on knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality as paramount in this study. Although there has been some references in this introductory chapter regarding Foucault's views on discourse and knowledge, these will be covered in some detail in chapter two, they will not be explored here. Instead I will introduce the reader to other paradigms that influenced my views about the discourses on homosexuality.

The first paradigm that needs mentioning is that of social construction. Constructivism asserts that we do not discover reality, we invent it (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:455). The following statement by Rorty (quoted by Kotzè 1994: 455) is apposite:

The current interest in constructivism and deconstruction is part of a widespread scepticism about the positivist tradition in science and essentialist theories of truth and meaning… both constructivism and deconstruction assert that meanings are historically situated and constructed through the medium of language.

Kotzè (1994:22) agrees by saying: "Knowledge from a post-modern perspective is viewed as a social construction constituted in language" where knowledge seems to reside in discourses about some reality. Within the social construction discourse, people exist in language, and language constitutes meaning that is constantly negotiated (Kotzè 1994:34-35). Meaning and understanding are thus socially constructed (Andersen & Goolishian 1992:27). Research by the biologists Maturana and Varela confirms that knowledge is a construction rather than reflection or representation of an objective reality. This means that "it is in language that people co-exist and co-construct a world in which to live – we are constituted in language, in a continuous becoming that we bring forth with others" (Kotzè 1994:26-27). And as mentioned, the "right" or "wrong" of knowledge is determined by the perspective we choose to assume (Kotzè 1994:29). We are reminded of the ethical responsibility that comes with a social constructive view of things: it implies that we take full responsibility for what we choose to co-create with others as our world (Kotzè 1994:30). Like most abnormalised social phenomena, homosexuality as a problem has been socially constructed. (Refer to 1.3 – A brief background to the so-called problem of homosexuality. The statement is also grounded in chapter two, specifically under heading 2.7 – A brief history of queer sexuality.)

According to this view, language structures not only one's own experience of reality, but also of those with whom one communicates. Language is not regarded merely as descriptive tool: to do so would obscure the power of what I call 'privileged language' which is used by those who are situated in authority and influence. From such a point of view it would be possible for those who create and use specialised language to determine widely accepted meanings, as in the case with the assigned meanings on homosexuality within the technical language of psychiatry and psychology (which will receive more attention in chapter four).

A social constructivist view also asserts that problems – like the deviancy or madness of homosexuality - do not only exist in language but "are unique to the narrative context from which they derive their meaning" (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:28). In contexts where the expert language of theology, psychiatry and psychology as disciplines are dominant, one can expect problematised homosexuality. Madigan (1996:56) calls such disciplines "communities of discourse". I see their approach to those sexual orientations other than heterosexuality as discriminatory. In my personal experience, the South African context or, more specifically, the Afrikaans-cum-Christian context, provides a particularly fertile soil for discriminatory narratives to take root. My culture of birth is a unique narrative context of gay discrimination because it once

discourse-d gayness as sinful and unnatural, thus creating and harbouring homophobia. The use of the word "Moffie" for a male gay person, by "straight" (heterosexual) men, carries many meanings of gay discrimination and homophobia in this culture.

I will now make a brief attempt to mention my predominantly post-modern, feminist-, participatory practical theological position. It is necessary to mention this position because it influences my approach to people and their spiritualities. I expected it also to play a part in the research project, which may touch on the participants' spirituality and / or religious beliefs.

In the first place, I need to declare that I hold a post-modern worldview and therefore also a post-modern (Heroldt 1998:215-229), feminist (Isherwood & McEwan 1994:8-146; Bons-Storm 1998:7-17), liberation (Kotzè & Kotzè 2001:4), and ecological theological views. According to such views the will of (a) God is not so authoritative or pre-determined as generally accepted in the Western patriarchal Christian tradition I was born into. I was both disillusioned and disenchanted with the Christian religious tradition (Tarnas 1991:400). My present paradigm includes the possibilities of multiple spiritual realities and religions (Kotzè 1994:49).

Before posing a few challenges for theology in a post-modern culture, Rossouw (1993:894) states: "Culture is the interpretive and coping mechanism of society… theology is a second order activity that reflects on the meaning of revelation for a specific cultural situation". I do not believe that there is a single or "true" interpretation of the Bible or any other religious text for that matter. I agree with Rossouw (1993:897-905) about certain challenges for theology, in particular that religious pluralism is necessary. He also mentions two other challenges: namely, a narrative approach to theology as suitable for spiritual wholeness and that theology can still have a liberation role for the marginalised. This seems to correspond with contextual feminist theologian Denise Ackermann's (1996:33) view that "The value of historically and contextually rooted stories in a feminist theology of praxis, is accepted as point of departure for doing theology which is concerned with human suffering and emancipation." In connection with this study, it means that (post-modern) contextual feminist theology also engages itself in liberating praxis of gay women and men whom were marginalised or oppressed into silence. Ackermann (1996:43) continues to say: "Telling stories breaks the silence which blankets the lives of … marginalized and oppressed people and this is intrinsic to the healing." Because I want to side with critical and ethical practices, I can agree with Ackermann (1996:41) that "Critical theological theories committed to articulating conditions of oppression and suffering while at the same time trying to account for such conditions, have both ethical and strategic dimensions." I should be clear that I believe certain discourses about gayness count as 'conditions or suffering and oppression'. For

example, homophobic discourses that reiterate or circulate stereotypical images of gays as promiscuous, subversive towards the good moral order (indeed), or abhorrent for some other reasons.

I think that my present spirituality is characterised by tentativeness and incompleteness about what / who God is and what religion may be. The same goes for my approach to the interpretation and creation of texts, as evident in the words of Haraway (quoted by Jones 1990:8): "Explicit incompleteness, tentativeness and partiality ('partial sight and limited voice') leave spaces / possibilities for others to enter a conversation, to bring their view to a dialogue." I hoped that space could be created for gay people to co-create their languaged reality, in the spiritual sense as well. Such a paradigm makes it rather easy for me to include homosexuality as an acceptable and even a preferable way of being, albeit an alternative one. Post-modern, feminist, liberation and ecological theology allows for celebration of diversity, instead of marginalisation of differentness. It should follow that I entertain the mystical, intuitive aspects of spirituality and theology, instead of the dogmatic and the strictly rational. The familiar Biblical texts pertaining to homosexuality, as well as the widespread Christian theological positions that I suspect inform anti-gay discourses, will be explored in chapter three which focuses on theology and homosexuality.

Both my practical theological position and my pastoral-therapeutic position can be described as contextual-participatory (Wolfaardt 1992:11-13; Ackermann 1993:21-36; Kotzè & Kotzè 2001:3-13). Such an approach includes the view that people are free beings who choose and / or develop their own interpretation of religion / spirituality and a lifestyle according to that interpretation. It should be clear then, that my pastoral therapeutic position would also be the participatory paradigm, which considers all people and therapists to be doing their understanding of spirituality together. Kotzè and Kotzè (2001:8) state my position in a nutshell: "This is a participatory process in which therapists collaborate with people in challenging oppressive discourses and negotiating ways of living in an ethical and ecological accountable way" (substitute *therapist* with *research facilitator*). Such a position is inclusive of alternative sexual orientations and queer lifestyles, and makes possible the journeying with gay men and women toward their freedom from discriminating, oppressive discourses. In my view, the paradigms mentioned thus far correspond with the research approaches chosen for the research project. These will be alluded to under the next heading.

1.7 Introduction to preferred research approaches

By way of discursive positioning I will now indicate how the qualitative, emancipatory, action, participatory as well as narrative research approaches were preferred to guide, inform and influence the research on the

discourses that contribute to silence amongst gay / queer people. Obviously, these approaches overlap and the elements of these approaches seem to have become interwoven in this research project.

Qualitative research: My main impression was that qualitative research is a break from the quantitative approaches that until recently dominated the (social) scientific scene. Quantitative design requires maximum validity, verifiability and reliability (read: objectivity and certainty) supposedly created by selecting large numbers of respondents from the population and interpretation in terms of psychometric and statistical formulae (Le Compte & Preissle 1993:145). Qualitative design on the other hand, relies more on the in-depth study of a single or a few participants for the purpose of better understanding individual and group perspectives of a particular social problem (Booth 1995:49). Where the former relies on the experimental and statistical paradigm, the latter is more descriptive, explorative and explanatory. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 5): "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied." As indicated elsewhere in this dissertation, my approach was influenced by a social constructivist viewpoint, and as a gay man I have a direct and personal relationship with what is studied. Therefore I chose to do a qualitative study.

From previous experience I knew that qualitative work includes interviewing and observation (Patton 1987:108 & 113). These methods allow for personal (individual or group) opinion, life story and experiences to be investigated (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:3). Such procedures are more subject to multiple interpretation (Firestone & Dawson 1988:218) than quantitative methods that might still rely on the myth of objectivism and the truth that it produces (Kaye 1990:29). The more direct involvement with participants was regarded as providing more in-depth understanding than the quantitative approaches. It remains my impression that quantitative research is more modernist (positivist, logico-empircism) whilst qualitative research leans itself toward post-modernist application (more naturalistic, interpretative, hermeneutic, and critical). Miles and Huberman (in Fetterman 1988:225) considers qualitative data attractive because "[T]hey are a source of well-grounded, rich description and explanation of processes occurring in local contexts." I considered these to be the advantages of qualitative research. Sears (1992: 65) calls qualitative research "an inquiry into the personal worlds of others that, if one is fortunate, becomes a journey into oneself."

In my opinion, the qualitative approach in research does not avoid subjectivity, emotionality, accountability, ethicality or social discourse (the political) – all factors which I considered paramount in the social-personal issues surrounding homosexuality that I wanted to investigate.

Emancipatory research: My understanding of emancipatory research is that it is aimed at changing (lessening or eradicating) specific social conditions that are considered limiting, oppressive or unjust for a particular (sub-) group of people. It thus opens up the possibility of liberation from problematic social ideologies or structures. In this case, liberation from queer discourses that are silencing could take place.

Since the feminist movements are known for their liberational elements (for instance, liberation from patriarchal domination) I suspect that much of the emancipatory research that takes place is from a feminist perspective. The following statement by Dreyer (1998:6) is apposite:

> Feminist researchers strive to maintain equality of the research relationship and to empower the research participants. They passionately guard against the exploitation of the researched and encourage participants to construct their own meanings. This view of the research relationship leads to a 'radical epistemology' where the researched become co-creators of knowledge.

In terms of the deconstruction of internalised problem discourses on gayness / queerness, I expected that my research would have a degree of liberation-effect on the participants of the project. Emancipatory research also includes many elements of what is considered to be participatory and action research.

Action research: Stringer (quoted by Dreyer 1998:5) declared that "[I]n community-based action research, the role of the researcher is not that of an expert who does research, but that of a resource person." In *Participatory Action Research,* Robbin McTaggart (1997: 26) points out that this type of research can mean different things to different people. Nevertheless, some of the basic ideas of action research that emerge from this work are that it usually starts with some kind of improvement or change that is necessary, and that the research is conducted through the stages or steps of planning, acting, observing and evaluating the result of the action. McTaggart (1997:27) describes action research as "the way in which groups of people can organise the conditions under which they can learn from their own experience and make this experience accessible to others". This approach emphasises the importance of group decision, commitment to improvement as well as flexibility and responsiveness of the planning.

I felt unsure as to what degree the research I was about to embark upon would indeed be action research, even though I did plan to consult with the participants about what they considered important for them to change or improve with regard to their sexual identity-within-society. Furthermore, the idea was to include a phase where there would be activities for reading deconstructive gay research material followed by group discussions. I also expected that there might be an evaluation-phase after this exposure. (Note: the relevant articles were provided and discussed during the actual research process) What I envisioned appeared to

emulate the process of action research through stages, as suggested by McTaggart in the previous paragraph. In chapter five more will be said about a critical action research approach and how it was relevant for our study.

Participatory research: McTaggart (1997:29) refers to Rajesh Tandon who identified several determinants of authentic participation in research, namely: 1) people's role in setting the agenda of the inquiry, 2) people's participation in the data collection and analysis, and 3) people's control over the use of outcomes and the whole process. Participatory research is therefore not merely problem solving, or research done 'on other people', or just a technique or a 'scientific method' (McTaggart 1997:30).

Some of the implications of doing engaged participative research seemed to be that the researcher enters the life-world of the researched and meets people on their own ground and on their own terms. Tripp (1983:32-45) refers to the co-authorship and negotiation of such research. Responsibility can be shared by inviting research participants to comment on and contribute their preferences regarding the questions asked during research, as well as by incorporating their opinions on the writing of research material.

In an article by Dreyer (1998:1-18) he addresses the issue of conducting research from a detached and objective distance versus a position of researcher as "insider". This author suggests a position of balance, or inclusion of both engaged insider / belonging, and detached outsider / distanciation, in order to overcome the implied problem of dualism. The traditional approach of objectivity has been sufficiently challenged on the basis of questioning so-called scientific / academic expert-ise as well as the relation between knowledge and power. In her article: *Freeing Ourselves from Objectivity*, Heshusius (1994:16) argues for an ethical and participatory mode of consciousness in research that includes compassion and kinship between researcher and the other participants. Power (2002:125) believes that action research focussing on socially marginalised groups, including gay men, lends itself specifically to participatory methods.

I envisioned the research project to be a collaborative effort between all the participants in the study, facilitated by myself. Since the theme of the study deals with homosexuality and the discourses related to it, and because as the researcher I am also a gay person, it could be none other than insider-participatory research.

Narrative Research & Ethnographic Method: The participant perspective also seems to be an important element of what Clandinin and Connely (1991:260) describe as narrative method, which includes efforts to 'enter into' the story and experience of other participants. Interactive relations and collaboration appears to

be part of this method. The narrative method is relevant for this study due to the expectation that participants may find it appropriate to share their personal stories to relate their experience of the discourses that affected their lives and loves. Thinking about narrative as research method is somewhat clarified in the following quote from a chapter with the heading: *Narrative and Story in Practice and Research*, by Clandinin and Connelly (1991 265):

> The central task is evident when it is grasped that individuals both live their stories in an ongoing experiential text and tell their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. More dramatically for the researcher, this is the smallest portion of the complexity, since a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and, therefore, involves restory-ing and attempts at reliving. A person is, at once, then, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories.

Similarly, what Tyndale (1990:24) refers to as narrative analysis as a practical methodology in family therapy research, can become useful in this research project. Narrative analysis is based upon the therapeutic work of Michael White and David Epston wherein there is a search for aspects of lived experience that fall outside the dominant problem narrative (Tyndale 1990:24), or *unique outcomes* as it is sometimes called. Narrative analysis therefore can become a useful tool to "explore, not only the dominant lifestory, but also the unique outcomes" both in therapy and in research (Tyndale 1990:24). Whilst homosexuality is widely considered to be a problem, we do expect some of the narrative data by participants to indicate alternative discourses that are pro-gay in nature. Narrative analysis may allow the research facilitator to extract from problem-saturated stories those accounts that actually indicate pro-gay discourses. (Narrative analysis became a rather prominent method in our project, as will be evident from chapters five and six).

It seemed to me that some of the characteristics of the approaches mentioned thus far, especially narrative research / analysis could in certain aspects be compared to what is called ethnographic study. The important point about ethnography is that it places researchers in the midst of whatever they are studying (Berg 1998:121). Berg writes that in the ethnographic approach "researchers can examine various phenomena as perceived by participants and represent these observations as accounts." The same author also explains ethnography primarily as "a process that attempts to thickly describe and interpret social expressions between people and groups" (Berg 1998:212). So-called micro-ethnography is described as "detailed examinations of people and their social discourse and the various outcomes of their actions…" (Berg 1998:123). This reminded me of what we were going to attempt. Interesting too, is the fact that this source considers the primary objective of ethnography to be to *read the text*, where the text should be the actual notes, memo's etc., of the researcher. Because it is part of the object of this study to approach the participants as living texts (and their accounts as primary "data"), I happened to notice this link between this project and ethnography. Sears (1992:152) refers to critical ethnography as a form of qualitative enquiry. He

mentions that "[C]ritical ethnography unravels and exploits the interplay between individual consciousness and the social order" and that "[T]he reconstruction of social relations rather than personal meanings" is the primary goal of critical qualitative research (Sears 1992:152). In our case, reconstruction of both social relations and personal meanings took place. In my view, the other elements associated with ethnographic research mentioned above have also been incorporated in this study.

With regard to the use of a focus group approach, the plan was to implement it as multi-method, as referred to by Morgan (1997:3). This means that the information gathered during a focus group conversation would be added to the data that is gathered through other qualitative methods. The focus group may be described as an interview style designed for small groups, and can be an attempt to learn more about the biographies and life experiences of group participants (Berg 1998:100). The use of the focus group has recently re-emerged in the social sciences (Berg 1998:103). Although it is widely considered to take the form of a group interview, I was going to approach it (somewhat experimentally) more in the open-ended question and conversational style. Berg (1998:100) calls such a style "discussions… under the guidance of a facilitator." The focus group approach assumes that the participants in the group may have a common factor or interest that corresponds with a similar interest of the research facilitator (Berg 1998: 100). In this case the common factor would be being gay and the interest in investigating the discourses that influence homosexual people's freedom. For this study an important advantage of the focus group approach would be that it provides "a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time" (Morgan 1997:8). In other words, it provides access to forms of "interactive data" that are not obtained through the other qualitative methods, such as open-ended interviewing and participant observation.

1.8 Summary of chapter one

People who prefer to practice / 'do' relationships that include sexuality with others of their own gender, have in all likelihood been around for as long as the existence of the human race. Such a preference became labelled as a problematic phenomenon called homosexuality. This resulted in the people who practised homosexuality becoming historically marginalised and discriminated against. The oppression of people who fall in love with their own gender reached more sophisticated levels during the modern era, partly due to the circulation of anti-gay discourses throughout most westernised societies. Homosexual-unfriendly discourses can often be linked to the social structures within society, like religious systems.

This first chapter of the dissertation serves as an introduction to the problematisation of homosexuality and provides the reasons and goals for the study of those discourses that may influence this phenomenon. It

also introduces the reader to some of the epistemologies and paradigms that have influenced my present position on homosexuality, including some of my personal experiences as a gay person. In addition, this chapter invited the reader into the planning and preparation phase of the research process itself, and asked the reader to consider the preferred qualitative research approaches that were going to be practised in the project.

Before we continue to the second chapter, allow me to provide you with a brief overview of the rest of this dissertation. Chapter two is devoted to Michel Foucault, whom I consider essential reading for any post-modern study on homosexuality. In chapter three you will be provided with a historical background on homosexuality from a theological point of view, including some theological origins of gay-related discourse. Chapter four covers other discursive fields that have influenced homosexual life considerably, in particular psychology, education, the military and legislature. The first four chapters therefore, provide us with a broad epistemological base for the issue of homosexual discourse. Chapter five then re-visits the planned research process as laid out in the first chapter, to indicate how the actual process eventually unfolded. The preferred research approaches mentioned in chapter one get illumined and appropriated for this study, plus some additional methods that proved invaluable, are also introduced. The penultimate and sixth chapter consists almost entirely of the narrative accounts of our three invited research participants, in the format of a five-axis thematic narrative analysis. The final and seventh chapter is a reflection on the whole process, on the discourses, as well as on the project's influences, teachings and pointers for the future.

CHAPTER TWO
EPISTEMOLOGY - FOUCAULT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

2.1 Introduction

Encountering Michel Foucault's work and his counter-historic and critical approach to the "truths" that we seem to align our lives by can be challenging in a number of ways. What stood out for me in my 'meetings' with this French historian-philosopher, was the way in which his whole network of concepts and ideas posed a challenge to the mainstream accepted views on the phenomena of knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality. More often than not, these themes overlap in his work, or become integrated or superimposed. In my view each of these concepts show significant relevance to the issue of homosexuality, which is why it became the chosen epistemology for this study. In fact, one of Foucault's preoccupations seems to be the historical production of homosexual identity in the context of the disciplinary apparatuses of modern sexuality (Sawicki 1994:287).

In order to explore the background of this particular preoccupation, the main themes (knowledge / power / discipline / discourse / sexuality) will be introduced and connected to the topic of our study. The reader will also be entertained with a brief history of queer sexuality according to Foucault, plus his influence in the origin of Queer Theory (the academic discipline of the sexual "other") will be pointed out. The reader can also expect a number of references to alternative gay discourses associated with Foucault, as well as some critique which has been levelled against his work.

But first, another few introductory remarks. Foucault does not seem to provide some grand new ideology; rather, he presents important and useful cues for alternative perspectives on age-old power-issues that affect the way people live their lives. The fact that he often re-interprets and counter-uses existent concepts in a radical way opens up creative possibilities for the transformation of our understanding of social issues beyond previously accepted limitations. For me, this makes his work relevant for post-modern researchers and specifically appropriate to the study of discourses influencing homosexuality.

Foucault was considered to be a post-structuralist. Theorists in the post-war period introduced structuralism which emphasised the importance of the structures of society in creating the individual (Fillingham 1993:91). Intellectuals who were considered structuralists were amongst others, Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss. For them the structure of language and binary oppositions (the inclination to dichotomise and

contrast concepts in language into antitheses like male – female, heterosexual – homosexual etc.) were determining factors in people's lives (Fillingham 1993:95). Foucault was more interested in "historical changing conditions of possibility" (Shumway 1989:49) than the effect of societal structures. Because this study carries the seeds of personal and social change, I prefer that Foucault's ideas become an integral part of it.

I will now commence in discussing important Foucauldian concepts under the five themes that I have identified (knowledge / power / discipline / discourse / sexuality), indicating how these ideas are relevant to the research.

2.2 Knowledge

One cannot mention the concept knowledge without referring to Foucault's work in *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault 1980:109-133), which deals with knowledge and its relation to power and discipline. As alluded to in the first section, Foucault was interested in discovering how and when that which is considered knowledge gets constituted. For example, Foucault explored what the social, historical and political conditions are which enable statements to count as "true" or "false" in certain eras, and not in others (McHoul & Grace 1993:29 & Foucault 1980:112). If we were to relate his quest to this project, one could ask: how and when was expert knowledge about so-called homosexuality constituted? And, how did it become to be "true", or the accepted and dominant knowledge? Perhaps equally important at this point in time would be to observe how the previous dominant notions about sexualities other-than hetero, are currently moving from problematic to acceptable and preferable – such as the development of a new truth about homosexuality.

Foucault contributed immensely to challenge and reverse assumptions of what was classified as "normal" and "abnormal" and exposed how classifications and descriptions about madness changed over time (Shumway 1989:27). This renders his work essential for studies on homosexuality. Remember that homosexuality was first included, and then later removed as an abnormal sexual category within psychiatry and psychology. Foucault also pointed out that the social sciences describe people on their behalf, as knowable truth, and studied what the effects of that was in institutions like hospitals, schools, prisons, courts and factories. By contrast, in this study we allowed homosexuals to speak for themselves. Foucault was interested in what the effects of "truths" were even though, according to him, truths are produced by discourses which in themselves are never completely true or false (Foucault, 1980:117-118). I was wondering, as did Foucault, what about all the *un-knowable* truth? It seems that some of the un-knowable,

or "not yet knowable" truths about gay / queer / homosexuality were re-discovered and re-created within this study.

2.3 Power

Power seems to be the most central concept in Foucault's thinking. McHoul and Grace (1993:57) think he attempts the "re-theorization of the concept of power through the analysis of power relations." Of course, his views on power cannot be separated from his work about the production of "truth" or his ideas on the development of discourse. According to Foucault, the (modern) forms of power that replaced older traditional power are much subtler, and include and employ the techniques of normalisation and control as associated with *the gaze* – a concept that has been introduced already and will be illuminated in due course. My understanding (or rather, experience) is that whosoever creates the dominant knowledge / truths of the day, will in all possibility experience some temporary power advantage, as we will discover about theology in chapter three and psychiatry / psychology in chapter four.

A Foucauldian perspective of power is that is not merely something that is owned by some people who get to be in charge of it all: power is exercised rather than possessed (Halperin 1995:16). Power comes from everywhere. Power is not only at the top of a hierarchy, but everywhere local (Fillingham 1993:143). Thus both the exercise of power and the resistance towards it is part of the same relation, and, in my understanding, exist at the same time. Champagne (1995:5) reminds us that Foucault did not define resistance as "outside" of power. "It is not something foreign to power that encroaches upon it, but is rather produced 'within' power" and "We are never trapped by power, we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy" (Champagne 1995:5). At the start of the project I wondered whether this indicated that gay people have never been powerless, even in the face of all the anti-gay discourses that exist and operate? It was in fact possible to see how the existence of resistance against discrimination and pro-gay discourses indicates a notion of power as 'everywhere local' as will become evident in last three chapters.

Despite indications in *Madness and Civilization* that Foucault sees the effects of power in psychiatry as oppressing and silencing, he was actually more interested in the positive productive nature of power (Foucault 1980:119). He states, "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (quoted by McHoul & Grace 1993:64). Apparently, he felt strongly about turning upside down the negative perception of power as repressing. It seems to me that power produces not only limitations but certainly also resistances that may create the distinct types of individuals that abound in society such as

forms of homosexuality. If that is the case, then it may be seen as a paradoxical effect of an intention to produce regularity - a notion that was actually supported through this study.

Foucault's notions on power challenge certain ideas that I have entertained for some time. For instance, I viewed freedom as something that needs to be taken back from somewhere-, something- or someone else. In Foucault's work there seems to be a significant absence of "freedom fighting." He had me thinking, what if 'liberation' is a discourse-created movement that plays along with binary oppositioning, which in turn informs conflicts and wars and other struggles of violence? Could it be a similar principle that Kitzinger (1987:1) had in mind when she cautioned against gay-affirmative research becoming merely a replacement for the former pathological research, and thus merely substituting one construction with another? I wanted to be wary of such a risk during this project. In retrospect, I was. Since reading Foucault, I have been wondering whether if power is viewed as an oppressive force, then this obscures its larger everywhere-local character. In turn, this makes it possible for people to be fooled into believing that they have to fight back, only to get stuck within revenge and survival cycles. Certainly Foucault should challenge our ideas about power as a negative and oppressing external force, or something that is always controlled by some against others (who are supposedly powerless). In retrospect, the forms of resistance that queer people have mobilised against homophobic discourses and discriminatory practices actually were forms of local power that they readily employed.

My view as influenced by Foucault would be that what gets created is done by all involved, either by allowance, surrender or initiative. Power is readily available, but how can a research project assist in de-activating limiting and negative notions of power as it is caught within discourses? Maybe research-conversations can allow people to re-discover their personal and local (immediate social) power and power-relations? How about challenging the conditions in which people experience regulatory and normalising observations and judgements? What subversive re-codifications of power relations are possible within a participative- and narrative oriented research study? If possible, can it then also be emancipatory research? Foucault's views seems to present itself as a lens through which old as well as contemporary socio-political issues, like homophobia, attain alternative potential, meanings and perspectives. Some of these questions and arguments are revisited, sometimes indirectly, in the final three chapters. It can be said at this stage however, that the results of this study mostly answer these questions and arguments affirmatively.

Power also comes from below (Halperin 1995:17), and "the major dominations are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations." Halperin seems to be referring to the notion of relations of power that may sometimes produce temporary hegemony or domination. Where there is power, there is

resistance, and there is always "inside" power, there is no escaping it (Foucault 1978:95). In addition, the points of resistance seem to be everywhere: they are "mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting re-groupings" (Foucault 1978:96). Maybe it is easier understood in the words of Halperin (1995:17) "Power is not a substance, but a relation…(an) unstable relation… fluid…. Domination is not the whole story to tell when it comes to power… it produces the conditions for the exercise of freedom just as freedom constitutes a condition for the exercise of power." Only in this light will it make sense to assert that for Foucault the aim of oppositional politics is therefore not liberation but resistance (Halperin 1995:18). It follows that this study can also be considered as an act of resistance.

2.4 Discipline

Apparently Foucault's ideas on discipline are more prominent in the publication *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (Foucault 1977:170-194), although the discipline theme seems to be integrated into most of his other writings. It is important to notice that Foucault purposefully calls the social sciences scholarly disciplines (McHoul & Grace 1993:26), because of their role in normalising society by reproducing and circulating dominant discourses which keep deviancies in check. It is particularly meaningful that he describes discipline as "an art of correct training" (McHoul & Grace 1993:170). The mechanisms of regulation are given much attention when Foucault describes how the science of discipline engineers the individual in armies, schools, hospitals, in madhouses and in factories – the institutions of social control (McHoul & Grace 1993:26). In connection with this study I was also wondering about churches and religious communities as institutions of social control, too. It is in places like these that the principles of discipline will feature, namely: specialisation, minute control of activity, repetitive exercises and detailed hierarchies to produce what he calls the "calculable man" (McHoul & Grace 1993:193). As previously stated, calculable (wo-) man gets programmed to conform, if for nothing else, to "reproduce labour capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative" (Foucault 1978:37). If (wo-) man does not conform, as often found in resistances due to alternative sexual orientation, s/he is usually silenced and / or limited to "underground" (read: subculture) existence. These statements will be proved to be accurate from what we have learned.

For Foucault, discipline is a modest, subtle and suspicious power that becomes effective through the normalising judgement of *the gaze* and constant surveillance. Corrective punishments and rewards as manipulating and conditioning tools are carefully administered for the desired conforming effect, producing correctly trained and docile labourers for a capitalist industry. I am thus intrigued by the following part of a

question put to Foucault in an interview: "Does this disciplinary power…draw support from…this fixed conception of a population that reproduces itself in the proper way, composed of people who marry in the proper way and behave in the proper way, according to precisely determined norms?" (Foucault 1980:124) For me, the question implies that disciplinary power is strengthened in societies where there is a high level of conformity to reproduce conservative social norms. My experience tells me that in the predominantly conservative Afrikaans-Christian tradition there is precisely such a conforming culture: one which includes heterosexist attitudes against gays. In my opinion this can be at least partly ascribed to the influences of mainstream religious dogma and doctrine and to the supporting discourses against homosexuals within social science. Once again, my opinion was supported by what transpired from the study.

Furthermore, all the above-mentioned disciplinary mechanisms and discourses often results in queer people exercising forms of self-discipline in order to escape society's rejection or punishment. In this way, the disciplinary discourse influence often results in self-control and suppression = silence. This idea of self-correction, or self-discipline, can be demonstrated in the remark by one of the participants who said, "Eventually, I made a deliberate effort to develop myself toward more masculine behaviour, in order to escape the ridicule about my 'sissy' behaviour." The same self-disciplinary effect can be detected in a response from the other gay male participant: "The constant need to check up on myself like that in my opinion, certainly contributed to the fact that I have not yet achieved intellectually what I am capable of."

2.5 Discourse

After the brief introduction to Foucault's notions on discourse in chapter one, we will explore it somewhat further here. In its broadest sense, discourse means anything that can be said or written or communicated (Fillingham 1993:100). Foucault prefers a counter-theory and critical-analytical approach, also on the phenomenon of discourse (McHoul & Grace 1993:27). As mentioned earlier, Foucault treats discourses as *bodies of knowledge* that change over time. His concept discursive archive points to the "historical flux of the general system of the formation and transformation of statements…and (the) fragmented and changing sites across which the flows of power moves" (McHoul & Grace 1993:41). Embedded in this statement is the collaboration between discourse and power, as well as the potential for shifts and changes. This project indicated that, as far as the homosexual issue goes, we are experiencing and initiating significant 'shifts and changes' at this moment in history.

I can appreciate Foucault's question "…how do medical discourses during and before the twentieth century produce a particular kind of social subject; how does this limit 'who we can be', and what strategies are

available for broadening or even defeating this limit?" (McHoul & Grace 1993:30) In my view, this question is an important one for homosexual people, in that it prompts us to reflect on the kinds of discourses that influence us, specifically those that try to limit who we can be. Yet it also encourages us to search for the gaps or opportunities to go beyond the "prescribed" limits. Foucault (1978:100) stated, "Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together." He then continued:

> To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies… Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are… silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance.

The latter quote seems to say that as in the case of power-relations, there is a kind of fluidity between apparent dominant and resistant discourses. Both silencing and voice-ing discourses regarding homosexuality exist simultaneously, as discovered in our study. Foucault (1978:101) then proceeds to discuss the example of sodomy. Although it was considered as an extreme sin against nature and was punished severely on the one hand, Foucault postulates that there also must have been some considerable tolerance of it on the other hand within certain societies where men were together, like in the army. He felt strongly that all the anti-discourses on the sub-species of homosexuality and other perversities made possible the formation of "reverse" discourses. In Foucault's own words: "Homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy, or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified." (1978:101) Different and contradictory discourses can exist within the same field, and it complements the reciprocal effects of power and knowledge that they ensure (Foucault 1978:102).

With regard to Foucault's political approach to discourse, Halperin (1995:30) points out that he suggests that "to analyze discourse strategically, not in terms of what it says but in terms of what it does and how it works… enables us to devise some effective strategies for confronting and resisting the discursive operations of contemporary homophobia." According to Halperin (1995:31) "[t]he effect of Foucault's political approach to discourse is not to collapse truth into power but to shift the focus of our attention from matters of truth to matters of power. That shift has proven extremely profitable for the analysis of homophobic discourses." Halperin's view of Foucauldian formulation shows that the discourses of homophobia cannot be refuted by means of rational argument, they can only be resisted (Halperin 1995:32). In addition, and in relation to the epistemology of the closet (that is discussed in more detail in chapters five and seven), the link between discourse and silence can be mentioned. Sedgewick (quoted by Halperin 1995:37) notes that,

"[s]ilence itself … is less the absolute limit of discourse… than an element that functions alongside the things said." Foucault himself (quoted by Halperin 1995:37) wrote "There is not one, but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie an permeate discourses." In other words, a unilateral view of silence and discourse is being deconstructed in the light of Foucault's work. Silence and discourse also exist side by side, as seen in the accounts of the participants (chapters five to seven).

2.6 Sexuality

Everyone does it, but very few speak of it openly. It is almost like, in real life no one has sex. But, everyone is guilty, guilty of enjoying sex (Achmad 1994:325). Why is it that sex between men and sex between women seems to be regarded with extra denunciation and detestation? Does it not obscure the fact that it is a messy (and obviously enjoyable) business, whoever partakes and whatever is involved?

In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault once again challenges the so-called repressive discourses. He wondered, "why do we say, with so much passion and so much resentment against our recent past, against our present, and against ourselves, that we are repressed? By what spiral did we come to affirm that sex is negated?" (McHoul & Grace 1993:77) A number of questions that sprung to mind were, how was it possible in Western traditions to produce certain "truths" about sex and to regulate sex in institutions like schools? Was sex not in any case alive and well in the so-called repressed Victorian era (Spargo 1999:11), and in our era too, although we often believe that we are living in conservative cultures? As Foucault (1978:47) put it, "Nineteenth-century 'bourgeois' society – and it is doubtless still with us – was a society of blatant and fragmented perversion." And it must be noted that he was not referring to homosexuality only!

Foucault exposed and proclaimed the socio-political (and in my view, economic) phenomenon of population administration and management of life through (the problems of) demography, public health, hygiene, housing conditions, longevity and fertility. He referred to this as bio-power. In an interview he alluded to his idea of bio-power with the statement, "I believe that the political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population" (Foucault 1980:125). I was wondering, as you might, how this fits in with the "problem" of homosexuality? Maybe because the regulation and administration of procreative hetero-sex (assumption) does not directly affect homosexuals, they become social subjects that require a different kind of regulation? Maybe gays became a threat because they are less subject to bio-power? I doubt that we will arrive at reasonable answers to these somewhat rhetorical questions within the limitations of this study, even though it is interesting and thought provoking to ask them nevertheless.

In a different vein I would like to ask, how practices of confession - as one would find it in religion and psychology - became an essential technique of bio-power, operating in a similar way to the panopticon (that architectural design for optimal surveillance and the all-seeing gaze)? Maybe this was because "the flesh" had to be mastered through different forms of discourse, such as self-examination, questionings, admissions and interpretations that take place between "penitents and confessors, or the faithful and their directors of conscience" (Foucault 1978:98). I actually do wonder about the intersection of such religious and psychotherapeutic practices, and Foucault's notions about bio-power. But maybe that is also topic for another study.

Maybe gay people want to consider how we can un-think sexual definitions, and so escape power-deprivation? Foucault suggests the concept of 'play' to assist in transformation and to avoid the trap of always being (disadvantaged?) in power-relations in his statement: "Play, whether sexual or overtly political, challenges society's rules on a deeper and less predictable level, opening up greater possibilities for change" (quoted by Fillingham 1993:151). Therein seems to lie a great deal of power re-locating for queers, and a way of doing resistance without over-doing the seriousness of life's problems. I find the following statement by Foucault (quoted by Fillingham 1993:151) exceptionally apt:

> We must see our rituals for what they are: completely arbitrary things, tired of games and irony, it is good to be dirty and bearded, to have long hair, to look like a girl when one is a boy (and vice versa); one must put in 'play', show up, transform, and reverse the systems which quietly order us about. As far as I am concerned, that is what I try to do in my work.

The phenomenon of 'drag' (although stereotypically but erroneously associated with homosexuals in general), is a case in point. What about this queer phenomenon of 'drag' as play? Spargo (1999:58) views drag as "subversive parodic gender performativity… drag's hyperbolic parody exposes the imitative structure of gender itself, making us look again at what we think is natural." Whenever men cross-dress and parade, be it in (semi-) private or in public like during gay-pride marches, they are "…both deeply earnest in its call for lesbian and gay rights and wildly subversive in its challenge to heterosexual stereotyping" (Gevisser & Reid 1994: 278). Halperin (1995:49) points to this type of counter practice behaviour as theatricalization. It did not really seem to feature in our narrative accounts, however.

Bersani (quoted by Halperin 1995:19) summarises a Foucauldian notion of sexuality succinctly:

> Power in our societies functions primarily not by representing spontaneous sexual drives but by producing multiple sexualities, and that through the classification, distribution, and moral rating

of those sexualities the individuals practising them can be approved, treated, marginalized, sequestered, disciplined, or normalised.

The reader is invited to search for aspects of the mentioned classification, moral rating, marginalisation, disciplining and (ab-) normalisation of homosexuality in Foucault's version of the history of sexuality that follows.

2.7 A brief history of queer sexuality, mainly according to Foucault

Foucault contributed significantly to generate an alternative perspective of gay life against the mainstream heterosexist viewpoint. I therefore consider it worthwhile for this study to add a background to historic homosexuality based on his work. It provides us with a basis for the development of both pro- and anti-gay discourse, which is central to this study. You have been introduced to the idea that homosexuality has been constructed as a separate life form in the nineteenth century (Spargo 1999:17). To refresh the memory, Foucault (1978:43) pointed to an article by Westphal in 1870, on "contrary sexual sensations" that stated:

> We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised…as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of inferior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul.

It gives an indication of how homosexuality became a "personage...of a singular nature". The nineteenth century homosexual therefore became a case history with specific describable type of life and apparently, "nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions" (Foucault 1978:43). What this seems to suggest is that from then onward, when a person was of homosexual inclination, his sexuality would be the most prominent aspect of his constellation of possible attributes, to the degree that everything about him was filtered through the truth about his (homo-) sexual orientation. The homosexual was now a species, and guilty of a specific disorder as such, which apparently demanded continuous examination, observation and "an exchange of discourses" as part of a technology of health and pathology (Foucault 1978: 44). Calhoun (2000:83) gives another view on the historical development of homosexuality as one of the "gravest sins against divine law" by pointing to the time when sodomy as such was viewed as unnameable and unspeakable. Such a view was held in Britain for centuries, and the aversion with which it was regarded can be ascertained from the words of Blackstone (quoted by Calhoun 2000:83) in *his Commentaries on the laws of England*:

I will not act so disagreeable a part, to my readers as well as myself, as to dwell any longer upon a subject, the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature. It will be more eligible to imitate in this respect the delicacy of our English law, which treats it, in its very indictments, as a crime not fit to be named; 'peccatum illud horribile, inter christianos non nominandum'

To add to the history of the sodomy-discourse, Halperin (1995:33) mentions how nineteenth-century German gay-rights advocates were attempting to decriminalise sodomy. Apparently, they wanted to represent homosexuality to their contemporaries as something natural and proceeded to convince early sexologists of this view. The result was only a temporary reform of the Prussian penal code. Eventually they would be more frequently incarcerated in insane asylums and treated as members of a degenerate species. As far as the term homosexuality as such goes, Johansson and Percy (1994:13) have suggested that it originated from the late eighteenth to the turn of the nineteenth-century period. The term was coined apparently by one Karl Maria Benkert, whose name in Hungarian was Karoly Maria Kertbeny, and who wrote about Europe's homosexual subcultures in a document titled *Discovery of the soul* in 1880. In this document, both the term homosexual and heterosexual were introduced to the wider public. Thereafter these terms were connected to the medical concept of sexual inversion, which in turn was supposedly the more scientific and "objective" term for sodomy (Johansson & Percy 1994:14). However one looks at it, it was in the late nineteenth-century that homosexuality was being considered as something that people *are*, rather than as an act that people do (Ussher 1997:131). Ussher (1997:132) also points out that "conceptualizing homosexuality as an identity led to the regulation and control of the 'homosexual person', regardless of whether or not they have ever engaged in same sex sex." She also feels that as with the case of male gays, the categorisation of the 'lesbian' also made it visible, and it was henceforth deemed unacceptable and condemned. As in the case of male homosexuality, the writings on the horrors and dangers of lesbianism by sexologists were widely disseminated in the medical and popular literature (Ussher 1997:140).

What Kate Hunt (1997:32) a lesbian ordinand in the Church of England, refers to as the "power of naming" comes into effect with the identification of a form of life that can be distinguished from other forms. In agreement with this idea of naming, Calhoun (2000:95) wants us to remember the role that the twentieth-century sexologists Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing played. They established and defined sexual inversion as a psychiatric condition, or, as Calhoun (2000:95) puts it, these sexologists suggested that, "True inverts came by their homosexuality congenitally; and their distinguishing feature was not the orientation of their desire, but their cross-genderization, that is, their apparent constitution as a unique personality type – the third sex." Calhoun (2000:68) takes for granted that lesbianism was included in this historical and antique description of sexual inverts, labelled "the third sex". Moreover, this shift toward the

perception that homosexuals differ from heterosexuals in profound and essential ways, should be associated with "the rise of the status of the medical profession and its increasing explorations into the biological and psychological origins of human behaviour" (Looy 1997:499).

Ever since these descriptions of homosexuality, the institutions of education and psychiatry have influenced society – and vice versa – to say "no" to all wayward unproductive sexualities. At the same time, as we know by now, all this contributed to the proliferation of non-heterosexualities. In fact, Foucault (1978:48) stated that the very "implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure…multiplied… and penetrated modes of conduct." Perversions, so it seems, form part and parcel of the reciprocal power-resistance relations in close proximity to the efforts to regulate and control human sexuality. However, we yet need to refer to the problematisation of homosexuality via institutions other than those already mentioned.

For me, Christianity seems to associate the sexual act with sin or evil. Whether that be a fair observation or not, it was Christianity that drew the moral line of acceptable sexuality at monogamous heterosexual (procreative) marriage, disallowing intimate relations between people of the same gender. Together with the rule of procreative monogamy, there was a condemnation of homosexuality (which will be expanded upon in chapter three) and a "glorification of self-restraint" (Foucault 1985:15). Besides Christian texts and traditions, there were a number of nineteenth-century texts that contributed to stereotypical portraits of homosexuals as feminine and weak, usually based on the inversion of sexual roles as well as intercourse between individuals of the same gender. Among the texts that depicted homosexuals as feeble effeminates with soft voices and "filthy fineries" (Foucault 1985:19), some were from ancient Greece and Roman origin. Elsewhere, it is however suggested that the pagan Greeks had institutionalised pederasty under certain socially beneficial guidelines, and the Romans may never have officially outlawed homosexuality (Johansson & Percy 1994:2). To illuminate it somewhat, it should be noted that "while Romans might have seen desire as potentially harmful, Christians viewed it as intrinsically evil" (Spargo 1999:25). Johansson and Percy (1994:9) suggest that state persecution and social ostracism of those who loved their own sex became prevalent almost immediately after the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity.

Foucault remarked about this image of despicability - these strongly negative judgements and aversions to anything that remotely indicates renunciation of the proper signs and privileges of the heterosexual masculine role - as something that was to come down through the centuries in "forms of stigmatization that

will extend well into the future" (1985:20). Experience of modern gay people can of course vouch for the accuracy of the remark, and you will be able to see some of this in the narrative accounts that are shared.

If I say that I am surprised that anti-homosexual texts originated in Greece, it is because it is often described how in their devotion to sexual pleasure, this culture included and tolerated the practice of pederasty, or the love of boys, as well as a variety of homosexual and bisexual practices. Halperin (1995:111) even described ancient Greek sexual morality as something other than modern disciplines: it did not try to normalise, but in effect actually tried to marginalise, and *to queer*. Despite the fact that the Greeks displayed a degree of moral ambivalence toward homosexual practices, they nevertheless apparently judged it as wrong (Smit 1985:127). Foucault (1985:188) makes the point clear though that for the ancient Greeks to use the expression "bisexual" does not denote the meanings of ambivalent or dual structured desire. Instead, for the Greeks a man could desire another man, or boy for that matter, simply because he had an appetite for beautiful human beings, whatever their sexuality or gender might be. Not that these men's relationships with boys completely evaded problematisation, but how and when that happened will have to be put aside for now. What can be added in this regard is that the man-boy relationships of that time was hugely concerned about the principles of honour and devotion, self-mastery and such virtues, amongst others.

We must remember that Foucault did not suggest that sexual practices between same-gender people did not exist before the nineteenth-century. It was primarily viewed before this time as sodomy and forms of pederasty, but afterward these were described in more specific terms of condemnation and perversification. Smit (1985:127) believes that homosexuality was a familiar phenomenon in ancient-Israel, but he associates it with idolatry. He also mentions that it was widespread among the Canaanites, who were a heathen nation, and not subject to the laws of God.

In an interview between Foucault and James O'Higgins in 1982 (Rabinow 1994:141), mention as made of a book written in 1980 by John Boswell entitled *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Christian era to the Fourteenth Century*. I found the following footnote underneath the transcription of the interview quite fascinating because it provides historical data that can be read in conjunction with Foucault's views:

> According to Boswell the urban culture of Roman society did not distinguish homosexuals from others. The literature of the early Christian Church also did not oppose gay behaviour. But hostility to the sexuality of gay people became more evident at the time of the dissolution of the Roman State and its urban centres. The eleventh century brought a renaissance of urban life and with it the reappearance of a more visible gay culture, which was only to be threatened a century later by theological and legal prejudices. The intolerance of the late Middle Ages

continued to have an effect on European culture for centuries to come. To understand the nature of gay relationships, Boswell insists that they must be studied within temporal boundaries according to the customs of their day.

<div align="right">(Rabinow 1994:155)</div>

Foucault's take on homosexuality seems to be mirrored by a social constructivist assertion that the conception of 'the homosexual' as a distinct type of person is relatively recent, despite ancient examples of same-sex behaviour in most known societies. According to social constructionism, "no essence of homosexuality historical unfolding can be illuminated" (Szesnat 1997:277) neither does sexuality come in two categories only. It must be noted however that "social constructionism is not a dogma, religion or an article of faith" (Szesnat 1997:285) either, but it allows and represents a deconstructive perspective that I can relate to. With this (mostly) Foucauldian perspective of the history of homosexuality in mind, I now want to invite you to undertake a short tour through queer theory, an academic field that owes a great deal of its existence to Foucault.

2.8 Foucault and Queer Theory: The academic discipline of the sexual "other"

As with the history of homosexuality, queer theory gives us a backdrop for a study on discourses surrounding homosexuality (its problematisation as well as its normalisation). In the case of queer theory, we are provided with a gay oriented academic movement. I want to include something on it as a contribution to pro-gay discourse, in addition to the history of homosexuality as a problem / abnormality.

We can hardly enter into a discussion of what has come to be called queer theory, without acknowledging that we are in the midst of profound changes in the world as we know it. The dynamics of change itself are changing radically. Altering our worldview - our fundamental assumptions of how the world is / works - seems to be part of our day to day living (Land & Jarman 1992:9). Foucault did say that discourses also change over time. And so it seems to be with the advent of the expression *queer*. Spargo (1999:3) points out that "the word 'queer', once hurled or whispered as an insult is now proudly claimed as a marker of transgression by people who once called themselves lesbian or gay." He rightly wonders, how did all that came about? We will explore this below.

Ussher (1997:131) describes queer theory as the discipline of gay and lesbian studies. Although women in the feminist movement were the first to query gender difference, homosexuals and others whose sexualities were defined against the norm of heterosexuality soon followed. To do so entailed politics in the realm of sexuality. It challenged most of society's basic assumptions about sex, gender and sexuality and

transformed it in many ways. We need not be surprised to learn that Foucault is associated with transformation of sexuality, especially after the recent introduction to his analysis of the interrelationships between knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality. At this point it should not seem strange to view Foucault as a catalyst for the creation of new ideas, and as particularly influential in the developments toward queer theory. In the following paragraphs we will very briefly touch on "…a particular set of discourses on sexuality culminating (temporarily, and not exclusively) in the current queer moment" (Spargo 1999:10). I want to make it clear that this short exposition will be based almost entirely on Spargo's *Foucault and Queer Theory* (1999:1-69).

Having said that, I nevertheless would like to introduce the term queer as it is presented by Holmlund and Fuchs (1997:6). Their work provides a broad view of the concept that is appropriate within a discussion of queer theory. They see the word queer:

> As both … a consciously chosen site of resistance and a location of radical openness and possibility for the expression of erotically 'marginal' perspectives. Queer is also, for now, the most inclusive term available, in many instances used also to address bisexual and transgendered concerns as well as those considered gay and lesbian. Finally, and precisely because we are aware that queer can be reduced to opposition, marginality, and / or lesbian and gay, we intend the word queer to question and exceed binary distinctions based on physical boundaries, to point to the ways in which… 'The queer operates within the nonqueer, as the nonqueer does within the queer.'

Halperin (1995:62) also contributed to the notion of queer identity by implying that it does not need to be grounded in any positive truth or in any stable reality. His definition of queer is as follows,

> Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. Queer then…demarcates… a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalized because of her or his sexual practices.

First, and this idea has already been introduced, is Foucault's rejection of the "repressive hypothesis" and his contention that (homo-) sexuality is a constructed category (Spargo 1999:12). Foucault did not ignore the role of biology in sexuality, but prioritised the central influence of social institutions and specific discourses in the formation of sexualities. He also managed to explore how psychoanalysis as discourse produced knowledges about (homo-) sexuality, and how such knowledges "contributes to the maintenance of specific power relations" (Spargo 1999: 14) not by actually repressing sexuality, but in a sense by encouraging people to speak about it *in specific ways*. For instance, the vocabulary that was provided to confess both to the priest and to the therapist, was made available by religious and socio-medical (psychological /

psychiatric) discourses. And of course the story told was heard and interpreted by an expert / authority, thereby becoming a truth that is produced within a particular discourse. And, as Spargo (1999:15) points out, "it is bound up with power."

The construction of the homosexual human "condition" from the earlier aberrant sodomite during the nineteenth-century, paved the way for homosexuality to be seen as pathology, suitable for treatment or subject to corrective disciplining and subordinated to social control (Spargo 1999: 20). Yet, as we have learned, by way of reverse-discourse homosexuality soon began to speak on its own behalf to demand its legitimacy and acknowledgement. At this point it would be apt to share Spargo's remark that "It was Foucault's overall model of the discursive construction of sexualities what was the main initial catalyst for queer theory" (1999:26). His ideas opened up possibilities for a different approach to understanding the changing relationships between sex, sexuality and power.

These developments may have contributed towards the use of the term 'gay' by homosexuals to describe themselves, as a matter of pride and resistance. Similarly, the gay liberation movement(s) that was to follow "contested the representation of same-gender desires and relationships as unnatural, deviant and incomplete" (Spargo 1999:28). Being and doing gay is both personal and political, as evident in the following statement by Spargo (1999:30):

> For lesbians and gay men, being 'out' or 'in' the closet became a crucial marker of their sexual politics. Coming out suggested emerging from confinement and concealment into the open, a movement from secrecy to public affirmation.

Similarly, Fuoss (1994:160) proposes that politics refers to "the struggle among competing interests for the power to define, establish, and maintain a norm… includes sexual and textual politics, encompassing both attempts to bolster and attempts to resist the hegemonic might of status quo norms." Having said that, it is obvious that the political struggle about by whom and how alternative sexualities gets defined continues… by way of a historical process.

Some of the movements in recent times that can be connected to queer history and Foucault's influences, are radical groups like Queer Nation and the Pink Panthers. They are involved in organising visible projects and activities to protect gay people's basic safety, freedom and rights. According to Spargo (1999:37), these groups have been known to arrange street patrols to counter gay bashing, commemorative marches, gatherings, and have even held anti-homophobic educational meetings in straight bars (in America, of course!) It was groups like these who actually preferred the slang term "queer" (as sometimes used in

homophobic discourse), to show their resistance and counter-inversion of anti-gay language and social expression.

There were people who found the terms "gay" and "lesbian" inadequate or too restricting for self-description. They wanted to contrast it more than with the "relative respectability" of gay / lesbian. This is clearly portrayed by Spargo's (1999: 40-41) statements:

> Queer theory could be seen as mobilizing 'queer' as a verb that unsettles assumptions about sexed and sexual being and doing. In theory, queer is perpetually at odds with the normal, the norm, whether that is dominant heterosexuality or gay / lesbian identity. It is definitively eccentric, ab-normal. Queer theory employs a number of ideas from poststructuralist theory, including Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic models of decentred, unstable identity, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures, and, of course, Foucault's model of discourse, knowledge and power.

It is clear that queer theory originated from a range of influences. Queer theory can be considered as a collective of studies within the humanities, history, literacy and philosophy, among others, whose exponents share a common concern with the politics of representation of gay and lesbian topics (Spargo 1999:41). Queer theory informs texts on homophobic discourses and constructions. Since its conception, there has been a steady increase of availability of university courses on queer theory.

One of the most important issues addressed by queer theorists was the opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which in many ways operated at the heart of traditional homophobic as well as anti-homophobic discourse (Spargo 1999: 44). Studies in queer theory confirmed Foucault's concern that certain affirmative queer politics reinforce the marginality of those who are 'in the closet', as well as "the binary and unequal opposition between homosexual and heterosexual" (Spargo 1999:47). Rather than opposing, queer theory should be seen as examining and questioning how a heterosexist worldview has shaped hierarchies, knowledge and power. In this respect, it helps to see homo- *and* heterosexuality as categories of socially constructed knowledge, rather than innate properties of people. The 'self' can then be recognised as a product of languaged discourses linked to certain divisions of knowledge. Gender and sexual preference are caught up in society's constructions of reality, according to such an approach, which captures and limits the options of sexual identities.

The work of feminist Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*) apparently has been a major influence in queer theory. Her contributions did much to restore the place of femininity / female within gender discourse analysis, whereas Foucault has been criticised for focussing on the male

homosexual. Spargo (1999:54) suggests that one of Butler's arguments is that "[c]ompulsory heterosexuality is installed in gender through the productions of taboos against homosexuality, resulting in a false coherence of apparently stable gender attached to appropriate biological sexes." Other phenomena that have intersected with queer theory and, more specifically, with Butler's work, is that of 'drag', which was mentioned earlier, as well as studies on transsexuals, transgender and the subversive potential of *camp*. Whilst *camp* - a form of twisted and over-the-top body-language and language usage - in the 1970's underpinned the negative images of flamboyant queers, it can today perform as subversion of heterosexist norms, as well as depicting certain ways of being for gay and lesbian identities (Spargo 1999:62). In a similar vein, Halperin (1995:29) refers to the notion of *camp* as cultural resistance by means of parody, exaggeration, amplification and theatricalization.

Queer theory may also stress the connections between theatricality (including aspects of *drag* and *camp*) and politics as we have encountered in the local characters of Evita Bezuidenhout and Nataniël. They satirise not only gender-prescriptions but often also undercut forms of racism and sexism that exist in our society. These performers seem to push the boundaries toward queer as eccentric and experimental action and performativity that "allow for the individual and collective subject agency in resisting oppressive knowledges and practices without returning to the modernist idea of the autonomous subject" (Spargo 1999:65). They are not autonomous subjects because they are performing their satirical art publicly, and have to a significant degree become part of the South African (and specifically, Afrikaans) society.

What is interesting is that the question is already being asked whether queer has just become another category. Is queer theory is just another fashion or tendency which focuses on transgression and difference as goals in themselves (Spargo 1999:6)? For the time being, queer theory is regarded as an academic discourse and is involved in a kind of "double movement of contesting and producing knowledge" (Spargo 1999: 68). As I have already explained, I want queer theory to become one of the backdrops for our study.

2.9 Other alternative discourses inspired by Foucault

One of the alternative ideas that Foucault proposed in relation to homosexuality was that gays should not merely affirm or defend themselves, but that they should also become a creative force. This notion is woven into many of his remarks if one looks at them deconstructively. Consider for instance his remark in an interview with Gallagher and Wilson in 1982 (Quoted in Rabinow 1994:166) that "[t]he relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation." He later also said that "resistance is a process of breaking out of discursive

practices" (Quoted in Rabinow 1994168). This seems to suggest that gay people's resistance against limiting and oppressing discourses can go beyond merely changing the discourse into diversifying sexualities and innovative living.

The work of Halperin (1995:67-126) can also be considered ideal to form a basis for Foucauldian alternative discourse about queer. As a start, Halperin quoted Foucault as having said, "Homosexuality is a historic opportunity to open up new relational and affective potentialities, not in virtue of qualities intrinsic to the homosexual, but because the position of the homosexual 'off-center'… makes it possible to bring to light these potentialities" (Halperin 1995:67). Apparently Foucault's work shifted in the last years of his life, from politics toward ethics. He became attracted to the notion of an aesthetic, or "stylistics of existence" which he encountered with the ancient Greek and Roman writers, also referred to as an entire "art of life" (Halperin 1995:68). One of the main principles of ethical conduct in an aesthetic approach to life would be to live toward what one would consider to be a beautiful and praiseworthy life. Self-mastery and the 'care of the self' were among the ultimate goals within such a lifestyle. It was these possibilities of "ethical artistry, self-cultivation, and various stylistics of the self" that Foucault attributed to gay and lesbian communities (Halperin 1995:71). I think it is important to notice that Foucault's conception of 'the self' which was to be cultivated as an "art of life" is not a personal identity, "so much as it is a relation of reflexivity" (Halperin 1995: 76). This would allow the gay person to resist and even 'escape' her / his social and psychological determinations. In a sense, this self-transformation (transcendence?) may become possible in the practice of gay sex, in fact, in the practice of different kinds of queer sex. Not least of all, such a transcending approach to life would include learning to think differently, and to be "in a state of becoming… to keep working persistently at being gay" (Foucault 1978:24). Foucault saw homosexuality as a type of "spiritual exercise insofar as it consists of an art or style of life through which individuals transform their modes of existence and, ultimately themselves" (Halperin 1995:78).

It seems like Foucault meant that it is our task to become queer, where queerness constitutes not only a resistance to norms or a negation of established values, but a positive and creative construction of different ways of life. This would include, in the terms of Halperin (1995:81) "[devising] relationships that might offer strategies for enhancing pleasure and might enable us to escape the ready-made formulas already available to us." The latter statement acquires more meaning when we are reminded by Foucault (quoted by Halperin 1995:96) that:

> There is an entire biologism of sexuality and therefore an entire hold over it by doctors and psychologists – in short, by the agencies of normalisation. We have over us doctors,

pedagogues, law-makers, adults, parents who talk sexuality… it is not enough to liberate sexuality; we also have to liberate ourselves… from the very notion of sexuality.

Foucault seems to suggest that we should deconstruct the acquired, learned, notions of what sex and sexuality is in order to go beyond prescriptive roles and expectations. Such a process does not have to focus on a struggle against prohibition, but rather become a kind of counter-productivity (Halperin 1995:97). Hence, it is not so much the sexual act itself, but a homosexual way of life that becomes the threat to hegemonic heterosexist practices. It would seem that Foucault considered homosexuality as a possible resource for practising "spiritual exercises" in the twentieth-century (and beyond). Halperin (1995:108) unpacks the concept "spiritual exercise" as proposed by Foucault as follows:

> To indicate something of the effort required to produce the social and psychic ruptures that lesbian and gay men must engineer daily in order to detach ourselves from heteronormative society, so as to be able to lead our queer lives without apology or compromise, and to continue to forge new and better ways of being queer.

Thus it would seem that a Foucauldian perspective of homosexuality would be to see it as a site for continuous de- and re-construction and renewal of ever changing identities. For this purpose, homosexuality happens to be in a good strategic position because it opens up possibilities for gay / lesbian / queer 'science'. Such a science would be one without objects, but rather queer studies as an ongoing process of self-knowing and self-formation (Halperin 1995:122). To me, this sounds like a creative life-process informed by our experiences and our story-ing of them. We can speak for ourselves and in the speaking create and re-create our lives and communities, sexually and otherwise. This actually did happen in our project.

The postmodernist idea that compulsory-, abusive-, and dominant heterosexuality - also referred to as heteronormativity - can be rehabilitated, was entertained by Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997:404). They suggest that a type of "queer *hetero*sexuality" can be promoted. I have seen examples of this in heterosexual men who experiment with cross-dressing / transvestism (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1997:413) and who explore and integrate their "feminine side". There are also straight men who include gays in their friendship circles. The effect of such theatricalization could be the deconstruction of the heterosexist ideas of heterosexuality, as well as the deconstruction of subordination of people under male power - even the deconstruction of "heterosexuality as key mechanism through which male dominance is achieved" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1997:408). Such forms of gender-play or gender bending (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1997:412) may be useful in the process of deconstruction homophobia and heterosexism, and thus worthy of mention here.

2.10 Critique of Foucault, and in defence of Foucault

Whereas the ideas of Foucault have been considered by many, including myself in the context of this study, as an exceptional intellectual contribution to queer liberties (from literacy / theory through to praxis), there are thinkers who critique his ideas. Champagne (1995:5) argues that in the modern West, culturally marginalised people such as gays cannot define and legitimate their own existence outside the framework established for them by the dominant group. His position seems to be post-Foucauldian in a sense, implying the impossibility of liberty from subjectivity. I do not think that our stories claimed to be defining gay existence completely outside of the available discourse-framework as much as there was a deconstruction of certain discourses and (re-) construction of preferred ones. For now, Champagne's critique needs merely to be acknowledged.

In addition, Champagne seems to be wary and suspicious of the recent and developing tendency in gay and lesbian studies to deploy largely untheorised notions of autobiography and experience. He is particularly suspicious of the "eagerness with which the liberal academy has lent its benevolent ear to our stories of late" (Champagne 1995:89). Considering that this study included an ethnographic slant, we should note what Jacques Derrida (quoted by Champagne 1995:57) said in this regard namely:

> Ethnology – like any other science - comes about within the element of discourse. And it is primarily a European science employing traditional concepts, however much it may struggle against them. Consequently, whether he wants to or not – and this does not depend on a decision on his part – the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he is employed in denouncing them.

Although Champagne might be critical of the narrative / ethnographic approaches within social science research, I was not able to confirm the reasons for his suspicion sufficiently for this study to be affected by it. He also seems to be of the opinion that searching for some "monumental history of homosexuality" (Champagne 1995:135) through the uncovering of all the great people who were gay that ever lived, runs the risk of:

> Rendering the lives of historical gay and lesbian subjects useful for homogeneous culture, turning a knowledge of their transgressive sexual practices into material for coffee table books and music and video's, rewriting gay and lesbian subjects in an image palatable for middle-class consumption by focussing on their 'artistic' production of heroic actions at the expense of an insistence on their wasteful carnality.

Despite this critique, there may well be a place for gay "role models", even those who have passed away. It was not an issue that was covered in this particular project, however. Champagne nevertheless poses questions like, Is celebration of culturally marginalised people by the dominant culture actually benefiting those who are oppressed? Whose interests are served in such a celebration, and How are existing power relations altered? His critique moves gay studies beyond both identity politics and the "rights" discourse within which much of contemporary gay studies are positioned. Our study does seem to incorporate the elements of identity politics, as well as what Champagne calls the rights discourse. However, I do think that in our context these focuses are useful and valid.

In a similar critical vein, feminist Nancy Hartstock and literary critic Barbara Christian felt quite suspicious of some of Foucault's ideas during a time when a lot of marginal groups were finally breaking their silences, and rejecting oppressive structures that limited their freedom and rights (Sawicki 1994:296). It could well be worth reflecting on the possibility that Foucault might be interpreted in ways that limit or prevent resistance or political praxis, although I do not expect it needs to be done within the scope of this study.

In defence of Foucault I would like to share a contribution by Halperin. According to his view of Foucauldian formulation, the discourses of homophobia cannot be refuted by means of rational argument: they can only be resisted (Halperin 1995:32). He proposed strategic discourse analysis instead as a way of fighting homophobia. This would expose the operations of homophobic discourse "to reveal the strategies by which the discourse of medicine, law, science and religion deauthorise lesbians and gay men. To subject those discourses to a political critique, and thereby to attempt to find ways of frustrating the political strategies immanent in their deployment, of delegitimating their claims to authority and dismantling their institutional base." We must remember that in his political work, Foucault tried a different tactic whereby he created opportunities for the voices of the disempowered to be heard, recorded, published, and circulated (Halperin 1995:52). This political tactic will again be referred to in chapter five. What Foucault refers to as "reverse discourse" (Halperin 1995:58) includes the idea that homosexuals begin speaking for themselves. This is an idea that has certainly been used in our study. Foucault therefore gave specific guidelines about how he thought discourse analysis could be conducted, and seems to suggest at the same time that such procedures involved a kind of political praxis. I have found these ideas particularly useful in our project, as will be more evident in chapters five to seven.

2.11 Summary of chapter two and expected influence of Foucault's ideas on the research

Looking in the rear-view mirror it seems that the central themes and concepts of Foucauldian work – namely, knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality - accompanied us throughout the project to guide and enlighten us. Foucault increased my curiosity as to how, when and why knowledges *different* from mainstream scientific "truth" exist and flourish in many gay people's lives and in their stories about their lives. In other words, parallel to my interest in analysing those discourses that have a limiting effect on people's lives within their bodies, there developed a curiosity about how it becomes possible not to allow oneself to be continually ordered around by the social systems and structures. I believe that during our narrative-participative inquiry these interests and curiosities which were inspired by Foucault have been researched meaningful and useful ways.

In the light of the above, I found the following question by Foucault (quoted by Rabinow 1994:135) extremely apt prompting me to consider the alternative purposes and functions of our gay desires and inclinations: "Perhaps it would be better to ask ourselves 'what relations, through homosexuality, can be established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?'" Rabinow (1994:135) then continues to comment that "the problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but, rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships." This Foucauldian notion of queerness as an instrument of diversification of the world fascinates me tremendously, and I hope that this project may instil a similar curiosity amongst the reader(s) of this report. In my view, the idea of diversification of life through homosexuality has been confirmed by some of the narrative accounts of our participants. The reader may agree / disagree after reading the last three chapters.

I think it is important to realise that one of Foucault's main aims was: "that the whole conceptual scheme that categorises homosexuals as deviants must be dismantled" (in an interview quoted by James O'Higgins 1994:141). According to Foucault therefore, and to a large degree also according to the participants involved in this project, homosexuality is simply an inadequate category!

I choose to conclude this chapter with Foucault's words (quoted by Spargo 1999:69):

> The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.

The statement envelops the aims of this study in terms of the historical analysis of the limits imposed on gay people through the influence of discourses, as well as how to go beyond these limits and discourses. However, Foucault's vision seem to go even further than what is captured within discourse – which may be worth a separate study altogether. It should be clear nevertheless that his ideas have contributed significantly to both the inspiration and the "doing" of this research project.

CHAPTER THREE
EPISTEMOLOGY - THEOLOGY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

3.1 Introduction: What do people say God says about gays in the world? (Heading suggested by Org)

Having come thus far reading the report, you will have some idea of the potential influence of discourses in problem phenomena. Also, there has been some foretaste of the role that theology, religion, churches and religious communities have played in the lifetime of homosexuality as a problematic "condition". This chapter is intended as an extension of previous introductions to the historic influence of theology / religion in the lives of homosexuals. It so happened that our study included four gay participants (including myself as research initiator-facilitator) who all have Christian religious backgrounds, and who have all experienced how our religious culture-of-birth has impacted profoundly on our sexualities. I consider it imperative therefore, that the report give coverage of a number of theological positions regarding homosexuality. The inclusion of a separate chapter on religion is also deemed important because the dissertation forms part of a degree in theology.

Let me say from the onset of this chapter that the motive is not to do theology- and religion blaming, or discourse blaming for that matter. However, when discourses that have influenced gay people are explored, it will be shared whether these are pro- or anti-homosexual or pro- or anti-religion / theology (or somewhere in between, if that be the case). In other words religious discourses will be allowed irrespective of their relative truth statuses. At this stage the religious discourses surrounding homosexuality are expected to arise both from literary texts that were consulted as well as living texts, namely the participants themselves. Some of the related / storied experiences of the participants may 'accompany' us from time to time when appropriate. There will also be a sharing of experiences and narrative texts by others: for instance, people who participated as speakers at a gay conference.

This chapter includes an exploration of Biblical origins of homosexual discourse, the position(s) of the European church-groups in our country on the matter of homosexuality, the sharing of a short investigation on the influence of fundamentalism in other western but non-Christian traditions, as well as some alternative (including pro-gay) theological and spiritual discourses on homosexual sexualities.

3.2 Biblical origins of homosexual discourse: Homosexuality is an abomination in the eyes of God

The traditional position of the churches on homosexuality has been, in the words of our theologian participant, "that it is taboo, it is a sin, you will go to hell, you are a pervert, you are against God's creation, and Jesus can heal you." Similarly, the other gay male participant, a minister's son, reiterated, "All the churches as far as I know discourage openness about homosexuality. It is proposed that gays are welcome in the church if they are prepared to confess to their sin and if they withhold from practising homosexuality. What they are saying is, 'You are welcome as long as you are not gay.'" Biblical origins of homosexual discourse will necessarily include an exploration of the (in-) famous Biblical passages that have been at the centre of homosexual debate for a long time. The scope of this study will not allow us to attempt a comprehensive exposition of the separate verses, yet these will receive reasonable attention as a whole.

The texts in question are Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9 and Timothy 1:8-10. Some Biblical scholars will also refer to Judges 19:22 as one of the "homosexual verses." I share here with the reader, extracts from some of these verses. All the quotes are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible (1982).
1) From Genesis 19:4 & 5: "The men of the city, the men of Sodom… called to Lot and said to him: 'where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.'"
2) From Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."
3) From Leviticus 20:13: "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death."
4) From Romans 1:27: "The men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."
5) From 1 Corinthians 6:9 & 10: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? …Nor homosexuals, nor sodomites…will inherit the kingdom of God."
6) From Timothy 1:9 & 10: "The law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and the insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners…the profane, ... for sodomites…any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."
7) From Judges 19:22: "…suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door… saying, 'Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!'"

Whether or not all or some of the mentioned Biblical verses refers to homosexuality, and whether the indication of specific verses are condemning it or not, is a matter of interpretation – the field of hermeneutic

exegesis. One of the possible interpretations of the passages is of course the literal way. This leads to judgement, condemnation and discrimination against homosexuals on Biblical grounds (Griffin 1999:214). It would seem that historically the latter interpretation has been the most popular. Obviously, there are different readings possible of all texts, including the handbooks of all the "great" religions of our world.

Germond (1997:189) mentions two sets of assumptions that are active during reading and interpreting Bible texts. These are firstly, the assumptions, perceptions and perspectives of the writers themselves, and secondly, the assumptions that readers of the Bible bring to the message. Although unavoidable, these assumptions should be thoroughly kept in mind whenever passages are analysed. Appropriate and contextual interpretation is essential, unless we generalise our own assumptions and superimpose them on that which is written. One of the dangers of taking certain assumptions for granted in the interpretation of Biblical texts, is that it may have profound influences on people and their lives, as we will see in the case of homosexuals and the interpretation of the quoted passages.

More recently, there have been a number of theologians who have concluded that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality as such. Among these writers would be Paul Germond and Steve de Gruchy, in *Aliens in the Household of God*. Whenever the more progressive interpretations of these Scripture passages are discovered by gay people / gay Christians, they experience tremendous liberation, as evident in the words of Wilma Jakobsen: "It was as if the lights went on" (1997:71). Her experience took her from the dark ages into enlightenment, one could say! Progressive interpretations are more contextual than earlier or traditional ones. Grethie, our female gay participant's remark in this regard was, "You only hear one interpretation – the heterosexist interpretation. I did not even know there were other interpretations! When I found out about alternative interpretations of the Bible, my first reaction was one of relief, that I was 'normal.'" After a careful examination using a hermeneutics of suspicion of the six mentioned Bible texts that are usually used to justify condemnation of homosexuals, Germond (1997:228) draws the following conclusion:

> Resorting to these six texts to justify a theology of heterosexism seems to me to be an exercise in utter futility. They simply are not convincing at all… If theologians and church people wish to continue to exclude lesbian and gay Christians from full participation in the church, they should have the dignity to be honest and say so, rather that hiding behind the pitiful defence of the six texts. Christ died to break down all dividing walls. He died so that all may no longer be aliens but members of the household of God.

Andrè Muller (1997:175), pastor of the Reforming Church in Pretoria, added his voice to the theological debate by specifically referring to the Afrikaans translations of the Bible which gives the impression that God judges gay people without any qualification. He also believes that all the "judgmental passages" in the Bible

need to be read and translated within their cultural and historic contexts, and that it is probable that none of (in-) famous "homosexual verses" are applicable today to those that we call 'gay' people (Muller 1997:176).

When we consider the issue of gay and lesbian life, religious groups universally seem to have interpreted the Bible from a heterosexist position. Germond (1997:193) reminds us that as a predominantly heterosexual institution the Christian church assumes that heterosexuality is the normative form of human sexuality. It should not come as a surprise therefore, that heterosexism often results in homophobia. Homophobia, like racism, is often saturated with binary oppositions – in this case the binary of heterosexual-homosexual occupies a central place in the discourse. One of the participators suggested his experience during his school years that "You are either a sissy or a man" as an example of the dichotomising of sexuality. Germond and de Gruchy (1997:3) confirm my position with their opinion that the problem is not homosexuality, but the very need to categorise lives and faiths as problems, *that* is the problem.

Local literary works on theological ethics make it apparent how the Reformed / Protestant Christian tradition has contributed to a theology of heterosexism. Heyns (1986:135) for instance, defines the sacrament of marriage as a relationship that is only possible between two people of the opposite sex. Williams (1997:20) who declares that "God's creational intent for human sexuality is heterosexual monogamous marriage" echoes Heyns' view. This view is widely held and often forms the basis for arguments against gay relationships. In contradiction to this, Stuart (1997:183) shares the thought provoking feminist-based argument that homosexuality is not necessarily prohibited because love and sex between men are prohibited, but because penile penetration involves transgression of the prescribed roles allocated to men and women according to the heterosexist / patriarchal reading of the Scriptures.

Naudè (1988:636-649) wrote an article for the Afrikaans journal *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* on the ordination of creation and homosexuality, from whence the influence of the heterosexual-monogamous-marriage discourse also becomes evident. He supplies us with an overview of the dogmatic-ethical theological positions of Brunner, Barth, and Thielicke on the homosexual question. Whereas these influential theologians do differ somewhat in their arguments surrounding homosexuality, it becomes clear that all of them, whether covertly or overtly, banish or exclude homosexuality from the original divine plan for humankind, based on the fundamental principle of the male-female ordinance for creation.

Although Smit (1985:135), author of *Etos en Etiek* (Ethos and Ethics) is of the opinion that gays ought to be allowed a place in society, he sides with those who are convinced that the practice of homosexuality should definitely be judged as a perversion. He leaves little doubt that he supports the ideas about homosexuality

as a mixture of illness and sin (Smit 1985:147). This author was indeed very concerned about the development of pro-gay liberation movements in South Africa, as well as some 'radical pro-homosexual' developments within theological hermeneutics during the mid-eighties. His heterosexist position is obvious when he explains heterosexuality as part of God's plan for creation and for humankind (1985:136). It comes as no surprise then, that he also suggests healing from this highly addictive problem of brokenness, through proper religious practice and forgiveness. Given such discourses, many young gay people, including one of our participants (during his youth) came to the conclusion that, "My intimate thoughts and feelings toward other boys and men, I simply viewed as a serious sin, that God must rid me of."

Smit (1985:137) also mentions a number of theologians' declarations in favour of homosexuality as an acceptable practice, but suggests that their leniency is conditional. He criticises the work of more tolerant theologians like Ridderbos and Thielicke among others, for being unduly critical of fundamentalism or too speculative around the homosexual phenomenon. He rejects Thielicke's leniency and his proposals that homosexuals should be encouraged to accept their condition, on the grounds that such an attitude will spread the message that homosexuals may then practice their sinful desires. Instead, Smit (1985:137) seems to expect gay people to suppress their desires as proof of living responsibly in the eyes of God, and urges them to seek counselling. Other solutions he suggests includes a type of protesting self-acceptance, disciplined self-control and "meaningful sublimation" which is a form of suppression and redirecting 'primitive' instincts into a culturally higher activities (Smit 1985:147). At this point I would like to ask whether Smit's arguments look like ethics or moral higher ground? Another opinion Smit (1985:147) has about same-sex relationships is that it remains incomplete due to the absence of the opposite sex. He does not consider homosexual marriages as worthy, not because of the absence of love as such, but due to the fact that it cannot reach the structural normativity of heterosexual marriages, and because it will never be "stabilised" by procreation and becoming a complete family (Smit 1985:147). Heyns (1986:138-139) mirrors the latter position of Smit by putting forward doubt at the potential of homosexual relationships to attain the complementarity and adaptability of its heterosexual counterpart. Implicated in Heyns' argument is the inability-to-procreate discourse, that apparently renders same-gender relationships invalid, or doomed, or both.

Heyns (1986:146-147) places the foundation of sexual relationships on biological difference between the sexes. Such a position disqualifies the gay relationship on a fundamental level. Of late, gay couples are more and more becoming involved in procreative projects through in-vitro fertilisation and surrogate parenting agreements – although I hope it is not an effort to duplicate the procreative-normative prescription / expectation, or to answer to its pressures. Nevertheless, I am fascinated by Heyns' (1986:164) description of

homosexuality as "sexuality without the other sex", a subtle but vicious strategy to amplify the notion of same-sexualness as incomplete and aberrant. What is more, he categorised this description together with other deviancies under the heading: Threats to Sexuality, no less! One of the threats, I presume, could be that homosexuality subverts 'normal' heterosexuality and healthy family structures. This completely disregards the immense social problems that are experienced within heterosexual families. Our female-gay participant, who prefers the self-reference of gay instead of lesbian, views this process of theological-ethics as "heterosexual brainwashing… an assumption that there is no greater variety, or that there must not be a variety of sexualities."

Heyns (1986:165), a theologian, provided the reader of his text with an expert explanation of the variety of homosexualities that existed in 1986. These were: True homosexuality (when it is part of a person's psycho-physical structure), Pseudo homosexuality (when a person is a core-heterosexual, but there is no contact possible with members of the opposite sex), Need homosexuality (similar to pseudo homosexuality, people of the same gender live together and do not have access to members of the other sex), Developmental homosexuality (homosexual behaviour as experimental and due to curiosity), and finally, Fashion homosexuality (homosexuality practised by people who want to make a social protest statement). While reading from Heyns' *Teologiese Etiek* (Theological Ethics) I wondered how these descriptions found their way into the minds of people in the field of theology / religion, and how such notions might become part of discourses, circulating as the truth of the day?

Heyns (1986:166-168) continues, and makes an effort to explain the theological rejection of homosexuality, by making a few positions clear. Firstly, homosexuality is a sin, and must be condemned. However, if the practice of this sin is unavoidable, it must be done in utmost discretion and secrecy. Secondly, homosexuality is against the will of God, because God intended people to live and survive in relationships as male and female. Sexuality is supposed to be practised only in its natural intended form, which is the heterosexual form. Homosexuality practised is a destroyer of marriage in its divine intention, therefore homosexuality is an abnormal, broken reality – it goes against the grain of humanness. Homosexual sex is sterile and cannot lead to fertilisation and therefore procreation, which underpins its unnaturalness. The use of the excretory organ for sexual activity (sodomy as stereotypical association with gay male sex) is considered unclean and an abuse of what the organs have been intended for.

Heyns (1986:167) also covers the familiar Bible passages that supposedly condemn homosexuality. Although he admits that the historic-critical method of exegesis has claimed some of these verses non-normative and not against homosexuality as such, Heyns decides to brush those arguments aside as mere

secular ethics. According to him, homosexuality should be regarded as contagious, and therefore a threat to the entire society. In his view homosexuality should be considered a radical kind of deviancy, and a serious form of decadence. Heyns further postulates that not all homosexuals should be held accountable for their pathological condition as such, yet must take full responsibility if they should dare to act on their wrongful inclinations or instincts. Homosexual people are called on to exercise self-restraint, but should preferably convert to Jesus, where healing can begin. According to him the homosexual problem should be attended to by a team of multi-professional experts (religious-ethical, medical-psychiatric and psychosocial) to attain the best possible social adjustment. The mere fact that Heyns (1986:168) discusses the problem what he calls pedosexuality (sex with minor children) in the same breath and space as homosexuality, conveys a specific message (discourse) to the reader, that of homosexuality as a menace to society and therefore totally rejectable.

I have included this discussion on Reformed theological ethics because it allows us to observe examples of discourse on homosexuality. I am wondering, as the reader may well be, to what degree authoritative sources like the ones by Smit and Heyns have both reflected and influenced the religious discourses about homosexuality? And, how does the church's positions reflect these writers' religious opinions? Our female gay participant, previously a ministers wife, feels strongly that the homophobic messages found in society in general are "strengthened by the messages that we get from the church… you know, the church is guilty and should be held accountable… we can lay it at the door of the church." She feels so convinced of the church's influence in anti-gay discourse that she states, "I will take on the churches on this, and it is not that I want to take on God. It is not God who says all these things, it is the church that must be confronted." Earlier, while she was speaking at a gay conference (held at Driehoek Dutch Reformed Church community during October 2002) she also stated that during her time of 'coming out': "The church was not there for me, but God was there for me."

Another contention that has been put forward regarding the Scripture (Bible) and homosexuality is to suggest that it is silent on, or irrelevant to the issue. This undermines the authority that the Christian community claims to speak about human sexuality (Williams 1997:1). Such a point of view undercuts the traditional interpretations (or translations) of the Biblical passages mentioned earlier, and may suggest that more accurate (or at least different) translations and interpretations do not indicate divine condemnation at all. One such example would be the argument that the crowd in Genesis 18 was seeking to make acquaintance with Lot's guests, or to check their credentials in case they violated the rules of hospitality, although Williams (1997:2) does not agree to such an interpretation. Similarly, not all interpretations conclude that sodomy as referred to in the Bible, is a heinous crime, but that it was ritual prostitution that was

the problem to be attacked and outlawed. Another view is that passages like the Leviticus verses are obsolete and may be called "dead Jewish Law" (Williams 1997:5).

The New Testament prohibitions against homosexuality have also been re-visited, debated and re-interpreted. Some studies that investigated the original meanings of Greek words like malakoi (associated with male prostitutes, or the passive partner in the homosexual act - the receiver of sodomy) and arsenekoitai (associated with homosexual offenders and / or pederasty, or the active partner in the homosexual act - the sodomist) - concluded that Paul's condemnation of homosexuality cannot hold. Williams (1997:9) once again does not agree with the more liberal interpretation, but rather prefers unqualified disapproval of homosexuality as evident in his statement:

> The Bible is not without a norm for sexual relationships, and it's a norm that argues against all deviations from it as well as against those who want to dismiss the Biblical prohibition against homosexuality as culturally irrelevant due to an alleged ignorance of the distinction between inverts and perverts… There can be no liberation from God's norms; true liberation is found only in accepting them.

By taking such a position, Williams (1997:9) confirms what appears to be the Biblical Paul's attitude: namely, that homosexuality should rightfully be called a degrading passion, an indecent act, an error, the product of a depraved mind, and even worthy of death. Such are some of the Biblical-theological discourses on homosexuality. As an afterthought to the divine norms on human sexuality, Williams then poses that where heterosexual Christians have been arrogant about their "normalcy" or where they displayed homophobia, they should seek forgiveness and consider gays as 'brothers and sisters'. Williams (1997:19 & 29) also approaches the Christian issue on homosexuality from the faith-and-repentance, redemption-sanctification stance. He adds that gays belong in the confessional community and are members of Christ's body, and must therefore be "understood, accepted, loved, forgiven, trusted and affirmed" (1997:14). It is not clear how homosexuals can be affirmed given the condemnation that must be held in place and perpetuated by heterosexual Christians. If Augustine was right that the body of Christ is not collection of normal and healthy people, but a "hospital for sick people" (Williams 1997:14), then I wonder if queers would still consider it a preferable haven to practice spirituality in? Nowadays gays are considering why we do *not* want to be in the psychiatric hospital anymore. How does the "hate the sin, love the sinner" discourse make it (im-) possible for gays and lesbians to remain in the church, if what they prefer to be and do is so repulsive to the majority of believers?

What are the options then, for gays who are Christians? Do some of them follow the policy of "don't ask; don't tell" which attracts the least attention to their sin / crime, and then confess only in privacy of the

confessional and / or psychotherapy, or do they simply remain totally silent? Whatever the case may be, it seems that there could be a declining support for traditional beliefs about homosexuality, among other issues. I make that statement because I come across many people, gay and heterosexual, who are still Christian believers but not involved in organised religion / church communities. Many of them also seem disillusioned, as I am, with the traditional / conservative position that the Reformed churches have maintained about so-called contentious moral issues including homosexuality. I am not aware of any studies done locally to sustain the "declining support" opinion, and only came across one study done in Memphis USA during the early nineties. The latter study, albeit more quantitative orientated indicates a significant decline in support for traditional (read: conservative and anti-gay) beliefs connected to gender roles and homosexual rights among conservative and other Christian groups (Petersen & Donnenwerth 1998:367-371).

Despite the recent reappraisal of the inherited discourses on sexuality by theologians worldwide, the South African churches have not moved as rapidly as some of their counterparts elsewhere in the so-called First world. Stuart (1997:178) suggests that the reason for this is that the apartheid political crisis demanded all the attention. I find that ironic because, in my opinion, the kind of fundamentalism that accounts for racist ideology can also be found in heterosexist-homophobic thinking. Will the churches then also have to be drawn kicking and screaming toward the eventual recognition and confession that discrimination against homosexuals on Biblical foundations was ungrounded and wrong, as was the case with racism?

At least it seems that all the major churches in South Africa have agreed that homophobia must be condemned, and they support the legal and constitutional protection of homosexual people in this country (Stuart 1997:185). However, the church has yet to come out and say that homosexuality is acceptable as one of many possible human sexualities, in order to make a more significant contribution in the adjustment and deconstruction of reigning heterosexist discourse.

3.3 The official position of churches: "*Not yet*'uhuru'"

The expression "uhuru" is Swahili for freedom. Not yet 'uhuru' then, points to illusive freedom.

Our discussion on the Biblical origins of homosexual discourse has mostly covered the position of the churches in the Reformed tradition. The most recent official declaration of the dominant Afrikaans church, the Dutch Reformed Church, can be found in a report after their general synod that took place in Pretoria during October 2002. Their official position can be summarised as follows: 1) Confirmation of the opinion

based on scripture that homosexual deeds must be condemned as sinful, 2) A message of support for those homosexuals who do not enact their desires, and encouragement that they remain actively involved in the church, 3) A request toward members of the church not to engage in judgmental attitudes, 4) Acceptance of the recommendation made not to uphold the report on Homosexuality of 1986, but to launch a thorough study of the issue with report back at the next general synod. The churches now consider it important that both expert opinions be gained, as well as consultation with people of a homosexual orientation. The research participant, who is also a theologian, feels that the present position of the Dutch Reformed Church is very unclear, and that it can still lead to the interpretation that homosexuality is unacceptable. He states that, "At this stage the church's interpretation of the Scriptures is simply too confusing for me to find any direction…" Next are a few examples of the positions of churches other than the Reformed tradition, on the gay issue.

The 1991 official United Methodist policy on homosexuality boils down to the following position, in the words of Paul Mickey, "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider the practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we confirm that God's grace is available to all" (quoted by Griffin 1999:211). I am not informed if they have since adjusted this position.

Since the homosexual debates of the mid-eighties and early nineties, the Church of England has gradually shifted its boundary of tolerance by moving from a position of heterosexism, to one where same-sex relationships are respected as a choice. This position though, is only valid for the laity and not for the clergy, leading to double standards being exercised and displaying their own hypocrisy (Yip 1999:51-52). This particular position left gay and lesbian ordinands in the Church of England like Kate Hunt (1997:37), with so many questions that the only answer for her was silence. No doubt it must also send mixed messages to the whole membership body of this denomination.

The Roman Catholic Church seems to have remained on their official position. Homosexuality is labelled as an "objective disorder" that, due to its non-heterosexual nature, has "no possibility for the transmission of new life" (Yip 1999:52). It seems that because the churches have not been able to be open and honest, it requires priests and other clergy also to be dishonest about who they are in order to give expression to their vocation (Jakobsen 1997:72).

It is said that gay people are often accused of being church-less and God-less. Andrè Muller, pastor of the Reforming Church in Pretoria, believes that the responsibility for such a situation lies squarely at the door of the church (Muller 1997:174). Given the position of most mainstream churches regarding homosexuality, we

can not act surprised at the steady exodus of gays from these religious communities. Muller (1997:174) also remarks that there seems to be many cases in which people move toward Eastern or other religions, or (just) become non-religious. To my knowledge, the only churches that seem to have made more progress toward accepting homosexuality as theologically totally acceptable, are those in the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a proper reference in this regard at the time of going to press.

3.4 Fundamentalism in non-Christian traditions: "Our beliefs are perfect, any modification would be wrong"

Even when you have experienced exclusion within your own cultural heritage due to traditional-conservative religious discourses, you are not always aware of similar effects in other cultures / traditions. Hunsberger's (1996:39) report on his study titled *Religious Fundamentalism, Right-wing Authoritarianism, and Hostility Toward Homosexuals in Non-Christian Religious Groups* gives us something to think about in this regard. He defines religious fundamentalism as:

> The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.

Upon reading this definition, I immediately wondered how such a discourse-field could act as compost for racist and homophobic attitudes and practices. At the same time I was reminded of my personal experience within the Afrikaans Christian tradition where it seemed to me that conservatism, authoritarianism and fundamentalism relies on such foundations as fear and guilt. Could fear and guilt be the underlying criteria or rules for homophobic discourse? Does fear and guilt make it more possible for fundamentalist, authoritarian and conservative notions to survive? The following observations from this study give us some indications.

Hunsberger's study (1996:41) indicated among other things that religious groups characterised by authoritarianism and fundamentalism tend to produce next generations who are usually submissive and generally follow the examples of parents' hostility, aggression and prejudice toward homosexuals or others who are considered "radicals." His study included samples of Islamic, Hindu and Jewish participants. He found that the fundamentalist and authoritarian connection with severe anti-homosexual sentiments correlated strongly with similar attitudes found amongst fundamental Christian communities. Besides the

already mentioned similarities between all these groups the following can be added: they all tended to believe that "their religion is perfect as it stands, and any modification would be wrong" (Hunsberger 1996:47-48). However, I found the following observation the most thought provoking in his entire article (Hunsberger 1996:48):

> Most interesting of all, they would probably be 'true believers' in any of the other religions involved, and most hostile toward their present religion, if they had grown up Muslims instead of Jews, Hindus instead of Muslims, Jews instead of Christians, etc. As the fundamentalists in different religions face each other, they are facing themselves. At least that is how it seems.

I cannot say that I agree with Hunsberger completely, but I have often wondered about the "co-incidence" of being "born into", so to speak, a specific culture, and how it would have been if 'you' were conceived in a completely different traditional setting altogether. Such an approach seems vaguely connected to the ideas of Foucault, which points to contingencies or arbitrariness of meanings within one culture across time, despite the illusion of permanency of values and principles in that culture.

We need not wonder whether or not the Reformed church denominations in the Afrikaans tradition contain religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism. One participant, the Dutch Reformed dominee, had the following to say: "My experience in the theological community… included a view of rejection and strong fundamentalist understanding of the passages about homosexuality, resulting in disapproval and condemnation." Just how religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism inform homophobic or otherwise discriminatory discourses in the lives of our participants, will become evident from the narratives shared from chapter five onward.

3.5 Alternative theology: Spirituality as "harmless religion"

> Spirituality connotes a non-institutional, individualistic belief system, a private path to peace or enlightenment. It has none of the dreadful associations of 'religion.' Indeed, spirituality is quite popular in our communities nowadays… Spirituality, in short, is a code word for unorganized, harmless religion.

These are the words of Nancy Wilson, senior pastor of the gay Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, as quoted in an article by Boisvert (1999: 54). The recent remarks about declining support for traditional religious beliefs comes to mind again when reading her words. What Wilson seems to be suggesting is that there is a specific new culture of gay spirituality emerging. Boisvert's article explores how certain writers of gay spirituality reflect forms of discourse that project this recent development. Despite the impression from the quote that this spirituality focuses on the personal and individual, Boisvert assures that

the emphasis is just as strong on the collective, communal and political (1999:55). He finds that gay spirituality includes the components of religions worldwide, namely: belief, myth and ritual, and points out that "it defines the holy in terms of the common experiences of gay men" (Boisvert 1999:56). It makes sense that gay spirituality is intimately connected to the disdain in which gay people have been held by organised religion throughout history, and that their "parallel discourse in turn becomes a significant source of personal and collective empowerment" (Boisvert 1999: 57). In fact, Boisvert claims that gay spirituality has emerged from the praxis of queer activism.

As noted under the previous heading: Biblical origins of homosexual discourses (3.2), gay spiritual writing also deals with the well established scholarly tradition of gay exegesis of problematic (i.e. homophobic) scriptural texts. Boisvert (1999:61-66) explains that gay spiritual writing can be understood in terms of a few modes of discourse, namely: the apologetic, therapeutic, ecological and autobiographical. The apologetic mode of discourse is not implied in negative terms, but in the sense of reasoned defence against traditionally negative religious teachings on homosexuality, or counter-interpretations of problematic scriptural passages. The therapeutic mode of discourse re-positions gay experience in healthy, preferred, celebratory terms, overturning the traditionally destructive psychoanalytic views on homosexuality. The ecological mode of discourse found in gay spiritual writing interconnects queer theory and eco-feminism, including elements of liberation theology, and suggests ethical parameters for gay people's relations with others and the world. The autobiographical mode of discourse "has its roots in the lived experience of gay men, and in their reflection upon it" (Boisvert 1999:65). The author (Boisvert 1999:66) feels that "It is undoubtedly these personal stories of religious struggle and insight which hold the power to move and to inspire. The autobiographical mode of discourse thus offers models for emulation, just as it purports to evaluate critically the influence of institutionalised religion on gay lives." To me it sounds like the autobiographical mode of discourse in gay spiritual writing mirrors the narrative paradigm both in therapy and in research processes. It seems that gay spirituality and gay spiritual writing represents "a continuing effort on the part of gay men to neutralise the religious discourse of exclusion and to fashion a sacred space and a sacred language proper to them" (Boisvert 1999:69).

In a similar vein, Griffin (1999) also argues for a reappraisal of traditional attitudes toward homosexuality and Biblical hermeneutics. He tries to extend this revisiting notion to the practitioners of pastoral care, and draws on lesbian narratives and narrative theology to engage in authentic dialogue regarding homosexuality. In addition, Griffin (1999:210) hints at the issue of slavery and the ordination of women that have undergone dramatic changes since the nineteenth-century. Earlier, the church was much divided on both these issues, just as the contemporary church seems to be divided on the issue of homosexuality. Griffin suggests

Charles Gerkin's narrative theology model as a useful tool to go beyond the traditional theological argument regarding homosexuality. His reason for the suggestion is that narrative theology does "not assume a position of moral legitimacy based on one's sexual orientation, but rather one which requires listening to the individual's story in order to determine merit and to provide support for her or his needs for wholeness" (Griffin 1999:215). Griffin also considers *Counselling Lesbian Partners* as ground-breaking work done by Joretta Marshall, who uses lesbian narratives to challenge theological and pastoral-care boundaries related to sexuality (Griffin 1999:218).

Furthermore, Griffin (1999:218) believes that reconciliation can occur when lesbians and homosexuals serve on the same committees, take part in the same conferences and participate in the same rituals and sacraments, on an equal basis as everybody else. His conviction is that the entire church will be able to benefit from the diversity within communities if equality is established as normative. On the other hand, studies like that of Yip (1999:47) have indicated that gay Christians can manage stigma imposed on them by the church, by practising a politics of counter-rejection of the church and its official positions on the issue of homosexuality. Such a counter-rejection strategy seems to be likely when gays have been denied full acceptance in the Christian community, have fallen prey to shame and guilt, or have been subjected to pressures to correct their "discrediting attribute" (Yip 1999: 49). One of our participants has openly stated his position toward the church as follows: "I have been beaten enough with the Bible! I am not interested in joining any organised religious group where there will be a continuation of guilt and fear. This made me realise how alienated people can become due to religion – then they don't think anymore, they just follow like zombies."

The process that Yip has observed amongst certain gay respondents corresponds with the ideas about power-relations and 'local power' as propounded by Foucault, in the sense that homosexuals employ their personal and collective power to choose and practice their Christian beliefs as they see fit. In the process, many of the gay respondents have managed to move on their own journey toward a positive gay Christian identity, or, as Yip (1999:49) puts it, they "shape and reshape their social biographies to reinforce their personal identity and social roles… and discredit the argument of the stigmatiser." This sounds to me like a process of deconstruction and re-construction - a process we have witnessed in the research project too.

In his analysis of the gay respondents' accounts, Yip (1999:53) observed four bases that the counter-rejection of the church is predicated on. These were: 1) the Church's ignorance of sex and sexuality in general, 2) the Church's ignorance of all sexualities as God's creation, 3) the Church's misinterpretation of Biblical passages on homosexuality, and 4) the Church's fallibility. According to Yip (1999:60-61), his study

demonstrates that homosexuals who "are socially labelled 'deviants' are capable of rising above their 'deviant' circumstances", and that they can construct new religious rhetoric that strengthen their social biographies as gay Christians.

In my view, Germond and de Gruchy's work can count as significant contributions to alternative discourse for gay theology and spirituality. Their main postulation that it is heterosexism, and not homosexuality that is the actual problem - forms the basis of a good deal of alternative and pro-gay religious discourses. As they say, "We need to name heterosexism as a sin and any theological justification of heterosexism as a heresy" (Germond & de Gruchy 1997:4). In the line of speaking out about gayness within Christianity, Sue Welman's (1997:61) statement tells of counter-to-silence discourse, when she says, "The world had to be told that we were gay Christians and proud Children of God."

Letting gay people and queer stories speak for themselves "far more than any theoretical analysis, [has] the power to strip away the hypocrisy and near-blasphemy of church discourse" (Germond & de Gruchy 1997:5). The ways that queer people have chosen to speak for themselves have been varied. Some do it by coming out of the closet, in different contexts, and by audibly voicing their preferred beliefs and increasingly exposing their way of life to society. Others organise themselves in networks and support groups that fulfil a range of personal and political purposes. Some of these organisations aim at breaking the silence(s) and taboos about homosexuality. Then there is also the influential strategy of pro-gay writing, as alluded to earlier in reference to Boisvert. Lutheran Vikarin Kerstin Söderblom (1997:155) suggests that when gay people use written accounts as a way of coming out in public, "they seek to change the perspectives of the discourse… in order to break the silence, to inform people, and to reduce insecurity about the issue." Söderblom feels strongly about breaking the cycle of silence that renders lesbian women non-existent in church circles. She shares Lorde's sentiment (quoted by Söderblom 1997:159) to encourage speaking out,

> My silence has not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences. And it was the concern and caring of all those women which gave me strength an enabled me to scrutinise the essentials of my life.

'The closet' is a place where homosexuals hide their sexuality from themselves and from others (Stuart 1997:86). 'Coming out' is the opposite of that. Coming out can be an act of defiance, self-affirmation, joy, and / or terror. Stuart (1997:87) states, "In the closet I die to myself that I may live to others; outside of it I die to others that I may live to myself." Adding to that view, Lamont (1997:126) suggests that if gay people remain in the closet they collude with the dominant message presented to them. According to him, gays and

lesbians who nurse their feelings of rejection reinforce and perpetuate self-internalised homophobia. He seems to caution queers not to allow this or adopt the role of the victim (Lamont 1997:126).

Womanist Theology is almost exclusively associated with the plight of the black woman, especially in a liberational sense. Renèe Hill (1997:147) argues that because womanism stands for celebrating women's relationships, it could also include the lesbian voice. As a variant in the feminist movement, listening to lesbian voices should be essential to womanists in order to confront the denial and invisibility of lesbian homosexuality in Black communities, and in general.

Although I have not attempted to research it thoroughly, my impression is that there are quite a number of gay religious groupings, or churches, in South Africa at the moment. The Reforming Church under pastorship of Andrè Muller earlier mentioned, would be one of them, and it is affiliated with the Gay Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles. Independent congregations are apparently becoming more common, some of whom are increasingly formalised and organised, and are seeking affiliation with umbrella movements and bodies. Whereas such developments could be understood as being both personally and politically positive for gay Christians, I sometimes wonder whether there is also a risk involved when marginalised groups create separate - sometimes exclusive social structures for themselves. Maybe I underestimate the degree to which they are integrated with broader society? Moreover, what if it proves to be an important phase toward "integration" of religious groupings if that is what is needed, I must hasten to add. One participant (Org, the gay son of a minister) made his views clear on the issue of gay churches: "The gay church attracts people on the basis of their differentness. It seems that a 'If the other churches do not want us, we will make our own' attitude is followed. But it is just another form of creating apartheid. Then closet gays have a safe place to go to church without being recognised by the rest of society."

Germond (1997:210) proposes a theology of inclusion in place of the theology of exclusion that calls for discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (among other things). He believes that a theology of inclusion is central to the Christian message and that it must be the theology by which all biblical texts should be evaluated. According to Germond the message of Christ is an inclusive message that challenges all the attempts of churches to create categories of exclusion. After all, it was a theology of inclusion that defeated the religious justification of apartheid.

In the letter column of 13 June 2003 edition of *Kerkbode*, a monthly newsletter for Afrikaans Reformed communities, Dr Andrè Bartlett (a theologian and minister of a Dutch Reformed parish) asks how churches may show a more human face toward gays. His question comes in the light of the seemingly pervasive

"loveless" attitude that gays still experience in church circles. He indicates that there are visible signs of change (for instance a re-consideration of old and previous positions toward homosexuality) and of possible optimism regarding the gay issue and the church. He suggests a number of helpful steps that the church could take. His suggestions include the following: 1) That theologians should be prepared to listen to the narratives of gay people, to come to a better understanding of their experiences, and to adjust the stereotypical perceptions of homosexuals that may exist in church circles: 2) That theologians should reconsider alternative biblical interpretations of homosexuality based on more recent exegesis of relevant texts, that may adjust the views on homosexuality as a perversion: 3) A request for theologians to consider an approach of guidance for the gay person toward meaningful integration of her / his sexual orientation and the responsible practising of a homosexual lifestyle. I regard suggestions like these as important for what they stand for. Moreover, they are significant since they come from within the community of theologians.

In similar vein, I would like to add the voice of the well-known and somewhat controversial theologian Dr Christina Landman. As one of the speakers at the gay conference held in Vanderbijlpark recently (October 2002), she made reference to the deferral of a new position by the Dutch Reformed Church regarding homosexuality until the next synod. Besides suggesting that gay people must rid themselves of the victim role, some of her questions and comments were as follows:

> Can we afford to wait another four years for theological-ethical answers? Must we expect so called 'normal' people to make space for gays, or should we be able to say that we want to learn from gays and their spirituality – to expand our spirituality in the process? Gays have traditionally been a rebellion on the borders, and should become part of the core business of the church. Gays can be empowered to create and formulate a gay theology. The church should be asking, 'how can we empower gays, how can we adapt liturgies to include gays (and women)?'

3.6 Summary, and "How can theology celebrate homosexuality?"

In retrospect, when reviewing the Biblical discourses on homosexuality and the positions of the churches, one can agree with 'gay dominee' Pieter Oberholzer: "Gay and lesbians have to endure so much pain and mockery from the intolerance of fellow believers in the church that they have either become invisible or – and unfortunately this is the largest group – have simply left the church in silence" (Oberholzer 1997:27). In addition, one cannot but side with Stuart's (1997:81) view that "The history of the Christian church is replete with bigoted views that have led the church to condone and even practice oppression." Churches seem to be able to reinstate themselves as the sources of authoritative dogmatic pronouncers of truth, and providers

of redemption (Stuart 1997:83-84) in the process of which they denounce homosexuality, and prevent gays from articulating their experience in their own terms.

How can churches instead provide gay people, especially young gay people, the opportunity (or role models?) to assist in self-articulation without having to resort to the patriarchal stereotypes of heterosexist manufactured gender discourse? (Stuart 1997:91) How will it become possible for the considerable effort that is expended to protect youth and society in general from the corrupting influences of homosexuals to be redirected so as to open up affirmative possibilities about alternative sexualities? Will future theologies in South African contexts speak of more tolerance, and beyond? Will it invite celebration of religious- and sexual-diversities? These questions are mostly of a rhetorical nature at the end of this chapter, and some of them seem to be addressed only indirectly by our participants in the study.

In the light of all the religious discourses encountered so far, and some of the silences that these produce, the next phrase by Doug Torr (1997:67) from his experience as a gay priest, is apposite:

> My bishop knows that I'm gay but would prefer that I keep quiet about it and that I be discreet. Living in silence does have its advantages, for no one is able to question the validity of ones vocation based on one's sexual orientation. But I find this a very isolating process. I would like to be open about my sexuality, and not fear rejection because of it.

Together we observed how traditional Christian teaching has viewed homosexuality as a threat to the religious practice of Christians. Fortunately, we were able to come across a number of alternative voices within the field of theology too. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, religious / theological discourse has exercised considerable force upon gays in the world, justifying its discussion and deconstruction within this report. This chapter then, becomes an important and useful background on theological discourse about homosexuality. There will be a lot of religious-related discourse in the narrative accounts of our participants, from chapter five onward. But before that, in chapter four we will first take a look at other discourse fields that have exercised significant leverage on gay lives. These additional discursive fields that will be investigated are: psychology / psychiatry, education, the military and the legislature.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADDITIONAL DISCURSIVE FIELDS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

4.1 Introduction: More about "restricting speech, and those who can speak"

By now we have met a number of voices in the realms of pro- and anti-homosexual discourse. This chapter will attempt to illuminate possible origins of gay discourse, or "echo's" (Smith 1997:195) of previously mentioned discourse that can be associated with psychiatry / psychology, the military and education, as well as legal discourses regarding homosexuality. Interestingly, Smith (1997:195) considers participatory action research as an important practice that may break the mere echo-ing of dominant voices in the field of social scientific research, giving people the right to speak about their lives and experiences. In similar style to what has been followed up to here, I will allow pro- and anti- discourse to mingle and compete continuously, for the same space. In the process, we hope to discover discourses that restrict gay speech, as well as others that allow the gay voice to speak out. Because the term heterosexism features regularly, I thought it wise to offer a definition as formulated by Herek (1992:89):

> Heterosexism is… an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatises any nonheterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community. Like racism, sexism, and other ideologies of oppression, heterosexism is manifested both in societal customs and institutions, such as religion and the legal system, and in individual attitudes and behaviours.

One participant, a gay theologian, describes his experience of heterosexism as follows: "a subtle male discriminatory and dominating milieu… that made me realise that I do not want to function within it any longer." The investigation on heterosexism and homophobia in this chapter will be presented under the following headings:

- Psychology as social science - Reproductions of expert medical / psychiatric discourse?
- Educational and military discourses - The school and defence force as straight.
- Legal discourses - The criminalisation and decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Africa.
- Additional and alternative discourses - The personal is the political.

4.2 Psychology as social science - Reproductions of expert medical / psychiatric discourse?

From chapter one onwards, there have been numerous insertions about the prominence of the original medical-psychiatric discourse on the phenomenon of sexuality, and, in particular, its influential role in what

came to be known as homosexuality. Most of the background on medico-psychiatric discourse on homosexuality was covered in the discussions on the work of Michel Foucault. To refresh our memories, one of the phenomena that Foucault (1980:119) investigated was the psychiatric discourse and the silences that it produced. During the nineteenth-century medical-psychiatric discourse identified and defined homosexuality as an illness that requires treatment. Even today, the long-term effects of how the category of homosexuality has been dealt with since then is visible in the homophobic discourses that still survive and circulate not least, in the fields of social science.

As a modern social science, psychology has been hugely influenced by psychiatry. It inherited the medical knowledge / truth about homosexuality, and continued to view and treat it as an abnormality. However, this position shifted somewhat within the historical trajectory. The American Psychiatric Association in December 1973 decided to remove homosexuality from their list of clinical diagnosis, better known as the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) system, and to consider it as a unique lifestyle instead of a disorder (Louw 1989:333; Smit 1985:128). In other words, both the DSM-I and DSM-II categorised homosexuality as abnormality, with the revision taking place before publication of the DSM-III-R. However, in most psychology textbooks the tendency remained to categorise homosexuality under headings like "sexual deviancies" or "other sexual disorders" (Louw 1989:333) alongside sado-masochism and bestiality.

During my training at university in the mid-eighties, textbooks included the aetiology of homosexuality, or the study of the possible causes involved in the "manufacturing" of homosexuality. The lists of causes and predisposing factors usually included neuro-biological / genetic, hormonal and psychosocial factors such as parental style (Louw 1989:335 & Heyns 1986:156). This has been presented to the public (and university students who became professionals) as authoritative knowledge for a long time. Only recently have there been more critical views on the aetiology of homosexuality with many social scientists now saying that there does not have to be a "cause" to homosexuality if it is to be considered as a "normal", healthy and acceptable way of life. Some of the common perceptions amongst members of the public are that homosexuality can also be caused by exposure to sexual abuse, or that it is a personality defect. May I ask what, if you please, *causes* heterosexuality?

I have always been fascinated by the fact that (even) in psychology courses, homosexual people remained hidden. In the early days of my university studies in some naïve way I expected it to be a relatively safe haven for gays to come out, especially as psychology was regarded as a the field of healing and an objective science. The topic of homosexuality was studied and discussed, but nobody "admitted" to the condition, although I knew for a fact of a number of gay psychology students. The silence was thus upheld in

psychology circles too. In my view, homosexuality has yet to shed its label as a deviant form of sexuality, especially as it has been long included under that specialised field in psychology called abnormal psychology.

For years mainstream psychology suggested and practised a range of treatments which aimed at the improved adjustment of sufferers of the homosexual condition. Clinical psychology, the field of psychology that specialises in the treatment of abnormal psychological conditions, has long worked side by side with psychiatry to improve the so-called adjustment of homosexuals within society. We must remember that the training of psychologists was largely based on the medical model and approach to human pathology and (mental) health. I should know, as I did my final-year internship for a social work degree, at a psychiatric hospital. And that is exactly what the multi-professional team aimed at: helping homosexuals to conform to the norms of heterosexual-dominated standards and expectations. Treatment was considered progressive when gays were aided in reaching similar levels of health, communication skill and general adjustment within their relationships as their heterosexual counterparts. It goes without saying that there were some exceptional therapists who assisted homosexual clients beyond mere adaptation, toward actual self-acceptance and pride. As one psychologist who presented at the previously mentioned gay conference in Vanderbijlpark said, "Hypnotherapy can be used to work through all the bad experiences of the past, in order to come to dignity and self-acceptance. I am involved in therapy with gays to deconstruct the wrong perceptions, and to educate society."

For a period of time it was an acceptable scientific practice to subject homosexual patients / clients to aversion therapy, also referred to as conversion therapy (De Gruchy 2001:866), a form of re-conditioning therapy. This method involved showing the homosexual patient / client sexually explicit same-sex material (pictures), and then applying a (mild) shock or unpleasant electronic sensation when a sexual stimulation-response was detected. This was followed by exposing the patient / client to heterosexually oriented material, followed by "supportive encouragement" and supplying reinforcement for positive responses. I kept wondering, to what degree was such treatment voluntary? The answer came while reading an article by Jeanelle de Gruchy (2001:866) which suggested that these practices within the South African Defence Force was not only experimental, but also coercive. Even if patients requested the treatment, how much was it influenced by the societal pressure to conform? A research participant made a comment regarding aversion therapy, saying, "Some of my friends told me that when they approached the church for help or sympathy they were sent for 'shock-treatment'. One sometimes hears terrible stories of how homosexuals are treated to become 'normal.'"

Let us look at homophobia defined: "It is the unrealistic fear of homosexual people that leads to hate and the dislike of Homo's and the idea that it is right to discriminate against them" (Oberholzer 1997:28). Stuart (1997:185) adds to this that homophobia is "the active persecution of lesbians and gays by informal or legal violence and discrimination." Some of the discourses suggested by Oberholzer (1997:29) that are associated with homophobia, are the following: Most gay men molest young boys. All homosexuals lead promiscuous lives. As a man you are never safe near a gay man. Homosexuals choose to be and live gay. Homosexuality is a sickness that must be overcome.

Since the late eighties, certain psychology textbooks have attempted to deconstruct some of the negative stereotypes or so-called myths regarding homosexuality. Louw (1989:334-335), for instance, indicated the following myths regarding homosexuality:

Myth: Homosexuality is only the product of modern society. Louw mentions various well-known historical figures such as Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo who apparently were also homosexuals, to show that it is an ancient phenomenon.

Myth: Homosexuality is limited to certain groups of people such as the white population, wealthy people etc. Actually, anybody can be homosexual.

Myth: Homosexual people can obviously be identified from a distance, based on the stereotypical image of gay males as 'fem' and lesbians as 'butch'. Would it be fair to say that only very naïve or ignorant people still cling to this myth?

Myth: Homosexual people have unique characteristics, like an essential type of personality. Actually, the temperaments and lifestyles of homosexuals are extremely diverse.

Myth: All homosexual people would really like to be (-come) the opposite sex than their own physical gender (transsexual wishes). Actually, it is quite the opposite, gay men like to be men and lesbian women prefer to be women.

Myth: Homosexual people experience more psychological problems or disorders than heterosexual people do. In fact, given the often gay-unfriendly environment that gays have to function in, most of them are doing incredibly well.

Myth: Homosexual people in relationships fit into one of two roles; an active ('more masculine') or a passive ('more feminine') role. This misperception may obscure the fact that the partners in gay relationships may enjoy more equality than many of their heterosexual counterparts.

Myth: Contact with homosexual people can be hazardous or dangerous for children. This myth might be connected to the popular association between homosexuality and paedophilia, which is inaccurate.

Myth: Sexual activity between gay men always involves penetration. In reality, the range of sexual / sensual possibilities between men is quite various.

Myth: Homosexuals are promiscuous. My opinion is that it may be so, but it is not less so for heterosexuals, is it?

My suspicion is that these myths imply specific homophobic discourses that have been circulating. Could it be that by dismantling these myths, psychology is endeavouring to undo some of the discourses that they participated in creating? Dominee Andrè Muller, a gay pastor who spoke at the gay conference held at Driehoek Dutch Reformed congregation (Vanderbijlpark) in October 2002, reminded us that "Myths are stories that are transferred to people, sometimes it is fictional stories, yet it lives inside people's perceptions." During this meeting, he contributed to the deconstruction of typical myths surrounding homosexuality. In the light of the discussion of discourses related to psychology, I can agree with Szesnat's view (1997:275) that homophobia will only stop once it is realised that homosexuality cannot be construed as a defect of any kind (biological, psychological or societal) and is therefore not in need of correction.

In a study on the stereotyping of gay men done by Madon (1997:663-685), she found that not all stereotyping was negative. Apparently two stereotypical subtypes were formed, one that reflected the perception that gay males have positive female sex-typed qualities (warm hearted, compassionate, gentle) and the other subtype reflected the perception that gay males violate acceptable male gender roles (feminine, touchy, melodramatic). This particular study indicated that the negative subtype was significantly more associated with gay men. I was thinking there might be many gays who would consider both subtypes as somehow positive? Then again, others may have a negative association with the "female sex-type qualities" description. In my opinion, therefore, stereotypes can never be accurate, or convey the diversity that may exist. For instance, the positive (female sex-typed) attributes, including affectionate, sensitive, open minded, artistic and liberal certainly are not owned by women and gay men only.

4.3 Educational and military discourses - The school and defence force as straight

Please be forewarned that my personal voice will be exceptionally strong and critical in this section, largely because of the homophobia and heterosexism that I experienced in the army and in school. Discussion of discourse within school and the military contexts have also been merged, and I sometimes jump from the one context to the other. This is made possible by the similarities that exist between discursive strategies in educational and military settings. The intersection of homophobia and racism will also be alluded to due to my belief that they share certain discourses and discursive strategies.

In an article about homophobia and the sexual construction of schooling, it is mentioned that homosexuality can be one of those issues that elicit "moral panics", or at least an emotive response amongst the members of a community. The authors Beckett and Denborough (1995:109) believe that the medical discourses of homosexuality, which "medicalised sexual unorthodoxy as a sickness or mental illness", have categorised lesbians and gays, thereby fostering negative associations and social prejudice. The effect is to normalise heterosexual behaviour while stigmatising homosexual behaviour. This also happens in the school and in the classroom (Beckett & Denborough 1995:114). They feel that homosexuality can however, be (-come) a challenge toward critical thinking and confronting issues of diversity in classroom settings. It would seem that schools have always been institutions where sexuality was disciplined, as implied by Foucault's remark in *The History of Sexuality* (1978:41) when "one thinks of all the agencies of control and all the mechanisms of surveillance that were put into operation by pedagogy." The *gaze* on the *gays* seems to be particularly active in educational environments.

Although diversity and pluralism ideally should be promoted and cherished in the academic environment, anti-gay prejudice and even violence are serious problems in many schools, colleges and universities. Schools then, also become settings for victimisation (Herek & Berrill 1992:32), in the form of "sissy bashing" and similar tyrannies. In my opinion, the way in which a male-sport, like rugby, is being used in schools to perpetuate the "ideal" heterosexual images of masculinity as tough and aggressive, often serves as the springboard for anti-gay discourse. To say the least, in the words of one of the male gay participants, "The rugby domain certainly is one of the places where an openly gay orientation is strongly discouraged." The other male gay participant put it like this, "It is bad news if you are too 'soft' to be a farmer, or too 'soft' to play rugby, you are reminded that you are different, your are ridiculed…you get told about faggots and how disgusting they are." This point can be further demonstrated with an example of how gayness is used to put down the opposing rugby team, in a joke that was overheard by one research participant. It goes like this: 'Have you heard that the Western Province (rugby team) will only use seven players in the game tomorrow? No, why? The other eight was killed in the gay club in Clifton the other day!' (Such murders actually took place).

An introduction to military discourse on queer - Ivan Toms (1994:258-263) shares his story of involvement with the ECC (End Conscription Campaign) and his refusal to complete his compulsory military service in the mid-eighties. His account appears in the "making waves" section of a book titled *Defiant Desire.* Remember that the South African Defence Act compelled white adult males to two years military service in the apartheid days. If you refused, you could go to jail. If you objected on moral grounds, you got treated like a traitor. If you did all these things and they found out that you were gay and involved in gay organisations,

the smear campaign (and the trial) starts. And that is the similarity between schools and armies: both seem to be institutions that are authorised to tell you who you could be, what you may not be, and what you should believe and do. Ivan Toms was eventually sent to jail because the law left the sympathetic magistrate no option, even though he observed, "You are not a criminal. Our jails are there for people who are a menace to society – you are not a menace to society. In fact, you are just the opposite, you have always been an asset to society in the services you have rendered" (quoted by Toms 1994:262).

One comes to know social reality through prolonged and intimate participation in it (Goodman 1992:120). I am prepared to share some of my experiences and reflections on the social realities of school and army. Goodman (1992:127) reminds us that we gain insight into the social reality of institutions like schools (and the military for that matter) through the stories that people tell. In contradiction with Toms' story, though, I did not refuse to complete military duty, but complied in silence. Educational as well as military environments have in my experience acted as deployment and reproduction grounds for the heterosexist and patriarchal saturated discourses on homosexuality encountered so far. To be precise, I think that educational and military environments are the extensions of original theological and medical-psychiatric disciplines as far as anti-gay discourse maintenance goes. One participant, the son of a dominee, described the separatism on the school's playground, "I can remember that there were certain areas at school that was considered exclusive boy-zones. Whenever I dared to go there, I was usually threatened to go and play with the girls, so I avoided it like a quarantined area." He recalls how school was a place where he was frequently harassed for being "a faggot… I was appointed a personal bully who was to pinch and punch me, and if I complained, I was called a sissy…whenever I went to the male teachers, nothing was ever done about it."

Both in schools and in the army the issue of homosexuality was taboo. It was not to be spoken of. Because it has always been considered a threat to the moral fabric of society, in these contexts homosexuality has been obscured in two ways. Firstly, by not overtly referring to it in any manner whatsoever, it is rendered voiceless / mute and in a sense non-existent. Secondly, by covertly warning against its dangers and subversive influences on normality, stability and the good order. I want to share the observation by Harry (1992:115) that violence is often a way of validating male adolescents' status, "maturity", and even virility. Gay bashing specifically serves to validate one's maleness in the areas of both violence and sexuality. In the case of gay bashing or sissy bashing that takes place in schools, the offender usually views the victim as worthy of punishment for having violated gender norms. It seems that the perpetrator excuses himself from opprobrium, disgrace and guilt and sees himself "as rendering gender justice and reaffirming the natural order of gender-appropriate behaviour" (Harry 1992:116). Referring to his impression of how homosexuality was dealt with in the National Defence Force, one participant said, "the general judgement was that gays

must be 'fucked up'" This participant explained how attitudes like this contributed to his decision to remain quiet about his sexual orientation.

Traditionally, both schools and armies have been the playground of the male authoritative figure, and all the paraphernalia that goes with patriarchal systems and hierarchies. The school ground as well as the military grounds were platforms of heterosexist speech and indoctrination via dominant hegemonic messages of what life should look like for men and women, families, and all forms of social life. It seems as if institutions of learning and military training are well placed to reinforce the status quo of the ideology of the day, and to "fight" the enemies thereof. That was the case with racism (we had to fight against Blacks and their freedom), communism and evolution theory (against intellectual challenge and freedom), and so on. Thanks to homophobic discourses and attitudes, the onslaught of the enemy homosexuality and / or alternative sexualities is still being kept at bay by the authorities. Or is it?

Later in life, I found it particularly interesting how the two disciplinary zones of education and the military converged with the existence of the cadets in schools. Both in the apartheid system of South Africa and the previous South West Africa (now Namibia), the cadet periods were part of a military-educational program for boys. Boys were expected to undergo training in all kinds of disciplinary regimes and preparation for battle, including target shooting practice and drills. Many of us hated it, because we could not identify with the implied violence and masculine-heterosexist aggression that was promoted and encouraged. One participant calls cadets at school "an additional stressor… all the quasi army stuff and military-type training." He also recalled that "if you cannot shoot well or carry something heavy because you happen to be of a small body size, you are called a sissy, and you get humiliated in front of all the other boys."

Like many people I know and a great number of others I have had conversations with, I have experienced schools and the army as alienating to my sexual preference. In more than one way the army was an extension of what we were taught in churches, in our homes, at school, and later in university: namely, that homosexuality is a sin, it is immoral and wrong, dangerous and utterly punishable. What does a gay person do on the receiving end of all these discoursed messages? You keep quiet. You hide your preferences. You lie if you have to protect yourself. You lie by remaining silent, and you lie by pretending to fit the norm. You do this to protect yourself from harm, from ridicule and rejection. Queer people often get ostracised without any effort on their own part. Some are simply too obviously different, and the majority does not want such differentness – it threatens the good order. It was in school and in the army (besides the church) where we were drilled to march as one, as a "nation of unity". In my opinion, we were more like an industry of mass

production and oppression. Foucault's ideas on discipline to produce "calculable man" (McHoul & Grace 1993:193) comes to mind again in this instance.

Ironically (or is it?) the army was also the first place where I came out to others about my homosexuality, and experienced the freedom of being amongst others like myself. Maybe it is a matter of power-relations that provides for counter-influence against suppression in the context least expected, in the context where the safety of heterosexism (not heterosexuality as such) seems to be the most important? Could it be that when a marginalised group is expected to become invisible and silent, that it activates ways and means for them to converge, in solidarity? Are we "coerced" into creating sub-cultures and societies? How does that then show our strength and creativity? Which counter-discourses would be in operation when gays find ways to survive, and flourish? Some answers will be found in the narrative accounts of participants.

It needs to be said that amidst the "silences" and discrimination, many gays find ways of enjoying life and making and experiencing it as meaningful and fulfilling, even during unlikely times like during their school and military careers. This sometimes happens despite the fact that the myths and discourses associated with homophobia are usually rife in places of learning and military training. Schools and armies serve as authorised knowledge-zones, truth protecting and truth reification zones. The discourses that network homophobia are inserted into places of education and military training.

During my internship at a psychiatric hospital, I sometimes rubbed shoulders with a psychiatrist whom, a few years later would receive "bad press" for his involvement in a program to re-condition homosexual men in the army, to become heterosexual. It was not a fully voluntary program, and it relied greatly on the aversion-therapy approach that was mentioned earlier. He was a man not only of psychiatry, but also of the military. Such is the fear of "real men": they seem to want everybody on their own side. As Sears (quoted by Beckett & Denborough 1995:118) say, "The fear of homosexuality and the reluctance to include the topic in the school curriculum is due, in part, to the social threat that same-sex relations pose to a male-dominated culture." This kind of fear was almost tangible in the army. I wonder how schools can become areas where education counters the male perspective on heterosexism, as well as countering the invisibility afforded women, girls and lesbians (Beckett & Denborough 1995: 110)? Forgive me for not hoping that military environments may transform into pro-gay zones, but being a pacifist, I believe that there should be no need for armies in the first place.

During February 2002, I attended a workshop by Kaethe Weingarten on *Witnessing, Wonder and Hope* (Weingarten 2000:389-402). This happened during a time of my life in which I reflected quite a lot about the

influences and effects of my culture on my sexual identity, in particular, on how the injustices inflicted by my culture have silenced my homosexual identity for so long. It was also a period during which I chose to "come out" in particular settings, including where I work (which happens to be in an educational context). Most of the violations (which I consider subtle forms of abuse) against my person, I experienced during my years at school and in the army. A good deal of the suppression was also associated with church life before the age of 20. I have always felt fortunate that I did not feel alienated within my family of origin. Nevertheless, I choose to share this condensed version of a personal story here, because I know its reflects some of my experiences within the social institutions of school and the military. It is the version that I sent to Kaethe Weingarten as a contribution to a witnessing project that was launched at that time. Maybe the reader will pick up on the disillusionment and anger, as well as the wish to move toward reconciliation. Anyway, I called the account *Insider Witnessing of Racist Culture and Homophobia*. This is how it went:

> This account shows another side of the racism and apartheid that took place in SA. The story is my own living in this body and this country as a WAMM: a White African Mid-aged (38) Male.
>
> I was born into a European skin in SA in 1963, to middle-class, urban Afrikaans speaking parents. I was raised in the tradition of the conservative Dutch Reformed Christian religion and Nationalism that followed the depression period, after which the Afrikaners supposedly lifted themselves from British oppression, and from poverty. At this stage I must mention that my culture holds unrelenting prescriptions for what is accepted / "normal" male-ness, but I was unable to conform to these due to my being of a small stature as well as gentle of temperament. Also, I am a gay person. Within this "package" of differentness I have experienced rejection, ridicule, exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination and many other subtle violations of my humanness meted out to me by my own people. The worst time was when I did compulsory military duty in the South African Defence Force (1987-89), which you know was a major instrument of racist oppression and defence against so-called enemies. I was ignorant then to the ways of overtly resisting conscription. Although I "counter-lived" many of the cultural prescriptions and expectations of the regime, I experienced clinical depression, enormous anger, guilt and psychological dis-association from the atrocities that was taking place. My position(s) of (dis-) empowerment and (un-) awareness were all messed up and chaotic.
>
> Let me now say with humility and gratefulness that I am not racist, but have acquired prejudices that I am continuously de-constructing. Let it be known that the leaders of my culture at that stage succeeded in withholding central and important information (social-political-economic etc.) from me and most people of my generation – especially in the Afrikaans culture, keeping us unaware and disempowered. Let it be known that they (ab-) used many of the young men in the name of their ideologies and beliefs – and that they sacrificed us in the wars that were taking place on our borders. Of course the women suffered at home. Let it be known that as I became more aware, I experienced disillusionment with all that my culture stood for. This led to a self-rejection similar to the effects of gayness earlier in my life. I have since left behind most of the values my culture taught me (including the Christian religion) and have, for the past ten years, been re-constructing a value system and worldview that more accurately reflects the person I prefer to be. Fortunately I could be integrate my language and many other pro-tolerance, pro-peace, pro-diversity and pro-loving values which were mainly taught by the women in my life.

This is not a plea of innocence, and I admit to some of the privileges that were reserved for white people during the Apartheid time. Also, I do not compare the injustice done to me with any of the injustices done to my Black / Coloured / Indian fellow South Africans. It is an effort to let everyone realise the ways in which discriminatory and intolerant ideologies - like racism, apartheid, and homophobia - damage not only victims on the "other side", but also those who are part of a nation who are considered racist / homophobic per se. Let it be known that in the past a person like me had to shut up and do what we were told (this particularly pointed to experience in schools and the church and of course in the army). Today, people like us have to shut up yet again and take much of the blame for wrongs we have not designed or believed in. Consider the effects of affirmative action on people like us, while our erstwhile leaders are living in the luxury of the pensions they have awarded to themselves – none of them fought or died for their sick ideologies.

There are many people like me (although not all gay). I guess our chosen trauma could be somewhat of a "double injustice" of not belonging, and being shunted / rejected / ignored by past regimes as well as present institutions. Maybe you can imagine some of the anger and helplessness it creates? Furthermore, it seems that my story carries the "paradox of voice" (Weingarten 2000:391) due to the shame of being part of a nation with racist elements, which often made me doubt whether to share this story or not. But I hope that breaking the silence will contribute both to our nation's healing and to myself becoming healed or more whole. This will be possible because sharing moves me away from a cycle of revenge (within my own culture) toward a cycle of reconciliation. I am encouraged by the stories of people of Colour who knew, or who are discovering, that many (maybe most?) of the WAMM's like myself are like them: peace-loving and caring humans. As my position shifts towards Aware and Empowered, I look forward to doing more hope. Thank you so much. Bernard Otto.

Witnessing becomes a process not only of sharing the wrongs of the past, but also part of the liberation from the unjust influences of that past. By relating my story here, you the reader become a witness to it. For my part, I am a witness to the stories of the participants in the study. I have sometimes wondered, will there ever be a truth and reconciliation process about homophobia, as there was about racism? Maybe that could contribute toward a society that is free of homophobia and of those discourses that marginalise and silence those who are different and challenging? Calhoun (2000:9), whom I view as a lesbian feminist, also draws a link between racism and homophobia. After sketching a background of heterosexism and its support for male dominance, this author shows how the images and practices that support racial dominance are inflected with gender and gender oppression. I do realise that I have been intermittently discussing the military and schooling, and now this witnessing account indicates aspects of racism and homophobia. It serves to demonstrate how homophobia, like racism, can be (come) promoted in institutions like schools and armies. Consider the possibility that similar discourse (i.e. heterosexism) and discursive strategies (i.e. fundamentalism) form the basis of homophobic as well as racist attitudes.

Returning to the issue of education, Luhmann (1998:147) reminds us that more recently, feminist-, radical- and anti-racist pedagogy has been very critical of mainstream education and its tendency to reproduce heterosexist patriarchal power relations in schools and other institutions of learning. She (1998: 147) goes as far as saying that,

> In the face of homophobic resistance to a queer curriculum… the call for lesbian and gay material, as well as for methods of instruction appropriate for queer content, is reflective of wishful assumptions about pedagogy, about what pedagogy is and what pedagogy can do.

What if the teacher is gay? Taylor (1994:289) found that even though it may not longer be so unusual to bring information about lesbian and gay authors into the classroom, there could be a range of implications, more so if you yourself are gay. You fear that you may lose your credibility, you fear that your students may pigeonhole you as a lesbian and screen everything you say as lesbian. You fear that you could lose your job. For Taylor (1994:291), the act of teaching is an act of performance, and performance lives in the body, which tells her that:

> Feminist teaching in general, and teaching lesbian literature in particular, is both vital and dangerous for me. Not to cover these topics, to participate in the construction of the silence that surrounds lesbian lives, is not neutral but is an act of homophobia. It helps to keep prejudice against lesbians and gay men intact.

Faced with this dilemma, she tried to teach in a way that made her visible to students who need to know that she was lesbian, while allowing those who need to ignore it to do so (Taylor 1994:293). What looked like selective silence to me, is also an educational compromise and move toward openness about alternative sexualities in learning contexts.

Sears (1992:152) is of the opinion that integrating (homo-) sexuality into the curriculum and acknowledging lesbian and gay feelings and conduct as an integral part of the human psyche poses a great challenge to the social order, because it threatens many people who benefit most from that existing order. It seems that teachers who may have the courage to address homosexuality at school level could unleash "a political whirlwind in which issues of power and dominance, dialectical materialism, childhood scripts, and adult expectations become the basis for critical discourse on sexuality" (Sears 1992:152). Hopefully such critical discourse on homosexuality, will both appear and increase in South African educational institutions. Unfortunately, the present situation seems to be still far from it. Sears (1992:152) continues: "Homosexuality, in this context, becomes a transformative tool for thinking about the construction of one's sexual identities vis-à-vis the interrelationships among language, history, and society." However, we need to take notice that

the field of education is particularly resistant to post-modern ideas, or as Jennings and Graham (1996:168) puts it: "Educational theory and practice is founded on discourses of modernity."

Back to the military. The statement that homosexuality is incompatible with military service will most probably be widely supported (Johansson & Percy 1994:205), at least superficially. On the one hand, however, it would be a perception and assumption that reflects threatened heterosexist securities. On the other, it obscures the inconsistencies of such a sweeping statement. A case in point would be that of the United States army, which introduced a "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the early 1990's. This was an attempt to outlaw the act of homosexual sex, but not the homosexual person (Ussher 1997:1390). Similar status – conduct distinctions can be found in institutions other than the military, for instance the Church of England where if vicars do not act on their homosexual desires, they cannot be punished or condemned (Ussher 1997:139).

4.4 Legal discourses - The criminalisation and decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Africa

> Sexual orientation, and in particular homosexual orientation, has never been far from the mind of the South African legislature. From being a ground for persecution, however, it has evolved into one of the prime human rights concerns in our fledgling democracy. Briefly put, South Africa has transfigured itself from a draconian outpost of Calvinist morality into a world leader in the gay rights field. Sexual orientation is now entrenched in the Constitution as an enumerated ground of non-discrimination.

The quote is from Steyn (2001:405) in a chapter titled *From Closet to Constitution: The South African Gay Family Rights Odyssey,* that serves as an enlightening tour through the history of homosexuality from a legal point of view in this country. In more ways than one, the constitutional developments locally point to the deconstruction of arbitrary distinctions that have traditionally and historically been based on gender, race, and sexual orientation among other things. Both male gay participants in the study indicated that our present constitution is a great comfort, or, as one of them put it, "Legally, employers and other institutions can no longer discriminate against your being of a gay orientation."

But it has not always been good news for gays in South Africa, as the quoted passage suggests. There is a long history of repression and regulation of sexuality by the Apartheid State during its hold on power from 1948. In the words of Cameron (1994:93), "The traditional attitude of intolerance towards gay sexual conduct seems to be deeply ingrained in our legal history" to the point of judges denouncing homosexual conduct with disapproval and revulsion in many court cases. Some judges used expressions that labelled gays immoral, depraved and an abomination to human nature.

The criminalisation of homosexuality has been invoked to justify a wide range of human rights violations against lesbians and gays. As Cameron (1994:108) remarks, "The South African judicial system has also played a significant role in legitimising the most vicious and brutal kind of anti-gay violence." The strong degree of hostility towards homosexuality in our society has been entrenched in the legislature and judiciary through a system of sexual policing, in terms of which gay behaviour was persecuted and homosexuals were denied basic human rights (Steyn 2001:406). According to our common law, sodomy and other "unnatural offences" between men have been punishable, and strictly speaking still are, although this law is seldom enforced anymore (Cameron 1994:92). In fact, Roman-Dutch law permitted heterosexual acts that aimed at procreation only, and punished any sexual activity outside this purview. The Sexual Offences Act (23 of 1957) and its amendment in 1969 could be mentioned as probably the worst anti-gay piece of legislation promulgated by the previous regime. It criminalised any "male person who commits with another male at a party any act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification", with a "party" being defined as "any occasion where more than two persons are present" (quoted by Steyn 2001:406-407). The implication of this was that police were authorised to enter private homes to crack down on homosexuals, whereas previously statutory offences could only be committed in public.

It should be mentioned that during the pre-1994 years, the lobbying work of the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) played an important role in the inclusion in the draft Bill of Rights of the ANC of a clause outlawing discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation. This led to the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation being included in the interim constitution in December 1993, and the eventual retention of this clause in the Bill of rights within the new Constitution as adopted on 8 May 1996. Thus South Africa became the first country to protect freedom of sexual orientation as a basic human right (Farlam 1997:133). Steyn (2001:413-414) believes that the potential effects of this could include the following: The decriminalisation of gay sex acts; A uniform age of consent for homo- and heterosexual acts; Rights of free speech, association and conduct; Recognition of permanent partnerships with related benefits in terms of pensions, medical aid, rights of inheritance, insurance benefits etc.; And law enforcement of non-discrimination, for instance in the fields of employment and insurance.

We know that marriage has been defined as a "legal relationship, established by two competent and consenting persons of different sexes." (Mosikatsana 1996:550 & Cameron 1994:91). This indicates the similarity between the legal and the Biblical-theological definitions with regard to the exclusive heterosexuality of marriage. Mosikatsana warns against the unexamined "consensus" which idealises the dominant conception of marriage, and the underlying assumptions about what family constitutes. He feels that it does not reflect the cultural diversity and pluralism of the new and more liberal and democratic South

Africa (Mosikatsana 1996:551). It seems that Calhoun (2000:154) would agree to this latter view, by arguing for the right of homosexual people to define what counts as family.

Steyn (2001:421) feels that "the possibility of a successful judicial challenge to heterosexual marriage has been opened by the Constitution…the court is authorised to develop the common law concept of marriage to provide for homosexual marriage." Mosikatsana (1996:552) echoed a similar sentiment and he extends the hope toward a broadened view of family within South African law when he states:

> Because the exclusive nature of the common-law definition of marriage does not reflect social reality, it has become necessary under certain legislation to adopt a functional approach to defining family status, with the result that couples who do not fit the traditional family model may be deemed spouses of one another, even though they are… not legally married to each other.

Some debate will yet have to take place before homosexual marriage becomes a reality in South Africa. Whether this is important for all in the gay community is another matter. Some feminist voices might object to the necessity of gay marriage as it may send out the message that gays need to copy heterosexist social norms, like monogamy within the institution of marriage. Steyn (2001:424) mentions another interesting option or alternative to formal marriage in a type of registered partnership that could be recognised by the state, and may implicate a range of legal advantages for gay relationships. Such arrangements are currently in place in countries like Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Hungary, and are also being considered in a number of other countries.

The issue of gay parenting rights is an even more complicated one, and cannot be attended to here in detail. It can be said that the gay family has a claim to legal recognition and protection in terms of our constitution (Steyn 2001:431). Mosikatsana (1996:554) has explained his view that South African law's failure to recognise same-sex families perpetuates the cultural hegemony of the western Judeo-Christian concept of marriage and family, ignoring the diversity and plurality of our societies. He implores the South African courts to adapt this situation according to the Chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution. Calhoun (2000:15), a British lesbian feminist, similarly feels that besides same-sex marriage, "lesbians' and gay men's access to children belong at the centre of lesbian and gay politics" of the future. According to sources (Herek & Berrill 1992:91), until recently in the USA, gay relationships generally had no legal status, and lesbian and gay male parents often lost legal custody of their children when their homosexuality became known. However, this seems to be changing, both locally and internationally.

Speaking of lesbians, Ussher (1997:133) remarked that in contrast to harsh legal treatment of sex between men, sex between women has been remarkably neglected in terms of the law. There are nevertheless examples of how woman-to-woman sexuality has been treated in legal circles in the past. One particular example is from Britain where a certain Lord Desart, a former Director of Public Prosecutions, had the following to say on a attempt to include a clause on lesbian sex to the 1885 Criminal Amendment Act: "You are going to tell the world that there is such an offence, to bring it to the notice of women who have never heard of it, never thought of it, never dreamt of it. I think it is a great mischief." The clause that was to be introduced was: "Any act or gross indecency between female persons shall be a misdemeanour and punishable in the same manner as any such act committed by male persons" (Ussher 1997:135). It does look like the "outlawing" of female-to-female sex has been neglected, or shall we say ignored, in South Africa too. And as we shall see in the analysis of some female-gay discourses in chapter five, an approach of "no knowledge" about women-to-women sexuality effectively denies the existence of lesbianism.

In a study, Siegel (1991:251) found that a high number of legal cases involving gay issues, freedom of speech and association seems to be at the centre of the battle. He comes to the conclusion that:

> The moment the gay liberation movement achieves liberation, the free speech claims will lose much of their force. Whatever… isolated pockets of homophobia and anti-gay discrimination persist will then be combated on more intellectually defensible grounds with privacy and equal protection arguments.

The reason why I share this piece of information with the reader, is because it made me think that a lack of freedom of speech is like a form of public silencing. Whereas the study was done in the USA, where one may assume freedom of speech is not a problem, such an assumption would obviously be inaccurate. Anti-gay litigation does not seem to be a common occurrence in South Africa yet, but it may increase with higher levels of awareness about human (including gay) rights. I think it can be expected, given our constitution, that more and more homosexual people may resist and shatter the conspiracies of silence that are still in place.

In an article by Samar (1994:160) he criticises both "Kantian theory" as well as the "natural law theory" that are used to discriminate against homosexuals. "Kantian theory" originates from Emmanuel Kant who proclaimed that homosexuality is universally wrong because it violates the end of humanity, which, in respect of sexuality, is to preserve the species. Similarly, the "natural law theory" assumes heterosexuality to be the natural sexual orientation as opposed to homosexuality that is unnatural. Suffice to say that I agree with Samar's observations. Samar (1994:160) suggests that:

Anti-discrimination legislation is both an appropriate and effective means to promote the idea that discrimination against lesbians and gays in respect to most employment, housing, and public accommodations is sufficiently injurious to both individuals and society that it should not be tolerated.

Lesbian and gay activism for civil rights of homosexuals does not get a lot of attention in this report, but it should be said that it is alive and well in South Africa. For example, in their manifesto for the annual Johannesburg pride march, the Gay and Lesbian organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) included as one of the "ten challenges" the recognition of longstanding lesbian and gay relationships by giving them all the benefits afforded to heterosexual couples (Steyn 2001:213). Sartorelli (1994:179) suggests that affirmative action programs should also exist for homosexuals given the wrongs suffered by gays and lesbians. The homophobic and discriminatory conditions that homosexuals had and still have to contend with, justifies the extension of affirmative action programs to homosexuals.

I find it both interesting and alarming that efforts are sometimes made to remove civil rights protection for homosexuals as a minority group, as happened in the American state of Oregon a few years ago, again on the basis of homosexuality being abnormal, wrong and perverse (Rice 1994:7). In a similar case in Colorado, the effort was largely funded by a far right conservative group "rooted in fundamentalist churches" that launched the effort under the banner of "Colorado for Family Values" (Rice 1994:6). Maybe this teaches us that within reciprocal power-relations there could exist a continuous "tug of war", so to speak? Most probably, because in both these cases some support for the endangered gay rights also came from Christian circles. One Catholic Bishop took a stand by saying that "past discrimination against gays and lesbians justifies laws forbidding it, such as laws that include 'sexual orientation as a category protected under the hate-crime statute(s)'" (Rice 1994:7). He later echoed this sentiment by encouraging "Biblically based Christians who operate out of a more loving and compassionate framework… [To] meet the challenge head-on and forcefully oppose this deceptive, homophobic campaign…" (Rice 1994:7) With regard to South Africa's constitutional prohibition of discrimination against homosexuals, Farlam (1997:142) feels the greatest benefit for Christian homosexuals is that it may compel churches to change their position too. This concludes our section on legal discourses about gays.

4.5 Additional and alternative discourses - The personal is the political.

Calhoun (2000:18) proposes that lesbian and gay politics needs to be centred on challenging politics and practices that are predicated on the following assumptions: 1) That there are only two natural, normal, nonpathological gender categories, 2) That homosexual sexuality differs qualitatively from heterosexual

sexuality in being more excessive and compulsive, and 3) That gay and lesbian people are fundamentally unfit for marriage and family. I am prepared to agree with Calhoun that these are basic issues that if deconstructed politically, may contribute significantly to deconstruction of anti-gay discourses. Moreover, the effects of such deconstruction could be what Calhoun (2000:95) would term the avoidance of "preventing future generations of gay and lesbian persons."

Elsewhere in this dissertation, references were made to writing as an act of resistance and speaking out. Besides the written word, the visual combined with narrative can be another powerful tool to convey the "not yet said" (Kotzè 1994) of gay and lesbian lives. The work of Holmlund and Fuchs (1997), specifically their use of documentary films as storytelling / narrative devices, may well belong within a category of alternative discourse. As they put it in their own words, "After all, to see and be seen is a matter not only of visual representation but also of social acceptance and political clout… reconsidering how speaking and naming, silence and suggestion, are expressed and experienced… we speak about us" (Holmlund & Fuchs 1997:1). Maybe the reader will agree with me that film as medium enhances the act of witnessing when it is conveyed both by word and image. Holmlund and Fuchs (1997:2) consider the documentary genre they are involved in, as not in typical voice-of-god narration style, but rather avant-garde and experimental, but certainly autobiographic and ethnographic in nature. Film seems to be a recent form of queer discourse that has arisen and is currently in circulation. In South Africa the annual gay and lesbian film festival has become an event in film and videography, and is openly supported by the Ster Kinekor group. What is more, and I can appreciate the tentative position, Holmlund and Fuchs (1997:7) recognise "that identity politics are premised on shifting grounds – sometimes interwoven, often disjunctive – these (visual) essays thus regard 'identity' as situational, provisional, and rhetorical rather that essential." In other words, they do not claim their work as being timeless or universal.

There was support from the two male participants both for the written and video format for conveying gay stories to other gay people and society. The preacher's gay son, Org, said: "lately, the movies, dramas and books with gay themes have been a tremendous relief… if I think about all the people that are struggling on their own without any information on the subject." The dominee-participant remarked: "The films *The Priest* and *Bent* as well as the book *'n Kas is vir klere* (A closet is for clothes) have contributed to the irreversible process that was initiated in my personal life. Later, the books by Bret Johnson *Coming out every day* and Jean du Plessis' *Oor Gay Wees* (About being Gay) meant a lot to me, especially with regard to the many misunderstandings and myths surrounding homosexuality."

Perhaps it would be wise to include a short discussion on the expression "the closet." It can be said that homosexuals who hide their orientation, or conceal their homosexuality from a hostile environment, are considered to be "in the closet" - metaphorically speaking of course (Johansson & Percy 1994:5). In my view, the expression of being "in the closet" implicates a range of meanings, among which the notion of silence(d) is the most prominent. The expression "in the closet" is central to a work by Johansson and Percy titled *Outing: Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence* (1994). It is a study about the process and means by which homosexuals are publicly brought out, or made to come out of the closet unwillingly (The expression "fettered out" comes to mind). Although that is not the focus of this study, it can be mentioned that practices of "outing" gays have taken place in a number of countries, for instance, in the form of witch-hunts against those who love their own sex. It is still taking place in contemporary society for a variety of reasons. As the title of their book suggests, Johansson and Percy inform us that the main motive for "outing" is to shatter the conspiracies of silence. When a public figure is "outed", it forces society to reconsider their notions and perceptions about homosexuality and heteronormativity (I cannot however, condone such a practice myself).

It has been said that the church, state (in my view including schools and legislature) and Christian society in general have committed countless crimes against homosexual people. Johansson and Percy (1994:32) however think that perhaps their worst crime was to force all individuals with homoerotic feelings to become lifelong hypocrites. Whether gay people come out voluntarily or not, it marks the breaking of this cycle, or the spell, of silence about queerness. It is about visibility and speaking out. Therefore, homophile movements that has for centuries opposed the heterosexist norms of bourgeois society will continue to this day and age and into the future. As Johansson and Percy (1994:52) state: "The infamy, which the medieval Church imposed on those guilty of 'crimes against nature', was what the homophile movement had to discredit in the eyes of the public." That is what gay activists still strive for worldwide.

4.6 Summary of chapter four, and a message of hope for gay relationships

The purpose of this section was to extend the previous epistemological sections on Foucault and theological discourse about homosexuality, by adding stories, witnessing, and academic text that informs both the origins and (re-) creations of discourses on homosexuality. The additional discursive fields were that of psychiatry / psychology, education, the military and legislation. Besides contributing to the depth to the study, this section shows how the "original" medical-theological discourse on homosexuality managed to infiltrate different strata of life to transfer certain knowledges / truths about queerness as unwelcome and unwanted.

In terms of the purpose of the study - which was to inquire upon discourses that either silence or promote the gay voice and the strategies and conditions of such discourses - a few remarks will now be in order. In general, it seems as if those anti-gay discourses that are silencing in their effect still serve the hegemonic positions of male heterosexists that abound especially in educational and military settings. In other words, it remains uncertain, for me at least, if any remarkable relief has been felt there. Some of the thinkers we referred to have made brave suggestions to improve the situation, more specifically in schools / curricula. Some gay-intolerant discourses as languaged in the fields of psychology and the legislature on the other hand, seem to have been not only exposed, but have been significantly challenged or reversed. It is as if discourses that mute gay people are less free to roam and circulate in these fields. In my opinion, the mere exploration and discussion of influential discourse in this chapter serves deconstructive purposes. Moreover, we must not underestimate the importance of the process of decriminalisation of homosexuality in SA, in which respect we seem to be rather advanced in the world. We are indebted to this progress for being able to live less subjugated and underground lives – to be living more out and proud not only for the sake of resistance, but as an experience of freedom.

As expected, the exploration of gay-related discourse also led to a range of mature as well as new or fresh resistance-discourses that strengthen the voice of optimistic knowledges about queer. The pro-gay discourses in their turn infiltrate and subvert the once-dominant homophobic "truths", to counter the influences of bodies of knowledge that try to homogenise the natural diversity of social life. As hoped for upon entry into this study, many things written, said or otherwise communicated, contribute to the process of liberation of queerness. This hopeful tendency remains visible throughout the rest of the dissertation, and is reflected in some of the themes identified during the narrative analysis of our participants' stories in the next two chapters. It seems that we are less silenced than I realised.

To conclude this chapter I am sharing a message of hope and encouragement for gay relationships. I fear that to the extent many gay people in a heterosexual dominated culture internalise societal homophobia, they may hold beliefs that they are incapable of maintaining intimate relationships. However, a study by Smith and Brown (1997:42) shows that such beliefs are, and can be, sufficiently counteracted by a social network of support for gay relationships. I know that the people in my / our life who have supported my partner (of 14 years) and myself, have contributed hugely to our commitment as well as the will and ability to survive difficult times. Included in the support network are the gay "family" circle, heterosexual friends and most of the biological-family members from both sides. All these people are involved in affirming and validating us as (gay) people, as well as our relationship. It seems that optimal relationship quality for gay couples is related to support from family and from friends. It may also be influenced by the positive nature of

the couple's relationship which draws a social network closer and encourages them to offer their support (Smith & Brown 1997:54).

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH PROCESS AND APPROACHES REVISITED

5.1 Introduction – Things did not work out exactly as planned

You may recall that the initial plan was to launch a study that would primarily involve the participative and action research approaches. In this chapter the reader will come to realise how the eventual process led instead to a preference for some of the other approaches that were introduced in the earlier chapters. These were the narrative and ethnographic research approaches, and what has been described as narrative analysis. Foucault's political approach to discourse or discursive analysis (Halperin 1995:43) as well as elements of Weingarten's (2000) ways of witnessing violations of lives and human rights, also proved to be extremely relevant. All the said approaches are strongly influenced by a preference for hearing the stories / accounts of participants, and keeping these central during analysis.

It so happened in this project that however much I endeavoured to "launch" the steps as planned for the study (refer to chapter one), the process invariably gravitated toward the sharing of personal accounts of the gay lives of the participants involved. It will become evident in this chapter as well as the next, how the actual process evolved, and how some of the elements of participative and action research have nevertheless been retained.

In this fifth chapter, I will put forward the actual process of how the participants were encountered and involved. In addition, the reader will be invited into, and accompanied through the developments of how their narrative accounts became the vehicle of the project – how the "gathering of information" took place. I will also try to show the prominence or preference for research approaches that compliment a narrative style. Furthermore, I thought it useful to develop a diagram / "map" / flowchart that depicts the multi-layered function of narrative / discursive analysis according to themes, in a research project. This chapter then, becomes a preparation for the sharing of some of the participants' own experiences, views and tellings of their gay lives in the next (sixth) chapter. At the same time this chapter introduces a stance of reflection / reflexiveness about the study, that will become more prominent from this point onward.

5.2 Gay participants "walking" into the project

Although you have been introduced to the research participants earlier, you will now be entertained with a more detailed account of how they became involved. Recently, I joined an esoteric group. One of the group members happened to be a Dutch Reformed minister who started a meditation group for a few people who were interested. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that clergy could be involved in esoteric interests and activities. When he heard about the research I was about to initiate, he almost immediately suggested two gay people he thought might be interested in participating. He introduced me to each of them at separate opportunities, and both committed themselves to taking part in the project. The one person was a 38-year old gay man, Org, whose father used to be a Dutch Reformed minister. The other participant was Grethie, a 38-year old female gay person who used to be the wife of a Dutch Reformed minister. The minister also knew of another practising gay Dutch Reformed minister who was interested in participating, and who eventually voluntarily joined in on the group of participants. This participant preferred to remain anonymous. For the purposes of this report we will therefore refer to him as the minister / dominee or the theologian. Both Org and Grethie have been balancing an 'in the closet' and 'out of the closet' situation in their lives. The minister's situation can be described in a similar way, as he is also 'in' in some contexts and 'out' in others. Org came out rather late in his life, according to him, which appeared to be when he was 30 years old. Grethie came out about 2 years ago. The dominee's partial 'coming out' was also quite recent. Being 'in the closet', of course implies (at least partial) silence about your homosexuality.

Thus, having met the three participants, I introduced them in more detail to the theme of the study. At this point in time I was still interested to continue with the option of involving people visiting a gay website / chatroom, as explained in the first chapter on the planning of the project.

5.3 Efforts to "do" research, and participants telling their stories instead

As I started to negotiate with the participants about how to continue with the process, they all indicated that they would be interested in seeing the questions that I had compiled during the preparation phase. I indicated clearly that although it was structured as a questionnaire, it was only meant to be a guide for conversations (individually and in a group fashion) that I hoped would take place. I nevertheless supplied all three of them with the questions (addendum A) that I thought might serve as thought exercises or experiments in terms of the issue of discourses surrounding homosexuality. Each participant had the option to approach the questions as a questionnaire if they so wished. I also invited the participants to change the content or format of the questions, or add any questions or issues that they felt were important to them. It so

happened that very little additional interests were raised - the participants seemed to prefer to address the research theme and questions as proposed by the research initiator.

What followed was that the two male participants continued to work through their questionnaires, answering the questions in a narrative format. They used the questions as guidelines to tell their stories of being gay within the Christian religious tradition. In the case of Grethie, she preferred that we discussed the questions in a conversational-interview style, which is what we did. It was particularly interesting that Grethie started off our very first conversation with the words, "Surely this means that I basically will be telling you my story?" Both in the case of Org and Grethie, we were able to follow up the questionnaire, and "interviews" or discussions, with a number of informal conversations about what was shared in their initial accounts. This was possible only to limited degree with our theologian participant. At a later stage, he was helpful in supplying me with the official documents of the Dutch Reformed Church's position on homosexuality. We did however, share a few short informal conversations.

At this stage I realised that the amount and type of information that was becoming available could be suitable for a narrative-oriented study and analysis. In the light of this, I eventually decided against the inclusion of additional participants. The earlier resolution to involve participants via the Internet was also aborted. This decision was confirmed when it became apparent that all three committed participants were involved in a gay conference that was held in the Vaal Triangle (Vanderbijlpark) in October 2002. During their presentations at this conference, Org and Grethie shared their stories about living as gay people within a Christian culture / tradition. The tape recordings of this event were made available to me, and I was thus able to include it as narrative material, or "text" as referred to in chapter one. It contributed much to the depth of the two participants' stories, specifically their witnessing-accounts inside religious communities that seem to be saturated with homophobic and gay-bashing discourse.

After the initial open-ended questions / "questionnaire", the interview-conversations and follow-up informal discussions between the other participants and myself, I supplied five articles to them as part of a preparation for the forthcoming focus-group interview. Summaries of these articles are included as Addendum B. The articles were chosen for their deconstructive contribution regarding homophobic discourses. It should be mentioned that participation in the group conversation was negotiated with each participant from our very first contact, and none of them had any hesitation or doubt about partaking in it. A few weeks later we had our focus-group conversation. The guidelines for this "interview" were prepared in the format of open-ended questions (see Addendum C) and were read and negotiated at the start of our

meeting. Eventually this group conversation focussed on the participants' reflections on the gay conference that they were involved with. This conversation lasted almost two hours.

Despite these unforeseen changes, the actual process nevertheless largely imitated the planning as outlined in chapter one. In my opinion, all six steps or "chapters" as they were referred to in the preparation phase, were present in one way or another during the actual research process.

5.4 Research approaches that accommodate what has happened, and some live textual data

Because narrative and ethnographic research was introduced in chapter one, I will not repeat the detail of it here. However, it may be useful to illuminate these approaches by making mention of what can be called autobiographic study, as well a narrative analysis approach based on the work of Foucault, amongst others.

We have witnessed that from a social constructionist viewpoint, "human beings create 'discourses' which construct and constitute reality. From this perspective, language… exerts primary power in manifesting a given social reality" (Goodman 1992:124). Goodman tells us that Foucault concentrated on the discourses of those who have often been ignored in the social sciences, or what he termed "subjugated knowledges". She also reminds us how Foucault's work centred on how systems of ideas emerge as systems of power (Goodman 1992:124). This author then indicates that one way of gaining insight into the social realities, is through the stories that people tell. In her words: "As stories are told and retold, they become myths that play a powerful role in establishing the social life of a group" (Goodman 1992: 127).

The basic method of Foucauldian discourse analysis seems to be to refuse to engage with the content of particular authoritative discourses – in this case, with the content of homophobic discourses – but instead "to analyse discourses in terms of their overall strategies" (Halperin 1995:38). I am not sure that we will keep to such a view of discourse analysis, as we are, as far as I am concerned, interested in the content of discourse too. From the Foucauldian point of view, the suggestion is made to concern yourself less with refuting homophobic discourses, but rather with "describing how those discourses have been constituted, how they participate in the legitimisation of oppressive social practices, and how they manage to make their own operations invisible" (Halperin 1995:43). Such a discursive or strategic analysis may help to explain the paradoxical, incoherent and "propositional indeterminacy" of homophobic discourse by way of two explanations, namely, the deconstructive and the psychoanalytic mode. Here, we will engage in the deconstructive mode. This seems to view the homosexual not as a stable or independent term, but as a "supplement to the definition of 'the heterosexual' - a means of stabilising heterosexual identity" (Halperin

1995:43). The interesting question could be posed: In order to resist or disrupt homophobic / heterosexist discourse, what sort of anti-homophobic strategies does the apparatus of homophobia make possible? Halperin (1995:48-51) mentions creative appropriation and resignification, appropriation and theatricalization, and exposure and demystification as useful strategies against homophobia. In the case of theatricalization, the phenomena of *drag* and *camp* came to mind, as discussed in chapter two (paragraph 2.8) as alternative discourse. Although these strategies do feature in gay life, they did not appear to be prominent in the lives our participants, judging from their narrative accounts (see next chapter). The other strategies mentioned here feature in a variety of guises in our study.

It has been pointed out earlier that in his political work Foucault tried a different tactic to create opportunities for the disempowered voices to be heard, recorded, published, and circulated (Halperin 1995:52). What Foucault refers to as "reverse discourse" (Halperin 1995:58) includes the idea that homosexuals begin speaking for themselves. If this is the case, then it seems that what we have been involved with here cannot be limited either to the field of research or to discourse analysis: it actually involved politics as well. My preliminary 'conclusion' or understanding would be that we have encountered - created if you will - a form of praxis, a sort of marriage between political work and analytic research. Another way of seeing it could be that deconstruction of taken-for-granted discourses and bodies of knowledge took place, as well as the (re-) construction of preferred identities. In my view, we have been witnesses to such de- and re-construction in this project. The reader will be able to assess my opinions on this in the final two chapters.

Because of its relevance henceforth, the following quote is deliberately repeated after being used in the chapter on Foucault, "The effect of Foucault's political approach to discourse is not to collapse truth into power but to shift the focus of our attention from matters of truth to matters of power. That shift has proven extremely profitable for the analysis of homophobic discourses" (Halperin 1995:31). This author seems to interpret that homophobic discourses operate strategically by means of (logical) contradictions and double binds, to impair the lives of lesbians and gay men (Halperin 1995:34). In my opinion, what this study manages to show, is that discourses do not necessarily contain truth (absolute truth / knowledge cast in stone), but that they nevertheless exert tremendous influence in people's lives.

Some of the ideas of Tyndale (1990) have also been referred to. He suggested that narrative analysis is based on language rather than statistics, and he uses the concept of "re-storying" that takes place through narrative family therapy. He seems to imply that re-storying can also take place in the process of research that involves the sharing of narrative accounts, as indeed did happen in this particular study. The crux of the "method" of discourse analysis as suggested by Potter and Wetherell (Tyndale 1990:25) is, "a search for

patterns in the data, … and the concern with the function of the discourse and its consequences…" It can be pointed out that both these factors were present in our analysis. I prefer to use the expression themes instead of patterns of data. Such an approach seems to indicate a process of discourse analysis that allows for the extraction of unique outcomes from the accounts of participants in narrative studies, where unique outcomes indicate pro-gay discourses.

As indicated in chapter three (3.5), Boisvert (1999:66) feels that it is undoubtedly the personal stories of religious struggle which hold the power to move and to inspire people. A contribution of our gay theologian reflects this idea as follows: "I am convinced that no theological argumentation will be able to hold against the telling of one's story… I have heard people who previously refused to reconsider the position of homosexuality as wrong, say that they changed their opinion completely after listening to a personal account." What Boisvert (1999:66) refers to as the autobiographical mode of discourse evaluates critically the influence of institutionalised religion on gay lives. The autobiographical mode of discourse seems to emulate the narrative paradigm both in therapy and research processes, and it shows some similarities with the ethnographic method as well. In addition, it seems that when gay spirituality is voiced, it represents continuing efforts by homosexual people to neutralise the religious discourse of exclusion and, at the same time, opens up possibilities for the creation of spirituality that includes forms of homosexuality. I hope that this report may count as gay spiritual writing in a sense, as it includes the autobiographical mode of discourse in the form of the participants' narrative accounts, as well as examples of other living 'texts'.

In addition to those already mentioned, Jennings and Graham (1996:165-181) also made some exceptional contributions to the field of action research, in particular with regard to discourse and discourse analysis. Their approach positions the researcher in a post-modern frame, which they feel is especially suitable for the reflection phase of the research cycle. Therefore, I share it here at the point where we are about to enter the reflective stage. The writers remind us that postmodernism is an approach that requires us to look at things in new ways, keeping in mind that there are no universal criteria for truth and that knowledge is always contextual (Jennings & Graham 1996:168). The authors are of the opinion that:

> Critical action researchers have become adept at exposing 'meta narratives' through the processes of 'critical reflection'… In fact, postmodernists argue that the overarching meta-narratives of the modern period have given way to the 'little stories' of the post-modern condition. Language, metaphor and discourse, the central elements of post-modern epistemology, can provide new ways of exposing competing meta-narratives. There are no 'final' stories but each story reflects our own way of organising and understanding the social world.

Within post-modern theory the subject is no longer a rational unitary being, but able to occupy:

> Different subject positions within discursive practices; positions which are produced by the power/knowledge relations of particular discourses. As such, the subject exists in-process, only as partial, and sometimes non-rational 'voices' occupying sites or positions which might themselves be contradictory'
>
> (Jennings & Graham 1996:170)

Included in action research is the post-modern tool of discourse analysis, which in turn includes the deconstruction of what we take for granted or regard as self evident (Jennings & Graham 1996:171). According to these authors, Foucault's work "shows how objects of knowledge are not natural, but are ordered or constructed by discourses which determine what is 'seeable and sayable'" (Jennings & Graham 1996:171). They continue to explain discourses in the terms of Gee (quoted by Jennings & Graham 1996:171) as:

> Ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort…churches of a certain sort…

The five key features of discourses supplied by Gee (in Jennings & Graham 1996:172) are, 1) Discourses are ideological, 2) Discourses are resistant to self analysis, 3) Discourses are defined positions in relation to other, ultimately opposing discourses, 4) Discourses value concepts and viewpoints at the expense of others, hence marginalising the others, 5) Discourses are related to power relations and hierarchical structure in society.

Hence, one way of disrupting non-helpful discourses is to use Foucault's power/knowledge couplet, including his view that "Power is relational, not a possession, exercised rather than held, and is not limited to a central point" (Jennings & Graham 1996:173). In practice, this implies that the researcher considers the question of 'how?', above the questions of 'who?' and 'why?' The main advantage of this type of analysis is its political potential, or put differently, its potential to question "which knowledge becomes an instrument of policies and practices" (Jennings & Graham 1996:175). Research from such a point of departure may lead not to solutions, but often results in new questions. Researchers "might reflect upon the need to struggle without end or resolution, indeed to deconstruct, construct and reconstruct meanings in 'making sense' of the world" (Jennings & Graham 1996:175). In the light of this, to my mind, projects like ours will always remain "unfinished business."

In addition, we need to comprehend that critical action research implies that oppression and emancipation form part of ever-shifting patterns arising from ongoing struggles. It is for the same reason that resistance rather than emancipation has become the central notion in post-modern discourse. Some of Jennings' and Graham's (1996:177-179) descriptions of the value of poststructuralist approaches in research will be shared later. The advantages of such an approach to research includes the following: 1) It provides a very useful tool in exposing dominant forms of discourse which silence non-dominant voices by power and power-relations, 2) It disrupts the concept of continuity, allowing the potential of discontinuity to be part of the 'reconstruction' process, 3) 'Narrative' can be examined as a useful form of discourse – these narratives help to communicate meanings, project voices and provide multiple perspectives and future possibilities, 4) Deconstruction can take place during the reflection phase, by seeing text and meaning as contested terrain. We seem to have enjoyed similar value of post-structuralist research approaches in this study.

Soon after meeting the (other) three participants involved in this project, I became aware that I am not only an involved participant, but that through my exposure to the sharing of the others' stories, I became a witness to certain violations against their humanity. The work of Weingarten (2000: 389-402) with regard to witnessing has been introduced in the previous chapter where I shared an account about my experience of racism and homophobia. The idea of myself (and of course everyone else involved) being in a witnessing stance within this research project, became more relevant as we went along. Weingarten (2000:391), a therapist and researcher, has said: "The themes of my professional work have been the themes of my personal life: silence, voice, witnessing and hope." I felt that I was able to identify with that statement in profound ways, with regard to this research project. I was involved in the witnessing of the influences of homophobic discourses in my own life, as well as in the lives of the other participants. Moreover, we were able to detect and share not only homophobic discourse, but also voices that transcend its violations. Therein lay the hope.

Maybe the inclusion of a particular example of voice-ing / speaking out / witnessing can be shared here. It is an account written by Grethie, in which she tells of her experience of vulnerability and fear of loss of a relationship once her gayness 'comes out.' She brought it to me, and read it to me aloud. I was profoundly aware of my position as witness to what she said and experienced at that moment. You may find the clues to the discourses of homophobia, its strategies and influences, both in her words and between the lines. Her 'text' is presented here in full, but will also appear in parts in the next chapter, where narrative analysis will be attempted.

Witnessing Grethie's voice, June 2003 – What follows is a direct transcription, therefore I quote:

What Makes It Difficult To Break The Silence? Having to know (If you knew about my homosexuality / gayness) I expect the following to happen:

1)   I will lose your trust. In future everything I do / recommend / say, you will see with other (different) eyes. You will view everything with suspicion and caution. Because you think I hold some danger to you / everything you are involved with – even your principles and value system. You will think I am here to corrupt your thoughts / your emotions and everything you believe in. I am danger. You might even see me as a vehicle for evil. As a threat. Someone who must be got rid of / exposed (of) / silenced.

2)   I will lose your friendship. No friendship can exist if there is no trust. So it will cease to exist. You will not phone me / ask me / involve me, as you always did before you knew. You will try to un-involve yourself of every place you have to make contact with me and even seek to try to avoid walking into me at places – even to the extent of avoiding eye contact because you are afraid of me. You don't trust me anymore and I am no longer your friend.

3)   I will lose your respect. Before you honoured my opinion / you took my advice / you recommended people to me. You placed your trust in me and even caused other people to place their trust in me. Now you will shun away from even thinking about me and you will even find yourself hating yourself for allowing yourself to befriend and trust me.

4)   You will be angry with me. You will think I have deliberately won your trust to hurt you. You will feel exposed as if I was dishonest to you. You will feel cheated and lied to. You will think of me as one big lie. You will wonder if you can even trust the other parts of me because of this thing that you believe was a deliberate lie. You will not trust me ever again – you will feel betrayed.

5)   Your feelings will be hurt. You will see this from your point of view and not mine. You will not understand me / nor my actions and I have little hope that you will ever think of me in the same way as before.

6)   I will lose your honour. In the past, I was great in your eyes. You thought of me as a person making a great difference to society – someone doing something of significance in Gods hands. And you were proud to be associated with me. Now association with me will cause you to feel ashamed. You will rather not admit that you once were so stupid as to have been called my friend. You will never again talk of me with regard / honour / expectation of something good / hopeful.

7)   You will belittle me. Behind my back you will talk of how much I have disappointed you. You might even hate me.

8)   You will hate everyone that positively connects themselves with me, treating them also with the same disrespect / apathy / avoidance / hatred as you do of me.

Why will I expose myself to this mistreatment and why will I expose my loved one to this mistreatment? It is mistreatment / inhumane / even abusive.

Why will I even try to change your mind / your opinion of me? Why will I even allow you to see some of the things I consider to be my pearls? – Like the one I love and consider to be my partner?

Why will I show you our love if you may spit on it, scorn it, or distrust it, or think of me / her / others like us as somehow sexually animalistic / deviant / Satanist / demonic?

You will not understand. You cannot fathom why I love her – the depth of my love / my devotion / my appreciation / my respect / my loyalty / my dependence in a sense / my happiness / my feeling of completeness and purpose of being.

So, I choose silence.

Our acts of witnessing go beyond the stories of the people we meet in person. As an example, I want to share an anonymous poem that I encountered in *Kerkbode* of July 11, 2003. The poem appeared on page 11, and is preceded by the following introduction, "*Kerkbode* received the following poem by a gay Dutch Reformed minister who recently resigned. The fear that his sexual orientation may become known, caused so much tension, that he was not able to continue working as a minister." I will present the poem in its original language, Afrikaans, with my attempted translation into English, next to it.

AFSKEID	PARTING
In die stilte van my meenthuis	In the silence of my townhouse
Heel op my eie	All by myself
Alleen	*Alone*
Moes ek dit telkemale uitpluis:	I often had to figure out:
My andersheid:	My difference:
Gay	*Gay*
Het my aartsonsekerheid ooit	Did my immense uncertainty ever
Deurgeskemer	filter through
My hard-probeer-geen-beheer	My try-so-hard-but-no-control
Paniek?	*Panic*?
Ek was altyd saam met julle	Always together with all of you
In lag, in fees, en	In joy, in celebration, and
Nood	*Need*
Had julle maar èèn keer raakgesien	If only you noticed but once
Net probèèr verstaan	Tried to understand

Liefhê	*Love*
Dan sou ek nog dalk kon aanbly	Then I might have remained
Kon werk en dien en gee	To work and serve and give
Bedien	*Service*
Maar julle liefde is te spaarsaam	But alas your love is too sparse
Voorwaardelik, selfs	Conditional, even
Min	*Little*
Daarom:	Therefore:
Hier gaan ek nou verder	I go on my way
'n Onseker tree, ja, maar vorentoe!	An uncertain step, but forward!

It seems to me that this poem carries the contradiction of both silence and voice, in that it voices the silence about homosexuality that lives in religious circles. The author steps out of a closet, but remains inside, simultaneously. In relation to the epistemology of the closet that has also been touched on in the previous chapter, the link between discourse and silence can be mentioned. Although the next quote has been used earlier, it is repeated because of its relevance here. Sedgewick (quoted by Halperin 1995:37) notes that: "Silence itself … is less the absolute limit of discourse… than an element that functions alongside the things said." Foucault himself wrote (quoted by Halperin 1995:37): "There is not one, but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses." In this poem, we witness a voice that is directed at the predominant silence about homosexuality which exists within the theological fraternity. Foucault may be saying that silences like these are in fact part of the discursive strategies of homophobia.

Although I was not able to find the idea of witnessing as a research approach described in any of the literature, nevertheless I believe that research, especially research that includes a narrative approach, is very much a witnessing act. It involves acts of listening, hearing, and 'seeing' the voices that may have been silent for some time. Such witnessing makes possible the telling, retelling and therefore re-storying of lives. My impression is that that is exactly what happened in this project. I hope that what I am trying to say here will become more 'visible' in the diagram / "map" / flowchart below.

5.5 Mapping transformation – Illustration of narrative analysis according to themes

The diagram may assist the reader to understand the next two chapters in terms of narrative analysis according to five narrative themes that were identified. In addition to those already mentioned, the work of

Yip (1999:47-63) and Ussher (1997:146-156) provided some ideas insofar as to how narrative or discursive analysis can be conducted. Both these authors applied a method that focussed on the participants' stories so as to extract those themes which emerged from the narratives. These themes became central in making sense of the participants' stories. I have chosen to use a similar type of reporting in the next chapter of the report. The themes that emerged correspond with the five central groups of discourse that will be demonstrated in the following diagram (also available as Addendum D). It follows that the participants' utterances are categorised under the five main themes of discourse as indicated. They are: 1) The discourse of oppression, exclusion, non-existence and homophobia – in other words problemed sexuality and its consequences, 2) Reverse discourse, discourse of revenge, anger and deconstruction of problematic homosexuality, 3) The discourse of resistance and liberation – challenging heterosexism and categorisation, 4) The discourse of (re-) construction of alternative sexualities and discourse of reconciliation, 5) The discourse of inclusion, celebration, contribution, hope and wonder. As can be expected, these themes overlap and examples of discourses sometimes belong with more than one theme.

As will be shown in the final chapter, chapter seven, the process of analysis will also imitate a deconstructive and strategic pattern of analysis, as referred to by Halperin (1995:43). In many respects, such an approach to discourse analysis will render visible the problem of heterosexism / homophobia, whereas homosexuality used to be the taken-for-granted problem.

Halperin (1995:52) explains:

> One way to fight homophobia… might be to expose… the operations of homophobic discourses, to reveal the strategies by which the discourses of medicine, law, science, and religion deauthorize lesbians and gay men, to subject those discourses to a political critique, and thereby to attempt to find ways of frustrating the political strategies immanent in their deployment, of delegitimizing their claims to authority and dismantling their institutional base.

Efforts will therefore be made to expose the operations of homophobic discourse as well as employing Foucault's "political tactic of creating opportunities for gay voices to be heard, recorded, published and circulated" (Halperin 1995:52). It appeared that the preference in this study was for the latter procedure, in other words, Foucault's political tactic was favoured above other ways of exposing homophobic discourse.

Power (2002:130) thinks that participatory research opens up opportunities for experimentation with new and exiting ideas like diagramming and mapping. What follows is an effort to display visually the themes that transpired from the narrative analysis, in a sort of flow-diagram that may also be considered as a "map" of time related transitions of gay discourses.

THEMES IN DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

Witnessing the past :
A position of (un-)aware
and disempowered?

1. THE DISCOURSE OF OPPRESSION, EXCLUSION & HOMOPHOBIA - PROBLEMED SEXUALITY

Dominating problem stories

2. REVERSE DISCOURSE AND DECONSTRUCTION OF PROBLEMATIC HOMOSEXUALITY

Witnessing the present :
A position of aware
and (dis)empowered?

3. THE DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE & LIBERATION - CHALLENGING HETEROSEXISM & CATEGORIZATION

Emergent preferable stories,
told and retold

4. THE DISCOURSE OF RECONCILIATION - (RE-)CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE SEXUALITIES

Witnessing the future :
A position of aware
and empowered?

5. THE DISCOURSE OF INCLUSION, CELEBRATION, CONTRIBUTION, HOPE & WONDER

Anticipated preferred &
alternative stories,
voiced and shared

Vertically alongside the five axis / themes of discourse that forms the middle column of the diagram, there are two parallel columns. The left column represents witnessing positions that stretches over the time frames of past, present and future. Each time-slot corresponds with a particular witnessing position according to the theory posed by Weingarten (2000:396-397), who asserts that witnessing positions change over time. The variables that change over time are grades / shades of awareness and grades of empowerment. In this instance it is used to indicate that the witnessing positions of gay people have changed over time from a combination of unaware and disempowered, to a combination of aware and empowered. This metaphor evokes images of the liberation of gay people from the denial of their knowledges and identities, rendering them disempowered, toward acknowledgement of their stories and sexualities, rendering them more visible, heard and empowered. Similarly, in the right-hand column the story-metaphor is depicted. We have been introduced to the narrative idea that people's stories contain the elements of events that take place in sequence, over time and according to plots (Morgan 2000:5). The same elements found in the narrative metaphor were recognised in the research participants' accounts, as it seemed to imitate a development over time from gay as problem-story toward gay as preferred or alternative story (Morgan 2001:10).

5.6 Summary of section five, and cross-over to narrative analysis.

This chapter served as a preparation for the next section, that will focus on the textual "data" in terms of the narrative accounts provided by all participants in the study, including the witnessed accounts as recorded on audio tape. This chapter also builds a bridge from the initial planning of the project, across the epistemologies toward the actual analysis of discourses. At the same time it can be viewed as a warm-up exercise for the reflective stance that will be carried into the last chapter of this report.

The diagram / map (Addendum D) demonstrates an overview of the narrative analysis in terms of the main themes that evolved from the study of homosexual discourses that have been circulating, those that are still influential, and those that are expected to colour the future of gay and queer life. The discursive and strategic analysis approach will be followed with Foucault's purpose in mind, which is "to authorise those who are normally the objects of expert discourses, who are spoken about while remaining silent themselves, to speak on their own behalf…" (Halperin 1995:55).

CHAPTER SIX

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS – HOW OUR STORIES EVOLVED

6.1 Introduction: Participants / gay people speak for themselves

At the onset of this chapter that will focus on the accounts of the participants, it may be useful to consider these words by Halperin (1995: 42):

> The political implications of Foucault's discursive approach to sexuality have not been lost on lesbians and gay men, who for too long have been the objects rather than the subjects of expert discourses of sexuality – who have been the objects, in particular, of murderously pathologizing, criminalizing, and moralizing discourses, one of whose comparatively minor effects has been to deauthorize our subjective experiences and to deligitimate our claims to be able to speak knowledgeably about our own lives.

In this chapter, you will be reading the very words of the participants (translated from Afrikaans to English). In most instances what they have witnessed and how they relate their experiences and stories will give us an insider view of the transference of discourses within the vehicle of language. Although the participants may not have been the initiators of the discourses, they (we) become the conveyors thereof. By citing the participants' own sayings, we let them speak for themselves (Halperin 1995: 53). In the words of Durkheim: "Stories, rituals, and perspectives contain modes of thinking that are socially and historically constructed" (quoted by Goodman 1992:130). Examining people's expressions about lived experience within a given social context can thus provide deeper insight into certain modes of thinking, or discourse. In this instance, we will be searching for themes within gay-discourse, as expressed by the participants.

I am aware that most similar studies make use of linking phrases between sentences and paragraphs of quotes of the participants' sayings. In this instance, I have deliberately avoided that approach, in an effort to allow a continuation or flow of the accounts, stories and expressions that were shared. The whole chapter will therefore be presented as the uncontaminated voices of the participants, in an exposition of the five thematic categories introduced in the flow chart / map in the previous chapter, chapter five. The five discursive themes are: 1) The discourse of oppression, exclusion, non-existence and homophobia - problemed sexuality and it's consequences (under heading 6.2), 2) Reverse discourse, discourses of revenge, anger and deconstruction of problematic homosexuality (under heading 6.3), 3) The discourse of resistance and liberation – challenging heterosexism and categorisation (under heading 6.4), 4) The discourse of (re-) construction of alternative sexualities and discourses of reconciliation (under heading 6.5), and 5) The discourse of inclusion, celebration, contribution, hope and wonder (under heading 6.6).

6.2 Theme One: The discourse of oppression, exclusion, non-existence, and homophobia.

Theologian

In high school I was teased and taunted by other boys about being a sissy, girlish and a fag (moffie). Both at primary and high school I learned about society's attitude towards the gay orientation, in the form of ridicule. I had a deep longing to play the piano, but was not able to do so because there was this perception that only girls play the piano. When I became head boy of the school I thought that nobody would think strangely of me any longer, because head boys are not fags (moffies). When I played rugby for the A-team, it helped me to develop a positive self-image, because rugby players are not faggots. Faggot is this expression / "bad name" that was used for boys who are girlish / effeminate or sensitive. Besides the fact that I experienced a calling to become a minister, I also felt that it was a safe haven, because I thought that there was no such thing as a gay theology student (tokkelok). Later, I became involved in the Church Youth League and was elected the president, to be able to say: presidents of CYL's are not faggots.

There was also a time when I felt close to a decision to bring an end to everything. I have experienced some of the loneliest feelings while being amongst other people… I think gay people will not blame me for saying that loneliness is one of the greatest fears they have, and live with. There was this huge piece of sadness, part of which was about what you have been missing and how it would have been (if you lived your life as gay).

My personal position as minister is a very difficult situation, particularly because the church has not clarified their official position on homosexuality. The congregation is naturally still very fundamentalist on the issue, and the community in general is still very condemning. During the synod of Western Transvaal in 1999 when the issue of homosexuality was tabled for discussion, there was a lot of joking and remarks that were made – despite the fact that a few of us there were gay people.

For many people homosexuality is synonymous with anal sex. I realised that gay sex must be one of the most detestable things about homosexuality that lives in people's minds when they think about gay people. In actual fact, homosexuality is much more than the sex act, but that is probably a way of perversifying gay people. Homosexuality is also associated with promiscuity and it is often said that AIDS is a homo-illness (moffie-siekte). Of course it is also said that gay relationships are short-lived, and that homosexuality is unnatural and against the order of creation. Where I was born and brought up, not a word was ever spoken about sex – and even less about homosexuality.

The experiences I had in the army caused an intense fear within me – because of the impression that gays are to be treated with aggression and violence. During my time in the army, I was always scared of possible assault, or that I would be found out as being gay and then sent home in shame. Even at university I feared being found out and suspended / expelled. As minister I remained quiet about my homosexuality as a matter of fact, because I was afraid that I would be put under censorship, dismissed, and then not be able to get a job again.

As far as the religious and church communities are concerned, they denounce and condemn it (homosexuality) most strongly – there are very few exceptions. I was too scared to say that I was gay – because what of the shame and the dishonour? The religious culture that influenced me pronounced homosexuality as taboo, sinful, perverse. What it said is that I will go to hell, that I am against God's creation, and of course, that Jesus can heal you. On the question, did the religious views in church circles contribute to self-acceptance or silence regarding your sexuality, the answer was: definitely not acceptance! On a individual level certain fellow believers meant a lot to me, but as far as the official views are concerned - zero!

I experienced my gayness as intensely problematic at one particular time of my life because I grew up in an era where there wasn't the opportunity to develop naturally, instead it (homosexuality) was devalued. Society says that you should not have gay friends. You are not supposed to get too near to gay people. Therefore everybody shied away, for if you come too close you too will be labelled.

Grethie

Before 'the four years' (the phase in her life during which she struggled with the idea of herself being gay) there was not even a mere thought in my mind that I could be gay whatsoever, it was simply not possible – because I was a child of God! (How can a child of God be gay?) There was no such a thing for me as someone being gay. If I did think of it, I thought it was something that happened to people because they got hurt somehow, like being raped, or something that happened that caused them not to like men anymore. I thought it had to do with some kind of unresolved pain…. And on top of that, I believed it to be sin. So, in my world, there was no such thing – it did not exist. I got these ideas from my own reading of the Bible, plus the messages that one got from the rest of society… all the heterosexual brainwashing… the notions that there isn't any (greater) diversity…So, this gay phenomenon did not really exist for me. I did not think that it was relevant for me. Because I did not want to be a man (stereotypical perception that gay women want to be male), it meant that I could not be gay – so I was not gay! Now, when I look back, there were quite a few instances where I could have been 'in love' with some or other teacher or friend… but I never considered the

feelings as being of a gay nature. I know there are people who know from a very young age that they are gay… and they sort it out early in their lives… I did not 'know' about my homosexuality.

For me there was no such thing as being gay. I never thought that what I experienced had anything to do with being gay. Maybe the closest was a time when I thought I might be bisexual, but I cannot even remember when / where I heard of this term. As I am thinking now… what if you do not have the language to describe something… and your culture does not provide any contexts where you can put it (your experiences) into…? So if you do not have the language to describe it with or any context to put it into, then it just hangs there in the air… then there is no place to put the gay thoughts… about who you are … you cannot define it. I think our culture pretends that it does not exist… or does not want to notice it. It must be a kind of denial.

I think we get our definitions (of homosexuality) from our religious beliefs. Your beliefs in who you are… So if your beliefs tell you it is something that does not exist, or that it is wrong…you have to go see someone who must / will make you well. So if you are like that for some reason, it can change. When I finally realised I could be gay, my first thoughts were that something was terribly wrong with me: I thought, I am gay, it must be a mistake!

So, during the years that I was a minister's wife, there was no such thing as homosexuality. When I look back I remember that there was a huge longing for what I considered to be friendship. Even the two ladies I befriended (whom I much later thought might be gay), also denied it. They also denied it to others. In the community it was considered a sin and it was taboo. In many respects they had a complete relationship…They were living together, did everything together, and went on holiday together in their caravan – in most respects they had a marriage, but it was not consummated. In a Christian society two women can be the best of friends and live together like husband and wife, they can do everything together – as long as they do not admit to or look as if they share the same bed – then it is OK!

Actually, as long as you say that you are born again… society may wonder about you but they won't say anything… so the silence becomes a kind of agreement between yourself and society… upheld by both. Then you do not have to face it! Neither you yourself nor the heterosexual society need to face it. Then nobody needs to know that there is something gay / homosexual – everybody denies it. It is not in your mind, and it is not spoken about. In a way it means that if straight society is confronted with someone who challenges this 'everyone is heterosexual' idea, then they will still say it does not exist. That is their way of dealing with it. You speak it into non-existence, or rather you think it into non-existence (Jy praat dit weg, of

liewer, jy dink dit weg). So, in straight society it is OK as long as you say it isn't so. You actively deny that you are gay. It does not matter if everybody is wondering about you. As long as you deny it, then things are OK. Then you are not considered as being gay.

Even during the four years that I was struggling 'against it', some people knew about my gay feelings and thoughts during that time. But as long as I declared that I did not *want* those feelings and thoughts, then I was considered to be straight – then I was still acceptable. But you *have* to say that you are fighting against it. You have to show that you are putting up a fight, then you are OK. But the moment that you say that you accept it (the gay feelings and thoughts) – then it is over. I was so confident that I was going to 'heal', that I planned to write a book that would show the process of healing; from gay to straight.

I made the following plans to cope with this problem (homosexuality): 1) View it as God sees it, 2) Hate it as sin, 3) Have remorse in your heart. 4) Repent it 5) Choose against it and 6) Stay away from it. At that time the only option was to hate it (gayness), because God hates it. The Bible says that He hates it! I did not want to talk about it, because it was such a shame. For me it was a terrible shame that I had to put up with such a condition – and I wondered, why me? So, you start thinking it must be a sin I have committed. Or, it must be a demon. You must have done something that gave Satan a hold on you. Maybe it was sorcery. You have become like an alcoholic, all you have to do is never to drink again – you may never again expose yourself to a situation…

All that really happened during this the time that I was trying to get healed - was that I experienced this frightening 'hole', an emptiness that you do not know what will fill it up - it was just this terrible void. This void became like a black hole that could not be satisfied by anything. No matter how hard I pleaded with God to take away this void…Nothing that I did was able to take it away. The black hole just draws everything toward it, nothing satisfies it, and it takes all your energy. There is nothing left of you… I felt that this emptiness inside of me was slowly killing me, that there was nothing left of who I once was. I was dying, but no-body was able to see… You seem to be able to help others, but you cannot help yourself. This 'thing' simply grows bigger and bigger. In a way it is like a longing for something that you do not even know what it is. You become more and more aware of this 'hole', and you want to be sincere with people (tell them what is wrong because they sense it) but you cannot… You live a double life. The only strategy that remains is to commit suicide. There is no more room to manoeuvre. Another way of describing this black hole is a dry, parched land. It is almost like a desert. You know that you need rain - more than rain - you need a flood!

One is constantly on the lookout to double check on how other people react. If you think that they may approve, then you show more… if not, you show nothing. The language of love between two gay people gets hidden. And it is extremely difficult for relationships to survive that kind of silence. So the public secret leads to a double life – you are in the closet even if you are out of the closet.

To be gay means you are alone, because it is considered to be a sin, a taboo, and it is wrong. It is a shame that must be kept silent / quiet. Eventually the 'hole' becomes unbearably huge. (For many) it may be easier to keep the status quo than to come out.

Org

For as long as I can remember, I have always been referred to as effeminate by both children and adults. People called me a sissy and a fag / faggot (Moffie), but I never wanted to accept this 'tag'/ label. I became friends with the other 'outsiders' of society. What made it worse for me was the fact that I was the son of a minister, a hotnots (non-Whites) dominee no less, during the apartheid times. All this, plus the fact that I was gay, made it extremely difficult for me to fit in or to be accepted. When I was in Standard three at school, we were taught how to look up the meanings of words in a dictionary. The first word that I wanted to look up was moffie (Faggot). I found the reference to the word homosexual, a word that I had heard of, but refused to believe. I did not want to be that. I am no worthless moffie. Somehow I did 'accept' that 'tag', but it was also the time when I started to resist it. As time goes by, as you are socialised to become a member of society, you learn about the meaning of the word homosexual / moffie. You learn how they view it, what they think of it and what they expect of you. At the age of ten, I had a clear understanding that it will not be tolerated. If you are gay you are not considered a true / valued citizen, but rather something second or third class. I also realised that you form part of a group of abnormal 'mad' people who had to be removed from society. Because they could not always remove you permanently, they nevertheless treated you in a manner that will lead to your making plans to remove yourself from society. Wherever you went, be it to the shop, to the school, to church, even in your home where you are supposed to feel safe, you are never spared the negative views and declarations against homosexuality. During those apartheid years the role of the church (supposedly there to provide our moral base / norms and values) was quite the opposite of tolerance of that which is different.

The discrimination starts when you go to school. There were always those children who called you moffie and pestered you, which causes you to have a negative attitude toward school. You are considered too 'soft' to be a farmer or to play rugby, so you get teased and ridiculed all the time. You are constantly reminded that you are different, that you are a fag / moffie. That was the worst – to be told about moffies and how

detestable and abhorrent they are. It is much the same as calling black people kaffirs. Those who label others seem to want to feel better about themselves. The boys of my era were very conscious of their own behaviour, not to be called a moffie. Once you have that label, nobody wants to associate with you, you are like the Biblical leper. Somewhere in your subconscious this impression about moffies got stuck, and you begin to hate moffies too. There is no place for gays in society, you do not belong here. You are not worthy as a human being. So from the day I realised I am gay, I started the fight to get rid of it. Even though you know that you are gay, you deny it. There is no-one you can talk to. It is your 'secret' that you keep to yourself. You are different and you do not 'fit'. What you hear is that it is a shame to be gay, even amongst the religious groups and organisations. But, as long as do not admit to it, no-one can really do anything to you. You learn quickly which type of conversations to keep away from in order to protect yourself. You learn how to hide your homosexuality, to deny it and to lie about it as often as necessary (I was able to identify very well with the character of 'the traitor' in the Bible).

Although I am by nature someone who prefers to socialise, I began to isolate myself from others. And because of the constant rejection, I developed a pattern of pleasing everyone in an effort to get some acceptance. However, you seem to be confronted with the 'moffie' story on a regular basis - every time it happens it is like you cringe, and start dying bit by bit. I always feared that my parents will throw me out of the house if they should find out I am homosexual. Because it was such a terrible shame to be a moffie you could not even discuss it with your family. All these messages that you do not belong, of being rejected all over, eventually leads to the idea that suicide may be the solution. You cannot even attempt to run away, because in a small town you are constantly being watched, it is like the eyes of Big Brother are on you all the time. I believe that due to distress surrounding homosexuality, your schoolwork also suffers. I was never able to achieve, and I hated school. It was hell to say the least. Most of the time it was best to keep your mouth shut and pretend you did not hear the insults. There was this bully whose assignment seemed to be to pester me. I was constantly picked on, or pinched and hit. If you protest, you are called a moffie. Whenever you tried to report it to the teacher, absolutely nothing was done! In fact, the teacher reckoned he should make a man out of me too.

I tried to believe that the struggle would all be over once I was a grown-up / adult. All I had to do was hope and pray. You also learn to do things in order not to be associated with the moffie image. You avoid anyone who even remotely looks like one, and you scored extra points if you also scorned and insulted moffies. I learned about unconditional discrimination. I did not want anything to do with moffies. I saw them as weak, pathetic and maladjusted people who are not able to fight the problem. I refused to go to gay clubs.

Unknowingly, I lined myself up for aggressive outbursts and suicidal tendencies. My mind was filled with the struggle and fight about gayness, and the way human beings seemed to view the problem.

After the army I had to go back to my hometown, Karasburg. There, still nobody knew about my being gay. I remained silent (Ek swyg). I remained in the closet. Dead quiet about everything and vehemently denying everything. When I had moved to Vanderbijlpark after getting a job there, the issue was still a big secret. One of my lady friends there had two male gay friends, and every time we went visiting them, there was some confrontation about them being out and my being in the closet / my hiding. They actually threatened my secret. Most of the time I hid everything from others, and felt lonely, frustrated, depressed and even openly aggressive. It was like the gay issue gnawed at me constantly. When I heard that a gay guy was coming to work in our section, I was furious! I thought that he might find out that I was gay, that he would tell everybody else that I was gay, I would then lose my job, and the rest of my world would crumble. I was petrified. My aggressive outbursts got worse…. I was in a deep depression, by the time I went to see the doctor, I was plagued with suicidal thoughts and plans. I was referred to a psychologist and given a prescription for anti-depressants.

Hypnotherapy showed that the cause for the depression was due to the negative view that society has of gay people. I knew I did not belong, but was not able to get away either. That is why I began seeing suicide as the only solution. Also, I began internalising all the negative ideas about gays, which developed into a self-destructive inclination. On the one hand I wanted to accept myself as gay, but on the other hand there was this part that could not deal with being a moffie at all. So, the battle to annihilate the moffie was established. Due to the 'trauma' of constant harassment, I was not able to develop into an emotionally sound person. I was busy exterminating myself.

Then there was the extra stressor of the military stuff, the cadets at school, where we received military-type training. Because you cannot shoot well or find it hard to pick something up (because you are physically smaller than other boys are), you are called a moffie. I imagined that my father must be terribly disappointed in me and ashamed of me.

I think I still have a big issue with religion and with rejection. I think what makes things even more difficult is the lack of knowledge about how it (homosexuality) works and what causes it. Society makes it extremely difficult with their narrow-minded / conservative and superficial concepts about life. It forms the foundation (teëlaarde) for destructive remarks and rejection, and according to me the gay person's own lack of information (misinformation?) allows this to happen. Because I fitted into others' stereotypical image of a

moffie, with all the negative things said about it, I did not want them to find out that I am gay because they would then reject me. In reality, I still felt rejected because I had to keep quiet.

Which situations and places make it difficult to be openly gay about my orientation? The churches – All of them, even the gay churches! It is being widely argued that gays are welcome in church if they confess to their sins and refrain from homosexual behaviour (restrain themselves from being gay!). So, what they are saying is, you are welcome as long as you are not gay. Do as we say and you go straight to heaven! There is no understanding, acceptance, or support in these institutions. Instead there is only rejection, guilt inducement (skuld belading), condemnation, disgust (weersin), ignorance, fear and judgement. I remember the day my own father mentioned in his sermon that homosexuals must be stoned to death…how that stuck in my mind, how a cold fear took hold of me. Although I realised later that it was not what he meant personally, the marks remained…

What I have experienced in my religious culture left me with a terrible fear of dying, because as a gay I was condemned to go to hell. For the Dutch Reformed church in short it means, 'Moffies go to hell!' The God of love is supposedly there only for straights. Religion was one of the biggest sources of self-punishment and self-blame, and in my life it still has influence. I also realised how alienated people can become due to religion. My religious culture also contributed to the silence, because the quieter you are the more difficult it is for them to find you. Churches and religion gave the rest of society the right to discriminate against gays and to use them as physical punch-bags. (Die kerk is in baie gevalle die stomp wat die vuur aanbrand…)

The religious views within church circles had the opposite effect of self-acceptance. Instead, it taught me about self-hate. Today I still have the scars caused by a society which has Protestantism as cornerstone. The aggression is still with me today, as is the fact that I find it difficult to trust people. I am a sociable person by nature, I carry my heart on my sleeve, but during certain stages of my life I had to hide, and I always felt that I was lying / being dishonest.

6.3 Theme Two: Reverse discourse, discourses of revenge and deconstruction of problematic homosexuality

Theologian
I was robbed of / denied my divine essence by those who were supposed to show me the divine way. I was disadvantaged through the projection of people's own sexual fears and insecurities. Today I take responsibility for the choices that I made and I do not want to blame the system or the past any longer.

Although my sexuality is a very important part, it is not the most important part of who I am. As a gay person I feel that I can experience the paradox of masculinity and femininity, not to be of one gender only… to be able to hold them both…At this stage I am very sensitive towards any effort to categorise me, or parts of my life.

Today I feel that the words gay / homosexual can be a general indication if you want to describe a group. However, the estimated 10% of the population that is gay, is actually extremely varied / diverse, which shows that the naming is very vague.

The church must be confronted about its inconsistency in the interpretation of the Scriptures and its position on homosexuality – these are long past their 'sell by' date. The myths surrounding homosexuality will have to be deconstructed.

Gay people must stop viewing themselves as people on the periphery or margin: they must stop adopting the victim archetype, and playing the blaming game. Gay people also need to be aware of the patronising attitude of others who assume we need help, like we are not autonomous enough to help ourselves. A gay consciousness must be created / developed in order for society to recognise that there really are people like us.

The movies *The Priest* and *Bent* as well as the book *'n Kas is vir klere* (A closet is for clothes) have started an irreversible process in my life. *The Priest* had me crying after so many years. Later, the books *Coming out every day* by Bret Johnson and *Oor Gaywees* (About being gay) by Jeanne du Plessis meant a lot to me, especially with regard to the many myths and misperceptions about homosexuality.

Grethie

There is a perception that a gay woman is someone who wants to be a man. I believed in that stereotype for a long time, and therefore I could not even consider that I am gay because I did not want to be man. As a child I wanted to be a boy (I thought they seemed to enjoy a much easier life). Being a tomboy was not considered socially unacceptable. I remember there was this woman whom my mother said had a sex change. I recall that I did not think that her physique looked bad, and that maybe one day I might look like her. I do not like that word 'lesbian' – it carries with it an association of wanting to be a man. I prefer the word gay. In our society people tend to differentiate between 'fem' and 'butch', which I find confusing…and makes things more difficult to understand…

The opinion of one counsellor I consulted was that I simply remained a little girl in certain respects…in my sexuality I did not grow up… Can you believe that it was part of the therapy and that I actually believed it?! She also was of the opinion that the problem could have been caused by a demon that I got over the Internet, that Satan gave me that demon – and that Satan therefore had a hold on me. All that I had to do was to confess my sins and everything will return to normal. We also worked through my past, because the assumption was that the problem could have been triggered by something from my past.

You know, I think the church is to blame…how the church interprets the Bible… and many people commit suicide and go through terrible experiences…due to the church's translation / interpretation of certain things… I wanted to commit suicide - I was on the verge of suicide! First you think that you will heal / get well, then when that does not happen…when you do not change, you realise that you are not within the will of God… and there is no way how you can live with this, no way to live with yourself…You try to change but there is no way, no way…

The other plan of self-therapy that I figured out was: 1) I had to cover myself with God, 2) Sing songs of worship, 3) Flood my thoughts with Him (not be idle in my thoughts), 4) Talk about God, 5) Be in His presence, and seek Him, 6) Remind Him of His promises, and 7) Think and act holy. However, all these things that the church suggested eventually were only a crutch. When I realised I was not going to heal, I felt that I was losing it, going mad, and I considered suicide. I am prepared to take on the church for the kind of 'support' they provide. You only hear one interpretation and that is the heterosexist interpretation. When I discovered there were other possible interpretations, I was furious! This however happened later, as I found out how misled I was…When I saw how the church misleads people… the 'help' they offer gay people is so false (Die hulp wat hulle, die Kerk, gee is so 'skyn') I think that the church plays a huge role in misleading people…

At the time I decided to leave my home / marriage, it was not because I was in another relationship. I had to go because of the immense emptiness and lack of room to manoeuvre. You get to a point where there seem to be no more options (So dan kom jy op 'n punt waar daar nie meer 'n skuiwergat is nie.) And I got the point where I knew I did not commit any sins, because if that were the case the gayness would vanish once God forgave you. The more I tried to become a more committed wife, the less I was able to. The relationship between me and my husband got worse. I felt more and more that I was deceiving / betraying myself (and him), even though I loved him. There seemed to be a growing discrepancy between what I was doing and what was supposed to happen. Well, all I knew was that I had this terrible longing / emptiness and I realised that the answer was not to be found with… (my husband). It was to be found somewhere else. As time went

by I saw that the longing that I had was for the physical touch, the love of a woman (and not that of a man). It was a terrible realisation. I kept asking myself, how is it possible? Why?! Only later in a committed gay relationship did I realise what was missing.

I remember when I 'came out', my parents were afraid that I may go and do all those extreme things, like participate in the parades and stuff. I didn't, but I believe that by doing those things people show a piece of their anger, it is almost like getting back (at society)… In a way you have to be 'hard' / tough. You must know that sometimes you will get certain looks… sometimes you will be ignored. But you have to keep on and on… reaching out in friendship, and not become too angry when you are judged. In a way you have to be hard-headed… within your pain – even when someone is really nasty toward you. You have to let their unloving, unkind ignorance fall from your back like water off a duck's back. Not to allow it to touch you or make you feel all bad inside.

I was approached by the magazine *Maksi-man* (*Maxi-man*, indeed!) about an article on homosexuality. They sent their journalists to several churches after which they had to report back. Anyway, one of them conducted an interview with me, too. Eventually it was a very disappointing article because the main message of it seemed to be that gays are still searching for God. What nonsense, that is simply not true!

Org
I often played games wherein I was the magician who was able to capture the other children and keep them hostage. I was constantly wishing I could get those back who were horrible to me.

I actually enjoyed it in the army. I was a good shot, and was selected for officers' training. I received the rank of lieutenant, which is the highest a national serviceman can be awarded. I got the highest marks for a military law course, and was later selected as one of very few accounting clerks who was to finalise the accounting report for Namibia's defence force.

Gay people are not allowed to have physical contact in public. Life's rules are made for straight people (Die lewe se reëls is gemaak vir straight mense). We (gays) cannot get married nor have children. But at the same time this leads to our questioning of many things including society's rules, beliefs, ethics, laws, norms etc.

If only the church would awaken from their deep medieval witch-hunting sleep, many things will improve. It may lead to people being generally more tolerant towards diversity that exists. It is not good enough that

churches throw open their doors for gays, but then remain silent on the issue and refuse to stand up for gays in public. As long as the broad public does not understand gayness (homosexuality), then there will always be people who will sit and rot (vergaan) in the closets, if they do not kill themselves in their teens. If only people can see what their negative statements do to young people…and in the process become liberated from their own fear of being labelled as gay…

What are some of the things that are said about gays? That they are sodomites. What of the fact that research shows that up to 50% of straights have anal intercourse, and not nearly all gay men prefer it? It is said that gays are promiscuous. In actual fact there are much less male prostitutes in the world. Fornication apparently is not a problem in the heterosexual world? It is said that gay men want to be women. Are crossdressers never straight? It is said that moffies are child molesters. What about the fact that more than 95% of men who are convicted of child molestation are heterosexual – or is that only a gay conspiracy theory? It is said that gays choose to be gay (and that gay is un-African). As if it is the most liberating thing imaginable to get up one morning and decide that you choose to be gay! Despite the fact that you will be discriminated against, demonised, and pushed to breakpoint. As if you would want to tell your parents and the world that you are a homosexual. It is said that moffies can convert / change straight men into homosexuals. Maybe that is an idea that was sponsored by someone like Robert Mugabe? It is said that moffies can be healed through prayer. If it does not work then it was because they did not believe hard enough, right? Maybe it is necessary to do exorcism to drive the gay demons out? Or what about some electro-convulsive therapy (skokterapie)? It is said that you can identify a moffie from a distance. It would be the one with the earrings, the one who does the flowers, who paint, who knows nothing about cars, who cannot ride a bike, who do their nails, who cannot gym, cannot play rugby. It is those who bake the cakes, design clothes, cannot hunt, who is not strong enough to go to the army, cannot shoot well, who cannot fart or burp loudly, who can cry easily, who cannot drive a tractor etc.…My reaction is, moffies can do all that is said they cannot do, and often they do it better than the straights!

The recipe for silence usually gets activated when you are in the environment of people with narrow-minded views of the life. People who use arguments that are obviously not their own thoughts, but merely repetitions of the broader public view. That is when you revive the rules of childhood days. Sometimes there is in certain situations simply a dominance of homophobic 'leaders', and then it is wiser to keep your mouth shut for the sake of peace and safety. Sometimes older people can easily pass judgements with their all-knowing and unquestioned 'seniority'.

I do not believe in any form of organised religion… it is the breeding place for gay sorrows, and the reproduction source of (for) non-thinking people. There you do not ask questions, you just open your mouth and get fed whatever they give you. People do not have to think for themselves, they simply explain everything from the Bible. I wonder what the word 'homosexual' that was coined in 1870, is doing in a book that is supposedly 2000 years old? And what about the so-called gay verses in the Bible? All the other sins like divorce etc. are also mentioned, but conveniently forgotten! It seems like murderers will be welcomed back into the church before gay people… The references to homosexuality in the Bible are very vague…

I think that the existence of organised churches depend a lot on the (ab-) use of guilt and fear. Heaven is also only for some elite little group of people, and you will only find out if you have really made it once you die! Churches can be worse than the Mafia who at least kill their opposition – churches maim people and then leave them to struggle on…that is why I do not want to be involved in any church anymore. Churches do not enjoy all the protection that they were used to in the past. Now they want the people they threw out, to come back. But people are not paper clippings… that you can throw away and revive again later. People are more aware of alternative spirituality and forms of belief. They know that there are spiritualities without all the death and doom. I have been bashed enough with the Bible (Ek is genoeg geneuk met die Bybel). Although I would like to know more about the other religions' views, I suspect that it may be more of the same. How will that help me to learn the lessons that I am supposed to, or to improve my life? Nothing! So, thank you but no thank you very much. I am not interested in more guilt or fear or self-defence. I have long since accepted that I am gay, and I am trying to live with it. But I am not yet over my aggression toward the church and its effects / influences on my life.

My angle during the preparation for the church's gay conference was why does the church want to give attention to the issue only now? The very first question from my mouth was why did it take them so long? And, what do they want to achieve? Do they want gay people to come back and to support the church? They can do whatever they want but I don't think gays will go back, at least not those that I asked about it. The majority of gay men that I know said that there is no way that they will return. Taking on the theology is exactly what we did (with the conference). I know what is written in the Bible on the one hand, and what goes on in my head and in my heart on the other hand… and I know it (gayness) cannot be a sin… and it certainly is not a choice! I tried so hard to get rid of it, and all their praying will not help. I prayed every day and it never went away!

6.4 Theme Three: The discourse of resistance and liberation - Challenging heterosexism and categorisation

Theologian

Today I know that to betray yourself must be the worst betrayal of all (Vandag weet ek dat verraad van myself, die hoogste verraad is wat daar is). At one stage I actually wanted everyone to know (about homosexuality) and I wanted to shout it out from the rooftops! I wanted to tell everybody, 'I am gay! Can you hear me? I am gay!' I even became proud of it, and at one stage felt arrogant, and wondered why I have to hide an integral part of me? But today I think differently about it. As time goes by there dawned a kind of calmness and peace as I realised I did not owe anyone an explanation about my gayness.

After some time as a minister, I just could not face remaining in the subtle male dominating and discriminating milieu (of the theological fraternity) anymore. There is much courage and freedom involved when a gay person 'comes out of the closet', but I also realised that coming out of the closet is a continuing process that does not stop with the disclosure of one's sexual preference. Sometimes I will 'come out of the closet' when people are discussing homosexuality and display intolerance, bigotry and injustice toward gay people. I am now able to look at a gay lifestyle as natural…it does not have to be understood as something similar to an illness, or as part of a broken reality, or that gays are simply a phenomenon on the margin…

Grethie

Then I began questioning the Church's dominant theology…and all those Christian counsellors who counselled from only one, very vague and not even very substantiated, version amongst all the theoretical interpretations that I had not been aware of in theology. Later, I was very angry with what the Christian counsellors teach people in ignorance. When I spoke at that conference, I also told them how furious I was – that it was the church (and the church's interpretation of certain Biblical verses) that made me almost to kill myself. Not being able to change, accept or live with myself. Fortunately, I read a lot and discovered many books; sources that I believe God made available to me. The book that I was going to write to show gays how to get healed, or how to change, was now becoming a book that will show how to accept and live as a gay person, and still be a Christian. Acceptable also to Him who made you!

We still have to go a long way to get rid of the stereotypes about gayness. I think knowledge must be disseminated on a wide scale to get rid of them. And the solution lies in the *group* (gay community) who takes a stand against the stereotyping, to tackle it… However, there are individuals who walk that road alone. Some of them you do not see, because they get silenced…

There is another side to gay silence – that part which makes you hesitate to cast your pearls amongst the swine (Om nie jou pêrels voor die varke te gooi nie). For example, sitting in your garden, holding your partner's hand. People drive by and stare. Maybe you yourself won't mind, but it is a real issue for your partner. So, you do not show the world what gay love looks like. And the rest of society will never know that gays have the same needs and feelings as other people, because we just don't show them. As a gay person I do not like my love being ridiculed, animalised or despised. So I avoid or hide it. But if we do not 'speak out' (act out) however, they will not realise gay people also have a normal need to hold your partner's hand. We hide our feelings to avoid the looks that others may give us. So we do not share our pearls with the rest of society, and they do not know about it. All they get to hear are the stereotypes. And people believe that gay love is only about sex and sleeping around. The only way to challenge is to show, but then there is risk…and you do not want to cast your pearls before the swine…

Org

The time I discovered the term homosexual in a dictionary also introduced my struggle of acceptance and making sense of it all. My parents always encouraged me to defend myself with words (Om my mond te rek as ek moes). While I was quiet (about being gay) I was not able to go on with the rest of my life. So, I had to speak out.

When I was in high school, we moved to another town. It seemed a bit easier there on the gay issue, but it also could have been because I had learned a few survival tricks and I was a bit older and wiser. Some children were still picking on me and often I had to defend or explain my behaviour, otherwise I would get 'the full treatment.' Because of my interest and involvement in arts, some of my peculiarities were interpreted as a type of 'eccentricity of the artist' which helped somewhat. By this time you have learned to cope with some of the stuff. Like when you are called a moffie in the cadets, you just ignore it and try to do the things that you have to. Yet I was constantly busy fighting the moffie image and trying to prove the opposite. My involvement in church activities diminished as I realised that praying did not cure me. As the years went by I realised that praying and faith was not going to heal me.

After school I went to university. For the first time in my life I felt more free. It did not feel that I was under constant surveillance anymore. There were people who even sided with me and defended me, and that felt wonderful. However, during my first year depression was taking a hold on me, and I went to see a psychologist, which was also wonderful for me. In my second year I decided to tell her that I was gay. For the first time in my life I was able to talk. She explained to me that I would have to accept it and live with it. She also explained that the best a therapist can do for a gay person is to help that person come to terms

with his homosexuality. After the session the three lady friends who had accompanied me for support, insisted that I told them what was going on. So I told them that I was a moffie. They did not seem to have a problem with it, nor did they reject me.

When I eventually did go to see a psychologist (For a second time later in life, after moving to Vanderbijlpark), I told her that I was gay and was experiencing problems accepting it. Even then I knew that I would have to tell my parents about it. It was then that I started the process of accepting myself as a gay man. I read a book that was written for the parents of gay children. It described how parents react, and how they deal with finding out that their child is gay. I knew that I was no longer able to remain silent about it. My parents had to be told. There was an opportunity for me to go the Cape for a wedding, and I planned to inform my parents during that trip. Whatever they did with the information was their prerogative. They could accept me or ban me from their home, but I was not able to continue the lie anymore. When I arrived home I was in a state of fearful but determined anticipation. I thought I was there to give them terribly bad news, but I had to push through with it. The opportunity to tell my sister came first, and her response was, 'It does not matter, you are still my brother and I love you.' When I told my parents I was a moffie, my mother warned me never to use that word in her house again ('Daai woord gebruik jy nooit weer in my huis nie!'). When I asked her if she knew what I meant by it, she said, 'Yes, I do understand what you are saying, but rather use the word "gay". Don't use the word moffie, it is much too negative.'

When I got back in Vanderbijlpark, I started telling my friends one by one that I was gay. Most of them had no problem with it. Two seemed to be terribly shocked. One was furious with me, and told me that he felt like beating me up (Hy het gesê hy wil my donder). I asked him if he wanted to beat me 'right / straight', and he said, yes. So I challenged him to first beat a Down's Syndrome normal, then he can attempt to beat me normal too (Sodra jy dit reggekry het is jy welkom om my te kom moer). He left, and after a week of no news from him, he arrived again one night to ask my forgiveness, and to say he still wanted to be friends – eventually, he was my first boyfriend! The other friend who was shocked to hear I was gay was ashamed that he had said negative things about gays in my presence. That was the beginning of the process of self-acceptance with the help of the psychologist. I do not mind anymore now who knows about me being gay. The most important thing that I have learned is that the quicker you can rid yourself of the things that anchor you in fear of rejection and retaliation, the better. It is easier said than done, though. The faster you can learn about self-love and self-acceptance, the greater your potential contribution in your lifetime.

I am (now) 'open' about my sexuality. Everybody who knows me knows about it. Anybody who asks about it may hear about it. I do not necessarily go around with a poster around my neck, but if people want to know, I

will tell them. I think that once you realise that it (homosexuality) is not a choice but rather a given, it makes it easier for you to accept it. You realise that you did not do anything to get it. It is a normal form of being human, like having red hair.

The church may take its time to change its attitude toward gayness, because that is all that the church has - time. But I wonder how many more people will have to die? Because that is what they are indirectly doing… people are indirectly murdered due to society's views that make it impossible for those people to continue (in life). My point is that society's views originate within the church. Those views originate from the Bible and how it gets translated and interpreted by the church. Then it becomes a handy weapon to beat gays with. A week ago I lost a friend who committed suicide because society teaches you (gay people) that you are worth nothing. Because you are gay you are pathetic and can't do anything. It becomes internalised and you become two separate parts. You hate the one part and love the other, but the two cannot look each other in the eye. This conflict takes up a lot of your life-energy that you could have spent differently. I think society loses a lot of brainpower in this way.

6.5 Theme Four: (Re-) Construction of alternative sexualities and discourses of reconciliation

Theologian
At this stage of my life it feels that my homosexuality is less of an issue. What really helped me a lot was the ability to work through it (Om dit te verwerk) and to integrate it as part of who I am. Other things that helped a lot were… my gay friends, they mean a lot to me – especially the gay colleagues who are also married and in the same position as I am. I have also become friendly with some of the gay people that I have been involved with professionally.

And yet, I realised that it (homosexuality) allows me to observe the church critically. As a gay minister / dominee I am different, not better or worse, just different. This actually helps me to view all the religious prescriptions with some suspicion, and to be able to notice what is socially unacceptable… I am able to trust my own intuition more than the mere prescriptions of what are right or wrong.

Within the church there are quite a number of ministers who are making positive contributions through their inputs at meetings, with synod reports, conferences and correspondence. The positive change in our constitutional position makes it easier for us to have some open conversations about homosexuality, and I find contact with gay people also makes things easier for me. I am very thankful to the Lord for a few straight / heterosexual friends, who accept me and keep telling me, 'we accept you for who you are.' Ever since my

spiritual rebirth in my standard nine-year at school, the Bible has meant a great deal to me. It was particularly with my reading of the Bible and during prayer time that I experienced contact with God and the experience of a quiet acceptance and integration of my own homosexuality.

With regard to the gay conference held at the church, we thought it was necessary to create a consciousness about gayness. It started with someone (a gay man) who came back to South Africa after living overseas for a while. His idea was to start a type of gay support group locally. However, the support group did not really get off the ground for a number of reasons. But that was where the idea of a conference about gayness actually started. During that time I told Org about my situation (homosexuality) and I went to see Grethie about the idea too. So it was the four of us who decided to continue with the idea. We then had to decide who else to invite as speakers and presenters. I spoke to someone who promoted the idea of gay people taking the stand with their personal gay stories. His opinion was that nothing would hold against personal accounts…not even the best theological arguments. Another high profile theologian happened to say the same thing, that listening to someone's story influenced him to take a whole new position on gayness.

I believe that we should not yield to the temptation of being provoked, not to allow ourselves to be fascinated by the violence of the language of some heterosexual people, not to indulge in the easy critique of the Church which our culture and our press offers us. The only issue at stake in discussions of the gay and lesbian 'problem' is the issue of truth. Although I had a lot of anger against the society and especially against the church, I don't want to be sucked up by another power battle. If we as gay people excluded our perpetrators or see them as being less-than human, or polarised them into the position of the 'evil', 'wrong' or 'bad ones', I believe the universe demands balance and does so by manifesting within us perpetrator energy. If we can't harbour the perpetrator, we are the next perpetrators in line, by violence or by silence.

Grethie

When I discovered the alternative interpretations of the Bible about homosexuality, my first reaction was, 'wow, I am normal!' I was so relieved. I was eventually able to accept myself, *and* be acceptable to God. Even though I was not in a relationship at that stage, I knew there was nothing wrong with me. In my case the value of truth became stronger and more important than fear or the anticipation of rejection. Some people thought I was brave to have done what I did, but I do not think it was a brave step (Grethie refers to her 'coming out' a few years ago). At that moment you do not always think about what you are sacrificing or even where you are going… you simply keep on walking because there is no other way! So, truth forced me 'out' and there I stood where everyone could see me – who I was and what I was, and what I stood for. They

can throw you out… but you do not have a choice, because truth put you there. It is as if you do not have anything to hide behind. I sometimes think that at the centre of our problems there is… fear.

I now also prefer to tell, to say it out loud. I lost a whole lot of friends after I came out. Now I prefer to tell beforehand and risk the loss before I get involved in friendship or even a working relationship. In that way the pain I guess is less. It is less painful to lose a friend before you get close than to experience rejection and loss of friendship. For instance, recently I travelled to Namibia and the lady next to me wanted to know why I was divorced. Eventually I told her, and I made a new friend. I do not want to live the lie anymore. But is 'rocking the boat' always a good thing or the best way? If you do it you must do it with responsibility. You cannot have influence in people's lives without going about it carefully. What you do is important, and how you do it is important.

Org

Later, when I asked my father about the things that are supposedly said in the Bible about homosexuality, he fetched the Bible and explained to me that the passages that are always quoted are not really relevant for gay people. (Although at first I did not want to believe him, I thought he just wanted me to feel better.) I asked them (my parents) if there was something they wanted to know from me: my father said that he felt terribly sorry for me. I explained to him that they do not have to feel sorry for me, instead, I hoped for their respect. I asked them to respect my choice if I should one day arrive with a partner. I requested my parents to ask any questions that they might have - I was prepared to answer any questions at all. I was ready to talk. I could almost not believe that my parents took the news about my gayness so well. Whenever I spoke to either of them about the issue after that, they assured me that everything was OK.

All the TV programs, movies, drama's, books etc. with gay themes, wherein gays are portrayed as the normal people they are, makes it a lot easier for us. Especially when you think of those who might be struggling alone without any information on the issue. People can learn what it means to be gay, how it feels. People can get a chance to get into (experience) a gay skin…. The more people are taught to think for themselves and not told what to think, the better things will be for all gays too. I think that the new curriculum (2005) educational program can assist in this, too. Maybe if gays can enjoy equal marriage contracts as those enjoyed by straights, then we may have a chance to join them with 'normal' divorce statistics too!

The reason why I gave personal witness at the church conference is because the church has a big influence in establishing the values in society. I hope that this conference will contribute towards inviting the church to

really re-think, and to think differently about the issue of gayness. I want the church to adjust its views and realise that it is not gay people's deliberate choice to be gay.

One of the articles that you gave us to read was incredibly interesting! It is the one about workshops for schoolchildren which teaches them how to recognise homophobia, and which shows straight people that to do policing on gays and on themselves is not beneficial for anyone (Org refers to the article *Questioning sexuality: a Workshop in progress* by Trudinger, Boyd & Melrose). Another thing I realised in one of the other articles was that straight men suffer too: they constantly have to defend themselves about not being gay. They have to assert continuously, 'I am not a moffie, I am not a moffie.' They spend half their lives proving that they are straight. In a way, I do not have to do that (proving that I am straight) anymore, and that makes me free.

6.6 Theme Five: The discourse of inclusion, celebration, contribution, hope and wonder

Theologian

During the time that I developed an awareness of my homosexuality, I realised that you cannot wish it away. I then I became conscious of the fact that I did not want to wish it away anymore – because it is / was me! And today I know that it was through my homosexuality that God drew me towards Him like a magnet! For me the mystic unity of male and male is both a physical, emotional and spiritual happening. There is, in an environment of true brotherliness, a relationship of deep humanness wherein all distinctions between the two men disappear… there is a huge trust in place when two men allow each other to touch their most private parts.

We have actually started to plan the next conference for later this year… maybe for later in October. We spoke about it afterward (the previous conference), and we thought that it may have been the most media coverage ever on the gay issue. There were three articles in *Beeld* (Afrikaans newspaper) and one in our *Vaal Ster* (newspaper in the Vaal Triangle), too. (Org mentioned that there was an article in the Cape in *Die Burger* as well). For me, the conference was like a miracle. One can dream about something like it, but when it actually happens you have that "aha" experience. That is what happened to me while the other people were sharing their gay stories. But in a way it was also a double experience, because I did not share my own story. You experience the joy and the sadness.

I still maintain that no argument will hold against the telling of people's stories. If I think of the people in my congregation that I shared my story with… most of them said that it changed their view completely. Even

those that have always simply accepted that it (homosexuality) was wrong, who never really thought about it independently, they crumble when you relate your story…

I want to connect with what the other two (participants) said. At one stage I had a terrible fear that anybody might find out that I am gay. Then I went into a phase where I wanted everyone to know about it. The more I told my story, the need to do it changed from doing it for myself to doing it for others. You tell your story for the sake of other people. The thing that I was most confronted with during the whole (research) process is the question, why are you keeping quiet? Why do you want to remain silent? Another thing that became clear for me is that I do not want to be categorised. Although I will from time to time say that I am gay, I want people to know that there is a great variety of gayness. I can relate to some forms of gayness, but not to others. Just like I do not find it necessary anymore to have to say that I am an Afrikaner, or of this particular religion / church…I do not want to be labelled. It only limits who you can be, because a gay person is much more than only gay. Nevertheless, the question regarding why I am still silent in certain contexts will remain with me for a while, because of what we have talked about. Having said that, I am deeply impressed by what the Talmud says: 'You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.'

Grethie

I am gay. After learning about the alternative interpretations (of the anti-homosexual passages in the Bible) I felt liberated and free. My thinking was set free. I did not feel guilt anymore; neither did I have to feel condemned. I was able to experience self-acceptance and peace. Finally I realised that I was not bad, and that I did not have to change. I think the Lord is going to change things for gay people. I believe that. I have been wondering what God's plan is with me. Why I had to walk this path of being gay…

Remember I told you about that course that teaches you to begin with the end in mind? (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*) You imagine that it is so many years later in your life and there is this big celebration… and it is all about you – your name is on the banner… and everybody is talking about you. What are they saying that makes you feel good and worthwhile? Whatever you want to hear, *you* have to do the things through your life that will lead to those remarks. I wish for… (My partner) to be able to say that having met me was the best thing that happened to her – that it contributed to her 'coming out,' and living life to the best and fullest. And I hope for my children to say that their mother really cared for them, loved them, and that they are proud of me – that they are proud that the community knows who I am. That they can say I taught them how to love God. That I showed them how to love themselves, that I gave them hope. Everyday you have to check what you do in order to earn this inheritance from all those who will be at the celebration.

Is it not time for a follow-up on the gay conference that was held last year? Maybe we must talk about that for a while? I think the Lord worked it that the conference coincided with last year's synod. It worked out perfectly…with all the articles in the papers about the conference… eventually it was said that the church's 1986 position on homosexuality is not acceptable anymore. Now there will be a special synod next year on the issue of homosexuality. If you think about it, there were quite a lot of chain-reactions from this conference. I also think that one effect of such opportunities for gay people to tell their story is that it breaks down the myths that exists. Conferences must be facilitating and not threatening to those who attend it. It can help to change and loosen up the perceptions, frameworks and assumptions of people about gayness. It reminds me of what the pastor said at the end of the movie *Chocolat*, 'Goodness must not be measured by the things that you exclude, but by the things and the people that you *include*.'

All this has me thinking whether one should not be considering another platform to convey the gay story, and to help other gay people? With my partner's literary background in mind, I have been wondering about a service on the Internet. That is why all these things ought to be written, and maybe that is why we (my partner and myself) are in this field (of writing), for us to be able to write about it. I often think that our love story needs to be written. But how do you do it without being exposed? Do you do it under a pseudonym? That will be a form of silence. If you publish under another name, it is like silence and then you can hardly be a role model. We have to become 'fit' to talk about who we are.

I am rather sorry that it (the research) is almost over now. It was quite nice to have your own personal therapist for a while! For me it was very good to talk about these things, because you are reminded of your own points of view and where they come from. I can also see how my viewpoints have changed. I think that this project could be extended. Wouldn't it be a good idea if we continue, record more gay people's stories and publish it in a book?

Org
I am sure I am as gay as a R7-00 note.

Our present constitution of course makes it a lot easier. Nowadays employers or other institutions cannot discriminate against you on the basis of your orientation. What also contributes to discourses that are pro-gay, are movies like *Love, Valour and Compassion*, written stories like *'n Kas is vir Klere*, the gay pride march and the Pink Loerie Festival. The most powerful influence of all are the gays themselves. Gays teach others what it means to be gay, through which people develop more understanding for the gay lifestyle. It is hopeful that churches present gay conferences and congresses. A world in which silence about gayness

does not have to be kept is only possible when people can tolerate difference and diversity. That will only become possible when people are informed and understanding.

I believe in destiny. There is a reason for everything, and we learn through everything that we experience. I practice this kind of belief on my own, and I am accountable to myself. From time to time I would like to have conversations with like-minded people about things that interest us, whether it be meditation, or philosophy or the gym. I will try to learn as much as I possibly can within this life. I believe that at the centre of life is love and reciprocal respect. I think it is possible to be gay and a believer. Gays are people in the first place, and that qualifies them to have the needs of experiencing meaning and purpose in their lives. All people are spiritual beings. Gays are people and therefore spiritual beings.

What will help gays to become socially liberated is to realise that it is not our fault. We have the right to be part of society, and we must play a role in constructing values and norms, just like anybody else. One of the greatest liberators of humankind is the ability to think independently and to be able to participate in mature discourse.

I think we made history! (Org's remark during our group session where they reflected on the gay conference). My life changed dramatically due to that conference. I will never be able to go back to where I was before then. It was almost unbelievable to realise the number of demons that I was able to bury due to my participation in the conference…and the power that was set free…! It is still having an influence on me. It was immensely meaningful, and gave me a purpose – I was able to contribute my part… it was a very powerful thing to do. I have always felt that it was my purpose to make things easier for others – whenever I get the opportunity to do so I will. Despite the aggression that I have toward the church, I had to participate in the conference because I believed it could make it easier for other people, that it could help someone. I also felt I was in that special position that I grew up knowing all the church stories… and I also know about being gay, so I have understanding from both sides of the story. I believe it was my destiny (my word for religion) to be at that place at that point in time. So when I was approached to participate I did not hesitate, I knew I had to do it. It was like a chance I had…maybe it was bigger than I was, I did not only do it for myself. Now I feel so much freer because of that experience… I am a much freer person now. The experience connects me to a 'job' I have to do. In a subtle way, you have to show people that some of the ideas they are holding on to are outdated. There are many ways of doing that, and that is why I cannot remain silent.

Being open makes things easier in a way. Everything can come out in the open, and it is nice when people know about it (my gayness) at work. It allows you to become comfortable and talk to people. Like when there

was this book about marriages on my desk. One of the guys asked me if I was going to get married, and I responded, 'Is that a proposal?' Nobody expects you to keep quiet about it, and sometimes you can make fun of it too.

The other article that I read, spoke about workshops that give gay people the opportunity to talk about their experiences and to show that they are human beings who are worth something. One person gets the opportunity to tell his story, to open up his soul - which for me was a wonderful opportunity. Thereafter, the others reflect about what that person has said, and they give you acknowledgement…. Personally I think it is a wonderful and powerful, nice, meaningful way to do it. If I could have the chance to do that kind of work tomorrow, I will do it. At the end of the day it is all about humanising gay people. For me that is the most important part of the whole process: that gay people have the opportunity to open their mouths and realise that they are beautiful human beings.

The value for me to have participated in this (research project) is that more issues were finished, more loose ends were cut off. The fact that I wrote my story maybe enabled one big realisation to emerge: the clarity of my aggression towards the church. I was also able to draw a link between my problems and the rejection that I experienced. The questions helped me to think and dissect systematically all the things that I was able to talk about. Eventually the aggression diminished, and that helped to make peace… Just like the talking (therapy) helped, this (the research process / writing the story / conversations about gayness) took it a little bit further… So, I think the more you do this kind of thing the more liberated you become. I am starting to think that from now on I will tell my story to people only for specific reasons – the urgent need to tell is not so strong anymore. I feel much calmer about it now. Everything brought me to a zone where I realised my life is not useless. That you are able to learn things from your life experience and about who you are. I would not have been able to deal with certain things in my life if it was not for that. It helped me to see the flipside of things. I think that research like this should continue to expose the things that cause so many problems for gay people. There are other things that also have shifted for me. I am much more at peace now. I attended a school reunion the other day that went better than I could have dreamed, and now I even shower and sauna at the gym! I do not have to worry that people are uncomfortable in my presence anymore.

6.7 Summary of section six – Having spoken the unspeakable

A study by Reid (1997:102) shows that gay respondents who were on the receiving end of the church's moral condemnation experienced feelings of alienation, embarrassment, discomfort, depression and fear. Openshaw (1997:122) adds guilt as a common experience of people who engage in gay relationships. Such

are the narratives of the story of gayness as a problem. During the research process the problem-position of homosexuality was challenged and reversed to such a degree that the original constructions of problemed homosexuality were sufficiently deconstructed and displaced or replaced. Alternative voices became audible, and eventually it seemed that an alternative story about gayness evolved, a story about gayness as preferable and good. However, detailed reflections about this journey from unwanted to preferred gayness will be covered in the seventh and final chapter, which will naturally include discussions of the discourse analysis in this chapter, as well as the teachings it provides us with.

CHAPTER SEVEN
A REFLECTION ON DISCOURSES, THE PROJECT'S INFLUENCES, TEACHINGS AND POINTERS

7.1 Introduction to reflections on discourses and what the research is telling us

"The only route we have is the dialogue between the experiences of gay and lesbian people as they have analysed and explored their own being from the standpoint of God's creation" (de Gruchy 1997:243). I want to add that in my view the use of the word "God" should be interpreted in its widest possible sense, and certainly not only in the traditional Christian understanding. The statement nevertheless confirms that the focus of our inquiry gravitated toward where it belongs – into the hands and voices of the gay participants themselves. According to De Gruchy (1997:235) "Our task is therefore to listen to the voices of those who are silent and silenced in the Bible. If the Bible was not written by slaves, women or gays and lesbians, then it is the contemporary task of theology to take that experience, that life, that story, as a crucial source for reflection." As a result, under the next two headings (7.2 & 7.3) we will be reflecting on the themes of discourse amongst the stories of our participants as shared in the narrative analysis in chapters five and six. Besides these narratives, there should also be recognition for the voices of the influential post-modern proponents and paradigms that informed the approaches preferred in the project.

Under heading 7.4 we will be looking back at our intentions at the start and reflect on the questions we asked then – reviewing the project in terms of the goals, purposes and questions from chapter one. We may also have to point out some questions that originated in our efforts to come to new or useful understandings of the issues surrounding homosexuality, homophobia, heterosexism and the discourses that influence these issues. General reflections and some preliminary "conclusions" will be shared under heading 7.5, with critique on the study under heading 7.6. The final two headings of the last chapter will be - Potential influences of the research, and pointers for the future (7.7), and a summary of what the project taught us (7.8).

I found the ideas of David Epston (presenter of a workshop in August 2002, in Pretoria) very helpful for reflection. Some of his ideas were about "questioning" your research project to elicit some thoughts on the process and influences thereof. If you "interviewed" your research project you may want to consider questions like, in what ways did 'you' (the research project) surprise your researcher? What have 'you' started teaching your researcher? What do 'you' want to show / tell the world? In addition, some questions that the researcher may ask himself could be, how has the project influenced or changed me, or motivated

me to rewrite my own story? Besides the reflections on past and present discourse, those that imply our futures shall be receiving some attention as well. Whichever way we look at it, at this stage we are wondering what the research is "telling" us. With that in mind, we can continue with this reflection phase of our study, as the last chapter of the dissertation.

7.2 Reflections on discourses as presented in the thematic analysis in chapter six

Reflections on Theme One: Dominant voices from the past. (THE DISCOURSE OF OPPRESSION, EXCLUSION, NON-EXISTENCE & HOMOPHOBIA – PROBLEMED HOMOSEXUALITY AND SOME CONSEQUENCES)

In this first theme of the five-axis discourse analysis, the strategies of homophobic discourse were the most obvious. The accounts by the participants tell of acts of labelling and abnormalising categorisation. Also, the influences of the official / expert knowledges and descriptions by heterosexist heterosexuals of homosexuals or the presumed 'gay condition', becomes visible. In the process of reading, we become witnesses of the internalisation of mainstream dominant heterosexist ideas (social discourses) regarding gayness. Society's normalising judgements operating through the all-seeing *gaze* on the *gays*, as well as its effects of self-discipline and self-regulation amongst the gay participants, becomes clearer. Note the language of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation related by participants. The power relations in favour of the dominant problem story regarding gays should also be obvious. In many instances gay hate can be seen as homophobia in action. The participants express experiences of feeling unwelcome, unwanted and of course of blatant rejection. Some of the influences on gays seem to be a disregard for themselves and self-denial. Most of society's practices toward gays seem to be the opposite of care and protection. You may notice how fear of rejection as well as guilt is in the foreground, and how this keeps secrecy and silence alive. In my view, judging from these accounts, silence seems to be a strategy of homosexual oppression in itself.

Most apparent is the theologically self-assured, judgmental and at times even arrogant character of the church discourse, which is taken for granted despite its heterosexist nature. Religious pronouncements as official truth are provided by the church. In turn this informs discourse of sin and shame and silence, in an apparent strategy of emotional blackmail. Could one say that the ultimate threat of death or harm serves as discursive strategy? I was also wondering about embarrassment and belittling as strategies of homophobic discourse, plus the strategies of isolation and alienation of gay people from the rest of society. In addition, the invisibility of the gay female person points to a perpetuation of the non-(s)existence of a lesbian voice. A preliminary conclusion would be that homophobia resembles a place where fear and aggression live together.

The first theme confirms the view of Johansson & Percy (1994:200) that,

> Homophobia thus continues to closet the living (as it has long done the dead). Homosexuals and heterosexuals alike become entangled in this web of deception and falsehood. Obligatory heterosexuality has required that everyone pretend to be heterosexual or be depicted as heterosexual…

The same authors have also noted, "We know that homosexuality became invisible to the Christian mind", yet it was / is simultaneously the object of "a thousand obscene fantasies" (Johansson & Percy 1994:40). They seem to confirm our participants' experience that homosexuality is allowed nowhere yet everywhere threatened society with destruction, and thus has to be silenced.

Reflections on Theme Two: The problematic past reviewed. (REVERSE DISCOURSE, DISCOURSES OF REVENGE AND ANGER & DECONSTRUCTION OF PROBLEMATIC HOMOSEXUALITY)

I deducted from the narratives that a reassessment of experiences and meanings seems to be taking place. These include acts and utterances of counter rejection as acts of resistance. Could it be courage shining through? There are angry and frustrated voices, too. What I thought I noticed was a resistance to the denial of and the non-existence of the gay experience, sometimes against the odds. I picked up some initial questioning voices, plus the standing up against ignorance and bigotry. This theme also indicated silence as a lack of available preferred language to describe the gay experience. To a certain degree, we recognise a revolution against the repression of authentic self-expression by homosexual people. Some story parts expose heterosexist fear as fuel for anti-gay discourse. The signs of revisiting interpretations of Biblical messages continue under this second theme, and a number of statements against forms of rejection can be detected.

Reflections on theme three: The past and present meet face to face. (THE DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION – CHALLENGING HETEROSEXISM & CATEGORIZATION)

The third axis of discourse analysis introduces early acts of speaking the unspeakable – saying that gayness is real and that it is, or can be, good. In certain ways this theme points to homophobia as 'unresolved heterosexuality' (A continuation of reverse discourse that is also visible in the second theme). We witness the stronger emergence of deliberately taking gay people and gay stories out of the closet. The citing of gay participants' expressions convey how they seem not to shy away from controversy. On the contrary, some participants seem to prefer controversy and want to employ it instead for the sake of deconstruction. You

may agree that there were signs of personal and 'local' power emerging, as well as indications of increasing courage – sometimes to the point of self-sacrifice. As part of the analysis, the third theme includes continued re-interpretation of previously held homosexual discourses and truths. Patriarchal heterosexism and its underhanded maliciousness and spitefulness is made visible, especially in the chauvinistic association between male weakness and homosexuality.

In some respects, all our participants seem to carry the potential, in Kitzinger's terms (1989:84) to construct "alternative texts" to liberal humanistic texts, that de-pathologise homosexuality and construct new identities of homosexuality. Constructing alternative human texts may serve to undermine the notion of so-called well adjusted lesbians and gays, who are supposed to be "just like heterosexuals", by reinforcing alternative moralities and identities that may revolutionise sexual identity rather than conform to, or perpetuate heteronormativity (Kitzinger 1989:92).

Reflections on theme four: The present informs the future. (RE-CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE SEXUALITIES – DISCOURSES OF RECONCILIATION)

Here we find yet further continuation of the deconstruction process of official categories and stereotypes of homosexuality. A plea for respect for difference and diversity is audible. The dispensing of new knowledge about gayness moves to the foreground, and even more voice comes out of the closet. This theme shows some efforts at constructing preferred expressions for the description of gayness as something positive and even desirable. More ethical ways of being and doing sexuality emerges from the participants' voices. My impression was that there is proof of discoursing that goes beyond revenge or reversal, toward more peaceful and diplomatic approaches to contributing to change.

Reflections on theme five: Emergence of future discourses, anticipations and expectations. (THE DISCOURSE OF INCLUSION , CELEBRATION , CONTRIBUTION , HOPE AND WONDER)

The theme here is quite different from where we started off, especially in its positivity and hopefulness. In this fifth axis the personal becomes the political insofar as every gay voice reaches the wider world, and the expectation of how that may contribute to transformation. The influence of a gay presence and pro-gay voices on a Dutch Reformed synod, and during a gay-organised conference, is shared with pride and excitement. From some of the shared living texts, one may understand that the opportunity to voice seems to have a therapeutic effect, or at least add to therapeutic processes. There can be little doubt about the transforming influence and the potential for empowerment that comes with speaking out publicly.

Also visible in this theme is the anticipation and opening up of possibilities for creativity and further praxis in the future. There are encouraging indicators of purpose and optimistic expectations for future gay life. I think we have witnessed narrative power – how breaking the silence releases power that transforms personally, politically and socially. We may see it as the result of the telling and re-telling of gay stories. What is clear is that the dominating problem story's power is broken, and hence the movement from self-rejection to self-acceptance and love. The process of emancipation has progressed into the zone of wonder and hope. Gay people also seem to say that we are here on a spiritual quest. We are here with a destiny to create alternative spiritualities, new spiritual positions and possibilities, new lifestyles and philosophies. I noticed new discourses which show forms of practising and performing gayness that is not silent or hidden but open, free and proud. This theme also indicated, however, that the process of de- and reconstruction continues.

7.3 A reflective retrospection upon participants' stories and the narrative analysis

Clandinin & Connelly (1991:265 & 272) wrote: "Our narratives are lived, told, and retold in the research process. Thus the two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry… the narrative inquiry process itself is a narrative one of storying, restorying, and restorying again." A number of aspects mentioned by the authors here, are true for this project. In the first place, both the participants and the researcher are gay, thus share a narrative of gayness. The statement is also true insofar as at least two of the participants as well as the researcher-participant experienced the process as a retelling of one's story and experienced it as empowering, liberating and transformative.

"Experience… has the quality of an event or action… it is something that has a past-future structure" (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:261). What these authors continue to say about using narrative and story in practice and research in the following quote, is exceptionally apt at this stage of our project:

> Reflection and deliberation, methods of practical inquiry, are springboards for thinking of narrative and story as method. The two terms tend to point in different temporal directions, with *reflection* commonly implying a preparation for the future and *deliberation* implying past considerations. Since narrative requires a treatment of past, present and future, we consider both terms.

> (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:263)

Their remarks should remind us of ideas mentioned earlier about narratives or stories as consisting of events, linked in sequence, over time, according to a plot (Morgan 2000:5). In a sense this project through

the research conversations that took place, can be seen as having had a "re-authoring" influence for those involved. It seemed to have allowed and even made possible for some of us to experience a change within our gay stories from silence (the love that dare not speak its name) to homocelebratia, or from gayness as a problemed story, toward being a more preferred story. Moreover, the development that took place across the five themes reminds us of a chronological trajectory of landscape of action and landscape of identity features, which in their turn indicate a new plot / theme of life-storying. This particular perspective of life-storying is that of the narrative therapeutic approach developed among others by Michael White (2003). In short, the "landscape of action" refers to significant examples of behaviour which fit with the persons preferred ways of being, and the "landscape of identity" are significant examples of potentialities they employ to reverse problematic impressions about themselves, that point to a preferred identity-in-construction. In our case, there are powerful indicators of development from problemed homosexuality toward preferred accounts about being gay. I am not claiming that this movement should only be ascribed to the research process and its relationships, but I suspect that it might have influenced, or at least confirmed, a process of transition in significant ways. The construction of new and alternative narratives at the same time points to the impermanence of discourses, as pointed out by Foucault in chapter two.

Narrative is always tentative to a degree. It produces likelihood, not certainty (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:263). Clandinin and Connelly (1991:275) also discussed interpretation in narrative in some detail saying among other things that: "We are engaged in offering an interpretation of the stories we are living… as embedded within particular cultures and histories… because one of the main functions of research from a narrativist point of view is to foster reflection and restorying on the part of the participants." Such an inquiry can be viewed as "giving back a story" (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:275). It should not go unnoticed that the same authors consider the writing of narrative as intended for larger audiences than only for the participants themselves (Clandinin & Connelly 1991:277). The intention of writing narratives includes creating space for readers to question their own practices, to question their own stories, or to see the potential for possible alternative stories. When I asked how it was for her to share her story, Grethie said, "I am ok. Actually, it is good for me. Because as I go through everything again then I realise that it was the right thing to do. I have known all along that it is the right thing to do. And it is good knowing that." (She was referring to her 'coming out' as the right thing to do). She then continued to say, "All these things, it feels to me like the roads that I have walked… maybe other people can identify with it… maybe it can help other people. That is why I do not think about it as my exclusive property… I would actually like to write it down and share it."

If I had to share an early and preliminary conclusion about what this project taught me, then I will have to say that I was enlightened about discourses that reverse *the gaze* on the *gays*. By this I mean that I realised that

heterosexism was the problem that informs homophobia and not primarily the existence of homosexualities as such. Such a reversal turns the gaze onto heterosexism and the constructions of homophobia, instead of scrutinising homosexuals for violations of social norms. I can therefore agree with Calhoun (2000:9) who says, "Lesbians and gay men are socially penalised for their gender *in*subordination, therefore heterosexism is nothing but a form of gender oppression."

Calhoun (2000:106) explains what she means,

> Lesbian and gay subordination is better understood as a matter of displacing gay and lesbian identities to the outside of civil society, and thus denying a place for gay and lesbian identities within both public and private spheres… displaced from workplaces, streets, the military, markets, schools, and other public places by requiring gay men and lesbians to adopt pseudonymous heterosexual identities as a condition of access to those public spaces… amounts to reserving the public sphere for heterosexuals only. Lesbian and gay identities are displaced from our social future via legal, educational, psychiatric, and familial practices that are aimed at ensuring the heterosexuality of future generations.

What the author refers to here summarises much of what we have heard about the origins and effects of anti-gay discourses from our participants, as well as from other literary-textual sources shared in the previous chapters. However, the practices of heterosexism and homophobia were only part of our narratives, and certainly not the whole story.

Social stereotyping is one of the barriers that makes it difficult for lesbian women to be open about their sexuality, because it militates against the emancipation and empowerment of women. There seems to be a stereotypical fear of women who are in lesbian relationships (Jakobsen 1997:74). The study was also able to show how stereotypes influenced society's homophobic perceptions about male gay people. To quote Antonio (1997:296) stereotyping informs "codes of silence and secrecy."

We have been advised by McHoul and Grace (1993:49) to "treat past discourses… as monuments to be described in it's character-disposition… to seek in the discourse its conditions of existence… refer the discourse to the practical field in which it is deployed". I think that we have made an attempt to follow their advice. One of the primary conditions for homophobic discourses to exist seems to be the heterosexist requirement of silence and secrecy about homosexual orientation. We have noticed how anti-gay discourses circulate in a wide spectrum of social institutions including the 'practical fields' of religious communities, education and the military. In an article by Samar (1994:160), also directly referred to in chapter 5 (5.4), he criticises both "Kantian theory" and so-called "natural theory." Kantian theory asserts that homosexuality is universally wrong because it violates the end of humanity in respect of sexuality, which is to preserve the

species. The natural law theory assumes heterosexuality to be the natural sexual orientation. Both these theories are used to discriminate against homosexuals. In my opinion, this study has contributed significantly to the deconstruction of these discourses, which seem to be ever present in anti-gay discourse. As a matter of fact, different versions of Kantian theory and natural theory have been encountered since the very first chapter. It featured particularly prominently in chapter three on theological discourse – where it was also deconstructed.

I believe that the narrative analysis followed in the previous chapter, which resulted in the five themes of discourse, show not only how specific discourses contribute to homophobic discourse but also how these discourses are in fact informed and sustained by the heterosexist operations of normalisation, silencing judgement, secrecy, homophobic and heterosexist fear and threatened-ness. Equally obvious though, were the discourses of resistance, the reverse discourses and the discourses of preferred alternative sexualities other than the "normal" heterosexuality, which informed the themes of gayness for reconciliation, hope and celebration.

My further evaluation would be that through their accounts, the participants contributed to the deconstruction of homophobic discourses as being incoherent, often paradoxical, and even indeterminate (Halperin 1995:43). I believe that the heterosexual - homosexual binaries have been exposed as a heterosexist-homophobic production (Halperin 1995:44). In addition to that, we have realised that heterosexuality defines itself implicitly as negation / absence of homosexuality (Halperin 1995: 44). Most importantly for me though, was the obvious ability and will of gay people to employ disruptive, resistant and anti-homophobic strategies (Halperin 1995:48) like creative appropriation and resignification, theatricalization as well as exposure and demystification, to counter and reverse the influences of homophobic discourse (Halperin 1995:49-51).

7.4 Reviewing the project in terms of the goals, purposes, and questions in chapter one

Under this heading, I will refer back to my aims and purposes for the project as these were presented in the first chapter of the report. Kindly remember that the research process as it actually evolved was discussed in chapter five where it was compared to the process as it was considered and planned during the research proposal, as put forward in chapter one of this report.

At the start of the report it was mentioned that the study was to be an investigation into the discourses that encourage and even require same-sexuals to remain silent about their sexual preference. The investigation was also to note any discourses that enable same-sexuals to be (-come) open about their homosexuality, or

those discourses that empower queer people to live and speak their gay lives openly. The purpose of the project involved finding out which discourses sustain the silence that queer people are sometimes confined to. To me, it does appear that those ideals were sufficiently attended to. In terms of the main concepts of Foucault (Fillingham 1993:1-151) namely: knowledge, power, discipline, discourse and sexuality - I was interested to find out how these concepts converge into discourses that produce silence about gay people's queer sexual preference. I dare suggest that the discursive analysis managed to point out those elements of Foucault's main ideas which related to gay discourse and to the silence that it encourages.

From the onset, it was explained that Foucault treats discourses as bodies of knowledge, and not as text-grammar-linguistic-structuralist formulations. He proposed firstly that we look at the rules and criteria for the transformations of statements in order to come to an understanding of how groups of statements can either constrain or enable what we know. And secondly, we examine how these rules and criteria may change in order to establish different knowledges ("truths") in the different eras through history (McHoul & Grace 1993:27). In this study I did not attempt to explore the rules and criteria of discourses as such, but focussed instead on the existence of influential discourses, as well as on the effects of the discourses on people's lives. In my mind however, I do think that some light was shed on certain strategies and conditions for homophobic discourses. For instance, male dominance and heterosexism in the fields of religion, education, the military and the law.

In chapter two we were reminded by Foucault of the discontinuities as well as the dependencies within and between discourses over time (McHoul & Grace 1993:48). He seemed to be saying that what counts as knowledge / truth, changes over time. I think that the transition of what counts as valid knowledge, has become quite obvious with the "phenomenon" of homosexuality. We were able to see how the official knowledges or "truths" provided by mainstream theology, psychiatry, education, and law used to be the dominant discourses by claiming to be the *necessary* discourses (Rogers 1996:2). What became clearer in the long run was that all along gay people were in the process of creating their own versions of knowledge about gayness. These "indigenous" truths seem to impact on the original anti-gay discourses, and seem to be overtaking their truth statuses as time goes by, as is visible in the development of the five discursive themes.

Another of my curiosities was to find out "the way in which centralised discourses on homosexuality constitute people's lives..." (Kotzè 1994:125). The themes ("plots") that focussed on the discourses of discrimination, oppression and abnormalisation of homosexuality clearly indicated the hurt and marginalisation that resulted from homophobic and heterosexist discourses. They constituted gay people's

lives to the degree that gay people select where / when they are open about their sexuality. In other words, the historically centralised discourses constituted closetedness or muteness. These discourses managed to silence gay people through the ways in which the Bible has been interpreted from heterosexist points of view, and how homosexuality has been promoted as sinful, unnatural and heinous. Besides religious discourse, certain anti-gay discourses were also transferred via the speciality fields of psychology, education and law, as indicated. In turn, these anti-gay discourses promoted silence and secrecy about gayness, influencing gay people to hide their true colours, and often living double (or half?) lives.

I hoped for the research to be what Kaye (1990:35) refers to as a generative inquiry: for the research to open up alternative (less restrictive, less subjugated) ways of story-ing and doing gay. From what I was able to notice, the study was certainly more generative than reproductive, in the sense that a wider range of discourses was generated than what was expected. The project definitely produced alternative or pro-gay discourse and possibilities, to a degree that was truly surprising for me. It was also generative in that it included male and female voices, and created some impetus for further meetings and the initiative for another conference. My understanding of all this is that we encountered less restricted and less subjugated ways of doing gayness in a predominantly (compulsory) heterosexual world. From what I was able to pick up from the female participant, she has been motivated to write gay literature that could inform other gay people about self-acceptance.

So, besides finding and exposing some discourses that contribute to silencing, these silencing discourses have also been challenged through participating conversations. I believe that the process contributed to weakening the influence of silencing discourses, as well as strengthening the participators' own vocality and even (re-) creating (resurrecting) alternative and pro-gay discourses. Ackermann (1996:43) suggests that: "Telling stories breaks the silence which blankets the lives of … marginalized and oppressed people and this is intrinsic to the healing." This idea resonates with the notion that our research may have had some therapeutic and healing influences too.

My impression was that the participants had an intuitive preference for narrative as a research approach through the spontaneous ways that they related their stories during the participatory process. It relates our process to Clandinin and Connelly's (1991:265) view about the central task of narrative enquiry as "evident when it is grasped that individuals both live their stories in an ongoing experiential text and tell their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. A person is, at once, then, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories." As indicated in chapter five, all the participants wanted to share their accounts of experiencing gayness within the Afrikaans Christian culture. In the process, these

experiences seemed to gain new meanings for them, or at least clarified aspects of their re-storied lives. Narrative analysis became a tool to "explore, not only the dominant lifestory, but also the unique outcomes" (Tyndale 1990:24). It allowed the research facilitator to extract from problem-saturated stories those accounts that actually indicate pro-gay discourses. These hopeful and optimistic pieces of life have become more visible and audible in themes three to five of the analysis.

There seemed to be a correspondence between this study and ethnography after all. Sears (1992:152) mentioned that, "Critical ethnography unravels and exploits the interplay between individual consciousness and the social order" and that, "The reconstruction of social relations rather than personal meanings" is the primary goal of critical qualitative research. In my opinion both the personal and interpersonal have undergone some reconstruction. However, the employment of Foucault's "political tactic of creating opportunities for gay voices to be heard, recorded, published and circulated" (Halperin 1995:52) became the preferred approach. This dissertation includes the 'heard, recorded, published and circulated' aspects mentioned.

While not all relevant questions can be covered in any single study, I felt that this project managed to address some issues at least in part. Consider for instance Madigan's (1996:62) questions: How can we "debate ourselves within the constrained / restrained parameters of the language that is available to us?" and "continue to externalise the internalised community problem-discourse with regard to gayness, as a process?" (Madigan 1996:54) Andersen and Goolishian (1992:36) put it this way, how can we resist the colonising effects of the modernist discourse of the patriarchy and Christianity on the gay identities? As far as I am concerned, both these matters were touched on by the discourses exposed and explored through the participants' narratives. How the participants debated their preferred sexuality even within contexts that were rather hostile and homophobic, and how they separated themselves from the problemed homosexuality discourses, were quite evident in their expressions categorised in themes two to four. These themes included participants' reverse discourses, resistances and challenges to the discourses that contributed to the problematisation of gayness.

Many of the questions asked at the start alluded to the purpose of the study. Some of the questions were: What does the language-as-meaning-making-vehicle look like at present with regard to gay people, and on issues surrounding homosexuality? How does gay people's conversational descriptions of self reflect a more modernistic or postmodernist paradigm on gayness? I was also asking if there could be the remains of internalised homophobic discourses in our gay communities. Would you agree that the narratives by the participants convey the language of both homophobia and homocelebratia, but that the self-descriptions

seem to be increasingly of a post-modern, critical, resistant and reconstructive flavour? That homophobic discourses still circulate within gay circles cannot be doubted. However, a shift in the power relations is also quite evident from the available stories.

In chapter one Andersen and Goolishian (1992:36) rightly asked: How do we explore and search for the "not yet said" of gay stories? I believe that we found some answers that belonged under the themes about alternative discourses and reconciliation - themes four and five of the thematic analysis. If we look at the process as a whole, I was not able to foresee at the start that there would appear such a powerful presence of pro-gay voices and discourses that stood for the right to be gay and out of the closet. Some of these preferred discourses strongly voiced the previously "not yet said" of gayness.

I am not sure that we promoted the idea of a "queer heterosexuality" to rehabilitate heteronormativity (Chapter two, last paragraph of 2.9), as much as achieving some deconstruction of "heterosexuality as key mechanism through which male dominance is achieved" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1997:408).

7.5 General reflections and some preliminary "conclusions"

From a social constructionist perspective, as well as from a narrative paradigm - which views everyone as equal participants and as "communicating and languaging human individuals" (Kaye 1990:30) - I certainly preferred doing qualitative research and incorporating some of the participatory and action research elements touched on in the first chapter. The question needs to be asked though: What difference did / could this research project make in the lives of the participants? Judging from the feedback that has been received from the participants, the project has become part of their continuous transformational spiritual journey, as it has of my own. I want to remain hopeful that this research project will have a deconstructive as well as constructive influence on those it will touch.

I think it is important not to perpetuate the polarisation of the issue of gayness by opposing the mainstream and the alternative viewpoints as the only possible positions. It seems that the voices of this study have gone beyond the limits of prescribed opposites. Could it be that the existence of many other-than-hetero sexualities and versions of homosexuality are suggesting that a combination of positions can be valid at the same time? At least one of the participants has indicated that he does not want to be categorised anymore. The other two certainly do not fit the stereotypes of gay and lesbian either. My position, strengthened by the study, would be that of multiple realities. Kotzè (1994:49) speaks of multiple self with many voices, performing different selves within different conversations. This is a position of "both, and…" allowing for the

validation of position(s), due to every, and any lived experience or preferred lifestyle that a particular person or society might present as valid for them.

Within the post-modern constructivist discourse there is space for the acceptance of multiple realities and meanings (Kotzè 1994:30). Maybe in future sexualities can be viewed as an unlimited range of possible preferences, rendering sexuality-discrimination or sexual orientation-phobia unnecessary. At first I did not believe that such a world will pose a threat to heteronormative family life – though it may well extend the notion of family beyond its widely accepted (as well as limiting, and challenged) heterosexual framework. Later I thought that maybe mainstream family values *should* be "threatened." In fact, chances are that what Holmes (1994:291) calls "queerbashing with family values" remains a major practice from heterosexist points of view. Maybe stronger challenges to the "norm" of family life as presented by mainstream social science, is exactly what is required? Kotzè and Kotzè (in press) speak of "multiform" families, and remind us how these already exist in our country. Such a change toward a kaleidoscope of "family life" goes well beyond the traditional heterosexual two-parent version, which has long been the only recognised institution from the mainstream Christian point of view. Judging from certain narrative descriptions from this project, it now seems that the Biblical prescriptive normative ethics has become rather irrelevant for queers as well as many other alternative-family lifestyles.

I suspect that the range of lifestyles that include healthy caring, love, compassion, commitment, sharing and many other like values, are diversifying. A variety of descriptions of preferred sexual lifestyles exist in the face of what is considered "norms" acceptable to the mainstream. Homosexuality / male gayness happens to be one of the many human experiences that will continue to move through the "circle of the unexpressed" (Andersen & Goolishian 1988, 380) toward ever more diverse expression of gay-stories and lives. Identity, including gay identity, is continuously emerging as one moves through ever-changing relationships (Gergen 1991:139). It seems that such ideas have been set free by the research process.

Furthermore, "not knowing" other people's reality or truth and not being the expert on their lives (Andersen & Goolishian 1992:28) does not have to imply indifference on the part of the research initiator. As far as I am concerned, this narrative-participative study shows that letting every person (research participant) be the expert of their life and experience, and allowing them their meanings of who and what they prefer to be and how they prefer to live, does not have to be relativistic, idealistic or a solipsism (Kotzè, 1994:28). Pointing to the related views of Hoffman and Gergen, Kotzè (1994:32) mentions that social construction discourse - as we have attempted to practice it here - avoids, or bridges, the dualism between realism and idealism. In fact, from my subjective and somewhat tentative position in this research project, I experienced a strong

alternative consciousness developing which replaced some of the non-helpful 'common-sense' beliefs we had about ourselves. I believe that a "not knowing" position created opportunity for such growth and transformation.

Since social constructivism casts grave doubts on the surviving dominant Western views on the selfhood / identity / personhood (Sampson 1989:2), the chances are open for de- and reconstruction of gayness instead of merely perpetuating the societal reproduction of gay identity as we know it. This notion is conveyed in the words "People can transform themselves by transforming the structures by which they are formed" (Sampson 1989:6). You may agree that in this study there were some changes in the conceptions of personhood by all involved. This was evident in the theme-development that took place.

In *Sensitivity for Difference and Sameness*, Kotzè (1994:128) mentions the observation by Kitzinger which cautions against gay-affirmative research becoming a replacement for the former pathological research: to do so would be merely substituting one construction with another. This notion was introduced in chapter two, and will be unpacked a little bit more here. Kitzinger (1987:l) apparently feels that the so-called gay-affirmative research may even represent a new development in the oppression of lesbian people, and that "it is complicit in the silencing of lesbianism as a political reality" (Kitzinger 1987:186). She seems to refer to the possible effects of so called scientific research reports (like the Kinsey reports) that were pioneered to break down sexual stereotypes. It may actually "assert the independence of science from ordinary ways of thinking about homosexuality and hence [to] reinforce the image of science as a privileged way of knowing" (Kitzinger 1987:12). I am in agreement with her, and hope that as a result of the approaches within this study we contributed to the opposite of reinforcing the ultimate image of science as having privileged access to objective truths. Kitzinger (1987:190) proposed that research based on a social construction paradigm can overcome this risk thanks to five critical tasks, most of which we tried to follow in this study. The critical tasks were: 1) Deconstruction of ideology, 2) Deconstruction of mystique surrounding social science, 3) Recognising the reflexivity of its own theory, 4) Offering radically different definitions of the world / away from taken for granted nature of normative definition, and 5) Presenting explicit / overt moral and political evaluation of alternative constructions.

Similarly, Kitzinger (1987:30) warned that insider rhetoric is also designed to persuade the reader to accept the information offered as valuable contributions to literature, just as distanciation rhetoric is. Her suggestion, again, was the social construction paradigm as the way forward for research on homosexuality / lesbianism because of the deconstructive potential that it poses (Kitzinger 1987:178). We did employ an "insider

witnessing" approach to some degree in this particular project, which might be persuasive to the reader. We hope that it achieved a balance between deconstruction and tentativeness.

I think that in many ways, non-heterosexuality has influenced and impelled gays to draw more on our spirituality in order to transcend and to cope with our difficult experiences within mainly - but not solely - modernist / westernist contexts dominated by patriarchal, dogmatic discourse. I have even wondered if our homosexualities have been evolutionised - into the species Homo sapiens to assist with a (need for) transition toward a (even) more diverse multi-verse? These are philosophical / rhetorical questions indeed, but they have been triggered by the study, related readings and the conversations between participants.

If the impression may be that this study proposes "outing" as the only / best / advisable option, then let us hear what Nicholas Southey, a Roman Catholic gay ordinand had to say: "I have the greatest sympathy for the desire of most to remain hidden, for the burden of the spotlight or the demand to be 'out' often divides, detracting from the work to be done" (Southey 1997:53). At least three of the four participants in the study have been balancing both 'in the closet' and 'out of the closet' situations in their lives, with one claiming to be 'out' altogether. In other words, however you may evaluate that, we are selectively 'in' and / or 'out.' I like to think that we are on a journey of continuous or increasing openness about our sexuality. This project is an important beacon pointing toward the total visibility and audibility of our gayness.

One of the more profound impressions of the project has been the privilege of having witnessed the accounts of those who participated, other than myself. I experienced their stories as both moving and encouraging. The individual and collective contributions shaped and changed the research process, and I know that it has influenced my life and paradigms significantly. To be more specific, I can say that being witness to the stories inspired me to continue on my spiritual journey with more courage and hope. I want to agree with Jakobsen's (1997: 75) opinion that: "Invisibility does not gain greater acceptability for lesbian women and for their lifestyles. For does it help the rest of the church and society…? We need the courage of those who have written… of their experiences, to name their stories as a legitimate part of the fabric of our church and society." The same goes for gay men, of course.

7.6 Critique on the study

Some might critique studies like ours for merely inquiring about or challenging oppressive discourses, saying that this is insufficient. Adrienne Rich (quoted by Sawicki 1994:308) pointed out that, "Breaking the silences, telling our tales, is not enough. We can value the process – and the courage it may require – without

believing that it is an end in itself." It would be unfair to say that this study achieved no more than merely breaking the silence, or exposing and challenging certain homophobic discourses. For example, the project was also generative of pro-gay discourse within a variety of discursive fields. Furthermore, one should not underestimate the additional impetus and potential of works like ours for influencing and informing present and future queer theory and practice / praxis. Breaking the silence was not the only goal, or result, of this study.

Another point of critique could be that the study works from a European / white assumption, more particularly, from an Afrikaans speaking, Dutch Reformed Christian background. No reference is made to homosexuality outside the white / European framework. This may be seen as a point of critique, but I also think that it was necessary to limit the scope of the study for the purpose of a dissertation. Similar studies in future may focus on other cultural groupings.

One of the influences or paradigms that informed this project is that of feminism which has been recognised widely for its critique on a patriarchal (hetero-) sexist view of the world. Whether or not the feminist movement in general caters sufficiently for the lesbian voice is one of the issues that Calhoun (2000:5 & 73) addresses in her book *Feminism, the Family, and the politics of the closet*. She seems to feel that lesbian oppression has not been adequately described or politically addressed within broader feminism because feminist works have concentrated mainly on the plight of heterosexual women and, to a degree, gay men. Upon reflection, I thought that it could be said that this study privileged male gays, too. On the other hand, the decision to include a female gay voice in the study was an effort to redress the gender imbalance.

At some stage near the end of the conversations, a remark was made that the story of the researcher-participant, myself, was less available to the other participants. As I reflect on this, I realise that it may be true. A request was made for further meetings, during which there might be opportunities for me to share more of my own narrative with the other participants.

It can certainly be said that many of the questions asked remained "unanswered". Only when we were into the study did I realise that the project had gone its own way. Moreover, it seemed to generate more questions and issues that demand deconstructive attention, than it was able to cover. If one looks at it that way, the project seems to be suspended in open-ended questioning. Throughout the report questions were continuously posed - some more and some less relevant to the issue of homosexual discourses. I nevertheless hope that readers of this dissertation may stumble across some aspect that they are drawn

into, by way of a question that they would want to attempt answering. Is that not one way of looking at the meaning and value of (qualitative) research?

7.7 Potential influences of the research, and pointers for the future

Put simply, the project created and allowed space for gay voices to freely express their experience of being gay, and also of being silenced. Their expressions reflect the influences of the cultural and religious contexts / discourses which rendered (their) homosexuality unacceptable to the broader society. In other words, the study gave additional voice to previously silenced stories, and for some of the participants it had some cathartic effect. When I use the concept of catharsis here, I mean to include both the idea of release of strong feelings, as well as to use it in the more classical sense of being moved – or transported - beyond a previous point of view.

The influence of the study on the participants ranges from being confronted with the "why" of remaining partially silent about one's gayness, toward reflection on one's own story and reintegrating it in preferable ways. Some of the participants indicated that the value and meaning of having participated was akin to participating in a liberating therapeutic process. Another influence that could be detected was a decrease of fear and self-loathing amongst the participants. Judging from the enthusiasm about the gay conference that was held, as well as for those projects envisioned in the future, silence and fear have been rendered a serious blow in the lives of the participants.

There also seems to have been additional spin-offs. One participant is considering an Internet gay support service, as well as offering some gay literary projects through electronic medium. Another participant is willing and eager to become involved in gay support work or in therapeutic groups that employ the approaches encountered in those articles that were made available to them. It seems that our project influenced participants towards becoming available as gay people with a voice, encouraging them to contribute beyond previous levels of involvement in deconstructing homophobia and heterosexism.

This influence does not have to be limited to the personal or individual level. It was recorded and is now being documented for others to see and hear. As suggested and even requested, this project will and should be used to inform and maybe influence other gay and non-gay lives if possible.

At this point I want to share the influence of the study on myself, as research initiator and participant. Like I pointed out in the first chapter, I expected that at least one influence on myself would be an adjustment on

self-reflection on the way in which my gayness was voiced or silenced in different social contexts. Since this project, I have been more open to (potential) situations where I could voice my sexual preference as gay. Despite the risks involved in disclosure, the opportunities and responsibilities of transparency have become even more obvious. There is no doubt in my mind that I have been moved by the courage and creativity the participants who managed to conduct their lives amidst a predominantly heterosexist and often rather hostile society. I certainly would not have been able to predict the course that the project would take, and therefore admit that I was surprised by how it unfolded. This taught me that narrative-participative projects could be rather unpredictable. The greatest impression and most pleasant surprise however was the simultaneous development of pro-gay discourse in the process of inquiring about homophobic discourse. This has engendered hope and courage in me. The project also invited me as a gay person to continue taking up challenges to practice creative and innovative living, and to attempt the process of discourse-challenging and deconstruction in more playful (light-hearted) ways than before. In addition, bonds of friendship have been formed between the other participants and myself that will accompany me throughout the rest of this life.

The inclusion of a female gay participant deepened and enriched the study tremendously. I was exposed to the lesbian side of silence and voice beyond what I expected. I did not realise the degree to which the female gay identity and experience has been negated and rendered non-existent in our shared culture. Moreover, I have made dear new lesbian friends in the process of learning from Grethie (and indirectly from her partner). Being in the witnessing position to the other three participants often felt like a privilege and a humbling experience for me. It was strengthening as well. I observed and experienced solidarity, mutual caring and a reaching out in the group interview, in a way that moved me deeply. I have wondered since what the effect would have been if we had had a reflecting person / team to respond to our meeting together.

Also unique was the insight that was made possible by encountering the experience of the three participants, who are all closely connected to the Reformed Christian tradition. Why? Because I did not plan the study to focus on religious discourses primarily. Being from the same Christian religious background myself, I experienced the opportunity to come to a deeper and broader understanding of the oppressive influences of discriminatory practices supported by organised religion in the lives of other gay people. In the process, I was reconnected to memory of my own estrangement from my culture, and I was able to come closer to (a tentative) closure on the matter due to this project.

7.8 Summary of what the project taught us, including some preliminary 'last words'

This study left me with the impression that qualitative research may develop in unforeseen or unplanned directions and may also lead to surprising places. In our case, the actual process and developments clearly did not keep to the preparations made during the planning phase. In this respect, I feel that the qualitative research approaches may give more accurate reflections of life than other research approaches that try to control or objectify the process as much as possible.

The study taught me that the mechanisms of silence are deeply associated with homophobic discourse. These rely, in turn on prevailing heterosexist notions that are rife in religious and theological communities, amongst others. The effects of this go well beyond, but also include the practices of discrimination and more overt practices of rejection and oppression. Silencing discourses still circulate, sometimes unquestioned, in most educational and religious settings. Yet - and this may well be my greatest discovery of the whole project - there is a wide array of pro-gay, homophobic-resistant and heterosexist-challenging discourses in circulation. The study was able to show, not only via the narrative accounts but also through the epistemological and theoretical background, a rich foundation of queer studies, ground-breaking constitutional and legal developments and gay-liberation movements. These shifts can be related to the steady re-locating of local power back into the hands and voices of homosexual people, or at least, so it seems.

The project also seems to teach us not to assume that you know the full gay story because you yourself are gay. Don't assume that there are core similarities amongst gays just because of their sexual orientation. During the project I also realised that it could be an illusion to believe that 'coming out' is the ultimate liberation or the door to happiness, naïve as it may seem.

I have learned that research based on feminist-cum-social-construction foundations, influenced by participative and action-oriented principles, and focussing on narrative approaches, may have life constituting and transformative effects on the participants involved. It is at one and the same time a privilege and also a huge responsibility. The project taught me that people's everyday humanness may be welcome and relevant in research, and that the research initiator may benefit in the sense of being touched and inspired by the stories of the other participants. Some of their experiences and their stories resonated with those in my own life. It made it possible for us to share more than what was required, and we remained friends afterwards.

Furthermore, I have come to realise that my relationship with this topic is at one and the same time both a passionate and a troublesome affair. On the one hand I feel committed to make a contribution to the liberation of gay people who feel compelled to remain quiet about their sexual orientation. On the other hand I often feel overwhelmed by the force and tenacity of prevailing anti-gay discourses, as well as the emotional exhaustion due to exposure to the problem-saturatedness of some (gay) stories. While a lot has been achieved toward a world wherein diversity will be welcomed and celebrated, yet I sometimes wonder how small contributions like this project can have an influence that makes a difference. Fortunately Weingarten, during a workshop she presented in Pretoria in February 2002, reminded us about something we know but sometimes forget: we need to respect the "small" and the ordinary, because they reflect the larger aspects of life.

I would like to think of this research project as a step toward future gayness or queerness that is less restricted by silencing discourses, and also toward the creation of discourses that will promote the continuous queering of a world which seems to be threatened by suffocating regulation and control of human life. I find the following statement by Foucault (quoted by Fillingham 1993:151) exceptionally apt:

> We must see our rituals for what they are: completely arbitrary things, tired of games and irony, it is good to be dirty and bearded, to have long hair, to look like a girl when one is a boy (and vice versa); one must put in 'play', show up, transform, and reverse the systems which quietly order us about…

I am confident that the study taught me about discursive counter-practices that I knew nothing about previously. These counter-practices and alternative ways can be found in the narratives of the participants as well as the epistemological foundations of chapters two to four. I hope that this study made possible for the participants as well as myself to "acquire and maintain the authority to speak, to be heard, and to be taken seriously without denying or bracketing my gayness" (Halperin 1995:8).

According to Halperin (1995:55), the aim of studying, or for that matter exposing discourses is to "democratise the distribution of information so as to facilitate the emergence of new circuits of knowledge and power, circuits that might generate different distributions of authority and thereby alter the overall strategic situation." According to Foucault, this is more about resisting forms of social domination, than about liberation as such. It is also about "shifting homosexuality from a position of object of power / knowledge to a position of legitimate subjective agency – from the status of that which is spoken about while remaining silent, to the status of that which speaks" (Halperin 1995:56). As far as I am concerned, this study managed to be involved in such an aim. Halperin (1995:60) goes further to say that: "To resist is not simply a negation,

but a creative process." I feel that from the narratives that we have become witnesses to, there were a number of creative acts made visible, not least of which the gay conference organised and performed even before this study was launched.

Gay science or queer theory as it was referred to in chapter two, is treating "homosexuality as a position from which one can know, to treat it as a legitimate condition of knowledge" (Halperin 1995:60). A queer study is also an "eccentric positionality to be exploited and explored: a potentially privileged site for the criticism and analysis of cultural discourses" (Halperin 1995:61). In my opinion, this queer study included valid gay knowledges and it managed to create conditions for the formation of new legitimate knowledges about being queer in South Africa.

The simultaneous existence of homophobic / anti-gay discourses, as well as reverse, resistant, reconciliatory, hopeful and celebratory discourses, points to actual power relations in existence with regard to (homo-) sexualities. Certain "knowledge-truths" were contested and deconstructed, displaced and replaced. The older discourses, however, were also resisting change. There seems to be a reciprocal influencing between competing discourses. I found that amongst pro-gay discourse, there are often signs of homophobia lurking, and vice versa. Somehow, it reminds us again to view our lives as sexual and textual political points involved in struggle amongst competing interests for the power to define, establish, and maintain norms (Fuoss 1994:160).

As a last remark, consider the expression: *Homophobia is unresolved heterosexuality*. It was discovered on a T-shirt by the theologian participant who, for a while considered wearing it to the next synod! We thought that the expression deconstructs abnormalised homosexuality and bears meaning of resistance to heterosexism. However, we thought it should read: Homophobia is unresolved heterosexism.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

NB: PLEASE LOOK AT THE QUESTIONS AND MAKE CHANGES AND / OR SUGGESTIONS IF YOU LIKE. YOU ARE ALSO INVITED TO ADD ANY QUESTIONS / ISSUES THAT MAY BE IMPORTANT OR INTERESTING TO YOU. YOU MAY CHOOSE WHICH QUESTIONS YOU WANT TO RESPOND TO.

1. How / when did you discover that you were homosexual / gay / queer?

2. How / when did you realise how such a position is viewed in broader society?

3. What was / is your personal experience of being gay in your communities?

4. Are you / do you feel free or safe to be open about your 'sexual orientation'?

5. What do you think makes it possible / impossible, difficult / easier to be open?

6. If there are situations / places / people that seem to discourage openness, how would you describe these?

7. What are some of the sayings that are going around about gays / homosexuality? What was / is the influence of that on your life?

8. How was / is homosexuality described / considered / viewed / judged / discussed in the social context that you were born into, and where you currently live?

9. Do you mind sharing some examples of societal opinions or events in your life that contributed to your remaining silent about your homosexuality?

10. How have you managed to live your life in spite of having to stay quiet about your preferred sexuality?

11. If you can imagine a world where such silence is not required, what would you be able to tell the world about yourself and your sexual preference?

12. Are you 'out' in some contexts but not in others? What determines where you can be 'out' and where not?

13. Are you religious, or spiritually inclined? Why / why not?

14. Are there ways of being gay and religious / spiritual / Christian?

15. How has the religious culture that you have been born into influenced your views on queerness?

16. Has your acquired religious culture contributed to silence about queerness, and if so, how / why?

17. What is Christianity / your religion's point of view on homosexuality? (Have you found that it differs from context to context?)

18. Do you experience a need to discuss examples or phrases from the Bible or other religious texts that seem to relate to gay discourses?

19. Are you able / willing to share real life experiences of how religion / theology have affected / influenced you and / or gay people that you know?

20. How have you been supported and / or marginalised due to religion / theology?

21. How would you prefer to practice your religious / spiritual beliefs, as a gay person?

22. Have religious views in church circles contributed to your self-acceptance and / or to your silence?

23. What do you consider important to change in order for gays / queers to become socially more free in terms of religion / theology / spirituality?

24. Are you aware of pro-gay discourses? When / where / how have they been created and by whom?

25. If you have other questions or issues related to the unspeakability / speakability of homosexuality, which interest you, you are invited to introduce these here.

ADDENDUM B: SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Questioning sexuality: A workshop in progress (by Mark Trudinger, Cameron Boys & Peter Melrose)

In the article, the authors share their experience of working with young men in workshops which aims to deconstruct beliefs on sexuality, masculinity and homophobia. The workshops are specifically designed to invite participants in questioning and resisting the dominant discourses and perceptions on male sexuality, as well as its possible links to violent behaviour. As facilitators, the authors mention a number of activities that are employed during the sessions. These include a Bart Simpson video that uses humour to dismantle notions associated with homophobia, as well as the use of questioning to guide discussions. Four groups of questions have been developed to address issues related to male sexuality and homophobia. The first two parts question the (so-called) stereotypical differences between gays and straights. The third part questions homophobia, and the fourth part questions heterosexual masculinity. The workshops go beyond merely speaking about problematic discourses, and provide opportunity to search for possible alternative views and attitudes that may prove to be more tolerant, balanced and to celebrate / accommodate sexualities other than the heterosexual. The effect seems to be an opening up of less restricted or prescriptive ways of doing maleness and humanness in general.

Linking lives around shared themes: Narrative group therapy with gay men (by Christopher Behan)

As the title suggests, this article is an expression of the author's experience in leading a gay men's group. The paper specifically describes the use of therapy groups as reflecting teams as well as using a process called a definitional ceremony, that is employed in the group therapy. The aim (and the outcome) of the therapy is the development of a sense of authenticity, wherein the participants' preferred identity becomes acknowledged – and reconstructed. According to the article, reflecting teamwork involves the rest of the group acting as so-called "outsider witnesses" within a forum where the therapist interviews one of the group members. The article also explains that narrative interviews mostly revolve around the particular member at the centre telling the stories / experiences of his (in this case gay) life. Within these interviews, the influences / effects of homophobia are part of the conversation, as is the person's process of 'coming out of the closet'. The rest of the group, who have been an audience to the interview, then reflect on what they have heard. The format of narrative reflecting teams is that each person from the group speaks from his own experience and links this to the conversation they have just heard. The facilitator-therapist guides with questions to create a process where the person at the centre's life gets more richly described – this is known as a

"definitional ceremony". As a result of the team acting as a witness in this way, the life of the person at the centre becomes multi-voiced and connected to many others around their preferred claims about their identities or histories. The whole process contributes to the (re-) construction of a preferred (gay) 'self'.

<u>Homophobia and the sexual construction of schooling</u> (by Lori Beckett & David Denborough)

The article explores issues of homophobia and sexuality within schools, against the background of the political context of New South Wales in Australia. It investigates three sets of power on young people's lives – adults over children, heterosexual dominance, and sexism. Homophobia as well as sexuality is put forward as sensitive issues, especially within the educational context where these issues can easily lead to emotive responses, or "moral panics." At the same time these issues provide a challenge that demands critical thinking and commitment in order to confront aspects of diversity and difference in classrooms. Such a challenge requires efforts to deal with discrimination and oppression and to promote a safe and carefree environment for teachers, young people and parents – which is what the article tries to encourage. The authors wrote the article from a feminist point of departure, in order to counter the usual male perspective on heterosexism and homosexuality, as well as countering the possibility of female (including gay-female) invisibility. The assumptions of what is considered "normal" support a narrowly defined sex education curriculum that reflects society's concern about promiscuity, the undermining of family values, and the "protection" of young people from experience other than married heterosexuality. The article links homophobia to prevailing assumptions that allows and promotes humiliation, bashing and other forms of discrimination / violations against being gay or lesbian. It seems that the article attempts to deconstruct such assumptions, and challenges the (hypocritical) educational authorities to acknowledge the needs and experiences of young people. The article then concludes with a number of recommendations on the issues mentioned.

<u>Framing the sexual 'other' – The regulation of lesbian and gay sexuality</u> (by Jane M Ussher)

Framing the sexual 'other' is a chapter from a book by the author – *Body talk: The material and discursive regulation of sexuality, madness and reproduction.* The following is an extract of the author's own summary and conclusion on the chapter. In this chapter I have examined the way in which both the material and discursive factors have been used to define, express and regulate gay and lesbian sexuality. Traditionally defined through the material act of same sex sex, 'homosexuality' has been regulated and controlled for

centuries at both the level of the material body and the level of discourse. In recent years, social constructionist, feminist and Foucauldian theorists have challenged the reductionist analyses which have dominated science and the law, demonstrating that 'sex' and the 'lesbian' or 'gay man' are products of discourse, not simply material acts or states, and that the meaning of lesbian and gay identities is dependant on and constructed within the social and discursive context in which a person is situated. …It has been argued that we need to move away from the dichotomy of material or discursive, to acknowledge that both are interlinked. We need to shift our… gaze from the narrowly focussed to the broadly inclusive, and to acknowledge that these different approaches reflect the ideological and epistemological stance of the different experts and critics, rather than the 'truth' about 'homosexual sex', or about what it is to be lesbian or gay… Through looking at a series of interviews conducted with a group of young lesbians, we have seen that material *and* discursive factors are irrevocably interconnected in the meaning of being lesbian. …To acknowledge and explore the relationship between the material and discursive is to move forwards towards a more comprehensive level of analysis, and one which appears to be a more meaningful reflection of the experiences of those who take up the position of 'lesbian' or 'gay'.

(Ussher 1997:155)

Teaching lesbian / gay development – From oppression to exceptionality (by Anthony R D'Augelli)

In this article, young gay and lesbian people's fears and uncertainties about their sexual identities are connected to the stigmatising culture that they are exposed to, including the pervasive anti-gay attitudes among young students' peers that reflect the many biases and stereotypes of the larger society. According to this article, most young gay people fear family reaction and peer rejection, and these become important barriers in their lives. Few opportunities exist for young lesbians and gay men to learn about their lives, because accurate information is not readily available for homosexual teenagers. Indeed, few topics in secondary schools' human sexuality curricula evoke such controversy and antipathy as homosexuality. This situation perpetuates the feelings of inadequacy and fear, leading most lesbian and gay young people to hide their identity from others – with much psychological energy being directed and devoted to coping and to vigilance to avoid disclosure or exposure. The need for accurate information / supportive experiences / and affirmation / acknowledgement are crucial to young gay people's development. A university course on lesbian and gay development is then described and its impact on students' lives is presented. The course focuses on the exceptional talent of lesbians and gay men in creating lives in a stigmatising culture, as well as the diversity of community helping structures that gay people have elaborated to promote their own further development. The article claims that the course's emphasis on how individuals develop (or are

oppressed by their social environment) produces personal change and social action in students. The main themes of the course are as follows – A deconstruction of the difference-is-deviance notion, the assumption of exceptionality of gay and lesbian people to achieve a differentiated developmental status, and personal development over the life-span. Other themes are the need for social support for gay / lesbian lifestyles, and close relationship development as the normative pattern for lesbians and gay men.

All the articles summarised here are listed in the bibliography.

ADDENDUM C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

1. Please relate how you initiated the gay conference.

2. What was the motivation for the gay conference?

3. What was each person's reason for participation?

4. What was the experience like to be able to tell about you being gay, at the conference?

5. What does it say about you, that you were able to speak about your gayness at the conference?

6. What do you think was the possible effects of the conference on the people who attended it, and on yourself?

7. How did you get from where you had to remain silent about being gay, to the position you are in today – where you can talk about it?

8. How does one get past the things that keep you quiet about being gay?

9. How would you prefer to meet the future as a gay person – openly gay / secretive / in between (and why)?

10. What do you think will help / hinder, you to bear witness to your gayness?

11. Are there any questions / ideas / remarks about the articles you were supplied with?

12. Do you think that participation in this project has influenced you in any way? How did it influence you?

13. Do you happen to have any suggestions on how such projects can be approached differently in future?

14. I have some ideas on how to use your stories / accounts in the research report, that I will share with you. Do you have any other ideas? I want to share your transcribed accounts with you before the report is handed in, is that OK? You will then be able to comment on it or make changes.

15. Would you prefer anonymity in the report?

16. Do you have any questions, ideas or points for discussion that you want to add?

17. What can we tell homophobia today?

ADDENDUM D: ILLUSTRATION OF NARRATIVE ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THEMES

THEMES IN DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

Witnessing the past :
A position of (un-)aware
and disempowered?

1. THE DISCOURSE OF
OPPRESSION,
EXCLUSION & HOMOPHOBIA
- PROBLEMED SEXUALITY

Dominating problem
stories

2. REVERSE DISCOURSE
AND
DECONSTRUCTION OF
PROBLEMATIC
HOMOSEXUALITY

Witnessing the present :
A position of aware
and (dis)empowered?

3. THE DISCOURSE OF
RESISTANCE & LIBERATION
- CHALLENGING
HETEROSEXISM &
CATEGORIZATION

Emergent preferable
stories,
told and retold

4. THE DISCOURSE OF
RECONCILIATION
- (RE-)CONSTRUCTION OF
ALTERNATIVE
SEXUALITIES

Witnessing the future :
A position of aware
and empowered?

5. THE DISCOURSE OF
INCLUSION,
CELEBRATION,
CONTRIBUTION,
HOPE & WONDER

Anticipated preferred &
alternative stories,
voiced and shared