

**Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring  
learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements  
for the Master's Degree in Education**

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# DECLARATION

I, **Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo** declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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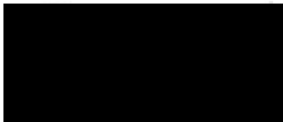
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# STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation is submitted with my approval.



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Dr. Bronwynne Anderson

## **ABSTRACT**

Same-sex desiring learners face unique and complex challenges within the school environment where negative perceptions, heteronormativity and homophobia makes it difficult for them to have a normal schooling experience. The study explored high school teachers' understandings, perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in an urban single-sex school. The researcher used a qualitative approach located within the interpretivist paradigm to collect data. The qualitative approach was also used in order to understand how the teachers navigate their teaching and the strategies that they use to include same-sex desiring learners. The social constructionist theory enabled the researcher to explore the variegated attitudes and perceptions that teachers have and how their social backgrounds namely their culture, race, class, religion and age have contributed to their perceptions.

The data was collected using photo-elicitation and semi-structured individual interviews which enabled the participants to express their perceptions and attitudes regarding same-sex desiring learners. The interviews were conducted with 17 participants who teach at a selected urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal. Results of the study revealed that many of the teachers lacked awareness and understanding of the human rights of same-sex desiring learners that are enshrined in the South African constitution and Bill of Rights. The study also revealed how cultural and religious beliefs contribute largely to the lack of tolerance and acceptance of same-sex desiring learners. Societal constructions of femininity and masculinity contributes to the ways in which these teachers perceive same-sex desiring learners and their attitudes towards the learners. Although the teachers may not openly be homophobic to the learners the study revealed that many of these teachers are covertly homophobic which influences how they navigate their teaching, and how they include and exclude learners inside and outside the classroom.

Recommendations in the study included educating teachers, more particularly at undergraduate level about same-sex desiring learners so that they are informed and will challenge the socially constructed perceptions and attitudes they may have before entering into a schooling environment. Developing an inclusive curriculum which speaks to gender and sexual diversity and developing policies that protect same-sex desiring learners was also recommended.

## ISIFINGQO

Abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo bahlangabezana nezingqinamba eziningi ezahlukene esikoleni lapho becwaswa ngenxa yokuthi banemizwa yobulili obufana nobabo. Lokhu kungeminye yemithelela eyenza bagcine bengenzi kahle esikoleni. Lolu cwaningo-ke luhlose ukuhlolisisa indlela othisha abaqonda futhi ababheka ngayo izinto uma kubhekwa abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo esikhungweni sokufunda abafundi bobulili obubodwa esikoleni esisedolobheni, esifundazweni saKwaZulu-Natali. Uhlobo locwaningo olusetshenzisiwe ucwaningo Lobunjalo Botho (*Qualitative approach*) esiza ukuqoqa ulwazi mayelana nokuqonda kothisha, indlela ababuka ngayo izinto, kanjalo nokuqondisisa ukuthi ukuqonda kwabo kwakhiwe kanjani nomthelela okunawo endleleni abafundisa baphinde babhekane ngayo nabafundi abathandana nabobulili obufanayo. Ukusetshenziswa kocwaningo Lobunjalo Botho ngaphansi kwePharadaymu yomhumusho (*Interpretivist paradigm*) kusize nokubhekisisa ukuthi bafundisa kanjani nokuthi yiziphi izindlela abazisebenzisayo ukufundisa abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo. Uhlaka lwenjulalwazi olusetshenzisiwe yithiyori yeSocial constructionist. Le thiyori ivumele umcwaningi ukuthi aqondisise imithelela yendlela othisha ababuka baphinde baqonde ngayo abafundi abathandana nobulili obufanayo. Lapha singabala imikhakha efana nemvelaphi, umsuka, amasiko, ubuhlanga, isigaba somnotho, inkolo kanjalo neminyaka yothisha ukuthi iliphi iqhaza elibambayo ekuqondisiseni kwabo abafundi abathandana nabafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo.

Ulwazi luqoqwe kusetshenziswa izithombe (*photo-elicitation*) nenhlololuvo esebenzisa imibuzo ehleliwe nengahleliwe (*semi-structured interviews*). Lokhu kuvumele ukuthi abahlanganyeli bakwazi ukuxoxa ngokuqonda nangokubona kwabo abantwana abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo. Abahlanganyeli balolu cwaningo kube ngothisha abayishumi nesikhombisa esikoleni sobulili obubodwa esifundazweni saKwaZulu-Natali. Imiphumela yalolu cwaningo ithole ukuthi othisha abaningi abanalo ulwazi olwanele nolufanele mayelana namalungelo abantu abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo njengokusho komthethosisekelo nosomqulu wamalungelo abantu eNingizimu Afrika. Lolu cwaningo luphinde lwathola ukuthi amasiko, inkolo kanye nenkolelo yabahlanganyeli kunomthelela omkhulu ekutheni othisha babhekane nobunzima bokwamukela baphinde baqonde abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo esikoleni. Ukwakheka kolwazi emphakathini mayelana nabantu besilisa nabesifazane kuholela ekuqondeni okuhlukahlukene kothisha uma kuziwa kubafundi abathandana nobulili obufanayo lapho beqhathaniswa nalokho okuthathwa njengokwamukelekile emphakathini. Ucwaningo luphinde lwaveza ukuthi othisha abacwasi ngokusobala nje esikoleni

kodwa ukungemukeli kwabo abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo kunomthelela endleleni abafundisa ngayo, futhi nendlela abangamukeli ngayo abafundi abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo ekilasini nangaphandle kwekilasi.

Izincomo zalolu cwaningo ziveze ukuthi othisha kumele bafundiswe futhi baziswe kabanzi ngabantu (abafundi) abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo, ikakhulukazi othisha abasaqeqeshwa ezikhungweni zemfundo ephakeme. Ukufundiswa kwabo kuzosiza ekulwiseni nasekuqedeni ukucwaswa kwabantu abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo njengoba bezobe sebenokuqonda okuthile mayelana nabafundi abathandana nabobulili obufana nobabo. Ucwaningo luphinde lwaveza ukuthi kumele kushintshwe uhlelo lwezemfundo lube nendlela yokuchaza izindaba zobulili kanye nangabantu abanemizwa yobulili obubodwa. Ukuthuthukisa izinqubomgomo ezikoleni nakho kudalulwe njengokubalulekile ukuze abantwana abanemizwa yobulili obufanayo bezovikeleka bengacwaswa ezikoleni.

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my loving mother, Sidudla Ngcobo,  
and to my late grandmother MaMgwaba.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

Despite South Africa having one of the world's most progressive constitutions in terms of protecting all citizens' rights, stigma, discrimination and the violation of individuals' rights remains a problem. Religious and cultural conservatism has resulted in some institutions not respecting people's rights to express their sexuality, including schools, where learners can be on the receiving end of inappropriate treatment from their teachers who are supposed to prepare them to live in a progressive society. While studies have been conducted about sexuality in co-educational schools in South Africa, little research has been conducted in single-sex schools, indicating a gap in how such institutions and teachers understand and respond to non-normative learners during the formative years of their lives.

This chapter presents the background and motivation for the study and discussed the rationale that motivated this research. It presents the objectives, and research questions, and introduces the theoretical framework and research design and methodology, the study location and data collection and analysis. It concludes by outlining the structure of the study as per the remaining four chapters.

## 1.2 Background

Globally, the laws and norms related to the acceptance and rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals remain divided, with many countries opposing the criminalization, violence, and discrimination that is directed towards these members of society (Chang, 2015; Kenny & Patel, 2017). However, over 70 countries continue to use their laws to arrest people for no other reason than identifying as LGBT (Pew Research Center, 2020). Although freedom, equality, and the protection of LGBT people in developed countries, such as the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) have been enshrined in laws, LGBT rights remain topics of interest in the media and academia, as non-normative individuals continue to face social challenges, discrimination and even hate crimes due to their sexual identities (Browne, Bakshi & Lim, 2011). As reported in the USA media about an event in 2019:

*“On Thursday, 18-year-old Devon Robinson was charged in connection with the May 25th fatal shooting of three people in a home in east Detroit: two gay men, Alunte Davis, 21, Timothy Blancher, 20, and a transgender woman, Paris Cameron,*

*20. On Tuesday, Ronald Peters, a 28-year-old gay man, was shot and killed in Decatur, Georgia on his way to work” (ABC News, 2019)*

The extract provides a glimpse into some of the crimes directed towards non-normative individuals in the USA, a developed, democratic country that has laws that date back to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which barred any discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Foreign Policy, 2020). More recently, the Equality Act of 2019 expanded on the 1964 Civil Rights Act and provided for the non-discrimination of LGBT people in all areas of life, such as employment, housing, credit, public services, and protection across the nation (BBC News, 2021).

The **South African constitution**, the supreme law of the land that governs all people, institutions, and organizations, was the first in the world to decriminalize and outlaw actions based on sexual orientation (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2011).

Section 9 of the constitution clearly states that:

*“(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone, on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnicity or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, p.6).*

There are reports of hate crimes based on sexual orientation in the South African context even though the constitution prohibits any unfair discrimination based on sexual orientation, guaranteeing equality to all lesbian and gay identifying individuals. The media reports show evidence that in South Africa, sexual minorities and gender non-conforming persons are victimised and discriminated against through social stigma, hate crimes, and homophobic violence (Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013). The instances of violence and murder in South Africa reveal the reality and existence of ongoing compulsory heteronormativity that suppresses non-normative sexual identities. The homophobic attitudes, compulsory heterosexuality, and the social intolerance that exists against lesbian and gay identifying individuals in South Africa remain a norm (Mailula, 2018). The following extracts indicate the considerable gap between the Constitutional rights and the reality of many South Africans living as lesbian and gay.

*"23-year-old, gay rights activist and musician, Lindokuhle Cele, was stabbed twenty-one times in full view of the public at an uMlazi butchery, in KwaZuluNatal, on the 6th February 2020. Cele's murder is understood to be motivated by homophobia, with*

*concerns raised about rampant homophobia within the community” (South African Human Rights Commission, 2020).*

*“The family of a 34-year-old man from Ntuzuma in eThekweni who was brutally murdered in a suspected hate crime last week said that they wanted justice. Sphamandla Khoza’s body was discovered in a ditch near his home last Monday. He was last seen alive at a neighbour’s house where he was allegedly attacked following an alcohol-related brawl. Khoza’s cousin and friend, Ndumiso Ngidi, said that Khoza had been drinking with about four other men when he was humiliated for his sexuality” (Eyewitness News, 2021).*

*"The family of a 14-year-old lesbian has been left devastated by her murder. Zinhle Sekgoapa was kidnapped by unknown people on Wednesday morning and her body was found by her mum dumped next to a pit toilet on Sunday morning. The teenager from Chocho, outside Hazyview in Mpumalanga, was found naked with plastic wrapped around her head" (Daily Sun, 2020).*

The murders of Lindokuhle, Sphamandla, and Zinhle illustrate some of the many injustices and the violence that persists against those who openly identify as gay or lesbian in South Africa. This indicates a disjuncture between the country’s constitution and the lack of implementation of individuals’ rights. Homophobic attitudes are so deeply embedded in some South African societies that they often expose lesbian and gay identifying individuals to gross violations and the deliberate denial of their human rights, which is to be treated equally despite their sexual orientation (Meer, Lunau, Oberth, Daskilewicz and Muller, 2017). A large-scale South African study by Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Struwig and Gordon (2016) estimated that over half a million adults, both men, and women, across all population and age groups in urban and rural areas, self-identify as homosexual, bisexual or gender non-conforming. The abuse of their rights occurs in all areas of their lives, from family living arrangements to employment and education, including schools.

According to Francis (2017), schools are one of the most important social institutions within society and are not only responsible for implementing the curricular, but integrating children into society and more importantly, safeguarding the social-emotional experience of children while in their care. However, research conducted by Msibi (2011, 2012), Bhana (2012), and Nichols (2016) indicates that both learners and teachers come from the very society where intolerance against LGBT individuals is



a norm, which can lead to same-sex desiring learners having negative schooling experiences, with the perpetrators of these negative experiences often being teachers (Bachinni, Esposito, Affuso, and Amodeo, 2020). Despite the teachers' constitutional obligation to provide basic education to all learners and to treat each and person equally, they sometimes ignore their responsibilities (Mostert, Gordon, and Kriegler, 2015). Although schools are mainly sites for teaching and learning, they also play a pivotal role in shaping and constructing every child's character and identity (Skovdal & Campbell, 2015).

There have been several cases in South Africa where perceived non-normative learners have been ill-treated at school and have even been suspended due to their sexual orientation (Reyneke, 2011). In 2017 The Sowetan newspaper article revealed discrimination directed towards same-sex desiring learners in South African schools, **"Lesbian pupil expelled for not wearing a skirt"**

*"Pupil Nokwazi Shelembe, 18, of Richmond village, KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, was expelled on Tuesday from Ndala High School after she refused to wear a skirt. "The school principal said I must go home and wear a skirt since I was a girl. I told him that I could not wear a skirt because I have never worn one in my life" Shelembe said. "She was wearing a school uniform. Did it matter whether it was a trouser or skirt?" asked the pupil's mother Sizakele Shelembe. "How could they deny her time to attend classes just because she is lesbian?" Shelembe believed she was expelled because of homophobia."*

Studies show that teachers discriminate and marginalize same-sex desiring learners, making them a stereotypically helpless and powerless group who experience constant victimization and marginalization in South African schools (Bhana, 2012; Mostert, Gordon, and Kriegler, 2015; Msibi, 2012). Research by Francis (2012) and Msibi (2011; 2012) shows that heteronormative and heterosexist discrimination takes place in the school, and is encouraged and supported by teachers, which has the potential to compromise and negatively affect the schooling experiences and the well-being of non-normative learners (Nichols, 2016). Studies on sexuality in schools illustrate that many teachers remain complicit in this widespread crisis (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2019).

Schools and teachers do not always respond to issues of sexual diversity, thus making schools not conducive to learners of non-normative sexualities. Moreover, the widespread nature of homophobia in South Africa greatly influences overt and covert attitudes and instances of homophobic and heteronormative behaviour by teachers (Bhana, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Brown, 2020). Instead of teachers committing themselves to treat all learners the same and creating a safe environment,

irrespective of their sexual orientation, they sometimes exacerbate the negative experiences of same-sex desiring learners (Lees, 2014). According to Francis (2012), approximately 10% of youth experience same-sex attraction around puberty in South Africa. Learners who self-identify as homosexual are a small minority of individuals who face a variety of unique and complex challenges within the school environment (Nichols, 2016). While teachers should provide a support system that enables learners to mitigate and overcome these barriers in the school environment and wider society, same-sex desiring learners face discrimination daily in the school environment simply because they do not fit into the accepted societal norm regarding gender identity and sexuality (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2019). A Times Live article in 2010 reported about “Lesbian pupils' back at school” :

*“The Commission for Gender Equality has slammed the suspension of 300 girls at a KwaZulu-Natal high school by staff who claimed that the girls are lesbians. This follows a decision late last month by the governing body and management of Mthwalume High School, on the province's South Coast, to remove 300 pupils from the school and to close down the boarding house after two girls were seen kissing openly in a dormitory.” (Times Live, 2010, March 8)*

The background presented highlights that discrimination and marginalization of same-sex desiring learners by teachers is a problem in schools and has the potential to have a detrimental effect on them. Hence, this study, offers an in-depth exploration regarding the perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in schools.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Despite having one of the world's most liberal constitutions that protects all people's rights, irrespective of race, religion, creed, and sexual orientation, stigma and discrimination are pervasive in some societies towards LGBT persons, including in schools. While schools are required to abide by the constitution in the way that they provide education and treat their learners, negative attitudes exist due to institutional and teacher attitudes, with learners seldom having the power to ensure that their rights are protected. Although the attitudes and perspectives of teachers concerning same-sex desiring learners are discussed to a great extent in the international literature and South African literature, specifically through studies by scholars such as Bhana (2012), Francis (2012), and Msibi (2011; 2012), there is a paucity of studies on single-sex high school teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in single-sex high schools. This study, therefore, aims to explore single-

sex high schools teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **1.4 Motivation and Rationale for the study**

As a gender specialist student, I have been alerted to the problem of social intolerance and ongoing homophobia that occurs in South Africa towards members of the LGBTIQ community. I have come to understand that the social intolerance that occurs in schools, which do not exist in isolation from the communities they serve, reproduces and perpetuates the societal norms that are prevalent in society. Both teachers and learners are products of the societies in which they live, hence, the discrimination and prejudice that occurs in communities are largely mirrored in schools.

The aforementioned problems resonate very strongly with my experience as a learner and an educator, as I am a former learner at a single-sex high school, having matriculated in 2014 and now teaching at a single-sex high school. It is concerning and alarming that there are teachers, who are complicit in homophobic behaviour and are also instigators of homophobic slurs and attitudes levelled at perceived same-sex desiring learners. In my school I have witnessed how teachers discriminate against self-identifying lesbian learners, despite their constitutional rights which should guarantee them to be treated equally and to express themselves and their sexual identities freely. Upon observing some of my colleagues at the school in which I work, it was clear that there are teachers who merely tolerate non-normative gender learners and are more intolerant due to their own personal beliefs, customs and religions.

I have also had the opportunity to interact with several self-identifying lesbian learners whom I teach, with some of these learners having expressed that their experiences at school have not been pleasant. They also stated that the school has become a hostile environment for same-sex desiring learners, which results in them feeling as though they do not belong. These self-identifying lesbians stated that they have been treated as outcasts in their school, which they believe is a result of their sexual orientation and being stigmatised and emotionally abused by their teachers.

As a person who considers themselves a gender champion and someone who is greatly concerned about the same-sex desiring community, I became interested in exploring the heteronormative attitudes that are both overtly and covertly imposed on same-sex desiring learners by teachers in single-sex high schools. I have also observed that the homophobic attitudes of these teachers towards

same-sex desiring learners has detrimental effects on learners. Therefore, I deemed it important to gain insight into it and why teachers are intolerant or embrace learners who deviate from the norm of compulsory heterosexuality. I selected the school that I teach in as a research site as some teachers had already indicated their willingness to participate in the beginning stages of this study.

### **1.5. Aim**

The study aimed to establish how teachers understand and respond to same-sex desiring **learners in an urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal Province.**

### **1.6. Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore teachers' **perceptions and attitudes** towards same-sex desiring learners.
2. To gain a deeper understanding of how teachers who have same-sex desiring learners in their classes **navigate their teaching,**
3. To understand the **strategies that teachers use** to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom

### **1.7. Research questions**

1. What are the teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners?
2. How do teachers in a single-sex high school who have same-sex desiring learners in their class navigate their teaching?
3. What strategies do teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom?

### **1.8. Definition of Key Concepts**

The terms attitudes and perceptions are defined in this sub-section as they bare background to the study. Moreover, homosexuality, homosexual and same-sex desiring will be used interchangeably throughout this study:

**Attitudes:** Attitude is referred to by Noviani (2020) as a convenient and efficient way of explaining behaviour and often explains and predicts behaviour. Attitude therefore, are learned tendencies that prompt an individual to exhibit certain behaviours in front of certain people, times and situations (Noviani, 2020).

**Perceptions:** Stump and Fisser (2008) define perceptions as being two-fold; impressions and ideas.

The two forms of perception make up the total mind as impression is what is heard seen and felt and those impression are clear, thereafter ideas are created regarding the impressions (Amodu, 2003). Therefore, perceptions are all that is in the mind and is derived from experience and the past and become subjective beliefs or opinions that are held by people and are based on impressions and ideas of things seems (Iwuagwu & Agabi, 2019)

**Homosexuality/Homosexual:** according to Ilyayambwa (2012) is defined as the orientation, desire, sexual need, or the responsiveness of one person towards other persons of the same gender. Msibi (2011) further states that the term ‘homosexuality’ was a term introduced in the West to control societal and social relations, labelling those who engaged in same-sex relations as ‘deviant’. Hence, in relation to this study, the term ‘homosexuality’ refers to the identity and behaviours of learners who share same-sex attractions. Moreover, the term homosexuality is a term that is commonly used across the literature to describe lesbians, gays, and same-sex desiring, making it a complex concept, thus the interchangeable usage of these concepts for the purpose of this study.

**Same-sex desiring:** The term ‘same-sex desiring’ will be utilised in this study to refer to learners who are non-heterosexual. There is however a lack of literature explaining the term same-sex desiring. However, Msibi (2012, 2013) has rejected the usage of the terms 'gay', 'lesbian', and 'queer' to dismiss the sexual categories that exist in society. De Lauretis (as cited by Gedro & Mizzi, 2014) asserts that the term 'same-sex desiring' is an alternative term that seeks to represent a more fluid concept of gender and sexuality to understand the diversity of humans and sexuality. (Msibi , 2013, p.107) maintains that “*the term same-sex desire avoids using current 'western' forms of sexual categorisation (in particular the terms 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'queer') and is merely a broad term to describe 'men/women/individuals who engage in same-sex relations to highlight the complexity of sexual identification with relations to expression is denied*”. Butler (1993) maintains that the term ‘queer’ has been used as a method to suppress, silence, and shame the identities and practices that contravene the perceived social boundaries.

## **1.9. Theoretical Framework**

The **social constructionist theory** guided this study on the perceptions and the attitudes that teachers have about same-sex desiring learners to the influence of their culture, religion, race, class, and gender. Gergen (as cited by Galbin, 2014) defines the theory as a perspective that looks at how a portion of human life exists due to social and interpersonal influences. Moreover, Andrews (2011) and Norman (2015) state that social constructionism is concerned with how knowledge is constructed and understood by people, and how certain characteristics in humans that are seen as typically rigid and completely biological, such as gender, race, and sexuality, are concepts of human interpretation, and are shaped and constructed by society and thus, an ongoing dynamic process.

The social constructionist theory is therefore relevant to this study as it focuses on multiple understandings, lived experiences, and realities, and allowed the researcher to elicit data and explore the variegated attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards same-sex desiring learners. It highlighted how these attitudes and perceptions are constructed, taking into account the multiple realities that were expressed by the teachers. Moreover, the researcher anticipated attaining variegated responses, as the participants, namely teachers, are not from the same social backgrounds. The study explored how culture, race, class, religion, and age contribute to the variegated responses. Thus, utilising the social constructionist theory helps provide a lens to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes on same-sex desiring learners. This then reveals the multiple realities and contexts of the teachers and how these realities and contexts shape and influence their perceptions and attitudes towards the same-sex desiring learners that they teach.

## **1.10. Research design**

This study utilised exploratory case study research which allowed for the exploration and understanding of complex issues more prominently within a specific context and selects a small geographical area that has a limited number of participants (Baskarada, 2013). Exploratory case study research was used as this study required the researcher to understand and examine the real life phenomenon of 17 teachers as well as to understand the attitudes and perceptions that the teachers had towards same sex-desiring learners.

The study used a descriptive exploratory design with qualitative methods to explore the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. The qualitative approach is relevant for this study as it explores the social phenomena in its natural settings. (Teherani, Martimianakis,

Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, and Varpio, 2015, p.669) state that “*the phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organisations function, and how interactions shape relationships.*” This approach is particularly useful for exploring people and how they are active within the research process.

The interpretivist paradigm was utilised for this study as it “enables the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures” (Pham, 2018, p.3). The paradigm is concerned with interpreting and exploring in-depth understanding and meaning of a particular social situation or event in the wider society that is given by the participants themselves (Thomas, 2010). Furthermore, this paradigm allowed the researcher to prompt and probe the participants’ thoughts, prejudices, perceptions, feelings, perspectives, and responses to the learners of interest.

## **1.11 Methodology**

### **1.11.1 Study Location and population**

This study was conducted in one urban single-sex high school located in the city of Durban (middle to high socio-economic setting in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa). The multiracial school has approximately 57 teachers, the majority being females from various races and backgrounds, with learners also from the White, African, Indian, and Coloured race groups. As a state-subsidized school, it requires parents to pay monthly school fees to cover all the running costs, thereby limiting access to this school to families who can afford being educated in an ex-model C school. The instruction medium is English, and it only accommodates day scholars.

### **1.11.2 Sampling**

The sampling method guiding this study was convenience and purposive sampling.

Convenience sampling was used as the study was conducted at a single-sex high school in Durban, KZN where the researcher is an educator which made it a convenient location for her to conduct the study. This study also used purposive sampling as the intention was to choose a particular group, namely teachers, who would generate relevant data. Purposive sampling, according to (Lopez and Whitehead, 2013, p.7), “*is designed to provide information-rich cases for in-depth study as it uses participants who have the required status or experience or are known to possess knowledge that the researchers seek*”.

### 1.11.3 Data Collection and analysis

Data was collected during semi-structured interviews using photo-elicitation as well as by observing the participants and by asking the participants questions using an interview schedule. The semi-structured individual interviews were used as an instrument to obtain data, which were recorded with the permission of participants. *“Semi-structured interviews are a mix of two types of interviews, structured and unstructured interviews where the questions are pre-planned before the interview, but the interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to elaborate and explain particular issues through the use of open-ended questions”* (Alsaawi, 2014, p.151).

Photo-elicitation was used during the interviews to encourage the teachers to engage with the researcher. Photo elicitation is defined by (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017, p.3) as *“using photographs in an interview to generate verbal discussion to create data and knowledge”*. The pictures that were used for the photo-elicitation portrayed gender stereotypes, gender roles, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) flag, and articles about lesbian and gay learners who have been suspended from school because of their sexuality, as well as about gay and lesbian marriages. The pictures were used to evoke emotions, perceptions, stereotypes, and memories regarding homosexuality to generate data

Observation of the participants during the interviews occurred and the researcher documented and described certain behaviours, such as non-verbal gestures, silences, hesitations, and laughing, or show discomfort, to add to the richness of the analysis. The researcher noted the topics and concepts that participants had difficulty talking about during the interview as they deemed them to be impolite or too insensitive to discuss (Kawulich, 2012). The qualitative data was thematically analysed bearing in mind the objectives of the study and the research questions that were to be addressed.



## 1.12 Chapter divisions:

The study is presented in the following chapters:

- Chapter 2. Literature review:** Chapter two presents the theoretical framework, which is the social constructionist theory, as it provides an analytical lens through which to explore teachers' understanding and responses towards same-sex desiring learners. It moreover, details literature that offers insight into the current state of international and South African education environments in relation to nonnormative sexualities.
- Chapter 3. Methodology:** This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to achieve the study objectives and research questions, including sampling, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, validity, and trustworthiness. It also includes the reflexivity of the researcher as well as the limitations of the study.
- Chapter 4. Results and Discussion:** This chapter presents the findings of this study and includes a discussion with respect to relevant literature to either support or refute the study findings. It reviews the findings concerning the theoretical framework as an analytical lens.
- Chapter 5. Conclusion:** The chapter sums up the focus of the study and presents the main findings. It addresses the extent to which the objectives were achieved by summarising the findings of the objectives. It presents recommendations for implementation at schools and further research.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents extant international and local literature on same-sex desiring (lesbian) and non-normative communities, and outlines the theoretical framework that informs the analysis of the data generated. As indicated in Chapter 1, the concepts of same-sex desiring, lesbian and homosexual are used interchangeably. The first section of this chapter is the literature review, which draws on studies about same-sex desiring communities and individuals. Due to the paucity in literature on same-sex desiring learners in schools as it pertains to teacher attitudes, the study relies on international studies and a more general approach to the South African literature that focuses on homosexuality and homophobia in the broader society and in schools.

The chapter begins by defining three critical concepts that are used throughout the literature and the study, namely, homosexuality, lesbianism and nonnormative sexuality. Thereafter, the literature is organised in a sequence of several themes, namely, (1) Same-sex desiring individuals an international perspective, (2) colonisation, policies of segregation and civil rights in Africa, (3) Culture and religion and intolerance in Southern Africa, (4) Patriarchy and homophobic violence in South Africa. It also reviews (5) Perpetuating community norms: Intolerance of same-sex desiring individuals in schools, (6) Teachers use of the curriculum to perpetuate heteronormativity and homophobia, (7) Single-sex high schools and non-normative sexuality: An international and South African perspective. Lastly, (8) Attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards same-sex desiring learners.

The second section of this chapter reviews the theoretical framework, which is the Social Constructionist theory. This theoretical framework is a useful analytical lens which helps in understanding the multiple realities, understandings and perceptions of same-sex desiring identities, and how culture, socio-economic context, race and age impact these understandings and perceptions.

### **2.2 Defining homosexuality, lesbianism and non-normative sexuality**

The concept of homosexual has become less popular as a concept, as terminology relating to sexual minorities are continuously changing and are vulnerable to change in history as well as personal and collective reinvention and are inclined to create unnecessary categories that people would need to fit in to create a just social order (Rosenfeld, 2009). Rumens (2017) and Msibi (2011) argue that the

common usage of certain discourses relating to sexual minorities such as the terms homosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual evolves from a western form of sexual categorization that has been used as a method to create a binary and stable categories to ensure social order and to control deviant social relations. Herek, Kimmel, Amaro & Melton (1991) similarly discuss that the term homosexual is ambiguous and is often assumed to refer to men, thus, excluding lesbians. Moreover, the term perpetuates negative stereotypes because of the historical association that homosexuality has with pathology and criminal behaviour. Scholars have cautioned against using the term homosexual as religious and cultural bodies have used the term 'homosexual' as a means to disregard non-normative sexual minorities and because the term implies the existence of static sexualities which may in future victimise those who are meant to be liberated by the usage of the term (Butler, 1993; Amoah and Gyasi, 2016). Similarly, Stollznaw (2021) warns against writing about homosexuality as the word historically had a medical implication that had pathologized same-sex attraction as a disease, defect, disorder, or a mental illness that is seen as a danger to society; she further mentions that homosexuality has been associated with paedophilia, child abuse, and incest.

Although there are negative connotations attached to the term 'homosexual', it is, however, necessary to include it in this study as, "*The term homosexual is part of the dominant sexuality discourse in present-day South Africa, including in human rights documents*" (Sigamoney & Epprecht, 2013, p.88). Therefore, the usage of homosexuality in this study is solely to ensure that the discourse in the literature is not changed to suit the purpose of the study. Nonetheless, the usage of the term same-sex desiring will be utilised interchangeably and alongside the term homosexuality.

The term 'lesbians' is often used in literature to describe women who are attracted to other women, with Advocates for youth (2019) defining a lesbian as a "*woman who is attracted to and prefers intimate relationships with other women. Attraction and relationships can be sexual, emotional, romantic, and/or spiritual. Some women may use different language to describe themselves, such as umbrella terms like gay or queer*". Moreover, a lesbian person often claims an identity based on how they perceive themselves as a stable self that is attracted to the same gender (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016). Matebeni (2011) further elaborates identifying as lesbian as an emotional and psychological identification of women with other women where two women's emotions, as well as affections, are directed towards each other. However, gender and sexuality according to Morgan (2017) are highly dichotomized as lesbian women do not fit into the societal norms and categories prescribed for women more especially those who embrace masculinity, hence, the usage of non-normative sexuality and

same-sex desiring. However, the literature used in this study utilises the term lesbian to refer to women who are self-identifying non-normative individuals.

Non-normative sexuality is defined by Gray (2016) as identities such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, transsexual as well as individuals who identify as queer and intersex where collectively these identities present a challenge to the existing gender binary and the hegemony of heteronormativity. The usage of non-normative sexuality in this study is a better alternative when referring to same-sex desiring individuals as it represents the fluidity of identity categories and seeks to diminish the rigid identity categories that exist such as gay and lesbian and therefore is able to reach beyond just gay, lesbian or bisexual because but also those who do not self-identify as gay or lesbian (Bolam & Jarvis, 2016). This study seeks to understand the perceptions and attitudes of high school teachers towards same-sex desiring learners, therefore using rigid labels and categories is problematic as the assumption that the learners in the school who are same-sex desiring have self-identified as a lesbian and this could be misleading. Due to stigma and discrimination, not all non-normative genders are confident and brave to 'come out'.

The usage of the term 'same-sex desiring' in the title of this study and throughout the study is a means to disrupt the rigid sexual identities and sexual categories that currently exist in society such as the common identities, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual. Post-structuralist and queer theorists such as Butler (1993), Foucault (1978), and Jagose (1996) have rejected the usage of Western labels as it creates the assumption that sexuality is static whereas it has been challenged for many years that sexuality is fluid and constantly changing. Likewise, the term 'same-sex desiring' helps to present a more reflective inquiry on same-sex relations more particularly in the African context. In keeping with Msibi (2011) and his account of the term 'same-sex desiring', he asserts that African societies historically have never had a gay, lesbian identity or even a pathologized homosexual category even though same-sex sexual attraction and the expression thereof did occur in a hidden and a more culturally accepted way. Thus, as proposed by Amory (1997) the usage of the terms same-sex desiring or same-sex attraction would be more relevant and contextual in South Africa as it acknowledges that same-sex relations do occur and are practiced by many but it does not necessarily lead to the emergence of a gay or lesbian identity.

### **2.3. Same-sex desiring individuals: An international perspective**

Attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring individuals is a global issue that continues to be largely divided in different regions of the world (Poushter & Kent, 2020). On an international, regional and local level, people who are attracted to the same-sex often face persistent discrimination and human rights violation because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation despite the United Nations Human Rights Constitution (MacArthur, 2015). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines articles that support non-discrimination that several states have sanctioned, intolerance on many fronts continues to plague citizens of many countries (Yecies, 2010; Assembly U.G, 1948).

In the US (United States of America) there continues to be discrimination and intolerance regarding issues of sexual orientation and gender non-conformity (Chicago Tribune, 2018). These divisions are made visible because of the diverse cultural, historical, political, and religious state of the US causing much of the discrimination experienced by sexual minorities (Duncan, Aguilar, Jensen & Magnusson, 2019). Although many parts of the world have slowly begun to recognize LGBTQI (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and Intersex) rights legally and socially, Ortíz (2016) notes that the US seems to still be lagging. The LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) individuals form a significant part of the US however they are amongst the most victimized groups of people in the United States and their lack of rights and protection makes them unequal according to the (Federal Bureau of Investigation cited by Kramer, Kehn, Pennington, Wechsler, Clark & Nagle, 2013 and Schoellkopf, 2012)." Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects any employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex as well as gender, race, colour, national origin and religion" (BBC News, 2019). Most federal appeal courts in the US have interpreted the law to exclude discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, however, New York and Chicago have just recently ruled that discrimination against LGBT people is a form of sex discrimination(The New York Times, 2019).

Schoellkopf (2012) states that homosexuality has been legalised and more legal protection has been provided to members of the LGB (Lesbian Gay and Bisexual) communities concerning issues such as activity, same-sex marriages, same-sex adoption, and employment in the US. The Federal law in the United States of America posits that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is against the law in instances related to work and employment, however, in non-federal government jobs, it is based on that particular state's laws where no federal protections currently exist for non-employees (Juarez, 2020). Dillbary and Edwards (2019) assert that despite the Federal laws that are designed to protect

and prohibit any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation, LGB communities should not expect to be treated equally in the United States of America. The Conversation (2016) maintains that LGBT people continue to experience homophobic discrimination and are largely targeted in violent hate crimes that often lead to death.

Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is a modern nation just like the US however this country strictly adheres to Islamism which is a monotheistic religion, where Islam followers are called Muslims and believe in Allah (Bello, 2012). The religious Islamic foundation of Saudi Arabia has influenced culture through the application of Sharia law derived from the Qur'an as the legal system that is also applied by the courts of law and punishes those who outwardly display homosexual affection thus leading to long discrimination and violence against homosexuals (Simmons, 2014). Unlike in the US, according to Human Rights Watch (2019) homosexuality is illegal although there are no written laws concerning sexual orientation in Saudi Arabia, however, judges use principles of the Islamic law (Sharia) and apply them according to their own interpretation to sanction people suspected of engaging in any activity that impinges on religious values including homosexual relationships. The punishment for engaging in homosexual acts in Saudi Arabia is a fine, public whipping, vigilante attacks, chemical castration, imprisonment, and even the death penalty (Bello, 2012). According to the Sharia law, for there to be conviction there must be at least four trustworthy male witnesses to the act, moreover, conviction and severity of punishments are dependent on the accused social class, religion, and citizenship (Rehman & Polymenopoulou, 2013). Culture, tradition, and religious norms according to Rehman and Polymenopoulou (2013) are used to condone and sanctify brutal punishments, discrimination as well as the exclusion of LGBT persons from society in Saudi Arabia, with the Government also openly referring to the Islamic religion as a justification for the abuse of queer individuals.

#### **2.4. Colonisation, policies of segregation and civil rights in Africa**

The disapproval of homosexuality on the African continent is pervasive and Africa is perceived to be extremely homophobic as homosexuality is deemed as un-African as well as a western deviance and intrusion (Awondo, Geschiere & Reid, 2012; McNamarah, 2018). Before European colonisation, customary laws governed indigenous African communities however when colonialism was established in Africa, Europeans then used laws as a way to rearrange indigenous African legal institutions (McNamarah, 2018). To date in Africa, Kretz (2013) reveals that same-sex relationships continue to be suppressed and illegal in more than 35 countries in Africa such as Uganda, Zimbabwe,

and Nigeria. McNamara (2018) articulates that in many African nations, government officials threaten violence against homosexuals by retaining colonial-era anti-queer laws and reinforcing those laws even post-independence. He further states that historical evidence reveals that British and French colonies inherited the imposed 'Sodomy Laws' and German and Dutch ruled colonies had similar penalties and punishment for same-sex conduct, more particularly for men in same-sex relationships (McNamara, 2018).

Even post-colonisation and post-independence Kizito (2017) argues that homophobic attitudes and heterosexism in Uganda cannot be divorced from the country being colonised and how the European colonisers spread homophobia, prejudice, and moreover cultivated legal and religious values in order for them to have a stronghold on Uganda. The missionaries used Christianity and imposed it on Ugandans as a means to distract them from rebelling against the colonial agenda at the time. "The missionaries felt that Africans needed to be "cleansed" with Christianity, and they did so forcibly; this is the root of white supremacy's hold on Africa. They whisper in the ears of Ugandan political leaders and preach to the common people in order to please God, they must punish one another" (The Hofstra Chronicle, 2019). The sodomy laws were thus introduced by the British into the Ugandan penal code as early as the 1920s (Kizito, 2017). Sodomy laws are described as an English criminal law that was attributed to the men of Sodom who attracted the wrath of God and had their city destroyed and sodomy is an offense that is against God's will which thereby attracted societies harsh punishment (Lawyers, 2011).

Uganda has an anti-homosexuality bill that was ratified in parliament in 2009 prohibiting homosexuality in Uganda (Zimet, 2016). The act was then adopted by parliament in December 2013 and since then Uganda has gained much popularity and international attention due to this anti-homosexuality bill which, "would allow for the death penalty to be implemented in cases of repeat homosexual offenses, as well as jail time for attempted homosexual acts, the spread of homosexuality, or hiding information about a homosexual individual" (Zimet, 2016, p. 8). Persad (2010) also contends that the anti-homosexuality bill sought to prohibit any same-sex sexual relations and same-sex marriages and strived to intensify already existing antihomosexuality laws such as the anti-sodomy laws.

However according to Carroll and Mendos (2016) in 2014 the anti-homosexuality act was annulled by the constitutional court and the ruling that was made by the court stated that parliament at the time that the act was approved did not have the required quorum. Later in 2014 a new bill entitled 'The

prohibition of promotion of unnatural sexual practices bill' was introduced and was meant to replace the 2013 act, however the only difference with the new bill was that it now did not refer to same-sexual acts as such but rather the acts alongside paedophilia, bestiality and other criminal acts (Caroll and Mendos, 2017). The ammendment of existing legislation aims to emphasize punitive penalties on the basis of sexual orientation.

The United Nations Human Rights (2014) released a statement whereby the United Nations commissioner for human rights Navi Pillay denounced the 'Anti-Homosexuality Bill' and the latest 'Prohibition of unnatural sexual practices' bill stating that it violates the rights that have been given to each Ugandan citizen as per the 1995 Ugandan constitution and violates international human rights that Uganda is obligated to follow as a member of the United Nations. The commissioner stated that "the 'Prohibition of unnatural sexual practices bill' would institutionalise discrimination against LGBT people and could encourage harassment and violence against them" (United Nations Human Rights, 2014).

Rock paintings in Zimbabwe left behind by the Khoi-san shows that homosexuality did exist in the pre-colonial era through examples of both erotic and non-erotic same-sex relationships cave paintings in Guruve, Zimbabwe (Obamwonyi, 2016). Moreover, communities in Zimbabwe pre-industrialisation believed that homosexuality had a medicinal effect and was believed to cure many ailments such as impotence and mental illness (Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013, p.4). According to Gunda (2010) it was also generally accepted that out in the bush, boys who herded cattle at the age of puberty would play with each other, and girl's sex play was considered normal and a part of a phase that prepared them for marriage. Despite all the evidence revealed about the prevalence of non-normative sexuality in Zimbabwe, early court records suggest that homosexual activities may not have been socially accepted however under customary law they were considered a lesser offense than adultery.

Prior to colonialism Mcnamarah (2019) also reveals that in Zimbabwe as a society amongst others such as Uganda and South Africa, homosexuality was not sanctioned, however with the establishment of colonially imposed laws indigenous attitudes switched from being tolerant to being completely intolerant. In societies where such anti-queer laws were not imposed and enforced those societies readily accepted the non-normative community. The Other Foundation (2019) disseminate that during colonisation when Europeans had settled in Zimbabwe, they introduced and imposed harsh laws as a means to punish homosexuals where native Zimbabweans would be put on trial for same-sex practice and cross-dressing. Due to the harsh colonial laws in the late 1890s, homosexual crimes decreased



leading to sexual minorities being suppressed and attitudes towards sexual minorities became increasingly intolerant which led to the passing and approval of the Sodomy Law in 2006 under the criminal law where even two people of the same-sex were not permitted to hold hands, hug or kiss as it was deemed as an indecent act (The Other Foundation, 2019).

Post-independence, same-sex sexual activity continued to be illegal in Zimbabwe where the law focused on sexual relationships amongst men only. The Zimbabwean criminal code Section 74 reads, “Any male person who, with the consent of another male person, knowingly performs with that other person anal sexual intercourse, or any act involving physical contact other than anal sexual intercourse that would be regarded by a reasonable person to be an indecent act, shall be guilty of sodomy and liable to a fine up to or exceeding level fourteen or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or both.” (Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013, p.6). Although the law specifically mentions 'male person' lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Zimbabwe are also confronted by discrimination daily where consequences of discrimination include poverty as well as denial of access to government services such as health and safety and denied employment based on their sexual orientation (Epprecht, 2008). In 1995 at a celebration of Zimbabwe’s independence, President Robert Mugabe affirmed that homosexuality, “degrades human dignity, its unnatural and there is no question ever of allowing these people to behave worse than dogs and pigs. If dogs and pigs do not do it, why must humans beings?” (Ray, 2010, p.75)

On the other hand, the constitution adopted by Zimbabwe in 2013 seems to be ambiguous about homosexuality as section 78(2) posits that same-sex marriages are prohibited, however, it is vague on the banning of same-sex sexual relations outside of the institution of marriage (Mhiripiri and Moyo, 2016). Similar to Zimbabwe, Nigeria also has a Marriage prohibition act also known as the 'anti-gay law which prohibits identifying as an LGBT person and it is a punishable act of 14 years imprisonment (Sogunro, 2011). Further to that, Sogunro (2011) states that the law also has a draconian punishment to anyone who knows of someone who is gay and does not report that to the authorities as a crime, this law prescribes 10 years imprisonment.

Oliver and Oliver (2017) state that when the European colonisers came to South Africa in 1652 as part of the Scramble for Africa, their ideology and notion was to civilise natives whom they considered to be inferior, thus early racism in South Africa can be attributed to the expansion of European colonialism. Mhlauli, Salani, and Mokotedi (2015) argue that often, systematized racism and racial discrimination is linked to the National Party however, racial discrimination dates back to the pre-

industrial period and more particularly when the Dutch settled in the Cape in 1652 where they caused much misery for local inhabitants such as the Khoikhoi herders who were denied access to water sources, grazing pastures and even robbed of their own cattle. Many traditional cultures before the arrival of the Europeans in Africa and more particularly in South Africa were tolerant of diverse sexualities and gender relations even though heterosexuality was dominant and was considered to be a norm in precolonial Africa (Bertolt, 2019).

There is quite a strong link between Anti-Sodomy laws that were introduced by European colonisers and with the criminalization of homosexuality in South Africa and other British colonies such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. According to Bertolt (2019), the coloniser wanted to accomplish a heterosexist and sexual morality vision of Africa which sought to prey on African values and rewrite history resulting in Anti-Sodomy laws whereby Christianity and the bible were used as a method to demonise homosexuality and to create a uniform morality..

The challenges and realities that the LGBT community in South Africa face are deeply rooted in colonialism where it is possible to see how colonial history rewrote the rules for sexuality in South Africa (Tallie, 2019). According to Spira, Chad, and Schneeweis (2015) the European colonial rulers controlled and regulated any kind of non-heterosexual relations and further enforced racial segregation, and similarly under the apartheid regime, race and sexuality were targeted. Apartheid was a system of legislation that upheld segregationist policies and white supremacy against non-white South Africans where non-white South Africans were forced to live in separate areas and use separate public facilities from white people for more than 50 years (Clark & Worger, 2013).

The Nationalist Party, which governed South Africa during apartheid passed several laws which included the Group Areas Act of 1950, Bantu Education Act of 1953, Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1952, and the Immorality Act of 1950 (Mhlauli, Salani & Mokotedi, 2015). “The Immorality Act of 1957, for instance, criminalized both interracial relationships and homosexuality and the Apartheid-era “pass laws” required identity documents with race and gender and served to track and limit the movement of black South Africans” (Spira, Chad & Schneeweis, 2015, p.8).

Anti-apartheid activists such as the late Simon Nkoli who established the first mass-based black gay and lesbian organisation in 1988 that was titled Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). De Ru (2013) cites that this organisation had committed itself to ensure a non-racist, non-discriminatory, and non-sexist democratic future in South Africa. Nkoli accentuated that homophobia

and racism were indivisible battles and in 1990 he boldly declared during the First Gay and Lesbian pride March in Johannesburg that, "I'm fighting for the abolition of apartheid. And I fight for freedom of sexual orientation. These are inextricably linked with each other. I cannot be free as a black man if I am not free as a gay man" (De Ru, 2013, p.227).

Post-colonialism and apartheid, South Africa pronounced its first interim democratic constitution in 1993 which sought to repeal and replace many unjust laws that were enacted by the apartheid government and sought to end a very brutal and discriminatory legal system (Endoh, 2015). In 1996 the final constitution was adopted and all South African's commemorate how South Africa was able to transition from an oppressive apartheid system to a democratic one (Christiansen, 2016). Furthermore, South Africa received abundant exposure and admiration as it became the first country in the world which had a bill of rights and constitution that prohibited any unfair discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. "Over the last two decades, the Constitutional Court of South Africa decriminalized same-sex sexual activity, required equal treatment of same-sex life partners in immigration and government benefits law, and affirmed the fundamental validity of same-sex relationships, including recognition of full marriage equality" (Christiansen, 2016, p.567).

Section 9(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) affirms that "everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law". Moreover, the constitution further guarantees in Section 9 (3) that, the state may not unfairly discriminate against anyone on grounds of, amongst other things, sexual orientation (Constitution of S.A, 1996, p.6). Section 10, 12, and 14 also assures everyone the right to human dignity; security, and the right to privacy (Constitution of S.A, 1996).

(Morison, Mtshengu, Sandfort & Reddy, 2016, p.30) refer to the fact that "the rights of many other socially marginalised groups, often remain paper-based, with various contextual barriers, particularly poverty, obstructing their full realisation". As Morison, Mtshengu, Sandfort, and Reddy (2016) have previously alluded, despite South Africa having one the most progressive constitutions in the world, the everyday reality is that majority of South African's are not as tolerant and accepting as we perceive them to be. While the laws are valid and are working to a certain extent, for instance, same-sex couples can legally be engaged in marriage, however freedom of expression and the protection thereof and sanctioning of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation remains problematic.

African leaders such as the late President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe have accused those who are in same-sex relationships of being worse than pigs and dogs and in some countries such as Uganda homosexuals have been threatened with death and stricter laws against them (Togarasei and Chitando, 2011). Moreover, in a country whose democracy and constitution is admired the Zulu King, King Goodwill Zwelithini uttered homophobic slurs that had the ability to fuel homophobic violence, he said: “Traditionally, there were no people who engaged in same-sex relationships, there was nothing like that and if you do it, you must know that you are rotten”(The World, 2012). The literature presents variations in homophobia in the African continent whereby some nations such as South Africa have embraced equal rights for sexual minorities post-colonialism and others such as Uganda and Zimbabwe continue to persecute such non-normative individuals due to a perceived view that homosexuality is a threat to social order.

## **2.5. Culture, religion and intolerance in Southern Africa**

Throughout history, non-heterosexual relationships in highly conservative societies have resulted in social ostracism, mental, physical, and emotional harm, and even death (Leach, 2018,). The influence of religion and culture, in particular, appear to be strong socialising determinants to explain why homosexuality is rejected although most religions emphasize that people should respect others however, most religions tend to categorize homosexuality as unnatural or impure (McGee, 2016; Janssen & Scheepers, 2019). Although cultures are dynamic and constantly changing, practices around sexual orientation continue to be contested within many cultures and communities across the globe (Mukoro, 2017)

The fundamental issue surrounding homosexuality in Uganda is based on the fact that the general population relies on both religion and culture to promote a culture of hatred towards those who identify as homosexual and disapprove of homosexuality completely (Jjuuko, 2013). However, Kapur (2017) asserts that religion and culture can never justify the advertent violation of citizens doctrine human rights further encouraging violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation. The legislative developments in Uganda do not only reinforce the criminalisation of same-sex relations but also force those who identify as homosexual to live in fear of harassment and violence and more especially deprives homosexual persons of their dignity and most basic human rights (Rudman, 2015).

Uganda is a predominantly Christian country with an 85% population that subscribes to Christianity.

Uganda's history of Christianity is derived from Uganda being declared as a British colony where European Anglicans arrived in Uganda in 1877 and Catholic Missionaries arrived in 1879, thus the arrival of Anglicans and Catholics enabled the institution of traditional Catholic and Anglican churches. many Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches have vocalised and explicitly expressed their complete intolerance for homosexuality, on the other hand, the Catholic church also influences norms pertaining to gender and sexuality however has completely silenced the issue of homosexuality.

Christian leaders in Zimbabwe and Christians, in general, have labelled homosexuality as unAfrican and is seen as a case of Western cultural influence which considers homosexuality unacceptable. (Mtemeri & Maziti, 2015) state that churches in Zimbabwe condemn homosexuality although there are no clear policies in place, however, it has been made clear that the church has deliberately taken a clear position in being guided by what the bible says which also condemns homosexuality. More particularly, homosexuality in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is said to be a sin and those who practice it are called to repent (Mudavanhu, 2010). There is a predetermined and functional biblical approach to sexuality that is followed by Christian Zimbabweans where homosexuality is harboured and is seen as not consistent with the Shona culture and is therefore unaccepted (Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013). Moreover, homosexual individuals according to churches are to be 'closely shepherded' through counselling, prayers and studying the bible in order for them to be transformed into heterosexuals (Gunda, 2010)

Likewise, the apartheid government also imposed Christianity on the South African society, apartheid was also justified and said to be a specific form of Christian doctrine and the bible was used as a tool to legitimize the apartheid ideology, thus resulting in many laws favouring Christianity (Farisani, 2014). One of the laws that were instituted by the then ruling government was the prohibition of Hindu and Muslim marriages as they did not conform in any way to the Christian doctrine and the agenda of the apartheid government. Similarly to Uganda and many other African countries the South African government also had a very repressive and oppressive attitude towards same-sex sexuality and gender non-conformity and it was prohibited by the anti-sodomy laws that existed at that time and the police enforced the law by persecuting particularly black homosexual men more than white men (Bilchitz, 2016). Culture in South Africa is also seen as a social institution that cannot be challenged and culture for many South Africans cannot be negotiated or challenged (DePalma & Francis, 2014). Since a large portion of South Africans hold conservative religious and cultural moral beliefs that correspond with their religious and cultural affiliations, issues relating to sexuality and homophobia still lie as a moral argument with many people.

Religion in South Africa is an important culture to many people, many of those people tie their identities closely to a specific faith or religious practice with 84% of adults reporting that they belong to some sort of religion (Hodgson, 2017; Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Struwig & Gordon, 2016). Moreover, “churches in South Africa are the most significant spaces where socialisation occurs and where social attitudes and ethical responses form”(Vincent & Howell, 2014, p.473). However, homophobia is played out vehemently in religious discourses and religious settings despite the legal construction of homosexuality in South Africa. Vincent and Howell (2014) assert that the acceptance of same-sex desiring individuals as equal citizens is an issue that has been debated for many years. For instance, the Dutch Reformed Church has accepted same-sex marriages and has allowed non-normative members to be a part of the church. However, churches such as the Anglican church and the Roman Catholic church have proved through their non-acceptance that homosexuality is unpalatable (Kotzé & Loubser, 2018). Homophobia and heterosexism have existed for more than a decade in South Africa and persists more particularly in religious discourse where homosexuality is considered to be sinful, however, Potgieter and Reygan (2011) state that it has been argued that sin does not lie in homosexuality but rather lies in the exclusion of lesbian, gay and bisexual people from church life.

The lack of tolerance of South African's towards same-sex desiring individuals was presented when Jacob Zuma, the former South African President made a condemning statement against gays and lesbians in 2006. The New Humanitarian (2006) reported that Jacob Zuma said that he believed that same-sex marriage was a disgrace to the nation and to God and asserted that when he grew up a gay person would have never stood in front of him as he would have knocked them out. The comments made by the then deputy president were uttered during a time when parliament was preparing to hold public hearings on same-sex marriages and placing them on the same level as heterosexual marriages. As a person whom the country looks up to and as a person who is meant to be the voice of the underprivileged, oppressed, and vulnerable, such hate speech and prejudice cannot be expressed by a national leader towards those who do not conform to heteronormative norms; thus such statements cannot be supported nor tolerated when the South African constitution stipulates equal rights for all irrespective of sexual orientation (Thomas, 2013).

It is clear that although there are multiple manifestations of faith, Christianity seemingly is unreceptive towards understanding human sexuality and the hostility shown towards the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex and Asexual) community holds back the legal and policy reforms and also drives stigma and violence in the wider society(Gunda, 2017).

## **2.6. Patriarchy and Homophobic violence in South Africa**

Many people who are a part of sexual and gender minority groups suffer abuse and violence that is seen as a 'corrective' measure to delegitimize the person's sexual identity, feelings, or appearance (Ewing, Brown, Mkhize, Msibi, 2020). Despite the progressive South African constitution Msibi (2009) and Doan-Minh (2019) both argue that South Africa is still very much patriarchal with ideas relating to masculinity and manhood still very much entrenched in the minds of South African citizens and the rates of gender-based violence in South Africa are amongst the highest in the world. Class differences continue to be structured through race which means that black lesbian women in poor neighbourhoods and who live in poverty are at most danger as they are vulnerable to violence, sexual attacks, and homophobic attacks as compared to lesbians who have access to resources, mobility and security (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy & Moletsane, 2012). Msibi (2009) discusses that the gay and lesbian communities in South Africa continue to experience many horrendous forms of violence including corrective rape, gay-bashing, and murder. Msibi (2009) further goes on to state that patriarchy largely contributes to the rising homophobic violence across the country whereby lesbian women are targeted through curative rape and gay men predominantly through physical violence and this is done as a means of being punishing those who disrupt the 'natural social order of society.

The brutal rape and murder of Eudy Simelane in 2008, an LGBTQI+ activist and Banyana Banyana soccer player is an ideal example that portrays the escalation and the continuation of violence that is perpetrated against lesbian and gay individuals. This particular case of violence was very brutal as Simelane was gang-raped and then she was stabbed more than 25 times (The Guardian, 2009, September 22). 'Corrective' rape according to Doan-Minh (2019) is a conventional form of violence perpetrated by heterosexual men that are positioned in the ideology that raping a lesbian woman will 'cure' her or 'correct' her of her homosexuality and is an attempt to put lesbian women in their place for violating traditional gender presentations.

Corrective rape in South Africa often occurs in South African townships to openly lesbian women and cultural views on sexuality and patriarchy are the major reasons for the existence of this phenomenon (Mulaudzi, 2018). The rhetoric that homosexuality is un-African according to Gqola (2015) is now used as an excuse and as a tool to defend homophobic behaviour and actions such as Eudy Simelane's untimely death. As a result, homosexuality is campaigned against in South Africa and is seen as un-African because procreation is an important element within the African culture, homosexuality,

therefore, disenables procreation as two women or two men cannot procreate and as a result, goes against set gender roles which in turn promotes patriarchy.

Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger (2012) define masculinity as a collective, socially constructed gender identity which gives the idea that men are meant to behave in a certain way according to societal expectations, and those who are different are seen as less masculine. Ideas surrounding masculinity and manhood are still deeply entrenched which influences homophobic violence where effeminate gay men are seen to be betraying the superiority of masculinity and therefore would need to be punished for threatening the 'natural social order' (Msibi, 2009). Traditional and normative masculinities expect men to dress, talk, walk in a way that proved their manhood, should one deviate from that norm it may result in homophobic violence (Jewkes, et. al, 2015).

In March of 2021 alone, four gay men were killed and these deaths are associated with hate crimes and prove that homophobia is endemic in South Africa. Sunday Times(2021, April 11) reported that one of the four deaths was that of Sphamandla Khoza who was discovered with multiple stab wounds in a ditch near his home in Ntuzuma, KwaZulu-Natal and homophobia is believed to be the motive for the killing. Patriarchy is deeply rooted and firmly engraved itself in the South African society, which contributes largely to the violence against the LGBTQIA+ community, such patriarchal sentiments are even encouraged by political and cultural leaders (Kumalo and Gama, 2018).

## **2.7 Perpetuating community norms: Intolerance of same-sex desiring individuals in schools**

Schools in the USA can be very hostile and unwelcoming environments more particularly for those learners who have non-heterosexual feelings, identities, and behaviours (Greytak & Kosciw, 2013). According to Goodhand and Brown (2016), there is a prevalence of bullying, assault, and harassment against lesbian and gay learners, and even those who are perceived to be gay or lesbian, children with an atypical gender also experience bullying. Kolbert, Crothers, Bundick, Wells, Buzgon, Berbary, Simpson, and Senko (2015) reveal that a Nationwide survey conducted in the US indicated that learners experienced such high levels of homophobic and transphobic bullying and that it has become a normal part of their daily lives. 7800 LGBT learners participated in the study and the study revealed that 55.5% of the participants felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 74.1% have experienced verbal harassment, 49% had experienced bullying, and all of these learners. Despite



learner-to-learner bullying, teachers themselves are unable to recognize heterosexist practices and if they are confronted with issues relating to sexual orientation they are fearful of challenging instances of homophobic discrimination at school (Goodhand & Brown, 2016).

Much public attention and focus have been placed on discussing school safety for LGBT learners in the USA. For instance, Los Angeles Times (2013) reported the murder of 15-year-old Lawrence King in 2008 who was shot twice in the face by a boy whom he had given a valentine's day gift. Just one year later, SocialistWorker.org (2009) reported that Carl Walker-Hoover, an 11-year-old committed suicide, and his death was attributed to the years of prejudice and homophobic bullying which he experienced at school. These two tragic examples exemplify how unsafe schools are for same-sex desiring and non-normative sexuality learners in the USA.

Schools are a large part of the broader society whereby heterosexuality is perceived as superior and is enforced through daily school rituals and interactions between teachers, learners, and the curriculum. The heteronormativity can be either implicit or explicit. Kosciw, Diaz, and Greytak (2007) allude that heteronormativity is enforced implicitly in terms of subtle, covert heteronormative discourse and societal symbols which portray traditional gender and sexual relations in the classroom, extra-mural activities and amongst peer groups; explicitly through means of name-calling, verbal and physical harassment.

Schools as institutions of learning and socialization play a vital role in the shaping of learners' sexual identities in Uganda and because they are highly sexualised sites. Muhanguzi, Bennett, and Muhanguzi (2011) hold that learners' sexualities within the school environment are lived out through many dynamics including control and resistance in Uganda. Through learners social interactions, peer networks, and how the school environment exerts its influence on how children construct and understand their sexualities the learners social and sexual identities are thus negotiated and moreover constructed in order to maintain a gendered school environment in schools in Uganda (Muhanguzi, Bennett & Muhanguzi, 2011).

Findings in the study conducted by Muhanguzi, Bennett, and Muhanguzi (2011) demonstrates that schools in Uganda control and regulate aspects such as gender segregation, co-curricular activities, uniform, and dress code are used as a means to ensure gender appropriateness. "While the school dress code was overly targeted at 'smartness', it was also associated with gender-appropriate ideas about bodily appearances, which should downplay any notion of sexual attractiveness toward the opposite or the same-sex" (Muhanguzi, Bennett and Muhanguzi, 2011, p.141). The regulation of school

uniforms and dress codes in Ugandan schools thus aimed to ensure that femininity and masculinity subjectivities are constructed and that subliminal messages regarding gender and sexuality are transmitted in schools.

Although there are strict measures in place that are meant to deter learners from expressing their sexual desires at school (Muhanguzi, Bennett, and Muhanguzi, 2011) express that learners in the study reported that both girls and boys were engaged in same-sex relationships which resulted in many learners being expelled on suspicion of non-normative sexuality and homosexuality. Public counsel (2012) reported that a schools board of Governors in a secondary school in Uganda resolved to expel any learner who is homosexual, the principal of this particular school objected and believed in promoting tolerance and diversity. Unfortunately, the principal suffered much harassment including being gang-raped, beaten up, and received death threats as a means to silence her. Because Ugandan leaders at the time wanted to impose penalties on those who identify as homosexual and even those who are supporters of homosexuality.

Advocate (2014) similarly reported that "Five Ugandans have been arrested under the country's draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act on charges of allegedly "promoting homosexuality" to minors". The Advocate (2014) reported that the arrests included two teachers, two learners, and one businessman and they were arrested after locals informed the police about their suspicions that the group of people were luring pupils into homosexuality in both primary and secondary schools.

The two examples above give a greater understanding of how the laws and legislature operate in Uganda and how the doctrine human rights of those who identify as homosexual or supporting anyone who is, their rights have been stripped away to the extent that it has infiltrated into schools where it is demanded that people should conduct themselves in a normative way as schools are grooming girl children to be feminine, nurturing and submissive and boy children are groomed to be masculine, dominant and homophobic. As a result, if anyone tries to support non-normative sexuality or preach tolerance of homosexuality they will be persecuted.

There is much paucity with regards to interrogations and investigations of school environments in Uganda and more particularly how teachers perceive same-sex desiring learners and how they navigate their teaching. It is indeed a complex problem that has received worldwide attention yet school milieu have not received much scholarly attention. Much attention has been placed on how the

law and religious denominations in Uganda are very discriminatory and anti-homosexual although the international legal system is permissive and forbids the criminalization of homosexuality.

Schools are critical sites for identity construction, The school and the classroom according to Verhoeven, Poorthuis, & Volman (2019) are social spaces that are occupied by different social agents that have different positions, status, and power and therefore influence how each individual can see themselves, other and how each individual thinks others see them in South Africa. Learners who identify as homosexual face different and unique battles in schools when it comes to teachers' and learners' understandings about sexuality. Bhana (2012) and Msibi (2012) note that evidence across many studies that have been conducted show that South African schools are homophobic and also notes that the homophobia stems from the patriarchal constructs of gender and sexuality that those teachers are still holding onto and ignorance which renders LGBT learners invisible. Since schools do not function in isolation and are part and parcel of society, social institutions and cultural ideas have a huge and harmful influence on schools and more particularly on learners (Nichols, 2016).

Regardless of the constitutional rights that protect all individuals and more particularly individuals who identify as homosexual, children also have additional constitutional rights in section 28 of the South African constitution (Songca, 2011). All children including LGBT learners according to section 28 of the South African constitution should be protected from any form of maltreatment, neglect, physical and psychological abuse, or degradation (Constitution of S.A, 1996). Section 28(2) of the Constitution of S.A(1996) specifically speaks to the fact that a child's best interests are of paramount importance and this would then include the right for the child not to be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. Moreover, policies such as the South African Schools Act and the National Education Policy Act also speak to how the democratic transformation of the South African education system is meant to serve the fundamental right of all South African citizens and how the school system has been put into place to redress the injustices of the past by combatting societal issues such as racism, sexism and other forms of unfair discrimination and moreover intolerance. The two education policies mentioned above help to provide a legal mechanism that will help to confront any unfair discrimination or inequality in the South African education system or any unfair decision that has been taken due to a learners sexual orientation still boils down to discrimination (Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013).

However, despite the many strides that have been taken to protect same-sex desiring learners in terms of policy and legislation, Van Vollenhoven and Els (2013) and Msibi (2012) contend that LGBT

learners continue to be discriminated against, harassed, sworn at using derogatory language and being assaulted by teachers and other learners in school. Findings in the study conducted by Msibi (2012) revealed that schools were pervaded with homophobic and heterosexist language although it may not have been direct. Participants in the study revealed that male learners who identified as gay or were perceived to be gay were being called by highly derogatory words such as 'isitabane' and 'ongqingili' by other learners and teachers that are similar to the term 'faggot'. Similarly, in the same study by Msibi (2012) female learners experienced discrimination and abuse and were cautioned to stop behaving like tomboys, Msibi (2012) notes that such statements encourage heterosexist attitudes and render homosexuality abnormal.

## **2.8. Teachers use of the curriculum to perpetuate heteronormativity and homophobia**

The LGBT community is repeatedly faced with high levels of homophobia, internalized homophobia, harassment, and victimization due to their sexual orientation (Craig, Austin, & McInroy, 2014). The New York times (2018) reported that Oregon high school students that identified as lesbian and as gay were taunted with homophobic slurs by teachers and other learners who had for the past two years fostered a hostile and unaccommodating environment for sexual minorities. Moreover, "gay and lesbian high school students described years of harassment and bigotry from school employees and other students and a deeply religious culture that silenced their complaints" (New York Times, 2018). Despite the already present progress in terms of laws and attitudes in the USA, it is evident that sexual minorities in school continue to encounter discrimination from their teachers and peers daily in the school environment, thus making them feel unsafe and excluded (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

A study conducted by Mollura (2017) revealed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is filled with a high amount of discrimination against learners in American schools who are sexual minorities more especially those who are gender non-conforming. Statistics by Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, and Truong (2018) in the 2017 National School Climate survey indicated that 57% of gender non-conforming learners reported that teachers and other staff constantly pass negative comments regarding gender expression and sexual orientation. Teachers according to Mollura (2017) have shown much discomfort in confronting bullying that is related to sexual orientation discrimination as opposed to issues facing other special populations such as learners with body image issues or learners living with a disability. The study revealed that "Teachers identified that they did not address bullying behaviours related to

LGBTQ issues as a result of apprehension of job loss, fear of personal discrimination, their own judgmental thinking, and because of the potentially negative reactions from parents, students, or other staff members" (Mollura, 2017, p.4).

Additionally, Kolbert, Crothers, Bundick, Wells, Buzgon, Barbary, and Senko (2015) reveal that learners do not report their incidents in fear of being victimised and the lack of attempts in teachers in trying to resolve the bullying. "56.7% of the LGBT learners consciously chose not to report incidents of bullying, aggression, verbal intimidation, and physical assault as they felt that intervention was unlikely to occur and could possibly worsen if they were reported. chose not to report the incident to school officials because they felt that interventions were unlikely to occur or that the situation could worsen if records were made of the event" (Kolbert, Crothers, Bundick, Wells, Buzgon, Barbary and Senko, 2015, p. 248).

Msibi (2012) asserts that teachers are central in spreading the idea that homosexuality is abnormal and moreover contagious, perpetuating the idea that heterosexual learners are at risk of being 'infected' by those same-sex desiring learners in South African schools. Teachers rely on the curriculum, both the covert and overt curriculum to convey messages about subject content and the world and society at large (Alsubaie, 2015). Francis (2017) alludes that the overt curriculum looks at other aspects of school besides the intentional curriculum and has a huge influence on producing changes in learners' values and beliefs whereas the covert curriculum has a huge influence on same-sex desiring learner's experiences at school. Nichols (2016) asserts that the hidden curriculum in schools plays a huge role in the violation of LGBT learner's rights to dignity and equality thus resulting in the stigmatization of learners. "When schools refuse the 'rights' of LGBT learners not to be discriminated against, it enhances both the 'hidden curriculum', in that normativity should be maintained, and the 'silence' concerning the existence of LGBT learners" (Nichols, 2016, p.21). Therefore the 'hidden curriculum helps increase the different forms of oppression in schools, schools need to be affirming spaces by embracing and providing a safe space for those learners who identify as homosexual.

The overt curriculum in schools is a structured and formal curriculum that has specific content and objectives and expected outcomes. The South African school curriculum includes teaching about gender and sexual diversity as a component in the subject Life Orientation which is a compulsory subject that aims to "empower learners to be aware of themselves, their roles in their communities, and their responsibilities as citizens" (Ngabaza, Sefer & Macleod, 2016, p.71). In a study conducted by Wilmot and Naidoo (2014) they found that Life orientation textbooks portray heteronormativity in

images and content relating to marriage, family, sex, and dating and there is often an inaccurate representation of sexual identities and gender diversity. In the studies conducted by Francis (2012, 2017) he found that teachers ignored or avoided teaching such topics when they were introduced in the classroom. "Three teachers mentioned that they would "discuss it only if the learners mentioned it or asked a question about it." The majority of the teachers struggled to articulate the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, or homosexual. Instead, they used the term "it" to refer to homosexuality and bisexuality. (Francis, 2012, p.9). The non-use and the silence around these terms contribute to making homosexual identities being deemed invisible, consequently lending legitimacy to compulsory heterosexuality. Bhana (2012) similarly states that silencing and invisibility in schools render non-heterosexuality inappropriate.

Besides the curriculum, Nzimande (2017) asserts that teachers are seen as instrumental in endorsing heteronormativity in schools as teachers carry with them subjective, stereotypical highly problematic, and homophobic knowledge about homosexuality when they come into schools. Teachers often carry with them social constructions which they learn in their societies that believe that homosexuality is un-African or unnatural resulting in these perceptions being carried into the school environment and classroom spaces. (Nzimande, 2017; Msibi, 2011). Compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity in schools are clearly depicted in a study conducted by Ngabaza, Sefer, and Catriona (2016) where a teacher was asked to reflect on learners' active sexuality in school. The teachers' response primarily referred to the maintenance of the status quo and heteronormativity in the school and it is evident that the teacher is negatively framing lesbian relationships as "This thing" repeatedly showing a high rejection of same-sex relationships and practices.

DePalma and Francis's (2014) study shows that teachers are reluctant to address content and issues relating to gender and sexuality in the classroom and the silences and hesitations around it are rooted in what those teachers understand to be cultural taboos. A participant in the study conducted by DePalma and Francis (2014) states that silence is strongly associated with cultural-religious decisions whereby it is considered to be taboo to talk about homosexuality. The function of the education system is to educate and fulfil children and young people's inherent rights as per the South African constitution in order for them to become active citizens in the democratic society. However, as reiterated above, the constitution does not necessarily relate to practice as silences and ignorance, religion, culture, the hidden curriculum, etc. reproduce unjust misconception about sexuality in schools, consciously and unconsciously promoting heteronormativity and homophobia in schools, making schools unsafe spaces for non-normative and same-sex desiring learners in South Africa.

## **2.9. Single-sex high schools and non-normative sexuality: An international and South**

### **African perspective**

Countries such as Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand have a sizeable number of single-sex schools. In other countries such as the USA and the United Kingdom, there has been a growing number of single-sex schools (Smyth, 2010). There is much paucity in educational research in discussing single-sex high schools and their relation to gender identity and sexual orientation. Secondary schools aim to provide a rich context for adolescents to socialise, among these social interactions same-sex friendships and relationships dominate adolescents' social lives (Li & Wong, 2018).

Park, Behrman, and Choi (2018); Chowdbury (2010) argue that co-educational schools can interfere with the development of girl children as teachers and peers can impose sexist attitudes on girl children; Hayes, Pahlke, Bigler (2011) contend that researchers and educators that oppose single-sex education argue that single-sex schools create more harm than good as they reduce the opportunities of opposite-sex contact as they believe that co-educational schools typically promote co-operation and tolerance across all genders, consequently reducing gender discrimination.

In the South African context, there is a paucity in scholarly research that places focus on single-sex high schools. Morrell (2000) discusses how single-sex schools have been associated with being elite for a very long time as British schools for both boys and girls were generally single-sex as a result due to South Africa being a British colony, Britain subsequently developed schools according to the British model in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historically education for girls in South Africa followed two racially distinct courses whereby education for black girls came in the form of co-educational schools and for white girls the choice of attending single-sex schools, either state or private or coeducational schools (Morrell, 2000).

Co-educational schools are assumed to ignore girl children and force them to conform and tolerate masculinist ethos resulting in girl children being disadvantaged when it came to subject choices where timetabling and teacher pressure discouraged learners from choosing traditional subjects such as sciences and maths resulting in girl children being domesticated and prepared for motherhood deleteriously affecting career opportunities (Shefer, Bhana & Morell, 2013). Moreover, schooling in co-education schools according to Shefer, Bhana, and Morell (2013) is often beset with a range of

challenges including gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy. Children who attend co-educational schools according to Morell(2000) were denied the opportunity to experiment with other forms of sexuality promoting a heteronormative culture. As a result, the factors mentioned above encourage learners to attend single-sex schools instead. Times Live (2011, November 25) reported the opinions of two principals in single-sex high schools in South Africa, the headmaster of Glenwood Boys High school in Durban KwaZulu-Natal asserts that single-sex school environments are better for some learners as there, says a single-sex environment is better for some pupils as there are fewer distractions and boy learners can develop at their own pace. Similarly, the principal of Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool located in Pretoria, says girl learners in single-sex schools "stop being the audience and become the players" (Times Live, 2011 November 25). Such statements reiterate that coeducational schools can be disadvantageous to some learners due to disruptions and not being able to reveal their potential.

Mthatyana and Vincent (2015) revealed in their study that girls who go to the all girls' school where the study was conducted state that homosexuality at the school is considered to be a norm, the construction of homosexuality and particularly lesbianism is assumed to be an experimental phase rather than a permanent identity and that after leaving the school individuals are expected to return to traditional heterosexual relationships where men are present in those environments. The study also revealed that in single-sex school environments, lesbian learners do not attempt to disrupt the normative gender binaries but instead maintain those gender binaries by assuming and performing masculinized identities rather than disrupting heteronormativity (Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015). Mthatyana and Vincent (2015) also note that homosexuality is never discussed or acknowledged in conversations relating to sexual diversity, sexual identity, and tolerance of sexual identity, there is a huge disjuncture in the way in which homosexuality is treated in the classroom and how it is treated in informal discourses and practices that circulate in learners social circles.

## **2.10. Attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards same-sex desiring learners**

LGBTQ youth continue to be targets of discrimination and harassment and much of the homophobic behaviour takes place in schools during school hours where teachers are often present (Schneider & Demito, 2008). Teacher's attitudes and how they perceive LGBT learners is often underestimated and seen as insignificant, whereas their attitudes have a critical influence and role as teachers are at the forefront of creating a safe environment for learners, more particularly for non-normative learners through creating a LGBT positive climate and by intervening when anti-LGBT discrimination occurs (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012); (Schneider & Demito, 2008).



A study conducted by Taylor and Peter (2011) in Canada revealed that 75% of LGBTQ learners asserted that teachers are the very same people who remain complicit and silent when homophobic comments and bullying is reported to them, which thus makes teachers appear to be bystanders. Remaining passive and silent about homophobic bullying that occurs in schools may not necessarily be viewed as being homophobic as the results from this study conducted by Taylor and Peter (2011) showed that teachers feel as though they are not knowledgeable enough to deal with homophobia in school hence their silence. Other teachers, are silent about LGBTQ issues as the issue is seen as a controversial issue in the schools which they teach in and therefore, teachers may run the risk of losing their jobs if they address LGBTQ discrimination issues in their schools (Schneider & Demito, 2008). On the other hand, participants in the study state that some teachers are at the centre of the homophobia that they experience as their teachers homophobic comments themselves (Taylor & Peter, 2011).

In the South African context, Bhana (2014) draws on the reality that homophobia and heterosexual dominance also pervades South African schools where the rights of gay and lesbian learners are constantly being contested and compromised as many learners nonnormative sexuality is relegated as taboo and inappropriate by teachers as well as school management. A common opinion amongst educators in a study by Mostert, Gordon and Kriegler (2015) revealed that they felt that non-normative learners should not be treated differently in school however, this opinion is problematic if homophobia within the school is not acknowledged nor addressed in the schools policies. The findings also showed that the teachers stated that there was no need for there to be policies on homosexuality and policies that seek to protect non-normative learners (Mostert et. al, 2015). The lack of consciousness regarding policy by teachers as well as the paucity in policies that seek to address issues of homophobic discrimination in schools also illustrates the subtle homophobic attitudes that still exist within schools.

Studies by Francis (2012) and Potgieter and Reygan (2012) alert us to the reality that teachers leave universities and enter the schooling environment with traditional, conservative and discriminatory notions and attitudes that are largely influenced by religion, culture, societal norms and gender stereotypes. These notions and attitudes that the teachers carry with them often lead to them inciting homophobic behaviour and homophobic attitudes in schools (Johnson, 2014). Some attitudes that teachers carry with them were revealed in a study conducted by Francis and Msibi (2011) where the teacher asserted that homosexuality is a social disease and unAfrican. Such attitudes represent the wider notions of neo-conservatism which seek to control and give rise to 'acceptable' sexual behaviour and therefore gives power and privilege to heterosexuality which leaves non-normative individuals in schools more powerless and more prone to discrimination (Francis and Msibi, 2011). Similarly to the

study conducted by Taylor and Peter (2011), teachers responses to addressing homophobia in schools is far from being proactive due to the negative attitudes that pervade many of them, moreover, the teachers were reluctant to intervene and challenge homophobia in schools as they are overwhelmed with the fear of the repercussions that would come with supporting gay and lesbian learners. Concerns about job security, support from management, censure by colleagues, however many of the teachers are ignorant about the importance of intervening and moreover ignorant about their homophobia and homophobic attitudes (Francis and Msibi, 2011; Bhana, 2014).

## **2.11. Theoretical framework: Social Constructionist Theory**

This study is guided by the understanding that people's attitudes and perceptions about same-sex desiring individuals are shaped by their daily social interaction. It is also guided by the notion that discourses of heteronormativity uphold, support and sanction heterosexuality as being normal and privileged, and is the accepted sexual orientation that has the ability to impose heteronormativity on members of society (Nichols, Brown, Diale, 2019).

The social constructionist theory is grounded in the perspective that knowledge and understanding of the world around us is a product of human thought, which depends on social interactions and agreements that create and shape what can be regarded as valid and real in a society (Burr, 1995; Segre, 2016). This means that social construction is a man-made system that is enabled through human interaction and therefore would not occur naturally or inevitably, and which may differ between people and groups.

This study draws upon the social constructionist theory as a comprehensive sociological theory that offers a way to study human beings critically. Berger and Luckmann (1966), Burr (1995), Butler (1993) and Jagose (1996) as influential scholars have provided insight into this theory. The philosophy underpinning this theory seeks to analyse the reality of everyday life, and more particularly, the knowledge that guides human conduct (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Reality is socially constructed, as Friedman (2016) asserts, that how people are brought up influences the way in which they view themselves and others, and further contends that their perceptions of reality are heavily influenced by their cultures, beliefs, backgrounds and shared assumptions. Social constructionism was therefore regarded as a useful theory to assist in analysing teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners, and how their attitudes originate from socially shared constructions and realities. The theory consist of three main principles, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), these being:

knowledge; that society exists as objective and subjective realities, and the role of language in the socialisation process.

### **2.11.1 Knowledge**

The first major principle of social construction is 'knowledge', this being better articulated as 'taken for granted knowledge', which is not a direct perception of reality but rather obtained from ongoing social interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Fisher, Knobe, Strickland and Keil (2016) argue that what we understand to be true and objective is a result of social interactions that take place in historical and cultural contexts. The knowledge that we gain through social interactions has a major influence on our lives, for example, our knowledge of sexual orientation. This knowledge often places sexuality on a continuum, with heterosexual and homosexual people at opposite ends of the spectrum (Hunt and Hunt, 2018).

The attitudes and perceptions that teachers have about same-sex desiring learners and their attitudes towards non-normative sexuality as a whole are a product of social practices (DeLamater, 1981). These differing opinions relating to sexual orientation can be witnessed in many African societies, with Whipple (2012) and Kizito (2017) providing a textual reference on there being a low social acceptance of homosexuality and a strong presence of homophobia. Many African populations are grounded in the idea that homosexuality is un-African and that homosexuality has the potential to destroy existing African values (Sandfort & Reddy, 2013; Msibi, 2011). This form of 'taken for granted knowledge' in many African societies that perceives homosexuality as inferior imposes heteronormativity as a reality, this knowledge being kept and maintained through social interactions.

### **2.11.2 Objective Reality and Subjective Reality**

The second major principle of social constructionism focuses on society and how it exists in objective and subjective realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 68). The objective reality, that results in 'habitualization'. Andrews (2012, p.40) describes habitualization as *“any action that is repeated frequently that becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort”*. Society can be regarded as a 'habit', as we are born into an existing society that already has embedded knowledge and norms. Societal roles can also be regarded as habitualization, as Koenig and Eagly (2014) define them as patterns of behaviour that are assumed by a person so that they are recognised in a society, the behaviour enacted within these roles providing each person with social status. In simple terms, 'Status' in sociology is grounded on shared beliefs about types of people and their rankings in society, and how they may benefit and be

more esteemed and respected compared to others (Ridgeway, 2014). Gender roles in society can be considered as a subjective reality, as gender is a social construct. McGinn and Oh (2017) maintain that while some roles are achieved, gender is one of those societal roles that has an ascribed status. This is in keeping with Judith Butler's Gender Performativity theory, which argues that gender is an identity that is performed through repetitious performances of 'Male' and 'Female' roles that are performed following the societal norms (Butler, 1990). Once a gender role is assumed and performed repeatedly, Butler (1990) upholds that it becomes cemented for it to be performed again, which subsequently results in it becoming a societal norm and expectation. It is then clear to understand that objective reality is reaffirmed and endorsed continuously through means of social interaction. Reality is then created, which will be the basis for social expectations in the future, in the same way that gender roles were first made a reality in order for the following generations to inherit that reality as something unalterable (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

### **2.11.3 Language and Reality**

The third principle of social constructionism is language, with Burr (2003) noting that language is a crucial part of primary socialisation, as it not only helps to express our thoughts but also influences our perception of reality, while language creates concepts and is a method of describing and structuring how reality is experienced. Kendall (2008, p.79) defines language as "*A set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another; verbal (spoken) language and nonverbal (written or gestured) language help us describe reality*". Language would then enable subjective reality to be maintained and modified through the use of concepts and symbols that are shared and maintained continuously amongst people during social interaction (Thomas & McDonagh, 2013). As a result, in the context of a school, once there is a shared and mutual understanding regarding sexuality and same-sex desiring learners by teachers, concepts no longer need to be redefined every time they are used in daily conversations, which enables subjective reality to be achieved.

Language, gender and sexuality are interdependent, the former often helping to reproduce and perpetuate already existing social inequalities, making language gender biased, heteronormative and homophobic (Van Han, 2014). The upbringing of different genders, as positioned by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999), is solely based on the belief system of that particular society, with the different behavioural patterns that are expected of both men and women when communicating and using language being largely dependent on that society's ideology and stereotypes. Those who do not

adhere to the societal rules of using language will be marked as different in society and become subjects of prejudice.

Particularly in South Africa, both Sanger (2010) and Msibi (2013) maintain that language is a powerful tool that enables societal attitudes towards issues of homosexuality to impose heteronormative ideas about gender and sexual orientation. For example, commonly in African societies, some of the negative heteronormative discourses that circulate in society about gender and sexual orientation are stereotypes that consider homosexuality as morally wrong and perceived as a contagious disease or a sickness. These heteronormative discourses are further extended into the schooling system, whereby *“words like ‘isitabane’, ‘moffie’ and ‘ongqingili’, which are all derogatory South African isiZulu and Afrikaans words with a meaning similar to ‘faggot’, were being used in schools to refer to queer-identifying learners”* (Msibi, 2013, p.523). Language, therefore, has the ability to influence perceptions of reality as a dominant group, and is able to project its subjective reality or its way of viewing reality as common and part of the objective reality, even if there are groups of other people who are disempowered by that subjective reality. This study explored whether teachers are project their subjective realities towards same-sex desiring learners as an objective reality by means of language, thus discriminating and marginalising those learners. As the study indicated, teachers' understandings and perceptions have been interrogated, which offers insight into their respective attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners.

In line with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist theory, Spengen (2014) highlights that schools are important sites that reproduce heterosexism and heteronormativity, which permeate through the formal and informal ('hidden') curriculum, which enable heteronormativity and heterosexual domination to be normative. A study conducted by Bhana (2012) highlights that the homosexuality topic in schools has been avoided by teachers and is often silenced through rigid practices that rebuke learners who 'wear their sexuality on their sleeve' or behave in a gender and sexual non-conforming way. As for the reason that schools and teachers are part of the broader social context, their taken-for-granted knowledge and subjective reality largely influence the way in which they perceive homosexual learners.

This study places much focus on teachers who work in single-sex high schools and their understanding of and response to same-sex desiring learners, being useful to understand the reasons for the multiplicity of views and perceptions. The school and the classroom environment can be seen as a setting where compulsory heterosexuality has the ability to manifest due to the normative attitudes

and beliefs that the teachers have about homosexuality and same-sex desiring learners (Khayatt, 2016). The curriculum (both formal and informal), school culture and attitudes tend to conform to gender norms, which reinforces hegemonic heterosexuality (Shin, 2019; Ruiz-Cecilia, Guijarro-Ojeda and Marín-Macías, 2021).

## **2.12. Conclusion**

This literature review focused on both local and international studies that pertain to same same-sex desiring individuals. The international context focused on the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The four countries that were focused on revealed that they are still lagging behind in terms of policies that are meant to provide legal protection to individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community in these countries. Homosexuality globally is still taboo and sexual minorities continue to be stigmatized and discriminated against in religious, cultural, and schooling settings. Colonialism and immorality laws that were imposed are also largely to be blamed for their influence on the current state. The literature also revealed that South Africa is still homophobic despite the influential democratic constitution which decriminalized homosexuality, colonialism, apartheid, prevailing patriarchy, culture, and religion are factors that cannot be divorced from the inequalities and homophobic violence that continues to persist in South Africa.

Moreover, the literature showed that schools and teachers play an instrumental role in perpetuating heteronormativity and hegemony in the school context both internationally and locally. Social and community norms seemingly play a role in how teachers perceive same-sex desiring learners, this then has a ripple effect on how the curriculum is expressed. The literature further revealed that there is much paucity in studies that focus particularly on single-sex high schools, however, the available studies present that homosexuality is common and is a norm in single-sex high schools although it is considered to be an experimental phase rather than a permanent identity.

Moreover, the social constructionist theory is a useful lens through which the phenomenon under study has been explored. Berger and Luckman (1966) and Burr (1995) have enabled an understanding of social constructionism as integral to gaining an understanding of why teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners are accepting or not. The social constructionist perspective provides a means to unpack the variegated perceptions and attitudes of teachers that may arise from their various backgrounds, age, culture and gender.

The theory is based on the premise that the participant's knowledge, objective and subjective realities and language have been influenced by culture, society and those around them. Therefore, the social

constructivist perspective attributes meaning and understanding of how and why attitudes and perceptions are developed over time within a social context (Andrews, 2011).

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology that has been used to conduct the research and address the research questions. Moreover, it will look at the research approaches that were to generate data for this study

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used to generate the data for this study. The chapter outlines and provides justification for the use of qualitative research. The research design and methodology, the paradigm and the ways in which the data was collected. The data collection, sampling, context description, ethical considerations, validity and trustworthiness and data analysis, reflexivity and limitations are discussed in this chapter.

*Table 3.1 Study objectives and methods*

Objectives		Methods
1.	To explore teachers' <b>perceptions and attitudes</b> towards same-sex desiring learners.	a. Photo-elicitation b. Semi-structured interviews c. Observations
2.	To gain a deeper understanding of how teachers who have same-sex desiring learners in their classes <b>navigate their teaching</b> ,	
3.	To understand the <b>strategies that teachers use</b> to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom.	

### 3.2. Research Design

In order for research to be carried out successfully, a suitable research design is required, this being a plan that is adopted by the researcher before data is collected in order to achieve the research objectives. Moreover, the research design links the research questions to the conclusions that are drawn from the conclusion through the steps that are undertaken during data collection and data analysis and should address the research questions. This study employed a qualitative approach as a means to explore the teachers understanding of and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in the context of an urban single-sex high school. A qualitative approach, according to Creswell (2014), provides means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals as well as groups attribute to a social problem. The qualitative approach gives the researcher a unique depth of understanding regarding each participant that is difficult to acquire using quantitative research methods. In addition, the participants are able to disclose their thoughts, feelings and experiences using a conversational technique in a way that allowed their voices to be taken seriously.



The qualitative approach was appropriate as it allowed for emerging questions and multiple perspectives, understandings and experiences to be revealed in the data, as each person had an understanding from their own perspective, making the research subjective, drawing on social realities (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Qualitative research, according to Hancock and Ockleford (2007) and Krauss (2005), has the unique task of understanding meaning and facilitating the meaning-making process, as it focuses on developing explanations about social phenomenon, participants subjective reality, culture, norms, beliefs, understandings, perspectives and stereotypes. Therefore, qualitative research aims to understand the world in which people live in and why things are the way they are. An inductive approach was applied as it explores meanings and gives insights into a given situation by using a range of techniques that aim to understand why people think, feel, react as well as behave in the ways that they do, the approach further seeking to understand how opinions and attitudes are formed (Mohajan, 2018).

Qualitative research is open ended as it can be adapted and changed throughout the research process, which helps to enhance the quality of the data as well as the insights that have been generated during the research. This approach was used as it enabled the researcher to represent the uniqueness of each participant, and their perceptions and attitudes towards the same-sex desiring learners in the single-sex school in which they teach. Qualitative research is context bound, with each study being a dynamic entity that is embedded in its context, which means that this study's findings cannot be generalized to other single-sex high schools (Elmusharaf, 2012).

An exploratory case study was used as a qualitative method as it focuses on describing process(es), individual or group behaviour in their setting, it has no formulated hypothesis but general expectations guide the research and helps to advance a field's body of knowledge (Ponelis, 2015). An exploratory case study was relevant to use for this study as the study aimed to understand the participants perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in a single-sex school setting which in turn can influence their behaviour in the school setting. The exploratory case study was useful for the study as it enabled the research to explore any phenomenon that served as point of interest to the research and enabled the researcher to ask questions such as, 'what?', 'why?' and 'how?' which opens up the door for further research in the same phenomenon and grows the school of knowledge. An exploratory case study enabled the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding of the existing problem within the school which was the seemingly covert negative perceptions and attitudes that the teachers had towards same-sex desiring learners.

### **3.2.1. Paradigm**

A paradigm is important when research is being undertaken as it provides an analytical lens from which to understand the human experience. A paradigm consists of theoretical ideas that certain groups adopt, and is defined as a way of describing a particular world view, which is the perspective or school of thought that informs the interpretation of the data (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, which places an emphasis on understanding individuals as well as their interpretation of the world around them. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) reject the notions that only a single reality exists in interpretivism, instead, interpretivists believe in multiple socially constructed truths and realities that are created rather than discovered. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm attempts to understand the social reality that is being observed rather than the point of view of the observer, hence the core tenet of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

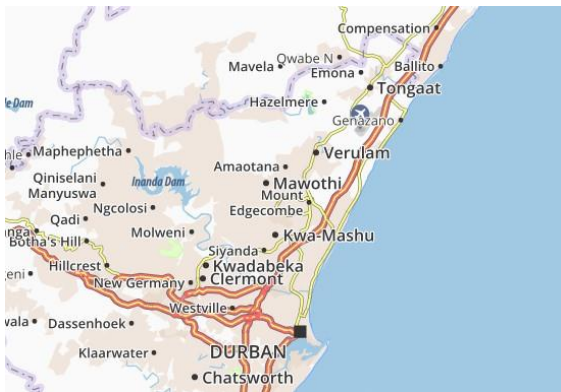
Using the interpretivist paradigm seemed appropriate to answer the research question, as the paradigm tries to comprehend why participants think and behave the way they do. As this study explores teacher's understanding of and attitudes towards learners who are same-sex desiring, the interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the teachers' holistic social world as well as their subjective perceptions using their responses. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the social world is constructed by people, is fluid and constantly changing over time.

### **3.2.2. School Context**

The research site was a single-sex high school situated in a predominantly white community in an urban middle-class area in the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province. The school consists of multi-racial teachers and learners, being categorized as White, African, Indian and Coloured. The teachers are from different social contexts and varying class backgrounds, and subscribe to different religions and cultures, thus creating multiple and variegated responses.

The motive behind choosing this particular school as the research site is twofold: The first being that I am a teacher at the school for two years, as well as having been a former learner at the same school and matriculated in 2014. The second reason was because it was convenient to conduct my research at a school I am teaching at due to time and availability constraints. It was slightly easier to make time during the day to conduct the interviews with the teachers because we were all on site.

Of the schools 57 teachers, 15 were males and 42 were females, while 40% were African, 12% Indian, 3% Coloured and 45% White. The school does not subscribe to any particular religion but included Christian prayers that were said during special assemblies and events.



*Figure 3.1. Map of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal*

### **3.2.3. Sampling**

Purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to collect data. Purposive sampling, according to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), is a non-random technique that requires no underlying theory or a particular number of participants, with the researcher deciding what needs to be known and finding people who would be willing to provide the information by virtue of their knowledge or experience. Moreover, purposive sampling requires the deliberate choice of participants due to certain qualities that they possess. The participants in this study were purposively sampled and the criteria that they needed to meet was to be a teacher in a single-sex high school, irrespective of any other qualities such as race, class or gender.

Convenience sampling is a type of sampling where members of the target population meet a particular criterion such as easy accessibility, availability or willingness to participate and the population being easily accessible to the research (Farokhi & Hambibadad, 2012). Convenience sampling is also explained by Taherdoost (2016) as a method that is adopted by many researchers that relies on selecting a pool of participants that are willing to communicate in an expressive and reflective manner. Convenience sampling helps to address the limitations associated with collecting data by using people who are conveniently available as part of the sample, which is far easier than targeting unknown individuals (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Convenience sampling was used as the second sampling method as the study was conducted at the single-sex high school at which I am an educator, making it easier and convenient for me to conduct the research where participants were easily available, had

the necessary experience and were willing to speak about their perceptions regarding same-sex desiring learners

My initial intention was to conduct this study at four single-sex high schools, however, due to the sensitive nature of the study, I was unable to obtain gatekeepers consent from the relevant stakeholders at the other three schools, which resulted in the study being conducted at one school. My intended sample size was 20 participants however, I was only able to secure 17 participants due to participants withdrawing from the study after I had begun. A few days after an interview had been conducted one participant indicated that she no longer wanted to participate and withdrew. Two other participants who had initially agreed to participate were unavailable to participate, and I then decided to work with the 17 participants, as there is no exact or precise sample size in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011). My main focus was to gather rich data from the sample that I had and would enable me to collect the requisite rich data. In order to generate diverse and intersectional data, I interviewed teachers of different races, genders, ages, economic class, religions, cultural backgrounds as well as various levels of teaching experience, from novices to those who had been teaching for many years. Out of the 17 participants, six were male and 11 were female.

### **3.3. Data Collection methods**

Three data collection methods were used for this study, these being photo-elicitation, semi-structured interviews and observations. A pilot study was conducted with one teacher in the school using the images for photo-elicitation and the semi-structured interviews, the participant and the interview was however not included in the final study. The pilot interview was done for the purpose of pre-testing the interview guide to see if the questions needed to be amended in a way that the participants would easily understand it and to ensure that the interview questions would yield the results that would address the research questions.

#### **A) Photo Elicitation**

This research used photo elicitation as the first method to obtain data, with images being used to generate and stimulate verbal discussion and create knowledge and understanding about the participants' insights into what occurs in their world (Thomas, 2009). Photo elicitation, according to Glaw, Inder, Kable and Hazelton (2017), is an important data collecting technique as it involves using multiple visual images in an interview and requires the participant to comment on them. The images shown have the potential to evoke feelings and memories that

draws out different kinds of information, and have the potential to create intense and interesting conversation. Photo-elicitation was used at the beginning of the interview and as a method to build rapport with the participants. The intention being to elicit their responses regarding their perceptions and attitudes about same-sex desiring individuals. The images can provide useful stimuli for participants who are unaccustomed to the interview process (Torre & Murphy, 2015). Six coloured images were used to stimulate the discussion, with these images being presented in *Appendix F*. The images were selected according to their relevance to the research focus and research questions and particularly to prompt and probe participants.

*Photo 1. Thoughts about boys and girls*

The photo was based on differing opinions about boys and girls and what appropriate behaviour should be. This photo was linked to the first objective which intended to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. This photo was meant to evoke the existing gender stereotypes that the participants may, or may not have about the learners they teach.

*Photo 2. Image of a boy wearing a dress*

This photo was a picture of a young boy who is wearing a dress. This image was also linked to the first objective which was to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. This image aimed to probe the participants thoughts about sexual orientation and the possible stereotypes that they may be carrying with them regarding sexual orientation.

*Photo 3. LGBTQIA+ Flag*

The LGBTQIA+ flag was used as a way to explore the participants understanding about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual community and was linked to addressing all three objectives which were 1) to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners 2) To gain a deeper understanding of how teachers who have same-sex desiring learners in their classes navigate their teaching 3) To understand the strategies that the teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom. The photo was used to prompt and probe the participants attitudes regarding same-sex desiring individuals, how the participants navigate their teaching with same-sex desiring learners and what methods they use in and outside the class to include or exclude the same-sex desiring learners in their lesson

*Photo 4. South Africa: Suspended lesbian learners back at school*

The photo was based on an article in Phambuzuka News where lesbian learners in Port Shepstone were suspended because of their sexual orientation. The photo was linked closely to all three of the studies objectives but mainly the third objective which was the inclusion or exclusion of learners inside and outside the classroom. The article was also used as a way to gain an understanding about the teachers thoughts about whether it was right or wrong for the lesbian learners to be excluded from school because of their sexual orientation.

*Photo 5. Desmond Tutu's daughter leaves clergy after marrying female partner*

The photo was based on a newspaper article regarding a Priest Mpho Tutu-Van Furth, the daughter of renowned Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu and her marriage to a woman. This photo was linked to objective one, which aimed at understanding the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring individuals and how religion influences their attitudes.

*Photo 6. Somizi & Mohale's Wedding*

This photo was also based on a newspaper article showing the newly married Somizi Mhlongo a popular TV presenter and celebrity to Mohale Motaung, a male. This photo was used to explore the first objective which aimed to understand the teachers' perceptions and attitudes about same-sex desiring individuals and what they think about same-sex desiring relationships which culminate in marriage.

## **B) Semi-structured Individual Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted once the photo-elicitation had been completed to obtain qualitative data using a prepared set of questions in order to provide a deeper understanding of the social phenomena of interest (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Qualitative research uses interviews as a way to explore and understand the research phenomena. According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), semistructured interviews are designed in such a way that they establish subjective responses from people regarding a particular situation or phenomenon, and do this by using an interview schedule that may be used when there is enough objective knowledge about a phenomenon but a lack of subjective knowledge. In other words, semi-structured interviews are flexible and enable participants to express how they view their situations from their point of view (Cohen et al., 2013). Semi-structured

interviews were used as a means to gain a thorough and detailed picture of the participants' understanding of and response to the phenomena under investigation. They entailed face-to-face interaction between myself and the participants, allowing me access to their thoughts and comments. Considering that I am a colleague, which could have prevented them from expressing their true thoughts and beliefs, using an interview schedule helped, as the questions were phrased in such a way that I was able to ask additional questions to clarify their responses. Moreover, the questions asked in the semi-structured were closely linked to the photoelicitation images and the responses in the interview were meant to support what was said in the photo-elicitation.

The 30 questions related to the three objectives as follows *Appendix F*:

**Demographic details:** Participants age, gender, ethnicity, religion, years of teaching experience. (3 questions)

**Objective 1:** The teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners

**Objective 2:** How teachers who have same-sex desiring learners navigate their teaching

**Objective 3:** Strategies that teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners

Prompting and probing questions were asked following the semi-structured questions to elicit further comments from the participants, depending on their responses, often being different for each participant. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis.

### **C) Observations**

The observations entailed observing the participants' general body language, as well as facial expressions and how they interacted with the images. This entailed making a careful note during the session and recording that once they had departed. Where possible notes were made during the interviews, but this was not always possible. During the interview, in photo elicitation, the researcher is able to observe the many emotions as well as verbal and non-verbal gestures that may arise when the participants discuss their meanings of the photographs (Torre & Murphy,

2015). I took up a facilitative role, and guided the interview with prompts and probes to help stimulate the discussion (Haultain, 2013).

### **3.4 Data collection process**

After I was granted permission by the school principal to interview teachers at the school, I approached the 20 teachers who had been purposefully selected who were willing to participate in the study. I then gave them the informed consent letters to read, sign and return before I conducted the interviews. All 20 teachers returned the signed consent letters *Appendix E* and I was able to begin the interviews.

One of the many challenges that I experienced at the time of my fieldwork was that in term three it is the Grade 12 trial examinations and many teachers, including myself, were multitasking invigilation, marking Grade 12 trial examinations as well as teaching Grade 8 to 11. In addition, due to the challenges of COVID-19 and the reasons mentioned above, it affected the availability and willingness of the teachers at the time when I needed to interview them. I was compelled to put the research on hold until term four. After returning to school in term four, I approached each of the teachers individually and scheduled an interview at a time that was most convenient for them. This was a huge challenge, as most of the teachers were only available at a time when I was teaching, which then caused further delays in the data collection process. I managed to interview only eight teachers before the final examinations started in November. The remaining 12 participants were interviewed in between the final examination invigilation and marking. I then managed to successfully interview 10 participants during their available times when final exams had commenced. The remaining two participants expressed that they were under pressure and that they would contact me when they were ready to be interviewed. I followed up a few days afterwards, and still they continued to make many excuses, which resulted in me taking the decision to not interview them. One interview was conducted with each participant, both the photo-elicitation and semi-structured interview was conducted in one session. Interview times with the participants ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

I had initially requested permission from the school management to utilize the school's boardroom to conduct the interviews. I conducted the first interview in that venue and realized that it did not provide the participant the privacy that they deserved, as the administrative staff knew why the boardroom was being used. The interviews were then scheduled to be conducted in my classroom, and I conducted one interview in my classroom. However, when asking the teachers where they preferred to be interviewed, the majority stated that they would like to remain in their classrooms. The remaining 16 interviews were therefore conducted in the participants classrooms. COVID-19 protocols were



observed throughout the 20 interviews where myself and the participants kept a safe one and a half metre distance from each other, and hands and surfaces were sanitized before and after the interview. In addition, face masks and face shields were worn throughout the interviews.

Another challenge that I experienced was the fact that I had to reschedule four interviews during the data collection process as two of my participants tested positive for COVID-19 a few days before the scheduled interview and the other two were in close contact with other people who had tested positive for COVID-19. This further delayed the interview process as I could not continue with the interviews because the teachers were not at school. Thereafter, I had to wait for the teachers to test for COVID-19 again before returning to school. Upon returning they had to attend to backlogs at work before I could approach them to continue with the interviews.

#### **3.4.1. Photo-elicitation**

The face-to-face interviews began with me providing the participants with an overview of the study, what would be required of them and obtaining their consent to audio record the sessions to ensure accurate data capture. When interviews began, I sat opposite the participants to enable the images to be displayed between us, and the data recorder was switched on. The images were presented one at a time in a specific order, and the participant was asked to comment on the image, what they thought about the image and what the image represented to them. Where they had difficulty expressing their thoughts, I provided prompts to help them to clarify and verbalise their opinions. The photo elicitation took approximately 10 to 15 minutes, although the times varied with each participant. Despite numerous attempts to get the teachers to discuss and share their points of view regarding what they saw in the pictures they were very reluctant to speak openly. In both interview situations, I gathered similar information regarding their social settings and upbringing however, the data obtained during the photo elicitation interviews was reinforced by what was discussed in the semi-structured interviews. There was very little engagement during the photo-elicitation part of the interviews.

#### **3.4.2. Semi-structured individual interviews**

Individual interviews were conducted over a period of three months. I managed to conduct 18 face to face semi-structured individual interviews, however, one of the participants withdrew from the study two days after we had conducted the interview. The participant called me to her classroom and expressed that she had changed her mind and felt that the study did not align with

her beliefs. Due to the fact that I had told the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time, I had to respect her decision, which then left me with 17 completed individual interviews. All the data pertaining to the participant who had withdrawn was destroyed immediately and not used in the study. I decided to not look for anymore participants as I was under time pressure and the academic year had drawn to an end, resulting in me not having access to any new participants for almost two months. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes

Three participants were first language isiZulu speakers and they requested me to conduct their interviews in isiZulu. I agreed because I wanted them to speak freely and openly regarding their perceptions and attitudes. Due to the code-switching the translation of the isiZulu to English interviews took place after the audio to textual transcriptions were done those transcripts were translated to English.

### **3.4.3. Observations**

Throughout the interviews, I had a notepad where one or more pages were dedicated to each participant where during and after the interviews I recorded my observations regarding the interview and the participants body language and non-verbal gestures. These observations were used with the interview transcripts when analysing the data.

I noted that the majority of the participants found it difficult to speak about same-sex desiring individuals and non-normative sexualities and it was evident via their body language, non-verbal gestures, and hesitations that they were apprehensive and uncomfortable speaking about non-normative sexualities. Their facial expressions often changed before answering the questions, with the many pauses in the responses revealing that they were trying to be cautious when responding to the questions. There were times when the participants were able to look at me directly in the eyes when responding and other times when they were unable to. There was much hesitance and uncertainty when answering the questions, and I therefore had to constantly probe in order to get more information from them.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data is regarded as subjective and consists of information that is presented in words. Data analysis in qualitative research is defined by Archer (2018) as a tool that is employed by researchers to be able to make sense of large quantities of data, namely interview transcripts, observation notes or other non-textual material in order for it to be presented in a systematic manner to readers to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. Archer (2018) and Harding (2018) further explain data analysis as being based on a fundamental principle of identifying common themes or patterns by breaking down data into smaller components and restructuring those components into themes. The analysis of qualitative data therefore involves making sense of it from the perspective of the participants, arranging and categorising it and reducing large amounts by identifying patterns and themes, as well as drawing meaning from the data to build a logical chain of evidence that either support or refute the findings of the study (Akinyode & Khan, 2018).

The data for this study was analysed using thematic analysis, according to (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p.) thematic analysis is “the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data”. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts, which requires the researcher to closely examine the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Braun and Clark (2006) state that there are two levels of themes, namely, semantic themes and latent themes. Semantic themes look at the surface meanings of the data and does not look for anything beyond what the participant has said and latent themes look at the data beyond what has been said and seeks to identify or examine underlying ideas or assumptions (Braun and Clark, 2006).

In this study I followed the six-phased thematic analysis process by Braun and Clark (2006) in order for me to be able to analyse the data thematically, (1) Becoming familiar with the data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes (4) Reviewing themes (5) Defining themes (6) Writing up analysis.

#### **3.5.1 Becoming familiar with the data**

The first step of analysing the data thematically was that I familiarised myself with the data by listening to each interview multiple times after I had completed the interviews. I connected the audios through the Bluetooth in my car and listened to each individual interview when travelling to work and back, and during my free time at work and at home before I went on to transcribe the

interviews. Once I had listened to all the interviews, I then transcribed them verbatim from audio to textual data. This was a strenuous task as the interviews were long and I had to listen to each one more than once after transcribing as the recordings were sometimes not clear and I had to ensure that I had transcribed correctly.

Thereafter, I re-read each textual interview repeatedly and familiarised myself with the contents of the data and began to make notes regarding my early impressions of the data. When reading the textual data, I read the interview based on the photo-elicitation and then I went on to read the interview that was responding to the semi-structured questions and began to jot down common themes that came out of both the interviews alongside with the observation commentary done after each interview on a separate analysis sheet. I repeated this process for all 17 transcripts.

I then sent them to my participants via emails and asked them to check their interviews to ensure that I had captured them correctly. Out of the 17 participants only five responded and agreed to check, as four of them did not have access to emails and the remaining participants did not respond to my messages. I had to send the document via the aforementioned applications as I did not have physical access to the participants as it was the December holidays and teachers were not working. I wanted to complete the checking of transcripts before mid-January, which was when I would return to work in the new year.

### **3.5.2 Generating initial codes**

Once the participants had checked the transcripts, I printed all 17 transcriptions and created a folder for each participant and I began with the second step of analysing the data. I generated codes that came from each individual interview with the photo-elicitation, semistructured interview as well as the observation. By generating codes for each transcript enabled me to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way and reduced the large load of data to smaller amounts that had meaning and were linked closely to answering the research questions and objectives. Upon working with each transcript, I coded each segment of the transcript that was relevant and addressed the research questions and objectives by coding semantically by highlighting key words and phrases and using colour coded sticky notes for the different codes on the hard copies of the transcripts.

### **3.5.3. Searching for themes**

Once the codes had been generated I began to search for patterns that emerged in the codes, these patterns were significant issues that arose that sought to answer the research questions. A theme according to Braun and Clarke (2012) captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question. Therefore, taking this into consideration I referred to the three research questions to look specifically for codes that addressed a research questions that could be collated into a broader theme. This process was then repeated until I had 15 preliminary themes that addressed the research questions.

### **3.5.4. Reviewing themes**

After I had developed the 15 preliminary themes, I reviewed and modified the themes by looking at whether the themes made sense, were relevant and whether the data supported the themes. I also had to ensure that the themes were coherent, and where themes overlapped, I then separated the overlapping themes by creating sub-themes if more themes emerged within the larger themes. I also removed themes that I felt would not be useful in addressing the research questions.

### **3.5.5 Defining themes**

This step was done as a method to refine the themes that had been developed and what each of the themes meant and what they were about. This step also helped to look at how the themes related to each other and if there are sub-themes, how the sub-themes relate to the main theme. Most importantly, I also explored the themes in relation to the data and looked at whether the theme gave me information about my data and answered my research questions and if there was sufficient data to support each theme.

### **3.5.6 Writing up analysis**

When writing up the analysis, the data that was related to the themes was transformed and discussed in great detail so as to provide a vivid piece of writing. In this step, each theme was addressed and was discussed and examples and extracts from the data were provided as evidence to support the theme. Moreover, I looked for literature in Chapter two and other existing literature which would either refute or support the findings. The theoretical framework was used to analyse and discuss the data.. Clarke and Braun (2013) assert that the writing of the analysis should tell a

coherent story about the data in relation to the existing data. In chapter 4, extracts have been included to illuminate the participants' perceptions and attitudes.

### **A) Photo-elicitation analysis**

The type of photo-elicitation conducted in this study was researcher-driven as I as the researcher provided the photos for the interview and the images were used as stimuli to promote discussion (Bates, Joseph, McCann Kaye & Taylor, 2017). The data that was collected for the photo-elicitation was also analysed using thematic analysis on a latent level. The reason for analysing the data on a latent level is because the study is premised within the social constructionist theory and the interpretivist paradigm. Therefore it is important to delve deep in exploring and identifying the underlying perceptions and attitudes regarding issues that have an influence on same-sex desiring individuals and more particularly learners. Moreover, when analysing the images, I ensured that I revisited the notepad where I had made important notes regarding the participants' nonverbal gestures and body language in the case that their actions were not captured well in text. In addition, I ensured that nothing was lost in meaning of the participants' words when converting from audio to textual data as I had listened to the audio recording several times, even after transcribing, I listened to the audio recording alongside reading the textual data.

### **B) Analysis of Semi-structured individual interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis as described above. Each interview was analysed individually. After listening to the audio recording and transcribing the audio recording verbatim, I read the semi-structured interviews alongside the photo-elicitation responses several times and thereafter I began to generate codes for each semi-structured interview. After generating codes for each interview I then began to look for common themes among all the interviews and I thereafter developed themes of similar issues that arose in each interview that sought to answer the interview questions.

After transcribing the photo-elicitation and the semi-structured interview. I reviewed the responses for the photo-elicitation first before reading the responses for the semi-structured interview for each participant. I generated codes for the photo-elicitation responses by looking at whether the responses answer the research questions. I only developed themes after reviewing the individual

semi-structured interview responses, this was done in order to draw comparisons and differences between the photo-elicitation responses and the semistructured interview responses for each individual interview.

### **C) Observation analysis**

The observations were conducted during and after each individual interview, where I wrote down notes about the participants` behaviour, non-verbal gestures and body language throughout the interviews.

Although the observation notes were developed to support the photo-elicitation and the semi-structured interviews, however, content analysis was utilised to analyse the observation notes that had been made about each interview. Content analysis according to Erlingsson & Brysiewicz (2017) is a research tool that is used to determine the presence of concepts, themes, or words that developed during the interviews. When analysing I identified communication trends of each individual, for example, silences, hesitations, body language, language and used that to describe the patterns in the participants attitude and behavioural responses when answering questions by reading the observation notes for each individual interview. Thereafter I looked at whether the communication trends were common amongst each of the participants and wrote an individual analysis where relevant in the data analysis when I extracted data from the textual data.

Once I had analysed each transcript and I had generated themes from the data, I integrated the results from the three data sets photo-elicitation, semi-structured interview and observations using triangulation. Triangulation is defined by (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, Neville, 2014, p.545) as “multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research that help to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena it also tests validity through the convergence of information from different sources”. I analysed each individual interview by looking at the themes that emerged from each interview from the photo-elicitation responses, the same was done for the semi-structured interviews and observations to ensure that they corroborated each other thereafter I looked at whether the conclusions from each of the methods were similar or the same. Upon analysing using triangulation, I found inconsistencies and contradictions in some responses. Often what had been said in the photo-elicitation response differed in some way from the semi-structured interview.

### **3.6. Data Storage**

The interview transcripts for this study are being kept in a locked cupboard for five years after which both the transcriptions and recordings are destroyed. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to them. The audio-recordings, which can be classified as the raw data, will be stored in electronic files with the interviewees pseudonym in a password protected drive that the researcher and supervisor will have access to. The storage of the data will be done to avoid the data being accessed by other people.

### **3.7. Validity**

Validating data, according to Leung (2015), helps to ensure the appropriateness of the research tools and design, methodology, sampling and data analysis for the sample and context. There are three common threats to validity in qualitative research, namely researcher bias, reactivity and participant bias (Cypress, 2017, p.256). The most important way to achieve validity in research is to minimize research bias as much as possible. Cypress (2017) refers to research bias as any form of negative influence of the researcher's knowledge, assumptions, opinions and attitudes, as well the tendency to seek interpretations that may support preconceived notions. Researchers often bring their own experiences with them into the interview situation, often unconsciously, which can be regarded as research bias. Due to the fact that interviews are interpersonal it is often inevitable that bias may come into play in some part of the data generation (Olteanu, Castillo, Diaz & Kiciman, 2019).

In order to ensure validity, I tried very hard remove my own biases by firstly acknowledging the value of observing research ethics.. Moreover, to ensure validity in the study, I accurately transcribed the data. Once I had conducted the first interview and I transcribed it and shared the transcription with my supervisor, who was able to identify if there were any biases in the interview and if my questions were not leading the participant in any direction. I further sent each participant their own transcript to verify if I had captured them correctly during the interview.

I ensured that while conducting all the interviews I was mindful of my own body language and any reactions that could have influenced the participants' responses. I had to be nonjudgmental throughout all the interviews by listening and not appearing to be shocked or concerned when talking to the participants. Moreover, I had to place my own views asides and not be distracted by my personal thoughts and feelings, which assisted the participants to feel heard and valued. According to Cypress



(2017), reactivity is any influence that the researcher has on the participants. I ensured that I did not ask leading questions that could influence the participants response that could lead to the ‘Hawthorne effect’. This effect is defined by Oswald, Sherratt and Smith (2014, p.53) “*as a change in the participants normal behaviour that can be attributed to the knowledge that their behaviour is being watched or studied*”. The Hawthorne effect leads to participants not providing honest responses because they perceive the topic to be a possible threat, or because they want to please the researcher with responses that they believe are desirable. I contend that many participants were seeking to provide responses that they believed were desirable throughout the study, given that they knew about the study. To ensure validity and reduce the Hawthorne effect, I phrased the questions in such a way that the participants could speak freely and express their true attitudes openly. I emphasized to the participants repeatedly that there was no right or wrong answer, which helped them to provide accurate and truthful answers with reduced bias of wanting to provide desirable answers.

Once I had conducted the photo elicitation interview I then conducted the second interview, which was the semi-structured and gave me a further opportunity to probe any statements that emerged in the initial interview. The usage of two data collection methods revealed inconsistencies and contradictions with many of the participants as in some instances the responses to the same question in the photo-elicitation interview did not align with their response in the semi-structured interviews, thus showing the contradictory nature of human beings.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of a study and data is essential as the quality as well as the validity of the study need to be ensured. (Connelly, 2016, p.435) refers to trustworthiness as “*the degree of confidence that a researcher has in their data, interpretation as well as the methods that were used to ensure the quality of the study*”. I built trust with the participants in the study by reaching out and engaging with them at the onset of the study before conducting the interviews, this gave them an opportunity to raise any concerns with the regards to the study and the research design. Being a teacher in the same school I already know many of them, but decided to get to know them better in order to be more informed about how to best communicate with them individually about this sensitive topic. As the participants all come from different social and cultural contexts, I had to ensure that I understood their expectations in terms of communication before conducting the interviews by asking questions about their fears and feelings about the research topic. Trustworthiness was also built by ensuring that the participants understood the study and their role in the study as respondents, for which I went through the informed consent form with each one at length to ensure that they had clarity. I constantly assured the

participants that everything that we discussed would remain between us, and that pseudonyms would be given to each person. When in pursuit of a trustworthy study the following criteria should be considered: dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability (Kennedy-Clark, 2012).

#### **a. Dependability**

Dependability is the extent to which the results would be very similar if the study was repeated by someone else using the same methods on the same group of people (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, Connelly (2016) explains that dependability also refers to the reliability of the findings, and the degree to which the research procedure and protocol are documented to enable someone outside the research to follow and audit the process. Dependability in this research was ensured by providing detailed information regarding the research design and data collection methods, processes and analysis used to document that appropriate research practices were utilised. In addition, I also wrote a section on so as to declare any biases and to reflect on my own position as a teacher and gender activist. Dependability in its entirety aims to provide truthful data, with the use of audio recordings and notes taken during the interview.

#### **b. Credibility**

Researchers ensure credibility when they impart evidence that demonstrates that the study has researched what the study had initially intended to investigate (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). Therefore, credibility can be confirmed if the results of the research mirrors the views of the participants who were included. One of the main methods that was used that ensured the credibility of this study was by establishing comfortable interactions with the participants and building rapport prior to as well as during the interviews.

Owing to the fact that the study was conducted in the school in which I teach, and that the participants were colleagues whom I worked with, it was important for me to create a safe environment that made them feel comfortable, which I did by providing them with a letter that summarised the study in layman's term when I interviewed each person. This was done as a way to inform them about what they could expect, what the interview was about and why it was such an important issue. Moreover, every individual who was contacted was given an opportunity to decline or accept the invitation to participate, this being done to make certain that the study included those who were willing and prepared to take part and offer information openly. Mutual trust was created by ensuring and emphasizing that confidentiality and

anonymity would be ensured. Trust was also maintained by asking them to review their transcribed interviews, this being done to enable them to verify their statements and to see if there were no misinterpretations of their input.

### **c. Transferability**

Transferability is a process in research where the researcher provides detailed information, and the readers note those details and use the results to determine if they could be applicable to another environment or situation that they are familiar with. Should the reader deduce that the results are very similar, they would then ‘transfer’ the study to another context. The results for this study were not meant to be generalised, however, the findings are transferable to similar contexts. In this study, transferability was achieved by explaining the purpose of the study to all 17 participants to ensure that all the findings could be transferred to other environments and contexts.

### **d. Confirmability**

Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs (2014) explain conformability as interpretations and findings that are completely free from any biases, which ensures and communicates to the reader that the findings are solely based on and reflective of the information that was collected from the participants, and not interpretations or the subjectivity of the researcher. The supervisor of this study ensured confirmability by interrogating the data and findings, while data triangulation ensured trustworthiness of this study.

## **3.9. Ethical considerations**

Maintaining appropriate ethical practices was importance in this research (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018) due to the sensitive nature of the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal from the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, as outlined in the ethical regulations of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Approval letter No. HSSREC/00001888/2020) (*Appendix A*).

Thereafter, the following ethical considerations were observed:

- A letter of permission was provided by the school principal to conduct the study in the school. (*Appendix C*)

- A letter outlining the study was given to each participant to enable them to think about whether or not they wanted to participate in the study in which the purpose of the study was explained in a transparent and accessible manner. I also outlined the possible discomfort of the research and advised that they could withdraw at any point should they wished to do so. I also advised the participants that they were not compelled to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with. (*Appendix D*)
- Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form before conducting the interview and were given a copy for their record. Receiving informed consent is an important part of the study as it confirms that the participants are aware of the nature of the research and that they understand what is expected of them (Nijhawan, Janodia, Muddukrishna, Bhat, Bairy, Udupa, & Musmade, 2013) (*Appendix E*). Permission to record the interviews was also obtained from the participants before starting the interviews.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were emphasised both before and during the interviews to reassure them that no one other than the researcher would know what their responses had been, and that they would be allocated pseudonyms once their interviews were transcribed for use thereafter. Confidentiality and anonymity are ethical practices that are a way to protect the privacy of the individuals who participate (Allen, 2017).
- Participants were told that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time and they were also told that they did not have to answer any questions that they were not comfortable with.

### 3.9 Reflexivity

The research site for this study was at the school where I am a former learner and I am now an educator. It was a sometimes a challenge because as a former learner I felt apprehensive about speaking about such a sensitive issue with my former teachers, and I underestimated how difficult and challenging it would be. However, I felt comfortable knowing that I was interviewing some of my contemporaries who I was familiar with. I saw the need to conduct the research at the school because I observed subtle prejudice amongst the teachers towards same-sex desiring learners.

As a 25-year-old Black African woman, who is a gender activist, my determination and enthusiasm were sometimes affected, as gaining access to my participants space and genuine thoughts was difficult due to my being a novice teacher in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching. I lacked confidence and I was fearful and anxious in my ability to conduct the study.

As an educator in this school and because I knew some of the teachers well, it was challenging to sanitise my preconceptions that I had about some of these teachers' attitudes. I also thought that I understood and was familiar with my 17 participants to a certain extent because of the rapport that I had built with them over the two years. Through observing and having had informal conversations with my colleagues, I had an idea of what their attitudes and perceptions were regarding non-normative sexualities, yet their responses were not consistent with what I knew about them. From the informal conversations that I had with several participants they revealed that many teachers had negative attitudes regarding same-sex desiring people. From observing the participants, it was apparent that their attitudes and perceptions were not entirely consistent with what they had said in their interviews. However, my own preconceived notions about what I knew had to be removed in order for me to remain true to the data collected.

As a gender activist, who has studied gender and education at Postgraduate level, I found it challenging to listen to the sexist and homophobic comments made by the participants about non-normative sexualities and the same-sex desiring learners whom they interact with and teach on a day-to-day basis. I found it even more disconcerting that not all teachers are sensitive to learners who are same-sex desiring. I came to understand the challenges that the same-sex desiring learners face on a daily basis in school but also had to consider the teachers' backgrounds and how their ages, cultures and religious beliefs impacted upon their constructions.

### **3.11. Limitations**

The results may have been affected by a number of limitations.

- The study was conducted at a single-sex schools, making it very difficult to find relevant literature to support or refute the study both locally and internationally.
- Time was a major limitation and constraint as this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a considerable impact on the schooling system and the availability of teachers. Teachers were under immense pressure to complete the syllabus, and the times that they were available for interviewing were often difficult for me as I was teaching, making the data collection process a difficult one.
- Some participants contracted COVID-19, which resulted in them being away from school for more than two weeks and delayed their interviews with them until they returned.

- The nature of the study resulted in some teachers not being willing to participate due to their disapproval of same-sex relationships. I therefore had to assure the teachers who did agree to participate that confidentiality would be upheld at all times and that a pseudonym would be used in place of their real names to protect their identities.
- As a teacher in the same school where I was conducting the study, I have interacted with the participants and they were fully aware that I was a gender activist and am knowledgeable about issues of gender and sexuality. It is possible that the Hawthorne effect could have affected the study, as the participants' fear of judgement may have resulted in them being too eager to respond in a desirable manner or in a manner that they believed would be better accepted by me, particularly as the study was controversial. My position of power as a knowledgeable person pertaining to gender issues could have affected the responses from the participants.

### **3.12. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology that was employed in the study and the research approaches that were used to generate the data. This study was located in a single-sex high school in urban KwaZulu-Natal with 17 participants who are teachers in this same school. The exploratory study used semi-structured interviews with photo-elicitation and observation to obtain qualitative data that could be thematically analysed to identify themes that could be distilled from the various responses. The trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also discussed in this chapter. The limitations of this study and how they may have affected the results of the study.

The next chapter presents the findings pertaining to the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners.

## Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis and discussion of the data that was generated through photo-elicitation and semi-structured individual interviews that were audio recorded and transcribed into textual data. After reading the data several times to familiarise myself with it, I then coded and categorised it into the themes that emerged. The analysis draws upon the Social Constructionist theory that was used to analyse and interpret the data, which also drew upon available literature in order to support or refute the findings.

Several themes emerged from the data that was collected and allowed for deeper insight into the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring female learners. It explored if and how their varying backgrounds of age, race, gender, beliefs, cultures, religions and value systems affect the ways in which they treat and teach learners in this single-sex high school. The three key research questions in this study were: (1) What are teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners? (2) How do teachers in a single-sex high school who have same-sex desiring learners in their class navigate their teaching? And (3) What strategies do teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom?

The following nine themes were identified from the data:

**Theme 1. Policy versus Practice:** The South African Constitution Chapter 2 Bill of Rights and SASA 1996 "Non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation"

**Theme 2. The role of culture and religion:** on teachers' perceptions of same-sex desiring learners

**Theme 3. Gender roles, stereotypes and societal expectations:** The impact on teachers' perceptions regarding non-normative sexualities

**Theme 4. Social processes and their impact:** on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners

**Theme 5. Teacher's implicit use of language as a discriminatory practice**

**Theme 6. "And you can just tell this is a boy in female or girls' structure":** Teacher judgements of learners

**Theme 7. "A lot of them (lesbian learners) are experimenting with this lifestyle"**

**Theme 8. Inclusion and exclusion of same-sex desiring learners in school:** How teachers navigate teaching

**Theme 9. "Will they change?":** School Environment, homophobic teachers and safety of non-normative learners

#### **4.2 Policy versus Practice: The South African Constitution Chapter 2 Bill of Rights and SASSA 1996 "Non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation"**

South Africa's democratic constitution was the first in Africa to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and therefore guarantees equality for gay and lesbian people (Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013). Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights in section 9(3) clearly states that "*The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth*" (South African Bill of rights, 1996).

Veriava, Thom and Hodgson (2017) state that South African schools and their policies should conform to the South African constitution. It is enshrined in the South African Schools Act in section 5(1) that a public school must admit learners in order to serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in anyway, with the governing body and all school stakeholders having the responsibility to develop a school code of conduct that has inclusive policies that actively promote respect for LGBTI learners. This theme seeks to gain a deeper understanding regarding the teachers knowledge about the South African constitution, how they implement the Bill of Rights in their classrooms, and to obtain an understanding about the policies within the school that embrace and promote respect, particularly as it pertains to same-sex desiring learners.

The participants in the study were asked how they implement the Bill of Rights in their classrooms and a follow up question was whether or not there is a policy that protects same-sex desiring (lesbian) learners. The first participant, Ms Khuzwayo, showed much uncertainty about what the Bill of Rights is:



**Interviewer:** *How do you implement the Bill of Rights at school and in your classroom?*

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *I don't know what that is...*

**Interviewer:** *The constitution, the South African constitution... Human rights...*

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *Ya? What about them?*

**Interviewer:** *How do you implement them in your classroom?*

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *Ey...*

**Interviewer:** *You know, how the constitution say every child has the right to learn, every child has the right to an education, how do you implement that in your class?*

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *Well... Learners know that as much as there is a constitution that protects them, they know that each teacher has their own classroom rules that requires learners to adhere to in order for them to benefit. At the end of the day, the learner has to pass, my job is to teach them so that they pass. So there is no learner who has the last say, just because they are dependent on the constitution, no. At the end of the day they need to be taught to be disciplined and be responsible.*

Ms Khuzwayo's response displays a lack of understanding of the Bill of Rights and therefore evident that she is not knowledgeable about implementing them in her classroom. As she was responding there were many hesitations and silences, which revealed that she was uncertain about how to answer the question. When she eventually responded to the question she spoke about how each teacher has classroom rules and learners are expected to adhere to those rules cannot stray from them because they are compelled to be consistent with the constitution. Ms Khuzwayo demonstrates a lack of knowledge that the Bill of Rights forms a part of the South African constitution, and that as is the supreme law of the land no other laws or policies supersede it, even classroom rules. Ms Khuzwayo's ignorance and lack of knowledge about the constitution, as a teacher, particularly as it pertains to the Bill of Rights, raises many concerns, as everything that is done within the school environment should be consistent with the South African Constitution and associated legislation.

Ms Khuzwayo was further asked if there is a policy at the school that formally protects nonnormative sexualities, and her response was,

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *You know, I've never seen one...*

**Interviewer:** *Do you think there should be one?*

**Ms Khuzwayo:** *No, it's not necessary for there to be one, the majority of the learners at this school are not lesbian, therefore there's no need to have a policy for just lesbians to make them comfortable and to give them permission to live their lifestyle. So far, they*

*know how to adhere to the school rules and regulations, there doesn't need to be a policy for them at this stage.*

My question did not suggest a policy exclusively for lesbian learners but rather one that is inclusive of non-normative sexualities in the form of non-discrimination. However, Ms Khuzwayo stated that she had never seen a policy for just lesbian learners and is of the belief that they are a minority group and therefore do not need one as they simply need to adhere to the school rules. Lesbianism often has a stigma attached, especially for those who are publicly lesbian and easily identifiable in public spaces, this resulting in many people choosing to hide their sexual orientation (Hutson, 2010). For this reason, the teacher cannot state that same-sex desiring learners are in the minority, as she is unaware of the numbers in the school who are non-normative and therefore is unable to make a judgement on their relative proportion. The participant further reveals judgement and expresses little tolerance for lesbian learners and seems prepared to tolerate learners as long as there is adherence to school rules. Moreover, she states that there is no need to have a policy for just lesbians to make them comfortable and to give them permission to live their lifestyle. Policies and regulations do not exist merely to give same-sex desiring people permission to 'live their lifestyle', being a much broader and bigger issue than that, as the policies that do exist compel schools to ensure and secure the protection and safety of all learners, including same-sex desiring learners who are at a continual risk of discrimination in schools (Bhana, 2014).

When Mrs Edgar was asked how she implements the Bill of Rights in the school and her classroom she began by sighing and after a few moments of silence said: *"well, everyone is treated equally, fairly"*, she paused for a moment and continued, *"without prejudice. It doesn't matter whether they are, uh, lesbian, or, whatever, I don't see it. I only see it when it interferes with my teaching and when they break the school rules"*. Mrs Edgar appeared uncomfortable and unsure when answering the question, the silences and hesitations being an indication of her unease. Mrs Edgar stated that everyone in the school and her classroom is treated fairly without prejudice, regardless of their sexuality, and that the only time that she becomes aware of the girls' sexual orientation is when it interferes with her teaching and when school rules are broken. It is however unclear what interference she is referring to. The only way that Mrs Edgar indicates that she implements the Bill of Rights is by treating everyone equally, which comes with a condition that they should not interfere with her teaching and should not break the school rules. The school rules that Mrs Edgar is referring to are those that are found within the school's code of conduct.

When questioned about policies in the school that formally protect lesbian learners, she said, **Mrs**

**Edgar:** *No, I don't think so. There is a policy saying uh.... That there may be no sexual, what's the word? No sexual acts performed on school grounds in school uniform whether its lesbian or not. There is also a policy that says no matter what you do, if you bring the school into disrepute it's uh, against the school rules. How could they be protected? What policy could protect them? Why would they need protection? If they just obey the school rules, why would the other learners need protection? Protection from what? I don't know... From other learners finding out that they are.... lesbian? And intimidating them, and bullying them. No it doesn't happen, it has never happened, it's the other way around. In my experience it has never been that way, it has always been the other way around.*

**Interviewer:** *Other way around how?*

**Mrs Edgar:** *They are the ones who would intimidate, bully, it's the other learners that would need protection from them.*

**Interviewer:** *Them?*

**Mrs Edgar:** *the lesbian learners, they don't need protection, not in my experience at this school. Uhm, they somehow, a lot of them feel, because it's not a co-ed school, they can just do what they like. They need to be spoken to, and if they choose their lifestyle, it's their business, but don't break the school rules. No holding hands, no kissing, no muffediving (oral sex), unacceptable!*

The participant appeared adamant that it was not necessary to have a policy to protect same-sex desiring learners. When responding to the question about policies that formally protect lesbian learners, Mrs Edgar questioned the need for same sex-desiring learners requiring protection, as in her understanding, they were more likely to be perpetrators of bullying and intimidatory practices. She was adamant that same-sex learners were the ones who needed to be monitored rather than protected. Mrs Edgar's response is a generalisation, as she believes that the heterosexual learners need protection from the same-sex desiring learners, thereby granting more power and privilege to the heterosexual and gender conforming learners. She displayed a somewhat biased attitude towards same-sex desiring learners by creating a binary of learners who should be protected and those who should not be within the school.

Both Mrs Edgar and Ms Khuzwayo's lack of knowledge about the Bill of Rights illustrates their biased positions, and in so doing, made this a priority by placing their own beliefs, the school rules and code of conduct first. They are unaware that the South African constitution is the supreme law and should

guide the school policies, which places an emphasis on nondiscrimination of learners on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Similarly, Mrs Williams, when asked about policies that formally protect lesbian learners in the school, responding:

*“Well.... I don’t know that there’s one that formally protects them? Why should they deserve special protection rather than anybody else? You know, what makes them special? Like I said, you know, why are we even like giving them a status? I mean they are just learners at the school, why should they get special protection?”*

Mrs Williams is of the belief that no learners should be given preferential treatment and makes it clear that lesbian learners do not deserve special protection or preference. It is clear that she is unaware of the many unique dynamics and challenges that lesbian learners in particular confront in society and in schools, and sees no need for the school to have a policy that particularly protects lesbian learners. As mentioned in Chapter 2, evidence in studies conducted by Bhana (2012) and Msibi (2012) revealed that South African schools are homophobic, and that teachers render LGBT learners invisible. In addition, the South African Constitution (1996) Section 9(1) maintains that everyone has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Policies and rules in schools are meant to conform to the South African constitution (Veriava, Thom & Hodgson, 2017). It is therefore apparent that Mrs Williams is not knowledgeable about the challenges that non-normative individuals have faced and continue to face in the wider society and schools that has culminated in a law that seeks to protect them, as enshrined in the South African Constitution and South African Schools Act of 1996 alike.

Miss Patel and Miss Cele were asked how they implement the Bill of Rights in their classroom and responded differently by saying,

**Miss Patel:** *Well, the right to education gets practiced, freedom of expression, freedom of choice, um, learners voice their opinions in my class. There’s no differentiation with race or any differences in teaching.*

**Miss Cele:** *Well, by treating everyone the same. I see no gender, I see no sexuality, I see no religion nor race when I teach, I see a learner. My sole responsibility is to teach them and guide them, I ensure that I do not discriminate and I ensure that they receive education as per their constitutional rights, I ensure that they are not harmed in anyway in my presence.*

Miss Patel and Miss Cele seemed to be more well-versed and confident when speaking about the Bill of Rights and its implementation in their classrooms. They acknowledge and understand that learners have constitutional rights and are protected by the constitution, and that they should be treated equally and be able to choose their sexual orientation, as enshrined in the constitution. Miss Patel showed a great understanding of the constitution, as she lists the different types of freedoms that all people are afforded. Miss Cele spoke about how she ensures that she does not discriminate and that the learners are not harmed in anyway in her presence. Neither makes a particularly distinction between same-sex desiring and heterosexual learners in their responses but rather makes reference to all learners.

A somewhat different response is demonstrated when asked about policies that formally protect lesbian learners in the school by both Ms Mhlongo and Mr Blose. They responded by saying that the policies that the school has do not explicitly mention lesbian learners, and that the policies that exist in the school do protect lesbian learners.

***Ms Mhlongo:** I wouldn't want us to say this is for them, but all the ones that we have protect them if you unpack each one, depending on the situation that you are faced with.*

***Mr Blose:** I would say the policy is not distinctive that it's gay or lesbian, it simply says learners. So I think we have not used the language where we were saying lesbian or gay, it simply says all learners which includes lesbians.*

The participants in the study are either not aware of the LGBTI+ rights in the Bill of Rights and what the South African Schools Act (1996) pronounces about the protection of all learners. It can be argued that they do not believe that LGBTI+ rights are important enough to be included in the school's policy. The rights of LGBTI+ youth are guaranteed in Section 9 and 10 of the South African constitution as well as in the South African Schools act of 1996 (SASA) in section 5 that states that the admission policy of the public should admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating. Teachers in South Africa are expected to manifest the constitution in their teaching as well as their behaviour and attitudes when at school, as teachers who disparage LGBTI learners contradict the country's constitution (Lees, 2017). Many of the participants' responses display a lack of consciousness as well as complete disregard of the general constitutional rights of learners, particularly same-sex desiring learners, and indicate that no special protection or treatment should be afforded to those learners in the schools policy, and in so doing exhibit heteronormative attitudes. It is important that the school's ethos and policies include all members of the school community, including LGBTI+ learners, in order to create a safe and inclusive school where in particular same-sex desiring learners feel safe and protected.

### 4.3. The role of culture and religion on teachers' perceptions of same-sex desiring learners

Religion in South Africa, according to Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Struwig and Gordon (2016), is an important part of many people's culture, their identities being closely linked to a specific faith or religious practice. It is evident from the participants' personal accounts that culture and religion in some way influence and shape the way in which they perceive same-sex desiring learners. Religion and culture appear to be strong contributing factors that in turn lead to participants either accepting, tolerating or completely rejecting same-sex relationships.

During the interviews, some participants were asked the following question: "*Some people say that being lesbian or gay is unnatural, unAfrican, demonic and evil, do you agree with this statement?*"

**Mr. Dlodla:** *Well... that's what I know, that's what the bible says I guess. This thing is linked to spirits, because even in the isiZulu culture, they often say that lesbian women have got a male ancestor living within them as a woman, and that needs to be fixed 'emsamo' (main tool used for communication between the living and non-living world). In Christianity the bible says this thing is a demon and is demonic.*

**Interviewer:** *Why? I've heard you say a lot about the bible, what does the bible say exactly about same-sex relationships?*

**Mr. Dlodla:** *They are not accepted at all in the bible. It speaks of Sodom and Gomora and the question was, why did God destroy Sodom and Gomorah, the reason was simply because of 'onqingili' (derogatory term for gays and lesbians).*

The extracts above indicates that the participant is dubious about why same-sex relationships are problematic, and this implicates culture and religion. Mr Dlodla firstly stated that being lesbian or gay is unnatural and supported his statement by quoting a biblical scripture to defend his position. When asked about what the bible says about same-sex relationships, there was much hesitation and uncertainty, and after a long pause he stated that the bible condemns same-sex relationships. Nkosi and Masson (2017) contend that the Christianity largely promotes heterosexuality and does not in any way leave room for accepting nonnormative sexuality or bisexuality.

Secondly, Mr Dlodla also offers an explanation that relates to culture and ancestral beliefs regarding sexuality and its link to ancestral spirits. He opines using his cultural beliefs that ancestors are able to cross ancestral boundaries in the isiZulu culture, whereby a woman can have a male ancestor existing

within them, which then leads to lesbianism. Such an issue, according to Mr Dlodla, can only be rectified by communicating with the ancestors directly. It is evident from this male teacher's account that cultural and religious beliefs are instrumental in the way in which he perceives same-sex desiring people (McGee, 2016). The dialogue with Mr Dlodla shows that practicing a religion might not necessarily dictate a person's perceptions about non-normative sexuality, but the consequences that come with being homosexual can lead to destruction due to same-sex relationships, as he quotes from the bible, where people experienced the wrath of God in the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Olanisebe and Adelakun (2013) assert that it is very common among Christians to associate the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with homosexuality. This participant's religious and cultural ideologies have played a role in influencing his perceptions and attitudes regarding same-sex desiring learners, which appears to be one that is not accepting of lesbianism. Another participant responded to the same question in a similar way:

***Mrs Edgar:** Yes, its unnatural, God created us and he has the right to say what will work in a marriage situation and he intended for a man and a woman to be in a relationship and be married. Not a man and a man, and I believe 100% in God's word and it is detestable to him and what is detestable to him is detestable to me.*

From Mrs Edgar's utterances she appears to be a staunch Christian who lives her life according to religious teachings. The quote above reflects the participants acknowledgement of the origin of sexuality, with a focus on what God's intention was when he created humans. Same-sex relationships, according to Mrs Edgar, are considered inappropriate and morally wrong, as they go against nature and God's intention for procreation that is linked to heterosexual relationships and marriages. Mrs Edgar's Christian beliefs has led to her an unwavering lack of tolerance of same-sex relationships and a support of heterosexual relationships.

Religion for both participants seemed to be a strong determinant of their views on nonnormative sexualities. The extracts above exemplify the social constructionist theory as it pertains to how reality is socially constructed, and that how we view ourselves as well as people around us is largely influenced by our beliefs and shared assumptions. Belonging to a religious group, according to Janssen and Scheepers (2019), influences individuals' social norms due to being in close contact with members who belong to the same group and who are urged to comply with the social norms and values of that group. If the social norm rejects same-sex relationships and expresses anti-homosexual views, such as in the Christian denomination, the likelihood of the members who adhere to that denomination adopting this same attitude is very high (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019, p.1975). It is apparent that both

Mrs Edgar and Mr Dladla concur with the social norms and values that reject same-sex relationships within the Christian religion, and carry those perceptions and attitudes with them in the school in which they teach.

Moreover, throughout the interview, Mrs Edgar narrated how she disliked her son's friend because he self-identifies as gay, stating that she would not accept her own grandchildren if they were to identify as gay or lesbian.

*"My son had a friend who was gay and would often come around to the house to him but as soon as he arrived one day with his boyfriend I spoke to my son and told him that I didn't want any sexual acts between them on my property and eventually they stopped visiting".*

**Mrs Edgar:** *"My son said, 'what would you do if my son decided to be gay?' so he put me in a very difficult spot there, I don't know whether he thought I'll say well, he'll be my grandson and I would just accept it. I just said to him that I won't accept it, I said would not accept his lifestyle choice"*

The extracts above emphasize Mrs Edgar outright rejection of non-normative sexuality, which extends to her own family members. This is also shown in her intolerance of learners in her school, some of whom who may identify as same-sex desiring. Another participant responded to the same question and provided a different point of view:

**Mrs Rajkumar:** *I'll tell you something about Hinduism, I don't know if anyone's ever said this to you. So we have this God, he's called 'Shiva' and you've heard of Shiva, Shiva the destroyer? And his wife is the Shakti. Do you know they merge between each other? If you google it to actually see that Shiva can become Shakti and Shakti can become Shiva. I was reading up about it with homosexuality and why Hinduism doesn't look down upon these people. We call them Shiva-Shakti, so when we see them, we say 'Oh, okay'. It's that merging between male and female and it's of no fault of theirs.*

Mrs Rajkumar subscribes to Hinduism, which is a religion that developed more than 5000 years ago in India which and was the largest civilization of the ancient world (Hindu American Foundation, 2016). Her account implies that Hinduism does not discriminate against homosexuals and further draws upon Hindu mythology, which appears inclusive of gender variance and non-normative genders. According to Kane (2020), the Hindu religion challenges and disrupts sexual norms that



sanction heteronormativity and gender binaries that discriminate against these LGBTQ communities in the world at large. Same-sex relations, gender variance and intersex characters have been spoken about and represented within the Hindu religion through rituals, law books, religious and mythical narratives, and in paintings, all these representations indicate that the Hindu religion does not discriminate against homosexuality (Hunt, 2011). Unlike India, Dicklitch-Nelson, Yost & Dougan (2020) indicated that among thirty-two countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda, a Christian-based country, is amongst the worst regarding the criminalization of homosexuality, with homophobia being entrenched within Ugandan society.

**Mrs Rajkumar:** *“It’s not a punishable offence to be homosexual in the Hindu religion, my religion doesn’t teach me to throw cast or any type of shade on these people”.*

It is clear from Mrs Rajkumar’s account that her Hindu religion embraces all sexual orientations and does not reject non-normative sexuality, the religion having taught her not to judge people because of their sexual orientation. The social constructionist theory in Chapter 2 is relevant in this instance in that there is an acceptance of multiple sexualities, where heterosexuality is not regarded as the only sexuality, resulting in any other sexual orientation being seen as deviant and problematic. In this instance, Mrs Rajkumar’s perception about sexual orientation is guided by the Hindu religion that she subscribes to, which has contributed to her not viewing non-normative sexuality or same-sex desiring people any differently to heterosexual people. Religion can play a central role in individual’s lives and affect and influence their attitudes in either a negative or positive light, as many people identify with a particular religious denomination (Janssen & Scheepers, 2019). Mrs Rajkumar’s religious background is tolerant, embracing and non-judgmental of non-normative sexualities, which explains her non-judgmental attitude towards same-sex relationships.

Miss Cele like Miss Rajkumar is non-judgemental and is aware of the evolving and multiple sexualities that are prevalent in society. Although she is also a Christian, her argument for acceptance of sexual diversity is premised on the notion that Christians commit crimes that affect people’s lives in more serious ways than non-normative sexualities.

**Miss Cele:** *You know what was relevant 200 years ago doesn’t necessarily apply to the current age and time. Things change, all the time, nothing is stagnant. Moreover, the bible was written by a person, meaning that they could include their own biases and subjectivities in the bible. I honestly, when I read the bible and when I go to church, I take what applies to me and my life and discard what doesn’t apply to me. When it comes to the churches standing on sexuality, I do not agree with the church at all, because love is*

*love, whether its two women or a man and a woman, it is the exact same thing. There are worser crimes and worser acts that Christians commit, they lie, they steal, they gossip, they kill etcetera, so how exactly is homosexuality worse than killing a person?*

She places the seriousness of offences on a continuum, and non-normative sexuality, in her view, is not as serious a crime such as murder. Miss Cele further offers an understanding of the way in which love occurs, being of the belief that people do not consciously choose who they love, and that heterosexual and same-sex relationships are exactly the same. She is aware of the way in which society evolves and that the evolution of sexuality and its diversity, this participant's open-mindedness illustrating her acceptance of diversity, which conflicts with Mr Dlodla and Mrs Edgar's perceptions, despite their subscribing to the same religious beliefs.

It is evident in the participants' views, such as Mr Dlodla and Mrs Edgar, that they strongly believe in the bible and its teaching. On the other hand, other teachers who also subscribe to religion, such as Mrs Rajkumar, who is Hindu and Miss Cele, who is Christian, are indifferent and accepting, and do not differentiate between heterosexual and homosexual learners. This indicates that religion is interpreted differently by individuals, specifically relating to attitudes regarding sexual orientation. The way in which the participants have been socialized in their various religious settings has also had an impact on them, as the heteronormative perceptions that participants such as Mr Dlodla and Mrs Edgar behold may be difficult to disrupt. Such attitudes resonate with Nzimande's (2017) and Msibi's (2011) studies, which show how social processes and religion impacts on people's understanding of non-normative sexuality as unnatural, resulting in these perceptions and attitudes being reproduced in the school environment.

#### **4.4. The impact of Gender roles and societal expectations on teachers' perceptions**

##### **about non-normative sexuality**

Identifying as lesbian, gay or even bisexual is understood by some to be an extreme gender role violation, and that sexual orientation is an independent basis of prejudice (Vincent, Parrott & Peterson, 2011). Such a view was believed to be true by some of the participants, and consequently reinforced existing stereotypes and societal norms and expectations that are reproduced in the classroom. This theme seeks to understand the view point of teachers in relation to gender roles and how society and societal expectations have influenced their perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring

people, in this instance, same-sex desiring learners. This theme was drawn from the participants' perceptions regarding the *Figure 4.1(Appendix G)*. The participants were shown the picture in the photo-elicitation segment of the semi-structured interviews and asked to comment and offer their views about the image.

The dialogue below illustrates Mr Khumalo's reaction to the image:

**Mr Khumalo:** *Aibo! Hahaha, this is Somizi, hahaha!*

**Interviewer:** *Somizi?*

**Mr Khumalo:** *Yes, this is Somizi. It looks like this is a boy with a dress.*

**Interviewer:** *Yes, what do you think about that?*

**Mr Khumalo:** *Oh, oh Lord, hahaha. Uh, boys don't wear dresses, uh, you can tell as you look at this boy that he is tomatoes, he is weak, you can just see. Wearing a dress! What kind of a boy wears a dress? How can he wear a dress? You are a boy, you're supposed to be a man.*

**Interviewer:** *Why not?*

**Mr Khumalo:** *It doesn't make sense right? It doesn't make sense. Why would you wear a dress if you are a boy? You're supposed to be a boy, then a man, but now you're wearing female clothes. What does it say about you? You are weak.*

Mr Khumalo found much humour as well as showed much discontent regarding the image, and having likened the boy in the image to Somizi, a South African TV and Radio personality who openly identifies as homosexual. He questioned the dress code of the boy in the image, and expressed his intense nonacceptance for a boy wearing girls' clothing. He mocks the boy whom he believes does not exhibit male qualities because he is wearing female clothing. For Mr Khumalo, seeing such an image challenges and disrupts the binary and gender norms that have been normalised in society, thus immediately associating the dress code with sexual identity.

Prostasia Foundation (2020 p.1) articulates that:

*"Clothes are clothes until someone assigns meaning to them. It is not uncommon for people to try to sexualize non-binary children early in an attempt to "understand" them. Rather, what happens is that they are subjected to the sexualization of their clothes and bodies while also having their very identities questioned."*

Mr Khumalo's understanding of gender and gender roles is largely premised on the fact that a boy child who wears female clothing is gay, as per his comparison to Somizi. The image induced a similar point of view in Mr Mpanza, whose response was:

**Mr Mpanza:** *Eish...(silence)... I don't agree with what he is doing.*

**Interviewer:** *Why?*

**Mr Mpanza:** *He's a boy and is wearing female clothing. There are specific clothes for men and specific clothes for women. If he feels like he wants to be a woman, he must still dress like a man. There is no need for you to wear women's clothing to show how you feel.*

Mr Mpanza clearly states that he disagrees with the image that shows a boy wearing a dress, which constitute as a way to assert or display who one might be attracted to. Such a stereotype may be harmful, as it reveals resistance towards non-normative sexuality within the school. Societies often reject homosexuality and stigmatises individuals who are perceived to be same-sex desiring (Janssen & Scheeper, 2019). Mr Mpanza clearly shows that he would prefer the boy to remain 'in the closet' and not openly display his sexual orientation through his clothing expression. It is teachers like Mr Mpanza that result in individuals suppressing their sexual desires and gender expression in order for them to not be ridiculed.

Both these participants' responses indicate that they have a particular expectation and a gendered belief about what a boy child should look like and how he should dress. Such beliefs reinforce rigid gender roles and reinscribe gender stereotypes. Alan, Ertac and Mumcu (2018) state that stereotypes about gender are pervasive in many societies, and that such views rigidly define the innate attitudes of each sex and the social roles that are appropriate for men and women. It is clear from both the participants' responses that they are mainly concerned with the distinction between male and female, and show a negative reaction and rejection to anything or anyone who does not conform to the societal norms. Gender identification for the participants is directly associated with appropriate clothing for men and women and indirectly associated with the prejudice that they may have against same-sex desiring individuals.

Mr Sibiyi focused on the Zulu culture and how traditionally a boy wearing a dress was seen as taboo:

**Mr. Sibiyi:** *Uh, you know in terms of our culture alright? Can I say traditionally back then from where we are coming from this was totally unacceptable because, uh, obviously this is a guy or this is a boy and he has adopted another style of living. Now you can see*

*he has developed a girlish kind of lifestyle so as much as I talk and comment as a Zulu man and in terms our Zulu culture, back then it was totally taboo. But now in terms of transition we are getting used to it, although it is a bitter pill to swallow especially with our parents, you know? But with the current crop generation it's not that difficult to understand and should I say digest the concept.*

Traditionally, men do not have the option of wearing a dress or skirt without them having to deny their prescribed masculinity, therefore wearing a dress can be more socially dangerous for men as they risk being labelled homosexual (Lindemuth, Thomas, Mates, & Casey, 2011). Mr Sibiya speaks of how a boy in his culture would not have been accepted if he wore a dress, however, due to the change in terms of non-discrimination, the older generation are being coerced to accept non-normative ways of being male and female. Mr Sibiya, an African man is in his mid 40s, comes from a generation where gender roles and societal expectations were rigid. However, his perception is being challenged and he admits that the change in the society that he comes from has enabled him to accept a boy child wearing a dress, despite his culture previously having not approved of such. This extract shows that there can be a shift in society's general attitude towards people who do not conform to the prescribed societal gender roles, which has an influence on the participants' perceptions regarding people who do not conform to the prescribed norms.

Ms Mhlongo shares her opinion about the image, her response was, *"unfortunately, he's going to be bullied, because in our society, somebody like this is easily not accepted and he can't dress like this going to the shops, it's going to be hidden."* Butler (1990) in Chapter 2, revealed that gender is performed, and that there are male as well as female roles that are performed in accordance with societal norms, and once a gender role is assumed and performed repeatedly, it becomes cemented, which results in it becoming a societal norm and expectation that is unalterable. Once a person goes against the endorsed societal norms it may be interpreted as defiance or rebellion against traditional masculinity (Lindemuth, etc., 2011). Ms Mhlongo's response indicates that a boy child would be able to wear a dress, but that society would ridicule such behaviour and would need to be hidden as it contravenes the stereotypes about what is considered as normal.

All four of the participants were Black Africans, and it is clear from all the participants' accounts that a reality may have been created for Black Africans regarding gender roles, where a boy dressed in a dress was against their reality and how they have socially constructed gender. In the Black African community there are opposing constructions of masculinity and femininity that fundamentally shape

people's notions about traditional gender roles, which then lead to gender construction occurring in a problematic way (Hellman and Ratele, 2016). Once a reality has been created it becomes the basis for social expectations in the future, and seeing an image of a boy therefore goes against the societal norms and expectations that have been ingrained into them, which has resulted to participants such as Mr Khumalo and Mr Mpanza showing intolerance towards their altered subjective reality. Contrary to the other views showed, Mr Sibiya is fully aware of the construct that has been created by society, but is willing to adapt to change and transition of the traditional gender roles and expectations. On the other hand, Ms Mhlongo fears the rejection that the boy in the image might receive in society due to him wearing clothes that contravenes gender and social norms.

#### **4.5. Social processes and its impact on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners**

This study is guided by the contention that the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners are largely influenced and shaped by their interaction with their communities and wider societies. This theme draws attention to how the societies that the participants come from have an influence on how they perceive same-sex desiring learners.

##### **a) Family, school and the community**

The sub-theme notes what kind of influence the participants' immediate environment, namely, their family, school, friends and community have on their attitudes and perceptions. It was evident from their accounts that non-normative sexuality was not taught or spoken about explicitly in their immediate environment. The participants were asked: *"Were you taught anything at home, at school or in the community about people who are not heterosexual?"* This was asked to obtain an in-depth understanding about how their immediate environment has or has not influenced their attitude towards same-sex desiring learners.

Mrs Williams responded to the question with much hesitation,

*"Um, not, you know... I must admit, I mean, I lived on a farm, so I was very isolated, and then I went to boarding school. So I suppose I came from a very protected, vacuum like society, where I was never really exposed to anything like that. I've heard of it, I read about it that people openly hate homosexuals, or lesbians or whatever. And they used to you, you know they would be beaten and there was a time where they were targeted and bullied"*

Mrs William's response revealed that the school that she attended did not explicitly teach her anything about homosexuality, resulting in her knowledge being limited to only what she had

heard or read about later in her life. Mrs William was only aware about the discriminatory treatment and alienation of same-sex desiring people from what she has externally heard or read. Her understanding of non-normative sexuality was rather negative and largely associated with violence, discrimination and abuse for members of the LGBTI community who are victims of hate related killings all over the world (Abaver & Cishe, 2018, p.61).

Mr Dlodla responded to the questions by stating that:

**Mr Dlodla:** *We were not taught anything about lesbians at school, we were not taught about it. They were discriminated against and they were called 'ongqingili' (derogatory isiZulu term that refers to a gay male), they were not accepted in the community. People at my school came from different areas, certain areas were not aware that such people existed and in my community only a few people were aware of such people. So the people that were not aware of such people would feel uncomfortable being around 'ongqingili'.*

**Interviewer:** *How did you feel?*

**Mr Dlodla:** *It was easier for me to accept because we had one in our community, even in our school we had one, a person of this type.*

**Interviewer:** *A person of this type?*

**Mr Dlodla:** *Lesbians, we had a few, maybe 3 at school, but they were not mistreated. We grew up with them, they were well known boys in the community, they were quite soft and effeminate, like girls and they befriended girls quite often. We were not scared of them, neither were we threatened that they would steal our girl friends*

Similar to Mrs Williams, non-normative sexuality was not taught or spoken about in Mr Dlodla's school, although he recalls that there were homosexual individuals who were derogatorily referred to as 'onqingili'. The linguistic term 'ongqingili' is an isiZulu term that is presented cautiously as it has homophobic and derogatory connotations that refers to a gay male (Reygan & Lynette, 2014, p.713). Mr Dlodla, a Black African male in his 40s, seems to be aware of the forms of discrimination and prejudice that homosexual individuals were subjected to in the school and community in which he grew up in. The social conception that the participant has about non-normative sexuality is stereotypical and carries with it traditional gender roles, as his understanding and perception of gay men is restricted and bound to them only being soft and effeminate, and that they generally befriend girls. Femininity, according to Rieger, Linsenmeier, Gygax, Garcia and Bailey (2010), is the main factor that people use to

identify someone as gay. Masculinity in society is valued, and men are therefore pressured to outwardly express masculinity, and to embody and internalise the associated ideas that are sponsored by the society (Whicker, 2016, p.8).

Similarly to Mr Dladla, Mrs Eric was also not taught anything about non-normative sexuality, but rather discovered related issues upon hearing that gay men had full blown AIDS.

***Mrs Eric:** ...The first time really I was exposed to such. I don't remember much on TV about it, before then. When AIDS started and I can't remember when it became more known, it was around after my matric. Then only did I start hearing that homosexual people, the men mostly had full blown AIDS. So that was when I first heard about it...*

Mrs Eric's knowledge was premised during the era where HIV/AIDS became more prevalent and according to her, gay men were the ones who transmitted HIV/AIDS. Her knowledge and perception regarding non-normative sexuality is rather outdated, inadequate and moreover a misconception, as AIDS historically was connected with homosexuals. However, HIV/AIDS cannot be confined to just the LGBTQ community, as that serves to perpetuate harmful stereotypes about same-sex desiring individuals (Evans, Cloete, Zungu, Simbayi, 2016, p.51). Moreover, the use of the term 'such' as a way to refer to same-sex desiring persons is derogatory and removes the humanity from these individuals.

Ms Patel on the other hand, stated that, *"In LO (Life Orientation), we were taught that there can be relationships, romantic relationships where its opposite sex or same sex, but we didn't go into extreme detail"*. Her account illustrates that, unlike the other participants, Life orientation as a subject in the school that Ms Patel went to contributed to her knowledge about sexuality but not necessarily about same-sex desiring relationships. Life Orientation, according to Ngabaza, Shefer and Macleod (2016) and Swanepoel, Beyers and De Wet (2017), is a compulsory subject that has the most significant impact on the construction of sexual identities. It aims to empower learners to be aware of themselves, their roles in their communities, and their responsibilities as citizens through themes such as sexuality, relationships, dating, marriage, human rights, values and beliefs. Ms Patel's experience in school suggests that teachers avoid teaching topics relating to sexuality in the classroom despite it being clearly being prescribed in the South African curriculum. Francis and Msibi (2011) argue that very little has been done to equip teachers to teach about sexual orientation in class, and as a result, they actively ignore issues of sexual diversity. Although Life Orientation contributed to Ms Patel's



knowledge regarding non-normative sexualities, unlike Mr Dladla, Mrs Williams and Mrs Eric, there is one common recurring idea amongst all four participants, despite their varying race groups. The common idea is that there is silencing around issues related to non-normative sexuality and the participants acknowledge that their families, schools and communities have largely contributed to their limited understandings. The non-use and silencing of non-normative sexualities contributes to making such relationships seem inappropriate, which consequently gives legitimacy to heterosexuality (Francis, 2012, p.9). In addition, the participants' accounts also show that non-normative sexualities are viewed negatively due to discrimination, with violence and HIV/AIDS have been linked to homosexuality, these factors having an influence on how they perceive same-sex desiring individuals.

#### **b) Cultural norms and Societal belief systems**

The cultural context and societal belief systems, according to Onwuegbuzi, Collins and Frels (2013), influences the developing person. For example, the society and community surrounding the person, which includes the context, belief systems, cultural norms, ideologies, laws and policies, indirectly have an impact and influence a person and their beliefs and attitudes. *“The members of the cultural group generally share a common identity, heritage as well as values”* (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013, p.5). Cultural norms and societal belief systems are highly influential, unspoken rules or expectations premised within a specific cultural or social group, and set a social standard for appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Newson, Richerson & Boyd, 2007). These cultural norms and social beliefs can be temporary, meaning that they can evolve and change over time, from generation to generation (Creanza, Kolodny & Feldman 2017). Mr Sibiya, in the extract below, discussed how a person who identified as homosexual in the community and society that he grew up in would have been at risk.

**Mr Sibiya:** *Where I grew up, I must say, if you were seen as that type of person, you might find that even your house could get torched and your life could be at risk. People were not well versed with these people's lives. If people realised that you were not normal, you could find yourself being called certain words and you would see that you might get yourself into huge trouble. So in the society it wasn't something that was accepted. So much so, that if you were a male but didn't carry yourself like one, they would beat you up so that you would become strong.*

**Interviewer:** *How did you feel when they were doing that? You mentioned that people's houses were torched or they were beaten up?*

**Mr Sibiya:** *Of course at time, it didn't sit well with me because as you grow and you learn, you look at yourself and say, 'why are people doing this?', how would they feel if this were to happen to them? You see, so as stubborn as I am, I also always feel and believe that some actions by people are uncalled for and those actions are unnecessary...*

Similarly, Mr Blose also expressed that the society that he came from disapproved of non-normative sexuality to the extent that he did not know anyone who was openly gay.

**Mr. Blose:** *The society that I came from, it was frowned upon, in fact it still is. It was something that was fairly hated. If it was heard that a guy liked another guy, it wasn't something that was really well received. Uh, to such an extent that when I grew up I never knew anyone who was openly gay, it wasn't something that was done.*

Mr Sibiya contends that the violence and hate crimes directed at individuals of nonnormative sexuality was a huge problem in the society that he came from, and was motivated by animosity and the belief that gays and lesbians must not be treated with dignity and respect. A differing sexual orientation in his society was severely dealt with and he felt that the violence perpetrated towards queer individuals was because people were not knowledgeable of alternate sexualities. The beating up of individuals who were perceived to be same-sex desiring can be compared to corrective rape, where “rape is perpetrated by straight men against lesbians in order to ‘correct’ or ‘cure’ their homosexuality” (Doan-Minh, 2019, p.167). Mr Sibiya stated that people were beaten up in order to make them strong. Moreover, the burning of the homes of people who were perceived to be same-sex desiring can be considered an extreme form of homophobia and a hate crime. The extract above reveals that although Mr Sibiya was brought up in an extremely homophobic and violent community, he acknowledges that homophobia is an injustice as it is discriminatory behaviour towards individuals. . On the other hand, Mr Blose expressed that non-normative sexuality was also not acceptable in his community, with people being aware to the extent that he knew of no one who was openly gay or lesbian, making it difficult for him to accept and tolerate anyone who is openly gay or lesbian outside of his community.

It is clear that societal attitudes towards non-normative sexuality differs across cultures and societies, and they all have their own values regarding appropriate and inappropriate sexuality. Some societies and communities prohibit and disapprove of homosexuality while others sanction it (Morison, Mtshengu, Sandfort & Reddy, 2016, p.33). Mr Blose and Mr Sibiya's

account indicates that in their societies non-normative sexuality was not well received, to the extent that same-sex desiring people's lives were at risk.

The participants responses indicate that the attitudes and perceptions that they have about non-normative sexuality were not directly taught to them in their families, schools, communities and societies. Rather, they were indirectly and covertly passed on, with conversations regarding non-normative sexuality being silenced and seen in a negative discriminatory light, as well as through homophobic violence and non-acceptance of gays and lesbians. All the participants were influenced by their families, schools, communities and societies regarding how they viewed and perceived non-normative sexuality through the values, beliefs and norms that have been imposed on the societies and systems that they come from and interact with on a regular basis. This theme suggests that societies beliefs and values either become entrenched in the mindset of the population that they come from or they fade away and are replaced by new beliefs and values.

#### **4.6. Teacher's implicit use of language as a discriminatory practice**

Language is a means of communicating meaning and often takes place within a social context, having the ability to reflect an individual's beliefs as well as the practices of the societies and the communities from which they come from (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2018, p.4). *"Language is the principal vehicle for the transmission of cultural knowledge, and the primary means by which we gain access to the contents of others' minds. Language is implicated in most of the phenomena that lie at the core of social psychology: attitude change, social perception, personal identity, social interaction, intergroup bias and stereotyping and attribution"* (Kraus & Chiu, 1998, p.2).

This study is based on the understanding that language is a critical part of socialisation, as the social constructionist theory argues that language enables people to express their thoughts and helps to influence their perceptions of reality and create concepts, being a means of describing and structuring the way in which reality is experienced (Burr, 2003). This study is guided by the thought process that language and sexuality are interdependent, and that language every so often helps to reproduce and perpetuate heteronormativity and homophobia, being largely dependent on the society's ideology and stereotypes (Van Han, 2014). Moreover, Sutherland (2016) suggested that there are an array of terms and phrases that are used to describe homosexuals or people who are gender non-conforming in South African languages. This theme seeks to obtain a deeper understanding of how language has an

influence on their perceptions towards same-sex desiring teachers in the school in which they teach and to establish if there are certain terms and phrases that they use to describe the such learners.

Some of the participants' responses indicate the use of certain words instead of 'lesbians' or 'gay' was common.

**Mr. Blose:** *They hated it too. Uh, from my grandmother to my own mother you just couldn't be isitabane, pick one.*

Mr Blose in his response used the pronoun 'it' rather than homosexuality, and referred to a homosexual as 'isitabane'. According to DePalma and Francis (2014), the pronoun 'it' is widely used when referring to homosexuality in a way that dehumanises, depersonalises and strips personhood from LGBT people. Moreover, the word 'isitabane', according to Msibi (2011) and Mbali (2013), is a derogatory and discriminatory isiZulu term frequently used in communal spaces to refer to gays and lesbians, and in some instances to intersex or hermaphrodites. The term is further used to discriminate, undermine and shame LGBTI people, and is applied to both gender non-conformance as well as same-sex desiring individuals (Other foundation, 2019). The use of the words 'it' and 'isitabane' by the participant connotes the derogatory elements that commonly fuel discrimination within society, and further undermines the dignity of people who identify within the LGBTI community and dehumanizes them. The non-use of appropriate terms to refer to same-sex desiring individuals by the participant may have been unintentional, and can easily be uttered in the presence of same-sex desiring learners, thus perpetuating a homophobic attitude.

Mr Khumalo's response was similar to Mr. Blose's response as he states:

**Mr. Khumalo:** *We don't believe that a female is supposed to date another female because you have boobs, you have gonads, sex cells and that means you must produce*

**Interviewer:** *You used the words 'we' and 'us', what do you mean?*

**Mr. Khumalo:** *I mean Black people.*

**Interviewer:** *Black people?*

**Mr. Khumalo:** *Black people, we don't believe that we should, oh goodness... that women should date each other...*

Mr Khumalo strongly believes that a female is not meant to date another female because of biology and more particularly the female reproductive system. The participant is against same-sex relationships, particularly lesbians, which resonates with Coome, Skorska and VanderLaan (2020),

who state that same-sex relationships are considered an evolutionary paradox as it lowers direct reproduction. Mr Khumalo's argument is linked to an essentialist perspective, where there is belief that the purpose of a relationship between a man and woman is to procreate, with same-sex relationship biologically being rejected as no natural reproduction that can occur between the two individuals (Lee, 2008). Moreover, on more than one occasion, Mr Khumalo used the word 'we' when explaining his point of view, and when asked why he uses the word 'we' he stated that he is referring to Black people. The use of collective pronouns in Mr Khumalo's response reveals that he is seeking support in his homophobic attitudes, thereby making it seem as if it is a collective viewpoint by including others in his responses.

By the same token, Ms. Mhlongo also used certain words when referring to the lesbian learners,

*"... I'll make an example, like in our school, I see girls like that, I will not say they must come to school dressed in pants because they are supposed to be boys..."*

*"....There are reasons why they are like that, there are three reasons, it could be, I want to explore, number one; Two, I was born like this, my parents don't want to accept me, the third one could be that I want attention, so if there are few people like us, who are like this, we will get more attention..."*

Ms Mhlongo said that she sees girls who are 'like that,' in other words, lesbians. She is under the impression that lesbian girls in the school are 'supposed to be boys', and is of the belief that they would wear trousers to imitate that, although the school does not make provision for this. Kachel, Steffens and Niedlich (2016) describe gender as reflecting socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity, both women and men being expected to fit into the 'normative' gender boundaries set by society. However, with non-normative sexualities, there are certain labels that are used to refer to and describe lesbians, for example the term 'butch' is used to refer to masculine women who dress in masculine clothes with short hair, whereas females are viewed and represented as feminine women who abide by the traditional gender identity of women (Kerr, 2013). Ms Mhlongo's view resonates with the common stereotypes of butch lesbians being seen as wanting to be men, and that they only have masculine interests, appearance and mannerisms. For people who exhibit a particular external persona, it may not necessarily be in line with their internal attitude or personality (Cooter, 2014). In other words, lesbians are able to display an external male appearance but internally they may still view themselves as a women. These imposed stereotypes that Ms Mhlongo has about the lesbian learners in her school are clearly reflected in her language usage.

Particular language pervaded the participants' accounts and was often not intentionally harmful but rather very implicit. The language use shows that participants avoided using the words that were linked to non-normative but chose to use pronouns and traditional derogatory terms instead.

#### **4.7. “And you can just tell this is a boy in a female or girls’ structure”: Characteristics, mannerisms and lesbianism**

The data collected shows that many teachers in the school where the study was conducted have pre-conceived perceptions about same-sex desiring learners. Fasoli, Maas, Paladino and Sulpizio (2017) contend that people judge whether a person is homosexual or heterosexual on the basis of nonverbal behaviour, including mannerisms and gestures. This theme seeks to obtain a better understanding about what the teachers' perceptions are about the same-sex desiring learners, if those ideas and perceptions are myths or realities, and if they in any way influence their attitudes towards them. The participants were asked if they have observed any lesbian learners at the school and what their attitude was towards them.

***Interviewer:** This is a single-sex high school, have you observed any lesbian learners in the school?*

***Mr Sibiya:** There are so many*

***Interviewer:** What is your attitude towards them?*

***Mr. Sibiya:** I have a very good working relationship with them and most of them know that we call them ‘oBafo’ brothers. There’s this one girl from Grade 8, she calls me ‘bafo’, such that there are no boundaries, we operate normally. Ya, I don’t have a problem with them, we just talk and joke around. At times I dig deep and try and find out what’s happening in their lives and with their girlfriends, and they are free to open up about what is happening. I don’t want to judge them, so if they even want advice I will give them advice.*

The extract above shows that Mr Sibiya has observed many lesbian learners, and that he has created good working relationships with them to the extent that they are able to open up to him as their teacher about their sexuality and lives in general. Mr Sibiya has embraced lesbianism in the school to the extent that he is willing to give them advice regarding relationships. However, he indicates that he calls the lesbian learners ‘oBafo’, which when loosely translated is an isiZulu word for ‘brother’, which indicates that he perceives them to be like boys. Another teacher had a similar attitude towards the same-sex desiring learners:

**Interviewer:** *Have you observed any lesbian learners in the school?*

**Mrs. Moyo:** *Yes I have.*

**Interviewer:** *What is your attitude towards them?*

**Mrs. Moyo:** *My attitude? I just treat them like any other. But it doesn't have to be lesbians only and non-lesbians. If they are behaving inappropriately, I reprimand them. I don't have to say because you're lesbian, that's why I'm reprimanding you. For example, if you come to my lesson late and you've been outside speaking to one of your girlfriends outside, I punish you for that....*

Similarly, when asked whether she has observed lesbian learners in the school, Mrs Eric disclosed,

*"Yes, I have, and shame, I've punished them as well because two were kissing once.*

*One gave one a card and chocolate on valentine's day in the courtyard and they are not meant to show any physical affection like a kiss, and they did it in the courtyard and the other grades around watched. The one got on her knee and stood up and kissed her in front of everybody so I had to punish them as a result of that because we can't have girls going around kissing each other in the school, just like if it was a co-ed school, we wouldn't allow boys and girls to kiss.*

*We have to have order, laws to stick to, so if they break any of those laws then they have to be punished, not in an evil way but because it's the law."*

Mrs Moyo and Mrs Eric both state that they are aware of the presence of lesbian learners in the school. A common issue for both participants is the behaviour of lesbian girls in the school, with Mrs Moyo in particular reprimanding lesbian learners who arrive late to class because they are speaking to their girlfriends. Mrs Eric draws upon a situation where she has had to punish lesbian learners for showing physical affection on the school premises. It is clear that both Mrs Moyo and Mrs Eric do not have a negative attitude towards lesbian learners but are concerned about inappropriate behaviour within the school. Mrs Eric shares the same sentiments, as she believes that the school needs to have order, and that if rules are broken in the school there needs to be consequences, as would be the case in a co-ed school. Miss Cele was asked the same questions and the extract below shows her response.

**Interviewer:** *This is a single-sex school. Have you observed lesbian learners in your school?*

**Miss Cele:** *Yes, yes, I have*

**Interviewer:** *What is your attitude towards lesbian learners in the school?* **Miss Cele:** *The same as with the perceived straight learners, at the end of the day they are all my learners, I don't see sexuality.*

Miss Cele has also observed lesbian learners in the school and treats them the same way as the perceived straight learners, without a focus on their sexual orientation. This indicates that she acknowledges that the learners whom she thinks or believes are straight might not be straight.

These participants attitude towards lesbian learners seemed to be more accommodating of same-sex desiring learners, did not have a problem with them and treated them the same as all the other learners. When asked how the teachers identify same-sex desiring learners in the school, the responses were as follows:

**Mr Khumalo:** *I can tell the way they walk, they talk, and you can just tell this is a boy in female or girls' structure*

**Mr. Mpanza:** *Uh, 1. it's the way they walk. A woman walks in a particular way and you are able to identify that it's a woman, she's born with it. So here at school the girls you can see that their way of walking is similar to that of a man. 2, their behaviour in class, you are able to pick up that this is a woman who is attracted or has feelings for other women. You're able to quickly pick it up when she is sitting with other women, how she touches other women, you're able to identify that they are lesbian. Even the language that they use is similar to that of a man, even their voices tend to be bold like men...*

The extracts above show that both participants method of identifying lesbian learners is based on the way they walk, talk, and how they behave in a similar way to men. Mr Khumalo believes that the lesbian learners are boys in female bodies. Love (2016) states that masculine females dismantle the notion that masculinity must be reserved for male-bodied persons. The body and appearance of people as different is identifiable for these two participants, with society relying on appearance to identify people and in order to know how to interact with them, the assumption being that people use their appearance to display their membership in one category or another (Kerr, 2013). However, such an identification method is stereotypical, a generalisation and compartmentalizes lesbian learners into certain boxes in terms of how they should appear and should be identified. Mrs Bailey, Mrs Eric and Mrs Fischer on the other hand shared a more common way of identifying lesbian learners in the school,

**Mrs Bailey:** *Its quite hard, because I suppose maybe they choose to wear a certain haircut, um, a different way of even walking, you know just their mannerisms. Maybe*



*even I don't know, but it seems like it's the sports they play. But I recently learned of being homosexual in my grade 12 class who do not fit that criteria at all, at all... But then then the others that I teach, I know they are homosexual because they have actually told me that they are homosexual. So I know they are, they seem to have the shorter hair, walk a bit more manly.*

**Mrs Eric:** *I think I'm bad at it, but what I've heard from other people, often they are the soccer players, that's what I was told, that a lot of the soccer players are. I don't know the soccer players but a lot of them have got that shaved side, mohawk, the way they walk, a lot of them do walk in a more boyish, manly way. I don't want to say all of them are like that because some of them are very girlish. That's what I've heard, that's what people have told me, and I would not have guessed at all.*

**Mrs. Fischer:** *Look, in our school specifically, I would say that we identify them using certain mannerisms but to a certain degree, not all are like that. We do have what we call the boy-girls, you know there are certain learners with the same haircut, and they are recognised that way because that's how they want to be recognised so that people can see who they are so that they can be encouraged to get involved with each other.*

All three participants in the extracts above do not have particularly clear character traits to identify same-sex desiring learners in the school, but are able to identify some by their characteristics and mannerisms, such as the way they walk, talk, cut their hair and even the sports they play. Both Mrs Bailey and Mrs Eric state that the way they identify lesbian learners is a generalisation because they have found that some do not actually fit the criteria. Mrs Fischer, on the other hand, expresses that the lesbian girls are called the 'boy-girls' and are particularly recognised by their haircuts so that people know that they are lesbian. Such responses reveal that the participants do acknowledge the stereotypes that exists regarding same-sex desiring learners and admit that how they identify the learners is problematic and reflects their own attitudes.

When asked how she identifies a lesbian learner, Miss Cele responded to the question by saying,

*"I can't identify a lesbian learner because then I would be stereotyping...."*

*Speaking about their characteristics and mannerisms would be stereotyping..."*

Miss Cele looks me straight in the eyes and chuckles a bit and then continues speaking,

*"What if I say that a learner who dresses in a masculine manner is lesbian, only to find that she isn't and is actually attracted to boys? what if I say the learner who looks feminine is straight only to find that she's lesbian? I've learnt not to stereotype, it is*

*wrong. The only way I can identify a lesbian learner is if she has personally come to me and told me that she is lesbian, that is the only way.”*

Miss Cele without hesitation indicated that she cannot identify a lesbian learner in the school because then that means that she would be reinforcing stereotypes. She feels that it is wrong to assume that a masculine looking learner is lesbian and that a feminine looking learner is heterosexual. The only way that she can identify a lesbian is if the learner personally tells her that she self-identifies as a lesbian.

The extracts above show that some of the participants have a particular idea and understanding of lesbians that are underpinned by claims of behaviour, which is very denounced and sometimes misguided. The participants use certain characteristics, mannerisms and external appearances to identify lesbian learners, which is often incorrect, as there are learners who display these characteristics but do not identify as lesbian. Gender roles, femininity as well as masculinity, play a large role in how the participants identify lesbian learners. It is evident that some teachers are still complicit and have feelings of ‘deviation’ regarding lesbian learners and their behaviour in the school.

#### **4.8. “A lot of them (lesbian learners) are experimenting with this lifestyle”**

Homosexuality is claimed to not be natural, that it is a lifestyle, and that gender non-conforming individuals are experimenting with their sexual orientation (Malory, 2012). Data collected in the study shows that there is a divide amongst teachers, with some believing that the same-sex desiring learners in the school are experimenting with their sexual orientation, others that the learner’s sexuality will not change. The participants were asked the following question: *“Many people say that lesbian and gay learners in single-sex high schools are just going through a passing stage and that they are attracted to girls only because that is the only gender available on a daily basis and that their sexuality will change and will become attracted to the opposite sex when they are older, do you agree or disagree with this thought?”*.

The six extracts below show the participants varied views and perceptions about the same-sex desiring learners sexuality changing post-high school. The participants responded to the question by saying:

***Mrs Eric:** Absolutely, I’ve seen that happen, I know some girls that I knew were gay here and were quite open about it and they aren’t anymore. I’m close with them, some are married and some are in serious relationships with boyfriends, so all of them have changed out of school. So ya, I think it is a passing stage, I think a lot of them are experimenting with their sexuality and finding their place in the world and I think for a*

*lot of them they will just go back to 'normal' relationships. Ms Khuzwayo: That's very true, because most of them are in the adolescence stage and are unsure about what they are doing and they think that sexuality is a trend. That's why I offer them advice that I don't encourage them to live this kind of life because they still don't know or are unsure about their sexuality, they are still young.*

*Mrs Bailey: Oh ya, I've heard that as well, and I've had lots of the learners say that to me. They say because they are not allowed to take a boy home and they say that the first boy they take home has to be the one they are going to get married to... And so they've actually told me that's why they have girlfriends. And then they've actually told me quite openly that how are they going learn how to for example kiss properly if they don't practice...*

Mrs Eric and Ms Khuzwayo's extracts of the contention that same-sex desiring learners are going through a phase because it is a single-sex school, and that it appears as though they believe that because of the pressure associated with having a boyfriend the girls 'settle' for other girls. It is these opinions that cause them to believe that these girls will resume heterosexual relationships when they engage with boys, rendering heterosexual relationships as superior. Mrs Eric in particular confirms that she has seen it happen with all the learners who identified as lesbian while at school, as they are now either in relationships with men or married to men. Overall, these three participants believe that the learners are going through an adolescence and experimental stage, and that their sexual orientation will change and they will be attracted to boy's when they have completed their schooling.

*Mrs Thomas: There are parts that I agree with, I think, I think that teenagers, a lot of teenagers do experiment, trying to discover themselves, but to say that for all teenagers it's going to be a passing stage, I think that's not right.*

Mrs Thomas shares a similar point of view and believes that teenagers experiment with sexual orientation, but it would be wrong to say that all teenagers are experimenting with being lesbians.

*Miss Cele: Oh No, I completely disagree that it's a passing stage... how can attraction be a passing stage? You know, I don't believe it is a passing stage. Love requires a connection, if I have a connection with a woman for 2 years and connection with a man for 6 months it's the same thing. I highly doubt that the learners who identify as lesbians in school change their sexuality when they leave school, not the one that I know, I could be wrong...*

*Mr Blose: I find that very confusing because they only encounter the same-sex for a couple of hours and then they're out there in the wider society swarming with males. Sometimes they socialise with males in buses, there are males in churches and they spend majority of their holidays with males in the house and around the neighbourhood so how do we say it's a passing stage? How do you deduce that?*

*It's very difficult.*

*Mrs. Rajkumar: I think when you see the girls who come here I think you are at that point 13 or 14 years old? I think you might have an idea of whether or not you're attracted to males or females. The learners are becoming more sexually mature so it's not like they will just suddenly by some miracle change at the end of five years of being at high school, I don't think so...*

Three participants, Miss Cele, Mr Blose and Mrs Rajkumar agree that same-sex desiring learners' sexual orientation will not change later in life. Miss Cele in particular argues that for these non-normative or same-sex attracted learners it is not a passing stage, and that lesbianism is not necessarily momentary. Similarly, Mr Blose contends that these learners are in school with girls only for a few hours but outside school they are exposed to men in the wider society with whom they spend a lot of time and therefore it is difficult to deduce that their sexual orientation is a passing phase. Mrs Rajkumar subscribes to an essentialist understanding of sexuality and is of the opinion that the learners are sexually mature and have an idea of whether they are attracted to males or females by the time they come to high school, and is of the opinion that lesbianism is innate.

#### **4.9. Inclusion and exclusion of same-sex desiring learners: How teachers navigate teaching**

Heterosexuality is often compulsory and advocated for in schools in South Africa, making such environments hostile and exclusionary spaces for learners who embody sexual diversity, such hostility being perpetuated through the everyday practices of school life (Reygan, 2019). This theme on inclusion and exclusion of same-sex desiring learners is linked to the third research question, which sought to understand what methods teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners in their classrooms. Participants were asked “*what methods do you use to include or exclude lesbian learners in your lessons?*”

Out of the 17 participants, none stated that they exclude same-sex desiring learners from lessons and other activities within the school:

**Miss Patel** *“Well, whenever you’re referring to gender I would say ‘Your future husband or wife’ you have to include both sexes as you never know what student is sitting in your class.”*

**Miss Cele:** *“Well, I strongly believe in inclusivity, but I don’t particularly single out the lesbian learners, but I make sure that when I teach I speak about the LGBTIQ community, I make examples of Mrs and Mrs so and so buy a car for x price... you know? I don’t only make husband and wife examples. My learners know that I am very open minded. I make sure that I create that platform for everyone to share their opinion without the fear of judgement.”*

Miss Patel and Miss Cele’s responses show that they make an effort to include lesbian learners and the LGBTIQ+ community in their lessons by using language that does not exclude any learners. Liang and Cohrssen (2020) assert that it is important for teachers to make an effort to identify opportunities to include same-sex attracted and gender diverse people in teaching, whatever the subject may be, and that discussions in the classroom should challenge gender stereotypes and assumptions that are around heteronormativity where heterosexuality is the norm. Mr Sibiya and Mrs Bailey expressed the importance of treating the learners equally as their method of inclusion.

**Mr Sibiya:** *When they are in my class, I treat them as my learners, I don’t treat them any differently, to me they are all girls, I don’t even address them as ladies, I simply say, girl. They know that the way, because once I start giving preferential treatment the problem will start, so when they are in class I treat them the same.* **Mrs Bailey:** *By treating them like normal, if like I say I want four volunteers, I’d be giving them the choice to put their hand up, I’m never going to in anyway exclude them. This is a hypothetical situation, so like for example if I had a class where nobody in the class knew there was a lesbian, from my lessons they would never learn that she’s a lesbian If I was the only one who knew they would never know because I would treat her like everybody else....*

Mr Sibiya and Mrs Bailey indicated that they treat all the learners the same, with Mr Sibiya particularly stating that he would never give preferential treatment to any learner. Mrs Bailey ensures that she protects the identities of non-normative genders by not discussing their sexual orientation with others. She appears to be diplomatic in her response as to how she ensures that learners’ sexual orientation remains confidential, thereby protecting them from any form of alienation or exclusion. Mr Sibiya and

Mrs Bailey's understanding of inclusion was merely limited to fair treatment, whereas Miss Patel and Miss Cele made an effort to make their lessons inclusive in the way in which they present their lessons to the learners. Bhana (2012) notes that when teachers are committed to teaching, all students change, and transformation can occur. The extracts above show how much the teachers are attempting to teach all students, and that they have different methods of including same-sex desiring learners in their lessons.

#### **4.10. "Will they change?": School Environment, Homophobic Teachers and safety**

Covert and overt homophobic, heterosexist comments and behaviours have the potential to create negative schooling environments for particularly same-sex desiring learners (Johnson, 2014). This theme emanates from the literature review in Chapter 2 as well as from the data collected in this study. This theme mainly seeks to understand if the school provides a safe environment for all learners, and to understand if it has homophobic teachers. A sub-theme that has been included within this theme sought to reveal the recommendations and intervention strategies that have been made by the participants regarding the teachers negative attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners.

The participants were asked if they believe that the school that they teach at provides a safe environment for all learners, including same-sex desiring learners. Some indicating that they believe that it was not a completely a safe environment for learners, particularly same-sex desiring learners, as indicated in the extracts.

**Interviewer:** *Do you believe that the school provides a safe environment for all learners, including same-sex desiring learners?*

**Mrs. Thomas:** *No*

**Interviewer:** *Why do you say that?*

**Mrs. Thomas:** *No, I think a lot of girls get victimised by other learners and I think sometimes by the staff too.*

**Interviewer:** *Victimised how?*

**Mrs. Thomas:** *I definitely don't think there's a safe space for learners, and I don't think a lot of the girls feel safe even approaching teachers or staff.*

**Interviewer:** *And what do you think could possibly be the reason for this?*

**Mrs. Thomas:** *I think the fear of being judged and confidentiality. They freely say things that have come from learners for example their home life and maybe what they are going through.*

Mrs Thomas shares that she believes that the school is not a safe space or environment for learners because they do not feel safe approaching teachers or staff members in the school as they fear being judged and that their confidentiality will be breached as some teachers speak openly about the learners' private issues. *"If these learners are not afforded support from peers and teachers, where else can they get support from? How else can school be more meaningful for them? Schooling for queer learners in contexts such as these is oppressive"* (Msibi, 2012, p.525). Teachers need to reflect on how they are complicit and how the lack of trust between teachers and learners has the potential to create negative schooling experiences for learners, which will hinder them from reaching their fullest potential as they fear that they will be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Mr Blose shared a similar sentiment: **Interviewer:** *Do you believe that the school provides a safe environment for all learners, including same-sex desiring learners?*

**Mr. Blose:** *I believe the school does, however, I do think that we need to adjust our attitudes, especially to the sexual preferences of our learners. It is what they choose and it is not up to us to try and influence them about this. When I say that, I say that because we can treat them adversely because we say that we want them to be normal or we can say things that make them uncomfortable and yet, it has nothing to do with us.*

Mr Blose does believe that the school is a safe environment for learners to a certain extent, with the only issue being teachers attitudes towards the learners sexual preferences. He feels that the teachers are to be blamed for creating an unsafe environment because of things that they say that make learners feel uncomfortable about their sexuality, that they are meant to be ally's but in this case are guilty of working against the human and constitutional rights of lesbians at school by being biased.

**Interviewer:** *Do you believe that the school provides a safe environment for all learners, including same-sex desiring learners?*

**Ms Mhlongo:** *It is a safe environment because they have the RCL to report to, they have their grade controllers to report to, whether the teachers are homophobic or not, this environment needs to be neutral, they have myself to report to.*

Contrary to the other teachers perceptions, Ms Mhlongo believes that the school is a safe environment, as there a number of communication channels that are open for the learners to report if they feel unsafe. Channels of communication amongst staff and learners is important, as teachers are able to play an important role in challenging any form of discrimination and maltreatment of same-sex desiring learners, however, it is not clear whether they are effective and work to the benefit of the learners who have a non-normative sexuality.

The participants were asked during the semi-structured interview if they think there are homophobic teachers in the school. The majority of the 17 participants expressed that there were homophobic teachers, their responses were as follows:

**Interviewer:** *Do you think that there are teachers at the school who are homophobic*

**Mrs Thomas:** *Yes*

**Interviewer:** *Really? What makes you say that?*

**Mrs Thomas:** *Because of the way they react when things like that are spoken about?*

**Interviewer:** *What are some of the reactions?*

**Mrs Thomas:** *That its nonsense, a passing phase, it's ridiculous, revolting and that it's disgusting*

**Ms Mhlongo:** *Oh yes, definitely! Absolutely!*

**Interviewer:** *What are some of the things that they say or do that makes you think that they are homophobic?*

**Ms Mhlongo:** *They say it's because of religious purposes and how they have been brought up, they are against these kind of relationships.*

**Interviewer:** *What kind of things do they say?*

**Ms Mhlongo:** *Naughty kids, don't know what they are doing, attention seeking, rebelling against culture...*

Mrs Thomas and Ms Mhlongo both agree that there are homophobic teachers in the school, which is seen through comments that they make about same-sex desiring learners about how they do not know what they are doing, and that it is ridiculous and disgusting, amongst other things. Ms Mhlongo in particular mentions that teachers are homophobic due to their religions and how they have been brought up are completely against homosexual relationships. (Bhana, 2012, p.313) states that “*religion amongst South Africans is a dominant means through which homosexuality was subordinated and denounced as sinful*”. Moreover, Ms Mhlongo also mentions that the homophobic teachers believe that the homosexual learners are rebelling against culture. Religion and culture as mentioned in Chapter 2 and in the theme titled “*The role of culture and religion on teachers' perceptions of same-sex desiring learners*” and are seen as a powerful means to expound that non-normative is abnormal and unnatural, with results in teachers hiding their homophobia by using culture and religion as a shield.

Furthermore, Mr Sibiya had this to say:

**Mr Sibiya:** *So many, there are sooo many...*



**Interviewer:** *What are some of the things that they say or do that makes you think that they are homophobic?*

**Mr Sibiya:** *Like commenting on the lesbian learners behaviour, that they can't sit properly, they make comments about how the learners are trying to behave like men, even at the sports field when soccer is being played, they comment on their legs and say they look like men's legs.*

Mr Sibiya specifically expressed that the many homophobic teachers at the school make comments about the same-sex desiring learners behaviour, and that they are trying to behave like men, also making comments about their outward appearance. It is clear from Mr Sibiya's account that teachers in the school discriminate against lesbian learners and make homophobic and heteronormative comments. Mrs Edgar, on the other hand, believes that she is able to identify homophobic teachers because she is not homophobic, and narrates upon a situation where teachers asked her to deal with a discipline issue that had to do with lesbian learners, which she seemed uncomfortable to deal with.

**Interviewer:** *Do you think that there are teachers at the school who are homophobic?*

**Mrs Edgar:** *Uhm, I think there are... I think there are, not many...*

**Interviewer:** *What are some of the things that they say or do that makes you think that they are homophobic?*

**Mrs Edgar:** *I pick it up because I'm not homophobic... I was thrown into a discipline situation a few years ago, with parents, grandparents, fathers, a group of lesbian learners... I could actually pick out that the teachers were not comfortable dealing with this discipline situation and they literally left me to do it.*

Although Mrs Edgar expresses that she is not homophobic, as she was able to deal with a discipline issue in the school that involved lesbian learners, however, this contradicts some of her responses about same-sex desiring relationships throughout the interview. She consistently expressed that she was totally against same-sex relationships, as her religion subscribes to the belief that they are ungodly and unnatural, rendering her utterance of not being homophobic being questionable. Mrs Edgar appears to be conflicted between her religious beliefs and her teaching responsibilities.

It is evident from the participants accounts that teachers at the school are homophobic, but that is covert and has not been directed at the learners. Negative attitudes and perceptions regarding same-sex desiring learners do exist amongst some teachers, which is a cause for concern and can possibly lead to outwards expression of homophobia.

### **a) Participants recommendations and intervention strategies**

After participants were asked to share if they know of any teachers who are homophobic and what they do or say that makes the participants believe that to be the case, they were asked what they think can be done to change the negative attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. The responses varied, and while many felt that nothing can be done to change the homophobic teachers negative attitudes, some indicated that various strategies could be implemented. The participants were asked the following question, “*What do you think can be done to change the negative attitudes that teachers have towards lesbian learners?*”. The participants responses were as follows:

**Mrs Eric:** *In their mind they have grown up feeling like that, if there are people like that, I don't know what's going to change. I don't think the school can change anything, honestly, I don't think the school can change their attitude...*

**Mrs Bailey:** *To be honest, I don't, I don't know if they will change. Will they change? No matter what I may say to them. If you maybe expose them to some program, like some sort of documentary, I don't know, I think people have these ideas in their head and they stick to it, I honestly don't think you can change that, If they are against homosexuality, no matter what you do, they will stay against it but they must not bring it into the classroom, into the workplace.*

**Mrs Fischer:** *You see? Can one? Can one? Because we all have different filters, the filter is culture, the filter is religion, the filter is an old mindset. Therefore, we cannot change things. You can debate it as much as you want. I think we just have to accept the fact that they have their own opinion. They have no right to expose the opinion to violate anybody else's human right. But at the end of the day, sometimes it's time for people to leave....*

**Ms Mhlongo:** *People who have a negative attitude towards certain people with a certain lifestyle never change. You could waste your energy on those. But I must be honest, if those teachers treat those learners unfairly, those teachers will go through disciplinary hearings.*

Mrs Eric, Mrs Bailey, Mrs Fischer and Ms Mhlongo were part of the group of participants who do not believe anything can be done to change the negative attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. The three felt that the homophobic teachers have fixed ideas regarding non-normative sexuality that cannot be changed. Mrs Fischer in particular expresses that religion, culture and an old mindset are an influence on the negative attitudes. Mrs Bailey, Mrs Fischer and Mhlongo believe that those negative

attitudes should not in any way be brought into the classroom, and should not violate anybody's human rights or lead to the unfair treatment of learners.

**Miss Cele:** *Nothing really, people are stuck in their ways... it is very hard to change a grown adults mind... But on a more optimistic note, perhaps having more staff development workshops that deal with issues of sexuality and tolerance, maybe it will be a wake-up call for those homophobic teacher to understand that lesbian learners are the as any other human being... They have no right to judge or to discriminate against them... their job is to teach them, they must look beyond sexuality.*

**Mr Blose:** *The issue is on teaching, people need to be taught. First of all, you need to be taught that someone else's sexual orientation is private. It has nothing to do with you. Secondly, you need to actually be taught that there will be different people to you and you need to be able to accept them as they are. You also need to be taught that you are not always right, your certain way of thinking with the years needs to be progressive and you need to actually acknowledge your own shortcoming in what you've been taught, in what you believe in. That allows for a mature and a progressive learning environment. In staff development we need to engage in such conversations, we must never run away from them...*

**Mr Sibiya:** *You see in staff development, they jump into conflict management, financial management as if those are the most important areas of concern. Although I believe that there are other areas that need to be covered like such topics... People will be taught the fact that we are living in a world where one is exposed to this, I think that would help a lot.*

On the other hand, Miss Cele, Mr Blose and Mr Sibiya felt that the teachers negative attitudes regarding same-sex desiring learners can possibly be changed through staff development workshops on non-normative sexualities so that their negative attitudes towards non-normative sexuality can be deconstructed. The participants felt that challenging problematic stereotypes about same-sex desiring learners is possible if proper training and seminars are conducted.

#### **4.11. Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data that was generated from the semi- structured individual interviews that results in the emergence of nine themes. Although attitudes and perceptions regarding non-normative sexuality and towards same-sex desiring individuals are changing slowly

internationally as well as locally, the data in the study revealed that majority of the participants maintain and carry with them negative attitudes regarding non-normative sexualities. Their attitudes do have an influence on how they are able to include and exclude learners in the classroom as well as in other parts of the school.

Despite the progressive South African constitution and the South African Schools Act that enshrines the non-discrimination of individuals in the LGBTQI+ community, it is evident from the data that the participants lack knowledge about the constitution as well as the bill of rights that are there to protect the learners whom they teach, particularly the same-sex desiring learners. The data revealed that the school does not have a policy that is in place to protect same-sex desiring learners from discrimination, homophobia and negative attitudes within the school environment. Teachers in the study do not deem it necessary for there to be a policy to specifically accommodate same-sex desiring learners who are at risk and vulnerable to the negative attitudes that teachers express and act upon.

The data revealed that the cultural and religious beliefs that the participants subscribe and belong to do influence how the teachers perceive non-normative sexuality, but not necessarily how they perceive the same-sex desiring learners in the school. The varying societies that the participants come from have all had a major influence on how they perceive non-normative sexuality and same-sex desiring learners, this impacted on how they identify same-sex desiring learners even in the school. The participants acknowledge the presence of same-sex desiring learners, however their methods of identifying them is discriminatory. The data also revealed that the teachers lack of understanding of how to engage with same-sex desiring learners in their classrooms as well as the general school setting showed that they don't have any particular methods to navigate their teaching to accommodate those learners. Their responses revealed that it is likely that the affected learners were well aware of the teachers sentiments towards same-sex desiring individuals.

The study revealed that the school environment does have homophobic teachers, and that the majority of the participants felt that the teachers attitudes regarding same-sex desiring learners is negative, although covert. While some had ideas about how to adjust teachers attitudes to be more accommodating, a common belief was that this would be very difficult to do as the basis for these beliefs have cultural and religious foundations that underpin the way that they engage with life in general.

The next and final chapter will discuss the main findings of the study and draw conclusions and will provide a summary of the entire study and will also make recommendation for studies in the future.

## **Chapter 5. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The study aimed to explore how teachers in an urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal perceive same-sex desiring learners and to gain insight into their attitudes towards them. Moreover, the study sought to further explore how teachers navigate their teaching and how they include and/or exclude same-sex desiring learners in their teaching and learning. This chapter provides a summary of this study and thereafter presents the key findings of the research. Recommendations to alleviate discrimination and suggestions for further research are also provided in this chapter.

### **5.2. Summary of research**

My interest to conduct this study emanated from my experience as a high school teacher in a single-sex school as well as my experience as a learner who matriculated from a single-sex school. My observations and experiences revealed that there are teachers who are homophobic and have negative perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in the school. However, this study particularly aimed to explore the attitudes of those teachers who teach in a single-sex school setting as there is a paucity of scholarship in this field of research, particularly as it pertains to teacher attitudes. The study was further motivated by my observations and reading of academic studies that focus on teachers attitudes regarding same-sex desiring learners. It is evident that heteronormativity and homophobia that occurs in society largely has an influence on both teachers and learners who then mirror the same discrimination and homophobia in school because they are products of a society that largely discriminates against same-sex desiring individuals. This study therefore sought to determine how teachers are implicated in perpetuating homophobia within the school.

Chapter 1 outlines the research topic for this study which was, “Teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZuluNatal. This study was carried through by answering three key research questions: (1) What are the perceptions and attitudes that teachers have towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal? (2) How do teachers in a single-sex high school who have same-sex desiring learners in their class navigate their teaching? (3) What strategies do teachers use to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners inside and outside the classroom.

This chapter also discussed the research problem for the study. It further provided background to the study using literature to support it and the motivation behind conducting the study. The research questions, research design and methodology that were to be used for the study were also included.

The second chapter presented extant literature that offered insight into the present-day state of international and South African education environments in relation to non-normative sexual orientation issues. Chapter two also offered the theoretical framework that was used, where the social constructionist theory provided an analytical lens to explore teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners. The literature used in the study revealed that culture and religion in many parts of the world are strong socialising determinants that categorise non-normative sexualities as unnatural and impure and as a result largely influence the rejection and ostracism of non-heterosexual individuals and relationships (McGee, 2016). Moreover, corrective measures are put into place to delegitimize non-normative sexualities in the South African society where particularly black lesbian women are prone to corrective rape and homophobic attacks that are owed to the patriarchal legacy that is deeply rooted in South Africa where heteronormative sentiments prevail (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy & Moletsane, 2012; Msibi, 2009)

Moreover, the literature also revealed that the fact that schools are part of the broader society, educational research reveals that societal constructions about heteronormativity are enforced globally through the daily school activities and social interactions between teachers, learners and the curriculum (Muhanguzi, Bennett & Muhanguzi, 2011). However, the heteronormativity is often enforced implicitly through heteronormative discourse in the classroom and in extra-mural activities and more explicitly through discrimination and harassment. Schools often exert their heteronormativity by regulating aspects of learners lives through dress code, language and control over learner's sexual identities using subtle, internal school legal systems.

Teachers have been reported across the globe to be fostering a holistic and unaccommodating environment for same-sex desiring learners. This is done by passing negative comments about the learner's sexual orientation and by being passive aggressive when it comes to addressing and confronting homophobic bullying in schools (Mollura, 2017). Moreover, teachers are said to spread the ideology that non-normative sexualities are abnormal, this ideology is spread using the covert and overt curriculum. The overt curriculum looks at the intentional curriculum whereas the covert curriculum works through silencing of issues and avoiding conversations linked to sexual orientation and it often endorses heteronormativity (Nichols, 2016)

Co-educational schools are said to interfere with the development of a girl child within society as they impose sexist, heteronormative attitudes by forcing girl children to tolerate masculinist ethos and are denied the opportunity to experiment with other forms of sexuality (Chowdbury, 2010; Morrell, 2000). Single-sex schools on the other hand consider homosexuality as a norm although the construction of many learner's non-normative sexualities is assumed to be an experimental phase which thus leaves the idea that learners will go back to heterosexual relationships after they leave the single-sex school (Mthatyana and Vincent, 2015).

Teachers attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners is critical as teachers are at the realm of creating a safe environment for same-sex desiring learners. However, teachers seemingly remain complicit when it comes to addressing issues of discrimination and homophobia. The reason for the complacency is two-fold, the teachers fear losing their jobs and secondly, they fear that they are not knowledgeable enough to deal with such controversial issues (Taylor and Peter, 2011). Teachers themselves are also considered to be at the centre of the homophobia and discrimination in schools as they also make homophobic comments creating unsafe schooling environments for non-normative learners.

The third chapter presented the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. This chapter provided a comprehensive account of how the field research was carried out. It included a detailed account of the research design, context of the study, sampling of participants, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical considerations, the limitations of the study and how the validity and trustworthiness of the study was upheld and observed in the research. The study used qualitative research to understand the world and why people feel, react and behave in the ways that they do and seek to understand how opinions and attitudes are formed. The study was located within the interpretivist paradigm which enabled me to get a deeper understanding about the teacher's holistic understanding, perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners and how they have multiple socially constructed truths (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

To address the research objectives, the study worked with 17 teachers who worked in one urban single-sex high school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research design and methodology used in this study was presented in this chapter and outlined that qualitative research was used as it sought to understand the participants and why they feel, react and behave in the ways that they do towards same-sex desiring individuals and also sought to understand how their opinions and attitudes are



formed. The study was positioned in the interpretivist paradigm which placed emphasis on understanding the teachers and how they interpret the world around them. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm enabled me as the researcher to elicit the participants multiple socially constructed truths and realities. This paradigm was relevant in understanding teachers' perceptions as it enabled me to get a deeper understanding about the teachers individual and holistic attitude towards same-sex desiring learners. Interpretivism allowed for the participants subjective point of views to emanate.

To generate data to address the research questions I used photo-elicitation, semi-structured interviews and observation as data collection methods. Photo-elicitation was an effective data collection method as it helped to build rapport with the participants and to help elicit responses regarding the participants perceptions and attitudes about same-sex desiring individuals before conducting the semi-structured interviews. In addition to these methods, I used my own field notes for the data generated in the study, which helped to capture non-verbal data. The data analysis was informed by the social constructionist theory which is based on the premise that how people are brought up largely influences the way they view themselves and others around them and is largely influenced by shared assumptions such as culture, religion and backgrounds (Friedman, 2016). The theory has three main principles which are: Knowledge, objective and subjective realities as well as language (Berger and Luckmann, 1996).

Chapter four presented the findings of the study and a discussion of the research findings. This chapter used the social constructionist theory to support or refute findings in the study. Thematic analysis was utilised in order to analyse the data collected during the research. The main research findings are presented in the summary of research findings.

The concluding chapter aims to provide a discussion regarding the research findings, limitations of the study and recommendations for areas that still require further research.

### **5.3. Summary of Research findings and discussion**

The key findings in this study indicate that five themes emerged from the data analysis which sought to address the three research objectives of the study which are, to explore the teachers' **perceptions and attitudes** towards same-sex desiring learners, to understand how these teachers who have same-sex desiring learners in their classes **navigate their teaching**, and the strategies that the teachers use to include or exclude them inside and outside the classroom. The following five key findings emerged from the data analysis. These are (1) Lack of consciousness and understanding regarding the South African constitution and its implementation in the school and in the classroom; (2) Culture and

religion: Factors that influence tolerance or rejection of same-sex desiring individuals; (3) Participant's constructions of femininity and masculinity and societal influences: Impacts on teachers' perceptions of non-normative sexualities; (4) Teachers, covert homophobia and navigating their classroom with same-sex desiring learners (5) Methods of inclusion and exclusion of same-sex desiring learners in the classroom.

### **5.3.1. Lack of consciousness and understanding regarding the South African constitution and its implementation in the school and in the classroom**

The findings of this study revealed that most participants lack knowledge and understanding regarding the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights and how it protects the rights of non-normative individuals. The participants' responses revealed that they determined and practiced their own rules in their classrooms and disregarded the Bill of Rights. Only a few participants showed an in-depth understanding of the South African Constitution and indicated the methods they use in their classroom to implement the Bill of Rights. The teachers were either unaware of any policies within the school that sought to protect lesbian learners or do not believe that there is a need for such policies. The participants indicated a lack of consciousness about the rights of same-sex desiring individuals, which in turn reveals that the participants have negative attitudes regarding the protection of same-sex desiring learners and creating a safe learning environment for them. The rights of heterosexual learners due to heteronormativity are afforded more importance than non-normative genders due to homophobic attitudes.

The findings reveal that some participants in this study find it difficult to navigate their teaching amongst same-sex desiring learners in the classroom. Many of the participants displayed a poor understanding of the policies and laws that seek to protect same-sex desiring individuals. Their lack of understanding of the constitutional rights of same-sex desiring individuals means that they disparage and disregard them even in the classroom thus, exhibiting homophobic attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. Moreover, the participants' inability to manifest the constitution and create a safe and inclusive environment using policy and laws for learners reveals that the teachers do not know how to go about navigating their classrooms and ensuring that they are safe and inclusive for all learners, especially same-sex desiring learners.

### **5.3.2. Culture and religion: Factors that influence tolerance or rejection of same-sex desiring individuals**

The majority of participants subscribed to particular religious beliefs that contributes to their acceptance, judgement and discrimination of non-normative sexualities. Many participants indicated that they are religious and completely reject non-normative sexuality, and used the bible to justify their attitudes and belief systems. According to the participants', the bible's teachings normalizes heterosexuality and assert that it is a constituent of a God-created humanity, with only a few participants not discriminating towards the same-sex desiring community. The participants' beliefs were a result of them being socialized to have heteronormative attitudes and perceptions towards non-normative genders. This theme revealed that although most of the participants subscribed to a particular religious belief the way in which they interpreted their religions differed.

The participants beliefs which are constructed and developed through social interaction (Hunt and Hunt, 2018) have had a major influence on how they perceive same-sex desiring learners. Religious influence as per the research objective 'understanding teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners. The religious values and beliefs that the participants live by, have led to many of the teachers to reject homosexuality and develop negative attitudes regarding non-normative sexualities. Although the teachers have not said that they specifically have a problem teaching same-sex desiring learners, their negative and intolerant attitudes towards non-normative sexualities reveals that they may not realise that their heteronormative notions are a form of knowledge that is kept and maintained through social interactions which may affect how they perceive learners and how they may include or exclude learners in their classrooms.

### **5.3.3. Participant's constructions of femininity and masculinity and societal influences:**

#### **Impacts of teachers' perceptions of non-normative sexualities**

The participants revealed that there was a particular expectation of how girl and boy children should dress, these expectations reinforcing gender stereotypes and gender roles. The responses from majority of the participants revealed how the social construction of gender has largely influenced their attitudes regarding the distinction between males and females, and shows a rejection of anything that does not conform to societal norms. Appropriate clothing for the participants was closely linked to gender identification and a way to identify whether someone was gay or lesbian. The constructs are created by the societies that the participants come from, with very few being willing to adapt and disrupt the traditional gender roles and expectations, those who are unwilling to adapt show a clear

non-acceptance of same-sex desiring individuals. The interviews showed that many participants had ways of identifying lesbians, these often being mannerisms that were associated with males and masculinity. The participants expressed that the learners' expression of their sexual identity in a way that portrayed men was unacceptable for female learners. Almost all the participants stereotyped the lesbian learners by identifying them using certain characteristics, mannerisms and external appearances, highlighting the gender stereotypes that exist in society.

Societal attitudes towards non-normative sexualities vary across cultures and societies, with the participants revealing that the communities that they come from prohibit non-normative sexualities to the extent that the lives of same-sex desiring people are at risk. Their unaccepting attitudes to non-normative sexualities was taught to them in their various socialisation settings, namely, families, schools and their communities. The negative attitudes and non-acceptance of same-sex desiring individuals was taught to them through homophobic attitudes and violence, with the issues that affect same-sex desiring individuals being silenced.

#### **5.3.4. Teachers' covert homophobia and navigating their classroom with same-sex desiring learners**

Some participants felt that there were homophobic teachers in the school, although none of them declared to being homophobic. The majority of participants were non-accepting of same-sex desiring individuals or their relationships. The participants revealed that the so-called homophobic teachers believed that the same-sex desiring learners are rebelling against culture and religion and are trying to behave like men, and use that as a justification to dislike the learners, seeing the learners as social agitators rather than simply being different. The homophobia was further revealed when one of the participants detailed how she had to deal with a case that involved lesbian learners that other teachers did not want to get involved in. The contradiction in the participants responses reveals that some teachers are homophobic, but display it subtly and covertly, and did not direct it at the learners.

The participants indicated that they did not believe that anything can be done to change the negative attitudes that the homophobic teachers harbour due to their having fixed ideas regarding non-normative sexualities. However, some felt that certain interventions, such as having staff development workshops regarding non-normative sexualities, could change their perceptions and negative attitudes.

The participants all agreed that if teachers have negative attitudes that should not in any way infiltrate the classroom and their teaching. When this finding is compared to that of Bhana (2012) who found that teachers harbour homophobic attitudes it is evident that homophobia is pervasive amongst the teachers. Also, covert homophobic attitudes are apparent in many of the participants, it is no wonder that teachers are portrayed as perpetrators of homophobic victimization (Msibi, 2012; Francis & Msibi, 2011).

The study revealed that many participants in the study were either unfamiliar with the discourse that is used to describe learners who identify as same-sex desiring or those that they perceive to be same-sex desiring. The participants unfamiliarity with the correct discourse resulted in many of them using pronouns that dehumanised the same-sex desiring learners or even using derogatory words to refer to same-sex desiring individuals. The silencing and the incorrect usage of terms shows an underlying disregard of the same-sex desiring learners as well as fuels further discrimination of learners in the school who identify as same-sex desiring. The usage of pronouns and derogatory words can easily be used in the presence of same-sex desiring learners and thus reveal the true negative and homophobic attitudes that the teachers carry with them in the school environment.

### **5.3.5. Methods of inclusion and exclusion of same-sex desiring learners in the classroom**

Varying attitudes and methods that the participants used to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners is evident. Many participants expressed that they do not have any particular methods or strategies to include or exclude same-sex desiring learners in their classrooms, according to them many stated that they treated all the learners in the same way regardless of sexual orientation. The fair or equal treatment of learners showed that the teachers had a very limited understanding of the strategies that they can use to accommodate learners of non-normative sexualities within the classroom. The neutral stance that the participants have chosen to take reveals that they intentionally fail to acknowledge the importance of ensuring that all the learners are included in their lessons and are accommodated. The lack of effort that many of the teachers put in to ensuring that learners are accommodated in their classrooms and lessons can be interpreted as exclusion. However, two teachers in particular indicated that they plan their lessons in such a way that when they make examples in the classroom they challenge heteronormativity or any gender or sexual discrimination, in that way the same-sex desiring learners would feel included in the lessons. The thought process behind preparing their lessons reveals that they acknowledge and understand that the overt curriculum is non-inclusive of non-normative sexualities. The data in this study showed that many teachers still need to develop

and in-depth understanding of non-normative sexualities and the challenges that nonnormative learners face in the society at large so that they can challenge those societal norms in a way that is inclusive of same-sex desiring learners.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made as a result of the study findings:

- Teachers need to be educated about how to be accepting of learners who have diverse sexual identities as well as people in general who are same-sex desiring, as the constitution clearly enshrines their rights and moreover mandates them to not discriminate against same-sex desiring individuals. By working in such environments, the teachers must accept that their personal opinions, attitudes and behaviour may not override the learners' constitutional rights. As a microcosm of society, schools need to be mindful of the social environment around them, and to ensure that they not only teach subjects, but engage with the learners in a manner that prepares them to be active and critical participants of their societies while they are at school and on completion. Moreover, academic institutions that train teachers need to specifically address the social, economic and political environments that South African students live in to prepare the teachers to be non-judgmental and non-discriminatory reformers in whichever schools they find themselves in to avoid carrying with them homophobic attitudes in their schools.
- As part of an ongoing curriculum reform process in South Africa, issues need to be identified that affect learners lives to ensure that it is incorporated across various subjects, and not just confined to those such as Life Orientation, where it is often left to the discretion and capability of the teachers to decide what depth of topics to cover. In all subjects where examples include people's lives, issues related to non-normative sexualities, as well as diverse social, cultural and religious beliefs and practices need to be included to expose learners to those who may be different to them to engender tolerance.
- More research needs to be conducted in single-sex schools to establish if the challenges of the same-sex desiring learners are the same as those in co-educational schools, where studies have been conducted. As the country moves away from the laws preventing people from living their authentic lives, the extent to which this is happening, single-sex schools needs to also be monitored to establish the nature and extent of any associated challenges that the learners may face.

- Schools need to develop a code of conduct that seek to protect learners who may be different from what the school regards as normal in any way, including same-sex desiring learners, to prevent discrimination and abuse by teachers as well as learners.
- Schools need to have clear mechanisms in place to assist same-sex desiring learners to navigate the school environment, such as teachers who are dedicated to addressing issues related to discrimination of any sort that contravenes people's rights. Having a school champion who can take up their issues, as well as those of other minority groups, will not only conscientize the learners and teachers about everyone's rights, but indicate to all those involved in the school that it takes issues of social responsibility seriously.
- Studies need to be conducted with same-sex desiring learners as well as their teachers in single-sex schools to enable an understanding of how they perceive or relate to each other, and to recommend ways of addressing areas of challenge. This could assist in informing policy documents and support mechanisms for schools who do not have the capacity or knowledge about how to provide a supportive environment for all learners, irrespective of their race, religion, creed or sexuality.
- As the study was only conducted at one school in the province, similar studies need to be conducted in both urban, township and rural environments to establish how same-sex desiring learners experience schooling in different settings, and the implications for learners completing their education, specifically in very traditional societies where such sexual orientations are not tolerated.

## 5.5. Conclusion

The researcher came to the realisation that although the participants teach in an urban single-sex school, the discriminatory and homophobic attitudes appear to be similar to those reported in the township and rural co-educational schools in South Africa. The participants lack of consciousness and understanding of the learners human rights is concerning, and resulted in poor attitudes towards issues affecting same-sex desiring learners, who should not be treated any differently from other learners in terms of being accepted and treated appropriately. School learners are in subordinate power positions in schools where they are required to follow the school rules and have little opportunity to challenge adult authority. This then puts the learners at a disadvantage in terms of ensuring that they are treated fairly and are not discriminated against. In the absence of having equal power in such settings, the schools should ensure that they protect learners' rights, and have mechanisms in place that optimize

and foster a positive learning environment for all the learners, irrespective of their race, religion, creed or their sexual orientation. If schools are to prepare future leaders, and equip them to drive the implementation of the constitution, the schools needs to do so holistically and not selectively, and not teach subjects out of context of the world in which learners live, as it is the application of knowledge through critical reflections that creates accepting individuals who ensure that they uphold the Bill of Rights in their families, communities and work environment. If South Africa is to be a welcoming place for all, the only way in which that can happen is addressing issues in schools and this can be reflected in how teachers behave and treat learners. Shaping the minds of all learners needs to ensure that schools are places of learning for all who desire to be there, without discrimination and prejudice, with teachers being critical role players in not only upholding their profession, but being representatives of the broader communities from which they come. Although the study was conducted in only one school in KwaZulu-Natal, it raises major issues that need to be addressed in other schools, across the city and the Province, and highlights the extent to which more needs to be done to ensure that the Bill of Rights is implemented at all levels of society, more especially at schools.



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## APPENDIX A: LETTER OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL



14 September 2020

Miss Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo (215040999)  
School Of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Miss Ngcobo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001888/2020

Project title: Teachers perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal

Degree: Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 30 July 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid until 14 September 2021.

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

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

## APPENDIX B:LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW TEACHERS AT SCHOOL

14 June 2020

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

### RE: REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo and I am a student at the University of KwaZulu- Natal. I am currently in the process of studying towards my Master's degree at the aforementioned University. In order to complete my Master's dissertation, I am required by the University to conduct research on a particular topic.

I would like to invite you and the educators from your school to take part in the research project titled: *'Teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex school in KwaZulu-Natal.*

This study aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions that teachers have towards same-sex desiring learners and how they navigate their teaching with same-sex desiring learners in their classrooms.

I therefore write this letter to you to humbly request permission from you to interview **20 educators** from your school. I assure you that the name of the school and any of the information discussed with me by the educators from your school will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be utilised strictly for the purpose of this study.

Due to COVID-19 regulations the research will be conducted remotely and telephonically with the participants through platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Whatsapp video calls.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Should you have any further questions I will be happy to answer any of those questions or concerns that you may have at that time:

You may contact me at my email address: 215040999@stu.ukzn.ac.za ■ r ■■■■■■■■■■

You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Bronwynne Anderson on her email: AndersonB1@ukzn.ac.za or on her telephone (031) 260 3671

I await your most favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely  
Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo

---

## APPENDIX C: PRINCIPALS APPROVAL AND CONSENT

Please fill in and return this page. You may keep the letter above for future reference purposes:

**PRINCIPALS CONSENT FORM APPROVING REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Title of the study: Teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners in four urban single sex schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

Researcher: Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo  
Supervisor: Dr. Bronwynne Anderson

Name of school:

Name and Surname of the Principal:

Contact number of the Principal:

- I hereby give free and informed consent, allowing those teachers from my school who wish to participate in the study to participate in the above research study.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from the participation of teachers in my school.

Signature:  4/06/2020

SCHOOL STAMP

## **APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO PARTICIPANT REQUESTING PARTICIPATION**

22 June 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

### **RE: LETTER TO THE TEACHERS REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW THEM**

My name is Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo and I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal studying towards my Masters Degree. As a big part of my own personal professional development and progress as an individual, I have taken it upon myself to start writing my dissertation to complete my Masters Degree.

The aim of this study that I am embarking on is to explore Teachers attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners. Furthermore, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding on how teachers who have those same-sex desiring learners in their classes navigate their teaching.

I therefore, humbly request that you participate in this study. I will be conducting individual semistructured interviews and they will be audio-taped and transcribed with your permission. Should you accept my request, as a participant you have the right to withdraw from this study at any moment or point that you desire to do so. Moreover, all the information discussed and disclosed during the interviews will only be used purely for the purpose of this study and will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will also be utilised in order to ensure anonymity.

Participants are requested to sign an informed consent form which aims to indicate that you have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

I thank you in advance for your assistance

Yours faithfully  
Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo

  
Email address: [Amanda.ngcobo45@gmail.com](mailto:Amanda.ngcobo45@gmail.com)



## APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Date: 22 June 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo and I am a M.Ed student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZuluNatal. I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in a study that I am undertaking as a part of my degree.

A brief description of the study is as follows:

This is a qualitative study; the data collection method of this study will be a semi-structured interview as the study will be located within the interpretivist paradigm. Data will be required from teachers. The study is expected to enroll 20 participants at 1 site

**The title of the study is:** Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

This research aims to explore teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards same-sex desiring learners in urban single-sex schools.

The method in which the data will be collected is through individual semi-structured interviews which will be conducted at a venue that is suitable to you.

#### **Please note that:**

1. Confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld at all times.
2. The interviews will be approximately be between 45 minutes - 1 hour long. These times can be altered to suit your timetable and schedule. Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
3. You have the choice to participate, not participate or to stop participating in the research at any time that you feel you no longer want to continue. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
4. Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
5. An audio recorder will be used (of which permission will be requested from you first) for the interview sessions. An audio recorder is useful to capture your exact words, strengthening the trustworthiness of the study.
6. After collection of data recordings and transcriptions will be validated with you by sending through both the transcripts and recordings of both the sessions.
7. A report on the findings will also be emailed to you at your discretion.

The study is not designed in to create any stress or anxiety but if your participation gives rise to any anxiety or stress then you may contact the psychologist who is based at the Edgewood campus:

Her telephone number is (031) 2603653

Email address: ngubanel@ukzn.ac.za.

For further information, you may contact my supervisor.

Dr. Bronwynne Anderson

Tel: (031) 2602371 Email: AndersonB1@ukzn.ac.za

You may contact the HSSREC Research Office for any complaints and/or concerns through email: on the following email address.

E-mail: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Thanking you in advance for your valuable contribution to this research. Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo

.....

Email: 215040999@stu.ukzn.ac.za

████████████████████

**Please sign the declaration on the following page:**

**DECLARATION**

I..... (Full names of participant) have been informed about the study entitled '*Teachers' perceptions and towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high schools in KwaZulu-Natal*'.

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I hereby **consent/do not consent** to an audio recording the individual interview sessions. (Please mark your selection with an **X**)

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

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

## APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Interview Schedule Introduction:

1. Thank the interviewee for participation
2. Personal introduction: I introduce myself
3. I explain the purpose of the research which is to generate information pertaining to the participant's perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in urban single-sex schools in KwaZulu-Natal
4. Stress CONFIDENTIALITY and anonymity of the school and the participant and seek consent to RECORD the interview.

### Interview questions:

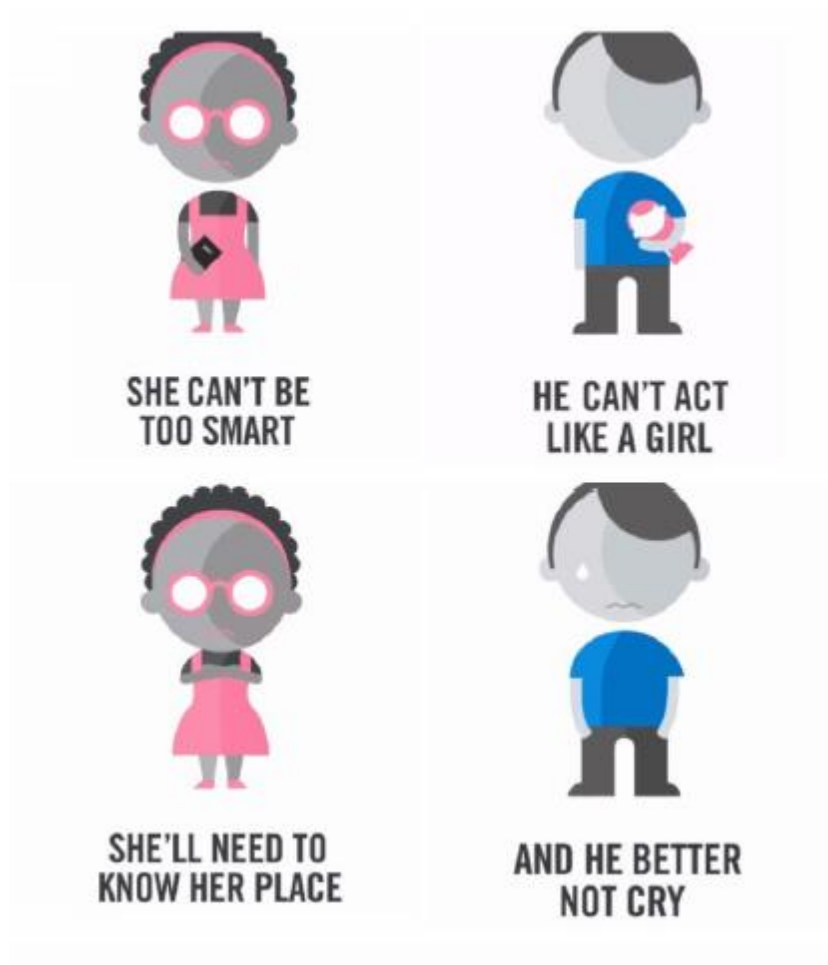
- Please can you tell me about yourself, your name, age, race, gender and where you live/d.

Can you please tell me a bit about your background? (Where did you grow up? Your family life as a young person. Who did you live with? Explain

- • Were there many rules while you were growing up as a male/ female?
- • What were you told about the opposite sex?
- • What were you taught about sex and gender as a young person?
- • How many years have you been a teacher? How has your experience been so far?
- • Do you think that all people, for example people of different races, gender, and sexuality, should be treated equally? Why do you say so?
- • Were you taught anything at home or school or in your community about people who are not heterosexual? Explain, how did you feel about it? Have your views / attitudes changed about what you were told?
- • A lot of people say that being a lesbian/gay is unnatural/un-African/evil/demonic? Do you agree with them? Explain
- • What are your feelings towards those who identify as same-sex desiring individuals? A lot of people are of the opinion that lesbian and gay / same-sex desiring people are not normal, deviant, evil, not of God?
- • Do you think celebrities are bad and harmful role models for children? Explain
- • This is a single-sex school. Do you have or have you observed same-sex desiring / gay/lesbian learners in your school?
- • What is your attitude towards gay/lesbian learners in the school in which you teach at?
- • How do you identify a gay/lesbian learner at your school? Explain
- • Do some or all of them self-identify as gay/lesbian?
- • Are they open about it?
- • A lot of people believe that lesbian/gay learners have certain mannerisms and physical characteristics, as they talk/dress/walk differently, what is your opinion on this?
- • Religion often calls homosexuals 'evil' and that they are sinners and that the only belief is that man was made for woman and vice versa. Do you agree with this statement and why do you say so?
- • Many teachers that I know of say that the lesbian and gay learners in their single-sex schools are just going through a passing stage and that they are attracted to girls only/boys only because that is the only gender that is available on a daily basis and that they see at school and that they will change their sexuality and become attracted to the opposite sex again when they are older and they are in university. Do you agree or disagree?
- • Have you heard about the term 'homophobia'? What do you think it means?
- • Are there teachers at your school that are openly homophobic? What about you? what things do they say or do that makes you think that they are homophobic?
- • Do you believe that the school that you teach at provides a safe environment for all learners? If so, how does it provide a safe environment, including non-normative sexuality learners? if not, how is the school an unsafe environment for them?

- • Research has been done in a lot of South African schools, the results in those studies show that learners, more in particular lesbian and gay learners are not safe. Do you agree or disagree with these findings? Explain
- • Several studies show that lesbian/gay learners get bullied, name called, harassed sexually by teachers. Does this happen at your school?
- • Do you feel comfortable teaching a lesbian/gay learner in your classroom?
- • Do you think that having a gay/lesbian learner in your class affects your teaching? Explain
- • Do lesbian/gay learners participate in extra-mural activities? What activities are they involved in?
- • There have been a few cases that lesbian/gay learners have been found in the toilets and in secluded places in the school kissing or even having sex. What do you think about this? Has this happened in your school? Explain.
- • I've heard teachers say that they avoid any communication with lesbian/gay learners and that as long as they are well-behaved and quiet in class they don't mind teaching them. What do you think about this?
- • As a teacher what methods do you use to include/exclude lesbian/gay learners in your lessons and in other activities in school?
- • What role do single-sex high schools play in limiting or controlling sexuality, especially amongst teenagers?
- • About 27 students were suspended from uMthwalume high school a few years ago on the basis of their sexuality, what do you think about this? Would you say this is fair?
- • The South African constitution protects the rights of gays and lesbians. Do you agree with this and why do you say so? So how do you implement the Bill of Rights at your school and in your classroom?
- • Each and every school according to SASA is meant to have policies that protects learners, many teachers say that the policies are there for formality sake and is not followed through/practiced. Is there any policy in your school that formally protects lesbian/gay learners in your school? If so, how is it implemented and followed through?
- What do you think can be done to change the negative attitudes that teachers have towards lesbian/gay learners in their schools? Provide some suggestions if you would like to.

## APPENDIX G: PHOTOELICITATION IMAGES/PHOTOS



*Photo 1. Thoughts about boys and girls*



*Photo 2. Image of a boy wearing a dress*



*Photo 3. LGBTQIA+ FLAG*

## **South Africa: Suspended 'lesbian' learners' back at school**

Mar 05, 2013

About 27 students, suspended from UMthwalume high school, on suspicion that they are homosexuals, have been allowed back in school. This was a result of a meeting between parents of suspended learners, the school governing body and the Department of Education of Ugu Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal

*Photo 4. South Africa: Suspended Lesbian Learners Back At School*

## Desmond Tutu's daughter leaves clergy after marrying female partner

### Mpho Tutu-van Furth says move was forced on her as the South African Anglican church does not recognise her marriage

Harriet Sherwood *Religion correspondent*

@harrietsherwood

Tue 24 May 2016 10 30 BST



Mpho Tutu and her wife, Prof Marceline van Furth, at their home in Cape Town, South Africa. Photograph: Foto24/Getty Images

The daughter of one of the world's best-known Christian leaders has given up her right to officiate as a priest in South Africa following marriage to her female partner.

*Photo 5. Desmond Tutu's daughter leaves clergy after marrying female partner*

## SIYASHADISA! SA CELEBS DAZZLE IN WHITE AT SOMIZI & MOHALE'S WEDDING

Somizi Mhlongo and Mohale Motaung had their white wedding at a secret location on Thursday and the list of guests naturally included the country's top famous faces.



*Somizi Mhlongo and Mohale Motaung. Picture: Mohale Motaung/Instagram. Lungelo Matangira*

JOHANNESBURG - All white outfits - check. Red bottom shoes - check. Secret location - check. South Africa's most famous gay couple tied the knot today and celebs showed off their stunning outfits on social media. Somizi Mhlongo and Mohale Motaung had their white wedding at a secret location on Thursday and the list of guests naturally included the country's top famous faces

*Photo 6. Somizi and Mohhales wedding*



## APPENDIX H: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

*Interview no. 4 03/12/2020*

**Pseudonym: Ms. Lisa Cele** Time: 00: 36: 54

Interviewer: Thank you so much Ms. Cele for agreeing to participate in this study my name is Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo. My study is based on teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school. The study will be conducted at this school with 20 participants. So I would like to emphasize that everything that we discuss today will be kept between you and I, you will be given a pseudonym. You've already given me permission to record this interview. Please can you tell me a bit about yourself, what is your name, how old are you and your ethnicity. Ms. Lisa

Cele: Okay, My name is Lisa Cele, I'm 27 years old and I'm an African. Interviewer: Your gender?

Ms. Lisa Cele: I'm a female

Interviewer: Do you subscribe to any religion?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes, I am a Christian Interviewer:

Your economic class? Ms. Lisa Cele: Uhm middle, I think

Interviewer: Where do you currently live?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Ashley, in Pinetown

Interviewer: Is it a rural, urban or township area?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Urban area

Interviewer: How many years have you been a teacher?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Umm... 4 years

Interviewer: How has your experience been so far?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Well I would say it has been quite good. I was fortunate enough to get a job at such a school, its every teachers dream to teach at a school with resources. I learn new things every day, about myself as well as about being an educator. The kids are amazing, they work hard which makes my job all the more easier. Interviewer: Which grades do you teach?

Ms. Lisa Cele: All, grade 8-12...

Interviewer: Can you please tell me a bit about your background? Where did you grow up? What was Your family life like as a younger person. Who did you live with?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Well I grew up in Pietermaritzburg, a very rural part of Pietermaritzburg about 40 minutes away from the CBD... Uhm, I grew up in quite a small family as I lived with my mom, aunt, grandmother, as well as my cousins... I spent about 4 years of my life in Pmb up until my mom got a job in Durban and we moved and I started my schooling in Durban. I had a comfortable life, despite the fact that my mom didn't earn much, I got everything that I needed and I didn't struggle at all. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately my father was not in my life at all, so it was just mom and I, so I learnt the importance of being independent as a woman, I learnt the importance of not depending on anyone, especially men. My mother also encouraged me to focus on my school work in order for me to be able to make a success of myself.

### **Photoelicitation Photo 1**

Interviewer: So I'm just going to show you a few pictures , please just tell me what you think about them..

So what do you think about this picture?

Ms. Lisa Cele: I believe that all these statements are stereotypes, such as "she can't be too smart", why can't she be too smart? You know... this kind of mentality is harmful to girl children because they grow up thinking that they aren't smart and that their male counterparts are smarter than them which is wrong.

Uhm, why can't he cry? Not crying and expressing yourself would mean that you aren't human... no, I don't agree with all these statements, they are pure stereotypes, that's it!

### **Photo 2**

Interviewer: What do you think about this? Ms.

Lisa Cele: Cute, very cute (giggles) Interviewer: why do you say so?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Well the child looks very happy, he's smiling. I see nothing wrong with him wearing a dress. However, I know a lot of people would be against a boy wearing typical female clothing.

Interviewer: Why would they be against it?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Well because of societies expectations... society would not approve of a boy wearing a dress, to societies eyes it is completely wrong because society has expectations about what a boy should dress like and behave like and what a girl should dress like and behave like. The society does not approve of such. Although we do have many, many cross dressers in South Africa as well as internationally, so I think slowly those gendered expectations are changing and people are now starting to become accustomed to this sort of thing.

### **Photo 3**

Interviewer: And this, what do you think about it?

Ms. Lisa Cele: No, no, is this gun real? Even if it isn't real I don't think that its appropriate for a child her age to be carrying a gun or encouraged to carry a gun. This also goes back to society expectations and gender roles, toy guns are generally perceived to be for boy children, so for a girl child to be carrying a gun, I think it is going against those social expectations as well.

### **Photo 4**

Interviewer: What do you think about this?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Wow, (claps hands)... this is wonderful. This man is one of a kind, going against gender roles. He's taking care of the house, cleaning, looking after the child, while the wife goes to work. Team work, I like it. Generally, the woman would be expected to stay indoors and perform domestic duties, but here it's the total opposite and it's a very good thing in my opinion. I would love to get married to a man who knows his way around the house **Photo 5**

Interviewer: Have you seen this flag before?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes I have

Interviewer: What do you think it represents? Ms.

Lisa Cele: The LGBTI community (laughs)

Interviewer: Why are you laughing?

Ms. Lisa Cele: I think its because I've seen this flag so many times because I have friends who are in the LGB community.

#### **Photo 6**

Interviewer: "Suspended lesbian learners back at school – 27 students suspended from uMthwalume high school on suspicion that they are homosexuals, they have been allowed back in school, this was as a result between parents of suspended, school governing body, department of education of Ugu municipality of KwaZulu-Natal." Ms. Lisa Cele: Wait, wait... they were suspended because they are lesbian? This is ridiculous, absolutely ludicrous. What the hell does their sexuality have to do with the school? I don't understand. The law allows for all people to express themselves and moreover does not allow for any discrimination on the basis of peoples sexuality. If my child went to this school I would sue the living daylights out of this school \ Interviewer: Why would you sue them?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Because they are discriminating against these kids because of their sexuality, they deserve an education just like everyone else...

#### **Photo 7**

Interviewer: Desmond Tutu's daughter has married a woman, Professor Van Vurth and has left her duties as an ordained priest because the Anglican church does not approve their marriage as women. What do you think?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Hmm... Ya, as a Christian I am aware of the fact that same-sex relationships are not allowed, more especially if you are a priest. It was for the best for her to leave the church, she had to choose her happiness over the churches outdated morals..

Interviewer: Why are same-sex relationships not allowed?

Ms. Lisa Cele: The bible clearly states that God destroyed the land of Sodom and Gomorah because of same sex-relationships... but this goes against the fact that the bible commandment also says we must love our neighbours the same way that we love ourselves... I don't like to talk much about the bible, it contradicts itself.

Interviewer: You also said that Mpho chose her happiness over the churches outdated morals, what do you mean by that?

Ms. Lisa Cele: You know, what was relevant 200 years ago doesn't necessarily apply to the current age and time. Things change, all the time, nothing is stagnant. Moreover, the bible was written by a person, meaning that they could include their own biases and subjectivities in the bible. I honestly, when I read the bible and when I go to church, I take what applies to me and my life and discard what doesn't apply to me. When it comes to the churches standing on sexuality, I do not agree with the church at all, because love is love, whether it's 2 women or a man and a woman it is the exact same thing. There are worse crimes and worse acts that Christians commit, they lie, they steal, they gossip, they kill etc., so how is homosexuality worse than killing a person?

#### **Photo 8:**

Interviewer: What do you think about them?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Love them, absolutely love them. I'm really inspired by them both, more particularly Somizi, he has really worked hard for himself. He doesn't bother anyone, he lives his best life.

#### **Semi-structured interview**

Interviewer: So were there many rules while you were growing up as a female?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Well, not really... but I was expected to make sure that the house is clean, that I cook when I come back from school. Uhm, I was responsible for myself.. my mom expected me to behave and to ensure that I don't bring her name into disrepute. I had to work hard, I had to pass otherwise there would be trouble. Interviewer: were you told anything about the opposite sex?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes! To stay away from men, that all of them are bad news and that they will impregnate me and leave me... I was not allowed to have friends that were boys, let alone a boyfriend (laughs)

Interviewer: Do you think that all people, for example people of different races, gender, and sexuality, should be treated equally?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes! Why shouldn't they be treated equally, moreover the constitution says that everyone should be treated equally. The constitution is the law of the land and needs to be followed by everyone, whether they like it or not.

Interviewer: Were you taught anything at home or school or in your community about people who are not heterosexual?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Not really, I only came to understand homosexuality a bit in Life Orientation but my teacher didn't go into great detail. We had lesbian peers but I guess I never paid much attention to it. But I gained more understanding about homosexuality in university, and I also met many homosexuals, particularly gay men that I am still friends with till today.

Interviewer: A lot of people say that being a lesbian or gay is unnatural, un-African, evil and demonic? Do you agree with them?

Ms. Lisa Cele: That is pure nonsense! Interviewer: Nonsense?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes it is! How can loving someone be evil and demonic? Unnatural? So a man loving a woman is natural and man loving another man is unnatural? (laughs) double standards!

Interviewer: Double standards?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes, the fact that people want to do things and want to be in relationships that suit them, heterosexual people tend to be very hypocritical. There's nothing wrong with homosexual people at all.

Interviewer: What are your feelings towards those who identify as same-sex desiring individuals? Ms. Lisa Cele: I have absolutely no problem with them.

Interviewer: This is a single-sex school. have you observed lesbian learners in your school?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes, yes I have

Interviewer: What is your attitude towards lesbian learners in the school in which you teach at?

Ms. Lisa Cele: The same as with the perceived straight learners, at the end of the day they are all my learners, I don't see sexuality!

Interviewer: How do you identify a lesbian learner at your school?

Ms. Lisa Cele: I can't identify a lesbian learner because then I would be stereotyping... speaking about their characteristics and mannerisms would be stereotyping, because what if I say the learner who dresses in a masculine manner is lesbian only to find that she isn't and is actually attracted to boys... what if I say the learner who looks feminine is straight only to find that she's lesbian... I've learnt not to stereotype, it is wrong. The only way I can identify a lesbian learner is if she has personally come to me and told me that she is lesbian. That's the only way. Interviewer: Do some or all of them self-identify as lesbian?

Ms. Lisa Cele: I only know of the few who have come to me and told me or if it's come up in conversations...

Interviewer: Are they open about it?

Ms. Lisa Cele: About what? Interviewer: Their sexuality?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Not really.. not the ones that I know...

Interviewer: A lot of people believe that lesbian learners have certain mannerisms and physical characteristics, as they talk/dress/walk differently, what is your opinion on this?

Ms. Lisa Cele: The belief is wrong. It only applies to a small minority and looking at those mannerisms requires you to stereotype, which is wrong...

Interviewer: Religion often calls homosexuals 'evil' and that they are sinners and that the only belief is that man was made for woman and vice versa. Do you agree with this statement and why do you say so?

Ms. Lisa Cele: Evil? (laughs) man was made for woman? (laughs) No, no I don't agree with it at all. If man was made for woman there wouldn't be so many gender based violence cases, there wouldn't be so many divorce cases.. so no I don't agree...

Teachers: Many teachers that I know of say that the lesbian and gay learners in their single-sex schools are just going through a passing stage and that they are attracted to girls only/boys only because that is the only gender that is available on a daily basis and that they see at school and that they will change their sexuality and become attracted to the opposite sex again when they are older and they are in university. Do you agree or disagree? Ms. Lisa Cele: Oh no, I completely disagree that it's a passing stage... how can attraction be a passing stage.

You know, sexuality is fluid, it isn't a passing stage... love requires a connection... if I have a connection with a woman for 2 years and a connection with a man for 6 months, it's the same thing... I highly doubt that the learners who identify as lesbians in school change their sexuality when they leave school, not the ones that I know... I could be wrong

Interviewer: Okay.. Have you heard about the term 'homophobia'?

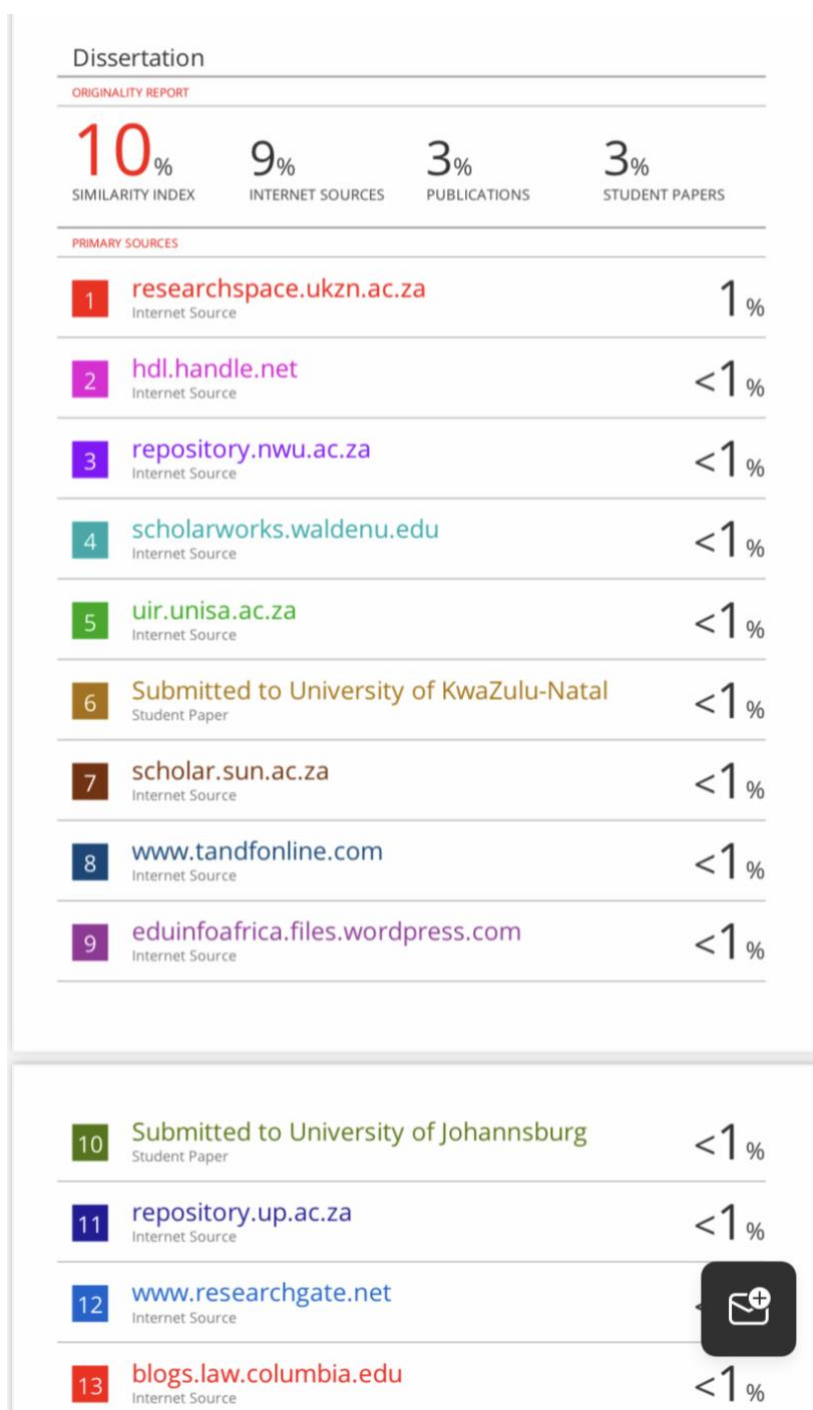
Ms. Lisa Cele: Yes, yes I have

Interviewer: What do you think it means?

Ms. Lisa Cele: It's the dislike and disdain of people who are homosexual...



## APPENDIX I: TURN IT IN CERTIFICATE



## APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Durban  
South Africa  
01 December 2021

**To whom it may concern**

**Title:** Teachers perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex desiring learners in one urban single-sex high school in KwaZulu-Natal.

**Student:** Sinenhlanhla Ngcobo

I have provided editing comment and corrections for this document in the form of track changes, but have not seen the final version, having left that to the discretion of the Author and supervisor. However, I am satisfied that if my comments were addressed as advised that the document would be ready for submission

Regards



Ms Carrin Martin  
Academic Editor  
MSocSci, PGDPH