

**NORTHERN SOTHO TRADITIONAL HEALERS PERCEPTIONS OF  
HOMOSEXUALITY: A STUDY IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT IN  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my daughters, Emily Kganyago and Kelebogile Semenya as well as my late grandmother Maria Ngaka Mahlo for taking care of me and providing guidance over the years.

## DECLARATION

I declare that **NORTHERN SOTHO TRADITIONAL HEALERS PERCEPTIONS OF HOMOSEXUALITY: A STUDY IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA** hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology** has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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**Letsoalo DL (Mr)**

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**Date**

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*“A person is a person because of other people” – An African proverb*

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## ABSTRACT

Eurocentric literature has contributed towards the understanding of homosexuality for centuries. However, there is very little literature on perceptions of homosexuality from an African perspective. Based on this historical gap, the aim of the current study was to explore Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality in the Capricorn District in Limpopo Province, South Africa. This was with the intention of documenting themes pertinent to Northern Sotho culture regarding homosexuality. Ten (10) participants (7 females and 3 males) were interviewed in the current study and they were selected using snowball sampling. Data was collected using individual face-to-face interviews guided by semi-structured questions and analysed using Thematic content analysis (TCA). The study was underpinned by Afrocentricity. The main themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data analysis were: homosexuality threatens family structure and values; homosexuality is regarded as a taboo and a disgrace; homosexuality and ancestral calling; historical evidence of homosexuality; homosexuality is confusing; homosexuality and western culture; homosexuality and cleansing (mourning process); homosexuality, traditional healing and ancestral calling; homosexuality and initiation schools as well as proposed interventions to curb homosexuality. The results of the study suggest that understanding homosexuality is not consistent with Northern Sotho culture. The study contributes to knowledge and information within Northern Sotho culture and offers suggestions for indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), academic training, policy development and legislation in terms of homosexuality and the indigenous culture. The study also offers guidelines, which health care workers and any other relevant personnel who work closely with homosexuals, should be cognisant of. Furthermore, valuable lessons were also reasoned from the current study in terms of homosexuality and Northern Sotho culture in the area where the research took place.

**Keywords:** Afrocentricity, Culture, Homosexuality, Northern Sotho, Traditional Healer.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADEFHO-Alternatives – Cameroun Association for the Defence of Gays and Lesbians

Camfaids – Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS

HRW - Human Rights Watch

IKS -Indigenous knowledge systems

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

MHaPP - Mental Health and Poverty Project

NCADC – National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

NHTL- National House of Traditional Leaders

OutRight – Outright Action International

SANDoH – The South African National Department of Health

SAHRC - South African Human Rights Commission

STATS SA- Statistics South Africa

TCA - Thematic Content Analysis

TREC - Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee

WHO - World Health Organisation

## **LIST OF ACTS**

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

Civil Union Act, 17 of 2006

Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998

Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 4 of 2000

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*"We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity" (Takei, 2013)*

### 1.1 General introduction

Traditional healers within the African region play a fundamental role in various spheres of the lives of people in rural African communities which has been the case for decades (Mokgobi, 2014). In the South African context, their role in respective communities has been duly acknowledged (Van Niekerk, 2014). It is also common knowledge that many people in deep rural areas prefer to use traditional healers as their first choice for any sort of suffering in either physical or mental spheres (Mashamaite, 2015; Mothibe & Sibanda, 2019; Semenya & Potgieter, 2014). This reflects rural communities preferred mode of treatment and their trust in the effectiveness of traditional healers in terms of bringing them relief.

The fact that their first choice is traditional healing is important and cannot be ignored nor overlooked. Reasons for frequent visits to traditional healers, amongst others, includes affordability and accessibility (Chan, 2008; Mothibe & Sibanda, 2019). This makes sense if the level of economic inequality in South Africa is taken into consideration as poverty is an everyday reality for those who reside in rural areas (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2018). Through full integration of both traditional and western medicine, and other stakeholders, the hope is that this historical gap will be narrowed (Ahlberg, 2017; Batisai, 2016; Makgahlala, 2016; Mokgobi, 2013; Moshabela et al., 2016).

It must be noted that the services traditional healers provide to their communities go beyond just helping community members' deal with mental and physical ailments

(Moshabela et al., 2016). In other words, their services to these communities are more comprehensive. The latter was plausibly put by Mokgobi (2014, p. 7) who stated that:

“African traditional healers serve an important role as educators about traditional culture, cosmology and spirituality. They also serve as counsellors, social workers, and skilled psychotherapists as well as custodians of indigenous knowledge systems”.

Zuma et al. (2016, p. 13), expanded on the role of traditional healers within rural communities and suggested that: “traditional health practitioners serve roles which include, but are not limited to, custodians and educators about culture, counsellors, mediators and social protectors.” The fact that traditional healers were described as mediators’ highlights, and is indicative of the fact, that they are also used to resolve conflict in the community, amongst families and individuals. They are renowned for helping to restore peace, order, and calmness, strengthening the notion that they are perceived as leaders within their respective communities (Van Niekerk, 2014).

Throughout South African history, traditional healers have played a significant role when it comes to the holistic well-being of communities (Semenya & Potgieter, 2014). As a result, they are highly respected, and their opinions valued within traditional communities. This was clearly captured by Van Niekerk (2014, p. 20) who stated that: “traditional health practitioners are recognised as an integral part of their communities, where they are highly regarded and often shape their communities thinking”.

Communities also look up to them for guidance on matters that are considered complicated, unusual, or uncommon (Mosotho et al., 2008), such as sexuality, in this case homosexuality. Their views in this regard are internalised by members of the community. In other words, what the traditional healers say informs the way communities perceive and treat perceived or ‘known’ homosexuals.

Another aspect that strengthens the trust of community members in traditional healers is respect for the ancestors (Lebaka, 2019; Mkasi, 2013). It is a well-established fact that Africans are highly respectful of the ancestors and their wishes. That is, traditional healers are not only seen to be representatives of the ancestors within their communities, but they are also regarded as the custodians of culture and conveyers of ancestral guidance (Mathibela et al., 2015; Mkasi, 2013). According to Mosotho et al. (2008), not respecting traditional healers can be interpreted as an indirect disrespect of the ancestors.

As a result of the trust that community members have in traditional healers the researcher, together with his supervisors, decided they were an appropriate source with which to explore the controversial topic of homosexuality in a traditional South African context. Traditional healers are leaders, as they help shape perceptions in their communities. Consequently, it was considered that the best way to understand communities' reactions towards homosexuality was to tap directly into traditional healers' feelings, thoughts, and knowledge about the topic.

Additionally, South Africa is comprised of multiple ethnic groups, each of which consists of its own culture which dictates the presence of specific traditional healers. Limited documented evidence gathered from studies which have explored traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality within the Zulu and Venda group in South Africa suggest that homosexuality is regarded as un-African and against culture (Masase, 2009; Mkasi, 2013). However, it was thought that those groups' traditional healers' conceptualisation of homosexuality was not necessarily the same as that of other ethnic groups in South Africa. To address this gap in the literature the present research was conducted in a Northern Sotho cultural setting. Furthermore, it must be noted that homosexuality is a complex issue that needs to be thoroughly investigated in South Africa. In this research, it was investigated from a Northern Sotho traditional healers' point of view.

## **1.2 Research problem**

The current study focused on Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality in the Capricorn district, Limpopo Province, South Africa. According to Mabvurira and Matsika (2013), research has tried (though in a limited way), to understand traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. These authors report that international research has been carried out in countries like Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Kenya on the topic. However, cultural perceptions linked to homosexuality may not necessarily be the same as those held by various South African cultural groups due to the different cultures, geographical locations, and each country's unique socioeconomic profile.

Within the South African context, only a few studies can be found that have explored and documented traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality (Masase, 2009; Mkasi, 2013), and no study could be found that explored the Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. In the few documented studies in South Africa, it was found that homosexuality was rejected and described as un-African and un-cultural (Masase, 2009; Mkasi, 2013). These studies focused on the Venda and Zulu ethnic groups which helped delineate the fundamental research question for this research namely: "If, among the few documented South African ethnic groups traditional healers, homosexuality is regarded or perceived as being un-African and un-traditional, do Northern Sotho traditional healers share the same sentiments?"

This study is important because it helps bridge the aforementioned gap in knowledge about Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. It allowed for an understanding of their sentiments based on their reported statements. The research, albeit qualitative not quantitative, meaning results could not be generalised, does provide an indication of how homosexuality is perceived in Northern Sotho culture. The overall conclusions are similar to those found by Masase (2009) and Mkasi, (2013) in Venda and

Zulu cultural settings. As a result of the study findings, guidelines which can assist academic institutions, legislators, and stakeholders in dealing with perceptions of homosexuality in the Northern Sotho culture were developed. Valuable lessons were also learned from the results of this study which could also play a role in shaping potential future interventions that focus on for instance, gender-based violence (GBV) and/or discrimination of homosexuals, especially programmes that target rural areas with the aim of emancipating, empowering and offering support to homosexuals who reside in those areas.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The aim and objectives of this study were developed to help fill the gap in research pertaining to the unavailability of knowledge about Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.

#### ***1.3.1 Study aim***

The aim of this study was to explore the Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.

#### ***1.3.2 Study objectives***

To achieve the study aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To determine Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions or views of homosexuality.
- To ascertain knowledge of any homosexual practices that took place in the historical context of Northern Sotho culture.
- To establish if Northern Sotho traditional healers agree with the sentiment that homosexuality is un-African.
- To ascertain Northern Sotho traditional healers' reactions towards homosexuals.

- To develop guidelines to assist academia, government, traditional healers, and law (or policy makers) with regard to homosexuality.

### ***1.3.3 Research questions***

The investigation has the following research questions:

- How do Northern Sotho traditional healers perceive or view homosexuality?
- Do traditional healers have any knowledge of homosexual practices that took place in the historical context of Northern Sotho culture?
- Do Northern Sotho traditional healers agree with the sentiment that homosexuality is un-African?
- How do Northern Sotho traditional healers react towards homosexuals?

## **1.4 Operational definitions**

The following operational definitions were used in this research.

### ***1.4.1 Culture***

There are multiple definitions of culture, the study considered the following:

Matsumoto in Spencer-Oatey (2012, p. 2), defined culture as, “a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next”.

According to Mazumdar as cited in Mohale (2014, p. 19), culture is defined “as a group of mutually interacting people with negotiated shared values, understanding, norms, ideals, way of life and a way of looking at the world and their place in it”.

Idemudia (2015, p.3), defined culture as:

“The sum - total of all things that refer to customary roots of a given people, and this include symbols, language, parables, idioms, songs, stories, celebrations and all

expressions of way of life. It also encompasses kinship, ways of relating to each other, and even ways of expressing illness and yielding to treatment.”

Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 3), defined culture as:

“ A fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his or her interpretations of the meaning of other people’s behaviour”.

The researcher adopted the latter definition for the following reasons: it acknowledges the influence of belonging to a specific cultural group without suspending or denying individuals the ability to make their own interpretation or meaning of other people’s behaviour. This indirectly accounts for why people of the same cultural group tend to interpret certain things differently from other group members.

#### ***1.4.2 Traditional Healer(s)***

According to Xaba (2002), a traditional healer is someone who performs indigenous medical practices. However, this definition is limited as it only accounts for the medical part of a traditional healer’s work.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), as cited in Starkowitz (2014), a traditional healer is defined as an individual who is recognised by the community in which he or she lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetables, animal and mineral substances. They may use other methods based on the social, cultural, and prevailing religious background of the community as well as the embedded socio-cultural knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of people living in the area. This definition was the preferred one in this study, as it is more inclusive.

### ***1.4.3 Homosexual***

Homosexuality is a difficult term to define. However, the following definition was preferred for this research: “orientation of sexual need, desire, and/or responsiveness towards other persons of the same gender, in this case males” (Ilyayambwa, 2012, p. 50). This definition was used in the research as it incorporates other aspects which extend beyond sexual attractiveness. In this study the research will only explore perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers towards homosexuals (males). It was considered that widening the definition to include for instance, lesbians would make the study too broad.

### ***1.4.4 Perception***

Perception refers to a common cultural belief or opinion held by members of a cultural group based on how things are seen from their cultural standpoint (Perception, 2017). This implies that people rely on information gathered, and learned from their own cultures, to make meaning of the world around them. This is how the term ‘perception’ is used, and understood, in this research.

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study adds to the scant existing literature on the perceptions of traditional healers towards homosexuality in a South African traditional setting. The study was conducted in a Northern Sotho cultural setting thus presents perspectives from traditional healers in that context. As traditional healers are leaders in their communities the impact of their beliefs and thoughts on the topic were also considered. Additionally, the study highlighted any differences between perceptions of homosexuality amongst these Northern Sotho traditional healers and other groups where the beliefs, on the topic, of traditional healers that have been researched (Zulu and Venda). Fundamentally, the belief that homosexuality was un-African was shared by all traditional healers in these cultures. The study highlighted the historical



existence of homosexuality among the Northern Sotho culture and how it was dealt with in the past. Furthermore, the research provided findings which give an idea as to what challenges homosexuals who live within rural communities endure because of socio-cultural views of homosexuality. Information gathered from the study also helped to bring a more nuanced cultural understanding of homophobia in a traditional setting in South Africa. The aforementioned can assist in influencing future intervention that can help rural communities understand homosexuality (and which can also help alleviate discrimination).

Guidelines were developed to assist academia in terms of incorporating cultural views of homosexuality into their scholastic content. These were envisioned as workshops which would ultimately empower students and academics in terms of understanding homosexuality. The guidelines can also be integrated into legislation and guidelines in the health sector in South Africa for both health professionals and traditional healers. A report on the study findings and developed guidelines was provided to relevant stakeholders at the conclusion of the study.

### **1.6 Structure of the study**

Chapter 1: the basic introductory remarks which form the basis for conducting the study were provided. The research problem was presented linking it to the cultural context from which the perceptions of traditional healers towards homosexuality are embedded. The purpose of the study, including aim and objectives, operational definition of key concepts, and the significance were outlined.

Chapter 2: focused on the theoretical framework used to underpin the study. The significance of the theory in relation to the research exploration and its relevance to the phenomena under investigation is provided. Afrocentricity in this context affords African people the opportunity to be at the centre of the narration of their cultural knowledge and

experiences, as opposed to adhering to the common Eurocentric dogma used to underpin research studies. In this chapter, to a limited extent, historical notions of African versus Western worldviews were expounded and explored.

Chapter 3: focused on a comprehensive overview of old and recent literature on homosexuality and African culture, with more emphasis on the South African context. The literature places more emphasis on the significant contributions made by studies conducted among people of African descent on the topic of homosexuality. It also explored, to some degree, how African sexuality was historically conceptualised on western cultural notions. The researcher also aimed to show how western notions caused biased perceptions in terms of African sexuality which impacted past and present notions of homosexuality.

Chapter 4: focused on the research methodology and justification for adopting the methodology. The chapter concentrated on the processes followed during the research namely, how interviews were conducted and how potential ethical dilemmas inherent within the research were minimised or addressed. The method of analysing data is described, detailing the steps followed guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006), work on TCA and supported by Asante's (1990), Afrocentric theory. The adoption of the methodology was instrumental in exploring, collecting, and making meaning of the perceptions of the participants.

Chapter 5: focused on the results of the study. Statements made by participants were reported verbatim to underpin and support themes gleaned from the data. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data and their interpretations to make meaning (along with the supporting literature) are also presented, linked, and discussed.

Chapter 6: brought the research to a close, reflecting on its limitations, strengths, and areas for potential future research. Implications for academia, indigenous knowledge systems

(IKS), as a constantly evolving research area of interest which effect legal and policy development were noted. Lastly, contributions of the study to existing knowledge, the innovative aspect in relation to mental health in a form of guidelines to academia and other relevant stakeholders (for instance, lawmakers, health workers and traditional healers) was presented.

### **1.7 Summary**

This chapter gave a general overview of the study and provided a foundation from which the entire research was based. The chapter included the research problem, aim, objectives, and significance of the study and the structure of the study. Chapter 2 outlines, and discusses in detail, the theoretical framework chosen to underpin the study. The rationale for the choice of the theory, and its relevance as far as the current study is concerned, is also provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*“Afrocentricity is simple. If you examine phenomena concerning African people, you must give them agency. If you don’t, you’re imposing Euro-centrism on them”*

*(Asante, 1990)*

#### 2.1 Introduction

The first chapter highlighted the research problem and how the research was conceptualised. It also indicated how the study will help fill the gap on research into homosexuality in an African setting, in this case a South African, context.

In any investigation there is a need for a theoretical framework which is used as the foundation for the research, this study is no exception. In this research the Afrocentric theory was adopted and used as a guideline to underpin the investigation to ensure that the study aim, and objectives were realised. This chapter thus serves as the foundation from which the chosen theoretical framework is introduced and applied in order to make meaning of historical and cultural explanations pertaining to homosexuality (Asante, 1990; Ince, 2009). This chapter also highlight the significant role played by Afrocentric theory in rebutting the common Euro-centric models that constantly side-line African people by offering them a way of looking at things that resonates with their lived reality.

As the study is qualitative in nature, I will refer to myself not just as the researcher but will narrate the study in terms of the first person (I or me) which is appropriate for this research paradigm. My intention in part, as a researcher in the field of homosexuality, was to highlight how African beliefs were inaccurately represented and censored because of western concepts and notions, and to a certain extent even excluded from historical records. This is carried out in the literature review. On this note, it seems that the continuation of ideas relating to how homosexuality was and/or is viewed within the cultural sphere in African

contexts is (and was) largely based on Eurocentric theories which are by implication biased (Ince, 2009).

In an attempt to set the context of the current chapter, firstly, it is proposed that it will be difficult to gain an understanding of the present without placing Africans within their historical context, cultural beliefs, political and social contexts (Dei, 1999, Idang, 2015). As Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d., p. 233) state:

“Africans should and must be able to determine, define and present their cultural practices and concepts as part of valid human knowledge experience in their broader psychology landscape and cross-cultural interactions”.

Secondly, peoples’ uniqueness and right to self-determine should be emphasised. This is clearly articulated by Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d., p. 232), when they point out that, “no measure of imported experience can ever be authentic, unless it is constructed and interpreted from within the lived experiences of the recipient”.

It must also be acknowledged that, subscribing to Afrocentricity does not render other theoretical paradigms irrelevant, exclude them, or deny other people the right to define their own world views. It should rather be viewed as better suited for defining the African world as seen through the eyes of Africans (Chawane, 2016; Schiele, 2000). The latter aligns well with the belief that people belong to varying cultural groups, with culture specific practices and traditions which determine their reality and should have this reality respected and valued. This research was carried out in a traditional African context and looks at the perceptions of South African traditional healers’ views on homosexuality in a Northern Sotho context.

Through the introduction of Afrocentric theory, I was interested in highlighting the role it plays in appreciating and acknowledging the way of life of African people. This can be different to existing notions because of the dominance of Eurocentric paradigms in explaining

‘things African’. In this regard, my idea was to give a more balanced discourse pertaining to African traditions and concepts such as homosexuality. As such, I was presented with the opportunity of interpreting African life from an African point of view. In effect, Afrocentricity advocates for a paradigm shift from the common dominant Eurocentric frame of reference to a more Afrocentric one (Adeleke, 2015; Karenga, 1993).

The main aim was to bring to light contributions made by Africans, not only within the academic sphere, but also within the global sphere, which have been either disregarded and/or overlooked over the years. By using Afrocentricity as the theoretical basis for this study, I intended to highlight the distinctive nature of Northern Sotho culture and how it explains homosexuality.

## **2.2 Defining Afrocentricity**

Afrocentricity was promoted by Asante (1990), as a philosophical concept in academia. It has been defined in various forms depending on the purpose (that is as dictated by context and what is being explored) it serves at that point in time, as occasionally aspects of the theory are used rather than the entire theory. Asante (1990), who is acknowledged as the originator of the concept, provided multiple definitions, or attested to multiple ways in which Afrocentricity could be used, depending on the aspect of the theory which is more relevant within the given context. For example, the following are definitions provided by Asante (1990; 1998). Firstly, he defined Afrocentricity as a way in which the thoughts, actions and beliefs of Africans underpin their interests, values, and perspectives (as cited in Chawane, 2016). Secondly, he defined it as (Asante, 1998, p.19):

“The study of African concepts, issues and behaviours and as a frame of reference developed by Africans themselves which is based on African cosmology (the structure of reality – collectivism, interdependence as well as harmony), axiology (significance of human interactions as their value system), aesthetic and epistemology (system and

methods through which the truth is revealed and understood as part of generating knowledge).”

Other authors guided by Asante’s (1998) definition(s) and what they purportedly wanted to use the theory for, provided further clarification. Early et al. (1994), as cited in Chawane (2016, p.79), defined Afrocentricity as, “An intellectual movement, a political view, and/or a historical evolution that stresses the culture and achievements of Africans.” The latter definition captures the significant role that Afrocentricity plays in the political and intellectual emancipation of African people in relation to their cultural achievements. It is also seen as a vehicle, by which Africans, can escape the perpetuation of historical intellectual Eurocentric entrapment.

Reed et al. (1997), as cited in Chawane (2016, p.80) defined Afrocentricity as: “a transformation of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour results.” These authors state that this suggests that it is the first and only reality for African people which points to a simple rediscovery of Africa as perceived by the African. This definition highlights that, through Afrocentricity longstanding biased perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards African culture, that have been inculcated by the dominance of Eurocentricity, can be challenged, and changed. They conclude that Afrocentricity has the potential to change the status quo in relation to how African culture is, and will be perceived, moving forward.

On the other hand, Chukwuokolo (2009, p. 32), defined Afrocentricity as: “as meaning towards African centeredness, according to which Africans should be given their intellectual pride as the originators of civilisation”. This definition is more concerned with the restoration of African intellectual pride but clearly articulates that this can only be achieved if Africans are placed at the centre of their world when their reality is investigated.

What the above-mentioned definitions have in common is that they call for a different but appropriate approach towards research into things African, which will not only restore African peoples' pride and sanity, but also advocate and ensure that 'Africanism' is an African reality. All definitions of Afrocentricity should be central when phenomena are explored from an African point of view (Chawane, 2016). In other words, African philosophies should be central to any research when tapping into African worldviews or when African worldviews are called into question.

### **2.3 Origin and background to Afrocentric theory**

The actual origin of Afrocentric philosophy cannot be confidently affirmed as much was in the African oral tradition. Early writings that had an influence on its advocacy were however based on the political activist, Marcus Garvey's work and life (Heuman, 2018). Afrocentric philosophy is reported to have gained motion in the United States of America (USA) during the Civil Rights Movement. Many African philosophies (and philosophers) were, at this time, endorsed in the Temple University School of Scholars in the USA (Chawane, 2016).

Moreover, Afrocentric philosophy's strong recognition by academe can be traced to the 1970s and was promoted by Asante in the 1980's. He later published a book entitled: *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980). Afrocentricity was then launched into the public view and was discussed globally amongst scholars and the public. Recognition of Afrocentricity during the 1970's was also due to contributions about the place of the African in global society from African scholars such as Akbar (1976), Mbiti (1970), Diop (1974) and Nobles (1974). The philosophical momentum of Afrocentricity increased significantly during these decades and other contributors to the emerging Afrocentric paradigm were Asante (1990), Karenga (1993) and Myers (1988). The researcher thought that it would be beneficial



to understanding Afrocentricity to look at the contributions of some of the aforementioned to Afrocentric ideology.

During the 1990's, Diop conducted exploratory research in Africa in the Nile Valley. The research brought to light two significant characteristics in which the African lifestyle was rooted. Firstly, it was noted that Africa has a rich ancestral past which informed the traditional way of life of peoples on the continent. Secondly, the research noted that, there was a connection between colonialism, slavery, and the diaspora of African people to different parts of the continent. These characteristics, at that time, were not usually acknowledged by western scholars. By bringing this to the fore in his research, Diop (1991) helped strengthen the philosophical underpinnings of an Afrocentric ideology. His writings also highlighted the African experiences of slavery and migration which, to a large extent, were motivated by the 'partition of Africa,' or how the continent was colonised by European countries. Diop (1991) thus gave Africans an understanding of what they had endured over the centuries and how this had a direct influence on how they defined themselves.

Since the dawn of colonialism in Africa, contributions made by Africans were not presented in an objective manner. The Eurocentric standpoint, that is the perceptions of the colonisers, distorted any African inputs and opinions and thus their subsequent influence on any global interventions. This was clearly noted by Nobles (2013) and Tlou (2013), as cited in Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d. p. 233), when they pointed out that: "the problem arising from this situation has been that African peoples' cultural experiences have been conceived and theorised from foreign ways of knowing and doing". This carried on through colonialism on the continent and through separated development and apartheid in South Africa.

Post-colonialism (and in South Africa post-apartheid) Africans found their voice and proposed that knowledge of Africans should not be Eurocentrically focused but rather should be looked at from the point of view of Africans. This brought the concept of Afrocentricity to the fore within the academic sphere where it was, and still is, robustly discussed (Chawane, 2016).

Afrocentricity brought with it some significant questions which highlighted a shift in the direction of African thought which was well captured by Asante (2009, p. 1): “what would African people do if there were no white people?” In essence what Afrocentricity does is not only to remove Eurocentricity from being central to the explanation of African reality, but also strengthens the idea that Africans are autonomous, and they should be treated and respected as such.

Chawane (2016), states that there have been misconceptions about the objectives of Afrocentricity as so-called traditionalist historians saw it as being anti-white and being used as a tool to advocate for an African global agenda. The author notes that as white Eurocentric historians have been dominant in the historical context of Africa for many centuries a more African viewpoint was seen as a threat to Euro-centric financial and social domination. There was an academic revolt in terms of accepting Afrocentric theory as some scholars saw it as a ‘takeover’ rather than an alternative worldview for Africans. However, Afrocentrists’ regard the theory as anti-oppressive. Asante (2009) in Chawane (2016, p. 83) supports this and states that:

“Afrocentricity is only one of several cultural perspectives from which multiculturalism in education is derived, noting that Afrocentricity is not the opposite of Euro-centricity, nor does it seek to replace Euro-centricity”.

Furthermore, Asante (2009) suggests that Afrocentricity is helpful as it places people within their rightful context rather than denying them their place. What Afrocentricity refutes is that Eurocentricity is a universal model without any alternative. It also suggests that there are many viewpoints in a diverse world. In the researchers mind this simply means that, having alternative perspectives of looking at issues under scrutiny, provides many choices. It gives us (researchers) the opportunity to choose and understand what is being researched without bias, by applying the most appropriate perspective. Strengthening this notion, as Asante (2009) as cited in Chawane (2016, p. 83) points out that: “Africans [as much as Europeans] are entitled to give their own perspective on the African experience, making Afrocentricity an exercise in self-knowledge”.

However, this should not be confused with thinking that Afrocentricity should be exempted from criticism, but rather where its applicability is warranted and likely to bring more insight than Eurocentric thinking, it should be applied as objectively as possible (Chawane, 2016). This is clearly elaborated by Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d. p. 234) who argued that: “all knowledge systems have philosophical underpinnings, are contextual and culture based and to some extent biased”. In my view this highlights the fact that each and every model, philosophy or paradigm is based on a specific worldview and thus has an inherent bias. This means that although Afrocentricity has shortcomings so does Eurocentricity, as a result, they should be treated equally as one viewpoint is not better than the other.

It is also worth reiterating that Afrocentricity has no problem with the existence of various cultures and their proponents. However, African philosophies are just as important as those which stems from a Eurocentric context (Chawane, 2016).

## **2.4 Critical analysis of the basic propositions of Afrocentric theory**

Afrocentric theory is driven by the view that the main problem with people of African descent, was their unintentional adoption of the Eurocentric worldview and paradigms and their associated conceptualisation without an African critique. This is problematic because it leads to displacement and dislocation, which in turn disorganises and leads to loss of an African identity (Asante, 2009). As a way to address this proponent of Afrocentricity the researcher took the initiative and advanced the Afrocentric concept to better explain the lives of people of African descent in terms of homosexuality.

Afrocentricity can be easily described as the adoption of an African worldview and philosophy to better understand and explain phenomena in relation to things African (Carr, 2011). It is centred on African identity and it considers African people to be centred, oriented and grounded. Consequently, Afrocentricity advocates for African values, ideals, and philosophies to be central to the analysis of African behaviour and culture (Alkebulan, 2005). In effect, Afrocentricity is enshrined in axiological, epistemological, cosmological, and aesthetical concerns which are reflective of African experiences and centeredness (Asante, 1990). Afrocentricity is thus broad in scope as it cuts across various fields, especially those that are concerned with Africanity including, but not limited to social, political, cultural, and psychological spheres (Mazama, 2001).

Afrocentricity is also centred around robust collectivism in support of multiculturalism which is essential for conservation of African society in general, and African culture in particular (Asante, 1990). The paradigm is no stranger to criticism, as Anti-Afrocentric proponents argue that it does not have sufficient empirical evidence to be endorsed as a theory of practice. Here, I would like to add that empirical evidence in some well-known, and used psychological theories for instance, Freuds (1920), psychosexual theory are most decidedly lacking in empirical evidence. However, as it is Eurocentric there is critique but

even today it is widely used and applied in practice and research. Despite its shortcomings, one researcher Alkebulan (2007), has argued that Afrocentric ideology is worth being defended and pursued. It is within this context that I felt that adopting the model would not only be advancing Afrocentric ideology but would also give people of African descent the ability to adopt the research as their own.

## **2.5 Basis for adopting Afrocentric theory**

Afrocentricity is thus based on a distinctive understanding of African people and relies on African philosophy as an entry point to an analysis of things African (Ince, 2009). That is: “African philosophy is rooted in the nature of black culture which is based on particular indigenous philosophical assumptions” (Nobles, 2006, as cited in Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata, n.d. p. 234).

This is of course because in contemporary culture, Eurocentric models are limited in explaining the reality of African people as shaped by the injustices of slavery, colonialism, and other forms of oppression over the years. This prompted the need for more knowledge and insight through research in order to accurately document and present real African peoples’ way of life (Collins, 1990; Chawane, 2016). This, it can be argued, subsequently informed their perceptions on a variety of issues, including matters of sexuality, in the case of this research, homosexuality.

Afrocentric theory as a worldview emphasises the significance of individual (and group) consciousness in that Africans, as agents of their own reality, must be allowed to view their lives through their own culture. This refutes the notion that Western cultural ideals are the only proponents of human civilisation and universal reality (Schiele, 2000; Ince, 2009). In the past Western ideologies were held in high regard and perceived as superior to those developed in Africa. Consequently, Africans were perceived as being inferior and incapable of abstract thinking (Eze, 1997; Ince, 2009). This was clearly expressed by Parham (2002), as

cited in Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d. p. 232), who argued that: “for Western or European centred psychology, the African as a member of an ethnic group does not exist”.

Putting the above into context it can be understood why historically Europeans insinuated that black people flourished and seemed to be happy being enslaved and governed by whites (Frederickson, 1987; Ince, 2009). However, it should be noted that these utterances were not based on any empirical evidence but promoted by regimes that were Eurocentric or Western in approach. In this case, I think (as a researcher) that such utterances suited the economic and social agendas of colonial powers. It must be stated that the issue of race has always played a significant role in presenting a distorted picture of Africans (Hall, 1997; Ince 2009). Afrocentricity, therefore, intends to correct these injustices by studying African people from their own perspective as they are reflexive in nature and capable of making informed decisions which informs (and informed) their way of life. This makes Afrocentricity a model that can be used to pave way for the liberation of African people from the deeply rooted effects of cultural and mental oppression as well as colonialism while not presenting them as victims (Chawane, 2016; Ince, 2009; Swignoski, 1996).

Another reason that serves as the basis for the adoption of Afrocentric theory in the current study is that it challenges the longstanding biased theoretical landscape of research generally, and also serves as an empowerment tool for African people. Since its steady growth there is little doubt that Afrocentricity has been an important tool in the liberation of many African communities and organisations and also freed them from Westernised intellectual oppression by bringing their innate knowledge to the reality behind African history (Graham, 2002). Afrocentricity advocates that there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding. It thus emancipates African people by freeing them from the continuous use of models that promote a biased Westernised superiority (Hooks, 1989, Ince, 2009).

As Ince (2009) reports Afrocentricity also brings to light the significant contributions made by Africans in social development and world history which would not otherwise have been known. Those from the Afrocentric school of thought strive to ensure that peoples' realities are rooted in their way of life and subsequently provide an explanation for their unique behaviour. Therefore, the intention is to offer an African centred model which is sensitive to experiences of black people and which offers a better understanding of their traditions and associated behaviour(s). I believe that this investigation added to the understanding of homosexuality in the African tradition. After all, the reality of the social world of Africans is what informs their behaviour (s). Those who adhere to Afrocentricity should aim to develop cultural knowledge of things African by being cognisant of the strengths and limitations of African people in light of social exclusion and the social, political, and economic conditions which they endured, and continue to endure, in the global context (Ince, 2009).

## **2.6 The application of Afrocentric theory**

The reasons that serve as the basis for the adoption of the Afrocentric theory (Asante, 1990) have been given and I would like to explain how it can assist in explaining African people's standpoint on matters of sexuality (homosexuality in particular). Afrocentric theory was chosen for this study based on three premises: firstly, we cannot fully understand meaning attached to homosexuality by Northern Sotho traditional healers unless we take cognisance of their history and values that are culturally based and inform their way of life (Ince, 2009). Secondly, while exploring their perceptions the researcher found it important to uphold their values which are highly enshrined in African philosophies. After all, an African worldview is about the way Africans perceive their world which, in turn, influences their way of thinking and doing. Thirdly, the uniqueness of the group and their rights were respected and considered during all phases of the research.

As a result, using the theoretical framework of Afrocentricity was considered suitable for such a challenging and sensitive topic. Nonetheless, I would like to reiterate that adopting Afrocentricity does not mean that other theories are excluded, or their explanations are less important, but rather it means that Afrocentricity is the most appropriate in this specific context. The latter was clearly articulated and supported by Schiele, (2000, p. 221), as cited in Ince (2009), who stated that: “no one theory is ‘robust’ enough to explain all human functioning”. It is, of course, often the case that one theory might be better than another particularly in the case of this research which is based in an African cultural context. Applied in this (Northern Sotho) cultural context I would also like to reiterate that cultural groups in South African vary and engage in different cultural practices. Different groups must be respected and valued on their own social, economic, and cultural merit. As Asante (1998, p.19) states:

“Afrocentricity is the study of African concepts, issues and behaviours and as a frame of reference developed by Africans themselves and is based on African cosmology (the structure of reality – collectivism, interdependence as well as harmony), axiology (significance of human interactions as their value system), aesthetic and epistemology (system and methods through which the truth is revealed and understood as part of generating knowledge).”

To be concise, Afrocentricity acknowledges cultural practices, values, and beliefs as the foundation from which African worldviews are centred or rooted. In other words, the theory is grounded in an African background. The theory advocates for phenomena to be viewed from the African cultural vantage point which is informed by the African worldview. The theory proposes that, any analysis of African people should place African culture at the centre (Lebaka, 2018).



Afrocentricity also suggests that gathering of indigenous knowledge, which is culture based should be reflective of values, beliefs, habits, knowledge, art, skills, and the way of life of African people as a whole (Asante, 1998). In the current study the latter was considered, and reflected on, as the way in which the Northern Sotho traditional healers perceived homosexuality. This theory is thus appropriate for the research in that Northern Sotho cultural values, rituals, habits, skills, sacred rituals, and beliefs to mention but a few, provided guidance on how homosexuality is perceived.

The theory also proposes that, when investigating African people, for the researcher to have a better understanding of African culture, he must socially immerse himself in that culture which was the case in this current study. This further implies that the researcher must also have a certain level of familiarity with the history of the people under scrutiny (Mkabela, 2005). It is for this reason that I (as the researcher) chose the topic and ethnic group from which the traditional leaders were sampled as I belongs to the ethnic group and am familiar with the language, rituals, history, customs, and values of the Northern Sotho people.

Afrocentric theory also advocates for the researcher to allow the people under investigation some level of control, as far as their participation in the research process is concerned. This was afforded to participants in this study, as the participants were interviewed and shared their perceptions in their mother tongue (Northern Sotho). Afrocentricity proposes that when a phenomenon is studied from an African perspective (as was the case in this research) all results and findings should be explained, understood and viewed from an African point of view and not from the dominant Eurocentric standpoint (Chawane, 2016). In other words, Afrocentricity acknowledges and appreciates values that support African philosophies within various spheres of its applicability (Ince, 2009).

Afrocentricity further points out that, when Africans are central in the narration of their own history, they perceive themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than

bystanders (or victims). They also feel empowered, in control, recognised and appreciated as well as respected (Chawane, 2016). In this study discussion about findings were shared openly and confirmed with participants to ensure accuracy which facilitated sincerity.

Through this study, I elucidated the distinguishing cultural explanations, or perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers pertaining to the controversial topic of homosexuality using an African worldview or Afrocentricity to underpin findings. Applying Afrocentricity afforded me the opportunity to unravel the culturally embedded uniqueness of the Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. Additionally, in this study, guided by Afrocentricity, I was able to untangle specific Northern Sotho traditional cultural norms which were brought to the fore in the traditional leaders' perceptions about homosexuality which were based on their understanding of their own culture. That is, Afrocentricity gave me the opportunity and afforded me the possibility of: "interpreting characteristics of African life from an African perspective" (Ince, 2009, p. 50).

In simple terms, Afrocentricity's central tenet is that Africans are the architects of their own reality and any attempt to understand, explain and make meaning of any phenomena among Africans should be carried out within such parameters (Ince, 2009). Due to the fact that traditional healers in South Africa are part of a uniquely African background, using an Afrocentric theoretical framework was considered even more appropriate. In brief, as Afrocentricity encourages centeredness, in this study, the researcher adopted the philosophy and was able to ensure that participants were located, centered, grounded and oriented to their culture throughout the investigation.

## **2.7 Summary**

In this chapter, a comprehensive insight into Afrocentricity as the adopted theoretical framework for the current study, and the principles that underpin its philosophical ideologies, central tenets and methodological implications was presented. African philosophy is central

to Afrocentricity and as such it enabled the researcher to identify the uniquely embedded cultural perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers towards homosexuals. African people, in this case traditional healers, were placed within their respective context using their cultural norms and traditions as a frame of reference. Afrocentricity did not only contribute to knowledge, but it also served as a base from which culturally rooted perceptions were better understood and culturally relevant inferences were made.

The use of Afrocentricity in the current study was neither random nor incidental, as it created a platform from which a clear focus of the relationship between African culture and its people were confirmed. The significant role that Afrocentricity played, was appreciating how an African worldview influences the perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional leaders in terms of male homosexuality

The next chapter contains a discussion of literature concentrating how African culture influences attitudes, perceptions, and treatment of homosexuality among people of African descent (of specific interest being Northern Sotho traditional healers). The argument contained within the review includes international, national, and local research, with specific interest to South Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*"Openness may not completely disarm prejudice, but it's a good place to start"*

*(Collins, 1990)*

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores in detail documented literature related to the perceptions of traditional healers on homosexuality internationally, nationally, and locally. The literature is divided into the following categories: brief background, conceptualisation of homosexuality; perceptions of traditional healers on homosexuality in the African context; a history of same-sex relationships which includes the African and South African cultural context; legislation on same-sex relationships in Africa and South Africa; attitudes towards homosexuality and African culture; African psychology and homosexuality; homosexuality and spirituality.

#### 3.2 Brief background to the literature review

The following databases and search engines were consulted during my review of the literature: Google Scholar, Sabinet, EBSCOhost, SpringerLink, JSTOR, PubMed, Research Gate, Science Direct, newspaper articles, relevant books and peer reviewed journals, manuscripts, theses, and dissertations from various Universities. Most of the literature reviewed was written between 1927 and 2020 thus it can be considered a comprehensive review.

The majority of the key words and phrases used during the literature search are as follows: homosexuality and African culture; perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers towards homosexuality; homosexuality and Northern Sotho culture; perceptions of traditional healers towards homosexuality in the African context; legislation pertaining to homosexuality in both Africa and South Africa; homosexuality and spirituality; attitudes

towards homosexuality in African culture; African conceptualisations of sexuality; historical existence of homosexuality among Africans and African psychology and homosexuality.

I found that there were two major arguments relating to perceptions of homosexuality in the traditional Black African and South African spheres. In the first argument traditional leaders argue that homosexuality is unacceptable in their various cultures. The rebuttal, or second argument (which is in the minority) argues that homosexuality has always been part of traditional African culture and spirituality. These arguments remain and are ongoing. I then asked the following questions and discussed them in literature that is presented in the literature review: “Was homosexuality always existent and part of African culture which is highly entrenched in spirituality? If so, where is the evidence and why was it hidden for so long? How was it dealt with in the past? How do cultural leaders and healers perceive homosexuality and where in their culture are these perceptions rooted?” In the following section a critical analysis of both sides of the argument from a cultural point of view (guided by the parameters of the current study) are presented. This underpins the conceptualisation from which the current study was drawn.

### ***3.2.1 Conceptualisations of homosexuality***

According to Bailey et al. (2016) individuals who think of homosexuality in a negative manner relate same sex-behaviour to social hypotheses for instance, early sexual experiences and/or its cultural acceptance. Sexual grooming by adults or having homosexual parents (implying children ‘learn’ the behaviour) are two of the most frequently given social reasons for homosexuality. However, the proof for this is weak to non-existent. The authors state that there is no generally accepted causal theory for homosexuality.

Manzouri and Savic (2018) suggest that homosexuality is associated with brain structures namely, cerebral midline structures. The authors used Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRIs)

to look at the functions of cerebral anatomy which had been noted in other studies as indicating sexual variation. They found that homosexual males had stronger cortico-cortical changes and weaker processing in the precuneus as well as stronger connections between the hypothalamus and thalamus (which are important in sexual behaviour). Other parts of the cerebral midline structures showed female characteristics in male homosexuals.

Sandfort et al. (2001) indicate that homosexuality can be linked to psychological or psychiatric disorders. In a quantitative study of over 7 000 individuals, it was found that psychiatric/psychological illnesses were more prevalent among homosexuals, both men and women. However, this cannot be stated as a cause of homosexuality. Nonetheless, it does support the hypothesis that homosexual individuals are more at risk of psychological illness.

Genetics also appear to play a part in homosexuality as noted by Sullivan (2019) who reported that genetically driven research revealed that between 8 – 25% of individuals are programmed for same-sex behaviours. Furthermore, he suggests that sex and behaviour is on a continuum that develops out of the genetic profile of individuals, thus homosexuality is not a choice but something that is biologically driven.

Moreover, Savin-Williams (2016) suggests that homosexuality is along the normal continuum of human romantic and sexual behaviour. He notes that homosexuality, amongst both men and women, is along a continuum of sexual behaviours. Furthermore, he suggests that genetic loading, neurodevelopmental triggers, and environmental triggers may also play a role in sexual orientation.

Historical conceptualisations of African homosexuality are explored later in the review (see 3.4). Western concepts of homosexuality (which are also referred to throughout the literature review) were embedded in perceptions of homosexuality as a disorder, or disability which stem from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Evans, 2015). In that era homosexuality was criminalised

in Britain and many other countries. In fact, it was only in 1973 that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – III) removed homosexuality as a psychological disorder (Drescher, 2015). This depathologised homosexuality but human memory is long thus regarding it as an illness (or disability) still exists.

### ***3.2.2 Occurrence of homosexuality***

It is difficult to estimate how many males are homosexual as research relies heavily on questions that are self-report in nature (Levoy, 2016). According to Kinsey (1948) 10% of the male population are gay. This was supported by Janus and Janus (1993) who reported that 9% of the American population was estimated as being homosexual. However, the 2000 USA Census Bureau stated that homosexual couples comprise of less than 1% of American households (Robinson, 2002). According to Gates (2011) approximately 3.5% of the American population identified as gay in 2011. In Britain in 2020 it was estimated that 2.2% of the population was acknowledged as gay (Robinson, 2020). In South Africa, no figures are available however, it seems likely that overall global occurrence of homosexuality (which cannot be verified) is probably between 1 – 3.5%, judging by the figures that I was able to find.

### **3.3 Perceptions of homosexuality in the cultural and political African context**

Existing literature has pointed out that, among various African traditional healers from various cultural groups, homosexuality is rejected and seen as a taboo

(Mkasi, 2013; 2016). The latter sentiments were propagated by the deep historically rooted cultural doctrine of procreation where recognition of manhood is based on the production of offspring (Kyalo, 2012; Okafor, 2018; Rudwick, 2011; Tatira, 2016).

According to Rudwick (2011), procreation is not only perceived to serve as the recognition of manhood, but it is also seen as a means through which there is a continued survival of the

ancestors. Furthermore, the author argues that this is believed to be enshrined within the socio-cultural supremacy of the male.

The above-mentioned serves as one of the many reasons why most cultural groups within African society reject same-sex relationships (homosexuality). These beliefs have, in some instances, led to homosexual males and lesbian females being attacked and killed within some rural South African communities (Abaver & Cishe, 2018; Mkasi, 2013).

For example, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2007 it was reported that two lesbians were brutally raped and murdered in Soweto (Campaign, 2007). Equally, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2007, Thokozane Qwabe's body (a black lesbian) was found in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal. In another attack in March 2006, Zoliswa Nkonyana (another black lesbian), was attacked and murdered by a mob in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. These incidents were found to be the result of a combination of deeply rooted cultural perceptions, attitudes, and intolerance in relation to any sexual orientation that is not heterosexual (Letsoalo, Nel, Govender, & Vawda, 2020; Triangle Project, 2006). It is thus argued that, both the concept of procreation and deeply rooted cultural perceptions, attitudes and intolerance play a role in the strengthening of the perpetuation of attacks on homosexuals. The notion that homosexuality is un-African, un-Godly and a taboo, especially in rural African communities still exists (Letsoalo et al., 2020).

According to Davis (2012), the killing and attacks on male homosexuals is also prevalent in South Africa. For example, in 2011 a homosexual murder made international news. Thapelo Makutle, a 23-year-old Gay man was murdered and also had his tongue cut out and parts of his genitalia cut off and put in his mouth. His throat was also slit from ear to ear in a manner which was close to beheading. This happened in Seoding near Kuruman, South Africa. Similarly, in 2013 Professor Carl Mischke (a Gay man) was brutally murdered at his home in Johannesburg (Nathan, 2013). In recent times, the Gay male activist, Lindokuhle Cele was stabbed multiple times just outside a butchery in KwaZulu Natal in



front of many people. They walked past and did not offer any help. Following the attack, he was rushed to the hospital but later succumbed to his injuries. He was stabbed once in the eye and three times in the spinal cord (Khanyile, 2020). The latter murder was linked to the patriarchal nature of KwaZulu Natal as a Province and the Zulu culture which do not accept homosexuality. All the aforementioned incidents occurred in rural areas where patriarchy and traditional tribal culture holds sway and where homosexuality (male and female) is not accepted and seen as ‘un-African.

It is also true that, within the cultural African context, the highest level of contempt has been directed at homosexuals (Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013; Matolino, 2017; Rukweza, 2006, as cited in Masase, 2009; Mkasi, 2013; Msibi, 2011). This led to some political leaders in Africa declaring sanctions against homosexuals, through public speeches and aligned legislation, which led to them being arrested and imprisoned. For example, one such speech was by the late former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. He made headlines in 1995 by strongly, and publicly, arguing that homosexuality was a result of western culture being imposed on traditional culture (Mkasi, 2013). The latter was well captured by Rukweza (2006), as cited in Masase (2009, p.58):

“President Robert Mugabe made the headlines in 1995 when he denounced Gays and lesbians as ‘sexual perverts’ who are ‘lower than dogs and pigs.’ When President Robert Mugabe rejected the call for Gay human rights he said, ‘we don't believe they have rights at all’. He charged that homosexuality was unnatural and un-African, saying that it is an alien culture only practised by a few whites in Zimbabwe.”

I would argue that the late former President Robert Mugabe’s words not only publicly condemned homosexuality, but also undermined and disregarded the hard fought for human rights of homosexuals. He stated that homosexuals do not deserve rights and perceived homosexuality as something of a foreign origin, or some sort of disease, which Africans need

to be cured of. President Mugabe also reduced everything in relation to homosexuality or homosexual behaviour to race as he remarked there were only a 'few' whites who practiced it in Zimbabwe. This suggests that he thought that white homosexuals were undermining African culture. In other words, it seems he thought that homosexuality was a westernised agenda meant to discredit African culture.

Similarly, Sam Nujoma, when he was the president of Namibia, during a press conference with international journalists said, "homosexuality is a borrowed subculture, alien to Africa and Africans" (Addington Hall, 2013, p. 201; Rukweza, 2006, as cited in Masase, 2009, p. 59), echoing the late former president Mugabe's words. Equally, in 2003 the then President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, was cited by the New Vision newspaper as calling for the Ugandan police to apprehend all homosexuals and those engaging in any form of sexual behaviour that is considered unnatural practice.

I am of the view that all these African leaders' utterances were a way of showing their displeasure and disapproval of homosexuality which is supported in literature (Rukweza, 2006, as cited in Masase, 2009). Their words and actions were also seen as a form of deterrence to those who were contemplating 'coming out of the closet' (coming out of the closet words associated with telling friends, family, and the world that the person is homosexual). This also highlights the extent to which some of these leaders went to in displaying their disapproval of any form of homosexuality. This is clearly indicative of how intolerant African leaders are towards homosexuality, as most of them are strong proponents of culture and are guided, or adhere, to cultural values that rely on cultural explanations of how homosexuality should be perceived. These African leaders (and many more) condemn homosexuality as 'un-African' and 'un-cultural,' thus it is a taboo subject in African culture (Matolino, 2017). This is underpinned by the president of the African Library and Information association stating that:

“Gays and lesbians are atoms of chaos being unleashed on Planet Earth by the profane society which is endeavouring to unseat governments of the developing world and replace them with fiefdoms (through conglomerates and multinational companies) in the name of human rights ( Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013, p.1):

This is supported by utterances, during a Human rights conference in Kampala in early 2010, when a Ugandan Member of Parliament stood up and declared that if his son were Gay, he would not hesitate to have him killed (Rudwick, 2011). Similarly, in recent times, Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini referred to homosexuality as being problematic and rapidly threatening the Zulu nation. He stated that homosexuality inspires people to being deviant and not having proper families with children as dictated by African culture which the Zulu culture represents (Rudwick, 2011).

The sentiments uttered by these presidents and influential people were not only visible within the cultural and political African sphere but were also evident within the religious domain, which is also a central tenet of modern African culture. For example, Archbishop Peter Akinola, the former Anglican Primate of the Church of Nigeria, was cited as saying that he could not visualise two men having sexual relations, as this does not take place even within the kingdom of animals. He continued by indicating that he does not believe homosexuals should be appointed as Bishops, in his own words: “Homosexuals are lower than beasts” (Masase, 2009, p. 59). Moreover, he compared homosexuality to bestiality, adultery, and incest (Macaulay, 2006, as cited in Masase, 2009), therefore equating it to an abomination as bestiality and adultery are considered and/or categorised as such within the Christian bible.

As author of the current research, I am of the view that the aforementioned reasons serve as a foundation for the non-acceptance of homosexuality by many African leaders, in

terms of their cultural, political, and religious views. These perceptions trickle down to many ordinary Africans who respect and look up to their leaders and thus negative views of homosexuality are sustained. They do not see homosexuality as a continuum along the long line of human sexuality (Human Rights Education Associates [HREA], 2003) but rather as an abomination, and thus taboo (Rudwick, 2011).

South Africa has been applauded on the international platform for its speedy legislation on ensuring the rights of homosexuality in the constitution. However, there have been those who have publicly uttered what could be seen as derogatory remarks about this, and current legislation in the country since South Africa became a democratic country in 1994. For example, former President Jacob Zuma went on record and publicly described same-sex marriage as a disgrace, not only to the nation but also to God (OutRight Action International [OutRight], 2016; Sokupa & Majova, 2006). Similarly, King Goodwill Zwelithini equated homosexuality to a 'moral decay' (Williams, 2019). Likewise, the former Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Committee, who is the current President of the Congress of Traditional Leaders South Africa (NHTL), Chief Patekila Holomisa was cited as saying that the majority of Africans do not promote and protect such things [homosexuality] (De Waal, 2012).

In this research I argue that many South African leaders do not support homosexuality and have categorised homosexuals for instance, as sub-human. This, as noted by Cikara et al. (2017) indirectly equates to an 'us' and 'them' scenario (Cikara et al., 2017). As I researched this my feeling was that this directly leads to the abuse of all homosexuals in South Africa.

It seems that to some African leaders the notion of homosexuality is a way of advocating for a western agenda for instance, in 2005 post the Constitutional Court ruling that same-sex marriages should be legally recognised, the NHTL (as a representative of African culture) declared that they were going to campaign against this, as they called it a

‘wicked, decadent and immoral western practice’ which is not in their culture (Idang, 2015; Quintal, 2006). This is also synonymous with ‘othering’ which means that homosexuality is not in African culture but ‘othered’ to western or Eurocentric culture (Tekin, 2010).

According to this author it is the process where a group of people or an individual are given negative characteristics which, in this instance, do not belong to any African groups. The representative and/or spokesperson of NHTL stated: “this kind of marriage does not fulfil the notion of marriage in African culture: “as only a man can pay lobola (bride price) for a woman” (Quintal, 2006, as cited in Vincent & Howell, 2014, p. 476).

The NHTL took the matter further by expressing their unequivocal disappointment in the Judiciary and accused the courts of giving support to what they regard as an immoral act or practice (Daniels, 2005, Williams, 2019). Additionally, the President of NHTL took it upon himself, in his personal capacity, to claim that those who drafted the constitution did not envisage the equality clause as accommodating same-sex marriages. He further stated that, the constitutional court ruling that ordered same-sex marriages be recognised as: “an undesirable and unintended consequence of the equality clause” (Quintal, 2006, as cited in Vincent & Howell, 2014, p. 476).

I argue that, based on the NHTL’s comments, their criticism of the constitutional court ruling had an impact on ordinary South Africans many of whom follow their leaders’ views. This type of prejudgment found many homosexuals, especially those who live in the deep rural areas, subjected to extreme forms of discrimination (Ilyayambwa, 2012; Mkasi, 2013).

Additionally, in a study by Mabvurira and Matsika (2013), conducted in Zimbabwe amongst traditional leaders (including traditional healers), it was found that the general sentiment was that homosexuality should never be tolerated under any circumstances in the African cultural sphere. Some participants went as far as reiterating the notion that homosexuality is the work of western culture trying to undermine African tradition. These

results were underpinned by Matolino's (2017) study where traditional healers expressed the view that homosexuality is fundamentally the 'Devil's' work. This is summed up by Mabvurira and Matsika (2013, p.9) as follows:

“Homosexuality is unnatural, against African culture, unproductive, responsible for misfortunes in society, causes diseases, forms part of the initiation process of witches, associated with charm and goblins and Satanism.”

### ***3.3.1 Socio-demographic perceptions of homosexuality***

Park et al. (2016) looks at how the education of clerics impacts on their views of homosexuality. It was revealed that the less education the cleric had the more likely they were to perceive homosexuals as mentally ill. They were also undecided on how best to deal with the homosexuals they encountered. Ohlander et al. (2004) reported that those who had less education were more disapproving of homosexuality than those who were college educated. The authors suggested that education appears to promote tolerance towards same-sex relationships. They also noted that attitudes to homosexuals were much more negative within a less-educated populace. However, Mwaba (2009) found that despite their education, tertiary students in South Africa were not likely to be accepting of homosexuals (possibly for cultural reasons). Moreover, he concluded that although the constitution in South Africa protect homosexuals, acceptance of same-sex marriage is probably quite limited in the country.

Poorer, less well-developed areas in South Africa may well be linked to negative perceptions of homosexuality. Maotoana et al. (2020) looked at experiences faced by lesbians in a specific area in Limpopo Province, South Africa. She found that same-sex couples were discriminated against and stigmatised and physically and verbally abused. No clear connection was drawn between poverty and homosexuality however, it is possible that poorer

areas are equated with the populace being less educated, thus attitudes are likely to be more negative.

Conservative and patriarchal African cultures are also likely to view homosexuality in a negative manner as it does not conform to their traditional beliefs. Msibi (2011) states that expressions of homophobia are publicly sanctioned by African leaders and obsolete laws that entrench patriarchy and heterosexuality on the continent. These notions, pertaining to African understandings of homosexuality, are explored in greater detail throughout the literature review.

### **3.4 History of same-sex relationships**

This section focuses mainly on literature pertaining to same-sex relationships within the cultural African and South African context. Evidence that supports the notion that homosexual practices (even though they may have been considered insignificant and sometimes practised in socially acceptable ways) took place within the African context and the reasons why it was not documented or ignored are presented. The words same-sex and homosexuality will be used interchangeably in this context.

#### ***3.4.1 History of same-sex relations within the African cultural context***

There is some evidence in literature that, even though the general sentiment from an African perspective is that homosexuality is in most cases culturally unacceptable, same-sex sexual attraction was always present however, in a culturally acceptable way (Epprecht, 2004).

Before continuing with the discussion and setting the context on same-sex relationships within the African sphere, I thought it beneficial to first give a brief background to the origin of the term homosexuality. It is worth pointing out that the term homosexuality originated from the western political experience and, as such, it originally did not have meaning within the African context (Msibi, 2011). In fact, homosexuality as a term was coined in the west in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to characterise same-sex attraction as some kind of negative (deviant)

pathology. What this means is that homosexuality was a term used to fundamentally disgrace and criminalise those who practised same-sex partnerships (Msibi, 2011). As homosexuality is a western term, which was not necessarily understood by Africans, same-sex attraction was not criminalised before the advent of westernised laws on the continent.

According to Msibi (2011), it is common knowledge that matters of sexuality are closely monitored as they are intertwined with power and politics. This seems to account for the way in which African countries approached same-sex attraction historically. The intention being to ensure that, although it existed, it remained hidden thus controlled. Tamale (as cited in Msibi, 2011) suggests that the patriarchal nature of many African societies inhibits any attempt by individuals who are attracted to the same-sex to mobilise and openly discuss their homosexuality. However, it should be noted that silencing something and inhibiting it does not mean that it does not occur, as sometimes people opt to practice same-sex relationships privately or find ways to have them that are societally acceptable. This seems to have been the case in Africa for many decades (Msibi, 2011). That is, African homosexuals may well have married or had girlfriends, but they still had same-sex relationships that were 'hidden' from the mainstream African culture. Moreover, these practices although 'hidden' per se were known but accepted as the issue was not publicly discussed or glamourised in any way (Tamale, as cited in Msibi, 2011).

I suggest that Africans practised homosexuality in this way so as not to interfere with societal expectations as enshrined by culture and not necessarily 'hidden' (which it seems was in any case an open secret) because of feelings of shame. Same-sex relationships thus existed but were carried out in a culturally acceptable manner and thus not demonised. Obviously, the counter argument is that no one should have to live hidden lives, nonetheless homosexuality practised in this manner was not criminalised or demonised.



There have been claims made within literature that Africa is a ‘sodomite free’ continent (Epprecht, 2004; Msibi, 2011), meaning that homosexuality does not exist and is not practised at all in Africa. However, the notion that Africa is a ‘sodomite-free’ continent and that same-sex practices did not take place is a fallacy, as there is evidence that both African men and women have always had same-sex sexual relationships (Moodie, 1988). The notion that Africa is homosexuality free was, for example, rejected by the work of the colonial ethnographer Evans-Pritchard. He indicated that, he was left amused by his informers in Africa about the continent being free from homosexuality as he had personally observed that same-sex attraction existed amongst African peoples (Murray & Will, 1998, as cited in Msibi, 2011).

Similarly, critical anthropology and historical studies and records indicated that there are some serious omissions pertaining to African same-sex relationships (Msibi, 2011). Documented reasons for this are multifaceted. It might have been intentional and in-keeping with the times (in Europe homosexuality was criminalised) or a way of not wanting to accept the reality that same-sex behaviour and acts occurred among Africans, as this gave them distinct personalities and characteristics, in other words it humanised them. If data on same-sex relationships had been kept by colonial historians, it may have changed the nature of the current homosexuality debate pertaining to the African continent. As Murray (1998), as cited in Msibi (2011, p. 12) puts it: “African homosexuality is neither random nor incidental - it is a consistent logical feature of African societies and belief systems”. Arguably omission of such truths by colonial historians and religious leaders who wrote down the previously oral history of Africans impacted on how homosexuality was perceived on the continent. Westernised notions of homosexuality as deviant and criminal were thus adopted though previously, they had been absent (Epprecht, 2004).

On the other hand, it was interesting to note that, in a study that explored the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, it was found that traditional healers and diviners who proved most effective in the community were men who displayed extreme feminine behaviour(s) and dress codes (Goddard, 2004). It is thus argued in this study that, the latter highlights two things; first, it acknowledges that spiritual powers are entrenched in behaviour that corresponds to the western term of homosexuality echoing Murray's (1998) assertion. Secondly, although it was not directly mentioned that the healers' dress codes were related to them being homosexuals, the fact that their femininity and extravagant behaviour was acknowledged cannot be ignored. This is especially true because there seems to be some acknowledgement among historians and anthropologists that there are records of traditional healers who employed homosexual practices as part of traditional prescriptions for people seeking material wealth (Gunda, 2010). According to Gunda (2010), it has also been pointed out that some traditional healers practiced homosexuality as a way of augmenting their own spiritual power. The author further states that it must be acknowledged that these behaviour(s) equate (or are aligned with) to the western term of homosexuality but were there long before the term existed, and was demonised, and has always been part of African spirituality.

From the literature, it is argued in this study that same-sex attraction, acts and relationships have always been in existence within the African cultural sphere; however, it seems that the intense un-conducive cultural environment, denial, keeping it hidden, fear of ridicule, and fear of humiliation limited colonial writers from presenting a balanced argument. As colonial laws and ways of doing permeated the continent it also inhibited Africans who had previously practised same-sex relationships from doing so, even traditional healers.

It is argued in this section that, the fact that there is very little documented evidence that same-sex behaviour existed amongst Africans, and that its representation as deviant and

criminal by colonialists changed how homosexuality was perceived on the continent which has remained unchallenged for decades.

### ***3.4.2 History of same-sex relations within the South African context***

It is well known that South African society is predominantly patriarchal in nature which was the case even before colonialism. The Bantu group serves as a good example of this in the country as in this group the male was (and still is) the head of the household and made all financial and other decisions (Mathebula & Motsoeneng, 2015; Moodie, 1988). It is also common knowledge that manhood in South Africa is intertwined with the doctrine of procreation in the context of patriarchy. The defining characteristic of the doctrine of procreation, other than ensuring continued survival of the ancestors as enshrined in the supremacy of the male, is that a man must marry a woman. Anything that is not in line with the latter (such as homosexuality) is labelled as unacceptable, deviant, and un-African (Mkasi, 2013; Okafor, 2018). This leaves no room for other sexualities to flourish and fuels negative attitudes towards those who display any same-sex attraction, evidence points to this being amplified in deep-rural communities (Okafor, 2018). However, there is evidence of same-sex relationships between men in Khoisan paintings which pre-date colonialism which suggest that during the ancient history of the country same-sex relationships were accepted, as they were depicted on walls for all to see (Epprecht, 2004).

It seems that African views on same-sex attraction before colonialism, as noted earlier, was less about restraining homosexuality and more about hiding it from open discussion or accepting it as a lifestyle on its own. In effect, compliance with heterosexuality and marriage were used as a way to restrain indigenous homosexuality, as argued by Epprecht (2004), as cited in Msibi (2011, p.13), who pointed out that:

“The political economy of heterosexuality in effect silenced indigenous homosexuality as traditional African societies tended to place great emphasis on maintaining a ‘proper’

outward appearance. In line with this notion, same-sex desire was treated with a ‘don’t-ask-don’t-tell’ attitude. Marriage served to conceal men who felt sexually attracted to males, but they did not need to fear that this feeling would compromise the socially-necessary performance of heterosexual virility, as they would simply marry.”

There has been many reforms in South Africa in the form of legislation which post-democracy protect the rights of homosexuals (Ilyayambwa, 2012). However, before the latter reforms in South Africa as in many African countries, homosexuality was condemned. Indeed, there was an anti-sodomy law (hailing from colonialism through separate development to apartheid) which prevented people from ‘coming out’ as they would be criminalised (Vincent & Howell, 2014). Of course, homosexuality and aligned sexual acts were still practised but were kept secret and hidden from the majority.

There is also historical evidence pointing to men engaging in sex with each other in the compounds of the Southern African mines which other miners were cognisant of (Achmat, 1993). This, according to Swidler (1995), was as a result of migrant labour which saw many men moving to work in the mines and leaving their wives behind. The same is true of the prison system (Booyens & Bezuidenhout, 2014) in the country where many consensual and non-consensual homosexual acts take place because there are no (or few) women. The men, like the migrant workers, did (and do not) practise homosexual acts outside these contexts. It is reported that within the mining system (as in the prison system) older miners took younger miners and made them their wives. All these acts were (and are) carried out in exchange for protection, sexual favours, material goods, and money. It was also noted that once the young males were married to older ones, they were therefore expected to perform all the duties of a wife. There is no doubt some of these men were (and are) homosexual but, it can be argued that, the vast majority were not (Booyens & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Moodie, 1988; Rudwick, 2011; Swidler, 1993).

According to Swidler (1993), one element that stands out within same-sex marriages amongst the miners, which were conducted in an informal manner, was that in certain instances an older miner paid a bride price (known as *ilobolo* in isiZulu and *lobola* in Northern Sotho) to the boy he was interested in (not to his parents). This can be seen as a form of inducement or even bribery. The young miner who received the *lobola* then saved the money and used it to pay his own *lobola*, or bride price for his intended wife at home. This type of behaviour in western terminology is called bisexuality however, in instances mentioned here the heterosexual males who returned or retired from mining did not practice homosexual behaviour in their home villages (unless of course they were actually homosexual). I felt, on reading this literature, that human sexuality is along a broad continuum and is not easily put into 'boxes' as seems to happen in contemporary society.

Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the same-sex relationships within these mines were discouraged by social customs from lasting long periods of times (Junod, 1927, Swidler, 1993), which to an extent, supports Msibi's (2011) notion that Africans were concerned about keeping same-sex relationships hidden from view. I would argue that the existence of homosexual acts and homosexuality was known amongst Africans and South Africans in particular. Therefore, denial of its existence was intentional and had its main motive as being to maintain the cultural status quo. This supports Epprecht's (2004), assertion that, those who practised homosexuality had no choice but to do so in a socially acceptable way as it did not tamper with what Riddinger (1995) called the well-recognised social or cultural order.

Another example that supports the notion that homosexual relations existed in the history of Africa, was the report by Drum magazine in 1955 which reported that outside Cato Manor shantytown, near Durban, men were wives. Not only was this known as a place where men were wives, there was also a specific location within the township where very colourful

marriages, associated with homosexuality, and ceremonies regularly occurred (Gevisser & Cameron, 1994; Rudwick, 2011).

To lend support to the aforesaid De Vos (1996) and Starkowitz (2014) pointed out that, homoeroticism, that is sexual attraction towards a person of the same-sex, was not totally rejected among the indigenous people of Southern Africa. This is underpinned by observations of the Basotho by Kendall (1996), during his exploration of lesbian expression among Basotho women. He stated that he had observed Basotho women kissing each other with great sensitivity and noted that they used their tongues to explore each other's mouths. He also noted that the Basotho people were aware of the intimacy and eroticism associated with such kissing, but this was seen as normal and nobody seemed to question it or even categorised it as sexual. This makes me think there is a significant gap in reported studies when it comes to investigations of African sexuality as noted by Swidler (1993), Gevisser and Cameron (1994), Sivertsen, (2016) and Mabvurira and Matsika (2013).

The aforementioned should not be misinterpreted as evidence suggesting that homosexuality was publicly approved, but it should be seen as evidence to challenge the longstanding biased misconception that homosexual practices were not evident in Africa and South Africa in particular. Nonetheless, the findings are in line with a study conducted by Nkabinde (2008), who reported that there are traditional healers, amongst some ethnic groups, who engage in same-sex relationships in South Africa. Moreover, in another study conducted by Mkasi (2013), in Kwazulu-Natal amongst *Sangomas*' (a type of traditional healer), homosexuality and homosexual behaviour was reported to have been accepted historically.

I note here that, although research exploring homosexuality in traditional South African ethnic groups is scant, since the turn of the century more investigations are being undertaken. This might be part of the emerging trend of people (including traditional healers) and

homosexuals opening up and enlightening us about homosexuality in an African context (Mkasi, 2013), due to a more conducive socio-political environment as well as constitutional and legal protection. For instance, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) and the Civil Unions Act No 17 of 2006 which protects the rights of homosexual persons in the country. It is also important to note that some traditional healers acknowledge the historical existence of homosexual practices (Msibi, 2013).

### **3.5 Legislation on same-sex relationships**

This section focuses on legislation that is related to homosexuality, homosexual behaviour, and homosexual advocacy in African countries with particular reference to South Africa. A clear picture of how homosexuality was seen both historically and in a contemporary manner is presented. This is underpinned by acknowledging legal reforms that have been made to afford them equal opportunities within the South African context.

#### ***3.5.1 Legislation on same-sex relationships in Africa***

Sexual matters within any African society are intertwined with power (Msibi, 2011). This, necessitated sexuality being highly controlled and policed on the continent. This was carried out in many ways which included, silencing, and condemning homosexuality or same-sex relations by not acknowledging their existence and punishing such relationships, this made homosexuals retreat into the 'closet' (Anteby & Anderson, 2014; Moore, 2017; Nel, 2009).

In previous sections I reported that some African leaders called homosexuality 'un-African' and deviant. The question that I ask now is what about those African countries where leaders are not vocal in their condemnation of homosexuality? Does their silence mean they support it? Literature suggests that the answer to this question is, 'No,' as even though many African leaders choose not to publicly 'voice' their opinions on homosexuality they support anti-homosexual legislation as the following paragraphs will show.

Although in recent times efforts have been made to address out-dated laws against homosexuality, the reality is that most African countries do not support legislation that tacitly approves of homosexuality (Msibi, 2011; The Law Library of Congress, 2014). The patriarchal nature of African tribal systems makes it difficult for homosexuals to live in peace on much of the continent. To support this viewpoint a discussion about legislation pertaining to homosexuality in various African countries follows.

### ***3.5.1.1 Malawi***

In Malawi homosexuality is criminalised. The criminal provision in Malawi as adapted from the Law Library of Congress (2014, p.9), states that:

“Anyone who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature ... or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature commits an ‘unnatural offence’, a felony, on conviction, punishable by a fourteen-year prison term. Attempting to commit an ‘unnatural offence,’ is also a felony punishable on conviction by a seven- year prison term”.

The provision did not end here as Malawi also criminalises what it calls ‘indecent practices’ and the law further states that:

“Anyone who commits an act of gross indecency with another in public or in private or ‘procures’ or ‘attempts to procure’ another to commit such act with him/herself or with another person commits a felony and is, on conviction, punishable by a five-year prison term (Law Library of Congress (2014, p.9).

The term ‘gross indecency’ however, is not defined. In Malawi. However, these criminal provisions are highly enforceable; an example is the case of a Gay couple who were arrested for the public celebration of their engagement. During their sentencing, the Magistrate, in his verdict pointed out that he was giving them a harsh sentence as he believed



that by doing so, he would be protecting the public from immoral acts. He sentenced the couple to fourteen years in prison, the longest sentence permissible by law (Msibi, 2011). The Magistrate noted that he hoped this would stop others engaging in such relationships. The sentencing received international backlash and prompted the United Nations (UN) to condemn it. Following this, South Africa (as a country in Africa that support same-sex rights) also voiced its disapproval of the sentence through its human rights leaders. The former President Jacob Zuma was silent at first but was pressurised to state the sentence was extreme, but his initial silence seemed to many that he supported the jail term (Msibi, 2011).

Following the international outcry, the President of Malawi had to revisit the matter and the sentence was lifted. During the announcement, the President of Malawi still reiterated that homosexuality was unacceptable to Africans. He stated: “these boys committed a crime against our culture, our religion and our laws” (Gevisser, 2010, p. 58; Johnson & Karekwaivanane, 2018, p. 1; Mawerenga, 2018, p. 62 and Oppenheimer et al., 2020, p.1). Culture being a theme in his pronouncement is of significance in this study, as it hints to the fact that the so-called traditional cultural values of Africans outweigh their personal preferences. In effect it seems he agreed with the sentence and only lifted it because of the international condemnation and possible economic sanctions against the country.

### ***3.5.1.2 Nigeria***

The criminal provisions in Nigeria echo those of Malawi, disapproval of homosexuality in Nigeria is intense. The following incidents, which took place in Nigeria, attest to the latter. In Nigeria, Bishop Akinola (former leader of the Anglican Church) was once quoted as advocating for the expulsion of both women and homosexual priests. He equated them to an abomination before God and suggested that they should have dead-weights wrapped around their necks and put into water (Rubenstein, 2004). Similarly, in 1998 during the Lambeth

Anglican Conference in the United Kingdom, delegates from Africa led by Bishop Chukhuma, attempted to perform an exorcism, in public, on a British Anglican priest for his unequivocal pro-women standpoint (Msibi, 2011).

The above incidences do not only show the level of homophobia, patriarchy, and related sexism in Nigeria, but also highlight the extent to which religious and other leaders are willing to go to display their absolute non-acceptance of homosexuality and women as equals. I argue here that, homosexuals are perceived as being less than human (subhuman), and suffer from a dangerous disease, that is homosexuality, which Africa needs to be cured of. Many African leaders want to expunge homosexuality from the continent. In this regard it must be noted that many Nigerian states practice Sharia Law ( this is a religious law which is part of the tradition of Islam motivated by some Islamic leaders from the religious book the Quran) whereby homosexuality or same-sex relationships are punishable by death (Rubenstein, 2004).

When it comes to recognition of same-sex marriages, Nigeria prohibits same-sex marriages through its same-sex marriage prohibition act. It also prohibits anyone from presiding over such unions. However, the introduction of the Same-sex (Prohibition) Act was not free of shortcomings as after its introduction, mayhem ensued in some Nigerian states, where those who engaged in same-sex relationships were attacked, threatened, discriminated against, and murdered (Msibi, 2011). However, I would argue here that, this did not come as a shock to many in Nigeria. It seems that the general public perceived the legislation paved the way for them to behave in any manner they liked towards homosexuals and that they would not be legally accountable for their actions (mostly they were not held accountable). After this, I would suggest, that homosexuals were left physically and psychologically devastated.

Similar to many African countries in Nigeria the state supports homophobia. The results of this were reflected by the former Nigerian foreign minister who expressed, in a United Nations Assembly, that there is no one who engages in same-sex relationships in Nigeria. Equally, President Obasanjo, the former Nigerian President in a national television interview stated that homosexuality is both un-African, un-Godly and unnatural. These iterations display the level of contempt displayed towards homosexuals in Nigeria (Msibi, 2011).

Furthermore, in Nigeria advocacy for homosexuals is also legally silenced. Essentially, Nigeria prohibits any form of Gay rights advocacy. Within the same-sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act it is stated that:

“The registration of Gay clubs, societies and organisations, their sustenance, processions, and meetings is prohibited. Violation of this provision is punishable on conviction by a ten-year prison term” (The Law Library of Congress, 2014, p. 11).

It is clear therefore that, in Nigeria all channels that can be used, are used to suppress homosexuality in the country.

### ***3.5.1.3 Uganda***

According to the Law Library of Congress (2014), Uganda’s legal stance on homosexuality through the Ugandan penal code echoes that of Nigeria and Malawi. However, in Uganda it is not only through the penal code that homosexuals are discriminated against, but also through another piece of legislation (The Anti-Homosexuality Bill). This was adopted by the country’s parliament on December 20, 2013 and signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni on February 24, 2014. This act criminalises homosexuality and imposes harsh penalties for violations of its provisions. Under this law, the offence of homosexuality (which includes sodomy, homosexual oral sex, or any form of same-sex sexual activity) is

punishable on conviction by a fourteen-year prison term. An attempt to commit such an offense is punishable, on conviction, by a seven-year prison term. Aggravated homosexuality, which includes recidivism, is punishable by up to life in prison.

I suggest that the Ugandan penal code was seen as not being harsh enough in preventing acts of homosexuality which motivated the promulgation of the Anti-homosexuality Bill. In effect, this was directed at dealing with the shortcomings of the Ugandan Penal Code. This law not only criminalises homosexuality but also requires friends and neighbours to report any form of suspected same-sex activity (Ewins, 2011). Ugandan law goes even further declaring that Ugandans who live in different countries, who are found to be practising any form of homosexual behaviour, must be extradited to face the court system in the country.

The newly passed law is extended to condemn homosexual advocacy which includes the use of electronic devices which includes social media, internet, films, [or] on mobile phones (for instance, any type of messaging). If the perpetrator of any of these offences is a judicial person, their license would be lost and they would be subject, on conviction, to a seven-year prison term. Same-sex marriages are also punishable by life imprisonment (The Law Library of Congress, 2014).

The implementation of the Bill was equated to a 'witch-hunt' in some media outlets while it was supported by others. For example, after the adoption of the Law, the Ugandan newspaper named Red Pepper published fifty names of those suspected of engaging in same-sex relationships along with their pictures as well as some of them engaging in same-sex activities. This did not only compromise their privacy, but it also placed them in jeopardy of violent attacks and legal proceedings. This forced them to go into hiding or, in some instances, to flee the country. One of the people on the list, David Kato a Gay activist, was murdered after his name published (Bearak, 2019).

#### ***3.5.1.4 Algeria***

Algeria's legal stance on homosexuality is unequivocal and it is on this basis that it is labelled as one of the most intolerant of homosexuality in Africa. It has been reported that homosexuals in Algeria are considered assassination targets by Islamic fundamentalists who are encouraged to murder them and their families (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada [IRB], 2007).

Similarly, in a London based magazine (QX Magazine, 2005), which focuses on accounts of the experience of homosexuals who have been discriminated against the following story was reported. The story was told by an Algerian refugee who witnessed the murder of two of his Gay friends and stoning of other homosexuals in Algeria by Islamic fundamentalists. It was also noted that Algeria is a country that homosexuals cannot live in and thus they should be given asylum. It is within this context that the British-based National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaign (2007), categorised Algeria as a country impossible for homosexuals to live in. I would also note that, as homosexuality is so discriminated against in the country, it is difficult to get current information and details about how Gay people are discriminated against and abused within its borders.

#### ***3.5.1.5 Botswana***

Botswana's historical legal stance was similar to those of Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda, where homosexuality was prohibited and criminalised. However, there were recent changes in the country. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 Botswana legalised homosexuality, nullifying all the penal code and the subsequent punishment imposed under previous laws (Bearak, 2019).

### **3.5.1.6 Burundi**

Burundi criminalises homosexuality, for example, in 2011, the President of Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza went on public record in support of the anti-homosexuality law and pointed out that:

“The Constitution of the Republic of Burundi (Constitution de la République du Burundi), our culture, the position of various African countries, not to mention the Holy Scriptures, we cannot allow homosexuality to be legally practised in Burundi (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013).

In his address, it is clear that the President’s condemnation of homosexuality has three aspects, firstly, on culture (which is common amongst African countries), Secondly, on other African countries stances and lastly on religious grounds.

After Burundi’s criminalisation of homosexuality, the global Human Rights Watch (HRW) took it upon themselves to carry out interviews centred on the difficulties of being homosexual in the country. This was published in a newspaper report and it was found that difficulties faced by homosexuals included: rejection by their families, police intimidation, occasional sexual violence, and potential incarceration (Voanews, 2009). In support of the latter the newspaper report also stated that one Gay man stated that since the passing of the law finding work had been a significant challenge for him. Another Gay man added that, the increased level of intolerance that he was starting to witness from his family and friends was because of the passing of this law.

### ***3.5.1.7 Cameroon***

Cameroon is regarded as the most aggressive country in Africa when it comes to the prosecution of homosexuals (HRW, 2013). The legal provisions on homosexuality are enforced vigorously in Cameroon. For example, HRW (2013) reported that from 2010 up until 2013, 28 people were prosecuted for same-sex behaviour(s). However, it was also reported that these cases did not have a strong legal base for prosecution as they were characterised by forced confessions, denial of access to lawyers, and ill-treatment by the police and judicial officials. This clearly shows that in Cameroon homosexuality is unacceptable to the point where men who are thought of as homosexual are prosecuted without any legal basis.

In a 55-page report entitled: “Guilty by Association: Human Rights Violations in the Enforcement of Cameroon’s Anti-Homosexuality Law (HRW, 2013),” it was reported that most homosexuals were incarcerated based on unconvincing evidence (solely because they were suspected of being Gay). For example, a 17-year-old who was arrested reported that during the arrest the investigator beat him on the bottom of his feet with the back of a ‘machete’ (a large, sharp knife). Another man in the city of Limbre reported that when his friend was arrested on the suspicion that he was homosexual, he was beaten with an iron belt, made to swim in the gutter and had plastic bags burnt on his chest. Similarly, another man arrested in Douala, stated that the police has beat him to a point where his toenails fell off and ordered him to sleep naked on the floor (HRW, 2013). There should be no basis in law for prosecution of homosexuality however, it is clear that in Cameroon men who are thought of as homosexual are coerced into ‘admitting’ they are. As a result, they are imprisoned. I think that laws should not be promulgated on the basis of same-sex desires however, it is clear that in Cameroon laws exist (which are blatantly against any human rights) but are not followed

as men are coerced into admissions of homosexuality. It seems that lesbians, in that society, are tolerated but not accepted and if a complaint is made, they too are prosecuted.

#### ***3.5.1.8 The Central African Republic***

The Central African Republic does not condemn same-sex relationships in general, but it condemns what is termed “public expressions of love by people of the same-sex” (The Law Library of Congress, 2014, p. 3). However, police do not enforce this law which seems to suggest that homosexuality is tolerated in the country as police do not enforce laws against public displays of affection between same-sex couples (Msibi, 2011). I suggest that it would be difficult to prosecute this type of law. It is probably a compromise in that it seeks to show the more intolerant members of traditional African society that homosexuality is not regarded as acceptable by the government. However, the laws do not actively promote imprisonment or other forms of punishment.

#### ***3.5.1.9 Ethiopia***

Ethiopia also has laws against homosexuality which are similar to other countries in Africa (The Law Library of Congress, 2014, p. 5). The courts can impose very high sentences which are up to the judges and magistrates in courts where homosexuals are prosecuted. Ethiopian law states that all courts are authorised to impose sentences which they see as commensurate with the offence, there is no cap on the number of years for specific homosexual offences. Fundamentally, Ethiopian law allows the judiciary to impose any term they see fit, which could even amount to life imprisonment. This leads to homosexuality in the country being hidden and same-sex marriages are obviously unlawful in that country (Msibi, 2011).



### 3.5.1.10 *Somalia*

Somalia prohibits homosexuality, homosexual rights activism, and homosexual marriages. In Somalia, homosexuality is equated to a mental illness and those who are convicted of same-sex crimes are deemed to be a danger to society and treated as if they have a mental disorder (Msibi, 2011).

Other African countries which do not support homosexuality, homosexual advocacy and homosexual marriages through their legislation include, Gambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Benin, Comoros, Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, and Zambia. A summary of the African countries which have criminalised homosexuality is supplied (for easy reference, see Table 1). I should note that in some categories on the table information was unavailable.

**Table 1:** *Criminal Laws on Homosexuality in African Nations (The Law Library of Congress, 2014).*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Criminal/Legal stance</b>	<b>Same-sex Advocacy</b>	<b>Recognition of Same-sex Marriage</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Angola</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Benin</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Botswana</b>	Recently legalised	None found	Recently legalised
<b>Burundi</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Cameroon</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Central African Republic</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Comoros</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Congo</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Egypt</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised

<b>Eritrea</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Gambia</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Ghana</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Guinea</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Kenya</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Liberia</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Libya</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Malawi</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Mauritania</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Morocco</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Mozambique</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Namibia</b>	Criminalised	None found	Information Unavailable
<b>Nigeria</b>	Criminalised	Banned	Not recognised
<b>Senegal</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>Seychelles</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	Criminalised	None found	Information unavailable
<b>Somalia</b>	Criminalised	None found	Not recognised
<b>South Sudan</b>	Criminalised	None found	Information unavailable
<b>Sudan</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Not recognised
<b>Swaziland</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
<b>Tanzania</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
<b>Togo</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Not recognised
<b>Tunisia</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Not recognised
<b>Uganda</b>	Criminalised	Banned	Not recognised
<b>Zambia</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Information unavailable

<b>Zimbabwe</b>	Criminalised	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
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### **3.6 Legislation on same-sex relationships in South Africa**

In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic election. After the election, the South African Constitution was drafted and subsequently amended in 1996. Of specific interest in the constitution as far as the current study is concerned is Chapter 02, which is the Bill of Rights, Section 09 (3) which 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 Constitution, 1996, p. 07).

The aim of the Constitution is to ensure that everybody (including people of all sexual persuasions, which are not deviant for instance, paedophilia or bestiality) enjoy peace, freedom, and equal rights in the country. Despite the attempt, as written into the Constitution and then by promulgation of Laws protecting homosexuals, there is no doubt that homosexuals in South Africa, especially in traditional, patriarchal communities, still experience discrimination and regularly have their human rights violated (Ilyayambwa, 2012). The latter prompted the Constitutional Court to revisit the matter which resulted in an instruction to parliament to promulgate legislation that considered the needs of homosexuals. This amendment changed the existing legal definition of marriage, where same-sex marriage was not acknowledged or recognised, which was in conflict with the constitution (Ilyayambwa, 2012; Masase, 2009). Based on these instructions, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 the Civil Union Act was promulgated. This resulted in South Africa becoming the fifth country to legalise same-sex marriages (Vincent & Howell, 2014).

Similarly, the Employment Equity Act (1998) supports fairness, equal opportunities, and treatment within the workplace regardless of an individual's sexual orientation. In other words, unfair treatment and discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace is prohibited by the Act. Equally, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) forbids any form of discrimination, hate speech and harassment either by governmental or private organisations on any grounds including sexual orientation. Furthermore, the Labour Relations Act (1995) does not allow organisations to dismiss an employee on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Moreover, the Medical Schemes Act (1998) encompasses same-sex partners within its definition of 'dependent'. In simple terms it means that same-sex partners have the right to add each other to their medical schemes without any form of discrimination (Vincent & Howell, 2014). It is also worth pointing out that when South Africa became a democracy the promotion of equality and the legal benefits extended to same-sex couples to allow for the adoption of children, pensions paid to surviving partners as well as immigration into the country by same-sex partners (Feder, 2013).

Despite all efforts by the judiciary to ensure that homosexuals enjoy rights (as enshrined in the Constitution and ratified by promulgated legislation) and are protected from any form of unfair treatment, discrimination still exists. This is particularly rife in rural communities where laws pertaining to equality are ignored. It appears that in rural areas any challenges to patriarchal gender norms, still face serious challenges which are culturally or traditionally rooted (Ilyayambwa, 2012; Isaack, 2007).

### **3.7 Attitudes towards homosexuality and African culture**

Africa is a deeply conservative landscape that has always been dominated by religion notwithstanding patriarchy and politics (Sivertsen, 2016). This is well captured by Mbiti (1970, p. 1), who claimed that "Africans are notoriously religious". However, it is important

to note that this viewpoint is directly related to colonialism. In fact, it is common knowledge that colonisation came with religious teachings which condemned homosexuality (Sivertsen, 2016).

Silversten (2016), reports that colonials imposed their (mostly Christian) religion on Africans and tried to wean them away from ancestor worship. However, the fact that colonialism came along with religious teachings should not be interpreted as meaning that Africans did not have their own belief systems as these were ignored and little understanding was shown of indigenous cultural and spiritual beliefs which also related to perceptions of sexuality. The Christian values of colonial times condemned homosexuality which, as the religion became a force amongst Africans, motivated traditional groups in African society to condemn homosexuality and it was termed 'un-Godly' (Msibi, 2011).

Another rationale that is commonly used by Africans is that: "homosexuality is a western export" (Sivertsen, 2016, p. 12). This presents a challenge, in that, if homosexuality is a western export, so is the Christian Bible, which makes it problematic as a reason for condemning the practice. I would argue that the Christian Bible is being used in a biased manner to support what a specific group deems as morally wrong or right. This is well captured by Msibi (2011, p. 18) who points out that:

"If Africa rejects the ideologies brought from the west, then surely religion brought from the west cannot be used to reject something that is being rejected for its foreign roots".

The above clearly shows that, within the African continent, the connection between some aspects of religion (or spirituality) and traditional views play a major role in perpetuating negative attitudes and condemnation of homosexuality (Sivertsen, 2016).

Various African leaders have suggested that homosexuality threatens African tradition and

family values (Msibi, 2011). However, there is some evidence to suggest that this rationale for negative attitudes towards same-sex attraction is a more recent viewpoint which might be a disguise to hide what Stein (2005) called ‘anxious masculinities’, whereby Africans are reluctant to accept social changes that are seen to challenge their patriarchal way of life. The latter is noted by Msibi (2011, p. 4), who points out that:

“Renewed efforts to label same-sex desire as un-African represent a façade that conceals neo-conservatism and resurgence of patriarchy, coated in the construct of religion, nationalism and law”.

Trying to understand what constitutes African reality, on top of what has already been mentioned; might bring further clarity as to where attitudes towards homosexuality are rooted in African culture. The core or the fundamental defining feature of African society is communalism in which the community is central in making and shaping an individual to become a whole person (Matolino, 2017). This means that the individual and the community are intertwined, however, community interests are of paramount importance that is, communal loyalty comes first.

Matolino (2017, p. 9), points out that, “This loyalty can be thought to be expressed in terms of the individual’s understanding that she or he owes his or her being to the community”. This presents a challenge in that individuals are communally overshadowed as their interests are dominated by communal needs. Fundamentally, this means that the community must agree on everything even matters of sexuality which means that homosexuality is mostly rejected. This suggests that it is easy for members of traditional African communities to condemn homosexuality in the name of tradition because of the need to protect their socio-cultural norms. I would argue that socialisation in this context serves as the basis from which individuals develop beliefs about the social world reflective of their respective cultures.

It is clear, therefore, that, attitudes which homosexuals face within African traditional communities are deeply rooted within African culture which is passed down generationally to ensure what is considered the collective good. This nullifies an individual's ability to question matters pertaining to sexuality. Essentially, everyone is charged with advocating for the common good, as instilled through community norms, and anyone who behaves outside these parameters (such as homosexuals) are regarded as being unworthy of belonging (Matolino, 2017).

### **3.8 African psychology and homosexuality**

Psychological literature that is theoretical aspects, that directly addresses the topic of homosexuality is scarce. However, in the last decade there have been many journal articles relating to the topic (for instance: Letsoalo et al., 2020; Maotoana et al., 2020; Nel et al., 2017; Van Zyl et al., 2017; Van Zyl et al., 2018). There has however, been very little research which incorporates Africanity into investigations into homosexuality. This thesis attempts to help fill that gap by combining theoretical aspects of Afrocentricity into research on homosexuality. According to Azibo (2014), African psychology has been in existence a long time albeit in an oral not a written tradition. He further states that Eurocentric thinking has been dominant in the field of psychology, which to a large extent ignored Afrocentric psychologies. In order to understand how African psychology is linked to perceptions towards controversial topics such as homosexuality, I will attempt to explain how psychological functioning is perceived within the African sphere.

Central to African psychology is the concept of the African personality which serves as a core concept in differentiating normality from abnormality (Azibo, 2014). The African personality construct is deeply rooted in African thinking and suggests that normality, in thinking and behaviour, are judged on whether what the person is doing is in line with what

Azibo (2014, p. 33) calls the: “original human beings’ nature”. To elaborate on the latter, the author defined mental health in terms of Afrocentricity as follows:

“Psychological and behavioural functioning that is in accord with the basic nature of the original human nature and its attendant cosmology (deep cultural thought) and survival (Azibo, 2014, p.33).”

In African psychology behaviour is grounded within deep cultural structures which are African centred. The African construct advocates for behaviour to be interpreted through cultural parameters which should be invoked in order to arrive at whether that behaviour is normal or disordered. Indeed, as Idemudia (2015, p. 3), puts it, “Every society embraces particular cultural theories or ideologies that set the parameters within which normal, abnormal and deviant behaviour is defined”.

It is important to consider the central principle of African culture is to bring enlightenment to the many. The first principle or concept is the way in which Africans view the creation of humanity which is based on the belief that God created a man, and then a woman simultaneously from the man’s spiritual essence, thus they emerged together with their off-spring as a unit (Barashango, 1991). I suggest that this is one of the reasons for the strong rejection of homosexuality amongst Africans which is seen as opposed to this doctrine. The problem is that although Africans adopted this principle it is an artefact of Christianity which was introduced into Africa through missionaries in the colonial era. However, today it is a cultural norm to believe in God and Christianity amongst Africans.

The second principle is that heterosexual relationships are the only ones which are recognised in many African contexts, which also embrace polygamy (Fenske, 2015). This allows an African male to have more than one wife (with the blessing of the first wife). Families are considered as complete as the female (or females) are seen as complementing



the male of the species in order to produce offspring (Azibo, 2014; Fenske, 2015). Furthermore, this means that behaving and thinking in a way that validates gender complementarity is the only way to ensure continuous survival and protection of human life, which is very important in African culture. Anyone who does not fit in with this norm for instance, homosexuals, are considered as psychologically inferior and, in fact, undermine true human nature (Azibo, 2014). For African males, these values are passed on to them through the initiation process. Adolescent males attend initiation schools' where the cultural values and aspects of the role they must play in their culture are passed on to them. These values incorporate the traditional male role of father and husband and preservation of family life. These values are passed on and in many African groups' circumcision takes place during the initiation process (Sedibe, 2019).

I would postulate that this is another reason that accounts for the intolerance of homosexuality in African society as it is seen to undermine the preservation of human existence, which is fundamental to traditional African thinking or philosophy.

According to Azibo (2014) in African psychology, behaving is always linked with the protection, maintenance, and development of life. That is, everything that an African does should always be to preserve life, promote normalcy and maintain traditions and culture. This is well captured by Azibo (2014, p. 41) when he states that:

“No behaving and thinking could be a greater manifestation of normalcy or appropriateness than psychological Africanity geared to purposefully ensure that African descent people remain on the planet in perpetuity as Africans”.

The African philosophy or concept of *Ubuntu* is also central in African culture. It can be explained as, ‘I exist because we are one therefore, we show humanity towards others’ (Ramose, 2002). This may, at first sight, appear to contradict the suggestion that

homosexuals do not belong in African society. I would assert that, in this regard, *Ubuntu* could be interpreted in the following manner. Fundamentally, as Africans only see themselves through others, which is the cultural norm, any African who lives outside this norm could be considered as not at 'one' with their own culture.

The above discussion provides some clarification as to why homosexuality is considered as a disorder in the African psyche. However, this rationale should not be interpreted or mistaken as advocating for discrimination against homosexuals amongst Africans as acceptable, but rather to bring to light the reactions or perceptions amongst them which are accounted for by their adherence to cultural principles and maintenance of what they think of as true human nature. As I noted this, to a degree, can be noted as due to the influence of colonialism and Christianity in Africa.

### **3.9 Homosexuality and spirituality**

Literature on the relationship between African spirituality and homosexuality is scant. As a result, over the years there has been a tendency by researchers to focus on heterosexual expression, and little on homosexual expression (Swidler, 1993). However, this does not mean that homosexuality has no place in African spirituality. There are some researcher(s) who tried to clarify this for example, Swidler (1993), during her examination of the place of homosexuality within African religion suggests that spiritual power is seen as embedded within sexuality. Basically, she asserts that both males and females are believed to have spiritual power(s) linked to them in terms of both heterosexuality and same-sex behaviours. In effect, this refutes the notion that Africans always displayed resentment towards homosexuality and homosexual behaviour within their spiritual sphere (Mokhobo, 1989).

Swidler (1993) points out that one of the reasons which better accounts for the idea that Africans have always resented homosexuality has a lot to do with the imposition of western rule and loss of land. She points out that the removal of ethnic groups ended with them being

placed in remote areas far from their previously occupied land. These removals, she argues, led to disruptions, and may have resulted in the displacement, dislocation, and scarcity of oral sources of that time, leading to an ambiguity on pre-colonial religious attitudes towards homosexuality. The latter consequently led to confusion regarding the history of attitudes towards homosexuality before colonialism. The removals did not only cause disruptions in the cultural and spiritual spheres but was also linked to colonial settlers who expanded Africa and subsequently challenged the existing status quo of indigenous social, spiritual, and religious relationships. Africans were dominated by western colonialism who imposed their culture on the existing one. They ended up embracing Christianity, relinquishing their traditions, and adopting new ones which saw no spiritual value within same-sex relationships (Swidler, 1993).

Mkasi (2016) states that it has been documented that spiritual possession is central to traditional healing and that during such possession's an individual's behaviour changes. However, he states that it is also worth noting that these spirit(s) are seen as having no boundaries as far as gender is concerned. What this means is that during spiritual possession, it is not odd to see a male *Sangoma* (a type of a traditional healer) behaving like a female *Sangoma*, if he is possessed by a female spirit and vice versa. In extreme forms, the possession may totally take control of a *Sangoma* in his or her entirety, depending on the type and how powerful the spirit that possessed the person is. Furthermore, the author states that although this does not necessarily mean that being possessed by a spirit of opposite sex makes an individual homosexual, it suggests that homosexuals and lesbians have always existed within African spirituality and that they were honoured and celebrated in specific contexts.

Mkasi (2013) as cited in Mkasi (2016, p. 2), further clarifies how spirituality manifests itself by pointing out that there are five ways in which ancestral spirits may possess a

*Sangoma*. They are as follows: a female spirit in a female *Sangoma*, a male spirit and a female spirit in a female *Sangoma*, a male spirit in a female *Sangoma*, an authoritative male spirit in a female *Sangoma* and a female spirit in a male *Sangoma*. He points out that if the above were translated into western concepts the following meaning is attained.

“A lesbian will be a female *Sangoma* who is possessed by a female spirit, a bisexual will be female *Sangoma* who is possessed by both a female spirit and a male spirit, a transgender will be a female *Sangoma* who is possessed by a male (authoritative) spirit and a Gay will be a male *Sangoma* who is possessed by a female spirit (Mkasi, 2016, p. 2).”

Of interest during spiritual possession as pointed out by Nkabinde (2008, p. 2) was that:

“When an authoritative male spirit possesses a female *Sangoma* and that *Sangoma* assumes a male position - she is addressed as *uBaba* (father), not only by *Sangomas*’ but by members of the community as well”.

This standpoint is underpinned by that of Summers (1995), who pointed out that behaviour and emotions associated with sexuality are fluid among Africans and for a better understanding to occur, homosexuality should be seen as an adjective, denoting emotions, and acts. This is echoed by Msibi (2011), who pointed out that homosexuality is a western term which may not necessarily be understood the same way by Africans, hinting at the possibility that denial of the existence of homosexuality within African spiritual and cultural spheres may be a matter of misunderstanding. Summers (1995), as cited in Dlamini (2006) states that:

“While there does not seem to have been a name suggesting a distinct category called ‘homosexual’, the type of behaviour now commonly known by that term was always

present. He suggests that this could be an indication that Africans would rather speak of acts and emotions rather than categorising people (p. 130).”

All the above attest to Dlamini’s (2006, p. 130), words that, “homosexuality was not an unknown behaviour over much of the African continent,” as most scholars claimed. It always formed part of their spirituality and, in certain instances, it was even celebrated. Furthermore, it is interesting that Africans actually see spiritual power within homosexual acts. This strengthens the notion, as pointed out by Gunda (2010) that, some traditional healers practice homosexuality to augment their spiritual powers.

### **3.10 Summary**

The chapter outlined documented literature, international, national, and local on salient issues pertinent to perceptions of homosexuality. A balanced argument pertaining to homosexuality on the African continent was presented. It was pointed out that the word ‘homosexuality’ had little or no meaning in the African context before colonialism. As such rejection of homosexuality may be based on a misunderstanding of what the term represents as it does not correspond to historical African understandings of same-sex behaviours. In contemporary society, however, the western concept of homosexuality is generally unacceptable in Africa which also has its roots in Christianity.

On the other hand, literature also gave a clear picture of the extent to which homosexuality, homosexual behaviour and homosexual support are not-tolerated within many African countries. Of importance, was the extent to which African leaders promote active discrimination against homosexuals. It was noted that homosexuality threatens traditional, patriarchal ways of life and heterosexual virility on the continent.

Furthermore, it was noted that Africa has been colonised for hundreds of years which has had a negative impact on Africans perceptions of homosexuality. This explains why many African leaders, including traditional healers (as supported by literature) tend to see homosexuality as a foreign ‘thing’ sent to destabilise the continent and to promote a western agenda.

The following chapter (4) discusses the research methodology used in the research process. It further provides a nuanced explanation, or discussion, of the chosen methodology and why it is appropriate to the current study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

*“Research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).*

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology adopted in this study detailing the processes and steps which were followed. Accordingly, interconnectedness and justification for the choice of the methodology, the theoretical model and research objectives are provided. The design of the study is discussed in relation to the rationale for adopting it. An integral part of the methodology was to develop a tool (in the form of semi-structured interview guide) and be guided by it during data collection. Analysis of data used techniques enshrined within TCA as promoted by Braun and Clarke (2006), as described. A description of concepts within the Afrocentric model is also given to underpin how it was used in the study.

The role of the researcher and the steps taken by the researcher to ensure ethical adherence is also provided. Issues of bias, objectivity, credibility, conformability, transferability, dependability, and the steps used to ensure that they were upheld are also discussed.

#### **4.2 Research design**

The research approach was qualitative and exploratory in nature, thus a qualitative, exploratory research design was used. Qualitative approaches are concerned with understanding human behaviour from the perspectives of the people involved, and the language they use to narrate aspects of their lived social reality (Welman et al., 2012). This made the approach appropriate for the current study, as this was exactly what the study envisaged and subsequently explored.

### **4.3 Population and sampling method**

#### ***4.3.1 Population and sampling***

The population of sample were Northern Sotho-Speaking traditional healers in Capricorn District, situated in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The South African National Department of Health (SANDoH) reported that the number of indigenous healers in South Africa is estimated to be around 200 000 (Kale, 1995; Moshabela et al., 2016). This is supported by Pretorius (1999), who estimated the number as between 150 000 - 200 000. In the year 2010, Ross (2010), provided a slightly higher figure and estimated the number to be between 250 000 and 400 000. Van Niekerk (2012) suggested an even higher figure and estimated the number as between 300 000 and 493 000. Based on the latter figures, it cannot be said with certainty how many indigenous healers are active in South Africa, as some are not registered, thus the figure could be higher.

In the context of this study, no documented estimations for the number of traditional healers in Limpopo Provincial and District levels could be found. However, the traditional healers, who formed part of the current study were however, documented and registered with the African Religion/Culture and Health Forum and during data collection they produced their certificates of registration as proof of affiliation.

#### ***4.3.2 Area of the study***

The area of the study was Capricorn District, situated in Limpopo Province, South Africa. A map of South Africa, with Limpopo Province highlighted in light yellow and the study area (Capricorn District) in red is provided in Figure 1.



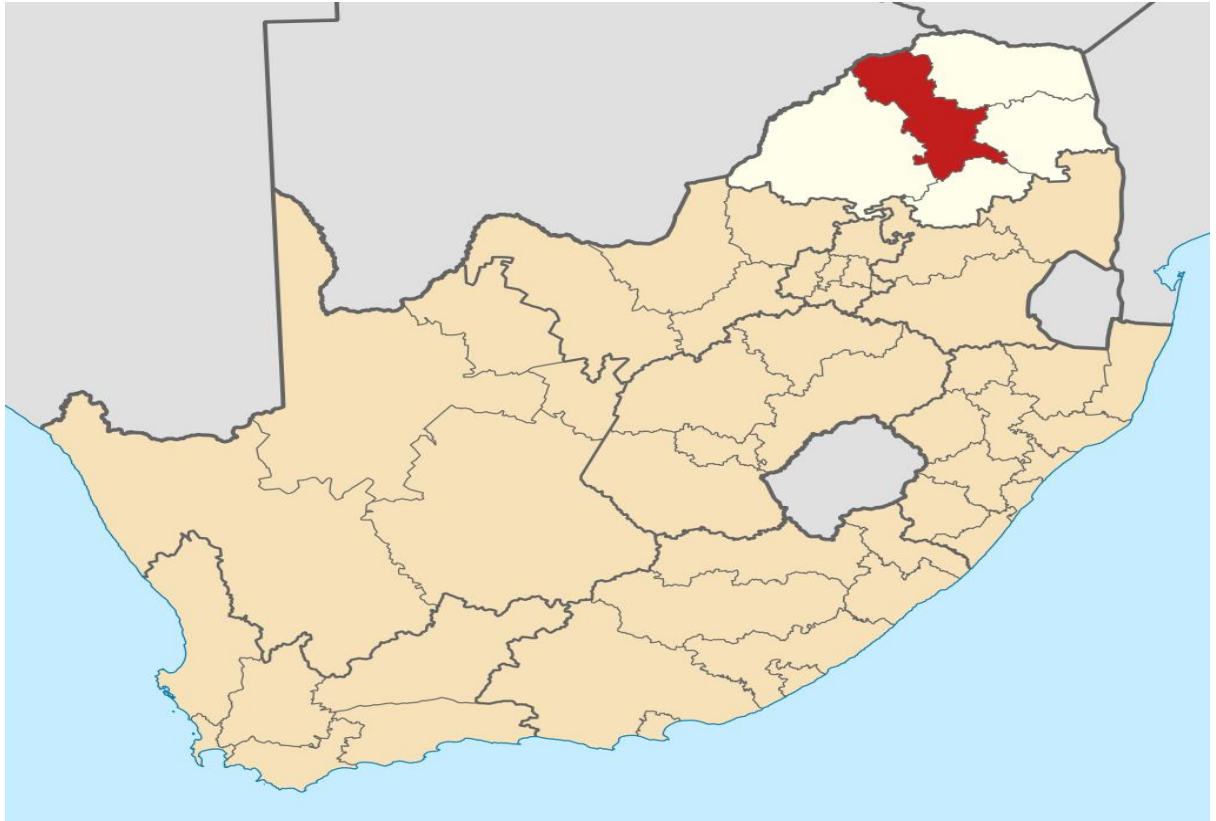


Figure 1: A South African map showing the province and district from which the study was conducted (red on the map).

#### ***4.3.3 Sampling method***

The study made use of a non-probability sampling method called snowball sampling. Snowball sampling allowed the researcher to make initial contact with a traditional healer and then used this relationship to establish contact with others. This is consistent with Bryman's (2012), description of snowball sampling in which he notes that the researcher utilises a specific meeting with an individual who has particularly characteristics to contact others sharing those features.

In this study, I approached an organisation called The African Religion/ Culture and Health Forum to which traditional healers are affiliated. I was able to contact a traditional healer who was willing to participate through this forum and was introduced to others by that person who were also willing to take part in the research. The final sample included ten (10)

participants, seven (7) females and three (3) males, all of whom were Northern Sotho-speaking traditional healers. This number of participants was considered appropriate as the study was qualitative in nature which looks at “quality not quantity of data” (Bryman, 2012). It should be noted that it was initially anticipated that an equal number of males and females would be used for equal gender representation, but due to difficulty getting in contact with male participants and with some of them residing outside the parameters of the stipulated study area, this was not possible.

Any traditional healer who did not fall within the Northern Sotho ethnic group was excluded. The researcher also validated the traditional healers’ authenticity through the African Religion/Culture and Health Forum. Furthermore, during the interviews each participant presented a certificate as proof of their affiliation to the organisation which supported their credentials as traditional healers.

#### ***4.3.3.1 Inclusion criteria***

The following inclusion criteria were used:

1. Northern Sotho Traditional Healers, both male and female and over the age of 18 and who speak SePedi.

#### ***4.3.3.2 Exclusion criteria***

1. Traditional healers who were not of the Northern Sotho ethnic group were excluded.

### **4.4 Data collection**

Individual face-to-face interviews, using a semi-structured interview guide, were used for data collection. This method was chosen for the research because of the sensitivity of the phenomena under scrutiny. It was also chosen because it allowed for privacy, which was necessary to stimulate insights that may not be elicited when using other interviewing

methods (for instance, focus groups). Interviews also created a space for the revelation and uniqueness embedded within personal experiences, which aided in the unravelling and understanding of a range of experiences, and cultural philosophies, or explanations related to homosexuality (McDonald & Rogers, 2014).

The interview guide consisted of eleven questions designed to elicit information about how the participants perceived homosexuality. Demographic questions were addressed such as age and gender (these were close-ended). Open-ended questions followed such as: “What is your view about homosexuality?” and “How would you react if it comes to your attention that there are homosexual people who want to get married traditionally within your community? As it was quite difficult to enlist participants the semi-structured interview guide was not pre-tested, however, I did not experience any problems in terms of participants understanding the questions (please see appendix A).

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) pointed out that, for practical reasons, in qualitative research, fewer than 20 participants are desirable to ensure that a close relationship with the participants is maintained. This allows for a frank and open exchange of information. The latter notion was adopted in the current study and it assisted in underpinning the validity and trustworthiness of the research as well as mitigating bias inherent to qualitative research. The researcher selected a quiet, comfortable, and non-threatening environment in which the interviews took place. With the participants’ permission, an audio recorder was used to record the interviews for later transcription. After the interviews, transcribing took place within a week. Discussions were held with supervisors relating to the transcriptions and the recorded data was placed in the supervisor’s office in a locked box, which only the researcher and supervisors had access to. This ensured that no unauthorised person was able to gain access to the transcriptions.

The semi-structured interview guide was used so that I remained focused (Goldfinger & Pomerantz, 2014), while still remaining flexible enough to follow and deepen the conversation based on the participants' responses. Each individual session lasted between 30 to 40 minutes due to the flow of information and probing as well as the fact that some of the participants were the elderly and some questions had to be repeated. The time for the interviews included 5 minutes for building rapport at the beginning of the session and 5 minutes at the end of the interview for de-briefing. This allowed me to ensure the participants did not feel uncomfortable or, if they did because of the sensitive subject matter, ask them if they wanted to speak to a psychologist who had agreed to help (also from a Northern Sotho background). After the individual session(s), I set up another appointment with individual participants where I gave them feedback regarding the research. This assisted in validating my interpretation of the findings. The interviews were all carried out using Northern Sotho and I later translated the data into English. None of the participants stated they felt uncomfortable either after the interview or in the follow up session where the interpretation of the interviews was validated.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was chosen as the method of data analysis for this study. It was not used in isolation but was aligned to the values of Afrocentricity for a more meaningful interpretation. Thematic Content Analysis has been defined as:

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

The analysis was used to elaborate on themes by allowing for an in-depth interpretation of participants perceptions. To support valid and reliable inferences, TCA involved a set of

systematic and transparent procedures for interpretation. The following steps adapted from Braun and Clark (2006), were followed.

#### ***4.5.1 Familiarising oneself with the data***

After the data was collected the first phase of the analysis commenced. Firstly, during this phase I collected data using the semi-structured interview schedule and an interactive interviewing technique. After the interviews were complete, I read and re-read the data so I was completely familiar with it. I then went back and validated the interpretations of the data I had made with the participants. When this was complete, I again read and re-read the data to ensure complete familiarisation. I was thus able to ensure my complete familiarisation with the contents before I began the next step of the transcription process which was underpinned by the type of TCA proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Secondly, the data which was gathered through interviews was then transcribed verbatim (that is using Northern Sotho) into written form. The entire process of transcribing was quite tedious and frustrating, however, I did all possible to ensure that the process was objective. This is a key phase in the data analysis process and if it had not been handled properly it would have negative implications for the entire study. Secondly, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to immerse himself with the data (Riessman, 1993). The first data I translated and transcribed into a first draft. The second round of translation was checked, corrected, and put into appropriate English, by a Northern Sotho academic who agreed to help me. The second round of translation is embedded in this PhD.

Thirdly, I further enhanced familiarisation with the data by translating the data into English and repeatedly reading through the data (interview notes and any other behaviours that were observed during the interview process and that I had noted). After this I checked the English translation with the help of a Northern Sotho academic to ensure the translation was

valid. Some minor changes that did not affect the meaning of the translation were made. After this I read and re-read the transcripts in order to search for patterns in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend that in TCA a researcher must read and re-read the transcripts for complete familiarisation before coding of data can begin. The main reason for this is that patterns and ideas are shaped as the data is thoroughly read over and over again which is essential before coding can begin.

As continuous reading of data is tiring and time consuming it must be completed over various sessions to stop the researcher being 'selective.' For instance, reading what he wanted to and leaving out difficult areas. This could lead to bias, thus, I ensured that I read and re-read the transcripts many times in different sessions. After this stage was completed the formalised coding process began.

#### ***4.5.2 Generating initial codes***

This stage commenced when I was thoroughly familiar with the data. I made list of ideas out of a reading of the transcripts and wrote down what I found of interest. I then generated initial codes from the data. These codes were identified in relation to the features of the data that I found interesting guided by the phenomena under scrutiny as proposed by Boyatzis (1998) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

Coding was important as it assisted me in organising segments of the data into meaningful categories. Coding in this case was theory driven as the data was approached with specific questions in mind and it was done manually. I gave equal attention to all the data which assisted me in ensuring that aspects that were of interest were identified and in line with the topic of the study that also formed a basis for compiling themes. Because the coding was carried out manually, I highlighted the areas of interest in different colours. Through

using different colours, I was able to identify (and change if necessary) initial codes as specific sentences and extracts were matched (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Due to the fact that qualitative data is rich in nature, coding was done for many potential themes which I considered would be of interest. Taking into account that extracts are not limited to one potential theme they can appear under different potential themes, as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 19) who state: “An extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded as many times, as relevant”. In summary, the importance in this phase was to ensure that all actual data extracts were coded and collated together within each coding frame. When this stage was completed, I began to search for themes that arose naturally out of the coded data.

#### ***4.5.3 Searching for themes***

After coding and collating of data I found that I had identified a long list of codes. During this phase, codes along with coded extracts were sorted into potential themes. Essentially, codes were analysed and interpreted and combined to form inclusive themes. I did this manually by separating the highlighted codes and the corresponding data extracts which were then sorted into themes. This is where the link between themes and codes became important, as some codes went on to form main themes and sub-themes. During this process I did, however, find that there were a number of codes that I could not fit easily into the generated themes.

At this point I had potential themes and sub-themes, along with the data extracts that resonated with them. I then started to have sense of the data in relation to the potential themes identified post collating. The coded data that I had previously not been able to fit neatly into the potential themes were placed to one side as nothing can be left out and the themes were not yet ‘cast in stone.’ Braun and Clarke (2006), state that at this stage there is a certain level of

uncertainty with regard to whether the potentially identified themes will hold or may need later refinement which will include the coded data that has not yet been slotted into the thematic process. I then began the next process which was a review of the themes.

#### ***4.5.4 Reviewing themes***

During this phase themes which were formed in the search phase were refined. Meaning that they were re-visited, and it was during this stage that it became apparent that some of the themes identified were not complete as they were not supported by enough data. This is compatible with the process of reviewing themes according to the tenets of Braun and Clark (2006). Some themes did not hold while others were combined to form new themes, often were collapsed into two or more sub-themes. It should be noted as per TCA that themes must be coherent and meaningful, and their dissimilarities must be easily identifiable.

Reviewing and refining of themes at this phase was two-fold. The first review was carried out at the coded data extract level which involved revisiting and re-reading of the collated excerpts of each identified theme. This was carried out with the intent of verifying if they were coherent or not. When identified themes and extracts complemented each other there was no problem, but when the themes and extracts did not complement each other, the theme was revisited. I verified the extracts with the intention of ensuring they belonged in that theme or not. If they did not, I looked at the themes again and the creation of new ones, or sub-themes were considered. I then looked at the extracts that I had put aside and was able to integrate them into these themes or sub-themes. According to Braun and Clark (2006), a researcher will always find some coded data that does not fit into any theme and, as long as a researcher spends time ensuring that a data extract does not fit any other pattern, theme, or sub-theme it can be discarded as long as it is not something that has any important meaning attached to it (Braun & Clark, 2006). I found only two such coded extracts which on reading and re-reading, I considered did not have any important meaning attached to them.



The second review was carried out to refine meaning which also enhanced the validity of the themes and sub-themes. At this point validity was judged in relation to how themes related to the overall data. In some instances, additional data, which was missed earlier had to be coded, as coding is a continuous process and not fixed. The main aim of this phase was to ensure that at the end I had a picture of how everything came together and how the entire story, arising out of the themes, could be narrated. This paved way for the next stage which was defining and naming the themes.

#### ***4.5.5 Defining and naming themes***

During this phase themes were properly defined and further refined. Fundamentally, this meant that the meaning of each theme was identified and captured. In order to avoid loading themes too much and over sophisticating them, I ensured that they were supported by extracts from the collated data. In this way I was able to present a consistent and coherent narrative. It was very important to not just present the data in the form of themes but to identify what was noteworthy about each of them as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006).

A detailed analysis of each theme was then presented along with the story each theme narrated and how it resonated with the story found in the data as well as the research question(s) and/or objectives. Themes were further refined in order to identify whether they contain sub-themes. This was carried out as sub-themes assist in unpacking complex themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

These steps were completed to ensure that themes were properly and appropriately defined. If, at this late stage I could not establish this I went back, looked at the data, coding, and themes again and in one instance further refined the theme. Even though at this stage themes are named, this is also a stage where it was ensured that they were validated in preparation for final presentation and analysis. As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 23) state:

“Names need to be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about”. I then completed the final stage of the analysis, which is producing the report or, in this case, the thesis.

#### ***4.5.6 Producing the report (PhD)***

During this phase, the researcher had completed the refinement of named themes and had to complete the written analysis in the form of a chapter in the PhD. A coherent insightful narration of the data was presented in a way that any reader can be easily convinced about the validity and trustworthiness of the analysis. This was echoed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 23) who suggested:

“It is important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell - within and across themes”.

Each theme in the write-up was accompanied by data extracts and which serve as evidence in support of that theme. Only vivid extracts were used to support themes as they are better suited and are embedded with the essence of the meaning the themes were intended to demonstrate in relation to the phenomena under consideration. However, I must note that the extracts were not only limited to the provision of data, but they echoed the entire analytic narrative. This is well captured by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 23), when they pointed out that:

“Extracts need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story that the researcher is telling about the data, and the analytic narrative needs to go beyond description of the data and make an argument in relation to the research question(s) and/or objectives”.

## **4.6 Quality criteria**

To ensure reliability, validity, and objectivity in qualitative research unlike in quantitative research, examination of trustworthiness is central. Trustworthiness is concerned with authenticity, truthfulness, and quality of qualitative research findings. This is embedded in the degree of confidence and trust that readers have in the research findings (Cypress, 2017). To ensure reliability, validity, objectivity, and trustworthiness of the inferences made in the current study, the following concepts from Lincoln and Guba (1985) for evaluating trustworthiness were used as adapted by Holloway and Galvin (2017), Ramalisa et al. (2018), and Sobekwa and Arunachallam (2015).

### **4.6.1 Credibility**

Credibility relates to confidence which arises from the truthfulness of the research results and/or findings (Elo et al., 2014). The latter was clearly captured by Lincoln and Guba (1989), as cited in Nowell et al. (2017, p. 3) who claimed that the:

“Credibility of a study is determined when core-searchers or readers are confronted with an experience and they can recognise it. Credibility addresses the ‘fit’ between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of them”.

To ensure credibility in the current study, the researcher ensured that boundaries were placed within the study which incorporated the population of interest, theoretical framework, and variables. I adopted well recognised research methods, built rapport with participants, and also described the phenomenon under scrutiny in detail as well as describing the study aim and objectives. I also conducted the research interviews in the participants’ mother tongue which added credibility to the study. Additionally, credibility was ensured through multiple reviews of the data, field notes, and persistent observation as well as being cognisant of my behaviour and any other aspect which could have caused bias in the study.

Furthermore, credibility was enhanced by ensuring that those who participated in the study were identified and accurately described. I also sought constant guidance from my supervisors during all parts of the research process. After the data collection and analysis, I also set up appointments with individual participants and briefed them about the results to ensure they were validated thus strengthening credibility.

#### **4.6.2 *Conformability***

Conformability is concerned with objectivity. That is, the compatibility between two or more independent people as far as the data's relevance, meaning and accuracy are concerned (Elo et al., 2014). To ensure conformability in the current study, I consulted with my supervisors who are knowledgeable about the method of interpretation used in the current study, so as to enhance the analysis. I was also aware of my own beliefs, knowledge, and assumptions which I 'bracketed' (placed on one-side) to ensure that they did not affect the research process. I was also cognisant of any shortcomings in the study methods and their potential effects and tried to minimise them as much as possible (for instance, 'bracketing' my own thoughts and beliefs to increase objectivity). Additionally, all procedures followed in undertaking the study were documented and I checked the collected data repeatedly as well as asking a Northern Sotho academic to check my transcription of the interviews into English. Furthermore, to enhance conformability, reasons for the choice of methodology, theories underpinning the research and analytical choices were provided and justified. This was carried out to ensure that others would understand the basis for the 'how' and 'why' of the choices made.

#### **4.6.3 *Transferability***

Transferability is concerned with the extrapolation of research data to other settings guided by the concept of generalisability (Elo et al., 2014). Transferability was ensured by

providing thorough descriptions of the research setting, participants and data collected. This was carried out so that those who wish to use the research design used in this study would be able to judge the study's transferability.

#### **4.6.4 Dependability**

Dependability is concerned with ensuring that the research data is stable over time and under different circumstances (Elo et al., 2014). This means that the research data should be able to be relied on over time in various conditions. This was upheld by making sure that the research methodology and procedures followed while undertaking this study were properly documented in their entirety. The role that I played in realising the study aim and objectives were also provided.

To further enhance reliability, validity and objectivity, the research was reviewed for accuracy based on the research cannons derived from Asante's (1990) Afrocentric theory as used by Reverie (2001).

- ***Ukweli* or 'Truth'** – This was achieved by making sure that the research was grounded within Northern Sotho traditional healers' cultural perceptions of homosexuality. This also allowed for verification of data to be made within that context as frame of reference (Reverie, 2001).
- ***Ujamaa* or 'Family-hood'**– This was achieved by being cognisant of cultural aspects that maintain the perceptions of traditional healers towards homosexuality which were echoed in the broader community. In this regard, I was informed by cultural knowledge about traditional healers which informed their perceptions in relation to the phenomena under scrutiny (Reverie, 2001).
- ***Uhaki* or 'Literacy criticism'** – This is concerned with fairness or objectivity. To ensure the latter, I made sure that the well-being and harmony of my participants

were at the forefront of this research process. I carried out interviews in a respectful manner and was also respectful of the participants culture thus was able to be fair and objective in a way that was mindful of the traditional African culture (Reverie, 2001).

#### **4.7 Bias**

To minimise bias during this study, the following were ensured guided by Galdas (2017), Smith and Noble's (2014) propositions on the importance of handling bias in research.

- a) No cues were given in relation to how the researcher would like questions to be answered.
- b) The researcher was cognisant and adhered to the ethical standards of his profession (psychology) during the interviews.
- c) The interviewees were allowed to express themselves without making them feel uncomfortable or being rushed in anyway, which enhanced the quality of the data gathered.
- d) The researcher also listened attentively, probed respectfully, and recorded everything that was said by the participants verbatim for transcription (which was later transcribed into English and checked by a Northern Sotho scholar for veracity).

#### **4.8 Ethical considerations**

##### ***4.8.1 Permission to conduct the study***

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the University of Limpopo Research and Ethics committee [Turffloop Research and Ethics Committee. 2019]. Approval and permission was granted (TREC/87/2019: PG). Permission to approach traditional healers was

sought through the African Religion/Culture and Health Forum which was also granted. It was originally thought that permission would be sought from the Limpopo Traditional Healers Association, however due to logistical complications this became difficult thus the African Religion/Culture and Health Forum was approached.

#### ***4.8.2 Rapport***

Rapport is defined as a state of mutual trust and responsiveness between individuals or groups of people (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Kapur, 2018; O'Toole, 2008; Shenton, 2004). At the beginning of each interview, I established rapport with participants to ensure a smooth interview process. The research was properly explained to participants in Northern Sotho to ensure they understood exactly what it was about. Any questions participants had were answered honestly.

#### ***4.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity***

In every study, protection of confidential information is of paramount importance (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Surmiak, 2018). Confidentiality in this study was ensured by making sure that none of the participants' information was discussed with anyone except my supervisors. I did not reveal the names or location of any of the participants to my supervisors as this further ensured confidentiality and anonymity. A covering letter explaining the reason for the study was provided to participants which they were able to read. For the purpose of preserving participants' identity and dignity pseudonyms were used which aided in-keeping participants' information private.

#### ***4.8.4 Privacy***

During qualitative research, protection of participants' identities and well-being is crucial (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, I safeguarded participants' rights to privacy by replacing their names with pseudonyms which I communicated to them. Privacy was further enhanced by ensuring that information collected (in the form of recordings and/or notes)

during interviews was guarded and shared only with my supervisor(s) and the Northern Sotho academic who helped with the translations. He, however, was not privy to any names or other information about participants as he only saw the transcripts with the pseudonyms.

#### ***4.8.5 Informed consent***

Informed consent is a necessity in any study to ensure that participants agree to participate in the study in a voluntary manner with a full understanding of any possible risks involved. The researchers' ability to secure informed consent allows participants to cooperate fully (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Surmiak, 2018). In this study, participants were provided with all the details of the research. There was no force or manipulation employed to persuade participants to take part in the study. They were also not given any incentives to take part in the research such as money or goods. In other words, participants were verbally informed as well as being provided with an informed consent form which they signed. It explained everything they needed to know about issues of consent as well as telling them that, if they felt uncomfortable at any stage of the process, they could withdraw with no repercussions.

#### ***4.8.6 No harm to participants***

Social research should never subject participants to harm, regardless of whether they participate voluntarily or not. It must be noted that participants can be harmed physically and/or psychological during some types of research. The responsibility lies with the researcher to look for subtle dangers and to guard against them (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). I kept this in mind when undertaking the study. Participants were informed that if they felt uncomfortable after the interviews, they could see a psychologist who had agreed to help (also a Northern Sotho speaker). However, there was no one who needed, or who verbally expressed in any way on the need for intervention after the interviews. I also observed the



participants closely and did not notice any behaviour or body language that warranted concern or referral to the psychologist.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology employed during the investigation, including concepts adopted from Afrocentric theory which I consider enhanced trustworthiness and minimised bias. The research design, sampling and Thematic Content Analysis were also clearly explained. Ethical considerations were also clearly articulated. The following chapter (5) provides a discussion and analysis of results and presents themes that emerged out of the data.

## CHAPTER 5

### STUDY RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

*“In qualitative research the goal of coding is not to produce counts of things, but to fracture the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2009).*

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the research results. The first section of the chapter focuses on the presentation of the demographic results. The second section focuses on the presentation of themes and sub-themes that emerged out of the data. The themes and sub-themes are supported by participants’ responses (translated from Northern Sotho into English) after which a brief discussion of themes and interpretation thereof is given. Some of the themes and sub-themes are quite similar however, themes are broken down into sub-themes to give a more nuanced interpretation.

The presentation of results is carried out in relation to the study research aim and objectives, linking them to the core concepts of Afrocentric theory. I will start by presenting the significant demographic details of participants. These are presented in a tabular format followed by an explanation.

I must also note that some of the sub-themes and themes may not have many supporting statements from participants. As the sample was relatively small, I thought this appropriate. This underpins Braun and Clarke’s (2006) notion that often it is necessary to further refine themes and sub-themes to provide a more nuanced understanding of the overall phenomena under study, or broad thematic areas. In this research there were many similar, but somewhat

nuanced thematic areas that needed extremely nuanced refinement. This assisted in the overall unpacking and clarification of complex themes.

## 5.2 Demographic data of participants

**Table 2: *Participants demographics details***

<b>No:</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Home Language</b>	<b>Years of practising</b>	<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>1.</b>	57 years	Female	Sepedi	11 years	No formal education	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>2.</b>	55 years	Male	Sepedi	13 years	Grade 09	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>3.</b>	46 years	Female	Sepedi	05 years	Grade 11	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>4.</b>	55 years	Female	Sepedi	09 years	Grade 07	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>5.</b>	72 years	Male	Sepedi	31 years	Grade 04	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>6.</b>	72 years	Female	Sepedi	37 years	Grade 08	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>7.</b>	57 years	Female	Sepedi	29 years	Grade 07	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>8.</b>	32 years	Male	Sepedi	04 years	Grade 12	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
<b>9.</b>	58 years	Female	Sepedi	11 years	No formal education	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer

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11	52	Female	Sepedi	27 years	Grade 12	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
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The study sample consisted of 10 participants. All participants were Northern Sotho traditional healers from the Capricorn District, in Limpopo Province, South Africa. All participants were sourced through a traditional healer who I met through the African Religion/Culture and Health Forum. They were all verified as members of this organisation. When I interviewed them, they provided me with a certificate verifying their affiliation to the organisation. There were seven females (70%) and three males (30%). Eighty (80%) percent of the participants were above the age of fifty, which suggests that they have a broad knowledge and understanding of Northern Sotho culture. Two of the participants had no formal education, three left and/or dropped out of school at primary level, three at secondary school level and two completed Grade 12.

The majority of participants indicated that they had left or dropped out of school as a result of difficulties caused by their ancestral calling, as they knew they had been called by the ancestors to become traditional healers. Some reported that they had visions while at school which were not understood thus, they felt it was better for them to follow their calling not formal education. It was anticipated that an equal number of participants would be found for gender representivity, however, this was not possible as it was difficult to locate the male traditional healers due to their locations (deep rural areas with no formal address our outside of the study area).

Among the participants, the longest serving was in practice for thirty-seven years and the youngest participant was in practice for four years. This is the basis against which they

can be considered as credible participants from which their knowledge and perceptions about homosexuality, as traditional healers in a Northern Sotho cultural setting, can be ascertained.

### **5.3 Analysis of data**

Analysis in the form of themes and sub-themes which is presented in this section emerged from a reading and re-reading of the research data (see Appendix F). I collected the data in Northern Sotho and then translated it into English with the assistance of a Northern Sotho Academic. We, as far as possible, ensured the translation was as close to the vernacular as it could be. The main themes and sub-themes which arose from the data are as follows: homosexuality threatens family structure and values; homosexuality is regarded as a taboo and a disgrace; homosexuality and ancestral calling; historical evidence of homosexuality; homosexuality is confusing; homosexuality and western culture; homosexuality and cleansing (mourning process); homosexuality, traditional healing and ancestral calling; homosexuality and initiation schools as well as proposed interventions to curb homosexuality.. There is some overlap in the themes and sub-themes which is usual in qualitative research however, each theme and sub-theme still exists as a stand-alone unit.

#### **5.3.1 Theme 1: Homosexuality threatens family structure and values**

Most of the participants (50%) were of the view that homosexuality threatens and disrupts the stability of the traditional African family structure and values. Having a family was also perceived as something enshrined within Northern Sotho culture, anything that goes against this notion is considered as absurd and confusing. Fundamentally, their view was that men must sow their seed and procreate to ensure the survival of the family structure. The following extracts support the latter assertion.

*“Their family [homosexuals] will never be fully functional. It is for this reason that if it was possible such things [homosexuality] should not exist. Where will it end since the first thing a family must do is to have a child... they will never have a fully functional*

*family...? When will their family ever become complete...? Our culture requires one to have a family and children.” (Participant 1)*

*“Because when parents have a child, they expect that child to continue growing the family, so that the family name does not disappear. This mean that our family values will disappear.” (Participant 5)*

*“So, when such things [homosexuality] start happening amongst us blacks, we get confused because we worry about our future? Families are going to die out”.*  
**(Participant 7)**

*“First thing, if a man lies with another man, they will never have a family. This is not our belief”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“It [homosexuality] stops people from having children which is not in our culture”.*  
**(Participant 10)**

It can be understood from the above extracts that in Northern Sotho culture same -sex relationships and/or family will not be recognised as a fully functional family because they will never have children which means the family is considered incomplete. This is supported by Azibo (2014), who pointed out that heterosexual relationships are the only recognised ones in African culture, as they are considered to be complete. Furthermore, he stated that this was because males and females complement each other while same-sex relationships do not which renders them unacceptable to the majority of traditional African communities.

Having a family is not only seen as a cultural requirement but also as a necessity to ensure the continued survival of the family bloodline and African culture as a whole. This relates to *Ujamaa* or ‘family-hood’ as a canon of Asante’s (1990) Afrocentricity. Participants felt that homosexual relationships disrupt the whole concept of family-hood. It is within this basis that homosexuality is perceived to disorganise and destabilise family structure.

### **5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Homosexuality and the preservation of family bloodlines and/or surname**

Some of the participants (20%) were concerned about the preservation of their surname and bloodline. They felt this was threatened by homosexual relationships because they asserted that homosexuals cannot have natural children (adopted ones' are not seen as carrying the family bloodline). Participants expressed fear about this as the continual existence of their surname is important to their ancestors and ancestral beliefs. This relates to the concept of *Ukweli* or 'truth' as a canon of Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity as the participants views were grounded in the common cultural conception of how preservation of surnames and/or bloodline should be upheld in Northern Sotho culture. If same-sex relationships are allowed they perceive their future in the community as uncertain. The following responses capture this:

*"The biggest reason that I do not agree with such things [homosexuality] is what is going to happen to the family surname? I mean even if a woman is married and the marriage does not work out, she comes back home with her children, life continues, the family grows."* **(Participant 7)**

*"If I am a man and I marry another man my surname will become extinct".*  
**(Participant 8)**

It must be noted that when asked what would happen if a woman was barren the response, from all participants was (though not necessarily in exactly the same words). "Then the man can take a second wife so that his name can continue."

### **5.3.1.2 Sub theme 1.2: Homosexuality and procreation**

A significant number of participants (80%) were of the view that homosexuality tampers with the doctrine of procreation, which is not only the core of Northern Sotho

culture, but also a means through which continued survival of the ancestors occurs. This ensures that the supremacy of the male is continued or sustained (Rudwick, 2011). According to Rudwick (2011), African traditional healers of various cultural groups reject homosexuality because of the cultural doctrine of procreation, which is both traditional and related to Christian values, where for a man to be recognised as a man he must be able to produce offspring. The following extracts illustrate this.

*“The line will end with them as they do not have a proper family [man and woman] and they cannot have children. As they are of the same-sex, since they will never have children born of their bloodline. They will not be able to show their family with pride because, we as Africans, pride ourselves on our children and when they grow up they get employed and assist us. So, with them [homosexuals] this cannot happen”*

**(Participant 1).**

*“Yes, I disagree with a man being with another man because how will they flourish and multiply? It’s the same with a woman and a woman... I just do not understand it”.*

**(Participant 3)**

*“Parents know what kind of child they have. If it is a man, they know that he will not be able to bear children, if it is a woman, she will be able to have children. So nowadays what we must do you cannot tell your child: ‘you my child you are like this [a homosexual] and I know you’. Even during the olden days, we did not recognise this [homosexuality]. Maybe the parent knew that their child was like this, but it was not spoken about and they married [the males]. Nowadays those who engage in same-sex relationships are those who cannot flourish and multiply”.* **(Participant 4)**



*“A man is supposed to marry a woman and have children. When a man is in a romantic relationship with a man, they will not have children of their bloodline. Where will that lead our community and our ancestors? Will this same-sex thing be satisfactory to parents? We get married and live together with a woman so that as men we will have children? What will the direction of our community be? You see, parents expect their children to grow their family not lose the family name. If we get married men with men, we cannot have children of our own line.” (Participant 5)*

*“We only know that a man marries a woman, and they have children. Now when a woman marries another woman how are they going to have children? The world is coming to an end because a woman will never make a child with another woman and a man will not make a child with another man”. (Participant 7)*

*“According to me there is the tradition where we name our children after elderly family members. When I have a child, the child will be named after an elder this cannot happen the same-sex marry because they cannot have children”. (Participant 8)*

*“What I do not understand is that if it’s a woman and a woman or a man and a man how will they be able to have a child?” (Participant 9)*

*“When people of same-sex are together they cannot have children”. (Participant 10)*

The above extracts suggest that, the concept of procreation is highly valued in Northern Sotho culture for multiple reasons. Homosexuality is not only perceived to threaten heterosexual virility but also procreation, which is not only essential for the continued survival of ancestors but is also seen as affording parents some level of pride in the form of children. The traditional healers stated that these children will grow up and help them in their old age. This upholds the concept of *Ukweli* or ‘truth’ as a canon of Asante’s (1990)

Afrocentricity as the participants' views are culturally grounded pertaining to the significance of procreation in ensuring the perpetual existence of their culture through the ancestors. This is seen as something which homosexuals cannot do as they supposedly cannot procreate. Homosexuality is further seen as a threat to the continuous survival of the world and seems to induce a certain level of fear amongst the participants regarding a 'childless' future of the world.

When I said that a homosexual male could use his sperm to inseminate a woman through invitro fertilisation (IVF) and the child would be his natural bloodline the healers did not think this was morally appropriate as the man had not married the woman, or impregnated her naturally. Women do not carry the family name in Northern Sotho culture so if she had a child through IVF it would 'not count.'

One traditional healer equated homosexual marriage to a joke as having children was central to the union of marriage. This view is embedded in the following response.

*"So, if you look at a wedding of same-sex people, it does not have dignity. Their wedding becomes a joke, but if it is a man marrying a woman then the wedding has dignity. Same-sex wedding is not right, and it is a joke which undermines the integrity of African culture. Their marriage is not real because it does not lead to anything, they cannot have children. I say again it is a joke of a wedding. They will not have children; it does not have anything to keep it together. I do not know who is going to control the marriage because they are of same-sex [this comment is associated with patriarchy and the male being the head of the household]". (Participant 10)*

Based on the above extract, it can be assumed that homosexuality is not only regarded as disgraceful but also as undermining the entire concept of marriage in African culture broadly and Northern Sotho culture in particular. Participant 10 was also of the view that

homosexual marriage does not have dignity unlike a heterosexual marriage. There was also a concern regarding social hierarchy and social roles that is this participant wanted to know who is going to assume ‘control,’ or responsibility in a homosexual marriage, as they are both men. Traditional, patriarchal tribal culture dictates it is the man who takes the lead in all things in a marriage (Mathebula & Motsoeneng, 2015).

### 5.3.2 **Theme 2: Homosexuality regarded as taboo and a disgrace**

Most of the participants (60%) in this study were of the view that homosexuality is disgraceful, against culture and it cannot be tolerated nor accepted under any circumstances. This echoes *Ukweli* or the ‘truth’ in Asante’s (1990) Afrocentricity as homosexuality is seen as being inconsistent with what is thought to be the truth in Northern Sotho culture. The following extracts support the above statement.

*“Of course, I do not accept it. I do not agree with what they are doing [same-sex relationship] it is disgraceful, but if he wants help, I will assist him”.* (Participant 3)

*“According to our culture, same-sex relations are taboo. No, there is nothing that I can do about it....it is just like that. It is not a good thing for men to behave like this. You know this is taboo what these people [homosexuals] are doing. When a man is in a relationship with another man according to our culture it is a taboo. But they disregard our culture so there is nothing we can do.”* (Participant 4)

*“It is not something common, it is new. Because back in the old days if a man had a relationship with another man, they could not live amongst us because it was taboo. They [homosexuals and lesbians] will be doing something that was never allowed. Today we see these things [same-sex relationships] on television even though it was never in our community before. I mean what can I say, he or she will be considered as an abomination. If I were invited to such a wedding I would go, it would be a disgrace*

*that I want to witness. It would be the first time that I witnessed such a disgrace, and I could see what was going on. What I can tell you is that back in the old days if one were about to marry or be in a relationship with another of same-sex, they would be in serious trouble. They could end up being killed. Back in those day the elders had no fear in deciding these peoples' [homosexuals] fate. Remember there was not this thing of the police stopping people doing such things [killing homosexuals]. Same-sex relationships were a disgrace when I was growing up. It is a disgrace among blacks based on how we grew up and our culture. To us it is a disgrace, we are scared of it [homosexuality] because when people of the same-sex get married they cannot reproduce. They just get old... and when they get old who is going to assist them? That is why we say in our culture that homosexuality is a disgrace. It is not that we hate homosexuals, we are just embarrassed by them and the way they are. When it comes to sexual intercourse we are still confused as it cannot work".* **(Participant 7)**

*"I do not accept it [homosexuality] and I am also not happy about it. If I know of such people, it will not sit well with me because it is a disgrace. You will find that when I travel and meet with other traditional healers and they talk of such things they say: 'that place which has people of same-sex.' So, no, homosexuality does not sit well with me".* **(Participant 8)**

*"I do not think that a man being with another man should be allowed."* **(Participant 9)**

*"According to me, homosexuality is an embarrassment and according to my beliefs it is a taboo. It is taboo because it causes bad things to happen in the community. Like I*

*said, according to my beliefs homosexuality is taboo because it contaminates nature”.*

**(Participant 10)**

The aforementioned comments suggests that homosexuality is perceived as associated with the occurrence of ‘bad things’ such as ‘contaminating nature’ and is consequently regarded as taboo and a disgrace by the majority of participants, based on their understanding of Northern Sotho culture. It must also be stated that people who were homosexual during the ‘olden days’ must have lived in a very difficult environment and were very likely in fear of losing their lives. Another issue noted by participant 7 was ‘how’ sexual intercourse took place which seems a naïve statement, however, in African culture it might be that anal or oral intercourse between men is such a taboo subject that the participant did not want to entertain the idea. It seems difficult to comprehend that most traditional healers would not understand how homosexuals engage in sexual intercourse. However, participant 3 stated that a homosexual would be helped if they needed help.

**5.3.2.1 Sub theme 2.1: Homosexuality and Northern Sotho culture**

Most of the participants (60%) who took part in the study were of the view that homosexuality never had, and still have, no place in Northern Sotho culture. Homosexuality is regarded as undermining the concept of “go forth and multiply” which is a central tenet of Northern Sotho culture in the religious and spiritual spheres. This underpins Mbiti’s (1970, p.10) assertion that “Africans are notoriously religious” and like to follow biblical rules. This is underpinned by Asante’s (1990) concept of *Ukweli* or the ‘truth’ as Northern Sotho culture dictates that marriage is for procreation. Same -sex marriages are also perceived as being disrespectful of, and undermining, Northern Sotho cultural norms. The following extracts support these assertions.

*“Mhmmmmm, there is nowhere in our culture where homosexuality is allowed; therefore, there is no way that our culture can allow things like this. Our culture demands that a family should grow and that children should be born. It is our culture, and it does not allow such things.” (Participant 1)*

*“I do not agree with homosexuality and our culture does not agree with it because this kind of relationship is against our culture. From our childhood we learn this and such things [homosexuality, in the past,] were not glamourised [like they are today in the media]. All of our historical cultural values are being disregarded”. (Participant 4)*

*“Same-sex relationships are very much against African culture. In our culture we say that we ‘we must flourish and multiply.’ Here is another issue, the gifts [a gift refers to the ancestral calling to be a traditional healer] I have received from my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparent they should be passed on down the bloodline. Homosexuals cannot do that as they cannot have natural children, so they [homosexuals] cannot belong to our culture.” Participant 5)*

*“Same-sex relationships are against African culture. We have never seen it [historically] in our culture. I do not have an answer for this; however, people make their own decisions and do what they want. They do it in their own culture wherever they are. It is unfortunate that it exists in any culture however, it does not involve our [Northern Sotho] community, but it is just painful to see these people. They go against everything natural but, in our culture, such a thing [homosexuality] is not allowed.” (Participant 6)*

*“When you hear a child saying I have seen a person going out with someone of the same-sex and I want to do a similar thing. I will say ‘No’ that cannot happen; it is not in our culture”. (Participant 7)*

*“It is against culture because it is a taboo, and it pollutes nature. As well as contaminating nature, it also tarnishes African culture. It does not make me happy. According to me homosexuality undermines African culture. It destabilises us because we Africans respect ourselves and we adhere to African customs. Following African customs and ways increases our chances of living longer and reduces diseases. There are many problems in the world and if we ignore our African culture things will get worse. The Bill of Rights has made things worse among us Africans because they allow even homosexuals to have rights. This is wrong because homosexuality shortens our lives because of disease, stops rain, contributes towards our children not being able to have babies and they [homosexuals] just make the world a bad place. Homosexuality in general causes things that contaminate the world and our core being as Africans”.*

**(Participant 10)**

It can be construed from the above responses that homosexuality is not tolerated culturally (in contemporary and the recent historical past), as it is perceived as being against the Northern Sotho cultural way of life. The above responses also suggest that not only is homosexuality perceived as against culture but as also tampering negatively with nature by contaminating it. I would assert that it is therefore safe to assume that homosexuality can be equated to some sort of a plague. The concept of modernisation also seems to be blamed for the abandonment of cultural ways. ‘Bad things’ that are happening in the world are seen as a result of African people abandoning their cultural way of life which keeps them alive longer and contributes to the overall greater good (unlike homosexuality). These beliefs can be supported by Asante’s (1990) notion this ‘truth’ is what the traditional healers in the study believe.

### 5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Homosexuality is un-Godly

This theme captures a significant aspect of the Northern Sotho religious sphere or beliefs. One traditional healer perceived homosexuality as being against God and human creation. The participants considered themselves as religious and viewed religion as an important component of their culture (Mbiti, 1970; Msibi, 2011). In this regard anything that is not accepted by their culture was also considered religiously unacceptable. This, of course, is somewhat ironic as Christianity was spread throughout Africa and South Africa by Eurocentric colonials. I noted that this was not alluded to by the traditional healers which may point to a somewhat limited understanding of the history of Christianity in South Africa. The sub-theme is supported by the following.

*“The reason [that homosexuality is not accepted] being that it means we are against God’s will and how he created us, it is un-Godly [homosexuality]”.* (Participant 5)

*“If someone’s biological sex is a man, then that is how God created him. If he is a man and lies with another man, then he decided to go against nature”.* (Participant 3)

This suggests that in Northern Sotho culture homosexuality is equated as being against God’s will thus un-Godly. This echoes Msibi’s (2011) assertion that being dissatisfied with God creation is categorised as being un-Godly. This is supported by Azibo (2014) and Francis (2012) who noted that one of the core principles of contemporary African culture stems from Christianity, which is summarised as, God created a man and a woman at the same time from his own spiritual essence from which they arose as a unit. Moreover, Langa (2015), reported that African communities generally categorised homosexuality as being un-Christian which was underpinned by religious and traditional beliefs.



### 5.3.3 **Theme 3: Homosexuality and ancestral calling**

All of the participants (100%) were of the view that, as much as they disapproved of same-sex relationships, if a homosexual were chosen to be a traditional healer by the ancestors, they would have no choice but to accept him. In this regard they stated that they had to uphold all ancestral requests. This supports Mkasi's (2013) assertion that, Africans are highly respectful of ancestral wishes. This also resonates with *Uhaki* or 'literacy criticism' which is concerned with fairness in Asante's (1990) Afrocentric notions. In this case an individual's sexual orientation would not be used to stop honouring an ancestral request. This is demonstrated by the following responses.

*"In the case of a homosexual being called to be a traditional healer we would not disagree as this would be a gift from his grandparents. They are different, but they can become a traditional healer since, like everyone else, they are also human. If it is a gift from his grandparents there is no one who can deny him [or her if a lesbian]. There is nothing else we could do we would just have to accept it as he has been blessed by his ancestors. There is no way in which we can make him suffer, we will just live with him in peace". (Participant 1)*

*"I do not have a problem with a homosexual being called by the ancestors to be a traditional healer". (Participant 2)*

*"I will accept him or her. I would accept him or her because that will be his or her gift from the ancestors. We cannot change him or her because that is who they are. I cannot take away his or her gift and I will not change him or her. It is something the ancestors want". (Participant 3)*

*“Eish, having a homosexual traditional healer will not sit well with me. However, ancestors are ancestors, if they decide to give him or her the gift, they have decided. You do not choose to be a traditional healer; you are chosen by the ancestors as they think you will be able to perform what they require. They [homosexuals] can undergo training because they have been chosen and we cannot deny them. They can go through the process of becoming a traditional healer”.* **(Participant 4)**

*“It is allowed, it is not as a result of his [the homosexual’s] choosing. He will have been given the gift by his ancestors. He will use what the ancestors gave him and follow the direction. It is the same for a lesbian”.* **(Participant 5)**

*“Becoming a traditional healer is not one’s choice. If his ancestors have given him the gift of becoming a traditional healer then he will become one. It is not a personal choice. One is born with the gift. Men and women can become traditional healers regardless of their sexual orientation”.* **(Participant 6)**

*“I do not have a problem as they have been chosen by their ancestors. The spirit that they are possessed with is either a male or a female, we accept it”.* **(Participant 7)**

*“As it was gifted to him by his ancestors it is not a problem as he [or she] was born with that gift”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“I do not see it as a problem because it is the ancestors in his or her family that give the gift of traditional healing. He or she would be possessed by the spirit that wants him or her to be that way [as in behaving like a homosexual]”.* **(Participant 9)**

*“Becoming a traditional healer is not one’s choice. For example, myself I could be a Matron or be in an executive position but due to the fact that I was chosen by my ancestors, I had to abandon all my dreams. If a person of the same-sex was given the*

*gift it means the ancestors specifically chose him or her. They were chosen to become a traditional healer. In other words, it is not a personal choice one is born to it. It is not possible for a homosexual to choose to become a traditional healer they were born to it, gifted by the ancestors. When ancestors reveals something through the person they chose, it has significance. There will be reasons for it; it is not because we want to make each other happy. If they reveal something, it has significance, ancestral vision has its reasons. We cannot disobey as we will become ill or worst". (Participant 10)*

It can be reasoned from the aforementioned comments that ancestors are highly respected by the traditional healers. As a result, if a homosexual received 'gift' or ancestral calling to become a traditional healer it would not be challenged (even if it were not liked). The authority of the ancestors cannot be challenged and their instructions or requests, if disobeyed, could lead to their revenge in the form of physical or mental ailments (Mashamaite, 2015). Traditional healers believe that ancestral calling is not personal, but a divine choice. It also seems that the gender of the individual who is called is insignificant. If the ancestors, through their divine will, call a homosexual or lesbian to become a traditional healer it must be accepted (Mkasi's (2013). Ancestral callings do not have gender or sexuality boundaries.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Historical evidence of homosexuality**

There were some participants (40%) who indicated that homosexuality or acts that could be equated to homosexuality were known and existent in the Northern Sotho culture. This is validated by Mabvurira and Matsika's (2013) assertion that, behaviour which corresponds to the western term of homosexuality has always been existent in Africa. Other participants indicated that they had heard about this and some also stated they knew about some homosexuals in their area. However, it seems that participants also thought such homosexual acts were 'rare.' They also thought that these homosexual acts should not be

discussed and knowledge of them should be prevented from entering the public arena. This theme is supported by the following responses.

*“The one that I know [homosexual] is not married. So yes, they are around”.*

**(Participant 3)**

*“During the olden days there were those who looked like a woman even though you knew they were a man. In the past people would tell you that your child was ‘gallivanting’ a lot. This usually meant they were doing bad things [mixing with homosexuals]. In Northern Sotho there is a saying that: ‘a child is known by his mother.’ So, a mother would know that her child was homosexual but would say nothing. It was not glamourised that these same-sex relationships took place and often homosexuals married, so it was ignored.”* **(Participant 4)**

*“It is possible for a person to be bisexual, however, the one that is dominant is the one that is embraced. As much as the person can be bisexual, one [form of sexuality] will be dominant. But if men marry a woman and have children it doesn’t matter too much, they must not be open about other relationships though.”* **(Participant 6).**

*“I once heard the elders talking when I was a child after they had found out about a man who was a homosexual. I didn’t witness it myself. I would just like to say that in the past we had no televisions, cell phones and computers which seem to bring these relationships [same-sex] to light and glamourise them. We kept these things [same-sex relationships] secret”.* **(Participant 7)**

This theme suggests that homosexual acts and behaviour have always existed in Northern Sotho culture. Furthermore, it was controlled through ‘secrecy’ and the possible marriage (to a woman) of the homosexual male. This underpins what Msibi (2011, p.13) postulated: “African societies tended to place great emphasis on maintaining a ‘proper’

outward appearance”. Lack of legislative frameworks and media coverage made it easy to constrain homosexuality in the community as elders and leaders decided (guided by cultural values) on what was and was not culturally acceptable.

#### **5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Historical evidence of ‘hiding’ homosexuality**

Some of the participants (30%) indicated that if an individual displayed unacceptable homosexual behaviour there were cultural ways in which it could be dealt with. The main objective, as before, is to ensure that homosexuality remains hidden within the Northern Sotho cultural context. This sub-theme is supported by the following comments from participants.

*“During the old days if you were a homosexual your family would find you a woman who you would marry and who would take care of your household. If there were no children, then one or two of the homosexual’s brothers’ children would be integrated into the household. These children would be referred to as his [the homosexual’s] children. A lesbian woman would marry a man found by her family. If she did not have children another woman would be found to enter the household and she would have children with the lesbian’s husband. They would then become the children of the family as they carried on the bloodline. Another thing is that in the past parents found marriage partners for their children so there was no problem in getting partners today they marry for so-called ‘love.’ This often does not work out, but we cannot do anything about it now, it’s the way of the world. Am I clear about the things I am telling you? In the past if I had a male child, I would find a wife for him. If, for some reason, he couldn’t have children then his brother would take over [and have sexual relations with the wife. So, in the past if I had a girl child, I would find a husband for her and if she did not have children, I would find another woman to go into the house and have a relationship [sexual] with her husband. This worked well and*

*homosexuality was not discussed unless there was some open breach of culture. In this case it is likely the man would leave the village to save himself from violence. You can see how this issue of same-sex marriage is very problematic to our culture as we were not used to it". (Participant 5)*

*"Cultural protection is available. What parents do is they see which side is dominant [hetero or homosexual]. If it is homosexual it would be seen as some kind of disability and the parents would try to convince the homosexual to stay with a woman who they would choose. This is done to ensure that the disability is not exposed. This is the protection African culture provides. The homosexual side, if it is more dominant, must be 'hidden' so that the man is supported and can live amongst us". (Participant 6)*

*"While we were growing up if we noticed that there might be something wrong [homosexual leanings] with a child we made sure that we gave them the necessary attention, as early as possible so that they could return to normality. We would take them to traditional healers for help. Where I grew up if people of same-sex had same-sex relationships they would be beaten. Things that are regarded as a disgrace were prevented from coming out into the open by parents and elders. During the old days things like this were not openly discussed or even allowed to happen." (Participant 7)*

This sub-theme suggests that homosexuality always occurred in Northern Sotho culture. It also infers that specific ways were developed for dealing with what was considered culturally unacceptable. The most common way of keeping homosexuality hidden was, it seems, for the homosexual to marry a heterosexual woman and, if unable to impregnate her, his brother took over. The child that was born thus carried on the family name and bloodline. Similarly, lesbian married and if she did not have a child then another woman was introduced

into the family which her husband impregnated. Again, the family name and bloodline was continued and the ‘secret’ of homosexuality, which was considered taboo and disgraceful was kept. This relates to Asante’s (1990) Afrocentric concept of *Ukweli* or ‘truth.’ The truth, according to Northern Sotho culture, was that homosexuality was taboo. In this regard if individuals displayed same-sex behaviours a culturally appropriate way of ‘hiding’ this, of course, related to the notion of a ‘sodomite free Africa’ which insists that homosexuality never , and does not exist, within true African culture (Epprecht, 2004; Msibi, 2011).

### 5.3.5 **Theme 5: Homosexuality is confusing**

Although the concept of homosexuality seemed to be well understood by the participants, forty-percent (40%) seemed to find its origin and what causes it confusing. This was reflected in the following responses from some of the participants:

*“I just do not understand it [homosexuality]. It makes me feel confused”.*

**(Participant 1)**

*“Actually, I would like to know, what causes homosexuality? I just do not understand it. Yes, I know that a person can have certain feelings for someone of the same-sex but it is not common in our culture. I suppose it is more prevalent these days. During the olden days we did not have this [homosexuality]”.* **(Participant 3)**

*“Same-sex-relationships are perplexing. I do not understand them. This thing [homosexuality] is becoming more evident now, it just confuses me”.*

**(Participant 5)**

*“I do not understand this thing [homosexuality]. I just do not understand it; it just does not resonate with my beliefs”.* **(Participant 9)**

It is apparent from the aforementioned responses that some of the Northern Sotho traditional healers do not understand that homosexuality is just a continuum along the broad line of human sexuality, or they do not want to. One response noted that this ‘thing’ did not happen in the ‘old days.’ However, in other themes and sub-themes the traditional healers did report to being aware of homosexuality however, it was kept ‘hidden’ (for instance, sub theme 4.1). I assert this purported lack of knowledge and ‘othering’ which is evident by the inability to say homosexual and saying this ‘thing,’ is related to the traditional, patriarchal culture they were brought up in underpinned by intolerant Christian fundamentalism. This can also be related to Asante’s (1990) notion of *Ujamaa* or ‘Family-hood,’ as the participants’ notion of family-hood is related to a man and wife having children. Moreover, this adds to the intolerance that has been endured by homosexuals, especially rural communities steeped in patriarchy and tribalism.

#### **5.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Homosexuality is synonymous with a disability**

Some of the participants (40%) equated homosexuality with a disability that one is born with. Participants stated that in African society disabilities were ‘hidden’ as they were seen as a ‘curse’ or ‘bad thing’ sent by the ancestors for some wrongdoing by the family. In this regard some of the participants saw homosexuality as a disability. These participants also stated that they thought that the so-called ‘origin’ of homosexuality was confusing as they did not see it as being part of the normal sexual continuum of human-beings. This theme is supported by the following statements.

*“It is their disability; being born without the ability to reproduce is a disability”.*

**(Participant 4)**

*“This issue is a problem because according to African culture those who are homosexual are regarded as being disabled. We cannot condone people of the same-*



*sex getting married; we just regard it as a disability. There is no chance that it can ever be allowed it is a disability. Children with such a disability will be known by their parents or, sometimes, just themselves. If we suspect it, we hide it from other to protect our children, to stop them from being regarded as being disabled”.* **(Participant 6)**

*“During the olden days, our children were born at home and thereafter the child was thoroughly checked to see if there was any disability. The trouble was this disability [homosexuality] is hidden. It is only brought to light in later years. This, we find confusing as how can we deal with such a disability in early life? We cannot, but we try to ensure it is hidden in later life to protect our children. The thing is we do not know what went wrong and where they ‘caught’ this thing [homosexuality] from. It is this we find confusing.”* **(Participant 7)**

*“These people [homosexuals] are, I would say, disabled. I have never met someone with such a disability. The parents must have done a ‘bad thing’ and been cursed [by the ancestors]”.* **(Participant 10)**

From the above it seems that traditional healers seem to struggle to grasp the origin of homosexuality. They do not (or do not want to) see same-sex attraction as part of the overall pattern of human sexuality. As such, they categorise homosexuality as a disability and, disabled persons, are often hidden from the world in African culture. This relates to Asante’s (1990) concept of *Ujamaa* or ‘Family-hood,’ where the African family is seen as a unit of man, woman (or women for instance, polygamy) and children. This infers that some, if not all, of the participants think there is something wrong with homosexuals which, must be hidden from communal view.

Another perspective is that associating homosexuality with a disability (or disorder) may have its roots in western culture. It was only in 1973 that homosexuality was removed, as a mental illness from the DSM-III (Sandfort et al., 2001), which was used in South Africa by all Psychologists and Psychiatrists. This is a relatively short period in human history, thus it can be suggested that linking homosexuality to a disability is associated with repositories of long-standing memory relating to conceptualisations of mental-illness.

### 5.3.6 **Theme 6: Homosexuality and western culture**

Forty-percent (40%) of the participants stated that homosexuality was caused by Africans being forced to adopt western culture. This theme is supported by the following responses.

*“It is more evident nowadays as white people glamourise it [homosexuality]. I disagree with it. They [homosexuals] cannot not get married in our culture. If they get married, and I do not agree with this, they must get married in a western way [civil partnership] as that is where same-sex relationships originated”. (Participant 4)*

*“We will accept it if we have to because these days the young forget about culture. They just want to follow western ways. It is not right though. They must live in town we cannot accept them into our own communities”. (Participant 5)*

*“Such things are for white people. For example, if a mother has a boy baby, she should observe him closely when breastfeeding him. When his nappy is changed, she must fully observe his manhood to see if it is fully functional [becomes erect]. If it is not, then there may be some kind of problem. These things are not done anymore because children are brought up in a western way. Nowadays, I have even seen men that are married, and heterosexual leave their wife and children for someone of the same-sex. This is not acceptable.” (Participant 7)*

*“Another thing is that we want to live an easy life. We try and live like white people and adopt their way of life. When we adopt white lifestyles, we get even more lost. We get lost because we don’t know what we are doing and, in the end, this will defeat us. For instance, termination of pregnancy has made the world a bad place as we ‘get rid’ of our children just like whites, that is why I say we do not know where we are going.”*

**(Participant 10)**

This theme indicates that homosexuality has no place in African culture therefore it must be ‘something’ of foreign origin. Some participants think that adopting so-called western (or white) lifestyles may be associated with Africans adopting homosexuality. Basically, some Africans have adopted western lifestyles at the expense of their own cultural roots. Homosexuality and abortion were related to westernised lifestyles which are not acceptable in African, tribal culture.

One of the participants was also concerned about the threat and/or influence that western culture might have on the future, and continued existence, of Northern Sotho culture. This participant was afraid that the younger generation of Africans might totally abandon their own culture. The following response illustrates this concern.

*“Our culture is becoming extinct as it is undermined by our own people. Some still respect our culture but others don’t. I tell you if we follow their (whites) ways we will suffer the consequences later just like those who want to do that thing [homosexuality]”.*

**(Participant 10)**

What can be gathered from the above is that traditional healers perceive adherence to the dominant westernised culture in South Africa as a negative and equated to adopting ‘things’ [for instance, homosexuality]. Participants felt that the adoption of western culture undermines Northern Sotho culture which might lead to its ‘extinction.’ Theme 6 can be

related to Asante's (1990) notion of *Ukweli* or 'Truth.' The participants' truth, in this research, was grounded in their perception of Northern Sotho culture and how it relates to homosexuality. This, was their interpretation of Northern Sotho culture and the lens through which they viewed same-sex practices

#### **5.3.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Homosexuality and modernisation**

Two of the traditional healers (20%) who participated in the study thought that homosexuality was a result of complications, or problems in living, brought about by modernisation and the rapid adoption of western cultural ideologies by Africans. This is well captured in the following response.

*"We plead with our male children not to resort to homosexuality because they have been hurt by women. We know they only become homosexual because they do not want to be hurt by women and men, because they are men, understand them better. Hurting each other, and paying child maintenance, are problems that we see every day between men and women. I think this kind of thing sends our male children into same-sex relationships. They [the male children] just tell themselves that they will live in a same-sex relationship because they won't allow a woman to hurt them again and also, they cannot have children, so it won't cost them any money. It is easy to do this in the world today". (Participant 7)*

*"I think this happens because our male children leave home and think they are being modern. They live in the cities and the suburbs so can live any way they like. It is easy for them because life in the suburbs is different from life in the rural areas. Those who live in rural areas and who do not adopt the old ways [marrying and having children and having hidden same-sex relationships] live in fear because they know the community, and their families, do not accept same-sex relationships. I do not know of*

*any [homosexuals] who live in rural areas. Same-sex relationships that are in the open are more prevalent in areas where life is fast and there is no discipline, like the big cities. These people [homosexuals] may be proud of themselves but it is not a good thing in African culture". (Participant 10)*

These responses suggest that these participants were looking for a means to ‘explain away ‘same-sex relationships without admitting or understanding that they always existed and exist on the human continuum of sexuality’ (HREA, 2003). Homosexuality is also perceived to be as a result of lack of discipline which is equated to living a ‘fast life’ in the city. Interestingly, these participants think the reason for male homosexuals having relationships with other men is, as a result of, them being hurt by a women. Fundamentally, this takes the blame away from the man and associates it with how a woman has treated him. Effectively, this is ‘othering’ taking the ‘blame’ away from an individual and conferring it on another (Takin, 2010). I would assert, that this is consistent with any patriarchal, but in this case conservative tribal, culture. In terms of Asante’s (1990) Afrocentricity one can state that this is the *Ukweli* or ‘Truth’ that these traditional healers understand underpinned by their cultural and religious perceptions.

#### **5.3.6.2 Sub-theme 6.2: Homosexuality and responsibility**

Although this sub-heading is based on one statement, as the sample was small (as explained in the introduction to this chapter 5.1) I thought it deserving of a separate sub-heading as it had a slightly different nuance to existing sub-themes. This supports Braun and Clarke’s (2006) notion that sometimes further refinement of themes is needed in order to identify nuanced areas within an overarching theme. I did this as it assisted me in unpacking complex themes. This response implied that same-sex relationships were used as a scapegoat so that a man could abandon his familial and community responsibilities.

*“You see these men use women and have many children. They have sexual relationships with many women and then they can no longer afford to keep up their children [financially]. This matter is very problematic. If these men have relationships with other men, then they cannot have children and have an excuse to deny any responsibility for things that happened when they were with women. For instance, we have two men, and you find that they have impregnated women which is too expensive. Then they have a same-sex relationship, and one calls himself a man and the other a woman, but they are both men. They abandon their responsibilities to their children, families, and community. On the other side is when two women have a relationship, and one is thought of as the man and the other a woman, but they are both women. This is not taking responsibility for being an African woman and living properly in African culture. These men and women lack all responsibility to their African culture and what they do is wrong culturally. (Participant 6)*

This traditional healer seems to regard homosexuality as a personal choice not as a biological or genetic issue. The participant indicates that homosexuals end up in same-sex relationships to ‘run away’ from the economic responsibilities that come with having children. It was not made clear why lesbians make a same-sex choice. This sub-heading can be interpreted using Asante’s (1990) Afrocentric notion of *Ujamaa* or ‘Family-hood.’ In this scenario homosexuality is not consistent with the Northern Sotho values of family-hood which encompass both familial and communal aspects. What can be is that the traditional healer seems to suggest that homosexuality is a personal choice where a man (or woman) can decide to have a same-sex relationship if things are not going well in his (or her) life. In the case of a male this was related to the financial obligation children bring.

### 5.3.7 Theme 7: Homosexuality and cleansing (mourning process)

Some of the participants (30%) were concerned, and confused, about the process of cleansing and how it would be handled in case of homosexuals, that is, if one of the partners were to die. Cleansing takes place in contemplation of life (after death) in another realm which is also consistent with the Christian standpoint. I did not explore this in the literature review as it was not, directly related to the topic, nor did I find reference to it in other literature related to African's perceptions of homosexuality. As a result, I explain the concept here. According to Ekore and Lanre-Abass (2016, p.369).

Africans ordinarily do not encourage the contemplation of death or any discussion about their own or their loved ones' death. [However] According to the African belief system, life does not end with death, but continues in another realm. Becoming an ancestor after death is a desirable goal of every individual.”

The following statements support the theme of cleansing, which is very important in Northern Sotho culture.

*“I mean how you can cleanse someone in this kind of relationship. If a man and woman sleep together there is impurification and they can be cleansed to help purify if they die...but a man sleeping with another man... no, it is a disgrace I do not think they can be cleansed.” (Participant 8)*

*“It contaminates nature [homosexuality] and it tarnishes African culture. No, they cannot be properly cleansed this makes me very unhappy.” (Participant 10)*

*“The thing is, if partners are of same-sex and they are married what happens when one of them dies, because we all die. Then, what is going to happen regarding mourning. In African culture when one dies mourning must take place. If a man lost a wife there is a mourning intervention that can be culturally prescribed, and if a woman lost a*

*husband, there is also treatment that can be prescribed. These are cultural interventions we assist with. However, if it is 2 men or 2 women then mourning cannot take place – we have no cultural interventions for that.” (Participant 6)*

What is noted here is that there are certain events that occur in life where rituals or cleansings are performed in order to deal with any impurification. These rituals are available for heterosexual couple but not homosexual couples as same-sex relationships are not considered a part of Northern Sotho culture. It must also be stated that if a same-sex partner dies and cannot be cleansed their living partner will enter ‘makgoma’ or the darkness which is a contagious physical illness which is dangerous (Phatlane, 2014). This contagion will be passed on with dire consequences for the individual and their family.

Ramose (2002), as cited in Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d. p. 236) stated that: “[African] people do not cease to exist once they are physically dead, instead, they transcend to the spiritual world to live in the community of the living dead”. Furthermore, the authors state that rituals do not only serve the purpose of transition but also as a mark of the individual’s life, and a way through which cultural identity and social organisation are expressed.

This brings another layer of confusion to traditional healers who perform these rituals. This relates to *Ukweli* or ‘truth’ as proposed by Asante’s (1990) Afrocentricity. The participants relied on their truth or knowledge of commonly performed rituals in Northern Sotho culture. Their truth does not recognise homosexuality therefore, it seems, they would not participate in any cleansing ritual in for instance, the death of a homosexual partner.

### **5.3.8 Theme 8: Homosexuality, traditional healing, and ancestral guidance**

Most of the participants who took part in the study (70%) were of the view that as much as homosexuality is a taboo in Northern Sotho culture, they would try to see beyond this and



assist the individual. This is consistent with Asante's (1990) Afrocentric concept of *uhaki* or 'fairness' and *Ukweli* or 'truth' as turning away someone who is not well is not consistent with communitarianism which is essential in Northern Sotho culture. It would also be considered unfair. The following statements support this theme.

*"Yes, I will help". (Participant 1 and Participant 3)*

*"It will not be a problem; I would just assist the person". (Participant 9)*

*"I will help either a same-sex man or woman". (Participant 8)*

*"Yes, I will help them because they are sick". (Participant 7)*

*"Helping will not be a problem... being same-sex will not stop people from being assisted". (Participant 5)*

*"I would ask them first what they were looking for or what was lacking in their lives. I would start by consulting with the ancestors through the use of divination bones to find out if the ancestors were happy about the consultation. If they came with family members, I would ask for information about their upbringing to see if I could find out why they were like this [homosexual]."* (Participant 6)

The above statements suggest that the traditional healers' humanity and preservation of the health of an individual for the collective good are more important than sexuality in Northern Sotho culture. Constant consultation with the ancestors is also essential for Northern Sotho individuals in order to seek guidance in their lives.

However, participants also indicated that they would have to ask the ancestors if they could consult with a homosexual client. They explained that first they would consult with the ancestors through the use of divination bones. This would inform them if they could help or

not. They did note that if the man visiting them wanted help finding a male partner, they would not be able to help, but could help with other issues. This is reflected in the following statements.

*“If I find out I cannot help them through the bones [divination process] then I tell them that I will not be able to assist. If the ancestors allow it then I will help. I would not help if they wanted to find a same-sex partner”.* **(Participant 9)**

*“Yes, it will depend on what kind of help he or she seeks. You may find that he or she is looking for assistance in finding a partner of similar sex, in that case I will not be able to assist. I can also say that when a person comes for consultation, I do not accept him or her alone, he or she must be accompanied by parents. After, the first consultation, if I accept the person then I see them alone. Parents are supposed to accompany them because there might be challenges that are encountered during the consultation process using the divination bones. They might be young and not have knowledge of the family’s history regarding how they lived their lives”.* **(Participant 10)**

The following extract from Ramajela (2011, p. 76) provides a more comprehensive view of the importance of the use of divination of bones within various spheres.

“It is accepted that divination bones (*ditaola*) can indicate, to those trained in their use, the answer to any question or the explanation of any situation. They can indicate whether the cause of a mishap should be ascribed to witchcraft or to the dissatisfaction of the ancestral spirits. They indicate the cause of disease and the curative methods to be administered. They can predict rain or drought, the course of a war, the results of a journey or any future event about which one wishes to know, as well as the precautionary measures which should be taken to ensure the desired results. The divination bones will show where one will find a lost or stolen object or strayed cattle,

and also whether the fact that the object is missing should be ascribed to any supernatural cause....it is believed that the divining set, when used by a properly trained specialist, has no limits in its ability to divine or predict”.

The above correlates with the results of a study by Ae-ngibise et al. (2010), who found that there was a need for traditional healers to consult with the ancestors for everyone who comes for assistance. This is carried out in order to seek spiritual guidance in terms of what to do and what not to do.

#### 5.3.8.1 **Sub theme 8.1: Homosexuality and spirit possession**

One of the participants pointed out that spirit possession sometimes contributes to men becoming homosexuals. For instance, a man can be possessed by a female spirit and a woman possessed by a male spirit. The participant stated that this can sometimes go unnoticed by the family, due to lack of knowledge about the ancestors wanting the person to become a traditional leader. If the calling goes unnoticed this participant believed it could result in homosexuality, especially if the necessary rituals are not performed (in terms of becoming a traditional healer). The following statement underpins this sub-theme.

*“Sometimes you find that there are men [or women] who are bothered by ancestral spirits who want them to become traditional healers. They may be still young, and the family are not aware of what kind of things a calling can manifest in and it goes unnoticed. An example of this is a man who is possessed by a female spirit and he likes to wear earrings and other feminine things. If there is no intervention, then he can become a homosexual and not take up the calling as a traditional healer.” (Participant 7)*

This traditional healer suggested that homosexuality can arise out of spirit possession, which may be temporary. However, if no intervention is made, it can lead to the man becoming permanently homosexual, if he is possessed by a spirit of the opposite sex. It can also be inferred that the display of homosexual-like behaviour may be the ancestors' way of communicating that they want the man to become a traditional healer. In this regard a traditional healer is noted as being essential in assisting the family with insight and guidance. This is related to Asante's (1990) Afrocentric notion of *Ukweli* or 'truth' as, culturally ancestral spirits and possession are part of the belief system of Northern Sotho traditional healers.

I would say that perhaps those with westernised education may find these ideas difficult to understand but in the Christian religion the 'Devil' and 'Angels' are regarded as a reality, each with different functions. If one looks at this with objectivity Ancestral worship and Christianity have many similarities.

### **5.3.9 Theme 9: Homosexuality and initiation schools**

Although the participants overwhelmingly did not support homosexuality most of them stated (70%) that they would not have a problem with a male homosexual who wanted to go to mountain school (initiation process). This underpins *uhaki* or 'literacy criticism' as it is grounded in fairness to ensure that no one is unfairly denied access to such an important rite of passage. The main aim of initiation school is to ensure that the young man becomes acquainted with his cultural expectations and roles which include the preservation of family life together, in some ethnic groups, with circumcision (Sedibe, 2019). This is well captured by the following responses.

*"There is no problem if a homosexual wants to go to a mountain school". (Participant 3)*

*“There is no problem they must go. Initiation schools have no problem with homosexuals as long as he is biologically a man he can go”.* **(Participant 4)**

*“Initiation school does not have a problem with homosexuals, any male can go as long as they are healthy. They must be biological male with a penis, then there is no problem. They must know our cultural ways.”* **(Participant 5)**

*“There is no problem they [homosexuals] have always attended initiation school.”* **(Participant 6)**

*“As long as they agree there is no problem”.* **(Participant 7)**

*“When it comes to circumcision, I do not see a problem. Males must be circumcised”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“I cannot see any problem”.* **(Participant 10).**

The above responses indicate that sexual orientation is not important when it comes to undergoing the initiation process. However, biologically they must be born male.

Nonetheless, three (30%) of the participants did find that it was problematic if homosexuals wanted to attend initiation school. The following responses underpin this view.

*“Eh, it will not sit well with me. If it is me who was helping him, I would try and help him so that he would become like the others [become heterosexual].”* **(Participant 8)**

*“Hey, I do not know how to respond to this because a homosexual at an initiation school could complicate the process. I do not think they should be allowed to attend. I mean he is a ‘man-woman’ not a man. This is confusing me I cannot see that he could attend I mean it is not just circumcision but also telling the young men how they must act in their*

*culture. No, I do not think that they [initiation school] will agree for such a person [homosexual] to attend.” (Participant 1).*

*“Those [homosexuals] are full of impurities so they may put other initiates in danger because those who attend must be pure. Those people [homosexuals] are disabled because of their impurification which may lead to the death of others if they were allowed to go to initiation school. They might pass the impurification to others [homosexuality] which might cause death.” (Participant 10)*

The above responses suggests that, some traditional healers rigidly adhere to, and respect, what are normative cultural practices. They do not consider homosexuality as culturally acceptable and would find it difficult, if not impossible, to make any concessions for them. It can be inferred that they perceive that allowing a homosexual to attend an initiation school would be associated with bad luck and, they seem to think it is contagious which could cause harm or even death to others. This is their truth, in terms of how they understand Northern Sotho cultural values, which is related to Asante’s (1990) Afrocentric notion of *Ukweli* or ‘truth.’

#### **5.3.10 Theme 10: Traditional healers’ interventions to curb homosexuality**

Some of the participants (20%) suggested that if they knew of a homosexual individual in their area, they would take it upon themselves to discipline him, or be involved in disciplining him. However, they would not do this alone as they would involve the homosexual’s family members. The main objective of this would be to try and ‘correct’ his homosexuality into heterosexuality.

*“I would try and discipline him even though I might fail. However, I would not discipline him alone, I would involve his family and we would discipline him together.*

*We would consult the ancestors on how to do this. If we failed, then at least we would have tried.” (Participant 6)*

*“So, I would say to our children that if they encounter challenges, they must seek help. Both western and traditional assistance is available for those who are homosexual [When I probed, I found out that this refers to reparative sexual orientation, which seeks to make homosexuals become heterosexuals, provided by some branches of the Christian church. Also, as parents we must not let our children do as they want; we must sit down with them and tell them what they need to do. We must take all the steps necessary to change this [homosexuality]. You ask what kind of discipline? That I cannot say I would have to consult the ancestors.” (Participant 7)*

It can be deduced from the responses that; the participants seem to believe that some sort of discipline is needed to correct or suppress homosexuality. In doing, ensuring the ‘discipline’ was carried out this traditional healer noted that they would do it with the homosexual’s family emphasising the collective responsibility. This participant’s truth, in terms of Northern Sotho cultural values, is related to Asante’s (1990) Afrocentric notion of *Ukweli* or ‘truth.’ I would add that I found it interesting that the participant would not be drawn on what type of discipline would be used stating that the ancestors would need consulting.

#### **5.3.10.1 Sub-theme 10.1: Homosexuality and tolerance**

There was one participant who was more accepting of homosexuality. This participant was close to a male homosexual which played a significant role in their understanding of same-sex relationships. This type of acceptance, as noted by Kotch (2014), leads to the development of some empathy. I think that this could indicate that traditional healers’ perceptions of homosexuality could change if they were closely associated with a

homosexual. However, the traditional healer did state that homosexuality was not accepted in Northern Sotho culture. The participant who was more accepting of homosexuality is linked to Asante’s (1990) Afrocentric notion of *uhaki* or ‘literacy criticism’ because it is associated with fairness and objectivity. The statement made by the traditional healer is, as follows.

*“The most important thing is how one feels in life that is what matters most. I accept homosexuals I do not have a problem with them they are human beings just like us [heterosexuals]. They have a right to live their lives as they want and to be free in every way. I have a nephew; he is a homosexual that helped me understand. I do have to say that in our culture it is not accepted though.” (Participant 2)*

#### 5.4 Tabular format of the Analysis in a form of themes

The themes and sub-themes are presented in a summary form for ease of presentation and to further clarify and aid the above-mentioned interpretations. Colour coding of themes is provided so that the reader can easily identify the themes and sub-themes both here, and in the text.

**Table 3: Summary of themes in a tabular format (with brief descriptions)**

Theme	Sub-theme	Brief description
<b>1: Homosexuality threatens family structure and values</b>	<b>1.1 Homosexuality and the preservation of family bloodlines and/or surname</b> <b>1.2 Homosexuality and procreation</b>	<b>This theme and sub-themes address perceptions of traditional leaders in terms of homosexuality threatening family values, structure, bloodlines, and procreation</b>
<b>2: Homosexuality regarded as taboo and a disgrace</b>	<b>2.1 Homosexuality and Northern Sotho culture</b> <b>2.2 Homosexuality is un-Godly</b>	<b>The theme and sub-themes indicate that in traditional healers’ views homosexuality, in Northern Sotho culture is taboo, a disgrace and un-Godly</b>
<b>3: Homosexuality and ancestral calling</b>		<b>The theme gives traditional healers’ views pertaining to homosexuals being gifted with an ancestral calling</b>



4: Historical evidence of homosexuality	4.1 Historical evidence of 'hiding' homosexuality	This theme and sub-theme relate traditional healers' knowledge about historical evidence of homosexuality and evidence of 'hiding' it
5: Homosexuality is confusing	5.1 Homosexuality is synonymous with disability	The theme and sub-theme relate to traditional healers' perceptions that homosexuality is both confusing and associated with a disability
6: Homosexuality and western culture	6.1 Homosexuality and modernisation 6.2 Homosexuality and responsibility	The theme and sub-themes relate to the participants perception of how homosexuality is related to western culture and modernisation and how it is used to escape familial responsibilities
7: Homosexuality and cleansing (mourning process)		This theme relates to traditional healers' perceptions that when a same-sex partner dies there are no clear rituals in terms of the cleansing and mourning processes (in Northern Sotho culture)
8: Homosexuality, traditional healing, and ancestral guidance	8.1 Homosexuality and spirit possession	In this theme and sub-theme traditional healers give their views about the possibility of homosexual clients. They also relate how female spirit possession can manifest as homosexuality in ancestral callings
9: Homosexuality and initiation schools		The participants gave their views pertaining to whether homosexuals should be allowed to attend initiation schools
10: Traditional leaders' interventions to curb homosexuality	10.1 Homosexuality and tolerance	The main theme address how traditional healers intervene in terms of curbing homosexuality. The sub-theme relates to how tolerance amongst participants

## 5.5 General discussion of results

Results of the current study are discussed in terms of the theoretical framework (Afrocentricity) and its canons (*Uhaki* or ‘literacy criticism’, *Ukweli* or ‘truth’ and *Ujamaa* or ‘family-hood’), literature reviewed, and study objectives as follows:

1. To determine Northern Sotho traditional healers’ perceptions or views of homosexuality.
2. To ascertain knowledge of any homosexual practices that took place in the historical context of Northern Sotho culture.
3. To establish if Northern Sotho traditional healers agree with the sentiment that homosexuality is un-African.
4. To ascertain Northern Sotho traditional healers’ responses towards homosexuals.
5. To develop guidelines to assist academia, government, traditional healers, and law (or policy makers) with regard to homosexuality. This is discussed and guidelines presented in Chapter 6.

The results of the current study underpin the results of other studies conducted in the area of homosexuality and culture (Ince, 2009, Mabvurira & Matsika, 2013, Masase, 2009). Themes which emerged in previous studies which infer that homosexuality is inconsistent with African culture, in this case Northern Sotho culture, were found in this research. The subsequent discussion, underpinned by Afrocentricity and relevant literature, discusses the results of the study.

It must be noted that international researchers have equated less education (Ohlander et al., 2004; Park et al., 2016) with more bias against homosexuals however, in a South African setting it has been found that even educated persons discriminate against same-sex persons (Mwaba, 2009). As a result, in this research it cannot be suggested that lack of education in the sample influences any discrimination and/or bias against homosexuals.

Results relating to the impact of homosexuality on family structure, preservation of bloodlines and surname as well as doctrine of procreation revealed that participants felt that homosexuality not only threatened the overall structure of the family but also the maintenance and continued survival of bloodlines. This was because the participants stated that homosexuals could not have children. They considered IVF unnatural and not acceptable, or compatible with, Northern Sotho culture. In terms of research objective 1, namely: To determine Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions or views of homosexuality, it can be stated that overall, the participants viewed homosexuality as a threat to the continued survival and maintenance of the family. This is supported by findings in previous research by Rudwick (2011), who found that amongst Africans continued survival of the ancestors was entrenched in cultural (and religious) perceptions of procreation. Participants also felt that as homosexuals were unable to bear or have what they considered natural offspring their families would always be considered incomplete. Having a family is an essential component of Northern Sotho culture which is echoed in Asante's (1990) Afrocentric canon of '*Ujamaa*' (Family-hood).

Mkasi (2013), reported that homosexuality and homosexual behaviour has always existed amongst Africans on the continent of Africa which includes South Africa. This underpins findings in this research as participants reported that homosexual behaviour (or acts that are representative of homosexuality) have existed historically in Northern Sotho culture. The participants noted that homosexuality was hidden and those exhibiting homosexual behaviours married and had families, so any so-called abnormal behaviours were not seen publicly. This underpins results in research by Msibi (2011, p. 13), who pointed out that African culture puts a great importance on maintaining proper outward appearances. Nonetheless, Epprecht (2004), suggests that, this was just a way that homosexuality could be practiced in a manner that was considered socially acceptable. Furthermore, he noted that this

should not be misinterpreted as meaning that same-sex relationships were not practised as some homosexuals found a way to practice it privately. In terms of objective 2, this suggests that traditional healers had knowledge that homosexual practices took place in the historical context of Northern Sotho culture.

The majority of participants perceived homosexuality as taboo and a disgrace to Northern Sotho culture. These lends support to a study by Mkasi (2013), who came to a similar conclusion. One of the reasons homosexuality was rejected, in this study, which is supported by findings in research by Mabvurira and Matsika (2013), was the belief that it led to the occurrence of ‘bad things.’ This also resonates with the results of a study by Msibi (2011), who reported that African societies reject homosexuality in order to maintain a ‘proper,’ as opposed to a ‘bad,’ outward appearance. A number of participants were of the view that accepting homosexuality was un-African which reinforces the results of a study by Francis (2012). In this study, the researcher found that Africans who were religious (Christian) argued that God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve which meant that homosexuality was un-Godly and thus un-African. In terms of research objective 3, findings in this study, suggest that Northern Sotho traditional healers agree with the sentiment that homosexuality is un-African.

The majority of participants were of the opinion that if a homosexual were called to be a traditional healer by the ancestors, they would not object. This according to participants was because ancestral requests in terms of ‘callings’ to become a traditional healer, must be upheld. Callings can manifest through mental and physical infirmities (Bodibe, 1992; Mashamaite, 2015) which the participants related to a disability. In this regard homosexuality was perceived as a disability. This is reflective of the overall respect and prioritisation of ancestral wishes as they are at the core of African culture. In terms of objective 4 namely: To ascertain Northern Sotho traditional healers’ responses towards homosexuals, it can be

ascertained that if an ancestral calling manifests itself in homosexuality it could not be objected to. The inference is that, in this case only, homosexuality is culturally acceptable.

Results relating to Northern Sotho traditional healers understanding of same -sex relationships indicated that they find the origins of homosexuality confusing. This is consistent with research by Msibi (2011), who pointed out that the term homosexuality originated from western political experience which historically had no meaning within African society. When Africa was colonised the term, homosexuality was adopted in a negative way by most cultures on the continent. This, Mkasi (2013) suggested, was one of the reasons that intolerance towards homosexuals exists particularly within deep rural areas on the continent. This is underpinned in research by Isaack (2007), who found that homosexuals in traditional rural communities, where patriarchal gender norms are the norm, still face serious challenges which are culturally or traditionally rooted.

Homosexuality was reported as being confusing to participants many of whom equated it to a disability. The traditional healers in the study stated that as homosexuals could not have natural children (without IVF), they were in fact disabled. In African society the disabled are often hidden and not acknowledged and, as a result, have many challenges in their lives (Mutanga, 2017). Similar to the historical existence of homosexuality, the only way to ensure that homosexuality, recognised as a disability, remained contained was to ensure that homosexuals married. This was the traditional intervention which ensured that homosexuality remained hidden as a public display of same-sex behaviour was culturally unacceptable to both the family and African culture (Matolino, 2017). This is consistent with both the traditional African beliefs and *Ujamaa* (family-hood) a canon of Afrocentricity according to Asante (1990) and Reverie (2001).

Homosexuality is considered by the Northern Sotho people to be of western origin (Mkasi, 2013; Quintal, 2006). This is supported in the current study as participants reported

that they believed homosexuality was a result of western influence. The participants also reported that homosexuality has been adopted by Africans at the expense of, in this case, Northern Sotho culture and its cultural values.

The performance of rituals and cleansing are cornerstones of African and Northern Sotho culture (Msibi, 2011; Phatlane, 2014). This underpins findings in this study as participants raised their concerns regarding how the process of cleansing would be handled in the case of a same-sex couple. The participants major concern was that homosexuals cannot be cleansed as there is no ritual in Northern Sotho culture for same-sex couples (only for husbands and wives). If a person dies in a relationship, and is not cleansed, their partner will enter the darkness or 'makgoma' which is considered a dangerous and contagious physical illness (Phatlane, 2014). They will then pass this illness on to others and very bad things are likely to follow. Furthermore, the deceased will not be able to enter the realm of the ancestors which is problematic as the ancestors pass down their guidance to family members.

The above challenge was also extended to the process of mourning, as it is a norm in African culture that when death occurs there are specific rituals that must be performed (Makgahlela, 2016). This is further supported by the results of a study by Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d.), who researched African conceptions of death. They found that death amongst Africans had to be followed by the performance of certain rituals. Moreover King (2013), pointed out that rituals are performed to signify the transition of the dead into the spiritual world. In other words, death in African culture does not signify the end, but serves as a milestone into another realm. This was captured by King (2013), as cited in Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (n.d. p. 235) who stated that: "When people die, they transcend to the spirit world to be in the company of the living dead or ancestors." It is within this basis that traditional healers find it confusing and problematic in terms of how mourning and cleansing would be handled in the case of same-sex couples.

Another finding was that the majority of participants stated that they would help homosexuals who sought help, as long as it was not to find a same-sex partner. This was related to Northern Sotho communal values and being fair and objective in their treatment of community members. A minority said they would not be prepared to help a homosexual as this behaviour was not consistent with Northern Sotho culture. Those who agreed to help indicated that when an individual is sick, they are prepared to look beyond sexual orientation. This correlates with the principle of *Ubuntu* (Austin et al., 2012; Ramose, 2002), which is essential in African culture as well as Asante's (1990) notion of Ujamaa or 'family-hood'.

Participants who stated they would, before helping a known homosexual, first seek guidance from the ancestors through the divination (*ditaola*) of bones (Lebaka, 2018; Makgopa & Koma, 2009; Mufamadi, 2001; Ramajela, 2011). If the ancestors' response was positive, then they would help a homosexual, if not then no help would be forthcoming.

The current study discovered that it is not uncommon for one to display homosexual behaviour as a result of spirit possession within the Northern Sotho culture. In simple terms what this means is that it is possible that a male person may be possessed by a female spirit and a female person may be possessed by a male spirit. This lends support to the result of the study by Mkasi (2013), as cited in Mkasi (2016, p. 2), who found that spirituality may manifest itself in multiple ways. Nkabinde (2008), as cited from Mkasi (2016, p. 2), expanded on the latter by pointing out that, "when an authoritative male spirit possesses a female *Sangoma* and that *Sangoma* assumes a male position - she is addressed as *uBaba* (father), not only by *Sangomas*' but by members of the community as well". This therefore suggesting that spirit possession has no gender boundaries but is based on the ability of the person to carry out the mandate as he or she will be chosen by such spirit which wants him or her to become a traditional healer.

It was found that such spirit possession (which in most cases has to be honoured by the possessed person undergoing training and becoming a traditional healer) may sometimes go unnoticed by the family due to lack of knowledge and may result in permanent homosexuality if not honoured. In this case, if such an individual was to be taken to a traditional healer, through consultation with the ancestors by the use of divination bones, the traditional healer will be able to establish that the individual is possessed by a spirit of the opposite sex and provide way forward, then eventually the person may become a traditional healer. In effect, the expertise of a traditional healer is essential in this regard. This according to Ramajela (2011), is in line with Northern Sotho culture and African culture generally (Aengibise et al., 2010)

Mountain or initiation school is another cultural practice that is highly valued and reflective of generational values and beliefs in African culture (Venter, 2013). According to Mohlaloka et al. (2016, p. 21):

“This means that traditional initiation is a generational ritual that is passed from one generation to the next to ensure that the legacy of that community, culture or family is kept alive for a long time”.

This was underpinned by the results of the present study which found that as much as the participants disapproved of homosexuality, they would not stop such an individual from undergoing their ‘rite of passage’ by attending initiation school. It was also believed by participants that the act of initiation instils good morals in boys and contributes towards building a society that is responsible and law-abiding in terms of the prevailing culture (Mdedetyana, 2018; Ntombana, 2011). Initiation school therefore serve as both a ‘rite of passage’ into manhood (Douglas et al., 2018; Froneman & Kapp, 2017), as well as a means through which discipline is reinforced (Maharasoia & Maharaswa, 2004). Denying a homosexual such a rite of passage would be considered unfair which is consistent with *Uhaki*



(fairness), a canon of Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity. Participants viewed qualifying criterion for attendance of initiation school as the biological sex of the individual not the sexual orientation.

Collective responsibility is very important in Northern Sotho culture where everyone is charged with the duty of advocating for the common good, as instilled through communitarianism, anyone who behaves outside such parameters is regarded as being unworthy (Matolino, 2017). This notion was underpinned by the current study, as participants reported that if they knew a male was homosexual, they would (together with the family) discipline them. Fundamentally, this 'discipline' is underpinned by the tenets of Northern Sotho culture which does not accept homosexuality. In terms of the research objective 4: To ascertain Northern Sotho traditional healers' responses towards homosexuals, I would assert that their responses are negative in terms of not accepting homosexuality as a continuum of human sexuality as 'disciplining' is considered a corrective measure (aimed at turning the homosexual into a heterosexual). This plays a role in the perpetuation of the rejection of homosexuality within the Northern Sotho cultural sphere as 'disciplining' them creates the impression that homosexuality is a matter of personal choice and that it can be prevented and cured at any time (De Palma & Francis, 2014; Francis, 2013).

All, but one of the Northern Sotho traditional healers, did accept homosexuality. This was because the participant had a homosexual family member. This might suggest that there is a possibility that, in the future, homosexuals might become more acceptable to traditional healers. Fundamentally, if they have a family member who is homosexual, they might become empathetic and subsequently, this might influence their perceptions in a positive manner.

## 5.6 Summary

The current research found that the general sentiment, amongst traditional healers was that homosexuality is inconsistent with Northern Sotho culture. These perceptions were rooted in the traditional healers' perceptions of Northern Sotho cultural values, norms, customs, and way of life.

Traditional healers also considered homosexuality as a taboo, disgrace, and an abomination which had the potential to cause 'bad things' to happen. The origin of homosexuality was not well understood and confusing to traditional healers. For example, some participants thought it was due to the adoption of western lifestyles by Africans while others thought it was just a way of abandoning family responsibility. In this regard it was viewed as a way of coping with relationships with women that had broken down causing hurt. There were conflicting views regarding whether to assist homosexuals, some indicated that if one were to approach them, they would help while others pointed out that they would find it difficult to assist. Generally, the traditional healers stated that if, through the divination of bones, the ancestors allowed it, they would help.

All participants were of the view that Northern Sotho culture does not approve of homosexuality. However, if a homosexual was given the gift of becoming a traditional healer, they would accept it as it was a directive from the ancestors (not a personal choice). This indicates that respect for the ancestors is highly important in Northern Sotho culture. Moreover, this implies that ancestral calling also has no gender boundaries. However, this does not mean acceptance of homosexuality, but rather the fact that directives from the ancestors are respected, no matter what.

Eighty percent (80%) of the participants thought that homosexuality threatens the doctrine of procreation which they believed was enshrined within African culture. They believed this because homosexuals cannot reproduce 'naturally'. 'This meant that the

continued survival of the family and the ancestors could not be upheld (Rudwick, 2011). Similarly, homosexuality was also perceived as destabilising the family structure as a family, with no children in Northern Sotho culture, is viewed as incomplete and not fully functional.

Some participants (30%) were of the view that homosexuality did exist historically in Northern Sotho culture. It seems that the notion that homosexuality did not exist had to do with the manner in which it was hidden from public display (Msibi, 2011).

Forty percent (40%) of participants viewed, and equated homosexuality to a disability. Some were also of the view that homosexuality tampers with the purification (of the dead) process as there are no rituals, or cleansing procedures, that deal with homosexual partners. Consequently, homosexuality was perceived as interfering with the mourning process as dictated by Northern Sotho culture (Makgahlela, 2016). Furthermore, some of the participant(s) were of the view that homosexuality was sometimes a result of possession by a spirit of the opposite sex. In this case, it was believed that this was associated with the 'calling' to become a traditional healer. However, if the family had a lack of knowledge about 'callings' an unattended person could become permanently homosexual.

The chapter provided a presentation and detailed discussion of the results. Previous studies were cited and compared to the current study results. The theoretical framework as well as the aim and objectives of the study underpinned the results and discussion.

The following chapter (6) discusses the study limitations, strengths, and innovative aspects of the study. It also provides recommendations for future research. Guidelines were developed to assist academia and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in terms of incorporating cultural views of homosexuality into scholastic and cultural contexts.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESEARCH LIMITATIONS, STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

*“Our society needs to recognise the unstoppable momentum toward unequivocal civil equality for every Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender citizens of this country”*  
(Quinto, 2011)

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to bring closure to the study. Firstly, I provide a brief background, discuss the methodological strengths and limitations of the study, and provide recommendations for potential future research within the area of homosexuality and African culture. Secondly, implications for academic training and IKS as well as possible policy and legal provisions are highlighted. Thirdly, guidelines for academic training, traditional healers and IKS, in terms of homosexuality and the preservation of Northern Sotho culture, are provided. Lastly, I examine how traditional healers’ perceptions give a better understanding of how homosexuality is viewed within Northern Sotho culture.

#### 6.2 Study strengths

An important study strength, in terms of qualitative research, was that participants were afforded an opportunity to express themselves without interference. This allowed them to talk freely and openly which, in turn, allowed me to gain a good understanding about their perceptions of homosexuality (in terms of their cultural understanding). Secondly, the study used individual face to face interviews, not just because of the sensitivity of the phenomena under scrutiny, but because they allowed for privacy which was necessary to stimulate insights that may not have been elicited when using other interview methods (McDonald & Rogers, 2014). The use of face-to-face interviews was also used because it was considered

the most efficient method of exploring the perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers with regard to homosexuality.

Thirdly, the theoretical underpinning of the study was Afrocentricity (Asante, 1990) which provided a foundation and platform for the participants to share their perceptions within their cultural context. The theory did not only allow participants to share their perceptions in the context of African reality but also allowed them to feel that they were the architects of their own reality, as their perceptions were understood and interpreted from an African viewpoint (Ince, 2009). The theory offered a different way of understanding by challenging the dominant Eurocentric models which supports oppressive ideological thinking which leads to intellectual incarceration and/or entrapment.

Fourthly, perceptions of the traditional healers allowed for generation of knowledge which is culturally based or rooted. This brought a better understanding of their perceptions of homosexuality. As a result, parliament, legislators, and the judiciary as a whole can enhance the effectiveness of legislation by ensuring that when amendments are done, legal discrepancies are addressed, and that, when new laws are being promulgated, lessons provided by this, and other studies, are incorporated or reflected. This should be carried out in order to effectively address discrepancies that lead to discrimination, prejudice and subsequent compromise of homosexual rights and freedom.

Fifth, the study only had 10 participants, as it was qualitative in nature. This ensured that a close relationship with the participants was maintained. This provided a platform for frank and open exchange of information without participants being uncomfortable as to what others were thinking, as could be the case with other methods for instance, focus groups (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Gill et al., 2008; Nyumba et al., 2018). This also played a significant role in ameliorating threats to validity and bias commonly embedded within qualitative research, subsequently, enhancing trustworthiness.

Sixth, all Northern Sotho traditional healers who participated in the study were verified for authenticity through the African Religion/Culture and Health forum and each produced a certificate of affiliation during the interviewing process. This assisted in alleviating the possibility of falling into ‘deception,’ that is, interviewing participants who claim to be traditional healers but were not. This had the potential of leading to contamination of data and possible misrepresentation of Northern Sotho culture.

Seventh, the study used an appropriate method of data analysis (TCA). The method allowed for the subjective interpretation of the content of the data through systemic classification where coding, and identification of themes, were central. This allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the participants perceptions of homosexuality and allowed the researcher to make meaning of their utterances. Additionally, I was guided by ethical considerations and a semi-structured interview guide through the process which allowed me, at every step of the research process, to remain focused.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Taking into consideration the overall results of the current study, the following recommendations are made. First, future studies should consider using probability sampling, large sample size and include a quantitative component. This will allow for a holistic representation of Northern Sotho traditional healers’ perceptions about homosexuality and also allow for generalisations to be made. Secondly, a study using other ethnic groups’ traditional healers is also recommended. This will assist in ensuring that perceptions about homosexuality, which are rooted within respective ethnic cultures, are unearthed. Consequently, some comparisons can be made. This will ascertain if there are any differences in terms of how traditional healers, of varying ethnic groups in South Africa, perceive homosexuality.

Thirdly, future studies should also consider using multiple research methods or triangulation. This will broaden the scope, and possible outcomes, of the research.

### ***6.3.1 Implications for academic training***

Academic institutions should integrate African paradigms for instance, Afrocentricity, into their curricula so that students can be exposed to theoretical perspectives, other than Eurocentric ones, in their academic studies. This will also allow them to make informed choices, when doing research, as to what theoretical underpinnings they use. Academic institutions should also incorporate African worldviews and homosexuality into their curricula for instance, in history, psychology, English, philosophy, health and medical subjects so as to bring a nuanced understanding of how one influences the other, cause and effect relationships (Francis, 2017), within the multicultural South African context. Lastly, the results of this study has implications for the advancement of thinking and methodology, with regard to Afrocentricity, as far as the understanding of sexuality and gender are concerned within the South African context.

### ***6.3.2 Implications for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)***

The current study could also be used as a base, from which other researchers and aspiring researchers, who are interested in the area of IKS, could use to significantly broaden the advancement of knowledge within the area of homosexuality and African culture towards the advancement of a better understanding of African communities and their cultural standpoint. This, in effect, will help inform their perceptions, and expand IKS as a whole as a constantly evolving research niche.

### ***6.3.3 Implications for policy development and legislation***

Policy development, promulgation of new legislation and amendments of existing legislation that focuses on addressing gender-based discrimination should incorporate and/or

take into consideration the results of the current study. This will assist in ensuring that discrimination and shortfalls inherited by previous legislation (Ilyayambwa, 2012), which may be culturally embedded, especially within rural patriarchal communities that hinder homosexuality from being normalised, are addressed. This will promote an inclusive and socially just environment for all, as ratified by the South African constitution (Francis, 2017). For instance, the rights of the majority can sometimes outweigh the rights of the minority in South Africa with regard to homosexuality. In other words, traditional leaders or healers may well use this as an argument to normalise the discrimination of homosexuality in terms of cultural norms. This is not the intention of the constitution or promulgated laws thus needs clarification (Stychin, 1996), which is still, I would argue, the case today.

Being cognisant of culture specific issues that seem to perpetuate discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance of homosexuality (especially in rural areas) may further assist the judiciary, legislators and parliament to legislate for culture specific laws that act as a deterrent to those who discriminate against homosexuals with regard to so-called cultural norms. This, it is anticipated, would be in consultation with traditional leaders and healers thus culture friendly. This, at first sight may appear impossible, but if approached through the correct channels, it may in the medium to long-term be conceivable.

#### **6.4 Contributions of the study**

The current study, I would assert, contributes significantly to understanding homosexuality within Northern Sotho culture as well as the advancement of cultural knowledge and preservation of knowledge in that cultural domain. The current research contributions are as follows.



#### ***6.4.1 Contribution to existing knowledge base***

Researchers have attempted to explore culturally rooted perceptions of traditional healers towards homosexuality however, these studies are few. I could find only one conducted amongst the Vendas (Masase, 2009), and another amongst the Zulus (Mkasi, 2013). This suggested a gap in the literature in terms of cultural studies pertaining to homosexuality. The current research builds and expands on this data-base by adding knowledge and reducing ethnic group deficits in terms of same-sex research, as it explored Northern Sotho Traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. This is therefore the first study to explore Northern Sotho traditional healers' views of homosexuality from their own cultural perspective. The research, it is hoped, will assist stakeholders in (government both local and provincial, Northern Sotho people and traditional leaders) in changing cultural perspectives of homosexuality by using the guidelines formulated out of this study. In other words, insights provided through this research which inform perceptions of homosexuality within Northern Sotho culture, can be used to inform ways of re-dressing the discrimination of homosexuals. The guidelines can be extrapolated, and adapted, for lesbians and others within the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community in traditional settings. The study also offers an innovative way of applying Afrocentric theory (Asante, 1990, 1998 & 2009) within the IKS research niche.

#### ***6.4.2 Contribution towards the preservation of Northern Sotho culture***

The study also contributed, in my opinion as a Northern Sotho male, towards the conservation of Northern Sotho culture and its traditional healers' indigenous knowledge system (IKS) in terms of homosexuality. This, I would assert, will help researchers and other stakeholders (for instance, government both local and provincial and academic institutions) to be aware of the need for more research on IKS in South Africa (Makgahlela, 2016), in this case related to homosexuality and cultural norms. Effectively, I think this will lead to the

preservation of cultural knowledge which later generations will be able to use as a point of reference in advancing research within the IKS niche. Consequently, ensuring that cultural knowledge, that offers a better understanding of African philosophies and standpoint as far as homosexuality is concerned, is continuously updated.

### ***6.5 Innovative aspects of the study***

There has been an increase in calls by various health care organisations, government, and researchers for the integration of traditional and western healing methods in the overall health care system of South Africa (Mokgobi, 2013; Moshabela et al., 2016). When this is fully realised, traditional healers will work alongside western health and allied health practitioners which will enhance healing and care processes for the majority (including Northern Sotho people) in South Africa. At this point, there is limited integration, particularly in deep-rural areas. The results of this study can help western practitioners understand how cultural norms are embedded in perceptions of homosexuality. This should help them deal with clients within cultural norms and with empathy and understanding. The opposite is also true, traditional healers can benefit from the study results by trying to understand homosexuality and same-sex relationships as a norm in the continuum of human sexuality. This, of course, will take interventions using for instance, the guidelines suggested by this study.

As a Clinical Psychologist in practice, and after working closely with traditional healers in this research, I have endeavoured to suggest guidelines for health care practitioners, law makers and other stakeholders for instance, government provincial and central in terms of homosexuality. These are as follows.

### **6.5.1 Guidelines for health care professionals, law makers and other relevant personnel who work closely with homosexuals**

1. People of various categories who work closely with homosexuals should strive to understand culturally induced unique risk (as reflected through this study's results) that exist for homosexuals who reside within the jurisdiction of traditional leaders and healers.
2. Health care practitioners in general (especially mental health care practitioners) and any other significant personnel who constantly engage with homosexuals can also benefit from familiarising themselves with the results of the current study which will be integrated into a report (sent to local and national government) and journal articles. They will not only gain knowledge about the traditional healers' views on homosexuality but also be able to immerse themselves in, and better understand challenges experienced by homosexuals, who reside within deep rural areas which are dominated by patriarchal norms (Mkasi, 2013). If they do this, they should be able to empathise with, and be sensitive to, the discrimination that homosexuals face. They should then be able to help homosexual clients in an efficient and constructive manner.
3. Those, in government (provincial and national) who develop, or amend, gender-based violence and/or discrimination programmes targeting improvements to homosexual health in rural areas, could also benefit from being cognisant of the research results in this study.
4. Mental health care practitioners (especially Psychologists, Social Workers and Psychiatrists) as they work intensely with vulnerable people, are encouraged to recognise the unique, culturally rooted challenges faced by homosexuals who

reside in rural areas within the jurisdiction of traditional leaders and healers.

The research results of this study underpin the bio-psychosocial and psychosocio-economic impact of culturally rooted perceptions of homosexuality.

5. Mental health care practitioners are also encouraged to use knowledge generated from the results of this study for relevant assessment, treatment and appropriate referral of homosexuals, especially those who are victims of trauma and victimisation incurred as a result of their sexuality.

#### **6.5.2 Guidelines for academia and training students**

- a) Academic institutions should strive to include cultural perspectives on homosexuality as realised through the lens of the results of this study, using an Afrocentric base, in professional and academic training.
- b) Workshops, which are more concerned with the promotion of health and alleviation of gender-based discrimination and/or violence against homosexuals, could incorporate the results of this study in Northern Sotho (and other ethnic groups) to promote understanding of the culturally rooted challenges faced by homosexuals.
- c) I will begin this process by initiating workshops and symposiums in both my place of work and the University of Limpopo to dialogue about key issues around the perception of homosexuality within the cultural sphere. On completion of this PhD all stakeholders and researchers interested will be invited to these symposiums (for instance, government, traditional healers and leaders, homosexual persons, westernised health care and allied health care practitioners, academics, and researchers).

### **6.5.3 Guidelines for integration of traditional healers into the health sector in terms of homosexuality and its implications**

- (i) In finalising the incorporation of traditional healers into the health care system in South Africa, their perceptions about homosexuality, as understood through this research (and the Venda and Zulu studies which had similar results) should be considered. I would assert that appropriate updates and possible new legislation is needed in terms of homosexuality and cultural contexts to ensure that any negative impact (as far as possible), is minimised in terms of ensuring that homosexuals, who consult with traditional healers (or their families who consult on their behalf), do not get subjected to ill-treatment. This is essential and cannot be ignored particularly in light of recent mental health care crises for instance, Life Esidimeni where people with mental conditions died as a result of poor administration and lack of understanding, by provincial and national government. I must note that, in South Africa, mental health care has been perpetually overlooked or downplayed which, in future, must change.
- (ii) Law makers would also benefit from observing the results of this study in terms of developing and ratifying formal regulations for the full integration of traditional healers into the health care system. This would give them insight into traditional norms and cultural issues that might arise.

### **6.6 Study limitations**

In all research there are limitations, this study is no different. Firstly, the study used a non-probability sampling technique, to be specific, snowball sampling. As snowball sampling relies on one person to refer another person, this could be considered a limitation as it is

possible that as that person is known to them, they might share the same views which could suggest possible bias.

The study was also limited to Capricorn District which could mean that results for instance, in a city context may be different. Fundamentally, the results of the study should be interpreted within the context of where it was conducted. The study further focused on Northern Sotho culture and/or traditional healers, as such their perceptions cannot be generalised to other ethnic groups in the country.

Secondly, the study focused on Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality only which infers some cultural bias. It is suggested that other larger studies be undertaken on all aspects of homosexuality within Northern Sotho culture. This will present a more balanced discourse and help bring a better understanding of how homosexuality is perceived and, how homosexuals are treated, within that culture.

Thirdly, this study only used a qualitative approach there was no triangulation with a quantitative method. Based on knowledge gathered, it may well have been more useful if for instance, a survey technique was used with a bigger sample size. The advantage of a quantitative element is that it makes it possible for a larger, randomised sample to be studied, making generalisations feasible. The study sample was also drawn from a small geographical location. For future research, and to allow comparisons to be made, it would be beneficial to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches, consistent with triangulation, in a wider geographical area.

Fourthly, the study was not balanced as far as gender representation is concerned. Future studies should consider using equal number of males and females to ensure equality of gender representation. Although equal gender representation was envisaged during the

conceptualisation of this study, achieving it was not possible (see the section on data collection for reasons).

Fifth, the researcher recognises the limitations inherent to the translation of data from one language to the other. That is, translation of data, before content analysis, may have led to incorrect substitutions of original words or omissions as far as the originality of participants' data is concerned. This was addressed, as far as possible, by asking participants to verify the meaning of the interpretation. Lastly, pre-testing of the semi-structured questions was not carried out which could have further enhanced the questions in terms of quality criteria.

Sixth, another limitation to the study was that the semi-structured interview guide was not pre-tested because of difficulty in enlisting participants. As only 10 were enlisted it was thought pre-testing on one of them would a) be open to possible bias as that traditional healer could have told others in the area what questions s/he was asked and b) as there were 10 participants it was decided not to reduce the number by pre-testing.

## **6.7 My reflections on the research process**

I found undertaking this study very stimulating, in particular tapping into the culturally embedded ethos of Northern Sotho pertaining to homosexuality. I found that homosexuality is regarded as inconsistent with Northern Sotho culture. It was deeply saddening to discover that historically (and probably today) there were processes used to cover up homosexuality, or homosexual practices, from public display. The most notable being that a homosexual marries (heterosexually) denying them the opportunity to live their life freely by choosing whoever they want to live their lives with, as enshrined in the South African constitution.

Before undertaking the study, through a reading of the literature, I familiarised myself with the challenges experienced by homosexuals from a cultural point of view. In some ways

this played a role in preparing me for undertaking the interviews however, I ensured that I remained objective by continually meeting with (or phoning) my supervisors. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, I knew that I would have to tread carefully as I did not want to upset traditional healers. After the interviews I have to say that I did feel emotional as, it became obvious, that traditional healers did not think that homosexuality was acceptable in Northern Sotho culture. This impacted on their perceptions, and treatment of, homosexuals in terms of how they perceived their cultural norms. I needed to talk to someone as a way of debriefing, and I did this with my supervisors who assisted me and gave me strength to continue.

As my research was ending and I had to reflect, I realised that although it was daunting and emotionally challenging, I have grown as a researcher. I also noted that it was important not only to explore the challenges faced by homosexuals, from a Northern Sotho cultural point of view, but also to add my own voice, in terms of presenting a balanced argument and concomitant analysis of data to this research niche. I feel I did this however, after the research had concluded and was written up, I did feel that the discrimination of homosexuals in rural areas was, to an extent, facilitated by cultural norms and perceptions. This is why I included guidelines in my research as I hope that, in future, so-called traditional norms can be changed to an account for a more empathic understanding of homosexuality in the African tradition.

I felt that accounts of traditional healers as they fall in the category of traditional leaders had to be explored and further documented in the form of reports and journal articles, in order to bring about a more nuanced understanding of homosexuality within the traditional Northern Sotho sphere. I feel that I was able to highlight the Northern Sotho's traditional healers' stance on homosexuality embedded within their cultural philosophy, through an Afrocentric lens, in the Capricorn district of Limpopo Province, South Africa.



## **6.8 Conclusion**

This research has shed light into the perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers and, to an extent, Northern Sotho culture as a whole. The main focus was on exploring deeply rooted cultural perceptions in terms of homosexuality. I was objective in writing up the findings and commenting on literature however, in the conclusion, it must be noted that the negative views pertaining to homosexuality that Northern Sotho traditional healers, who participated in this research, are likely to facilitate discrimination of, and attacks, on homosexuals. The role of religious teachings associated with the introduction of Christianity during colonialism also cannot be ignored as it appears to have validated, indeed even facilitated, African views pertaining to homosexuality. The study pointed out that, perceptions of Northern Sotho traditional healers, as based on their understanding of their own (and African culture) has a bearing on the treatment of homosexuals. The treatment of homosexuals by traditional healers, it can be inferred, has a bearing on how same-sex individuals are treated by Northern Sotho communities (as designated within the area of this research). This on the whole is suggested as being non-acceptance and discriminatory.

To sum up, a paradigm shift or ‘sea change’ is necessary to reframe policy direction and legislation, to ensure that the Northern Sotho traditional healers, who took part in this study (and very likely all Northern Sotho traditional healers), are sensitive, and relevant to, the needs of homosexuals. Currently in South Africa, there are laws that strive to promote homosexual freedom (Chapter 02 of the Constitution: Bill of Rights; Domestic violence Act, 1998; Employment Equity Act, 1998; the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000; Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Medical Schemes Act, 1998), however, it seems that within the cultural sphere these may be either ignored or seen as not talking to African culture. This is inferred through the research results of this study and other studies on homosexuality in the African culture as related in the literature review. This is

reflected by feedback from homosexuals in studies by Ilyayambwa (2012) and Isaak (2007) who found, in their research, that, regardless of the South African law and Constitution homosexuals still experience discrimination on one or constitutional grounds (Chapter 2: Bill of rights, section 9(3)). These authors also reported that in spite of the constitution and laws of the country the non-acceptance of homosexuality, especially within traditional, patriarchal communities still exists as same-sex marriages are often unrecognised by local authorities (Ilyayambwa, 2012; Isaack, 2007). The findings of this research support the aforementioned findings in terms of the non-acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex unions.

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## **APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE (SEMI-STRUCTURED)**

### **INDIVIDUAL FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS**

The researcher identified himself to each participant. The researcher then gave each participant an opportunity to introduce himself/herself. This allowed for the enhancement of rapport between the researcher and each participant. The researcher then introduced the topic to each participant and briefly explained what the research was all about. The researcher also explained the aims and objectives of the research and provided a consent form and allowed each participant to sign.

Interviews elicit a lot of information, some of which may need a lot of time to analyse, and the researcher conducted the research with this in mind. The researcher probed where it was necessary in order to get clarity and elicit further relevant information.

The questions were developed guided by Afrocentric theory, research aim, objectives and the phenomena under scrutiny.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The following demographics formed part of the data collection:

- Name (pseudonym will be given)
- Age
- Educational status
- Country of origin
- Ethnic group (Northern Sotho only)
- Years practicing as a traditional healer

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following are questions were used within each individual face-to-face interview sessions with each participant for data collection purposes:

6. What is your view about homosexuality?

7. What is your view on the statement that Homosexuality is un-African?
8. Do you know of any homosexual practices that took place in the history of Northern Sotho culture?
9. How would you react towards a homosexual who wants to undergo initiation?
10. How would you react to a homosexual who wants to become a traditional healer?
11. Do you know of any traditional healers in your culture that have married partners of the same-sex either historically or in the current context?
12. Are you aware of any Northern Sotho homosexual traditional healer? If yes, how do you react to them?
13. If a homosexual came to you for help, would you assist him or her?
14. How would you react if you knew of homosexual partners residing within your community or village? Why would you react in that way?
15. Is it possible that, within the Northern Sotho culture, ancestors may reveal a marriage of the same-sex? If yes, how do you explain this?
16. How would you react if it comes to your attention that there are homosexual people who want to get married traditionally within your community?

## **SEKGOMARETŠWA SA A (b) - PHATADIGANONG YA PEAKANYOGARE**

### **Poledišano ka botee ka botee mahlong**

### **DINTLHA MABAPI LE BAKGATHATEMA**

- Leina (leina la moswananoši)
- Mengwaga
- Maemo a thuto
- Otšwa kae
- Mohlobo
- Palo ya mengwaga o le ngaka ya setšo

### **Dipotsišo**

Dipotsišo tše di latelago ke tšeo monyakišiši a di botšišetšego mokgathatema yo mongwe le yo mongwe yo a bego a kgatha tema mo dinyakišišong:

- 1) Naa o ka ntlhalosetša maikutlo a gago ka boratani ba bongbotee?
- 2) Naa oka ntlhalosetša maikutlo a gago mabapi le mmolelwana wa gore boratani ba bongbotee bo kgahlanong le setšo sa geno?
- 3) E ka ba o na le tsebo ya ditiragalo tša boratani bja bongbotee tšeo di kilego tša diragala hisitoring ya setšo sa lena?
- 4) Naa o be o ka dirang goba wa ikwa bjang ge o ka kwa gore go na le motho wa boratani bja bongbotee yo a nyakago go ya komeng/morotong mo motseng wa geno?
- 5) Naa o be o ka ikwa bjang ge o ka kwa ka motho wa boratani bja bongbotee yo a nyakago go ba ngaka ya setšo?
- 6) Naa e kaba gona le ngaka ya setšo sa geno yeo oe tsebago yeo e kilego ya nyala molekani goba balekani ba bongbotee historing ya setšo sa geno goba ga bjale?
- 7) E ka ba o na le tsebo ya dingaka goba ngaka yeo e welago ka legorong la boratani bja bongbotee? Ge e ka ba go bjalo, o ikwa bjang ka yena goba bona?

- 8) Ge motho wa boratani bja bongbotee a ka tla go wena a nyaka thušo, o tla mo thuša?
- 9) Naa o be o ka ikwa bjang ge o ka kwa ka baratani ba bongbotee ba ba dulago mo motseng wa geno? Ke ka lebaka la eng o ikwa ka tsela yeo?
- 10) E ka ba go a kgonagala gore setšong sa gabolena, badimo ba kgone go ntšha pono ya gore batho ba boratani bja bongbotee ba nyalane? Ge e le gore go bjalo, se sona o se hlalosa bjang?
- 11) Naa o be o ka ikwa bjang ge o ka kwa ka baratani ba bongbotee bao ba nyakago go nyalana ka setšo motseng wa geno?

**APPENDIX B – ETHICS FORMS (TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS  
COMMITTEE)**

Date: .....

**FORM B – PART I**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Northern Sotho traditional healers’ perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**PROJECT LEADER:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

**DECLARATION**

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

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

**Name of Researcher:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

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

Approved/Not approved

Remarks:.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Signature of Chairperson: .....

Date: .....



**FORM B – PART II**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Northern Sotho traditional healers’ perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**PROJECT LEADER:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

Protocol for conducting research using human participants

1. Department: Psychology
2. Title of project: Northern Sotho traditional healers’ perceptions of homosexuality.
3. Full name, surname, and qualifications of project leader:  
Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba  
B.A. Honours in Psychology  
M.A. Clinical Psychology
4. List the name(s) of all persons (Researchers and Technical Staff) involved with the project and identify their role(s) in the conduct of the experiment:  

Name:	Qualifications:	Responsible for:
Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba	B.A. Honours in Psychology M.A. Clinical Psychology	Research
5. Name and address of principal researcher: Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba, P.O. Box 234, Makhudu, 0777.
6. Procedures to be followed:  
Individual face to face interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured guide constructed Informed consent will be sought from each participant.
7. Nature of discomfort:  
The interviews may tap into deep personal feeling in connection to phenomena under scrutiny as such causing discomfort. Participants who show signs of discomfort will be referred to a psychologist or counsellor within the area for intervention.
8. Description of the advantages that may be expected from the results of the study:  
The study will give an in-depth account of how homosexuality is perceived within the Northern Sotho traditional healers.

Signature of Project Leader: .....

**FORM B-PART III**  
**INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**PROJECT LEADER:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

1. You are invited to participate in the following research project: Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.
2. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project, without providing any reasons, at any time.
3. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project, although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the project might prove advantageous to others.
4. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader and the researcher will gladly answer your questions. They will also discuss the project in detail with you.
5. It may be that you feel discomfort when discussing homosexuality. However, I will do my best to ensure that this is discussed properly with you and if you do feel that the discomfort has elevated to an extent that you cannot cope; I will ensure that necessary arrangements are made for you to see a counsellor or psychologist within your area. The researcher will also take it upon himself to help those who may be in a similar position.
6. Should you at any stage feel unhappy, uncomfortable, or concerned about the research please contact Ms Noko Shai-Ragoboya at the University of Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, Tel: 015 268 2401

## PART IV (a) - CONSENT FORM

**PROJECT TITLE:** Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**PROJECT LEADER:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following project: Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.

I realise that:

- 1) The study deals with Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.
- 2) The research may hold some psychological risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage.
- 3) The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.
- 4) The research project (that is, the extent, aims and methods of the research) has been explained to me.
- 5) The project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research. It also sets out an explanation of the anticipated advantages, for myself or others that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.
- 6) I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation.
- 7) Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.
- 8) Any questions that I may have regarding the research, or related matters, will be answered by the researcher and his promoter.
- 9) If I have any questions about, or problems regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba (Daniellesibaletsoalo@gmail.com) or my supervisor Prof S. Govender ([Saraswathie.Govender@ul.ac.za](mailto:Saraswathie.Govender@ul.ac.za)) or external supervisor Prof Nel [Kathryn.Nel@ul.ac.za](mailto:Kathryn.Nel@ul.ac.za)
- 10) Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.
- 11) If any medical/psychological problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person and/or I will be referred to my doctor.
- 12) I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

**Signature of research Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Researcher** \_\_\_\_\_

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2019/20

**KAROLO YA IV (b) – FOROMO YA TUMELELO (SEPEDI)**

**HLOGO YA NYAKIŠIŠO:** Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa. (Tebelelo ya boratani bja bongbotee dingakeng tša Sesotho sa Leboa: nyakišišo seleteng sa Capricorn Profenseng ya Limpopo, nageng ya Afrika-Borwa).

**MOETAPELE WA NYAKIŠIŠO:** Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba

Nna \_\_\_\_\_ ke ithaopa go kgatha tema mo lesolong la go nyakišiša: Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.

Ke a kwešiša gore:

1. Nyakišišo ye e mabapi le Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality.
2. Nyakišišo ye e ka ba le di tla morago go nna tšeo di ka no se bonwego gabjale.
3. Lekgotla la matshwara le file tumelelo gore batho ba ka latwa, ba kgopelwa go kgatha tema mo nyakišišong ye.
4. Ke hlaloseditšwe dilo ka moka mabapi le nyakišišo ye.
5. Nyakišišo ye e ka ba le ditlamorago tšeo e lego gore di ka tla le go se dudišege gabotse go bakgathatema, e hlalosa le mohola wo o ka tšwago go yona go nna le go batho ba bangwe.
6. Ke tla botšwa ka ditaba tše di mpsha tšeo di ka tšwelelago go nyakišišo tšeo di ka fetolago boithaopo bja ka go tšwela pele le nyakišišo.
7. Tumelelo go di rekoto tša go kgatha tema ga ka, e tla fiwa fela batho bao ba etilego pele nyakišišo (monyakišiši le moeletši wa gagwe).
8. Potšiso ye nngwe le ye nngwe ye nka bago le yona mabapi le nyakišišo e tla arabja ke moetapele wa nyakišišo le moeletši wa gagwe.
- 13) Ge nka ba le dipotšiso, mathata goba ditlamorago tša go se kgahliše mabapi le nyakišišo ke tla ikgokaganya le moetapele wa nyakišišo: Letsoalo Daniel Lesiba (Daniellesibaletsoalo@gmail.com) goba moeletši wa gagwe Prof S. Govender (Saraswathie.Govender@ul.ac.za) Prof K Nel (Kathryn.Nel@ul.ac.za)
9. Ke a kwešiša gore go tšea karolo mo nyakišišong ke maithaopo a ka ebile ke na le maloka a go ka ikgogela morago nako ye nngwe le ye nngwe.
10. Ge go ka ba le mathata ao a lemogwago mabapi le seemo sa ka sa mogopolo goba lephelo, seo se tla bolelwa ka sephiring le motho yo a nago le mangwalo a go dira seo, goba ke tla romelwa go ngaka ya ka.
11. Ke dumela gore Yunibesithi ya Limpopo le yo mongwe le yo mongwe yo e lego karolo ya nyakišišo ye, ba ka se tšee maikarabelo mabapi le go kgatha tema ga ka nyakišišong ye le se sengwe le se sengwe seo se sepelelanago le yona go akaretšwa le bošaeledi bjo bo ka dirwago ke yo mongwe wa baetapele ba nyakišišo.

**Tshaeno ya Mokgathatema** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tshaeno ya Monyakišiši** \_\_\_\_\_

**E saennwe kua** \_\_\_\_\_ **ka tšatši la** \_\_\_\_\_ **la kgwedi ya**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **2019/20.**

## APPENDIX C (a): PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Department of Psychology

University of Limpopo

Private Bag X1106

Sovenga

0727

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The President

African Religion/Culture & Health Forum

P.O Box 656

MANYAMA

POLOKWANE

0700

### **Permission to conduct research with Northern Sotho traditional healers**

I am a registered Doctorate (PHD in Psychology) student at the University of Limpopo and I am currently doing research on Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality. The main aim of the research is to explore how Northern Sotho traditional healers perceive or view homosexuality.

I would hereby like to apply for permission to conduct research with Northern Sotho traditional healers who are members of the association. It is of significance to indicate confidentiality (regarding participants' identity) will be of utmost importance during the research process and the researcher will do all that is necessary to ensure that the latter is upheld.

The research participation will be voluntary in nature and participants are free to withdraw from the process at any time should they feel uncomfortable in any way. Data will be collected through semi-structured, individual face-to face-interviews with Northern Sotho traditional healers who are part of the association.

Yours faithfully

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Daniel Letsoalo

PHD student

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Date

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Prof S Govender

Supervisor

---

Date

---

Prof KA Nel

External Supervisor

---

Date

**SEKGOMARETŠWA SA C (b): TUMELELO YA GO DIRA NYAKIŠIŠO**

Department of Psychology

University of Limpopo

Private Bag X1106

Sovenga

0727

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The President

African Religion/Culture & Health Forum

P.O Box 656

MANYAMA

POLOKWANE

0700

**Tumelelo ya go dira dinyakišišo le dingaka tša setšo tša Sesotho sa Leboa**

Ke moithuti wa dithuto tša Bongaka (PHD in Psychology), Yunibesithing ya Limpopo. Gabjale ke dira dinyakišišo. Hlogo ya dinyakišišo ke ye e latelago: “Tebelelo ya boratani bja bongbotee dingakeng tša Sesotho sa Leboa: nyakišišo seleteng sa Capricorn, Profenseng ya Limpopo, nageng ya Afrika-Borwa”. Maikemišetšo magolo a dinyakišišo tše ke go kwešiša ka moo bongbotee bo lebelelwago ka gona magareng ga ngaka tša setšo tša Setšo.

Ke be ke kgopela tumelelo ya go dira dinyakišišo le dingaka tša setšo tše e lego maloko a mokgahlo wa lena. Go bohlokwa go le lemoša gore ditaba le maina a bakgathatema di ka se utollwe ebile e tla ba sephiri.

Go kgatha tema mo dinyakišišong tše ke ka boithaopo ebile bakgathatema ba na le maloka a go ka ikogela morago nako ye nngwe le ye nngwe. Dipoledišano di tla ba magareng ga monyakišiši le bakgathatema ka o tee ka o tee mahlong.

Wa lena ka botshephegi

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Daniel Letsoalo

Moithuti wa bongaka

---

Tšatšikgweedi

---

Prof S Govender

Mohlahli

---

Tšatšikgweedi

---

Prof KA Nel

Mothuša Mohlahli

---

Tšatšikgweedi



## APPENDIX D: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



**University of Limpopo**  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 5 April 2019

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/87/2019:PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Northern Sotho traditional healers 'perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn district in Limpopo Province, South Africa.  
**Researcher:** DL Letsoalo  
**Supervisor:** Prof K Nel  
**Co-Supervisor/s:** Prof S Govender  
**School:** Social Science  
**Degree:** PhD in Psychology

**PROF P MASOKO**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

*Finding solutions for Africa*

## APPENDIX E: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

To Whom It May Concern

I declare that I, Louise Nel, have proof-read and edited the research proposal entitled: Northern Sotho traditional healers' perceptions of homosexuality: A study in the Capricorn District in Limpopo Province, South Africa by Mr D.L. Letsoalo.

The research thesis was generally well written. Major grammatical errors were found and corrected. To ensure that the candidate's voice was not 'lost' not all minor grammatical errors were corrected as this would have meant re-constructing sentences (thus losing the candidate's voice) which were, in my opinion, coherent. Black (or African) South African English is not yet recognised however, I have edited the thesis with this in mind.

Please note that I have been editing journal articles, dissertations, and theses for a period of five years.



Ms K Louise Nel

HKE (Rhodes): Hons HKE (Rhodes)

0741544314

**APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTS OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES PUT INTO THEMES**

**Participant 1**

<b>1 57</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Sepedi</b>	<b>11 years</b>	<b>No formal</b>	<b>Northern</b>	<b>Traditional</b>
<b>years</b>				<b>education</b>	<b>Sotho</b>	<b>healer</b>

*“Their family [homosexuals] will never be fully functional. It is for this reason that if it was possible such things [homosexuality] should not exist. Where will it end since the first thing a family must do is to have a child... they will never have a fully functional family...? When will their family ever become complete...? Our culture requires one to have a family and children.” (Participant 1)*

*“The line will end with them as they do not have a proper family [man and woman] and they cannot have children. As they are of the same-sex, since they will never have children born of their bloodline. They will not be able to show their family with pride because, we as Africans, pride ourselves on our children and when they grow up they get employed and assist us. So, with them [homosexuals] this cannot happen” (Participant 1).*

*“Mhmmmm, there is nowhere in our culture where homosexuality is allowed; therefore, there is no way that our culture can allow things like this. Our culture demands that a family should grow and that children should be born. It is our culture, and it does not allow such things.”. (Participant 1)*

*“In the case of a homosexual being called to be a traditional healer we would not disagree as this would be a gift from his grandparents. They are different, but they can become a traditional healer since, like everyone else, they are also human. If it is a gift from his grandparents there is no one who can deny him [or her if a lesbian]. There is*

*nothing else we could do we would just have to accept it as he has been blessed by his ancestors. There is no way in which we can make him suffer, we will just live with him in peace*". (Participant 1)

*"You know in the past; in olden times these things were not discussed so they did not happen"* (Participant 1)

*"I just do not understand it [homosexuality]. It makes me feel confused"*. (Participant 1)

*"Yes, I will help"*. (Participant 1 and Participant 3)

*"Those [homosexuals] are full of impurities so they may put other initiates in danger because those who attend must be pure. Those people [homosexuals] are disabled because of their impurification which may lead to the death of others if they were allowed to go to initiation school. They might pass the impurification to others [homosexuality] which might cause death."* (Participant 1)

## Participant 2

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2	55	Male	Sepedi	13 years	Grade 09	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

---

*"MMMhh Yes, it is not an African thing as no proper marriage takes place – it is not a real union as no children can be born."* (Participant 2)

*"I do not agree with homosexuality and our culture does not agree with it because this kind of relationship is against our culture. From our childhood we learn this and such things [homosexuality, in the past,] were not glamourised [like they are today in the media]. All of our historical cultural values are being disregarded"*. (Participant 2)

*“I do not have a problem with a homosexual being called by the ancestors to be a traditional healer”. (Participant 2)*

*“When I was a child if people saw this, they told the elders and then some of the older men and women would whip them [homosexuals].” (Participant 2).*

*“Sometimes you find that there are men [or women] who are bothered by ancestral spirits who want them to become traditional healers. They may be still young, and the family are not aware of what kind of things a calling can manifest in and it goes unnoticed. An example of this is a man who is possessed by a female spirit and he likes to wear earrings and other feminine things. If there is no intervention, then he can become a homosexual and not take up the calling as a traditional healer.” (Participant 2)*

### Participant 3

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3	46	Female	Sepedi	05 years	Grade 11	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
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*“Yes, I disagree with a man being with another man because how will they flourish and multiply? It’s the same with a woman and a woman... I just do not understand it”. (Participant 3)*

*“Of course, I do not accept it. I do not agree with what they are doing [same-sex relationship] it is disgraceful, but if he wants help I will assist him”. (Participant 3)*

*“If someone’s biological sex is a man, then that is how God created him. If he is a man and lies with another man, then he decided to go against nature”. (Participant 3)*

*“I will accept him or her. I would accept him or her because that will be his or her gift from the ancestors. We cannot change him or her because that is who they are. I cannot*

take away his or her gift and I will not change him or her. It is something the ancestors want". (Participant 3)

"The one that I know [homosexual] is not married. So yes, they are around".

(Participant 3)

"Actually, I would like to know what causes homosexuality? I just do not understand it. Yes, I know that a person can have certain feelings for someone of the same-sex but it is not common in our culture. I suppose it is more prevalent these days. During the olden days we did not have this[homosexuality]". (Participant 3)

"Yes, I will help". (Participant 1 and Participant 3)

"There is no problem if a homosexual wants to go to a mountain school". (Participant 3)

"The most important thing is how one feels in life that is what matters most. I accept homosexuals I do not have a problem with them they are human beings just like us [heterosexuals]. They have a right to live their lives as they want and to be free in every way. I have a nephew is a homosexual that helped me understand. I do have to say that in our culture it is not accepted though." (Participant 3)

#### Participant 4

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4	55	Female	Sepedi	09 years	Grade 07	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

---

"Parents know what kind of child they have. If it is a man, they know that he will not be able to bear children, if it is a woman, she will be able to have children. So nowadays what must we do you cannot tell your child: 'you my child you are like this [a homosexual] and I know you'. Even during the olden days, we did not recognise this [homosexuality]. Maybe the parent knew that their child was like this, but it was not

*spoken about and they married [the males]. Nowadays those who engage in same-sex relationships are those who cannot flourish and multiply". (Participant 4)*

*"According to our culture, same-sex relations are taboo. No, there is nothing that I can do about it....it is just like that. It is not a good thing for men to behave like this. You know this is taboo a what these people [homosexuals] are doing. When a man is in a relationship with another man according to our culture it is a taboo. But they disregard our culture so there is nothing we can do." (Participant 4)*

*"Eish, having a homosexual traditional healer will not sit well with me. However, ancestors are ancestors, if they decide to give him or her the gift, they have decided. You do not choose to be a traditional healer you are chosen by the ancestors as they think you will be able to perform what they require. They [homosexuals] can undergo training because they have been chosen and we cannot deny them. They can go through the process of becoming a traditional healer". (Participant 4)*

*"During the olden days there were those who looked like a woman even though you knew they were a man. In the past people would tell you that your child was 'gallivanting' a lot. This usually meant they were doing bad things [mixing with homosexuals]. In Northern Sotho there is a saying that: 'a child is known by his mother.' So, a mother would know that her child was homosexual but would say nothing. It was not glamourised that these same-sex relationships took place and often homosexuals married, so it was ignored." (Participant 4)*

*"It is their disability; being born without the ability to reproduce is a disability". (Participant 4)*

*"It is more evident nowadays as white people glamourise I [homosexuality]t. I disagree with it. They [homosexuals] cannot not get married in our culture. If they get married, and I do not agree with this, they must get married in a western way*

*[civil partnership] as that is where same-sex relationships originated". (Participant 4)*

*"There is no problem they must go. Initiation schools have no problem with homosexuals as long as he is biologically a man he can go". (Participant 4)*

#### Participant 5

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5	72	Male	Sepedi	31 years	Grade 04	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

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*"Because when parents have a child, they expect that child to continue growing the family, so that the family name does not get disappear. This mean that our family values will disappear." (Participant 5)*

*"A man is supposed to marry a woman and have children. When a man is in a romantic relationship with a man, they will not have children of their bloodline. Where will that lead our community and our ancestors? Will this same-sex thing be satisfactory to parents? We get married and live together with a woman so that as men we will have children? What will the direction of our community be? You see, parents expect their children to grow their family not lose the family name. If we get married men with men, we cannot have children of our own line." (Participant 5)*

*"Same-sex relationships are against very much against African culture. In our culture we say that we 'we must flourish and multiply.' Here is another issue, the gifts [a gift refers to the ancestral calling to be a traditional healer] I have received from my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparent they should be passed on down the bloodline. Homosexuals cannot do that as they cannot have natural children, so they [homosexuals] cannot belong to our culture." Participant 5)*



*“The reason [that homosexuality is not accepted] being that it means we are against God’s will and how he created us, it is un-Godly [homosexuality]”.* (Participant 5)

*“It is allowed, it is not as a result of his [the homosexuals] choosing. He will have been given the gift by his ancestors. He will use what the ancestors gave him and follow the direction. It is the same for a lesbian”.* (Participant 5)

*“During the old days if you were a homosexual your family would find you a woman who you would marry and who would take care of your household. If there were no children, then one or two of the homosexual’s brothers’ children would be integrated into the household. These children would be referred to as his [the homosexual’s] children. A lesbian woman would marry a man found by her family. If she did not have children another woman would be found to enter the household and she would have children with the lesbian’s husband. They would then become the children of the family as they carried on the bloodline. Another thing is that in the past parents found marriage partners for their children so there was no problem in getting partners today they marry for so-called ‘love.’ This often does not work out, but we cannot do anything about it now, it’s the way of the world. Am I clear about the things I am telling you? In the past if I had a male child, I would find a wife for him. If, for some reason, he couldn’t have children then his brother would take over [and have sexual relations with the wife. So, in the past if I had a girl child I would find a husband for her and if she did not have children I would find another woman to go into the house and have a relationship [sexual] with her husband. This worked well and homosexuality was not discussed unless there was some open breach of culture. In this case it is likely the man would leave the village to save himself from violence. You can see how this issue of same-sex marriage is very problematic to our culture as we were not used to it”.* (Participant 5)

*“Same-sex-relationships are perplexing. I do not understand them. This thing [homosexuality] is becoming more evident now, it just confuses me”. (Participant 5)*

*“We will accept it if we have to because these days the young forget about culture. They just want to follow western ways. It is not right though. They must live in town we cannot accept them into our own communities ”. (Participant 5)*

*“Helping will not be a problem... being same-sex will not stop people from being assisted”. (Participant 5)*

*“Initiation school does not have a problem with homosexuals, any male can go as long as they are healthy. They must be biological male with a penis, then there is no problem. They must know our cultural ways. “ (Participant 5)*

#### Participant 6

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6	72	Female	Sepedi	37 years	Grade 08	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

---

*“We only know that a man marries a woman, and they have children. Now when a woman marries another woman how are they going to have children? The world is coming to an end because a woman will never make a child with another woman and a man will not make a child with another man”. (Participant 6)*

*“Same-sex relationships are against African culture. We have never seen it [historically] in our culture. I do not have an answer for this however, people make their own decisions and do what they want. They do it in their own culture wherever they are. It is unfortunate that it exists in any culture however, it does not involve our [Northern Sotho] community, but it is just painful to see these people. They go against*

*everything natural but, in our culture, such a thing [homosexuality] is not allowed.”*

**(Participant 6)**

*“Becoming a traditional healer is not one’s choice. If his ancestors have given him the gift of becoming a traditional healer then he will become one. It is not a personal choice. One is born with the gift. Men and women can become traditional healers regardless of their sexual orientation”. (Participant 6)*

*“It is possible for a person to be bisexual, however, the one that is dominant is the one that is embraced. As much as the person can be bisexual, one [form of sexuality] will be dominant. But if men marry a woman and have children it doesn’t matter too much, they must not be open about other relationships though.” (Participant 6).*

*“Cultural protection is available. What parents do is they see which side is dominant [hetero or homosexual]. If it is homosexual it would be seen as some kind of disability and the parents would try to convince the homosexual to stay with a woman who they would choose. This is done to ensure that the disability is not exposed. This is the protection African culture provides. The homosexual side, if it is more dominant, must be ‘hidden’ so that the man is supported and can live amongst us”.*

**(Participant 6)**

*“This issue is a problem because according to African culture those who are homosexual are regarded as being disabled. We cannot condone people of the same-sex getting married; we just regard it as a disability. There is no chance that it can ever be allowed it is a disability. Children with such a disability will be known by their parents or, sometimes, just themselves. If we suspect it, we hide it from other to protect our children, to stop them from being regarded as being disabled”. (Participant 6)*

*“You see these men use women and have many children. They have sexual relationships with many women and then they can no longer afford to keep up their children*

[financially]. This matter is very problematic. If these men have relationships with other men, then they cannot have children and have an excuse to deny any responsibility for things that happened when they were with women. For instance, we have two men, and you find that they have impregnated women which is too expensive. Then they have a same-sex relationship, and one calls himself a man and the other a woman, but they are both man. They abandon their responsibilities to their children, families, and community. On the other side is when two women have a relationship, and one is thought of as the man and the other a woman, but they are both women. This is not taking responsibility for being an African woman and living properly in African culture. These men and women lack all responsibility to their African culture and what they do is wrong culture. **(Participant 6)**

“The thing is, if partners are of same-sex and they are married what happens when one of them dies, because we all die. Then, what is going to happen regarding mourning. In African culture when one dies mourning must take place. If a man lost a wife there is a mourning intervention can be culturally prescribe, and if a woman lost a husband, there is also treatment that can be prescribed. These are cultural interventions we assist with. However, if it is 2 men or 2 women then mourning cannot take place – we have no cultural interventions for that.” **(Participant 6)**

“I would ask them first what they were looking for or what was lacking in their lives. I would start by consulting with the ancestors through the use of divination bones to find out if the ancestors were happy about the consultation. If they came with family members, I would ask for information about their upbringing to see if I could find out why they were like this [homosexual].” **(Participant 6)**

“There is no problem they [homosexuals] have always attended initiation school.” **(Participant 6)**

*“I would try and discipline him even though I might fail. However, I would not discipline him alone, I would involve his family and we would discipline him together. We would consult the ancestors on how to do this. I we failed then at least we would have tried.” (Participant 6)*

**Participant 7**

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7	57	Female	Sepedi	29 years	Grade 07	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

---

*“So, when such things [homosexuality] start happening amongst us blacks, we get confused because we worry about our future? Families are going to die out”.*  
**(Participant 7)**

*The biggest reason that I do not agree with such things [homosexuality] is what is going to happen to the family surname? I mean even if a woman is married and the marriage does not work out, she comes back home with her children, life continues, the family grows.” (Participant 7)*

*“It is not something common, it is new. Because back in the old days if a man had a relationship with another man, they could not live amongst us because it was taboo. They [homosexuals and lesbians] will be doing something that was never allowed. Today we see these things [same-sex relationships] on television even though it was never in our community before. I mean what can I say, he or she will be considered as an abomination. If I were invited to such a wedding I would go, it would be a disgrace that I want to witness. It would be the first time that I witnessed such a disgrace, and I could see what was going on. What I can tell you is that back in the old days if one were about to marry or be in a relationship with another of same-sex, they would be in*

serious trouble. They could end up being killed. Back in those day the elders had no fear in deciding these peoples' [homosexuals] fate. Remember there was not this thing of the police stopping people doing such things [killing homosexuals]. Same-sex relationships were a disgrace when I was growing up. It is a disgrace among blacks based on how we grew up and our culture. To us it is a disgrace, we are scared of it [homosexuality] because when people of the same-sex get married they cannot reproduce. They just get old... and when they get old who is going to assist them? That is why we say in our culture that homosexuality is a disgrace. It is not that we hate homosexuals, we are just embarrassed by them and the way they are. When it comes to sexual intercourse we are still confused as it cannot work". (Participant 7)

"When you hear a child saying I have seen a person of going out with someone of the same-sex and I want to do a similar thing. I will say no, that cannot happen, it is not in our culture". (Participant 7)

"I do not have a problem as they have been chosen by their ancestors. The spirit that they are possessed with is either a male or a female, we accept it". (Participant 7)

"I once heard the elders talking when I was a child after they had found out about a man who was a homosexual. I didn't witness it myself. I would just like to say that in the past we had no televisions, cell phones and computers which seem to bring these relationships [same-sex] to light and glamourise them. We kept these things [same-sex relationships] secret". (Participant 7)

"While we were growing up if we noticed that there might be something wrong [homosexual leanings] with a child we made sure that we gave them the necessary attention, as early as possible so that they could return to normality. We would take them to traditional healers for help. Where I grew up if people of same-sex had same-

*sex relationships they would be beaten. Things that are regarded as a disgrace were prevented from coming out into the open by parents and elders. During the old days things like this were not openly discussed or even allowed to happen.” (Participant 7)*

*“During the olden days, our children were born at home and thereafter the child was thoroughly checked to see if there was any disability. The trouble was this disability [homosexuality] is hidden. It is only brought to light in later years. This, we find confusing as how can we deal with such a disability in early life? We cannot, but we try to ensure it is hidden in later life to protect our children. The thing is we do not know what went wrong and where they ‘caught’ this thing [homosexuality] from. It is this we find confusing.” (Participant 7)*

*“Such things are for white people. For example, if a mother has a boy baby, she should observe him closely when breastfeeding him. When his nappy is changed, she must fully observe his manhood to see if it is fully functional [becomes erect]. If it is not, then there may be some kind of problem. These things are not done anymore because children are brought up in a western way. Nowadays, I have even seen men that are married, and heterosexual leave their wife and children for someone of the same-sex. This is not acceptable.” (Participant 7)*

*“Yes, I will help them because they are sick”. (Participant 7)*

*“As long as they agree there is no problem”. (Participant 7)*

*“So, I would say to our children that if they encounter challenges, they must seek help. Both western and traditional assistance is available for those who are homosexual [When I probed, I found out that this refers to reparative sexual orientation, which seeks to make homosexuals become heterosexuals, provided by*

*some branches of the Christian church. Also, as parents we must not let our children do as they want; we must sit down with them and tell them what they need to do. We must take all the steps necessary to change this [homosexuality]. You ask what kind of discipline? That I cannot say I would have to consult the ancestors.”*

**(Participant 7)**

### Participant 8

8	32	Male	Sepedi	04 years	Grade 12	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

*“First thing, if a man lies with another man, they will never have a family. This is not our belief”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“If I am a man and I marry another man my surname will become extinct”.*

**(Participant 8)**

*“According to me there is the tradition where we name our children after elderly family members. When I have a child, the child will be named after an elder this cannot happen the same-sex marry because they cannot have children”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“I do not accept it [homosexuality] and I am also not happy about it. If I know of such people, it will not sit well with me because it is a disgrace. You will find that when I travel and meet with other traditional healers and they talk of such things they say: ‘that place which has people of same-sex.’. So, no homosexuality does not sit well with me”.* **(Participant 8)**

*“As it was gifted to him by his ancestors it is not a problem as he [or she] was born with that gift”.* **(Participant 8)**



*“It [homosexuality] as I know it has never been accepted the elders dealt with such things in the past.” (Participant 8).*

*“You know we were told at the school [initiation] when I was there that these men have a disability and there must be something bad in the family.” (Participant 8)*

*“We plead with our male children not to resort to homosexuality because they have been hurt by women. We know they only become homosexual because they do not want to be hurt by women and men, because they are men, understand them better. Hurting each other, and paying child maintenance, are problems that we see every day between men and women. I think this kind of thing sends our male children into same-sex relationships. They [the male children] just tell themselves that they will live in a same-sex relationship because they won't allow a woman to hurt them again also, they cannot have children, so it won't cost them any money. It is easy to do this in the world today”.*

**(Participant 8)**

*“I mean how can you cleanse someone in this kind of relationship. If a man and woman sleep together there is impurification and they can be cleansed to help purify if they die...but a man sleeping with another man... no it is a disgrace I do not think they can be cleansed.” (Participant 8)*

*“I will help either a same-sex man or woman”. (Participant 8)*

*“When it comes to circumcision, I do not see a problem. Males must be circumcised”.*

**(Participant 8)**

*“Eh, it will not sit well with me. If it is me who was helping him, I would try and help him so that he would become like the others [become heterosexual].” (Participant 8)*

## Participant 9

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9	58	Female	Sepedi	11 years	No formal education	Northern Sotho	Traditional healer
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*“What I do not understand is that if it’s a woman and a woman or a man and a man how will they be able to have a child?” (Participant 9)*

*“I do not think that a man being with another man should be allowed.” (Participant 9)*

*“I do not see it as a problem because it is the ancestors in his or her family that give the gift of traditional healing. He or she would be possessed by the spirit that wants him or her to be that way [as in behaving like a homosexual]”. (Participant 9)*

*“We were told to stay away from these people [homosexuals] because they were a disgrace to their families.” (Participant 9)*

*“I do not understand this thing [homosexuality]. I just do not understand it; it just does not resonate with my beliefs”. (Participant 9)*

*“Our culture is becoming extinct as it is undermined by our own people. Some still respect our culture but other don’t. I tell you if we follow their (whites) ways we will suffer the consequences later just like those who want to do that thing [homosexuality]”. (Participant 9)*

*“It will not be a problem; I would just assist the person”. (Participant 9)*

*“If I find out I cannot help them through the bones [divination process] then I tell them that I will not be able to assist. If the ancestors allow it then I will help. I would not help if they wanted to find a same-sex partner”. (Participant 9)*

*“Hey, I do not know how to respond to this because a homosexual at an initiation school could complicate the process. I do not think they should be allowed to attend. I mean he is a ‘man-woman’ not a man. This is confusing me I cannot see that he could attend I mean it is not just circumcision but also telling the young men how they must act in their culture. No, I do not think that they [initiation school] will agree for such a person [homosexual] to attend.” (Participant 9).*

### Participant 10

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10	52	Female	Sepedi	27 years	Grade 12	Northern	Traditional
	years					Sotho	healer

*“ It [homosexuality] stops people from having children which is not in our culture”.*  
**(Participant 10)**

*“When people of same-sex are together they cannot have children”.* **(Participant 10)**

*“So, if you look at a wedding of same-sex people, it does not have dignity. Their wedding becomes a joke, but if it is a man marrying a woman then the wedding has dignity. Same-sex wedding is not right, and it is a joke which undermines the integrity of African culture. Their marriage is not real because it does not lead to anything, they cannot have children. I say again it is a joke of a wedding. They will not have children; it does not have anything to keep it together. I do not know who is going to control the marriage because they are of same-sex [this comment is associated with patriarchy and the male being the head of the household]”.* **(Participant 10)**

*“According to me, homosexuality is an embarrassment and according to my beliefs it is a taboo. It is taboo because it causes bad things to happen in the community. Like I*

said, according to my beliefs homosexuality is taboo because it contaminates nature”.

**(Participant 10)**

“It is against culture because it is a taboo, and it pollutes nature. As well as contaminating nature it also tarnishes African culture. It does not make me happy. According to me homosexuality undermines African culture. It destabilises us because we Africans respect ourselves and we adhere to African customs. Following African customs and ways increases our chances of living longer and reduces diseases. There are many problems in the world and if we ignore our African culture things will get worse. The Bill of Rights has made things worse among us Africans because they allow even homosexuals to have rights. This is wrong because homosexuality shortens our lives because of disease, stops rain, contributes towards our children not being able to have babies and they [homosexuals] just make the world a bad place. Homosexuality in general causes things that contaminate the world and our core being as Africans”.

**(Participant 10)**

“Becoming a traditional healer is not one’s choice. For example, myself I could be a Matron or be in an executive position but due to the fact that I was chosen by my ancestors, I had to abandon all my dreams. If a person of the same-sex was given the gift it means the ancestors specifically chose him or her. They were chosen to become a traditional healer. In other words, it is not a personal choice one is born to it. It is not possible for a homosexual to choose to become a traditional healer they were born to it, gifted by the ancestors. When ancestors reveals something through the person they chose, it has significance. There will be reasons for it; it is not because we want to make each other happy. If they reveal something, it has significance, ancestral vision has its reasons. We cannot disobey as we will become ill or worst”. **(Participant 10)**

*“As I understand it our families in the past hid this disability as it was taboo.”*

**(Participant 10).**

*“These people [homosexuals] are, I would say, disabled. I have never met someone with such a disability. The parents must have done a ‘bad thing’ and been cursed [by the ancestors]”.* **(Participant 10)**

*“Another thing is that we want to live an easy life. We try and live like white people and adopt their way of life. When we adopt white lifestyles, we get even more lost. We get lost because we don’t know what we are doing and, in the end, this will defeat us. For instance, termination of pregnancy has made the world a bad place as we ‘get rid’ of our children just like whites, that is why I say we do not know where we are going.”*

**(Participant 10)**

*“I think this happens because our male children leave home and think they are being modern. They live in the cities and the suburbs so can live any way they like. It is easy for them because life in the suburbs is different from life in the rural areas. Those who live in rural areas and who do not adopt the old ways [marrying and having children and having hidden same-sex relationships) live in fear because they know the community, and their families, do not accept same-sex relationships. I do not know of any [homosexuals] who live in rural areas. Same-sex relationships that are in the open are more prevalent in areas where life is fast and there is no discipline, like the big cities. These people [homosexuals] may be proud of themselves but it is not a good thing in African culture”.* **(Participant 10)**

*“It contaminates nature [homosexuality] and it tarnishes African culture. No, they cannot be properly cleansed this makes me very unhappy.”* **(Participant 10)**

*“Yes, it will depend on what kind of help he or she seeks. You may find that he or she is looking for assistance in finding a partner of similar sex, in that case I will not be able to assist. I can also say that when a person comes for consultation, I do not accept him or her alone, he or she must be accompanied by parents. After, the first consultation, If I accept the person then I see them alone. Parents are supposed to accompany them because there might challenges that are encountered during the consultation process using the divination bones. They might be young and not have knowledge of the family’s history regarding how they lived their lives”. (Participant 10)*

*“I cannot see any problem”. (Participant 10).*