Heterosexism in schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences

M de Beer

 **orcid.org 0000-0003-0581-5244**

Dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Health Science in Psychology* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr EK van der Merwe

Graduation: May 2020

Student number: 22816070

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PERMISSION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,
South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900
Faks: (018) 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: +27 18 299 4849
Email : Ethics@nwu.ac.za

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Based on approval by the **Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC)** on **05/10/2017**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school based experiences
Project Leader/Supervisor: Dr EK van der Merwe
Student: M de Beer

Ethics number: NWU-HS-2017-0150
(Institution – Year – Project Number)

Application Type: Single Study
Commencement date: 2017-10-05 **Expiry date**: 2020-10-05 **Risk:** Medium

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HHREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HHREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

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While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- *The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HHREC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.*
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- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via HHREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HHREC retains the right to:*
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The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HHREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA Du Plessis
Digitally signed by Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2017.10.09 16:09:18 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis
Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the following individuals for their assistance and support with this research project:

- To **Dr Karen van der Merwe**, for her persistent guidance and motivation. It has been an absolute privilege to have been supervised by such a compassionate, humble and kind soul. Without her guidance, this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you for giving me perspective, helping me to persist, and having faith in my abilities.
- To the following scholars, **Dr Delan Naidoo**, **Dr Anthony Brown**, **Carole Cilliers**, **Dr Jacques Rothmann**, **Prof. Shan Simmonds and Prof. Thabo Msibi**, for their suggestions and advice.
- To my psychologist, **Mr Vincent Cloete**, with whom I was fortunate enough to have attended growth therapy sessions throughout this research process which have enabled me to engage in meaningful self-reflection.
- To every friend and acquaintance for their willingness to serve as locators. My sincere gratitude for taking the time to familiarise yourself with the study aim, terminology, ethical considerations, and recruitment protocol.
- Finally, my profound gratitude goes to the research participants for their willingness to share their precious time and unique school-based experiences during the process of interviewing.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, **Jan and Corne de Beer**, for being the most important teachers in my life and for showing me the beauty of unconditional, unwavering love. Their words of encouragement and push for tenacity when challenges were high and resources scarce inspired me to complete my studies. I am honoured and blessed to have been raised by two individuals whose compassion for others knows no boundaries.

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

I, **Melissa de Beer**, declare that this research study, **Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences**, is my own work and that the opinions and views expressed are my own and that all sources have been fully referenced in both the text and the reference lists. I further declare that this dissertation was edited by a qualified language editor, as prescribed.

……..

MELISSA DE BEER

DECLARATION BY THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

WORDSMITH Linguistics

www.wordsmithlinguistics.com
info@wordsmithlinguistics.com
084 548 0579

13 June 2019

To whom it may concern

This is to testify that the master's dissertation titled

'Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences'

by

Melissa de Beer

has been language edited to the best of the language practitioner's knowledge and ability.

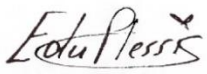
The language practitioner in question is registered at the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) with membership number 1003382 and thereby fully qualified and authorised to provide said services.

Should there be any queries, please feel free to contact the language practitioner at the number provided below.

Kind regards

Elcke du Plessis-Smit (I.D. 9212030060083)

0845480579



PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted for the degree Master in Health Sciences in Psychology. The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the school-based experiences of heterosexism within schools in the South African context. This study is of interest to emerging scholars interested in school-based issues related to queer identities. The significance lies in its potential to expand a scarce knowledge field in South Africa, which may set the scene for larger-scale investigations and potential interventions. This may enhance the quality of life of queer South African schooling community members.

- This dissertation adheres to the guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 6th edition).
- Language editing was conducted by a qualified language practitioner.
- Both English and Afrikaans field questions were concurrently established and used during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' preferred language.

ABSTRACT

Heteronormative socialisation processes, rooted in the deeply internalised cultural and religious values and beliefs of South Africans, have produced cultural heterosexism. Schools, as institutions that transmit governing societal values, reproduce such social ills, leaving its queer members inferior and oftentimes oppressed. Educational ideologies and policies in South Africa are reinforcing a hidden curriculum marked by compulsory heterosexuality that leaves queer schooling communities invisible, silenced, excluded, and marginalised. Unifying the terms queer and teacher may be a particularly difficult endeavour due to the *in loco parentis* role bestowed upon teachers in schools as custodial settings. Queer teachers reside in a challenging terrain due to inaccurately being mapped as having perverse intentions or promoting a *gay agenda*. Even though research on queer identities in South African schools is growing to address the silence, both international and national literature specifically focusing on queer teachers' school-based experiences remains scarce. This study followed a qualitative research methodology, with an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (APA) research design.

Social constructionism as the paradigmatic orientation and queer theory as the theoretical framework were chosen to complement Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as both the research design and method of data analysis. Purposive, snowball sampling was used to locate nine queer teachers who resided in either one of the following provinces: Limpopo, Gauteng or North West. The sample consisted of six cisgender women, one genderfluid person, and two cisgender men. From the six cisgender women, five identified as lesbian women and the remaining participant preferred self-identifying as a queer woman. The genderfluid person identified as asexual, while the remaining two men both identified as gay men. All participants were SACE-registered, full-time South African teachers between

the ages of 22 and 65. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and IPA was used to identify themes for this study.

Noteworthy superordinate themes were organised into the following categories: 1) perceptions of heteronormativity in schools, 2) experiences of discrimination, stigma and prejudice, and 3) queer teacher adjustments. Participants' perceptions were structured into the following subordinate themes: cultural heterosexism, internalised heterosexism, perceived factors related to school-based heterosexism, and religion-based heterosexism. Experiences of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in schools were structured into the following subordinate themes: heteronormative assumptions, reverberations of school-based heterosexism, and psychological consequences. Finally, queer teacher adjustments were structured into the following subordinate themes: defence mechanisms, self-acceptance and social perspective taking, religiosity and/or spirituality as protective factors, queer consciousness and knowledge, queer teachers as unique role players in schools, and a psychological sense of community.

This study serves as one of the first to focus specifically on queer teachers' school-based experiences in a South African context. Any individual who rejected heteronormative social ideals and was in some or other way negatively affected by it, was permitted to participate in this research. Apart from possible adverse experiences, teacher resistances, resilience, agency, and power were also considered. Through this study, the voicing of the nature of possible social injustices against such individuals could serve as predecessors for future social transformative studies.

Keywords: queer teachers, queer inclusive schools, heterosexism, heteronormativity, interpretive phenomenological analysis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

This chapter aims to provide a brief overview of the research milieu. The importance of exploring heterosexism in South African schools will be expounded. Thus, this chapter includes an orientation to the context of the research; a brief clarification of significant concepts and terminology; a problem statement and research question; an explanation of the aim of the study.

Motivation and Background

In this research, heterosexism in South African schools and its effect on queer teachers was explored. This section serves to briefly orientate the reader on previously recorded queer teachers' school-based experiences of heterosexism, possible origins of such experiences, and possible reasons for the existing study gap, particularly in a South African context. The term queer is used to inclusively represent those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). Queer teachers reside in a challenging terrain (Gray, Harris, & Jones, 2016). According to Evans (1999), the historical validation of heterosexual relationships is blameworthy of modern assumptions of sexual and gender norms, particularly in school contexts. This historically created monolithic heteronormativity permeates school environments (Evans, 1999; Gansen, 2017; Gray et al., 2016) and frequently transforms schools into sites of oppression and harassment (Bhana, 2015).

Queer teachers are often harassed by learners and staff members, resulting in lower levels of confidence, increased stress, poorer work achievements, a proliferation of resignations, and possibly being overlooked for promotions (Warwick, Chase, & Aggleton, 2004). This is not an exclusively South African phenomenon. An American study found classrooms to be unwelcoming and unsafe spaces for these individuals (Endo, Reece-Miller, & Santavicca, 2010). In addition to explicit harassment, queer teachers frequently experience

silencing (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015) and invisibility (Atkinson & DePalma, 2010; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015). In view of queer teachers being positioned as foreign to the norm, their invisibility may be sustained by their own internal homophobia. Evans (1999) elucidates the occurrence of internal homophobia, asserting that some queer teachers question the validity of their own life experiences. This creates disconcerting feelings which preserve the invisibility of queer teachers (Evans, 1999), often leaving them feeling excluded (Gray et al., 2016). Queer teacher exclusion originates from LGBTQ+ identities being rendered foreign to hegemonic sexual and gender norms (Gray et al., 2016). This social exclusion and discrimination negatively impact the health, wellbeing, and achievement of queer teachers (Warwick et al., 2004). Consequently, I deemed queer teacher school-based experiences in a South African context worth researching.

Bhana (2014a, 2014b) asserts that homosexuality in South African schooling has, until recently, been mostly unexamined, despite its importance for sexual wellbeing and rights. Nonetheless, research on this matter is growing to address the silence (Msibi, 2012; Potgieter & Rygan, 2012; Reygan & Francis, 2015). However, this is not necessarily the case for research that specifically focuses on the school-based experiences of queer South African teachers.

A systematic review conducted by Duke (2008) titled ‘Literature (or lack thereof) on gay and lesbian teachers in the United States established that queer teachers have been predominantly excluded from empirical studies. This induced his recommendation for the development of a critical qualitative research agenda examining school-based experiences of queer teachers. A similar study was conducted by Gray et al. (2016). Comparable to the above study, Gray et al. (2016) claim that research on the experiences of LGBTQ schoolteachers, located primarily in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Nordic countries, New Zealand, and Australia, has increased in the recent past (Gray et al., 2016).

However, I was unable to locate literature focusing specifically on queer teachers' school-based experiences in the South African context. From the available articles related to heterosexism and heteronormativity in South African schools and universities, none particularly focused on queer teacher experiences (Bhana, 2012; Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003; Francis & Msibi, 2011; Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Mostert, 2013; Msibi, 2012, 2013; Van Vollenhoven & Els, 2013, inter alia). However, during the final stages of this dissertation, Msibi (2018) published a book focusing on black, homosexual male teachers' hidden sexualities, in a South African context. Despite not having intended to showcase the experiences of queer teachers, defined in this study as a collective and inclusive term for all members oppressed by heteronormativity, the data presented some valuable information on the challenges queer South African teachers face.

National literature on queer teachers' school-based experiences and the intersections of a range of identities to foreground these experiences remains scarce, leaving this community underrepresented. Internationally, the available body of literature is considerably larger. Nevertheless, research on this topic can still be considered scarce when taking into consideration how diverse the queer teacher population is. Many studies focus specifically on gay and lesbian teachers, leaving many members of the queer population underrepresented. According to Donelson and Rogers (2004), difficulties related to researching the topic emanate from moral resistance of individuals, organisations, and institutions, as well as researchers' fear of diminished marketability in academia, dismissal, denial of promotion and refusal of adequate funding for future research. In conjunction with these difficulties, scepticism of review boards and academic communities that questioned the necessity of such research was revealed. Finally, research scarcity is also related to individuals' hesitation to participate, to avoid drawing attention to their sexualities at work (Donelson & Rogers, 2004). Regardless of such hurdles, I deemed it imperative that this research gap be filled. The

voicing of the nature of these social injustices could serve as predecessors for social transformative studies.

Clarification of Concepts and Terminology

Msibi (2013) accentuates the power of language as an instrument for naming perceived abnormality and objectifying those involved. The proliferation of epithets such as faggot or dyke throughout school hallways serves as evidence of queer individuals being reviled (Evans, 1999). On the contrary, language may also be considered an instrument for challenging oppression, referred to as 'resist-stancing' (Msibi, 2014, p. 254). Thus, linguistic opportunities may actively be used to oppose derogatory same-sex relations discourse (Msibi, 2013). By reason of the influence language may have on social transformation, terminology was conscientiously chosen to be representative of and satisfactory for the chosen study population. Also, since numerous definitions and criteria with regard to sexual orientation are represented in recent literature (Habarth, 2008), care was taken to be explicit about the specific phenomenon of investigation.

The Complexities of Human Sexuality and Gender

Public health discourses, critiques of and discomforts related to identity categories have contributed to an expansive vocabulary on the subject of sexuality and gender (Matebeni & Msibi, 2015). Discussions appertaining to human sexuality and gender are dynamic leaving no definition universally recognised (Eliason, 2014; Samelius & Wagberg, 2005). Similar terms represent different concepts, while comparable concepts represented by different terms (Habarth, 2008). According to Eliason (2014) no consensus has been reached on the most fitting way to define research concepts associated with human sexuality and gender. Moreover, academically agreed on definitions, categories and phenomena may not match participants' description of their identities or experiences (Habarth, 2008). As stated by Eliason (2014), extensive, vaguely defined terminology related to sexuality and gender, may

rather create confusion than provide clarity. He recommends addressing this confusion through regular discussions concerning the pros and cons of standardizing these terms. Not only should the dynamicity of terminology related to gender and sexuality be acknowledged, but the continua used to elucidate their complexities should be recognised as mere imperfect, socially constructed attempts to provide structure and order to these complexities. Movitz (2011) explicates that despite the majority of individuals fitting nearer to one or the other end of a continuum, individuals rarely fit neatly into one of the extreme ends. Diverse individuals fit into every point along the different sexuality and gender continuums, which will be examined in depth in the following sections. As Reilly-Cooper (2016) has explicated, I recognise the limitations of these spectrums that disallow individual self-determination of their identities, since they have to define themselves by reference to the distribution of identities in their group or social context. In the following figure (some of the) continua of identities are depicted.

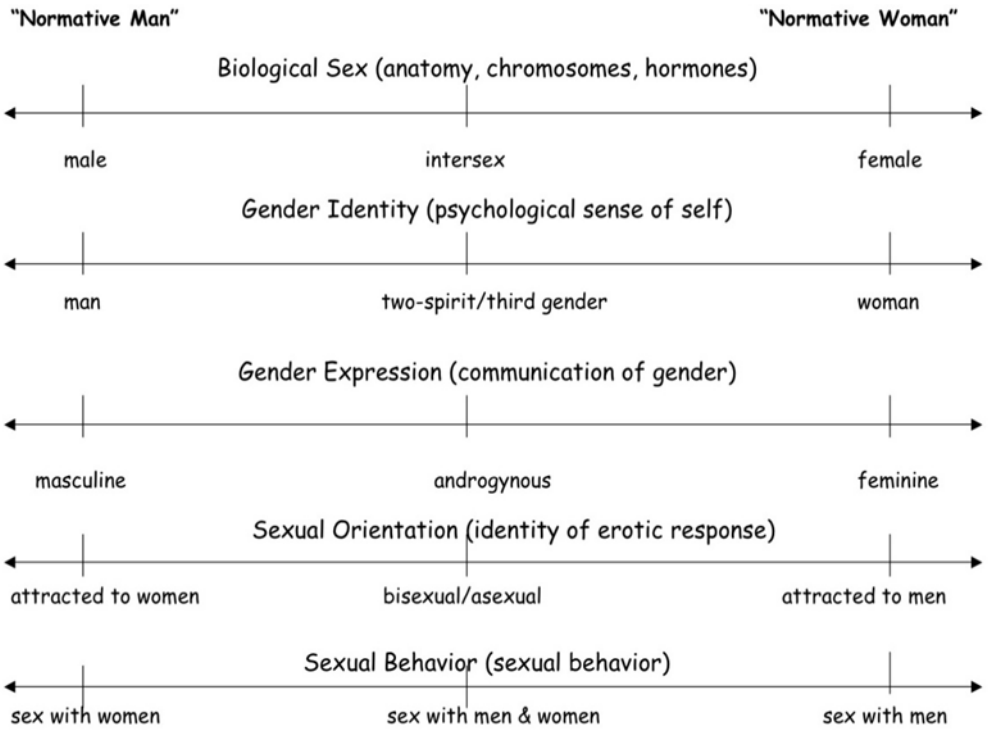

Figure 1. Diagram of sex, gender and sexuality. Adapted from *Centre of Gender Sanity*, by A. Movitz, 2011, Retrieved from http://www.gendersanity.com/diagram.html. Copyright 2009 by Centre of Gender Sanity. Adapted with permission from Centre of Gender Sanity.

Gender: Gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex. Conventionally, sexuality and gender are constructed as inseparable, assuming a masculine man or a feminine woman should be heterosexual (Gansen, 2017). Eliason (2014) defines gender as "the set of emotions, attitudes, knowledge, skills and identities related to personal perceptions of the male/female and masculine/feminine continua" (p. 163). The terms gender and biological sex are frequently understood as indistinguishable synonyms. To start with, the biological sex of a person (female, male, or intersex), is assigned at birth (Eliason, 2014). According to Movitz (2011), the categories assigned at birth are based on chromosomes, genitalia, and internal reproductive structures, among other sex characteristics. Biological sex is a continuum rather than a scale consisting of merely two categories on each extreme, namely male and female. Positioned somewhere in the middle of the biological sex continuum is intersex individuals, which include all those who do not fit the chromosomal or reproductive characteristics of a male or female (District of Colombia Corrections Information Council, 2016). This is attributable to them having, for instance, combinations of typical male or female characteristics (i.e., both testes and ovaries), XY chromosomes and female genitalia, or an abnormal chromosomal pattern, such as XXY (Movitz, 2011). Individuals' biological sex may or may not be aligned with their gender identity (Eliason, 2014).

Gender identity is a psychological quality entailing individuals' perceptions of themselves as men, women, a third gender (two-spirit), or neither (Movitz, 2011). The alignment of gender identity and biological sex may be referred to as cisgenderism, as opposed to transgenderism (Forbes, 2014). A biological female who perceives herself as a woman, for example, is considered cisgender, while a biological female who perceives

himself as a man is transgender. Figure 1 on the previous page illustrates how cisgender individuals may also be represented as ‘normative men’ or ‘normative women’. The term transgender is oftentimes used as an umbrella term for individuals who experiences incongruence between their physical body and psychological gender identity, and/or do not fit societal gender norms of appearance in terms of their gender expression (Eliason, 2014).

Everything used by individuals to communicate their sex and/or gender to others, including mannerisms, clothing, hairstyles, and gender roles, form part of their gender expressions. These may be purposefully or accidentally communicated. In between the opposites on the gender expression continuum lie androgynous gender expressions: neither feminine nor masculine, or a combination of feminine and masculine characteristics, also called gender bending. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2012), the gender identity of a person may differ from their gender expression. It cannot be assumed that male deemed bodies automatically produce masculinity which automatically suggests heterosexuality (Butler, as cited by Beasley, 2010). A homosexual male may, for instance, adopt a masculine gender expression, but have a gender self-concept on the opposite end of the gender identity continuum. Hence, apart from being categorised as male at birth, this individual perceives herself as a woman. Her choice of adopting a cisgender expression (traditional masculine behaviour and mannerisms, and clothing that matches the assigned biological sex) despite having a transgender self-concept may be based on fear of social rejection. According to Fantus (2013), the constant social judgement and scrutiny of gender expression or performance creates fear that pressures queer individuals to conform to heteronormative ideals.

Sexuality: Sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual preference, and sexual behaviour. Sexuality is often used as an umbrella term covering various closely related components, including sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual preference, and sexual

behaviour (Tracy & Cataldo, 2001). Sexuality may be defined as "the set of attitudes, emotions, knowledge, skills and identities related to reproduction, physical intimacy, desire, relationships and arousal of the genitals" (Eliason, 2014, p. 139). Sexual orientation is a multidimensional construct which includes various dimensions related to sexual identity, sexual attraction, and sexual behaviour (Katz-Wise, 2013). Sexual orientation could thus be defined as a rather stable biological predisposition of an individual for attraction towards others of the same or opposite sex, or sexual attraction to people of either sex (Eliason, 2014). Bisexuality is in the mid-range of the sexual orientation continuum. Asexual individuals do not feel attraction towards either men or women (Movitz, 2011) and are not represented on this continuum. The sexual orientation of an individual may result in social affiliation and/or behaviour associated with this attraction (APA, 2015). However, this is not always the case. Huber and Kleinplatz (2000) suggest that sexual orientation and sexual behaviour cannot simply be synonymised. The former exceeds behavioural components to include a broad scope of affective and cognitive dimensions, such as 'sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, emotional attachments, social preference, self-identification, lifestyle sex-role identity and biological sex' (Huber & Kleinplatz, 2000, p.2). Conversely, sexual behaviour merely refers to the nature of sexual activities that individuals engage in, irrespective of their sexual orientation or sexual identity (Tracy & Cataldo, 2001).

Additionally, sexual identity is regularly used as the label to describe the sexual orientation of a person (Katz-Wise, 2013). According to Eliason (2014), no assumptions are made by these self-reflexive labels about the nature or nurture of sexuality; thus, sexuality is inborn and/or learned and changeable through behavioural adjustments. Sexual identity merely incorporates inherent desires into individuals' sense of themselves as sexual beings (Tracy & Cataldo, 2001).

As an alternative to the term sexual identity, the term sexual preference is sometimes also used by individuals to describe their sexual orientation. However, sexual preference implies that sexuality is changeable (Eliason, 2014). It assumes that individuals have a freedom of choice over sexual attraction and behaviour (Tracy & Cataldo, 2001). Despite the lack of consensus among scientists on the aetiology of sexual orientation, most agree that both nature and nurture play complex roles and that individuals experience little or no sense of choice over their sexual orientation (APA, 2008). Therefore, I preferred to use the term sexual identity over sexual preference when referring to the manner in which the sexual orientation of a person is described. The LGBT+ acronym is commonly used by queer individuals to define their sexual or gender identity. The advantages and drawbacks of this acronym will be discussed in the following section.

The continuous evolution of the LGBT+ acronym. The homosexual identity, developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, diversified into a plurality of terms related to sexual orientation (Samelius & Wagberg, 2005). Currently, the LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, inter alia) acronym is commonly used as an umbrella term for uniting sexualities and gender identities (Eliason, 2014). Letters are constantly added to the acronym in an attempt to be as representative and inclusive as possible. Eliason (2014) refers to this attempt towards inclusivity as an "alphabet soup" (p. 170). Many different sexual orientations and gender identities are incorporated in the LGBT+ acronym. Therefore, the + symbol is used to accommodate various inclusions of queer identities into the acronym. According to the District of Colombia Corrections Information Council (2016), variations may include: LGBTQ ("Q" representing "Questioning" or "Queer"), LGBTQI ("I" representing "Intersex"), and LGBTQIA ("A" representing asexual orientation). Gamache and Lazear (2009) define 'lesbian' as the physical, mental, and emotional attraction of woman towards woman, while 'gay' represents either sex's (male or female) attraction towards the same

gender. Bisexuality, on the other hand, represents these attractions by either man or woman towards both genders (Gamache & Lazear, 2009). Asexuality may be defined as an enduring orientation or disposition where an individual lacks any lustful inclinations directed towards others (Bogaert, 2015). Eliason (2014) warns that joining these diverse sexual orientations and gender identities under the LGBT+ acronym puts the elucidation of inherent differences of these identities at risk.

The queer identity. Recognition should be given to individuals' self-identifications and unique combinations of attributes related to sexuality and gender. Yet, this study necessitates a term that is inclusive enough to represent all these unique and complex sexual and gender identities. According to Levy and Johnson (2011), the term queer is inclusive and serves as a tool for questioning the foundations of heteronormative classifications of sexuality and gender identity. The term queer may include people with any sexual or gender identity who do not identify with the heteronormative hegemony.

According to Murray (2011), those who identify as queer have gender identities, sexual orientations, and/or gender expressions that differ from that which is normalised in mainstream society. However, within this study, it was not a prerequisite to identify with a gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression that differs from mainstream or heteronormative perceptions of normality. A heterosexual, cisgender woman, for instance, would have been accepted into the study population if she rejects heteronormative social ideals and is in some way negatively affected by it. Even if such an individual might not face the same extent of discrimination in her daily life as a homosexual or transgender individual, her wellbeing might still be affected by heteronormativity.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the terms homosexuality and homosexual should be substituted with more inclusive terminology. The term queer is synonymous to 'non-heteronormative' and has thus been chosen to describe the study population. Within a

heteronormative framework, the prefix ‘non’ in non-heteronormative may imply that the categorisation is inferior, less than, or part of a minority. Considering that the formerly derogatory word, queer, has been reclaimed to frame politics of gay liberation (Kapoor, 2015), its use was preferred. Msibi (2013) claims that queer, as theorised through queer theory, is a powerful tool for understanding the complexity of diverse sexual identities, practices, and desires.

The queer theoretical perspective subscribes to the view that sexuality is inherently fluid and understands the heterosexual-homosexual binary as socially constructed (Callis, 2009). In other words, a queer theoretical stance posits that sexual categories are fluid and unfixed, highlighting the brokenness of modern sexual categorisation (Plummer, 2011). The long-standing suppositions about gender and sexual orientation have been exposed as social constructions rather than biological facts (McPhail, 2004). Thus, queer theory challenges and deconstructs the primacy of gender in determining the sexualities of individuals (LaMarre, 2007), which reifies masculinity and femininity, leaving heterosexuality institutionalised (McPhail, 2004). Without challenge, the status quo of heteronormativity and queer marginalisation will remain.

LaMarre (2007) refers to an ‘insider/outsider’ dichotomy between naturalised, normative heterosexuality and the unorthodox, perverse world of homosexuality. Those who oppose normative heterosexuality in any way are marked as fundamentally unnatural outsiders. She explains that the problem with these binary systems is their placement of attributes into opposition with each other. How should identities that are not subsumed by such a binary then be organised or experienced? The Kinsey Scale, also known as the Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale, was one of the first attempts to illustrate how sexuality does not neatly fit into dichotomous categories (Galupo et al., 2014). Initially, this scale was mostly based on sexual behaviour, before alteration (ASSAf, 2015). Alfred Kinsey

proposed that both sexual behaviour and interests are dynamic and fall along a continuum of dichotomous extremes (Galupo et al., 2014). The intricacies surrounding human sexuality have further been explored through the development of numerous instruments that succeeded the Kinsey Scale (Galupo et al., 2014).

Msibi (2012) stresses the difficulty of defining who queer individuals are, considering that the term seeks to radically shift from fixed notions of identification. Within academia and Western culture, "queer" may be used in multiple ways: derogatorily to describe homosexuality, effeminacy or something out of the ordinary, and as an umbrella term for non-heteronormative individuals (Callis, 2009). I recognise that research regarding theories and terminology related to sexuality and gender is constantly proliferating. At some point in the future, the term queer may be regarded as outdated and replaced with more suitable neologisms. Until then, the term sufficiently represents this study population within the current historical context. Msibi (2012) states that it may refer to anyone feeling marginalised by mainstream visions of sexuality. Hence, within this research context, it was used inclusively for all South African teachers who experience themselves as oppressed by heteronormativity and heterosexism in the schooling system.

Heasley (2005) explains that a heterosexual male may also be considered queer if he disrupts heteronormative constructions of masculinity, in turn disrupting heteronormative ideals. Similarly, LaMarre (2007) explains that heterosexual women can be masculine, as can heterosexual men be sensitive and caring, creating dissonance between their traits and binary categories. Since these individuals are either victims of heteronormativity and/or reside somewhere near the opposite end of the conventional, normative, heterosexual extremity of the 'insider/outsider' dichotomy, they were included in the research.

Heteronormativity and Heterosexism

According to Murray (2001) homophobia is the extreme outcome of heterosexism. It may lead to various social injustices against those not conforming to the heteronorm. The Latin prefix 'homo' used with the suffix 'phobia', meaning fear, literally translates to 'fear of man' or man's fear of being exposed as insufficiently masculine (Herek, 2004). Commonly, it refers to fear or hatred of homosexual people, together with anti-homosexual beliefs and prejudices (Hamilton & Flood, 2008). The term homophobia is given meaning within a heteronormative framework, where gender inequality is given shape as a natural or normal state (Bhana, 2015). It is indeed this framework that I perceive as socially constructed and oppressive. The socially constructed heteronormative framework obligates individuals to define their sexuality in a socially acceptable way, leaving the true complexity of sexuality and gender masked (LaMarre, 2007). This marginalises those who fall outside or between normative definitions of sexuality of gender.

Initially, I considered including only gay and lesbian teachers as a means to avoid the complexities related to sexuality and gender. The term homophobia would then have been used to describe derogatory actions or attitudes towards the study population. However, since I value inclusivity of an underrepresented, yet diverse group of individuals, the scope of meaning of the term homophobia was too exclusive to represent all possible members of this study population. This is due to its inability to accurately frame discrimination against all sexualities apart from heterosexuality (Smith, Oades, & McCarthy, 2012). Heterosexism, on the other hand, operates on many levels and includes all forms of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination (Smith et al., 2012). It is defined as the belief occurring on individual, institutional, and cultural levels that all persons are or should be heterosexual (Cramer, 2014). Murray (2001) explains how a world using heterosexual images and references nearly exclusively creates an environment in which heterosexuality is the status quo and anything

differing from this is perceived as abnormal or deviant. This presumption lays bare the belief in heterosexual superiority, consciously or unconsciously shutting non-heterosexual individuals off from daily activities (Sears & Williams, as cited by Smith et al., 2012).

Heterosexism may be viewed as flowing from heteronormativity (Lundin, 2016). Heteronormativity is a societal hierarchical system which privileges and sanctions individuals based on assumptions, beliefs, and practices regarding the normality of heterosexuality (Jackson, 2006). This socially constructed order is a product of compulsory heterosexuality, which assigns and creates gendered and sexual identities through the pressurisation of normalised gendered acts (LaMarre, 2007). More specifically, Stear (2015) describes educational heteronormativity as the organisational structures in schools which normalise heterosexuality and pathologises anything that deviates from it.

Those who subscribe to the premises of heteronormativity or reject it do so irrespective of their sexuality or gender. It cannot be assumed that individuals do not feel marginalised by heteronormativity or reject its socially constructed superiority simply because they are heterosexual or cisgender. Heterosexual or cisgender individuals who ally themselves to the LGBT+ agenda are sometimes denoted as “A” within the LGBTQIA+ acronym (Russel, 2011). Likewise, it cannot be assumed that all queer individuals reject heteronormativity.

Internalised homophobia is cultivated when heterosexist societal attitudes are internalised by gay individuals and applied to the self, which might create internal rejection of their own sexual orientations (Frost & Meyer, 2009). In an attempt to be more inclusive, some researchers such as Armer (2016) and Msibi (2016) replace ‘internalised homophobia’ with the more inclusive terminology, ‘internalised queerphobia’. Moreover, due to internalised homophobia or queerphobia inaccurately suggesting a ‘phobic’ reaction, other researchers have suggested using internalised heterosexism or internalised sexual prejudice

(Frost & Meyer, 2009). Regardless of the dissimilitude with regard to appropriate terminology, internalised heterosexism creates intrapsychic conflict due to experiences of homosexual desire and the longing to be heterosexual (Herek, 2004).

The Hidden Population

It is not factual that most people conform to traditional gender roles and ideas of sexuality. The complexities related to sexuality and gender inhibit the accurate estimation of queer minority status. Consequently, those who do not conceal their queer identity remain a social minority. Throughout history, lesbian women and gay men have comprised approximately 10 % to 15 % of the overall population (Fassinger, 1991). Nevertheless, they remain a hidden population, some taking certain measures to avoid confrontation or discrimination (Browne, 2005; Fassinger, 1991; Johnson, 2017). A population is considered hidden when publicly acknowledging membership in the population may pose a threat (Heckathorn, 1997).

This is the case for queer individuals who, according to Fassinger (1991), remain mostly invisible due to a complex web of stigmatisation and negative societal attitudes. I considered using 'sexual and gender minority groups' as part of the terminology as an alternative to the term queer. Authors regularly make use of 'sexual and gender minority groups' as a hypernym due to its ability to encompass self-identity, behaviour, and attractions (Eliason, 2014). Although it is frequently used in literature, there is no clarity as to whether it represents queer individuals, since it cannot be assumed that queer individuals have a minority status. According to Samelius and Wagberg (2005, p.13), 'giving exact or estimated numbers of the occurrence of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons in the world is not viable or even possible'. Reasons for this include differences in defining the inclusion criteria of those belonging within the queer umbrella term, different survey methods, and a lack of consistency when asking particular survey questions (Gates, 2011). Within this particular

study, the term queer is exceptionally inclusive, as I endeavoured to document the experiences of any teachers who oppose or feel victimised by heteronormativity.

Problem Statement and Research Question

According to Gates (2012), queer employees commonly experience poor wellbeing in various workplaces. Even if direct hostility is sometimes absent, queer individuals often have heteronormative work environments, marked by suppositions that queer identities are abnormal or do not exist in the present-day context (Yoder & Mattheis, 2016). These heteronormative work environments are particularly prominent in schools. This notion is supported by evidence from various studies which have established that schools are dominated by pervasive heteronormative beliefs (Bhana, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Buston & Hart, 2001; Butler et al., 2003; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Epstein, 1994; Herek, 2004; Lundin, 2016; Mostert, 2013; Msibi, 2012; Reygan & Francis, 2015; Richardson, 2004; Wells & Polders, 2006). Heterosexuality in schools is considered natural, normative, and superior to all other sexualities, concomitantly leaving queer identities "othered" (Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015, p. 116). They refer to a "heterosexual imaginary" (p. 116) to denote the abovementioned illusory view of reality in which heterosexuality is left unquestioned. Heterosexism then becomes an instrument for perpetuating a heterosexual/queer-dichotomy. In so doing, this binary logic of othering (Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015) may serve as an impediment to queer teacher wellbeing.

As stated by Gates (2012), workplace wellbeing is moulded by individual, interpersonal, and environmental elements. Where individual wellbeing encompasses psychological, subjective, and health-related wellbeing, interpersonal wellbeing includes conflict with and support from others, as well as identity congruence. Lastly, wellbeing is environmentally entrenched, since self-actualisation and the degree to which an employee

flourishes are dependent on the support received in the work environment (Gates, 2012). What it is that queer teachers experience in a South African context needs to be investigated.

The research question of the study is thus: What are queer teachers' school-based experiences of heterosexism in a South African context?

Aim

Fundamentally, the purpose of this inquiry was to understand, explore, interpret, and describe the school-based experiences of queer teachers in South African schools. I was aware that some of the selected queer teachers might neither have experienced their school environments as oppressive nor have been aware of the existence of heterosexism; or have perceived themselves as marginalised victims. Thus, apart from possible adverse experiences, teacher resistances, resilience, agency, and power were also considered. Regardless of the nature of participant experiences, I attempted to document it holistically, accurately, and truthfully.

Conclusion

This chapter contextualised the study by providing a brief introduction of heteronormativity in schools. This directed the problem statement and research question of the study. Finally, a clarification of regularly used terminology and a motivation for the choice of terminology appropriate for the purpose of this study were also presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

In this chapter, a detailed orientation and overview of relevant and available literature are presented to provide the reader with information on the broader socio-historic context within which the research was performed. This orientation includes a description of the cultural historic development of views on same-sex relations, South African legislation, and societal attitudes towards queer identities and heterosexism in schools. The last-mentioned consists of queer learner experiences in South African schools, broad-spectrum queer teacher experiences, and how the hidden curriculum influences heterosexism in schools. Hereafter, the individual, interpersonal, and environmental elements of queer teacher wellbeing in schools are explored. To conclude this chapter, a brief overview of current suggestions for disrupting heteronormativity in schools is provided.

Cultural Historic Development of Views on Same-sex Relations

Michel Foucault was perhaps one of the most influential precursors to queer theory (Matos, 2013). Foucault alleged that same-sex relations had a certain degree of social acceptance before the 19th century construct ‘homosexuality’ became a site of systematic religious, legal, and medical investigation (Kapoor, 2015). Thus, the emergence of homosexuality as an ontological category initiated the demonisation and pathologising of queer sexualities. While queer individuals were persecuted by this categorisation, it also provided them with opportunities for resistance and for demanding cultural and social recognition (Matos, 2013). The modern movement for queer rights, dating back to the 1996 Stonewall uprising, has been challenging for virtually all societies to tolerate, address, and accept (Beyrer, 2012). Nevertheless, according to Human Rights Watch (2015), progress toward LGBT rights has been accelerated within the past ten years, with some governments

of the developing world (such as South Africa) at the forefront of the defence of LGBT rights. Progress is consequently not solely a Western phenomenon.

During the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, made the following statement: 'Those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, those who are transgender, transsexual or intersex, are full and equal members of the human family and are entitled to be treated as such' (Pillay, 2008). Despite this progress, the global fight for queer equality seems far from complete. Human Rights Watch (2015, para. 2) stated that 'approximately 2.8 billion people live in countries where identifying as gay could lead to imprisonment, corporal punishment, or death'. On the contrary, 'only 780 million people are living in countries where same-sex marriage or civil unions are a legal right' (Human Rights Watch, 2015, para 2). Moreover, it has been declared illegal to engage in consensual homosexual sex in thirty-eight out of fifty-three states in Africa; some even execute those in same-sex relations (Msibi, 2011). He states that South Africa is 'the only country in Africa where the right to sexual orientation is constitutionally protected' (Msibi, 2011, p. 58).

According to Epprecht (2012), it is not self-evident that African cultures are inherently homophobic, nor that homophobia is a uniform continental issue. He warns that African homophobia should not blind individuals to the progress made to broaden acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights. Msibi (2011) strengthens this sentiment, claiming that same-sex desire was culturally acceptable in a variety of African societies, prior to colonialisation. This historical evidence challenges the presumption that same-sex desire is un-African and that Westerners recruit Africans into homosexuality. Murray (1998) invalidates homosexuality as a Western imperial imposition by providing evidence of its pre-colonial existence in African cultures. It is ironic that many Africans consider homosexuality to be a colonial imposition while the neo-colonial imposition with

regard to evangelical Christian influence is left unquestioned by them (Cheney, 2012). Punishments in African countries used as a discriminatory tool against those in same-sex relations arose mainly from anti-sodomy laws remnant from the colonial era (Awondo, Geschiere, & Reid, 2012; Msibi, 2011; Semugoma, Nemande, & Baral, 2012). These laws are largely driven by neo-conservatism which, in effect, work to create and foster patriarchy (Msibi, 2011). Correspondingly, opposition towards homosexuality is a result of both misplaced accusations of neo-colonialism and spurious arguments about what constitutes traditional African culture (Cheney, 2012).

The argument for a more nuanced image of homophobia in Africa should not understate very real homophobic forces commonly instigated by political and religious leaders (Awondo et al., 2012). Delayed political and economic development, resistance to globalisation, political leadership strategies, and the legacy of colonialism contribute to African homophobia (Ireland, 2013). Hence, a dominant view still upheld in much of Africa is that of homosexuality as an un-African Western perversion which erodes African culture and values (Bhana, 2014b). This remains true, regardless of progress made to broaden acceptance. Finally since neo-conservatism and patriarchal views are still commonly upheld in Africa, same-sex desires continue to be closeted and silenced (Msibi, 2011) as evidenced by a large body of research on violence, stigma, and other forms of discrimination against non-heteronormative Africans (Awondo et al., 2012; Semugoma et al., 2012; Msibi, 2009, 2011, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Wells & Polders, 2006).

South African Legislation and Societal Attitudes

South Africa became the first country in Africa to constitutionally enshrine the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Epprecht, 2012). According to Article 9(3) of the Constitution of South Africa, no person may directly or indirectly unfairly discriminate against anyone on any ground, including sexual orientation

(Government Gazette of South Africa, 1996a). This constitutional protection referred to as the explicit "gay rights clause" was the first of its kind in the world (Cock, 2003, p. 35). Unfortunately, despite this equality clause, queer schooling community members in South Africa face a very different reality (Francis, 2017). The Employment Equity Act additionally forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment (Government Gazette of South Africa, 1998), and the Civil Union Act (Government Gazette of South Africa, 2006) recognises same sex civil unions by way of either marriage or a civil partnership. South Africans, therefore, have full citizenship irrespective of sexual orientation (Potgieter & Rygan, 2012).

Education plays a significant part in the transformation of longstanding prejudices towards queer individuals at both individual and institutional levels (DePalma & Jennet, 2010). Education-related legislation does not explicitly mention sexual orientation or the word homosexuality (Bhana, 2014a). The South African Schools Act of 1996, for instance, merely proclaims that schools should combat racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and uphold the rights of its community members (Bhana, 2015; Government Gazette of South Africa, 1886b). This exclusion of specific terminology may allow schooling community members' justification of gender- and/or sexuality-based discrimination as being in the best interest of learners, according to their own moral standards. Francis (2017) adds that the above legislation and the teaching of sexual diversity in schools are also contradictory. Even if South African legislation prohibits unfair discrimination against learners in any way (Zondi, 2017), no specific support or interventions are planned by the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure respect for queer learners' rights (Bhana, 2015). According to an attorney from the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC), continued discrimination may result from principals' and teachers' ignorance and unawareness of legal protection for queer learners (Zondi, 2017).

Notwithstanding queer protection in the above legislation, many religious, political, and cultural leaders instigate hateful labelling of homosexuality as a threat to traditional social structures (Bhana, 2015). A powerful interplay between religion, culture, and gender enforces both homophobia and sexism (Msibi, 2012). Anti-gay sentiments in South Africa are strongly influenced by patriarchal Christian ethic disseminated across the country (Bhana, 2012; Butler, Alpasan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003). The previous State President Jacob Zuma, prior to being elected into office, stated that same-sex marriages were a disgrace to the nation and to God (The Sunday Times, as cited by Msibi, 2009). In addition, during that period, approximately 80 % of South Africans aged sixteen and older opposed same-sex relations between consenting adults (South African Social Attitudes Survey [SASAS], 2008). More recently, a survey of South African attitudes towards gender nonconformity and homosexuality, Progressive Prudes, found that a majority (51 %) of South Africans believe that queer people should have the same human rights as other citizens (Collison, 2017). Yet, in the same survey 72 % reported that sex between people of the same gender is morally wrong (Collison, 2017). This reflects what Msibi (2012) refers to as ‘a great disconnect’ (p. 518) between South African policy and reality. Consequently, this inconsistency between lived reality and legislation leaves equality elusive (Bhana, 2015). Thus, constitutional equality has not guaranteed the end of social discrimination (Roberts & Reddy, 2008).

Likewise, despite South Africa having one of the most liberal constitutions in the world with regard to sexual orientation, homophobic attacks commonly occur (Wells & Polders, 2006). Morris (2017) reports that an astonishing 40 % of queer South Africans know of a murder that took place on the basis of the sexuality or gender identity of the victim. Black queer individuals who live in rural areas are particularly at risk (Morris, 2017). Among other factors, the regularity of violent attacks and murders is dependent on location, with queer individuals from Limpopo especially expressing fear of being raped, burned, or killed

(Beresford, 2017). It is, therefore, no wonder that individuals in Limpopo are the least likely to open up about their sexuality; only 35 % compared to 57 % nationally (Morris, 2017). In this province, queer individuals are three times more likely to be attacked compared to any of the other provinces (Keeton, 2017). These statistics are unexpected considering that 70 % of queer individuals in the Western Cape openly express their sexuality (Morris, 2017). Among various reports of violent hate crimes against queer South Africans, corrective rape is becoming a growing concern (Smith, 2015). According to Koraan and Geduld (2015), corrective rape refers to "an instance when a woman is raped in order to cure her of her lesbianism" (p. 1931). Only weeks before the corrective rape, torture, and murder of Sizakele Sigasa, she voiced her discomfort with being one of the first women living openly as a lesbian in her community (Smith, 2015). The belief held by perpetrators of corrective rape is that the act might cure the victims of their transgression of being queer (Korhaan & Geduld, 2015). Such violence endorses fear in queer individuals and ensures the conservation of heteronormative and patriarchal ideals (Msibi, 2012). Despite numerous recorded incidents of this nature, inadequate enforcement weakens constitutional protections against such crimes (Human Rights Watch, 2011). According to Hames (2007), policy and legislative developments create an illusion about South Africa as tolerant and accepting of diverse sexualities. As incidences of hate crimes attest, this illusion masks a deeply conservative, divisive, patriarchal, homo-prejudiced, and racist South African society (Hames, 2007). Some of the most offensive social, cultural, and religious practices deeply embedded in educational institutions are evident in collective attitudes towards queer citizens (Jansen, 2015).

Despite regular horrific, violent attacks on queer South Africans, Morris (2017) acknowledges the support of constitutional protections and a growing tendency of tolerance and open-mindedness among some South Africans. New legal frameworks are challenging normative patterns of sexual behaviour, creating space for new conversations, identities, and

expressions (Bhana, 2015). A culture of respect towards same-sex relations is becoming established in South Africa, with some African leaders condemning homophobia (Bhana, 2014a). One of the most vocal sexual rights supporters Archbishop Desmond Tutu openly condemns claims of the Bible endorsing homophobia (Bhana, 2015). He compared the struggle for queer equality to that of racial equality (Legge, 2013). It can be argued that the South African developing human rights environment provides leverage to negotiate a path between the protection of sexual equality and the shadow of homophobia embedded in social and cultural forces (Bhana, 2014b).

Heterosexism in Schools

The Ascendancy of Heterosexism Through Socialisation and Bitter Knowledge

Discriminatory socialisation processes with regard to sexual and gender diversity appear to be dominant in South African households, considering the abovementioned societal heterosexism. This again strengthens the "great disconnect between policy and reality" (Msibi, 2012, p. 518). If the abovementioned heterosexist societal behaviours and attitudes reflect deeply internalised cultural and religious values and beliefs of South Africans, these may be transmitted into the education system.

According to Bhana (2015), social tensions around sexual diversity and gender identity are ostensibly reproduced in schools, resultant from school policies and practices or more subtle forms of control and silencing. Francis and Reygan (2016) use the term 'subtle heterosexism' to refer to those harder to pin down, micro-aggressive biases against queer identities in South African schools. Heteronormative assumptions of what is considered normal are woven into daily interactions between members of a schooling community, the school environment, and the curriculum (Evans, 1999). This idea is supported by a variety of researchers who noted that societal homophobia often finds expressions in schools (Bhana, 2012, 2015; Butler, Alpasan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003; Msibi, 2012; Richardson, 2004).

Anderson (2014) suggests that heteronormative cultural biases of educational institutions may also prevent leaders from implementing progressive policies. It will therefore be impossible to challenge broader social prejudices without firstly prioritising the transformation of school cultures (Bhana, 2015). Consequently, queer teacher experiences should be considered in light of the role of schools as institutions transmitting governing values (Jennings, 1994).

According to Bhana (2015), both the Revised National Curriculum Statement and its 2002 predecessor are heavily informed by a belief in social transformation through education. Intended transformation in schools since the political shift to democracy as well as the sources that contribute to seemingly stable heteronormativity are worth investigating. During the apartheid era, all forms of sexuality apart from heterosexuality were condemned and regulated, especially in essential social institutions such as schools (Bhana, 2015). This institutional condemnation of queer identities originates from an extensive, invisible, self-perpetuating and mostly invisible process, which Harro (2000) refers to as the cycle of socialisation. The following summary encapsulates the essence of this cycle (Harro, 2000, p. 15-20):

> At first, humans are born into social realities in which social identities, including categories of race, religion, sexual orientation and gender are prescribed to them. In addition, exposure to already established rules, roles, structures and systems of oppression takes place. An individual is either fortunate enough to fit into dominant/agent groups, around which social norms are built, or unfortunate to fit into a subordinate/target group. The former groups are normalised by the assumptions on which the established systems are built, while the latter are disenfranchised, victimised or demoralised due to being devaluated in the existing society.

> Socialisation originally takes place within the family milieu. Socially constructed gender-appropriate behaviour and the valuing of certain religious and cultural beliefs while rejecting others are imparted by families. Once personal socialisation in such a setting has taken place, exposure to larger institutions and cultures (i.e., schools) either reinforces or contradicts what has previously been learned. Certain enforcements are in place to maintain societal norms. Those who conform to societal expectancies and fit into its norms are then rewarded, privileged, and empowered, while non-conformists are punished and persecuted. By enforcing the provided social roles of subordinates or agents, the system of oppression is perpetuated.

The dominant societal system is thus maintained by subordinates who remain victims through learned helplessness and internalised oppression, and agents who are unconscious of or unwilling to interrupt the cycle, respectively. The cycle of socialisation illuminates how socialisation maintains an oppressive system based upon power. Jansen (2009) adds that possible contradictory new knowledge individuals are exposed to within various larger cultures and institutions may then lead to disruption of previously learned "secure knowledge" (p. 143).

The concept of bitter knowledge developed from a process of investigating the reasons behind white students' preservation of racist ideas, long after apartheid (Msibi, 2016). Its development was inspired by the book, *After such knowledge*, in which Eva Hofmann attributes indirect knowledge acquired by a younger generation to intergenerational transmission of what the previous generations have experienced (Jansen, 2008). Jansen (2008) refers to "bitter knowledge" (p. 114) as the intergenerational transference of symbols, stereotypes, and beliefs influenced by indirect knowledge that shapes the foundations of adulthood. This knowledge, acquired from families, social spaces, religious institutions, and academic institutions, is received as indisputably true, resulting in children being raised bitter

(Msibi, 2016). The consequences of bitter knowledge are distressing since the generation who bears and express the transferred loss, trauma, and bitterness of their parents do so long after it was initially experienced (Jansen, 2008).

The disruption of this secure knowledge, perceived as a threat to what is known, is usually accompanied by anger and distress (Jansen, 2009). The present-day bearers of bitter knowledge feel helpless, confronted, and disillusioned (Msibi, 2017). Within this context, heteronormative schooling community members may have been socialised to view sexuality and gender as binary. All secure knowledge that this community may have acquired, such as considering queer identities as inferior or pathological, may be considered bitter knowledge. When they are confronted with new knowledge on sexual and gender categories that may disprove the validity of the indirect knowledge accepted as factual, they may experience provocation. Nevertheless, Msibi (2016) suggests that bitter knowledge may be contested and reformed by using queer pedagogy in schools. This will be discussed in a following section titled 'Disrupting heteronormativity in schools'.

If the established socialisation cycle is not interrupted, it will endure perpetually. The purpose of schooling entails transmitting cultural values to learners (Saldana, 2013). As sites of reflection, interrogation, and critical thinking, they act as critical arenas for social transformation and the shaping of values and attitudes (Bhana, 2015). Considering this critical role, schools have the power to disrupt the established status quo. Research addressing heterosexism in schools may transform South Africa significantly due to contributions in the development of values and attitudes of young children who may otherwise resist change later on (Department of Health [DOH], 2009). Unless educational institutions are prioritised as sites for combatting heterosexism, social ills will continue (Bhana, 2015). Hence, the status quo should be questioned and understandings reframed to reform the cycle of socialisation into a liberating new cycle (Harro, 2000).

Factors Contributing to Heterosexism in Schools

International research exposed schools as predominantly heteronormative and heterosexist (Buston & Hart, 2001; Epstein, 1994; Herek, 2004; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009). In a similar vein, literature suggests that schools within a South African context remain highly heterosexualised, both in structure and practice (Bhana, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Butler et al., 2003; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Mostert, 2013; Msibi, 2012, 2018; Reygan, & Francis, 2015; Richardson, 2004; Wells & Polders, 2006). Within an educational context, heteronormativity has a pervasive effect on the formal and informal curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and the teaching profession at large (Haddad, 2013).

Francis (2017) claims that religion is central to the construction of queer identities as marginal and immoral. Being queer amidst a school with a religious framework provokes strong reactions (Bhana, 2012). According to the prospectus of a school in Bloemfontein, for instance, enrolment of homosexuals will not be allowed if they refuse to embrace heterosexuality (Francis, 2013). This is not an exceptional case. The majority of teachers who participated in a study by Bhana (2012) disapproved of homosexuality on the basis of religion. Similarly, strong religious convictions among learners, rooted in parental conservatism, place pressure on schools to remove openly queer learners (Bhana, 2012). Together with religion, Bhana (2014a) found race and culture to be prominent factors by which school managers contest queer rights in schools. She argues that heteronormativity predominantly emanates from Christian ideologies along with African traditions, and involves the language of power, exclusion and inequality (Bhana, 2014a).

Challenges to traditional gender roles could threaten masculinity in an exceedingly partriachal South African environment, provoking homophobic violence (Wells & Polders, 2006). The origins of such phobias can be found in dominant cultural understandings of

gender and masculinity in particular (Bhana & Bristow, as cited by Reddy, 2002). These social and cultural expectations in schools legitimise heterosexuality while pressuring individuals to conform (Bhana, 2015).

Queer Learner Experiences in South African Schools

From previous discussions, it is evident that the heteronormative school environment has already been established as a key topic in South African schools. Francis (2017) assembled a corpus of available literature on queer learner experiences in South African schools. Some of the key indications from literature are that, apart from facing emotional, verbal, and mental anxiety in South African schools, queer learners have lower levels of school belongingness and experience multi-layered vulnerability. They experience regular heterosexist assault and harassment, and queer learners are either positioned as too visible or invisible. Self-hate among queer learners also occurs regularly as the result of experiencing internalised heteronormativity.

Butler et al. (2003) found that gay and lesbian learners experienced their school environment as unaccepting towards them. They felt avoided, rejected, or isolated and had a need for information and curriculum content related to gay and lesbian issues (Butler et al., 2003). This relates to the theme relegating sexuality to the private domain in an attempt to silence it (Bhana, 2012). McArthur (2015) adds that this rejection and isolation causes a frequent absence of queer learners from school.

The Role of Teachers in Queer Learner Experiences

The oppressive milieu in which a culture of violence thrives, engenders feelings of frustration and unhappiness (McArthur, 2015). The perpetrators of violent victimisation are primarily fellow learners, parents, teachers, school administrators, and school counsellors (Butler et al., 2003; Francis, 2017). Teachers are central figures in spreading ideas of the contagiousness of homosexuality and may be both physically and verbally abusive towards

such students (Msibi, 2012). However, support from teachers and administrators plays an essential role in queer learner wellbeing (Francis, 2017).

Regardless of regular instances of queer learner victimisation by teachers, those who challenge heterosexism and offer support to these learners should not be overlooked. Mostert (2013), for instance, surveyed teachers who argued for the acceptance of homosexuality in schools. Some teachers claimed that learners should have freedom of expression and learning, irrespective of their sexual orientation (Mostert, Gordon, & Kriegler, 2015). Bhana (2015) also indicated that secondary school teachers mostly agree that support should be provided to homosexual learners. Of the 113 teachers who participated in Bhana's study, only eight disagreed on support being necessary.

Queer Teachers' School-based Experiences

Evans (1999) claims that bringing together queer and teacher is a difficult endeavour. Throughout history, on an international level, queer teachers have experienced discrimination, invisibility, and silencing in schools (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015). Ferfolja (2007) points to a discrepancy between the progressive societal attitudes of tolerance in Australia and schooling which silences queer identities. Since no specific protection for queer teachers exists, queer Australian teachers have to rely on federal and state anti-discrimination legislation (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015). The same discrepancy exists between the discrimination queer identities face in Swedish schools and the accepting attitudes of its general society (Lundin, 2016). In Swedish schools, heteronormative attitudes seem to prevail, while queer teacher visibility seems to be lacking. As discussed earlier, in a South African context, a similar inconsistency exists between the constitution of the country and heteronormative societal attitudes that especially find expression in South African schools (Msibi, 2018).

Earlier findings point out that homosexual teachers in the United States often choose to lead secretive lives, attributable to beliefs that self-identification in schooling communities would result in loss of credibility or, possibly, jobs (Griffin, 1992). This relates to more recent findings which indicate that heteronormativity has led American queer teachers to separate their sexual and professional identities, for similar reasons (Endo et al., 2010). According to Machado (2014), the United States have a long history of discrimination against queer teachers: between 1957 and 1963, a group of Florida legislators prompted the firing of more than 100 queer teachers. Later on, in 1978, a law known as the Briggs Initiative was proposed, which prohibited employment of openly queer teachers in Californian public schools. A more recent executive order protects federal employees against workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. This, however, excludes teachers, who are subject to local and state laws (Machado, 2014).

In the United Kingdom, more than a third of queer teachers that took part in a poll conducted by a teachers' union reported that they experienced bullying, harassment, or victimisation due to their sexual or gender identity (Duffy, 2018). In stark contrast to many prior studies in the United Kingdom, Edwards, Brown, and Smith (2016) found that queer teachers identified with narratives of resistance. They were committed to disclose their sexual or gender identity in appropriate contexts to challenge heteronormativity and promote tolerance and sexual diversity in schools.

In an Irish context, a majority of participants from a study which explored the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers outlined teaching as a profession with unique difficulties for them (Neary, 2013). One of these participants, for instance, revealed that she thought there was a 'greater freedom outside the teaching profession' (Neary, 2013, p. 9). Moreover, Ferfolja and Stavrou (2015) found that the possibility of job loss has been a reality for some Australian teachers, claiming that queer teachers have been overlooked for

promotion or fired because of their sexual or gender identity. Gray et al. (2016) state that queer teachers remain within institutional spaces of exclusion in Australian schools. However, they are not imprisoned by these spaces, since increasing socio-political tolerance of queer Australians enable them to deliberately interrupt discursive mechanisms through which heteronormativity are reproduced in schools (Gray et al., 2016).

Because of the heteronormative pedagogical, teleological, and professional practices that dominate schools, teaching is considered a moral profession in which the private worlds of teachers are considered separate from their professional worlds (Gray, 2013; Msibi, 2018). Such school environments compel queer teachers to develop techniques to establish distance between themselves and learners (Neary, Gray, & O'Sullivan, 2018) in order to escape rejection and victimisation (Msibi, 2018). As a result, teachers have to negotiate private and professional boundaries, which may be particularly challenging for queer teachers whose lives are complicated by religious, cultural, and sometimes legislative constraints (Msibi, 2018; Neary, 2013). By claiming professional identities, described as "an act of passing and often a manifestation of internalised homophobia", queer teachers may escape their queer realities at the expense of separating their public and private lives (Msibi, 2018, p. 116).

However, beyond teachers' fear of being othered or risking job loss for disclosing their sexual or gender identity, disclosure may serve as a political act of deviance or as a psychological need for living tolerable private and professional lives (Gray, 2013). It may cause queer teachers a great deal of work and stress to remain secretive about their sexual or gender identity (Machado, 2014).

The Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum, characterised by "informality and a lack of planning" (Wren, 1999, p. 594), takes place within a perimeter outside of the official curriculum (Walton, 2005). It consists of the unmentioned and unnoticed attitudes, values, norms, and behaviours

conveyed in schools (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993; Alsubaie, 2015). This curriculum is a hegemonic cultural mechanism which represses the underprivileged to serve dominant interests which may include heteronormative interests (Walton, 2005). A hidden curriculum marked by compulsory heterosexuality is currently being reinforced by educational ideologies and policies in South Africa (Francis, 2017). The schooling community rarely engages in discussions about queer history or queer rights apart from derogatory discourses, leaving the queer school and broader community invisible, excluded, silenced, and marginalised (Kumashiro, 2000). Concealed privileges of heterosexuality and the foreignness or non-existence of queer identities are reinforced by the curriculum (Evans, 1999). This informal reinforcement does not merely stem from silence on the queer topic, but also from heteronormative socialisation in schools (Walton, 2005).

Queer invisibility in curriculum policies resulting from a hidden curriculum marked by compulsory heterosexuality contradicts the ideals of equal and inclusive education (Francis, 2017). Due to this hidden curriculum, schooling community members are often left with incomplete and inaccurate knowledge about queer identities that are taught indirectly and unintentionally (Kumashiro, 2005). To confront discrimination and prejudice that arise from this curriculum, policies based on inclusivity and equality should be conceptualised for and in schools (Francis, 2017).

Elements of Queer Teacher Wellbeing in Schools

The effects of workplace sexuality discrimination are extensive and include impairment of relationships, identity, physical and emotional health, professional growth, and career opportunities (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015). According to White (2008), the concept of wellbeing is difficult to define due to it being context specific. Wellbeing in the workplace includes various personal and work-related gratifications and may refer to the mental, psychological, emotional, and physical health of employees (De Simone, 2014).

Psychological wellbeing, as a fundamental component of individual wellbeing, is mostly threatened by experiences of workplace discrimination (Gates, 2012). Evidently, queer discrimination in schools, attested to through the above literature, disrupts the psychological wellbeing of queer teachers.

Individual Elements

According Compton and Hoffman (2013), subjective wellbeing is linked to positive relationships, a sense of control, high self-esteem, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. The relationships of lesbian and gay teachers with other schooling community members seem to be obstructed by fear, brought about by schools' heteronormative rules, biases, and expectations (Anderson, 2014). Certainly, this fear may also deprive queer teachers of their sense of control. Furthermore, the manner in which events are interpreted might be a concomitant of self-esteem. Cognitive theories support the idea of subjective wellbeing resulting from individual interpretation rather than external events (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). This, again, relates to 'internalised homophobia' resulting from a queer person directing negative social attitudes to the self, which leads to internal conflicts, poor self-regard, and devaluation of the self (Meyer & Dean, 1998). Otherwise stated, societal intolerance, stigmas, and negative perceptions that queer individuals are subjected to are turned inward and believed to be true (Community One Foundation, n.d.). Evans (1999) explicates her experience as a queer teacher struggling with internalised homophobia: she constantly questioned the validity of her life experiences and had a lack of ease in mentioning these experiences in her classroom. She rarely felt this lack of ease when she was married to a man.

Interpersonal Elements

On an interpersonal level, the presence of workplace conflict which may result in interpersonal harassment or violence immensely affects workplace wellbeing (Gates, 2012).

Gates (2012) claims that queer employees generally experience heterosexist jokes, verbal harassment, and/or physical violence. Apart from overt harassment, queer teachers are often ostracised (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015) and are forced to reside in "spaces of exclusion" (Gray et al., 2016, p. 291). The relationships of lesbian and gay teachers with other schooling community members seem to be obstructed by fear brought about by schools' heteronormative rules, biases, and expectations (Anderson, 2014). Such heteronormative school cultures can impede the professional identities of non-heteronormative teachers, leaving them less authentic than those of their heterosexual peers (Haddad, 2013). This is a limiting factor that constrains their thriving and work (Haddad, 2013). Consequently, since positive relationships with others are a prerequisite for wellbeing in the workplace, the abovementioned spaces of exclusion may distract from their wellbeing and lead to the development of identity incongruence.

Gates (2012) defines identity congruence as the degree to which the social identity and self-identity of a person matches. In the context of this discussion, it may refer to congruence between the professional identity and self-identity of a queer teacher. The effect of this incongruity may be explained by means of various psychological theories. According to the self-determination theory, all individuals have three basic psychological needs: the need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan, 2009). If these needs are unfulfilled and not supported in social contexts, higher levels of vitality and self-motivation cannot be reached (Ryan, 2009). Therefore, in a psychological sense, experienced inauthenticity or identity incongruence places an individual at risk of not becoming fully actualised (Rogers, as cited by Mengers, 2014). Correspondingly, the identity incongruity that queer teachers may experience can be explained by means of the theory of cognitive dissonance.

Festinger (1957) elucidates how every individual strives towards consistency within themselves. When there is discrepancy between two held opinions, beliefs, or actions,

cognitive dissonance is experienced (Acharya, Blackwell, & Sen, 2017). Psychological discomfort, which results from cognitive dissonance, may then serve as a motivation for reducing the experienced inconsistency and achieving consonance (Festinger, 1957). Therefore, cognitive dissonance experienced by queer teachers may, for instance, result from an inconsistency between their queer identities and knowledge about their heteronormative school environment. Experiencing such dissonance may then motivate queer teachers to adopt personas that are considered appropriate in their school environments in order to avoid being discriminated against. The beliefs, knowledge, behaviour, and feelings related to their identity then conflict with expectations of heteronormative schools with regard to how an individual of their biological sex should feel, behave, or think. Another similar theory that may be applied to this context is the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers' self theory.

According to Carl Rogers, milieus of 'genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy' are prerequisites for individual growth (McLeod, 2014, para. 1). From a previous section on the experiences of queer teachers, it is evident that schools frequently fail at meeting these needs for personal growth due to heterosexism and the beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes that stem from it. Moreover, in order to reach self-actualisation and thus a strong feeling of self-worth, congruence between who an individual desires to be (ideal self) and the actual behaviour and self-image of the individual (real self) is necessary (Rogers, 1959). Due to the previously mentioned fear of various forms of discrimination instilled by heterosexist schooling environments, queer teachers are forced to hide their sexual or gender identity, which preserves the incongruence between their actual selves and ideal selves.

Environmental Elements

Finally, wellbeing in the workplace is environmentally embedded and predominantly dependant on organisational support (Gates, 2012). Even when explicit hostility is absent

from work environments, queer employees often work in heteronormative environments marked by assumptions that queer identities are pathological and foreign (Yoder & Mattheis, 2016). Organisational support refers to the perceptions of employees of the extent to which their contributions and wellbeing are valued by organisations (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Organisational support enables queer employees to be less fearful and more open in their work contexts (Caridad, 2014; Yoder & Mattheis, 2016).

Ferfolja and Stavrou (2015) assert that the consequences of queer teacher discrimination do not solely occur on an individual level, hindering psychological wellbeing, but also disable productivity in the workplace. Policy vacuums and inadequate articulation of queer-related issues in schools result in an overall lack of explicit organisational support for queer teachers (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Gates, 2012). According to Gray (2014), queer teachers globally frequently work in professional contexts that are antagonistic to queer teacher wellbeing and professional efficacy.

The interrelationships between workplace experiences and workplace wellbeing are visually depicted in the following figure:

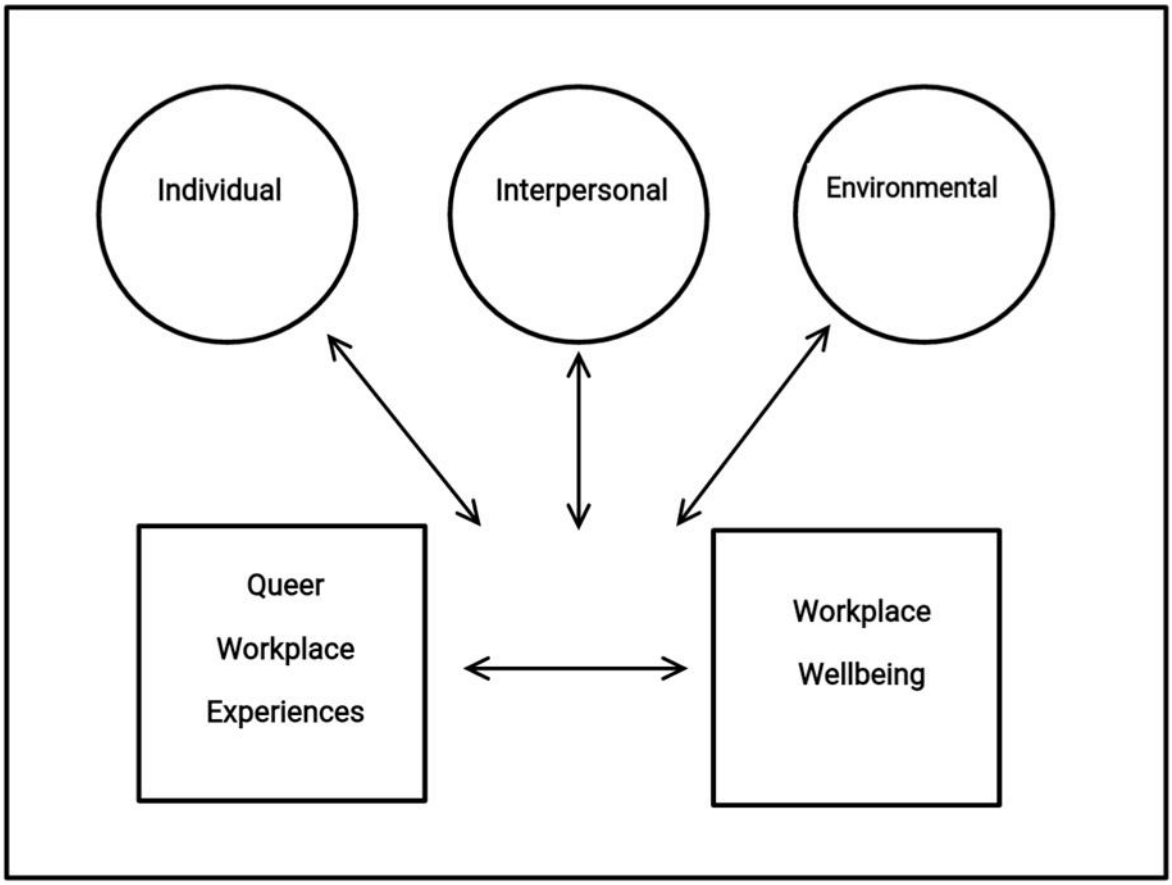

Figure 2. Workplace experiences and workplace wellbeing.

Disrupting Heteronormativity in Schools

DePalma-Ungaro (2017) upholds that school contexts are critical in challenging discrimination against queer schooling community members. Deeper cultural perspectives should be adopted to enable schooling systems to advocate for queer rights and work toward countering broader misconceptions about gender, sex, and sexuality (DePalma-Ungaro, 2017). Some suggestions to deconstruct heteronormativity proposed by Stear (2015) and Kothlow (2012) include advocacy for queer inclusive policies, inclusion of queer themes in curricula, awareness campaigns and counselling to address queer victimisation, and education of parents and teachers regarding queer issues.

In order to disrupt the heteronormative lens through which schools have been shaped, school administrators and teachers need to recognise and identify the manner in which it manifests in schools (Kothlow, 2012). According to Gansen (2017), teachers'

acknowledgement and acceptance of counterhegemonic performances of sexuality lay at the inception of disruption. DePalma-Ungaro (2017) explains that sexuality and gender are not passive experiences but rather performances that serve to establish or maintain norms which involve social power and desirability. It is ineffective to merely respond to individual acts of queerphobia as a means to change underlying heteronormativity in schools. Hence, classroom practices play an essential role in challenging these queerphobic school contexts (DePalma-Ungaro, 2017). According to Kearns, Kukner, and Tompkins (2014), an important part of this anti-oppressive pedagogy lays in pre-service teacher training programmes related to queer awareness and disruption of heteronormativity in schools. Thus, training pre-service teachers to incorporate anti-discrimination strategies against queer identities into their teaching practice will be an important part of school and education reform. Unless new teachers are given opportunities to apply and explore the knowledge obtained from professional development, existing social justice policies or procedures are often ignored (Kearns et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced a detailed overview of available literature which included African perspectives on same-sex relations, South African legislation, societal attitudes towards queer identities, and heterosexism in schools. The lastmentioned consisted of queer learner experiences in South African schools, broad-spectrum queer teacher experiences, and the hidden curriculum. Some individual, interpersonal, and environmental elements that may affect queer teacher wellbeing in schools were introduced. The chapter was finalised with the provision of a brief overview of current suggestions for disrupting heteronormativity in schools.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide motives for choosing social constructionism as the paradigmatic orientation and queer theory as the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. Hereafter, the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research design and the concomitant research method is explicated. Finally, details regarding adherence to the ethical guidelines set out by the North-West University and the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 are provided.

Paradigmatic Orientation and Theoretical framework

Despite recognising the necessity for transformation, the study was not framed in a transformative paradigm. According to Holbrook (2014), transformative research involves the creation of radical change and new paradigms. Even if this study may serve as a potential precursor to future transformative research, the aim was to illuminate experiences of queer South African teachers of heterosexism in schools.

Social Constructionism

According to Andrews (2012), constructivism and social constructionism tend to be interchangeably used and encapsulated under the term ‘constructivism’. It is important to note the difference between the two concepts. Van Niekerk (2005) refers to constructivism as the process by which an observer creates reality by giving meaning to what is observed. It therefore focuses on internal, cognitive processes of individuals (McNamee, 2004). On the contrary, McNamee (2004) explains that social constructionism focuses on discourse or shared social activities transpiring between people. Its postmodern theoretical stance expands to include the role of cultural and social contexts which influence the way in which reality is perceived (Van Niekerk, 2005). In the next few paragraphs, social constructionism will be explained as applicable to this study.

A common misconception about social constructionism is its denial of the existence of an objective reality (Andrews, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Concepts are constructed rather than discovered; yet they correspond to something existing in the real in the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). The socially constructed naming of a disease or determining what it constitutes, for instance, differs from believing it has no independent existence (ontological status) beyond language (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). It is impossible to deeply understand participant experiences without investigating underlying socially constructed understandings and assumptions of these experiences. Burr (2015) argues that social constructionism provides an invitation to take a critical stance toward taken-for-granted understandings and assumptions of the world. For instance, seemingly natural sex and gender categories such as man and woman may be mere assumptions, inevitably bound up with normative cultural prescriptions of gender.

The perception of knowledge as created by subjective interpretation and influenced by social context has been interwoven into my ontological and epistemological stance and is aligned with the phenomenological design and use of queer theory. Creswell (2009) points to the importance of researchers' acknowledgment of personal, cultural, and historical experiences and its shaping of their interpretations and position in the research. Therefore, during data analysis, I considered participants' reality and knowledge as subjectively communicated through language, as well as my subjective interpretations hereof. This has been done by means of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Queer Theory

In essence, queer theory aims to diffuse the notion of categories so that identity is constantly evolving and fluid (Malins, 2015). It is argued that sexual categories have little meaning, since gender identification is a social construct (Msibi, 2012). Throughout the 1990s, academics and activists began re-appropriating the word queer, expunging its former

negative connotation, resulting in the derivation of queer theory as a school of intellectual thought (Haddad, 2013). Queer theory evolved to include more than gay and lesbian studies, despite originating from scholars in this field, substituting all rigid normalising categories with possibilities existing beyond binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine, and gay/straight (Meyer, 2007). Within this study, queer theory served as the perspective through which non-heteronormative teachers' school-based experiences were explored and interpreted.

The acronym LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) is regularly used in research to represent the scope of non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities (Anderson, 2014; Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2013; Ferfolja, 2008; Lee & Carpenter, 2015; Reygan & Francis, 2015). Yet it may not be inclusive enough to represent the complexity of self-identified sexual and gender identities which do not necessarily fit into fixed categories. Contrariwise, queer theory takes apart identity categories and blurs group boundaries (Gamson, 1995), allowing greater subjectivity and participant meaning-making when studying complex concepts.

Nevertheless, queer theory has its limitations and is critiqued by many. Gamson, (1995) challenges queer theoretical notions by asking the following questions: "What happens to identity based social movements, such as gay and lesbian rights?" and "Must socio-political struggles articulated through identity eventually undermine themselves?" (p. 391). Queer theory has failed to successfully destabilise dominant patriarchal normative discourse and power structures due to the underlying poststructuralist idea that no subject, but merely discourse, exists (Beresford, 2014). This implies that discrimination cannot be experienced by the subject. Msibi (2012) adds that queer theory does not consider structural restrictions which limit agency. Even if individual actions and behaviours may support fluid

conceptions, individuals are not viewed by others nor think of themselves as fluid beings (Msibi, 2012).

Furthermore, many writers suggest that the claim to invoke a destabilised identity involves a convenient side-stepping of ethnic/race/cultural location in geographic and bodily terms (Beasley, 2005). Barnard (1999) elucidates that white queer theorists, influenced by Western postcolonial advance, have mostly failed to represent the racialised nature of being queer. Msibi (2013) also highlights that the term strongly carries a load of Western history, failing to express how African sexual politics have evolved. Nevertheless, it has been suggested by some researchers that queer does not necessarily have to be chained to Western understandings of sexuality (Bhana, 2015). Therefore, the rationale for choosing the term queer and what it represents within the study context had been thoroughly explained to participants.

In the article 'I'm used to it now', Msibi (2012) explains his intent to present participants as they see themselves. Queer theory may seem like an imposition on those who hold on to fixed notions of identification; however, it brings alternative sexual expressions together (Msibi, 2012). Kuper, Nussbaum, and Mustanski (2012) assert that the interpretation of research findings is complicated when authors fail to clarify the origin of participants' gender identities. They explain that researchers may assign an identity, for example transsexual, to a particular population or participant being studied, regardless of how the population or individual self-identifies. People might prefer only a single or multiple labels when describing their gender identity and sexuality, while assigning unique meanings thereto (Riggle, & Rostosky, 2011). Fixed political labels such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' may also be unfitting for all participants, because their sense of identification may range between sexual practices and their own sense of sexual identification, or both (Msibi, 2012). For these

reasons, I supported participants' right to self-identify, whether they used fixed singular labels, multiple labels, or declined using labels.

Research Approach and Design

The study followed a qualitative research methodology, used for exploring and understanding meanings ascribed to human or social problems, by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2014). This methodology centres on discovery, insight, and understanding from participant perspectives and the manner in which they interpret and give meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Through qualitative research, rich data about a phenomenon can be obtained (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a, 2007b). Therefore, a qualitative methodology seemed particularly relevant for the in-depth exploration, understanding, interpretation, and description of the school-based experiences of queer South African teachers and the meaning they give to these experiences.

Creswell (2009, p. 5) defines a research design as a plan or proposal for conducting research, involving the 'intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and methods'. Plans and procedures of a research approach include steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). For the purpose of this study, I aimed to investigate and comprehend participants' innermost deliberation of their lived experiences as queer teachers in a South African context. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was deemed most appropriate for this particular research, since its individualised analysis allows for the attainment of a more holistic understanding of participants' thoughts, behaviours, and beliefs (Noon, 2018). According to Alase (2017), it is participant-orientated and flexible enough to allow for the undistorted description of a similar phenomenon, as experienced by multiple individuals. Additionally, IPA is perfectly aligned with my paradigmatic orientation, since it comprises a phenomenological psychological approach to investigating personal lived experiences of participants (Eatough & Smith,

2011). It seeks to explore specific, personal experiences accepted as the product of individual acts of interpretation, where their retelling itself is an act of reconstruction (Griffin & May, 2012). Arguably, IPA investigates a topic that matters to a purposively selected sample, after which the meaning they attach to the topic is explored (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). The following three key positions inform IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2013): 1) phenomenology; 2) hermeneutics, and 3) ideography. These key positions will be discussed in a following section.

Phenomenological Research

According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological research focuses on the description of meaning of a certain phenomenon or concept, as it is experienced by several individuals. In order to describe a universal essence, individual experiences are reduced to identify their core (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological study may contribute to understanding the essence of the lived experiences of queer teachers' intentionality (Ahmed, 2006). Edmund Husserl, the father of descriptive phenomenology, proposed that phenomena, as they manifest, can be described rather than having their causal relations searched for or explained (Sadala & Ardono, 2002). The approach involves the study of essences and the treatment of problems as attempts to define the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness (Merleau-Ponti, 1956). Descriptive phenomenology is not particularly fitting for this study, since it places too much emphasis on essences or the essential structure of experiences.

According to Sloan and Bowe (2014), interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology, on the other hand, places less emphasis on such essences. It rather aims to understand meaning attached to experience by searching for themes and interpretively engaging with data, without removing observers existing with the phenomena and essences from the process (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Through hermeneutic phenomenology, the subjective experiences of individuals or groups are scrutinised to unveil their lived experiences contained within their

life stories (Kafle, 2011). The "being-in-the-world" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 8) nature of hermeneutic phenomenology accentuates time and participants' relation to and existence in the world. This creates opportunities for further practical applications of the approach to a wider range of scenarios and better clarifies phenomena for the researchers (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The primary aims of the integrative hermeneutic phenomenology, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), is the detailed investigation of participants' sense making of certain life experiences together with detailed interpretations of these accounts, in order to understand their experiences (Tuffour, 2017). Hermeneutic phenomenology, specifically IPA, allowed for the summarisation of queer teacher experiences and interpretations of these experiences, which will inform the construction of a rich, in-depth interpretive text of the school experiences of queer teachers.

Population and Criteria for Participant Selection

As previously explained, anyone feeling marginalised by mainstream visions of sexuality was eligible for inclusion. Therefore, regardless of queer teachers' self-identification, they were considered ideal participants if they rejected heteronormativity and/or felt marginalised by it within their school communities. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) define a sample as a representative subgroup of a population used to collect data within research studies. Qualitative research often makes use of non-probability sampling, which deliberately selects participants to reflect features of groups within the selected population (Richie & Lewis, 2003). Purposive sampling is fitting for IPA, since the research question involves a closely defined participant group (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Selection based on population characteristics is appropriate for a qualitative study, thus a purposive sample was selected.

Inclusion criteria. The following criteria were required for participation in the study. Teachers had to:

1. self-identify as non-heteronormative or queer (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, demisexual, omnisexual, et cetera); therefore, any sexuality and/or gender identity included as part of the umbrella term 'queer' (as defined within this study);
2. be trained for teaching within the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels of the educational structure, thus in the General Education and Training (GET) or Further Education and Training (FET) bands;
3. currently be employed by the Provincial Department of Basic Education (DBE), a School Governing Board (SGB), or other relevant authority;
4. be able to understand and respond to interview questions in either English or Afrikaans;
5. be registered with SACE (South African Council of Educators);
6. be based within any of the following provinces: Limpopo, Gauteng, or North-West (for practical reasons).

Exclusion criteria. Participants were excluded from the study if they met any or all of the following criteria.

Teachers that were:

1. lecturers within the tertiary phase of education (due to dissimilar work environments, institutional cultures, roles, responsibilities, and ethical requirements). A possible explanation for these dissimilarities is school teachers' involvement with minors and stricter school legislation because of this. The school teacher has an *in loco parentis* role, which translates to 'in place of the parents' (Nakpodia, 2012). Such a responsibility may be particularly challenging for queer teachers who are expected to act *in loco parentis* in a predominantly heteronormative and heterosexist culture;

2. pre-service teachers, retired teachers, and qualified teachers who do not currently teach. Pre-service teachers have limited exposure to schooling environments and do not have the same responsibilities as full-time teachers. Similarly, retired teachers and qualified teachers who are not currently in the profession may not have experienced the current nature of heteronormativity in schools. The purpose of the research was to describe heteronormativity in schools, as it is currently experienced by teachers.

Sample Size and Motivation

According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), guidelines for determining non-probabilistic sample sizes are practically non-existent. Usually, the required sample becomes apparent as the study progresses and new categories, explanations, or themes stop emerging from the data, known as saturation (Marshall, 1996). Creswell (2009) suggests using five to twenty-five participants for a phenomenological study. Guest et al. (2006) found saturation to occur within the first twelve interviews.

Within IPA (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis), data saturation is not generally a goal, but rather obtaining rich and full personal accounts and exploring concepts and commonalities across a sample (Hale, Treharne, Kitas, 2007). Callary, Rathwell, and Young (2015) advise that researchers using IPA consider small samples due to time constraints. Literature confirms that typical IPA research recruits only a small number of participants (Hale et al., 2007; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Callary et al., 2015; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008); usually no more than 10 participants due to the nuanced, detailed verbatim analysis involved (Callary et al., 2015; Smith, 2004). However, sample sizes for IPA studies diverge, since they are dependent on and determined by the idiosyncrasies of each case, including the level of analysis and reporting (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, sample size

was not predetermined. I was interested in the quality of the data rather than the number of participants selected.

Recruitment of Participants

Participant recruitment is difficult when research focuses on specific individuals, groups, or experiences that are not validated by society (Brown, 2008). Such participants are often hidden due to secretly identifying with particular factions or lifestyles which may lead to discrimination (Browne, 2005). Snowball sampling was therefore used, because the chosen population is difficult to find and queer teachers tend to form part of an interconnected group of people. It was especially suitable because the focus of the study was on a sensitive private issue which required insiders to locate participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling enabled the researchers to gain access to individuals who live outside normative boundaries (Browne, 2005).

Initially, a snowball begins when the researcher contacts one or more people belonging to the population being studied. These people then use their social networks and personal contacts for gaining access to people who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify others to start a snowball (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Browne (2005) suggests that personal networks, friends, and acquaintances may be used to gain initial contacts when recruiting participants. However, it should be noted that an ethical concern is raised when researchers directly contact potential participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The specific procedures followed for the recruitment of participants for this study will be discussed in a succeeding section.

Data Collection Method

According to Qu and Domay (2011), semi-structured interviews are guided by predetermined themes from which questioning develops. This questioning is interposed with probes and takes place systematically and consistently with the aim of eliciting more

elaborate responses (Qu & Domay, 2011). Semi-structured interviews benefit from having an interview schedule that is not required to be followed rigidly, since the interviewer is rather guided by the interviewee (Griffiths, 2009). Semi-structured interviews allow researchers and participants to engage in dialogue, modify initial questions, and probe into important areas of participant responses (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The reciprocity of these interviews allows for critical reflection, clarification, and meaning making (Galletta, 2013). They are adequately structured to address specific topics related to a phenomenon, yet allow participants to offer new meaning to the focus of the study (Galletta, 2013). Their flexibility of coverage and exploration of novel areas produce richer data, allowing the researcher to enter the psychological world of the participant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). For these reasons, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate data collection method for this research. Neither open-ended interviews nor structured interviews would have been equally suitable. The former takes on a conversational form without structure, while the latter contains detailed, predetermined questions which inhibit probing (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b). Keeping the aim of the research in mind, field questions were developed by both the researcher and supervisor. After biographical information had been obtained and the meaning of important concepts, as they are used within the research context, explained, the following field questions were used during the semi-structured interviews:

1. What made you decide to become a teacher?
2. How would you, in your own words, describe your sexuality and/or gender identity?
3. What are your school-based experiences of heteronormativity?
4. Generally speaking, how would you describe the attitudes of South African schooling community members toward queer teachers or other queer community members?

5. Prior to becoming a qualified teacher, did you ever feel that your sexuality and/or gender identity would hinder you in any way in pursuing a career in teaching?

6. Do you, for any reason, feel obligated to refrain from disclosing your sexuality and/or gender identity to your schooling community members? If so, please explain why you feel that way.

7. If you were to tell colleagues and/or learners of your sexuality and/or gender identity, what do you think their reaction would be?

8. How does heteronormativity within your schooling environment, if present, affect your (a) professional duties, (b) relationships with colleagues and/or learners, and (c) personal wellbeing?

9. Can you recall an incident where you felt victimised or excluded within your schooling community because of your sexuality and/or gender identity?

10. What do you think are the most significant obstacles for queer teachers in South Africa?

11. Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you give to queer pre-service teachers?

Data Analysis Method

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c), data analysis is an iterative approach aimed at the understanding of participant meaning making processes with regard to the phenomenon under study. For the purpose of this study, IPA was used to analyse verbatim transcripts of participant interview recordings. Rather than measuring the frequency of meaning, IPA focuses on the content and complexity of meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

As previously mentioned, the following three key positions inform IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013): 1) phenomenology; 2) hermeneutics, and 3) ideography. It firstly attempts to explore personal experiences and perceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2008). When

studying phenomena, the contexts of embodied, situated individuals' experiences are always considered (Eatough & Smith, 2011). The quality of these experiences and how participants make sense of their experiences are prioritised over causal relationships (Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Therefore, after participants' meaning of experiences had been explored, recognition is given to the significance of those experiences for them (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Secondly, IPA involves a double hermeneutic process where participants try to make sense of their personal and social world, after which the researcher tries to make sense of their descriptions and explanations (Smith, 2004). Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek word 'to interpret' or clarify, entails the comprehension of individuals' mentalities and the language that mediates their experiences of the world (Freeman, 2008). Both the participants' interpretations of phenomena and the researchers' interpretations are considered in the analysis process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Therefore, participants' and researchers' sense-making and interpretations are involved during analysis (Eatough & Smith, 2011). Lastly, it may be viewed as idiographic due to its comprehensive analysis of one case before moving on to the next (Callary & Young, 2015). An idiographic level of analysis denotes a specific focus as opposed to generalisation (Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

The data corpus of this research consisted of nine semi-structured interviews which I personally transcribed. The analytical process of IPA usually starts with individual case analysis (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The particulars of each data item are, for instance, meticulously examined to provide an in-depth account prior to moving on to convergent and divergent patterns across cases (Eatough & Smith, 2011). I commenced the process of analysis by immersing myself in the data through personal transcription of research interviews and repetitive reading thereof. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that personal transcription of data allows researchers to develop a far more thorough understanding of their

data. Active reading, in addition, enables researchers to search for meanings and patterns early on for possible use in subsequent phases of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hereafter, I summarised the essential information from each of the nine data sets see Appendix A). To commence the individual case analysis, I organised each transcript within the first column of a table, using the succeeding columns to annotate anything significant or attention-grabbing and write memos and ideas for second-cycle coding (see Appendix B). Smith and Osborn (2007) claim that similarities, differences, amplifications, and contradictions may emerge as the researcher works through the transcripts. These comments were noted in the 'memos and ideas' column. Through the hermeneutic cycle, researchers are encouraged to work with data in a non-linear, iterative, and dynamic manner (Eatough & Smith, 2011). This is precisely the manner in which the analysis process of each data item was conducted.

Initial data-driven codes were provided by the identification of attention-grabbing aspects within each item, organising them within meaningful groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thereafter, I transformed these initial codes into phrases in which it was attempted to capture the essential meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Codes and phrases were then sorted into potential themes (see Appendix C). In so doing, these emerging themes invoked more psychological terminology by shifting interpretation to a somewhat higher level of abstraction (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest using tables or thematic maps for organising and connecting themes. For the purpose of this research, I made use of both tables and a thematic map (see Appendix D).

Trustworthiness

In line with the eight criteria of quality in qualitative research set out by Tracy (2010), the following criteria were adhered to: 1) a worthy topic; 2) rich rigour; 3) sincerity; 4) credibility; 5) resonance; 6) significant contribution; 7) ethics; 8) meaningful coherence.

Worthy topic. For a research topic to be worthy, the researcher should assure that it is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting (Tracy, 2010). This research topic is both relevant and timely when considering its attempt to address an important issue of this time. The significance lies in its potential to expand a scarce knowledge field in South Africa, which may set the scene for larger-scale investigations and potential interventions.

Rigour. Rich rigour in this study was assured through the use and detailed description of appropriate and sufficient theoretical constructs. Interview recordings were transcribed personally and I made use of stepwise replication and a code-recode strategy. Stepwise replication is a data evaluation procedure where the same data are analysed separately by two or more researchers and compared for inconsistencies (Chilisa & Preece, as cited by Anney, 2014). The code-recode strategy refers to a researcher coding the same data twice, with a gestation period in between (Anney, 2014). Hereby, transferability of data was assured.

Sincerity. Tracy (2010) claims that sincerity can be achieved through self-reflexivity, vulnerability, transparency, honesty, and data auditing. Within this study, I continuously practised self-reflection by means of journal-keeping. In so doing, the research process and my role within this process were noted. Since I highly value authenticity and honesty, I introspectively assessed my own biases and personal motivations throughout the research process.

Credibility. Credibility can be assured through thick descriptions of findings, which should be transferable to other settings (Tracy, 2010). Throughout the research process, I sought opportunities for peer scrutiny, welcoming feedback from peers, colleagues, and academics (Shenton, 2004). In addition, I attended frequent counselling and debriefing sessions throughout the study, in order to counter biases that I may have. To ensure participant honesty, only those genuinely willing to partake and prepared to offer data freely were involved in the study (Shenton, 2004).

Significance of the study. Tracy's (2010) explanation of theoretical, heuristic, and practical significance was applied to this research context. The theoretical significance of the study is contained within its potential ability to extend and build on scarce disciplinary knowledge. Heuristic significance was assured by providing significant and interesting suggestions for future research. Lastly, the study may be considered practically significant due to its ability to set the scene for larger-scale investigations and interventions for enhancing exclusiveness in schools.

Ethical Requirements

Estimated Ethical Risk Level of the Study

The South African queer community may be considered vulnerable due to prejudiced societal attitudes against them and the consequences thereof, evident from available literature on the topic. In many instances, those that deviate from the status quo are marginalised by society. In light of this socially induced vulnerability and the possibility of re-traumatisation due to the sensitive conversational content during interviews, the study was considered high risk.

Vulnerable participants. The vulnerability label assigned to queer individuals is the result of societal injustice towards non-conformists. In an ideal world, queer individuals would not have been any more vulnerable than heterosexual individuals. Some queer individuals may even find it offensive to be labelled as vulnerable. Nevertheless, the detrimental effect of heterosexism, evident from previous literature, cannot be doubted. Recruitment, informed consent, and debriefing to withdraw were imperative. If distress was experienced, participants would have been referred to support services as detailed previously in this document.

Probable Experience of the Participants

Clarke, Ellis, Peel, and Riggs (2010) argue that research with LGBT participants usually occur in contexts of marginalisation and risk of discrimination or prejudice, potentially resulting in harmful consequences for participants. These particularly relate to anonymity and the possibility of being exposed as non-heterosexual (Clark et al., 2010). It was therefore deemed critical that I clarify the study aims and objectives, participant expectations, procedures to protect confidentiality, and limitations thereof.

It was advantageous that I am a queer teacher myself. An "insider advantage" (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 68) enabled me to gain better access to sensitive information and secure participants' trust (Clarke et al., 2010). This relates to the emic perspectives taken on by researchers forming part of the community being studied (Naaeke et al., 2011). Olive (2014) claims that the nuances of a particular culture cannot fully be comprehended and appreciated if one does not reside within that culture. Through emic perspectives, researchers become immersed in phenomena to densely portray and interpret participant experiences by virtue of empathetic and experiential understanding (Mamabolo, 2009).

Additionally, possible re-traumatisation had to be minimised and addressed sensitively if it occurred. Therefore, debriefing from either a clinical or counselling psychologist was available for affected participants, in accordance with section 94 of the Health Professions Act (56 of 1974). Within this section, it is stated that researchers should take reasonable steps to protect participants if harm becomes apparent. The participant experiences during the research process was probably different from their daily experiences. Due to societal stigma, participants may not have opportunities in their daily lives to talk about their experiences in heterosexist schooling environments. Even if they have support, I may potentially have communicated a deeper level of understanding and empathy as a result of my genuine interest in queer teacher wellbeing.

Risk Mitigation

With participant vulnerability considered, I took special care in executing my responsibility to participant wellbeing (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2008). Stein et al. (2000) claim that some participants may benefit from talking about trauma, but it may also have a counter-therapeutic effect if the time and/or context are inappropriate. This relates to the multiple factors determining participants' experiences of the researcher, including established rapport and the extent to which participants feel appreciated and heard (Stein et al., 2000). Therefore, I took responsibility for the provision of sufficient information on the nature and effect of the research (HPCSA, 2008).

Possible effects of the research on participants including risks and benefits were described to enable them to make informed decisions concerning participation. I explained my understanding of the sensitive nature of the topic and its probable consequences. Participants' rights, possible misconceptions, expectations, precautions for avoiding re-traumatisation, and protection of confidentiality and privacy were thoroughly explained in the section on informed consent. For the purpose of this study, confidentiality and respect of privacy was highly valued and prioritised, since exposure may threaten participants on various life domains.

Additionally, the physical safety of participants and the researcher was prioritised. While the location had to be convenient, it also had to be a confidential, yet publicly available (libraries, meeting rooms for hire, et cetera). Elwood and Martin (2000) state that participants may feel empowered during their interaction with a researcher when provided with opportunities to choose interview sites. Participants were offered a choice of location where they would feel comfortable to speak freely. Possible sites to suggest to a participant were located, keeping the abovementioned risks and possible adverse experiences in mind and adhering to the ethical research principles set out by the Health Professions Council of South

Africa. These include non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, confidentiality, and justice (HPCSA, 2008).

I had procedures in place for interview evaluation and termination, if risks/dangers became evident, such as participant distress. Firstly, I would have taken the responsibility to stay with participants until they reached a stable emotional state. Secondly, local counsellors would have been available to intervene if a need for therapy was indicated. I arranged for a clinical or counselling psychologist to be available and informed participants of this service in advance (see Appendix H). If additional therapy had been indicated after a 50-minute session with a counsellor or psychologist, a participant would have been referred to a private practitioner.

Clarke et al. (2010) explain that undertaking qualitative health research on sensitive topics may also pose many risks and challenges for researchers. Self-risk was managed by a contact protocol with two individuals that I was familiar with. Contact before and after each session was made and safe words were used to indicate researcher safety.

Benefits for Participants

Qualitative interviews, according to Hutchinson et al. (1994), might have possible benefits for interviewees. It may serve as a catharsis, provide self-acknowledgement, increase self-awareness, provide a sense of purpose and empowerment, promote healing, and give voice to the disenfranchised (Hutchinson, 1994). Although I completed training up to honours level, I acknowledge that: a) interviews were not therapy sessions, and b) I am not a therapist. Nevertheless, I can appropriately facilitate a discussion of this nature and potentially refer participants to relevant researchers for additional support. Additionally, an "insider advantage" (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 68) and shared language and knowledge between parties facilitated the development of rapport and allowed for the production of meaningful, deep analysis (Clarke et al., 2010). Personal exposure to heterosexist schooling environments

contributed to my deeper level of empathy and compassion towards participants. It is, however, inadequate to establish trust and rapport of participants simply by self-identifying as an insider (Clarke et al., 2010). Therefore, despite having an insider advantage, I was mindful of the idiosyncrasies of each situation and experience. I critically reflected on personal bias to avoid making assumptions or influencing the content of the interview process.

Indirect benefits to participants included a contribution to the expansion of a scarce knowledge field, especially in a South African context. This exploration might set the scene for larger-scale investigations and interventions to relieve heteronormative pressures experienced by teachers and enhance inclusiveness in schools. Corbin and Morse (2003) maintain that research benefits should always outweigh risks to participants. Within this research context, risks to participants did not outweigh possible benefits to them. For every evident risk, I had planned precautions to mitigate possible risks. If risks would have been identified by participants before data collection, further precautions would have been implemented or data collection withdrawn.

Expertise, Skills and Legal Competencies

I am well informed about South African school systems, structures, and schooling community members' roles and responsibilities. During my Baccalaureus Educationis training, I completed modules in educational law and the South African school system, inter alia. A social development course at the North-West University (NWU) involving ethics on working with community members, ethics training at a level that is suitable for the requirements of the NWU's HREC committee, and a workshop on Researching Non-heteronormative Sexualities in Education were completed. Furthermore, I have been trained up to honours level in Psychology, which included modules on counselling skills and interviewing, community psychology, and crisis intervention. Interviewing with participants

was an ongoing, guided process. The research supervisor, who is a registered educational psychologist, provided close supervision after each interview.

Facilities

Venues were publicly available, confidential, and secure. Specific diligence in the protection of participant confidentiality was exercised. Venues were booked in a manner that did not jeopardise confidentiality. Such venues were public libraries, meeting rooms, or any other private, secure, and physically comfortable spaces. I avoided booking venues on school grounds due to the likelihood that teacher confidentiality might have been breached.

Legal Authorisation

I adhered to the ethical guidelines set out by the Human Science Research Council. This research was aimed to be undertaken using a queer teacher sample in their private capacity. While acknowledging that the research pointed to experiences in professional contexts, recruitment and briefing information expressly highlighted that participation would be in participants' private capacity. As such, it was not foreseen that authorisation would have been required from the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

Participant Recruitment and Informed Consent

As explained earlier, participants were recruited by means of snowball sampling. In order to yield study samples, this method relies on referrals made among individuals who either share or know of others possessing characteristics that are of interest to the research study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Initially, I contacted friends and acquaintances, personally or telephonically, who were mostly queer teachers or queer student teachers themselves. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) advise researchers to exclude these individuals as study participants, since they merely act as gatekeepers or locators for participant recruitment. This was indeed the case in this study. The motive for choosing to involve queer teachers as locators was due to the relatively easy access that could have been obtained.

Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) recommend choosing locators with similar occupations, lifestyles, and social positions as those of the particular study population. Each locator was meticulously informed on the purpose and scope of the study, rights of participants, as well as appropriate means of initiating contact with potential participants (see Appendix E). A comprehensive advertisement was emailed to locators, which summarised essential study details to assist them during participant recruitment (see Appendix F). Locators who were then willing to partake in this study made personal contact with potential participants. Additionally, the administrator of an existing, private Facebook group, LGBT Teachers South Africa, agreed to serve as a gatekeeper. She shared an advertisement which contained details on the research rationale, protection of participant confidentiality and privacy, incentives and reimbursements, as well as possible benefits and risks of participation, on the group. If participants who met the inclusion criteria inquired about the study, the administrator would have briefed them and arranged a venue and time that would have been most suitable and convenient for them. Unfortunately, those who inquired in the group were based in provinces that were not included in the study. All study participants were therefore located through snowball sampling, with the help of locators. The research project was discussed in depth with potential participants only after they had been ethically recruited by the locators who also facilitated the consenting process. I had no direct contact with participants, telephonically or otherwise, prior to conducting the interviews.

In addition to the briefing provided by locators, I briefed participants again before the interviews commenced. I confirmed that the participant had a thorough, clear understanding of the content provided on the advertisement. Any uncertainties were cleared up and participants were offered the opportunity to ask questions. This principle of informed consent is an ongoing process which entitles participants to change their minds about participation (HPCSA, 2008). Thus, information was initially shared by locators, telephonically or via

email, then discussed before and after an interview took place, and again before data dissemination. In so doing, the participants were allowed to decline participation or to withdraw at any time without suffering reprisal or prejudice (HPCSA, 2008).

The anticipated risks and benefits were listed in the informed consent form (see Appendix G). Potential participants thus had the choice to weigh these before consenting to participate. This is aligned with the responsibility of the researcher to always ensure the wellbeing of research participants (HPCSA, 2008). Additionally, the language used in all communication was on a level that teachers could understand. Hence, accessible English or Afrikaans was used for all documentation and verbal communication with participants.

Within this research context, deception of participants was not necessary and participants had ownership over the information they provided. As a result, each participant had the option to obtain access to their own information throughout the research period (HPCSA, 2008).

Incentive and Remuneration of Participants

Friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who chose to take responsibilities of locating potential participants for the study upon them had done so voluntarily. Study participants, however, were offered reimbursements for any telecommunication costs. Additionally, the costs of traveling to the interview sites were reimbursed and refreshments were available during the individual interviews with participants.

Dissemination of Findings

Informed consent explained that anonymous findings will be published in scientific peer-approved journals. The briefing and debriefing information highlighted this to participants also.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Within a research context, the notion of confidentiality refers to not discussing participant information with others and presenting findings in ways that protect individuals' identities (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). However, limits to confidentiality exist, since data may be reviewed or inspected by bodies such as the National Health Research Ethics Council or the HPCSA (HPCSA, 2008). Apart from this, participant safety is valued above all else and their identities will not be compromised. Personal participant information was thus collected, stored, used, and will be destroyed in ways that respect both confidentiality and privacy of participants (HPCSA, 2008).

With respect to data collection, I thoroughly explained via an informed consent form, pre-interview briefing, and post-interview debrief the measures that would be taken to protect participant anonymity and privacy. Through "data cleaning" (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1636), identifying details were removed from the final article and substituted with pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were constructed by making use of a coding system only known to my supervisor and myself, ensuring that participants' anonymity are protected. Recorded data were deleted after transcription. Transcripts were immediately transferred to a password-protected storage account (Google Drive).

Storage and Archiving of Data

The data preservation planning as governed by the HSRC Data Preservation Policy for this project is as follows: all informed consent documents and data obtained from research activities will be stored for five years after publication at the NWU on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet. Van Eynden et al. (2011) state that the reliable erasing of data files is a vital component of data security management. Therefore, research data will be destroyed after the required retention period which is five years. Secure data disposal methods will be adopted due to the sensitive nature of the data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the choice of social constructionism as the paradigmatic orientation and queer theory as the theoretical framework was rationalised. Thereafter, the phenomenological research design, together with concomitant research methods including purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the method of analysis, were explicated. As a final point, I explicated how this study adheres to the ethical guidelines set out by the North-West University and the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The study explored heterosexism within schools in the South African context by focusing on the school-based experiences of queer teachers. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to explicate the nuanced and complex nature of these participants' school-based experiences. It should be noted that participants' identifying details were removed or replaced with pseudonyms. However, certain demographic details including ethnicity, age, school type (public, private, special needs schooling, et cetera), and settlement type (villages, towns, cities, et cetera) have been included to provide an enriched description of the nature of participants' experiences.

Through the dynamic, ideographic, double hermeneutic process of IPA, I attempted to engage in participants' personal worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Since I have an "emic perspective" (Naaeke et al., 2011, p. 1) due to belonging to the specific study population myself, I was able to immerse myself in participants' subjective worlds. However, Smith and Osborn (2008) point out that an emic or insider's perspective cannot fully be achieved due to the researchers' personal conceptions which limit access. Therefore, I continuously reflected on my personal bias so as to avoid making assumptions or influence the content. Nevertheless, this certain extent of subjectivity is required for the two-stage or double hermeneutic activity involved in IPA to be attained (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I followed the ideographic nature of IPA, moving from particular participant ideas to more general claims through case-by-case analysis. The analytical process that was systematically discussed in Chapter 3 generated the following core themes: 1) perceptions of heteronormativity in schools, 2) experiences of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice, and 3) queer teacher adjustments.

Profile Summaries

The demographic data obtained from participant interviews, combined with brief summaries of the participants' descriptions of their school-based experiences of heteronormativity, provide context for understanding the themes that transpired from the data set. The study sample consisted of nine self-identified queer South African teachers, located in either the Gauteng or Limpopo province. I was unable to locate participants from the North West province due to the use of snowball sampling and time constraints. By means of snowball sampling, I was able to locate six cisgender women, one genderfluid person, and two cisgender men. From the six cisgender women, five identified as lesbian women and the remaining participant preferred self-identifying as a queer woman. The genderfluid person identified as asexual, while the remaining two men both identified as gay men. All participants were SACE-registered, full-time South African teachers. Despite a noteworthy congruence in themes which emerged between individual cases, the participants had unique perspectives and experiences of school-based heteronormativity. Information of each idiosyncratic case has been encapsulated in their participant profile (see Appendix A).

Study Findings

A synopsis of the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews completed by a sample of nine queer South African teachers, including the reoccurrence of superordinate themes across cases, is presented in Table 1 (see Appendix I).

Perceptions of Heteronormativity in Schools

A description of participants' perceptions and experiences in schools, noticeable across all nine cases, were structured into the following superordinate themes: 1) cultural heterosexism, 2) internalised heterosexism, 3) perceived factors related to school-based heterosexism, and 4) religion-based heterosexism. The frequency of each of these themes and their subordinate themes has been assembled within Table 1.1 (see Appendix J).

Cultural heterosexism. Within a social constructionist framework, perceptions of sexuality, including identities and sexual categories, are mediated by cultural and historic factors (Fox, 2012). Regardless of the South African liberal human rights-based constitution, cultural conservatism is a powerful force (Viereck, Ball, Minogue, & Dagger, 2018) that Jost (2006) describes as an ideology marked by acceptance of inequality and resistance to change. Accepted cultural scripts for sexual and gender identities are dominated by heterosexist notions (ideologies) which often discriminate against and disadvantage queer individuals (Herek, 2007; Page & Peacock, 2013; Reygan & Lynette, 2014). Heterosexist notions are inculcated implicitly and explicitly in households and communities (Bhana, Morrell, Hearn, & Moletsana, 2007). As a result, heteronormative socialisation, nurtured by heteropatriarchal hierarchies (Finnessy, 2016; Valdes, 2013), dominates in schools (Grozelle, 2017). These render queer teachers subordinate, invisible, pathological, powerless (Finnesy, 2016; Herek, 2007; Reid, 2017; Van der Walt, 2007), and even punishes them (Du Pisani, 2012). Three subordinate themes emerged across cases, namely heteropatriarchy, societal ignorance, and culture duplicated in schools.

Within South African societies, gender constructions are closely associated with heteronormativity (Reygan & Lynette, 2014). According to Vales (2013), while the term heterosexism favours cross-sex relationships, the term androsexism denotes a certain kind of discrimination which favours male-identified persons, practices, and concepts. The regime of heteropatriarchy based on joint heterosexist and androsexist biases privileges masculine, heterosexual men by creating heteropatriarchal hierarchies and categories (Valdes, 2013). Through this regime, queer individuals are devaluated and subordinated under heterosexual, male dominance (Finnessy, 2016). In order for hegemonic masculinity to succeed, authority needs to be exercised over women and marginalised or subordinated men (Van der Walt, 2007). What is considered appropriate sexuality is regulated by powerful entities that

prescribe and enforce norms of sexual behaviour while punishing behaviour that is considered deviant (Du Pisani, 2012). This exertion of power over queer identities was evident in seven of the nine interviews conducted. According to Herek (1984), unconscious hostility towards gay men may be the result of heterosexual men resenting them for their freedom from constraint by the masculine.

The power accorded to heterosexist patriarchal ideology was experienced by participants in group-sanctioned behaviours and expressions:

> *… every now and again, because there's boys, you hear the "That's so gay" thing. (Leah)*
>
> *… there are a few mean comments thrown around by the men now and then, but that's men. (Barbara).*
>
> *The second time all our male colleagues had a braai and one of them said: "We know you are gay, so that's why I am going to tell a fag joke." (Koos)*
>
> *Even now when I think about when my family found out, I feared for my freaking life! My brother is this typical Afrikaans man. I was most afraid that he would find out. (Ester)*

Participants seemed to expect such arrogant expressions of the power position accorded to dominant heterosexist discourses. Ostensibly innocent expressions such as '*that's so gay'*, homophobic humour, and mean expressions can be seen as micro-aggressive acts against queer individuals and are used to disseminate and reinforce social mores of what real masculinity is (McCann, Plummer, & Minichiello, 2010; Woodford, Howell, Kulick, & Silverschanz, 2013).

Interestingly, participants experienced unabashed expressions of patriarchy to have mostly been uttered by males. Henk speculated that the reason for such behaviour by men is that they feel threatened by alternative identity expressions: *"I think men feel especially*

threatened". Research supports Henk's intuitive understanding. Shen (2003) asserts that some men and boys may feel threatened by expressions of non-traditional gender identities or their misunderstanding of homosexuality. In either case, traditional masculinity is perceived as being challenged.

More subtle and perhaps more insidious markers of heteropatriarchy were also noticed by participants.

> *It's always about the heterosexual relationship… The conversations between the staff are always centred on wives and their husbands. When I started working there, one of the first things they asked me or told me was: "Just remember, men are the heads of their households. You have to be submissive." (Ester)*

Females' and the broader community's unquestioning acceptance of the heteropatriarchy is very influential in perpetuating the status quo. The participants expected and, on some level, had to work around the intolerance and disrespect for their queer identities. In this culture and school environment, participants' voices were muted or even silenced. They felt victimised by expressed and also unexpressed heteropatriarchy, but due to their own vulnerability, unwittingly became complicit. Thus, despite legal protection for and equality of all people, participants' reality was as expressed by George Orwell in Animal Farm: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others".

Even if societal attitudes towards and perceptions of queer identities vary significantly depending on historical background, it is evident from the data that heterosexism in many South African schools is rooted in cultural conservatism. Individuals that endorse traditional ideologies of family, sex roles, and sexuality often use those values as a weapon of expressing prejudiced and hostile attitudes towards queer identities (Herek, 1984; Reid, 2017). In the experience of participants, such traditional values are a major threat to queer inclusion in schools. Seven participants enunciated heterosexism, ingrained in communal

perceptions of queer identities, as the product of a perceived threat to traditional values. Henk described "*societal perceptions of who gay people are…*" and "*ingrained bigotry people sit with*" as major obstacles for queer teachers. He perceived his community as inflexible towards and resistant to queer inclusion. Broader societal enculturation socialises schooling communities to duplicate their cultural heterosexism in schools:

> *…upbringing at home; ideologies that are forced upon learners by parents and in culture as well. Like the way we live in South Africa and how the community reacts towards homosexual people in public, also influences children's reactions and also the school.* (Mariaan)

The "*ingrained bigotry*" (Henk) of the broader socio-cultural context perpetuates a culture of unawareness that Joan described as a "*culture of blindness*". This blindness or ignorance is a product of socially constructed discourses responsible for a paradoxical condition in modern societies where increasing knowledge creates the circumstances for increasing what is unknown; hence, ignorance among its members (Dorniok, 2014). Thus, in spite of more acculturation processes fed by globalisation, heteronormativity persists. In his 1963 book, Strength to Love, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that "nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity". From a social constructivist perspective, ignorance is knowledge that is socially present, yet not fully or correctly realised (Dorniok, 2014). It does seem that in our open society, people may consciously choose not to explore and engage with alternatives such as queer identity, but rather languish in a state Hertwig and Engel (2016, p. 259) refer to as "deliberate ignorance". It is uncertain whether ignorance related to sexual and gender diversity resulted from knowledge that has not been fully realised or deliberate ignorance. Nevertheless, progress towards queer inclusion in schools has been encumbered by this societal ignorance.

Barbra believed her community to be deliberately ignorant about the existence of asexuality. Although homosexuals and bisexuals as anomalies in her community are subject to ignorant remarks, it is even more so when it comes to asexuals. Deep-rooted heteronormative ideals of what a healthy sexuality encompasses, renders the possibility of not being interested in sex unimaginable. Ignorance derived from heteronormative socialisation, in Barbra's experience, attributes not being interested in sex (asexuality) to an inability to attract members of the opposite sex: "*It's very much a question of: 'Oh, look at her, she's a precious snowflake', in the sense that: 'Oh, she couldn't find a man and now she's trying to convince everyone that she's not interested*.'" As an aftereffect of their ignorance, Barbra was treated passive-aggressively and overburdened with a higher workload than her heterosexual colleagues with families.

It is indeed societal ignorance that causes community members to close themselves off from queer teachers. Their lack of knowledge about the complexities of sexuality and gender identity creates fear which makes them withdraw from forming relationships with their queer colleagues. Henk explains this as follows: "*...unfortunately this is how people are; something that they are unfamiliar with is something they fear and when they fear something they start building up walls*." This unfamiliarity, in turn, produces preconceived ideas and stereotypes about queer attributes. I apportioned a separate section for the discussion of these stereotypes.

A collective perception noticeable across cases is the different attitudes towards and perceptions of queer identities among diverse South African cultural groups. One of the foremost determining factors of heterosexism in schools, according to Samantha, is school culture: "*It depends on the culture that you're in*." The cultural roots of heteronormativity were clear to participants. They agreed that in their own and their queer friends' experience, mono-cultural schools were spaces dominated by prejudice and intolerance. According to

Leah, "*…perhaps more culturally dominated schools, like perhaps Afrikaans schools, Muslim schools…I think that there's generally a very intolerant atmosphere.*" Afrikaans schools, especially, were named by participants as being conservative and judgemental towards queer teachers. This singling out of the Afrikaans culture may be due to the demographics of the participants of whom 55 % were Afrikaans cultural insiders.

> *If it's mainly Afrikaans, you're going to probably have a couple of issues; especially if it's older Afrikaans people.* (Samantha)
>
> *If you're in an Afrikaans, conservative school, it will be difficult… some of my teacher friends who are in more traditional Afrikaans schools feel that they can't talk about that at all…The first school where I worked had a pure Afrikaans 'boere' culture and I couldn't live out my sexuality there. I was deeply closeted; it's unthinkable. (Henk)*

Ester highlighted the school-based invisibility of queer identities who work at certain Afrikaans schools:

> *If you take the average Afrikaans community…I would say I've never heard of [a gay teacher who has come out]…the only time I heard of a homosexual teacher, was when I was a learner myself and we suspected that she was a lesbian and only now that I am an adult, she came out.*

Even though I set apart religion-based heterosexism as a separate theme, it is worth noting that the religious milieu many Afrikaners reside in may be a main determinant of their attitudes and perceptions towards queer identities. Religion is a significant determining factor of attitudes towards sexuality (Du Pisani, 2012). Joan spoke about the relationship between heterosexism within Afrikaner schools and its religious origins:

> *…if you look at large mainstream Afrikaans schools that are still big on religion with regards to reading Bible and praying… I wouldn't even last a year, before I'd want to resign.*

The fear of a homosexual agenda and a specific reading of the Bible seem to underlie conservative Christian sectors' resistance to the normalisation of and advocacy for cultural acceptance of queer identities (Chuene, 2016). This fear fuelled by religious dogma may be one of the driving forces behind heterosexism in schools. Some participants voiced their awareness of such cultural and/or religious misconceptions and feared being perceived as propagators of the so-called homosexual agenda. Anel, for instance, evaded encouraging learners to perceive queer identities as normal. "*I don't want to influence them by saying: Okay, gay is right, straight is right, gay is wrong, straight is wrong.*" In contrast to the 'unawareness' that manifested in insensitivity towards and ignorance of the queer experience, Anel may have evidenced an understanding of the position of parents. Such an understanding might be born from experiences of discrimination and the need for self-preservation.

Ester also expressed her fear of being perceived as having a homosexual agenda:

> *…if they find out that I am homosexual, they will immediately ask me to leave. If parents find out that a homosexual person is teaching their children, I am most probably misdirecting their children…I mean the kids are easily susceptible to any influences. They wouldn't want their children to be left with those questions.*

African cultural influences were also perceived to favour heterosexism:

> *…we mainly teach African children; their culture specifically is also very closed minded towards gay people.* (Samantha)
>
> *And it's not just in schools; it's everywhere…the idea that being queer is un-African... (Leah)*

After conveying his perception of Afrikaans communities as predominantly heterosexist, Henk believed the reverse to be true about English-orientated schools: "*The current school that I'm working at is a private school that is mainly English-orientated and the previous school is a non-white school, with predominantly English…and at both schools I was accepted.*" His views accorded with other participants' perceptions of English schools reflecting more accepting cultures.

> *Maybe perhaps English schools tend to be more relaxed than Afrikaans schools. I think that there you can find a very open and accepting space" (Leah)*
>
> *…in English communities, et cetera, they are very chilled with it. They're just like: "Oh, you're gay. Okay, nice. Lovely". You know it's not a big thing of: "You're going to hell" or something like that, you know?* (Samantha).

The Afrikaner and African cultural silencing of homosexuality (Bhana, 2014b; Du Pisani, 2012) has, in the experience of participants, not changed. Conversely, they perceived that the more liberal elements of English culture provide for more openness and acceptance. The influences of the apartheid regime on the development of a multi-lingual South Africa and associated cultivation of distinct cultural values may, in part, explain these perceptions. The silencing of queer identities by the Afrikaner culture has been documented in literature. For the longest part of the twentieth century, the existence of homosexuality in the Afrikaner culture was silenced and denied (Du Pisani, 2012). During apartheid in South Africa, Afrikaans was a symbol of Afrikaners' cultural distinctness and superiority, while English was the urban, international language used in liberal and black newspapers ("Language Policy and Oppression", 1982, para. 4).

Internalised heterosexism. "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Steve Biko, 1978, p. 68). Minority stress denotes experiences of psychosocial stress derivative from minority status (Brooks, 1981), due to dissonance created

between a dominant social environment and a minority group member (Meyer & Dean, 1998). A noticeable theme that emerged during analysis is that of internalised heterosexism, a minority stress process, that produces self-directed derogatory social attitudes, which induce self-devaluation, poor self-regard, and internal conflicts (Cornish, 2012; Meyer & Dean, 1998). I congregated the terms internalised homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and even queerphobia into an inclusive, encompassing term, namely internalised heterosexism. From a psychoanalytical perspective, implicit and explicit heteronormative socialisation creates intrapsychic conflicts between homoerotic desires and internalised heteronormative beliefs (Cornish, 2012). This self-directed aversion creates intra- and interpersonal communication conflicts (Eguchi, 2006), increases the risk of maladaptive coping mechanisms (Cornish, 2012), and serves as a mental health risk factor (Lorenzi, Miscioscia, Ronconi, Pasquali, & Simonelli, 2015). As a result of internalising school-based heterosexism, participants experienced cognitive dissonance and compartmentalisation, nurtured by their own meta-perceptions. "*I don't know but to some extent I also want say that I think that sometimes the biggest obstacles are the perceptions that those teachers [queer teachers] have in their own heads...*" (Leah)

The effects and consequences of heteronormativity are sometimes exaggerated or even misinterpreted in the minds of queer teachers. Meta-perceptions involve perceptions of others' perceptions or experiences of them, which usually leads to interpersonal misunderstandings and conflicts due to discrepancies between the two (Cooper, 2009). Seven participants described unsubstantiated perceptions of their schooling communities' perceptions about their queer identities. Some participants alleged that their sexualities were regularly discussed and/or denounced in their absence, without providing any evidence to validate their speculations.

I am sure that I have been judged hundreds of times behind my back. (Koos)

> *I sometimes feel like I heard it, but then I wasn't sure…you know, as you're passing, so I couldn't confront the person.* (Leah)
>
> *…at break time, when we can socialise a little bit…and then the rest, who think that they are better than you for being normal, will form their own groups. It felt as if they perceived themselves as normal and what the hell are you? So I felt as if I was invading their space.* (Anel)

Perhaps belonging to a historically pathologised and stigmatised minority group contributed to misjudged expectancies of hostility directed at them. Participants who have experienced or witnessed heterosexism before might have used those subjective experiences to evaluate others' intentions or behaviour as queerphobic. This relates to a phenomenon known as 'the spotlight effect' (Gilovich, Medvec, & Savitsky, 2000, p. 211), where the extent to which individuals' appearances, actions, or attributes are detected by others is overestimated (Heflick, 2011) and evaluated by their own subjective experiences (Heflick, 2011). The spotlight effect is noticeable in the following: Barbra expected rejection if she would have disclosed her sexuality to her schooling community. She paralleled the possible consequences of disclosing her sexuality within her school with experienced reactions of her family members: "*…it didn't go too well in the family, so it's not going to go to well at work.*" Anticipated rejection is a form of internalised stigma, understood as individuals' knowledge of society's stance toward minorities and expectations of stigmatisation being enacted in a certain context, due to minority status (Rood et al., 2016). Internalised stigma as an internal stressor is experienced in response to an external stressor (Rood et al., 2016) such as, in Barbra's case, the denunciation of her queer identity as unnatural by family members. Similar to Barbra, many participants remained closeted due to anticipating rejection based on perceptions of societal stigma, rooted either in previous aversive experiences or observations. Ester was reluctant to provide any kind of support or advice to queer learners, as she believed

it might provoke the interrogation of her own sexuality: "*Because why did I identify it? It's going to come out immediately. They'll immediately start asking questions.*"

According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, all individuals have an innate desire for consistency between their behaviour and attitudes (Festinger, 1957). In order to avoid or reduce mental discomfort created by such discrepancies, they may change their beliefs, actions, or perceptions of their actions (Hall, 1998). From the data, it is evident that some participants experienced such disharmony. While some held opposing views, others experienced discrepancies between their beliefs and actions. For 27 years, Henk espoused a heteronormative lifestyle, despite being queer, in order to reduce the dissonance between heteronormative expectations and the consequences of diverging from them. In his attempt to resolve the mental discomfort he experienced, it deteriorated to a point where he had to alter his beliefs and behaviour to accommodate his sexuality: "…*after 27 years of married life, I decided that I've done my Mandela time and I think I deserve to be myself now. I live out my sexuality.*"

The discrepancy between Ester's perceived religious obligations and her queer identity caused immense discomfort: "*…I made the mistake of marrying because of my religious beliefs. I firmly believed marrying a man was the right thing to do, as the word of God says.*" She ended the dissonance between her religious beliefs and queer identity by divorcing her husband and learning to accept her sexuality as a natural part of who she is. As a consequence, she established consistency by changing her beliefs, actions, and perceptions of her actions. As in Ester's case, Mahaffy (1996) revealed that a majority of lesbians who struggle to achieve cognitive consistency espoused evangelical identities prior to realising their sexual identity. However, most choose to alter their beliefs instead of living with tension or leaving their faith (Mahaffy, 1996). Ester reformed her interpretations of Christianity in order to resolve the dissonance and accommodate her queer identity.

Within the workplace, especially in the teaching profession (Craig, 1994), individuals are encouraged to embody values that fit the institutional credo (Rozuel, 2011). The subconscious psychological defence mechanism called compartmentalisation is often used to avoid cognitive dissonance or tension caused by contradictory cognitions, values, and emotions, inter alia (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). In effect, some participants created professional personas in order to mask the incongruence between their queer identities and the value systems they had to exemplify at work:

> *So because I know what the school's outlook is, there's no way that I can even think about being a piece of myself. Every single day is one big lie after the other. You just play according to their cards.* (Ester)
>
> *…I decided not to talk about my sexuality during interviews. I will avoid it as far as possible and if the question comes up, I would lie and say: 'HE does this and whatever', which is wrong. I believe it's morally wrong.* (Joan)

However, suppression of aspirations, emotions, and values deemed inappropriate within a particular context may result in a moral void due to disengagement in the moral responsibility towards the self (Rozuel, 2011). Unsurprisingly, in their attempts to avoid discrimination or to be granted equal opportunities, these participants became disengaged in their moral responsibility towards themselves.

Barbra also experienced and still experiences cognitive dissonance attributable to conforming to some heteronormative expectations that are in conflict with her queer identity. Prior to experiencing self-acceptance, growing up in a heteronormative society made her believe that something was wrong with her: "*…for years I didn't know that I was asexual. I thought I was broken.*" Even now, as she accepts her queer identity, she keeps conforming to heteronormative standards in some instances: "*Only later on, as a teacher, I realised that I am asexual and only as an adult, 30-something, I realised that it's okay to be genderfluid. It's*

too late now. I have taken every effort to be a woman, so now I am one." Having conformed to heteronormative expectations for so long, by presenting herself as a woman, made her perceive that changing her gender expression to fit her masculine gender identity was senseless.

Within this research, fragmentation, separation, and isolation of different aspects of participants' personality were evident. Four participants explicitly emphasised the importance of separating their professional and personal lives in order to avoid confrontation or persecution for being queer. Only three participants experienced the freedom in their schools to coalesce their professional and queer identities. Leah, for instance, has no inhibitions about openly speaking about her personal life, just as any heterosexual teacher would, when appropriate in the specific schooling context.

Perceived factors related to school-based heterosexism. Schools as custodial settings are responsible for guardianship, nurturing, and defending of learners, in addition to imparting academic knowledge (GLSEN, 2002). Because of these responsibilities, it is no wonder that Bhana (2015) describes sexuality as a controversial matter in schools. Participants singled out certain factors as particularly influential in the preservation of school-based heteronormativity: 1) parents as antagonists against queer teacher inclusion, 2) the relationship between age and heterosexism, and 3) the category and locality of schools.

Parents as perceived antagonists against queer teacher inclusion. The South African Schools Act (1996) stipulates that schools should be governed by democratically elected representatives from the broader schooling community, mostly parents authorised to set rules and policies and monitor adherence thereto (Bhana, 2015). A majority of participants were apprehensive about parents' influential roles in determining school policies and their preserving of school-based heteronormativity. Barbra perceived parents as significantly influential in the shaping of learners' attitudes towards queer teachers: "*Parents are not*

accepting of anything that deviates from the norm and that deviates from the gender binary, at all. Therefore, children aren't accepting." Bhana (2015) confirms these significant parental influences in the development of their children's value systems and the mediation of their perceptions on sexuality. If parents display acceptance towards queer individuals, their children, in effect, are also more accepting of them (Herek, 1984).

Due to anticipated resentment from parents, some participants withheld information from their learners that may expose their queer identities to parents:

> *I avoid those kinds of questions [related to personal relationships] totally! Everywhere I go I avoid it, because I am scared of childish behaviour from parents.* (Joan)
>
> *… I prefer not to have any issues with parents. Because I teach grade 5 and 6, you know, they could be like: "That's not on", you know? "We don't accept that. We don't want that woman teaching our children". So I'd rather not come out to the kids, at all.* (Samantha)

Ester feared that being exposed to parents would make her school environment a "*walking on eggshells kind of place*". She was under the impression that such exposure would lead to her immediate dismissal: "*If they find out that I am homosexual, they'll immediately ask me to leave. Because if parents find out that a homosexual person is teaching their children, they may think that I am busy misleading their children*." Bhana (2015) evidenced that Ester's fear is not an unsubstantiated meta-perception. South African parents who took part in a focus group expressed their discomfort with queer teachers' facilitation of classroom conversations about sexuality, positioning them as a threat to their children (Bhana, 2015). Vann (2012) maintains that parents' antagonism towards queer teachers is usually motivated by commonly held misconceptions about queer teachers having sinister agendas of recruiting children to queer lifestyles.

Participants' concerns of jeopardising their credibility kept them heedful of sharing information that might expose them as queer. According to Russ, Simonds, and Hunt (2008), teachers belonging to minority groups are more often perceived as less credible than their heterosexual peers. Therefore, no matter how clearly they demonstrate their ability to teach, queer-biases may alter how they are treated and perceived in the classroom (Russ et al., 2008).

Relationship between age and heterosexism. Samantha believed that queer teachers would face discrimination "*especially if their [colleagues are] older, Afrikaans people*". Correspondingly, Joan perceived her younger colleagues as more approachable and better informed about queer issues:

> *With regards to younger teachers, I found that I could be more open, because they understand it better…With an older teacher, who has been in the education system for twenty years, I have to be careful, because they are prone to giving looks.*

In the United States, earlier findings by Herek (1984) parallels more recent research (Holland, Matthews, & Schott, 2013; Ohlander, Batalova, & Treas, 2004) which found younger and better educated individuals (those who have presumably been exposed to liberal values at university) to exhibit more tolerant attitudes towards queer individuals. Currently, within an African context, younger and better-educated individuals are also showing increasing support for queer rights (Morris, 2017). More specifically, Page (2017) found younger teachers to be more comfortable with incorporating queer texts into their teaching in comparison to their older colleagues. This is unsurprising considering that younger teachers, especially within a South African context, are exposed to a more diverse and inclusive post-apartheid society.

Simoni and Walters (2001) acknowledge that previous studies have found a positive relationship between heterosexism and age, but reported the inverse relationship to be due to

a highly positive relationship between the levels of education and ages of their particular sample. Therefore, education should be considered an important mediating variable of the relationship between age and heteronormativity. Barbra believes education is responsible for her teacher colleagues being more accepting of queer identities than parents of the school:

> *If you look at our educational curriculum, there's a constant hammering on diversity, inclusivity, diversity, inclusivity and as a result, there's a conscious: "I'm going to accept this person, come hell or high water" and I think it's a good springboard for our society from the teachers' side, because teachers are a little better informed than parents.*

Post-apartheid teacher training in South Africa mandates that teachers adhere to education policies that promote diversity and prohibit discrimination on various grounds, including sexual preference (Du Plessis, 2013). Even though this could explain Barbra's perception, it cannot be assumed that the parents of her school were not exposed to inclusivity training or have not received tertiary training. The parents' age range and education-level are unknown to the researcher, yet they should mostly be products of our post-apartheid dispensation. As explained previously, parental prejudiced attitudes could be towards queer teachers in particular, rather than queer communities in general. Due to the cultural stigma of queer teachers having sinister agendas of recruiting or influencing children to adopt or accept queer identities as normal (Vann, 2012), parents might find the *in loco parentis* role of queer teachers particularly concerning. Children are susceptible to influences from their teachers, who play crucial roles in building their learners' characters and shaping their moral identities (Sachar, 2015). It may be that parents are accepting of queer rights in general, yet disapprove of their children being exposed to and influenced by queer role models in the schooling system. This relates to findings from a survey of attitudes towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity in South Africa, where 51 % of South Africans

indicated that queer individuals should have equal rights, yet 71 % believed same-sex activity to be morally wrong (Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Stuwig, & Gordon, 2016). The overlap between those who simultaneously promote equal rights and morally reject same-sex relations may indicate that some individuals are able to comprehend the importance of queer inclusion, without compromising their own values. Similarly, experienced parental antagonism in this study may be attempts to protect their children's traditional or religious morals, rather than blatant hatred of queer communities.

In addition to the perceived positive relationship between age and heterosexism, some participants also believed age to be an important determinant of queer teachers' self-acceptance. Ester perceived older queer teachers as more self-confident and less fearful of heterosexism directed towards them, compared to their younger counterparts: "*People older than 30 or 40, who are comfortable with themselves…those people are happy and they do not care about what other people think of them…*" Additionally, she believed older queer teachers to be better equipped in dealing with heterosexist parents: "*In general, younger teachers are more fearful of parents than older teachers who have more experience on dealing with parents.*" Research confirms Ester's observations/perceptions of a positive correlation between age and self-esteem, as self-esteem generally increases over a lifetime and peaks at age 60 (Madormo, 2018). In order to explicate younger queer teachers' vulnerability and susceptibility to victimisation, Koos compared his experiences as a young teacher with his more recent experiences. As a young teacher, he chose self-isolation to escape heterosexist comments made by colleagues, since he did not know who he could trust. Currently, as a mature, experienced queer teacher, he claims to be unaffected by colleagues' perceptions of him and believes that queer teachers should be open about their sexuality, without feeling guilty: "*I'm sure I've been judged behind my back hundreds of times, but naturally I don't give a damn about that…It's time for us to acknowledge who we are [queer*

teachers], without feeling guilty." During middle adulthood, circumstances in various life domains, including work and relationships, are highly stable, as people tend to invest more in the social roles they hold (Madormo, 2018). As Koos aged, he developed a strong sense of self-worth in his identity as a queer teacher, which allowed him to comfortably dismiss experiences of heterosexism as unimportant.

School category and locality. Within the data corpus, certain school categories were singled out as being more queer-inclusive, than others. All three participants who worked at special needs schools perceived those school climates as being more inclusive of queer teachers. Koos is of the opinion that special needs educators are more prone to embracing diversity, possibly due to having developed deeper compassion for marginalised minority groups. For this reason, he decided to transfer from a public school to special needs education:

> *I then started looking out for an education system that is more lenient and accessible…It is here that I was able to connect with my colleagues, because teachers working with special children see the world totally different and have space for everyone in their lives.*

In addition, Henk perceived special needs learners to be less concerned about their teachers' sexualities:

> *Because I work with mentally challenged children…They are aware of it [his queer identity], but it's not as pertinent to them. With them it's just a case of: "You're the teacher. It doesn't matter who you are", you know?*

Some participants voiced their perceptions of rural schooling communities as more inclined to being heterosexist, compared to those from urban schools. Out of the nine queer teachers that had been interviewed, six worked at urban schools, one at a sub-urban school, and the remaining two in smaller town schools. The majority of the queer teachers from

urban settlements experienced greater freedom within their school environments, compared to the non-urban teachers. All of them, either fully or partially, disclosed their queer identities to some schooling community members, despite having experienced or feared some form of heterosexism. On the contrary, the remaining two teachers from smaller cities completely concealed their queer identities from what they considered conservative, rigid schooling communities.

In comparison to rural schools, Leah perceives urban schools as much more accepting: "*I suppose that if you're at perhaps a sort of school in an urban city, I think that there you can find a very open and accepting space*." She then goes on to list township schools, among other demographic factors, as responsible for heteronormative atmospheres in schools. Ester agrees, describing "*plattelandse*" [countryside/rural] schools as the most unwelcoming and unaccommodating of queer teachers. Despite not working at a rural school, she believed that if she would be exposed as a queer teacher, information about her damaged reputation would certainly be disseminated through her small community: "*Especially if you look at the community in which I grew up; it's not a rural community, not nearly as small as Putsonderwater, but small enough for people to know of me, as a teacher*." Even though there might be truth to her assumption, Ester seemed to project her own experiences of discomfort with her queer identity, possibly stemming from internalised heterosexism, onto her small city community. This may relate to her age, self-esteem, and having only recently accepted herself as queer, after having suppressed her actual self out of perceived religious obligation. Urban areas are often depicted as liberating spaces (Annes & Redlin, 2012), while rural areas are often perceived as constraining spaces for queer individuals (Annes & Redlin, 2012; Wienke & Hill, 2013). Individuals raised in urban areas generally have higher tolerance for diversity and more accepting attitudes towards queer individuals (Herek, 1984). As a result, queer residents of urban settings have better access to support systems, including queer-

positive organisations and businesses (D'Augelli, Preston, Kassab, & Cain, 2002). Even if participants from urban schools seemed to have less direct experiences of hostility and were generally less constrained by heteronormative institutional doctrines of their school cultures, most of them still experienced subtle discrimination in the form of micro-agressions. Samantha was the only participant who had supposedly not experienced any heterosexism whatsoever, yet concealed her identity from parents in fear of persecution. Due to the nature of this research, it cannot be assumed that urban schools are generally more accepting spaces for queer teachers. Moreover, despite the above research which found urban spaces to be more accepting of queer identities, in this particular sample, a direct correlation between locality and heteronormativity cannot be made. An unknown combination of external factors, including school type and school culture, as well as internal factors, such as meta-perceptions and internalised heterosexism, influence participants' school-based experiences and perceptions thereof.

Religion-based heterosexism.

The tendency to turn human judgements into divine commands makes religion one of the most dangerous forces in the word.

—Georgia Elma Harkness, '*The Recovery of Ideals*', 1937

Religiosity is usually one of the foremost predictors of heterosexist attitudes (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). Historically, a majority of Christians have regarded homosexuality as a moral sin (Subhi & Geelan, 2012), and while some Christians presently support the coexistence of homosexuality and Christianity, it remains a controversial topic with much opposition (Nkosi & Masson, 2017). It can be argued that heterosexism in South Africa has its origin in religious tradition, with Christianity having played a major role in shaping societal norms since colonisation (Bhana, 2015; Pushparagavan, 2014).

Eight of the nine participants singled out Christianity as one of the main reasons for heterosexist attitudes in schools. Some participants merely voiced their perceptions of the relationship between heterosexism and religion in South African schools, without necessarily having had experienced it personally:

> *I think that religion, in general, is a factor which makes many spaces uncomfortable for teachers and pupils.* (Leah)
>
> *I think it's mainly the culture and religious beliefs you grew up with, all that kind of things [that produce a heteronormative schooling environment].* (Samantha)
>
> *If you're at a school with a strong religious background, be careful, because the chances are they are going to exploit you, push you aside and bully you.* (Joan)
>
> *I've heard of people that have been denied the privilege to inaugurate morning meetings with scripture, even though they are Christians, because they are homosexual.* (Mariaan)

Barbra concealed her queer identity from her schooling community because of how her family reacted when she came out*: "'You are betraying your creational purpose' was the words they used*." This anticipated rejection, based on a previous negative experience of coming out to her parents, has previously been discussed as a possible meta-perception. In other cases, queer teachers' sexualities were explicitly or subtly categorised as ungodly by schooling community members. Henk recalled incidents earlier in his teaching career where some of his superiors used religion to communicate their rejection of his sexuality: "*I had an HOD at the previous school who often made cutting comments, but never directly.*" More explicitly, he was warned about God's enmity towards his queer identity:

> *A female colleague once opened up about her feelings towards me, in private. I remember she said: "The Bible leaves no uncertainty about the reason why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorra." She said acting on homosexuality is a sin and [that]*

> *I have to get my life back in order. There was another incident where the head of the department told me that he disagrees with the gay lifestyle, because it's unnatural and against the will of God*. (Henk)

Ester also understood her school community to be dogmatically rigid. Her school's vision and mission statement spoke of their unwillingness to accept any deviation from their rigid moral standards. She understood the "*straight and narrow*" to be the only option:

> *If you even think of deviating from what is said in the word of God, you will probably be fired…If you look at Leviticus or the end of Romans, I can think of so many verses that deliberately, according to their interpretation, say that you'll be stoned if you partake in homosexual behaviour. Even in Romans, where the Romans are advised not to give in to their unnatural desires; they have to lay down that lifestyle, because that is what the Lord expects of them.*

In addition to describing her schooling community's religion-based, heteronormative perceptions, the above quotation also provides information about her own heteronormative interpretations of the Bible. Subhi and Geelan (2012) state that queer individuals find the reconciliation of their religious and/or spiritual beliefs with their sexuality to be particularly challenging. In order to dissolve intrapersonal conflict experienced by those who are both Christian and queer, many renounce their faith (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). Ester had not altered her religious interpretations to accommodate her sexuality, but rather rejected the Christian faith. Whether she renounced her Christian faith solely because of intrapersonal conflict she experienced between her Christian and sexual identities is unclear. However, ambivalent oscillation between her alliances to her once dearly held faith and her sexuality caused a great deal of distress, evident in the psychopathology it produced (discussed in a succeeding section). As a former member of the Reformed Church, Ester expressed sadness and shame

over the thought of being perceived as a false prophet, if her sexuality were to be exposed to her schooling community:

> *The fact that I was [once perceived to be] such a big disciple of God will make them question everything I taught them [if they find out about her sexuality]…because I am just a hypocrite. Everything I taught them will be thrown out the window, because I don't live according to the word of God. Why should they take anything that I've taught them seriously?*

In her opinion, it would have been imprudent not to conceal her identity, since those who do not live according to her schooling community's interpretations of what the bible prescribes would be deemed unfit for the position of a teacher:

> *Religion is explicitly used as the sole reason the school is being managed as it is and because of this there is no possibility of reasoning that homosexuality or anything other than heterosexuality is acceptable. If you even think of deviating from what is said in the word of God, you will probably be fired.*

Despite her personal struggles with reconciling her queer and Christian identities, Ester was hopeful that a supportive schooling environment might exist: "*Yes, religion is practised in public schools, but there are schools that practice Christianity in the form of love and not judgement. So I believe there will be people who will receive you with love.*" Within this particular sample, six of the seven religious participants were able to master the difficult task of reconciling their religious and sexual identities. Reconciliation, in many of these cases, had been facilitated by professional psychologists or other support systems. Barbra recommended that queer teachers seek professional support to resolve experienced conflict, but advised against seeking help from a pastoral counsellor, probably to avoid religious bias during the therapeutic process: "*Get a counsellor as soon as possible and sorry to say, not a pastoral*

counsellor. I don't care if you are in a queer accepting church, not a church counsellor. My experiences with church counsellors aren't positive."

Experiences of Discrimination, Stigma, and Prejudice

A description of queer teachers' experiences of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in schools, noticeable across all nine cases, was structured into the following subordinate themes, namely 1) heteronormative assumptions, 2) reverberations of school-based heterosexism, and 3) psychological consequences. The frequency of each of these themes and their subordinate themes has been assembled within Table 1.2 (see Appendix J).

Heteronormative assumptions. The most frequently used homosexual stereotypes include perceptions of men as mentally ill, insecure, lonely, promiscuous, and most likely to be paedophiles, and lesbians as hostile or aggressive towards men (Herek, 1984). These stereotypes, as products of heteronormative socialisation, were apparent in participants' descriptions of their school-based experiences. In some cases, the participants described stereotypical assumptions made about them, while others assumed they were being stereotyped or merely described common stereotypes held about queer teachers. Ester's description somewhat relates to what is suggested about lesbian stereotypes in the above literature:

> *People are scared of lesbians. I mean, a gay man does not scare boys, because he will never show interest in them, but lesbians scare girls, because lesbians are interested in every girl. But what they don't understand is that a guy wouldn't just show interest in any girl and a girl wouldn't just show interest in any guy. They are terrified that every single lesbian would show interest in them. And of course, the stereotypical butch lesbians; people are scared of them.*

Unsurprisingly, because of heteronormative socialisation, schooling community members regularly made remarks or asked questions based on assumptions that the

participants had to be heterosexual and cisgendered. In her very first job interview, Joan's interviewers assumed that her spouse had to be male: "*They asked me: 'Are you married?', to which I replied: 'I'm engaged', because at that stage I was already engaged. They then replied: 'Well, that's fantastic, what does he do?* "' Her learners made the same heteronormative assumptions: "*I get questions, especially from the younger grades: 'But ma'am, we want to see a photo of your husband*"'. Leah provided a few examples of similar assumptions:

> *There is no debate or concept that there might be people other than ladies and gentlemen in your audience. Whenever a teacher spoke up, you know, about someone in a relationship it was always: "She's starting to notice boys for the first time", you know? There was something that this person is going to be interested in the sort of (inverted commas) 'opposite gender'.*

These assumptions are rooted in ignorance, rather than deliberate antagonism against queer individuals. Barbra's schooling community attributed her asexuality to either an inability to attract men or not having met the right man yet, since not being interested in sexual or romantic relationships disrupted their heteronormative thinking. These assumptions are perfect examples of heterosexual privilege, which Cullen (2008) describes as undeserved benefits granted to heterosexual individuals which are often taken for granted or go unnoticed. From a position of the privileged, deviation from heterosexuality and the struggles that those who deviate from this position might face, are unimaginable.

Preconceived ideas and stereotypes related to physical appearance. The perceived identification of queer individuals by certain physical characteristics, mannerisms, or clothing seemed to be a commonly held misconception. The stereotype theory posits that stereotypical queer characteristics or patterns of behaviour reinforced by the media (Mabokela, 2015) contribute to a biased, heteronormative portrayal of queer individuals (Seif, 2017). Societal

misrepresentations that are to a large extent reinforced by fictional representations were evident from participant descriptions.

> *People would say: "I actually have a very good gaydar, but I would never have classified you as a lesbian." Then I feel a little uncomfortable, because immediately I'm thinking: 'How am I supposed to look? How would you prefer me to be?' It made me feel uncomfortable.* (Joan)

From this description, it is noticeable that certain expectable traits are attributed to queer individuals in order to rigidly categorise and distinguish them from the heteronorm. The term 'gaydar' (gay + radar) is colloquially used to determine individuals' sexual orientation by relying on visual cues (Tabak & Zayas, 2012). These include choice of embellishments, actions, sounds, and acoustics by which the accuracy of judgement of individuals' sexual orientation is better than chance (Rule & Alaei, 2016). However, Gelman, Mattson, and Simpson (2018) found the objective measurement of individuals' sexual orientation to be a fallacy, since the term gaydar cannot be decontextualised, assuming the existence of a universal biological measure of perceived sexual orientation. Even if there is some truth to the possibility of determining individuals' sexual orientations based on certain visual cues relevant within a specific social context, Joan's discomfort is understandable. Alongside this discomfort created by the above remarks, it is evident that she is frustrated with her colleagues' expectations of how she should look or act to fit their stereotypical label of a lesbian. Rather than coming from a position of heterosexual superiority, these comments are products of heteronormative ignorance about the complexity of human sexuality and gender and how it relates to gender expression. Another queer individual might as well have made similar comments, based on their knowledge of stereotypical traits of lesbian women within a specific social context.

Both Samantha and Joan had the exact same response at the disclosure of their queer identity: "*But you don't look like a lesbian?*" Such ignorant, stereotypical comments frustrated them. Samantha sarcastically responded: "*Sorry I forgot to put my rainbow on my forehead, you know.*" On the contrary, participants who clearly fitted stereotypical categorisations were expected to conform to traditional gender roles. Anel described the discomfort she experienced because of expectations to conform:

> *Sometimes they are very judgemental, meaning when you arrive and maybe look…you're not dressed like a girl, understand? It's not comfortable for us to teach if I know I have to prettify my face every morning and the hair should always be done and the nails should be done. Sometimes it feels as if they are very judgemental and at the previous school I found it very hard to fit in, because they found out that I [was] gay or lesbian or whatever.*

Because Anel had stereotypical queer attributes, some of her colleagues became uncommunicative and unsociable: "*Anyway, because of that [perceiving her as queer because of her physical attributes] they all became cold towards me.*" Their insolences towards her as a gender-nonconforming teacher evidenced their disregard for deviating from the heteronorm. As a result, Anel experienced discomfort in their presence for being expected to express herself in a manner which they deemed appropriate for a woman.

Barbra talked about the advantages of not having typical queer physical attributes: "*I am not obviously different. I am straight-passing and therefore I can slip through under the radar, because nobody notices that you are funny*." Passing is a layered and complex issue that allows identification with a certain social group in order to receive benefits or avoid adversity, but may hinder forming intimate connections with others and lead to self-loathing and depression (Gianoulis, 2015). I acknowledge that a causal relationship cannot be

assumed, yet I found it interesting that Barbra indeed struggled with and avoided connecting with her schooling community and suffered from depression.

Perceptions of queer teachers as paedophiles. According to Machado (2014), queer teachers' concerns about being misrepresented as having hidden agendas may, in part, be traced back to unfounded theories that link homosexuality to paedophilia. Within the Afrikaner culture, common perceptions of a positive association between homosexuality and paedophilia exist (Crous, 2006). It is, therefore, unsurprising that participants considered the Afrikaner culture particularly antagonistic towards queer inclusion in schools. An awareness of these baseless stereotypes caused some participants to refrain from exhibiting behaviour that may expose them as queer. Queer teacher stereotypes and societal expectations of teachers acting as role models for children hinder the coming out process (Vann, 2012). As elucidated previously, Ester concealed her queer identity to avoid being stereotyped:

> *For some or other reason if someone finds out that you [teachers] are gay, they think you messed around with every single girl in your school. It's a fear that I have been struggling with and that I will struggle with for a long time if people find out.*

When considering the religious and cultural schooling environment in which Ester resided, her reservations were reasonable. Many queer teachers are forced to conceal their queer identities and espouse heteronormative discourse in order to avoid jeopardising relationships with others in an already strenuous occupation (Thompson-Lee, 2017; Vann, 2012). This is especially true for queer male teachers who are often inaccurately mapped as paedophiles with perverted intentions (King, 2004).

> *Society still has, especially when it comes to teachers, if you are a teacher and you are gay, you must be a pervert, you know, that misperception and especially when you are a male teacher, that you are going to molest the little boys.* (Henk)

Despite heteronormative stereotypes about gay teachers having paedophilic intentions (Ferfolia & Hopkins, 2013; Martino, 2008; Petersen, 2014), there is no statistical evidence that they are any more prone to harming children than their heterosexual counterparts (Abel & Harlow, 2002; Jenny, Roesler, & Poyer, 1994). Participants voiced their awareness of certain South African schools as perilous terrains for queer teachers because of societal stigma.

Reverberations of school-based heterosexism. Even if queer teachers adjust well in heteronormative schooling environments, heterosexism still has remarkable after-effects on their school-based wellbeing, which also echoes into other domains of their lives. I considered the following subordinate themes to be the most noteworthy reverberations of school based heterosexism experienced by participants: 1) exclusion, silencing and othering of queer identities, 2) poor collegial and social relationships, 3) limited opportunities for professional development, and 4) higher workload.

Exclusion, silencing, and othering of queer identities.

> *A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.*
>
> —Brené Brown, *The Power of Vulnerability, 2011*

In some schools, an 'us versus them' binary, normalised heterosexuality, and complementary traditional gender-roles were evident, while queer identities were devaluated as pathological and subtly sanctioned through exclusion, silencing, and othering. The socially constructed practice of othering creates a binary relationship between a marginalised, subordinate group and a contrary, co-constructed dominant, privileged normative group (Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, & Suda, 2012). A hierarchical relationship is maintained by the

positioning of those who adhere to the heteronorm as normal and respectable, including those who conform to hetero-gendered norms to avoid being exposed as queer (Morrison, Mtshengu, Sandfort, & Reddy, 2016). Seven of the nine participants discussed their experiences of being excluded, silenced, and othered, while those who had not had such experiences expressed acknowledgement and concern about discrimination against queer teachers.

Joan believed that queer-related topics are generally considered inappropriate for discussion within South African schools, with a few exceptions in "*open-minded schools*". Participants viewed queer-related topics as inappropriate topics for discussion in schools and classrooms. They feared that such discussions might provoke questions about their personal lives. Internalised heterosexism, together with the fear of being perceived as promoters of the so called '*gay agenda*', kept them from any discussions that might have portrayed queer identities as acceptable diversifications of human sexuality and gender identity. Such silencing is distressing when considering that queer teachers may be especially important voices for inclusivity within education. In addition to being silenced, Anel was excluded due to her nonconformity to heteronormative expectations by colleagues who closed ranks against her. She managed her emotions resulting from this exclusion by prioritising her professional responsibility to her learners.

> *So my experience is that I do not allow myself to be troubled by it, on a professional level. My work gets done as it should. That's what I studied for. I have a love for children and that is all that motivates me to keep on going anyway and pretend everything is all right.*

Anel allowed herself to experience the emotions evoked by her colleagues, at home: "*…when you get home, you do feel a bit: 'Okay, who the hell do they think they are?' Yes, it affects you a little bit, but eventually you get over it*." Experiencing and accepting such

negative emotions is an imperative part of maintaining mental health (De Wall et al., 2011; Rodriguez, 2013). Unfulfilled desires of acceptance and inclusion of queer teachers may be a significant impediment to their flourishing in schools.

According to Rogers (2011), the Sodom and Gomorra account in the book of Genesis has, for the most part of biblical history, been interpreted as the condemnation of homosexual activity. By comparing herself to "*Sodom and Gomorra in the middle of the Vatican*", Ester accentuated the demonised status of queer identities and expressed her vulnerability in a fundamentalist Christian school.

Even participants who have not personally experienced exclusion or othering attest to the silencing of queer identities in their own or other South African schools. Leah spoke about her frustration with the school management's refusal to attend to suggested queer awareness projects, despite prioritising inclusion in the school ethos:

> *The pupils are very interested in starting a gender and sexuality support group and they have been blocked by the head. So the Life Orientation teacher, who really is keen to cover this kind of thing with them, and I together sent an email to him saying: "The girls are keen on doing this…um…and they've been told no. Can you explain your decision please?" And the email we got back had all the usual stuff in it about, you know: "We are a school that tolerates and accepts and loves everyone, so there's no need to go creating a specific group for those people and sexuality is one of those things that people are free to explore in their private domain". In other words it [discussions about sexual and gender diversity] doesn't belong in school…It's not considered an appropriate topic for school.*

Since she aspired to provide gender and sexuality training in schools in the future, her school's misdirected stance on protecting and promoting sexual and gender diversity frustrated her. Management accepted their legal and moral responsibility to protect and

support queer employees and learners, yet advocacy of queer inclusion remained a silenced topic that created discomfort. In a similar vein, Mariaan's school management neither discouraged nor confronted her for being queer; nor acknowledged it: "*The principal knows, but she doesn't talk about it. She doesn't say anything*." Unlike the previous case, the principal's motivation behind not acknowledging her sexuality is unknown. Yet, regardless of the motivation, such silencing has deprived Mariaan of forming meaningful relationships in which she could spontaneously express herself without filtering information about her personal life. In many instances, participants' otherness leads to self-doubt and feelings of inferiority. According to Fleet (2016), environments of heterosexual dominance and the pervasiveness of heteronormativity create cultures of silence for queer individuals, often engendering their negative self-perceptions and keeping them voiceless in the face of heterosexism. Barbra discussed one such incident where she felt that she had to remain silent in the face of heterosexist remarks, possibly due to fear of conflict and discrimination:

> *The remark I've most often heard people say is: "If you don't like sex you are sick in the head!" It has probably been said four or five times in my presence. Well, I guess I'm sick in the head then, thank you. Understand? You have to pose yourself. So you question yourself the whole time: 'Am I keeping a straight face? Am I revealing how I really feel? Am I supposed to say something, because this is totally ace-phobic!'*

Poor collegial and social relationships. A majority of participants expressed how being queer in heteronormative schooling environments damaged or inhibited the quality of their relationships with colleagues. Shah (2012) regards strong collegial relationships among schoolteachers as vital to teacher enhancement, including the augmentation of teacher professional development, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Mariaan reckoned that misconceptions of queer teachers' professionalism produced self-doubt that rendered

them disinclined to seek professional help and develop meaningful relationships with their schooling communities:

> *…it [being queer] may be perceived as unprofessional or you being unequipped to fulfil a certain task. I think it keeps you from having a possible enriching relationship with a colleague that has been taken away, because you might not have the boldness or self-confidence to be honest and open with them and then it gets taken away from you; a learning situation from a more knowledgeable person who could help you. I'd say it [being perceived as unprofessional] steals a bit of your happiness and comfort in your environment, you know? When you feel excluded you withdraw, because you don't feel welcome in your environment. So I think this causes you to, I don't want to say develop an identity crisis, but you will start questioning yourself.*

Having meaningful relationships with colleagues empower teachers to experience rich workplace interactions and learning, collegial problem solving, mentoring, coaching, and critical dialogue (Shah, 2012). Anel and Barbra's reasons for their poor relationships with colleagues differed slightly. While Anel had been rejected for being perceived as having stereotypical queer physical attributes, Barbra withdrew due to her unwillingness to be her authentic self in the presence of people who she perceived as too ignorant to understand or accept the complexities of her sexuality and gender identity. For the same reason, Ester avoided collegial interaction and fabricated personal information in the company of colleagues:

> *I keep distant as far as possible, because we are only seven teachers within the phase that I am teaching…Every day at school when they ask me questions about what's going on in my life, I tell them lie after lie after lie.*

Apart from her inability to relate to their heteronormative life experiences, constricted by and limited to heteronormative and fundamentalist Christian standards, she felt interrogated by their questions about her husband: "*All they ever talk about is their husbands and my husband, so I try to avoid it.*" She was unwilling to inform them about her failed marriage and the reasons behind it, as it would not have been welcomed with empathy and understanding. Joan disclosed her sexuality when asked about her assumed husband. Even though her HOD and colleagues' questions were mere attempts to get to know her better, their interest in her personal life disintegrated when they realised she does not abide by their heteronormative standards:

> *The greatest discomfort I have experienced was with my HOD…They asked me: "Your husband…?" They knew that I am married and then I replied: "Can I just say, it's my wife," and then my HOD looked at the other colleague that teaches with me like: 'What the hell?' and she just said nothing and I felt uncomfortable.*

Limited opportunities for professional development. Unsurprisingly, school-based heterosexism seemed to have been inhibiting some of the queer teachers' professional development opportunities. Joan realised at the outcome of her very first interview for a teaching job that heterosexism might inhibit her vocational aspirations. Joan feared for her professional future after the interview was cut short. She realised that she had to be subtle, silent, or dishonest to evade being victimised or overlooked for job opportunities or promotions. Anel believed that she had been excluded from organising an extramural activity due to speculations about her queer identity: "*They started with the arrangements for the revue and I am a huge culture person. I felt that I'm not good enough to be part of them, because they don't include me.*" By being overlooked or excluded, Anel had been deprived of opportunities for professional development. Koos's principal had cautioned him that he might face difficulties with professional development in the South African school system: "*The first*

time [awareness of heterosexism] was when my principal warned me that I would never be promoted in the schooling system, because of my sexual orientation." In spite of his professional skills, Koos has been denied many promotions he applied for, which he believed to be the result of heterosexism:

> *During those years I often applied for promotional posts, without being successful. Despite being a successful teacher…I had more than enough knowledge and leadership skills, but I was denied a promotion every single time, because of my sexual orientation that my principal had already been aware of.*

Not being considered for promotions was one of the far-reaching effects of workplace discrimination against queer employees (Van Niekerk, 2017), including queer teachers (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015). In a South African context, 21 % of queer employees have reported being discriminated against in pay, hiring, and promotions, while one out of every twenty-five complaints come from queer employees (Van Niekerk, 2017).

Higher workload. Barbra was of opinion that asexual teachers are particularly overburdened and exploited, while heterosexual teachers benefit from belonging to a traditional family unit. Even if unmarried teachers are not limited to asexuals and discrimination is not necessarily intentionally directed at asexual teachers, being discriminated against was still her reality:

> *As an asexual person I do not have a family to look after or a child I need to transport in the afternoons… We have a list of responsibilities and it's being weighed up against each other. Hours [for working] are assigned to those who have families and those who do not, so that one [a teacher without a family] can automatically spend more time than that one [teacher with a family] and so on. So at the end of the day I'm stuck with 13 extramural activities, while women with children only have 6*

> *extramural activities. And if you talk about it, it's like: 'Oh, but you don't have a husband and children so stop complaining.'*

As has been elucidated above, Barbra acknowledges that the expectancy of longer work hours is not the result of direct discrimination against asexual teachers, but rather a reverberation of heteronormative socialisation:

> *Like I've illustrated earlier, I am drowning in professional duties and I'm being [evaluated] against a higher standard, because: 'You have more time to get it perfect. What's wrong with you? Why are you giving me such a poor standard of work?' So I'm known at work as an overachiever, because if you don't meet up to their standards, they would say: "What's wrong with you? You're single. You don't have a husband. You don't have children." It's not necessarily ace-phobic, but it's incredibly personally attacking. So you tend to overachieve.*

From a heteronormative perspective, it is assumed that monogamous heterosexual couples and their offspring constitute healthy family unity (Snider, 2016). If it is true that married or partnered teachers benefit from being pardoned from responsibilities expected from single or asexual teachers, superiors undoubtedly perceived the heteronormative family unit as a natural progression in all employees' lives. Hence, allocating a higher workload to these participants was not perceived as discriminative, as they too would be excused from certain responsibilities when they start their own families. From a heteronormative perspective, not striving towards this ideal is unimaginable. They might even perceive asexual teachers as bringing these burdens upon themselves, as they could have chosen to have families. I considered being overburdened with a higher workload as a noteworthy subtheme despite Barbra being the only asexual participant. I am uncertain whether this is an idiosyncratic case or whether other asexual teachers might have similar experiences, as I was unable to locate any literature on the topic.

Psychological consequences. School-based heterosexism experienced by queer teachers had detrimental psychological consequences that paralleled findings by Griffin (1992), Endo et al. (2010), and Neary (2013). In fear of exposure and accompanied rejection, many participants restricted sharing information about their queer identities to their personal domains and portrayed acceptable public personas at school. Others resorted to self-isolation within their schooling environment. Participants' experience of heterosexism in unaccommodating and ignorant schooling communities engendered feelings of discomfort, irritation, frustration, hopelessness, and helplessness. Understandably, some participants suffered from mental illness.

Anxiety and/or fear. A majority of the study population have experienced either anxiety or fear related to heterosexism somewhere along their journeys as South African teachers. The terms fear and anxiety are sometimes interchangeably used as the conditions often occur together and symptoms typically overlap (Ankrom, 2018). Both function to signal 'danger, threat, or motivational conflict, and to trigger appropriate adaptive responses' (Steimer, 2002, p.234). Anxiety is an emotional response to an imprecise or unknown threat, and fear the response to a definite and immediate threat (Ankrom, 2018). Despite the subtle distinction between these natural adaptive conditions, anxiety becomes pathological when it constrains effective coping with stressful life events and alters body conditions (Steimer, 2002). Mariaan felt anxious about the possibility of being persecuted: "*I am very hesitant about sharing [information related to her queer identity] with them…there are some teachers who wouldn't approve*." Henk believed that queer teachers' constant fear of exposure encumbers their professional duties and opportunities for growth: "*That fear [of being exposed] creates anxiety to such an extent that your work is affected by it, because you constantly have to look over your shoulder.*" Ester fitted this description as she was constantly vigilant and anxious about the possibility of exposure. In some instances, she had

been confronted with a definite, known, and immediate threat, yet in other instances, she anticipated exposure simply if she were to support queer learners: "*Because why did I identify it? It [her queer identity] will immediately be out and open. They would immediately start asking questions.*" When considering her schools' conservative religious ethos, a fear of being perceived as a queer ally and reprimanded for it is understandable. However, it is irrational to believe that merely supporting queer learners would inform others about her sexual orientation. Her fear of being exposed made her over-cautious of supporting queer rights. Nevertheless, it is reasonable of her to fear exposure if her community truly perceived queer identities as she believed them to:

> *…because the word clearly says that I have to be stoned. I have to change my lifestyle. I have to lay down my desires. I have to change who and what I am, because it's a sin in God's eyes and I will never be admitted into the kingdom of God.*

Nevertheless, the enduring nature of the fear she experienced has immensely inhibited her personal and professional wellbeing. Even Leah, who was self-confident and advocated against heteronormative standards at the time of the interview, had initially also experienced anxiety about being accompanied by a same-sex partner to a school function:

> *You know, I've sometimes wondered whether, sort of the first time I took that partner to the matric dance, I was the first person to ever take a same-sex partner to the matric dance and I wondered how it would go down. You know? I felt a little bit anxious with [being a queer couple]…that day.*

Regardless thereof, she took the leap of being the first teacher to take a same-sex partner to the dance and has since been accompanied by her same-sex partner annually: "*Once we were there it was perfectly fine and I've taken someone ever since*." Leah's anxious reaction was a natural adaptive response. In fact, it can naturally be expected that being exposed as queer in a sea of heteronormativity would amplify vigilance, even if the threat is imprecise.

Concealment or secrecy of queer identity. A prominent subtheme that has emerged is queer teachers' concealment of their queer identities due to fear of jeopardising their careers in education. Vann (2012, p. 35) describes the process of individuals unveiling their queer identities as "a long and hard progression", primarily because of assumed heterosexuality. Queer teachers find this progression even harder, since opposing forces often perceive them as ruthless role models and recruiters of learners to follow the so-called "homosexual lifestyle" (Vann, 2012). However, disclosure of their queer identities has psychological benefits for teachers and may enable them to be positive queer role models to learners (Lecky, 2009).

Joan and Samantha advise queer teachers to be heedful of their interviewers' attitudes toward queer teachers during job interviews. Samantha suggested that queer teachers be discreet until they have familiarised themselves with the schooling environment, as disclosure may lead to prejudiced judgement during job interviews:

> *I'd say, don't like walk into the interview and be like: "Hi, I'm so and so and I'm gay". Don't. That's not the way to go, because you don't know how the school views the LGBT community. You don't know how the principal feels about it. It could harm your chances of getting the job. First be there, feel out the situation, look at the staff, see how they would react possibly, find out if maybe someone has gay family members or have there been gay teachers there before and stuff, before you come out. If you get bad vibes and you're just like: 'No, this is not going to work', then rather just stay in the closet. Keep it quiet.*

When Joan was asked questions about her fiancé by interviewers who assumed it had to be a man, she responded by saying: "*She is 'n lecturer at the North-West University*". Due to the discomfort her reply evoked, they immediately terminated the interview. As a result, Joan

decided that she could never again reveal her queer identity in job interviews, even if she had to tell lies:

> *As things progressed naturally I immediately made the decision not to talk about my sexuality during interviews. I am going to avoid it as far as possible and if that question comes up, I'll lie and say: 'He does this and that', which is wrong*.

In order for Joan to have the same opportunities as heterosexual teachers, she has been forced to be inauthentic and dishonest. Contrary to what participants advised, McGuire (2017) found it beneficial to be upfront about her queer identity during teaching interviews, as it allowed the interviewee to decline her application and ultimately keep her from working in uncomfortable, heterosexist school environments. However, in a South African context, this might not necessarily be a viable solution due to work scarcity and a large number of religion-dominated schools. In order to minimise adverse interview experiences, Joan advised that queer teachers enlighten themselves about school communities' attitudes towards queer identities prior to applying: "*If you have an interview at a school, make sure you know what kind of school you are going to.*"

When a queer teacher has been employed, some participants suggested that they disclose their identities to their school communities, while others acknowledged that it is not always possible, depending on the specific school milieu. Nevertheless, all participants wholeheartedly agreed that authenticity is beneficial to queer teacher wellbeing. Henk had been fortunate enough to have been embraced by his schooling community members at both schools he taught at:

> *In my case, I have been very privileged. At the school that I am teaching at now and at the previous one I have been open, from the start, about who I am and I was totally accepted. I never felt any antagonism or anything from anybody.*

He advised other queer teachers to disclose their queer identities so as to benefit from the same freedom he has experienced and to inspire change, regardless of personal challenges that result from it:

> *My advice is to be honest about who you are from day one. It will be difficult in some situations, depending on the type of school where you are at, but the longer we hide who we are, the more difficult it will be for the next guy. Gradually the ice has to be broken and thankfully our society is gradually becoming more open-minded.*

Joan and Mariaan also encouraged authenticity, yet paradoxically advised queer teachers to be cautious about the content they discuss and who they share it with:

> *Just try to be yourself, but also try to always protect yourself; only because this is not a topic that everybody feels comfortable with yet. It's still a taboo, so be careful of what you share with colleagues or learners or friends at school or whoever*. (Joan)
>
> *Just be comfortable with yourself from the beginning and people who can relate to you will accept you, but be careful who you speak to and be selective… before jumping in and saying: "Hey, I'm gay!"* (Mariaan)

Similar to Ester, experiences of heterosexism that constrained Barbra from revealing her true gender identity extended beyond the borders of her schooling community. Her school is a mere microcosm of a broader community in which she feels obligated to perform according to heteronormative expectations of gender expression. Thus, despite having a transgender identity, she expresses herself as a female:

> *I've done a lot of psychological tests and games before. Most of their tests revealed my brain to be masculine. So I have a lot of masculine character and personality traits that traditionally would have been considered to be male traits, even though my body is female. To me, gender-fluid is mostly a matter of: 'I know my body is female and I have no choice but to live with it, because in this town there is no other option,*

> *but I know my brain is not female. I know I don't meet the social standards of women.'*

Some participants who comfortably revealed their queer identities to colleagues deemed it inappropriate to share similar information with learners:

> *Learners do not have to know about my sexuality, simply because I am the teacher. What I do in my bedroom or in my house has nothing to do with them, so I generally avoid such questions with them.* (Joan)
>
> *You don't talk to your kids about such things, in terms of intense personal examples, because it is unprofessional. I can't tell my kids that I am asexual, because it is unprofessional. However, I can tell them that it is okay to be asexual.* (Barbra)
>
> *I'm open to the colleagues, but to learners, definitely not. Because we mainly teach African children, their culture specifically is also very close minded towards gay people, so I prefer not to have any issues with parents…So I'd rather not come out to the kids, at all.* (Samantha)

These participants' motives for concealing their queer identities from their learners differed slightly. Joan and Barbra believed it to be unprofessional or inappropriate, while Samantha feared being discriminated against. I am curious as to whether participants would have the same reservations if they were heterosexual teachers. Teachers should of course have personal boundaries and reservations when it comes to sharing personal information, depending on context and professional restrictions. However, it seems unthinkable to me that heterosexual teachers would compartmentalise their professional and personal lives with such rigid boundaries, since disclosure holds many benefits and heterosexuality is socially normalised.

Self-disclosure encourages classroom participation (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), learner motivation, and teacher credibility when it is not negatively received (Cayanus &

Martin, 2008). Additionally, when used as a teaching method, it may humanise teachers to their learners so as to encourage dialogue of social justice issues (Haddad, 2013). Seeing that teachers' professional identities should be positioned within the affects and climates or their schools (Haddad, 2013), negotiating queer and professional identities poses many challenges. As a result, many participants seemed to rather live with separated, compartmentalised personal and professional identities. Unfortunately, because participants could not find spaces in their schooling contexts where their queer identities were valued or acknowledged, they experienced 'identity-incongruence' (Haddad, 2013, p. 80). For Barbra, Joan, and Samantha, the abovementioned benefits of self-disclosure possibly could not fully be realised, as their heteronormative school context inhibited them from achieving identity-congruence. Mariaan seemed to feel indifferent about self-disclosure of her queer identity to learners. Without having disclosed any information, she trusted that some were well aware of her queer identity, while others might have suspected it, because of the way she expressed herself:

> *I don't necessarily think that it [self-disclosure] is important. Some of the learners know about my sexuality, some came to ask me about it, and others just assumed, because of how I talked in class. Probably my attitude in class or the way I express myself confirmed it to them. So some are aware, but I don't think everybody knows.*

Self-isolation. To avoid social stigma and exposure to judgemental audiences, individuals physically and/or psychologically isolate themselves from networks of needed or desired relationships (Biordi & Nicholson, 2013). In the case of this study, individuals might be stigmatised not necessarily because of visible obscurities, but because of their unconventional perceptions. Consequently, participants within heterosexist schooling environments either conceal their queer identities by fabricating socially acceptable versions of who they are, or isolate themselves.

Some participants withdrew themselves from social opportunities with colleagues because of expected or, in some cases, experienced rejection:

> *At the end of the day I don't hang out with the staff. Never! I'm going away the weekend we're having our work function, so that I don't have to attend it.* (Barbra)
>
> *After that conversation [homophobic remarks made by a colleague] I no longer knew who stood with me and who didn't, so I started feeling uncomfortable between my colleagues and withdrew myself to the safety of my classroom.* (Koos)
>
> *I distance myself as far as possible…* (Ester)
>
> *When you feel excluded you withdraw, because you don't feel welcome in your environment*. (Mariaan)

These participants regarded attempts to form deeper social bonds with and explaining themselves to colleagues, who have been socialised to perceive through an unyielding, heteronormative lens, as senseless. Their self-isolation was motivated by distrust in their colleagues' intentions.

Religion-based discrimination prompted self-isolation. The "clobber passages" (Hornsby, 2017, p. 73) refer to a collection of regularly used texts that are erroneously used by conservative Christians to pronounce homosexual individuals as sinners in need of salvation. These biblical passages include 'Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1: 26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10' (Hornsby, 2017, p.73). After a colleague quoted biblical passages to reveal her resentment of what she perceived to be his homosexual lifestyle, Koos isolated himself from his colleagues. This experience brought about feelings of distrust in his colleagues' intentions and attitudes toward him. Koos was not the only participant whose self-isolation was inspired by colleagues' religious prejudice. Ester justified her self-isolation by comparing herself to "*Sodom and Gomorra in the middle of the Vatican*", accentuating her vulnerability in a fundamentalist Christian school that demonised

queer identities. According to Rogers (2011), the Sodom and Gomorra account in the book Genesis has, for the most part of biblical history, been interpreted as the condemnation of homosexual activity. In her colleagues' presence, she was forced to create a fabricated, socially acceptable version of herself, which frustrated and exhausted her: "*I can't even tell you how many times I've almost…[said something that may expose her as queer]. I can't open my mouth. I have to lie the whole time!*"

Anel recognised that working collaboratively is indispensable for the creation of a professional and operational teaching environment, yet preferred to be taciturn and reserved throughout conversations with colleagues. She felt excluded and unwelcome in their presence: "*I learned to keep it short and sweet in instances where I felt like I invaded their spaces. We only talk when we have to, keep it professional in front of the kids, set examples of professionalism.*" At her own expense, she avoided confronting them over the way they treated her to avoid provoking conflict that may disintegrate the quality of their collegial relationship: "*It is senseless to work against each other, especially in this profession where you have to support them [learners].*" Because asexuality oftentimes goes unnoticed or is not considered to be a sexual orientation, Barbra generally felt excluded from the queer community. Barbra was surprised that she had been included in a study about queer teachers. According to Canning (2015, p. 56) "queer spaces" are often identity-specific, leaving those who are not considered to be queer, excluded. This leaves asexual people with a limited number of spaces to discuss or explore their identity.

Discomfort and frustration. Participants' discomfort and frustration have been observed not only in some of the discourse analyses, but also in their body language and tone of voice. Within this study, frustration can essentially be attributed to a seeming lack of control over heteronormativity and experiences of heterosexism. The sources of participants' discomfort differed. Anel experienced discomfort resulting from colleagues' judgement of

her physical appearance. Koos withdrew himself from his colleagues after some homophobic remarks produced feelings of distrust and discomfort in their presence.

For Ester, being unable to unmask the persona she was forced to wear at school brought about a great deal of frustration and discomfort. Without any internal support system, the inflexible heteronormative standards she was expected to conform to and the consequential discomfort and frustration created by them left her helpless and vulnerable in her school context. Barbra's was frustration with having to explain herself for not being interested in a romantic or sexual relationship and the ignorant comments that followed:

> "*I can't tell people that I'm asexual, because at the end of the day I would have to explain and then I am being told: "Oh no, just wait for the right man to get you". That and I have been on a few forums where psychologists tell a person who is ace [asexual]: "No, don't worry. I just think you should go for sex therapy."*

When Mariaan was asked to elaborate on the feelings created by experiences of heteronormativity in her school, she emphasised feelings of discomfort. Such feelings were not solely related to being othered, but also to internalised heterosexism:

> *I'd say it [being perceived as unprofessional] steals a bit of your happiness and comfort in your environment, you know? When you feel excluded you withdraw, because you don't feel welcome in your environment. So I think this causes you to…I don't want to say develop an identity crisis, but you will start questioning yourself.*

Leah singled out discomforts produced by heteronormative school environments as the most significant obstacle queer teachers have to face: "*I think that there are schools which are very uncomfortable places for those [queer] teachers.*" Throughout her interview, she spoke about discomfort people experience around queer-related topics. As has been postulated in a previous section, the discrepancy between the inclusive ethos of her school and the failed implementation thereof frustrated her. Nevertheless, Leah shifted focus from the problem of

experienced heterosexism to a solution of queer teachers confronting their inner discomforts. She had mastered the pacification of the negative emotional consequences of experienced heterosexism by prioritising advocacy of social justice for queer schooling communities and challenging the status quo: "*I'm very passionate about social justice issues, so I very easily speak up for a lot of things that, you know, people wouldn't normally talk about or feel uncomfortable [with] or whatever.*" Leah advocated for self-acceptance and recommended that queer teachers be comfortable with themselves, even when challenged with experiences of heterosexism.

Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. More than half of the study participants expressed their perceived lack of control over their heteronormative schooling environments, together with their expectancies of aversive outcomes. The concepts of hopelessness and helplessness have consistently appeared in clinical explanations of depression (Halberstadt, Andrews, Metalsky, & Abramson, 1984). The hopelessness theory of depression hypothesises that depression is caused by individuals' negative expectations about exceedingly valued outcomes or exceedingly aversive outcomes as beyond their control (Abramson, Alloy, & Rosof, 1981). Barbra's efforts to explain asexuality to her community disheartened her. She believed heteronormative indoctrination to be irreversible and therefore misrepresented or masked her true identity to avoid being pestered with uncomfortable questions.

> *I can't change their stance, just like a homosexual learner can't change a homophobic person's attitude or brain. You just can't! It's an unstoppable force and an immovable object. It will never work. Because these are obscure things, you always have to explain yourself…So at this stage I'm like: I'm a spinster. I'm not interested. Bye!*

According to Liu, Kleiman, Nestor, and Cheek (2015) the hopelessness theory of depression posits that the attribution of negative life events to internal, stable, and global

causes increased the likelihood of the development of depression. Barbra attributed negative life events to external causes, namely heteronormative socialisation, yet perceived them as stable and global. She believed the situation was unalterable and would negatively impact all domains of her life. Likewise, Ester believed heterosexism to be irreversible, as it has been ingrained in cultural and religious practices of many South Africans; particularly her fundamentalist schooling community. Having been raised with similar religious beliefs has left her with no faith in the possibility that conversations about queer inclusivity might produce any meaningful change for queer community members:

> *I was raised in a reformed church and those who know the reformed teachings will understand how conservative they are… There is no room for discussions or debates or anything about… They won't give in to other interpretations [about homosexuality], as some churches do. So they are very narrow-minded and will never depart from what they believe.*

Until recently, Ester attributed her negative life experiences, such as being unable to live authentically, to internal causes. She felt obligated to conform to the heteronormative religious standards of the community she grew up in. Thus, she believed her homosexual attraction was pathological and married a man in an effort to heal her homosexuality:

> *I firmly believed marrying a man was the right thing to do, as the word of God demands… So the norm was to start working, to meet the man that you would get engaged to, marry and to have children. I had my first experience with a woman at varsity and when I got back to my hometown I realised: 'Goodness, no! This is not what God had planned for me' and then I told the guy who I married that I am gay, but that God had healed me. We then got married and now, two or three years into our marriage, I realised that I can't go on like this.*

After making peace with her queer identity, Ester no longer attributed her negative life experiences to internal factors. However, she perceived her experiences of school-based heterosexism as a stable issue that affects all aspects of her life. She was convinced that all schools in her community would reject her if her sexuality was to be exposed or disclosed. Thus, even though she managed to accept herself, she felt vulnerable and helpless in her schooling situation and community at large:

> *No teacher will admit that they are gay in this community I live in. Nobody would, because nobody would appoint you in the first place, because that is not the type of person you would want to expose your children to. At schools [in her community] they are explicitly saying: 'We don't tolerate homosexuality.'*

Moreover, Ester explained the frustration and complete powerlessness she felt for not being able to offer support to queer learners. Having been raised in the same community as her queer learners enabled her to have profound compassion and empathy with their circumstances. Nevertheless, her inability to support these learners who were trapped in an unaccommodating schooling milieu left her saddened and powerless:

> *I can only stand powerless at the school where I am at now… That [queer] child will never just reach out to someone and talk to them. At least not in this type of school, because the teachers will immediately say: "No. You have to confess your sins. It's a sin. There's something wrong with you." So sometimes it saddens you.*

Joan developed a sense of hopelessness and regret for studying education, after being rejected at her first job interview:

> *I went home [after her first interview as a teacher] and I cried my eyes out. I told my fiancé: "My love, I don't know if this was the right move. I wasted four years, because I can't teach in such an environment. Will I ever be able to teach, because of my sexuality?"*

Yet, despite her initial feelings of hopelessness, she found happiness and hope in a queer-inclusive school. When negative life events are reduced and positive life events increased, the stress components are undermined, resulting in decreased expectations of hopelessness and possible depression (Halberstadt et al., 1984).

Mental illness. Barbra and Ester were the only participants who opened up about clinically diagnosed mental health issues, which they believe were invoked by their heteronormative schooling experiences. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5) defines a mental disorder as follows (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 20): "A mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in a psychological, biological or developmental process underlying mental functioning." Queer people are disproportionately prone to mental illness (Leon, 2017). Poor mental health among queer individuals can be attributed to numerous factors, including inequalities and discrimination (Mental Health Foundation, 2018). While a majority of the study participants acknowledged that heterosexism had or may have had a detrimental effect on their own or other queer teachers' wellbeing, two participants revealed that they indeed suffered from mental illnesses. I recognise that no assumptions can be made about a direct correlation between these participants' experiences of heterosexism and their suffering from mental disorders. However, these participants believed their experiences of heteronormativity were somehow to blame.

Ester admitted to never have felt the same attraction towards her husband as she had towards women, but was conflicted about a perceived religious obligation to lay down her homosexual desires and adopt a heterosexual lifestyle. These realisations led to the development of clinical depression and various suicide attempts:

> *I always thought about, even though it was not really an intimate relationship, about what I had at university. I always thought about how much more I reacted when I was with her, compared to when I was with him and then I got depressed. I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital a few times after I tried committing suicide. I tried committing suicide a few times. So at the end of the day it came down to my psychiatrist and psychologist confirming that I am suppressing it and that I am homosexual.*

The mental health professional who worked with her described the day she accepted herself as a queer woman as a defining moment in her life:

> *Apparently the big turning point in my life was when I accepted that I am homosexual and that I therefore decided to get divorced. Yet here I am in my school situation, where I can't be honest that I have accepted that I am homosexual.*

Unfortunately, despite eventually resolving the internal guilt she had felt about her same-sex desires by coming to terms with her sexuality, Ester felt constricted by her unaccommodating, heterosexist schooling community. Barbra recognised that unintentional heterosexism created working conditions such as a higher workload for unmarried teachers that led to the deterioration of her psychological wellbeing:

> *The fact of the matter is, the moment you become buried in work, especially when you were already prone to anxiety and stress as a child, your anxiety increases. Currently I am experiencing relatively serious anxiety attacks. It's not yet at the level of panic attacks, but I sit with really serious anxiety attacks. I have insomnia and I have relative serious depression. Needless to say, the depression is a combination of circumstances that triggers a chemical imbalance in your brain. But the fact is, I attribute my level of depression at this stage to being completely overworked, exhausted, burned out, anxious and sleepless.*

Yule, Morag, Brotto, and Gorzalka (2013) found that asexual participants responded disproportionately positively to questions related to mood and anxiety disorders, compared to other queer participants. It is speculated that, apart from experienced marginalisation for being queer, they may further be stigmatised for not experiencing sexual attraction (Deutsch, 2018). As has been mentioned previously, assigning larger workloads to single or unmarried teachers was probably not deliberately aimed at inconveniencing some employees. From a heteronormative perspective, it seems justifiable to expect more from single teachers, as they may also choose to have families.

Queer Teacher Adjustments

Queer teachers rely on different combinations of virtues, defence mechanisms, support systems, and protective factors to help them adjust well within their schools. These adjustments were noticeable across all nine cases and structured into the following subordinate themes: 1) defence mechanisms, 2) self-acceptance and social perspective taking, 3) religiosity and/or spirituality as protective factors, 4) queer consciousness and knowledge, 5) queer teachers as unique role players in schools, and 6) a psychological sense of community. The frequency of each of these themes and their subordinate themes has been assembled within Table 1.3 (see Appendix J).

Defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms are involuntary and innate regulatory processes intended to diminish cognitive dissonance and unexpected changes in external and internal environments by altering perceivers' perceptions of these events (Vaillant, 1994). From a psychoanalytic perspective, psychological defence mechanisms are crucial for maintaining emotional homeostasis as it functions to attenuate negative emotions in order to restore or maintain a healthy state of mind (Bowins, 2004; Gerson, 2018). While more primitive defence mechanisms including denial, regression, acting out, dissociation, compartmentalisation, projection, and reaction formation have high short-term effectiveness,

mature defence mechanisms including sublimation, compensation, and assertiveness are constructive and helpful (Grohol, 2017).

Some participants used mature defence mechanisms as means of coping with adverse experiences of heteronormativity in their schools. Henk used humour to mitigate queerphobic attitudes and/or behaviour. His light-hearted use of self-mockery in the staffroom reduced the discomfort created by queerphobia:

> *Every morning with our staff meeting, I'd say maybe three out of the five days of the week when we have a meeting, there will be some or other joke made [by Henk] about it [queer stereotypes]. For example, the other day they talked about the theme of our upcoming senior dance and it's going to be the great Gatsby, so I asked: "Listen, will you mind if I go in a dress? I can already see myself with the sequins," and it was one big joke.*

Humour is a form of sublimation, where unacceptable thoughts, emotions, or impulses are channelled or the intensity of a situation reduced through laughter (Grohol, 2017). In another instance, Henk used the same defence mechanism to diminish some of his male colleagues' discomfort: "*There was one or two, especially male teachers that felt a bit intimidated, until one day when I told the one guy: 'Listen man, you know there's no need to be afraid of me. You're not my type.*"

Anel resorted to suppression to cope with the unwanted emotions produced by being othered. According to the Institute of Clinical Hypnosis and Related Sciences (2017), suppression is a useful psychological defence mechanism where unwanted information is forced from awareness to avoid being disrupted by the impulses such information produce. Thus, Anel evaded the conscious feelings, thoughts, or behaviours that naturally accompanied her experiences of heterosexism in order to focus and avoid interferences with her professional responsibilities:

> *It doesn't really influence me, because you [a teacher] are supposed to separate your professional and personal lives. So my experience is that I do not allow myself to be troubled by it, on a professional level. My work gets done as it should. That's what I studied for. I have a love for children and that is all that motivates me to keep on going anyway and pretend everything is all right.*

Suppression is highly associated with mental health, seeing that emotional conflict is dealt with through stoicism, where wishes are postponed rather than ignored and disturbing experiences are subjectively minimised rather than ignored (Vaillant, 1994). Even though Anel did not entertain feelings, thoughts, or behaviours that might have been responses to heterosexism in her schooling context, she allowed herself to process her emotions in a manner she deemed appropriate. She had not been unaffected by heterosexism, but postponed dealing with the unwanted emotions it produced: "*When you go home you feel: 'Okay, who the hell they think they are?' It gets to you a little bit, but eventually you get over it.*"

Leah recounted directly addressing learners who made queerphobic remarks since she was fervent about educating and advocating for queer equality. However, she deemed it futile to be distressed by each and every queerphobic comment made at school. Therefore, she suppressed the feelings that such remarks provoked:

> *I know it happens. I'm comfortable enough with myself that it's not important enough to go and cry in the bathroom. I wasn't all that upset, but I really just wanted to set him straight, at the moment. I need them to know that it's not okay and if he remembers it after that day or not, doesn't matter.*

Denial was the defence mechanism Ester used. The fear and shame produced by not living according to what she then believed God had planned for her life led to Ester denying her queer identity; as previously discussed, she decided to marry a man to conform to her perception of God's will. Denial is a primitive defence mechanism, characteristic of early

childhood development that keeps individuals from accepting or dealing with feelings or aspects of their lives in order to avoid the painful realities they provoke (Vaillant, 1994). Growing up in a fundamentalist Christian community which subliminally encouraged heteronormativity and condemned homosexuality burdened Ester with guilt and fear. In order to be accepted as an esteemed member of her community, she had no other choice but to conform to their heteronormative, fundamentalist Christian standards. The maturity of a defence mechanism seems to be strongly related to participants' acceptance of their queer identities. The primitive defence mechanisms used were reactions to anticipated heterosexism or internalised heterosexism.

Self-acceptance and social perspective taking.

Because one believes in oneself, one doesn't try to convince others. Because one is content with oneself, one doesn't need others' approval.

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, 1868

Cass (1979) suggests that homosexual individuals progress through six stages of identity confusion, comparison, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and synthesis, which facilitate a process of identity change and self-acceptance. The final stage involves the integration of individuals' queer identity with other identities and aspects of themselves (Haddad, 2013). I acknowledge the limitations of this linear model that is too reductive to capture the complexities involved in queer identity negotiation (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996) and does not take the role of context into account (Herek, 2013). Yet this model sufficiently demonstrates that queer individuals need to negotiate and dissolve various internal and external conflicts in order to develop self-acceptance or identity-congruence. Participants found themselves at different stages of this process, yet a majority located their queer identities in the stages of acceptance, pride, and synthesis. These participants seemed to have had numerous life experiences that empowered them to adjust their perceptions,

attitudes, and behaviour in their heterosexist schooling environments to their advantage. Despite some internal struggles, most rejected or questioned the inferior positions bestowed upon them by heteronormative socialisation. Leah's identity pride was apparent. As a teacher, instead of being disturbed by the heterosexism she observed in her school, she chose only to be mindful of it: "*I wouldn't say that any of those experiences made me feel victimised or excluded. I really just noticed them.*" Even if she had been aware of school-based heterosexism as a pre-service teacher, she still would have chosen to face heteronormative adversities in schools in order to challenge the status quo:

> *I think that it [the effects of heterosexism] might have crossed my mind if I'd been a young person, considering becoming a teacher, but I think that I would have decided that I didn't care and they were going to have to accept me like I was and that I was going to make a space where pupils, perhaps, could have different school experiences than I have had.*

Similarly, Henk was disinclined to compromise his authenticity in order to deflect school-based heterosexism. He prioritised his long-term wellbeing over being accepted by his schooling community by bravely proclaiming his rights as a queer teacher:

> *I decided that if I have to go to school functions, I am not going to leave my spouse at home, just because I am gay. So I went to the principal. My first move was to tell him: "Listen, I know what my constitutional rights are.*"

Prolonged exposure to heteronormativity had desensitised Henk to the negative effects and consequences thereof. His strongly developed self-concept and self-acceptance protected him. If he had not been able to discern the sensibility of emotionally detaching himself from others' heterosexist opinions, he might not have adjusted as well to his schooling environment as he had. Having been forced by circumstances to be married to a woman for 27 years cultivated a deeper understanding of the value of authentic living:

> *I was fortunate enough, because I lived under a cloak in a heterosexual community for years, to have developed a thick skin. So it [heterosexist remarks] didn't bother me, but I know it would have bothered somebody who didn't stand so firmly in their identity. It really could hurt.*

Eventually, Henk was accepted and supported by his schooling community. Even those who originally experienced discomfort became contented with his sexuality after he used humour to dissolve the queerphobia they experienced. He was of the opinion that the specific historic context enabled queer teachers to progress towards self-acceptance with fewer complications than they would have in the past: "*Luckily we are in a time where we can disclose who we are without feeling guilty, no matter in which profession they stand.*" Yet he acknowledged that queer self-acceptance is naturally accompanied by some form of internal hardship: "*Nobody in their right mind would choose to be gay. Who would want to live a fearful and false life?*" Throughout his interview, he showed a remarkable sense of pride in being a queer teacher. He advised that queer teachers proclaim their own spaces in their schools without being apologetic of feeling inferior:

> *My advice to queer teachers would be: "Be yourself!" It is time for us [queer teachers] to admit who we are, without feeling guilty. When you do not hide anything from yourself or the world out there, you get that feeling of freedom*.

Anel clearly communicated her rejection of sexuality and/or gender identity categories. She accepted all parts of who she was and expressed herself accordingly: "*No, I don't label myself at all. I am Anel and what you see is what you get*." Even though Anel's sexuality and gender identity deviated from the heteronorm, she refused to abide by constructions of what normality encompasses: "*I am normal, because I never felt comfortable with being different and trying to blend in with society.*" To both Anel and Henk, living inauthentically in order to adhere to heteronormative expectations produced greater

discomfort than being considered misfits in heteronormative societies. They embraced their individuality despite being minorities in their schooling communities.

Barbra revealed that she felt indifferent about being miscategorised, since revealing her true identity would have provoked uncomfortable questions:

> *It's very much a question of: 'Oh, look at her, she's a precious snowflake', in the sense that: 'Oh, she couldn't find a man and now she's trying to convince everyone that she's not interested'. Which is fabulous, you know? Aces [asexual persons] go for it!*

Unlike persons in some of the other queer categories who may need to hide or fabricate information about their personal lives, asexual individuals easily evade heterosexist confrontation. Heteronormative ignorance did not hinder her self-worth and self-acceptance as an asexual person whatsoever. Barbra understood and accepted that her schooling environment was not and may never be utopian. She was insightful about that which she was able to control, that over which she had limited control, and that which she should not be upset by due to it being out of her control. "*If you are a troll, you are a troll. If you are going to be ace-phobic, I can't do anything about an ace-phobic person…But how you react to it, is what you have control over.*"

Some participants showed an ability to decipher the perceptions, affect, and cognition of those who have been socialised by heteronormativity and the standards of a unique schooling situation. This allowed them not only to develop a deeper sense of understanding of an opposing worldview, but also greater awareness of their own prejudices and mindfulness of their reactions. Perspective taking constitutes a conscious process, modifiable by awareness and training, where the social perspective of another person is explicitly represented by means of one's emotional and cognitive resources (Roan et al., 2009).

Ester acknowledged her own prejudices and preconceived ideas when previously generalising that all Afrikaner schools demonise homosexuality. She understood her extreme schooling situation to be an anomaly:

> *I'm not saying that every Afrikaner school has a mindset of homosexuality being equal to Satanism. Okay, if you take the whole community [South African schooling community], surely including schools from the Cape, English private schools, all schools, then I have to say that I don't think all schools are this close-minded.*

Ester believed that any learnt behaviour, attitudes, or perceptions may be reconsidered or adapted when challenged. Thus, ignorance disappears when people become educated:

> *If 25 years ago we had a whole Afrikaans community that struggled not to use the word k…r [offensive word referring to black African people], whereas today we have people who are extremely excited about adopting black children, even though their parents reject it, I believe… I hope two generations from now that the Afrikaners could maybe change their attitudes [towards queer individuals].*

Barbra understood her colleagues to be ignorant rather than intentionally hostile towards queer identities. The ability to take on their social perspectives allowed her to develop compassion with and tolerance for opposing views:

> *The teachers work really hard at trying to accept you. I'm talking of what I've observed and not experienced, because my experience was different. Like I said earlier, not because I think they were deliberately cool, but people are not always aware of asexuality and therefore they are not always aware of aphobic remarks. So many people in our town don't know people of the queer community, so they don't know what homophobia or biphobia or aphobia is. So they make ignorant remarks, but they are always willing to learn.*

Even though Leah never hesitated to address school-based heterosexism, she had developed a sense of compassion for those indoctrinated to perceive through heteronormative lenses. She perceived heteronormativity, a social construction, as the true opponent of inclusivity, instead of the people who had been socialised to live according to its principles:

> *So if I could wave my magic wand back [and undo social constructions related to heteronormativity]…not just in schools, everywhere! You know the idea that being queer is un-African. All of those ideas that we have to battle.*

Religiosity and/or spirituality as protective factors.

> *As a candle cannot burn without fire, so man cannot live without a spiritual force.*
>
> —Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1987

For Anel, religion played an important role in the self-acceptance of her queer identity: "*God created all of us… The Lord doesn't make mistakes and He makes you the way you are for a reason, whether it is to help people or support children [which she believed to be her God-given calling].*" She believed being a queer teacher permitted her to play a unique but necessary role in the lives of her learners. Dissimilar to her personal experiences of a religion-based schooling community rejecting and even demonising queer identities, Ester firmly believed that religion may also potentially promote love and inclusivity in schools: "*Yes, religion is practised in public schools, but there are schools that practise Christianity in the form of love and not judgement. So yes, I believe there will be people who will receive me in love.*" On a personal level, she believed that queer individuals may reconcile their queer and religious identities and use it to contest heterosexism:

> *If you are a believer and you have made peace with your interpretation of the Bible and you stand in a relationship with God and you are an Afrikaner and you go to a small town school, where there are preconceived ideas about homosexuality, be the difference, even if it means you cannot live openly.*

Koos rejected the notion of queer teachers being fated to be victims of experienced heteronormativity in schools, and motivated other queer teachers to live authentically and not to be faced by adversity as long as they have made peace with their maker: "*Somewhere in this cruel world, confusing world, he or she will find a safe harbour, because at the end of the day it is a matter between God and you. You feel freed. The truth is out!*"

Queer-consciousness and -knowledge. Queer-consciousness may be a plausible solution for countering the seemingly ubiquitous queerphobia of South Africans (Scott, 2014). It entails queer individuals' understanding of sexual diversity, knowledge of the naturality of being queer, and being comfortable with their own and others' sexual and gender identities (Scott, 2014). Within this study, all participants accepted being queer as natural and inherent parts of their identities. While it took some participants time to discard internalised heteronormativity, all of them eventually made peace with being queer. Queer consciousness entails more than transitory verbal assertions against false constructions of queerness, but should reverberate into individuals' actions, life approaches, and the manner in which they take pride in their identities as both queer individuals and queer community members (Scott, 2014). Prior to conducting the interviews, I introduced relevant terminology to each participant. When asked if they understood the meaning of the concepts, all participants were able to provide roughly accurate definitions. Additionally, they often used queer jargon and described complex queer-related concepts that evidenced their understanding of the complexity of sexuality and gender identity. At the outset of each interview, participants were asked to describe their sexual or gender identities, to which most gave detailed well-informed descriptions. Their self-knowledge suggested that they have done introspection, reached out to queer communities, and/or studied information related to sexuality and gender. The construct of self-curiosity denotes individuals' interests and tendencies to explore their inner functioning (Aschieri, Durosini, & Smith, 2018). I speculate

that being part of a marginalised minority group and having been socialised to perceive oneself as pathological or sinful could inspire profounder self-curiosity. Leah and Barbra are seamless examples of queer-conscious participants. Both understood their own and others' queer identities comprehensively, using jargon and explaining concepts that heterosexual people would not necessarily be aware of. Leah deemed her sexual and/or gender identity as too complex to be compartmentalised within the boundaries of a specific label:

> *My gender identity is cis. My sexuality (thinking), I don't have a clear, single-word answer for that. I suppose if I did, it would be queer, simply because for me that's the word that doesn't fit comfortably into any single box or space or definition.*

Barbra had developed a deep sense of self-knowledge after having investigated possible explanations for not conforming to heteronormative expectations: "*To me genderfluidity is, to a large extent, a matter of: 'You don't encompass female traits. You don't encompass male traits.*"

Due to having an insider perspective, Leah's queer consciousness permitted her to detect heteronormative language through the generally accepted 'ladies and gentlemen' that would probably go unnoticed by heterosexual individuals who have never had to question the heteronormative status quo:

> *And I don't know that … straight teachers or even the other teachers at all would notice or listen to the language that's been used there. I listen very closely to the wording of what is said, because that's how I am*.

Queer teachers as unique role players in schools. The majority of participants considered either themselves or other queer teachers as potentially important role players in contesting the perpetuation of school-based heteronormativity and providers of support and encouragement to queer learners. According to Lecky (2009), a positive queer role model is especially important for queer learners to alleviate the stress of growing up.

Advocates for social change.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead, n.d.

After recognising the risks involved, Henk implored queer teachers to recognise the opportunities authentic living could create. Gradual exposure to queer identities may, in his opinion, habituate communities to members who do not reside within the prescribed restrictions of heteronormativity. In so doing, socially constructed heteronormative thinking may steadily be deconstructed:

The longer we hide who we are, the harder it will be for the next guy [queer person]. Gradually the ice needs to be broken and luckily our society is gradually becoming more open-minded. You know, luckily the TV-programmes and so on bring this awareness of us being part of society more to the open. Even some of my friends, who came out in very conservative contexts had initially experienced that antagonism, but gradually they have accepted them because they saw: 'Listen, these guys are exactly the same guys they were and their colleagues and they do their work.' In this way the walls are gradually being broken down.

Over the years, Koos witnessed gradual inclusion of queer identities in South African schooling communities. He believed that apart from queer inclusive legislation, regular exposure to queer identities was vital for this progression:

Nowadays, the South African schooling community is better informed about being gay. I think teaching communities are better informed and treat gay people with the needed respect and apart from that there is also the constitution that protects your rights as a gay person. I also think schooling authorities and communities nowadays

> *are more regularly exposed to gay individuals and individuals that openly make their sexual orientation known.*

Anel and Mariaan also acknowledged the importance of queer exposure in diminishing queerphobia, yet concealed their queer identities until their schooling communities had opportunities to become accustomed to them:

> *Luckily at the new school people already knew me from when I was little, so they were much more open and accept me a lot more now and I can just be who I am.* (Anel)
>
> *At first I kept it to myself. People then first got to know me as Mariaan and as a person and later on I came out to some people and they had no problem, because they already knew me as a person.* (Mariaan)

Contrarily, Leah unashamedly discussed some details of her married life with learners and teachers, as any other heterosexual teacher would when appropriate. She also encouraged the establishment of queer support groups and bravely confronted queer discrimination. The following examples that have all been mentioned in previous sections serve as evidence of her queer advocacy: Leah did not hesitate to correct heteronormative and derogatory language or assumptions in order to educate those who have been oblivious about queer inclusivity; she confronted management who declined queer support initiatives; she challenged heteronormativity by taking female partners to school functions. Altogether, she was willing to risk being ostracised in order to challenge the heteronormative status quo in schools and better the lives of queer schooling community members.

Mentors and role models. Queer teachers' insider perspectives enable them to have a deeper compassion for the difficulties queer learners may face in heteronormative South African schooling contexts. All the participants were schooled in South Africa and they almost certainly faced comparable difficulties to their queer learners, even more so if they had been schooled before the post-apartheid educational policy shift. According to Frances

and Reygan (2016), the apartheid regime regulated sexuality through Christian values to introduce what was regarded as social and moral hygiene in sex education. Nevertheless, in recent times, new forms of sex education have also been resisted by schools, NGOs, and religious bodies (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Joan, for instance, experienced heterosexism as a queer learner schooled in post-apartheid South-Africa. Based on what she had experienced, she was certain that she would have been beleaguered by heterosexism if she had been a teacher at that school: "*At my high school, when I was still a learner, if I had to say who I am, they would have rejected me and make sure that I don't even last a year before I want to resign.*" Similarly, Mariaan, who was also schooled in post-apartheid South Africa, was inspired to become a teacher because of not having had any teacher she could have turned to for support and guidance:

> *I became a teacher, firstly to make a difference in children's lives, because I didn't experience the necessary support at school when I was still a learner and I felt that I could provide that leadership to learners who need it, especially because of their sexualities.*

Participants' previous experiences, as learners in South African schools, contributed a great deal to their desires to promote queer inclusivity in schools and provide support to queer learners. A majority of participants mentioned their roles as mentors or role models to queer learners who reach out to them for support, motivation, advice, and protection:

> *A lot of children, gay or straight, come to me and say: "Is it okay that I feel this way? What should I do?" and then I support them through it.* (Anel)
>
> *I have one or two gay learners in my class that considers me as their safe haven, because they know I am gay. They sort of accepted me as their protector.* (Henk)

> *Some of them feel closer to me and it happened before those learners, especially girls, came to me and said that they are also homosexual. Oftentimes they ask for advice too.* (Mariaan)

Mariaan kept a healthy balance between attending to the needs of queer learners who reach out for support and advice, and keeping a professional distance from them. In doing so, she chose to show compassion rather than empathy, protecting herself from emotional involvement in her learners' personal lives that might be deemed inappropriate for a teacher. Ester was deprived of such opportunities, since she conformed to heteronormative and religious expectations. Irrespective, some girls compared themselves to her, possibly because of observing her queer mannerisms or characteristics that they may have identified with: "*There are girls [possibly queer girls] that came to me on their own and compared themselves to me.*" At the previous school where Ester had worked, queer learners often reached out to her for support: "*Gay kids came to me all the time, even kids that you wouldn't expect it from and of course kids everyone would expect it from, boys and girls*." Barbra was distraught over the heteronormative conditioning of learners that may have caused learners to ask themselves if they were broken.

> *...it's a question of us [teachers] setting kids up to think that there is something wrong with them if they don't look at someone of the opposite sex and don't say: "Hubba-hubba". We are setting them up to think, firstly, that a teenager is a sex machine. We love saying: "You're flushed with hormones! You're a teenager. You're supposed to be curious and want things and desire things," because it is okay to normalise that for them. But in reality how many of our children do not experience that? How many children experience that differently and how many children are just simply confused and now they are being told they should think about sex and should feel it [attraction] towards the opposite sex.*

According to Mchunu (2007), schools should recognise children as sexual beings in need of education regarding the sexual nature of their bodies. Even though sexuality education can be problematic (Mchunu, 2007), it should be queer-inclusive. Barbra communicated her compassion with and concern for asexual learners who may diagnose themselves as pathological for not having sexual desires: "*As a teenager, it [disparity between her queer identity and heteronormative expectations] was a question of: 'Am I broken?*'" Queer teachers may encourage other educators to be considerate of sexual minority groups during dialogues or classes that include the topic of sexuality. Teachers, especially queer teachers, are important agents for the promotion of a queer-inclusive society, and may serve as mentors for queer learners and provide the necessary reassurance and encouragement to learners to progress towards self-acceptance:

> *There will be children who need you, who can talk to you. Those children won't necessarily become teachers, but may become doctors [for example] that will talk to [queer] people who may develop depression and need to hear that it is okay, the reason you feel this way is because you haven't accepted who you are.* (Ester)

From a religious perspective, Anel believed queer teachers should have been called for a specific purpose in education:

> *The Lord does not make mistakes and he made you the way you are for a reason, whether it be to help people or to provide assistance to or support children…I can help more children, because I can often spot it [if a learner is queer].*

By being her authentic self, Leah was able to incorporate unique qualities into her teaching and contribute to the broadening of learners' worldviews:

> *I just feel like it [being queer] has made me so much of a better teacher. It's made me able to offer so much more, professionally. The rewards seemed worth the risk and the difficulties. By being authentic you can let pupils know that you are there for*

> *support or for information of just as an ear to listen, in a subtle or not so subtle ways as you need to.*

Being a queer teacher has empowered her to challenge the oppressive heteronormative system that she was exposed to as a learner, so that future queer generations may have better schooling experiences than she had: "*That's one of the things I love about being a teacher, that I get to make a space for learners, where maybe they could have different experiences from what I had in the day*."

A psychological sense of community. Social support has been found to mitigate the consequences of minority stress and is related to improved mental health outcomes for queer individuals (Salfas, Rendina, & Parsons, 2018; Willging, Salvador, & Kano, 2006). Despite her experiences of school-based heterosexism, knowledge about well-adapted queer teachers in other South African schools provided Ester with a sense of hope for her future as a teacher. She did not believe all schools to be as hostile towards queer identities as the school she taught at. Joan's supportive schooling community, including numerous queer teachers, empowered her to openly express herself as a queer woman:

> *Generally, with teachers, I am relatively open with regards to my sexuality and I feel okay with my environment. I think because it is an all-girls school, they accept it more. With regards to teachers, if we talk about 'my husband' or 'my boyfriend ' or 'my girlfriend' or whatever, I feel comfortable enough in my environment to say 'my wife or my partner'*.

Likewise, Samantha deemed the presence of other queer teachers an important determinant of self-disclosure: "*If there is another gay staff member and they're [colleagues are] okay with him or her, then you can come out.*" Having queer colleagues and allies brings about a psychological sense of community and opportunities for communal outreach:

> *It helps to have support…We don't look the same, we are not the same ages, yet in a way you have that connection of: 'I understand you. I know what you are going through. I know how you feel.'* (Joan)
>
> *That school had a huge number of lesbian and gay staff members. Our principal at the time was gay. The one who followed him was gay. So there was a very relaxed, accepting atmosphere.* (Leah)

Leah emphasised the importance of a psychological community and support from school management and in-group members: "*Try and find a space where the school management is prepared to be supportive of you from day one and try to find ways connecting with queer teachers who are already teaching*." Having a psychological sense of belonging is intrinsically gratifying, forms part of individual self-concept, increases self-respect, enhances coping ability in the workplace, and buffers stressful workplace demands (Klein & D'Anno, 1986).

Conclusion

The IPA process produced the following core themes: 1) perceptions of heteronormativity in schools, 2) experiences of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice, and 3) queer teacher adjustments. From the findings, it is apparent that school-based heterosexism, as experienced by queer teachers, is rooted in heteronormative cultural socialisation which was, in some cases, internalised by the participants themselves. Participants singled parents out as prominent antagonists of queer inclusion in schools and believed that their schooling communities' perceptions of queer teachers are dependent on their age. Younger colleagues were perceived as more tolerant and/or acceptant of their queer colleagues, compared to their older counterparts. Similarly, queer teachers believed in a strong relationship between the maturity of queer teachers and their abilities to counter the aversive effects of heterosexism. The locations and categories of schools were also deemed important determinants of

heterosexism. All but one participant had experienced, perceived, or believed religiosity to be the foremost predictor of heterosexism in South African schools. The psychological consequences of experienced or perceived heterosexism included anxiety and/or fear, adopting inauthentic professional personas (secrecy or concealment of queer identities), self-isolation, feelings of discomfort and frustration, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, and, in some cases, clinically diagnosed mental illnesses. Yet the majority of participants adjusted well in their school environments by adopting mature defence mechanisms, accepting themselves, social perspective taking, using religiosity or spirituality as protective factors, gaining queer consciousness and knowledge, finding purpose in their professions (serving as mentors and advocates for change), and relying on social support groups.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to interpret queer teachers' school-based experiences in a South African context. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings as related to the literature as well as the findings and contributions of this study. In conclusion, I discuss the study limitations and provide recommendations for future research, a brief personal reflection on the study, and my learning experiences.

An Overview of Literature Findings

Although same-sex relations were, to a certain degree, socially acceptable in some cultures, the emergence of homosexuality as an ontological category in the 19th century initiated the demonisation of queer sexualities (Kapoor, 2015; Msibi, 2011) and the cultural historic development of heteronormativity. Despite the accelerated evolution of queer rights in recent times (Human Rights Watch, 2015), the up-rise of the queer movement has been challenging for almost all societies (Beyrer, 2012). Within an African context, colonialist anti-sodomy laws significantly influenced the illegalisation of homosexuality (Awondo, Geschiere, & Reid, 2012; Msibi, 2011; Semugoma, Nemande, & Baral, 2012) in a majority of African states (Msibi, 2011). Yet homosexuality as an un-African Western perversion is still a dominant view upheld in much of Africa (Bhana, 2014b), that preserves discrimination and persecution against queer identities (Awondo et al., 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Msibi, 2009, 2011, 2012; Semugoma et al., 2012; Wells & Polders, 2006). Even though South Africa constitutionally protects sexual orientation (Epprecht, 2012; Msibi, 2011), "a great disconnect" (Msibi, 2012, p. 518) between policy and reality exists. This creates the illusion that South Africans are tolerant towards queer identities (Hames, 2007), while violence against queer citizens (Geduld & Korhaan, 2015; Hames, 2007; Wells & Polders, 2006)

attests to the contrary. Societal queerphobia that often finds expression in schools (Bhana, 2012, 2015; Butler, Alpasan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003; Msibi, 2012; Richardson, 2004), is maintained by cycles of socialisation (Harro, 2000) that will endure perpetually if not interrupted. International research (Buston & Hart, 2001; Chesir-Teran & Hughes, 2009; Epstein, 1994; Herek, 2004) and research within a South African context uphold that schools are highly heterosexualised spaces (Bhana, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Butler et al., 2003; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Mostert, 2013; Msibi, 2012, 2018; Reygan & Francis, 2015; Richardson, 2004; Wells & Polders, 2006). Queer teachers often choose to separate their professional identities from their private ones (Endo et al., 2010; Gray, 2013; Griffin, 1992; Msibi, 2018; Neary, 2013) to escape bullying, harassment, or victimisation (Duffy, 2018; Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Gates, 2012; Msibi, 2018; Stear, 2015). Many queer teachers reside in spaces of exclusion (Bhana, 2012; Gray et al., 2016; Kumashiro, 2000) and silencing (Bhana, 2012; Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015), preserved by their fear of heterosexist persecution (Anderson, 2014; Gray, 2013) such as job loss (Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Gray, 2013; Griffin, 1992). Other queer teachers identify with narratives of resistance, disclosing their queer identities as a means to challenge heteronormativity in schools (Edwards, Brown, & Smith, 2016).

An Overview of Research Findings

This study aimed to expand the limited knowledge field on heterosexism in South African schooling environments and even scarcer research on queer teachers' school-based experiences. I documented the experiences of a silenced, unrepresented, and oppressed community. In this qualitative study, I employed an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach and methodology. The analysis of transcribed interviews produced three superordinate themes, namely 1) perceptions of heteronormativity in schools, 2) experiences of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice, and 3) queer teacher adjustments. A master table of

superordinate and subordinate themes' reoccurrence across cases and individual tables of subordinate themes' descriptions were produced (see Appendix I). The study findings resonated with previous research findings on queer teachers' school-based experiences, while also contributing to some new findings.

Findings that Concur with Previously Published Studies

- Heterosexism as the dominant ideology renders queer teachers invisible, powerless, and/or pathological (Finnesy, 2016; Francis, 2017; Herek, 2007; Reid, 2017), despite constitutional (Government Gazette of South Africa, 1996a) and other legal protection (Epprecht, 2012; Government Gazette of South Africa, 1998, 2006; Msibi, 2011).
- Cultural and historic factors mediate the perception of sexuality (Fox, 2012).
- Heteronormative values are often used to justify hostile attitudes and prejudice towards queer teachers (Herek, 1984; Reid, 2017).
- The convergence of heterosexist and androsexist biases with the heteropatriarchy resulted in a devaluation and subordination of queer individuals (Valdes, 2013), especially queer teachers (Finnesy, 2016; Herek, 2007; Reid, 2017; Van der Walt, 2007), under heterosexual male dominance. Within this study, that which was deemed appropriate sexuality for teachers was regulated accordingly.
- Participants expected or personally experienced arrogant expressions of the power accorded to dominant heterosexist discourses, often through micro-aggressive acts (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Experienced expressions of the heteropatriarchy have mostly been uttered by males and have been found to originate from threatened masculinity (Bhana, 2015; Shen, 2003; Wells & Polders, 2006).
- Internalised school-based heterosexism resulted in experienced cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and compartmentalisation (Msibi, 2018; Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Some participants created professional personas in order to mask the incongruence

between their queer identities and the value systems they had to exemplify at work. Two participants struggled with their heteronormative socialisation that conflicted with homoerotic desires (Cornish, 2012). In both of those cases, this resulted in intra- and interpersonal communication difficulties (Eguchi, 2006) and mental illness (Lorenzi, Miscioscia, Ronconi, Pasquali, & Simonelli, 2015).

- In accordance with literature findings (Mabokela, 2015; Seif, 2017), some participants believed that certain expectable traits were attributed to queer individuals in order to categorise and distinguish them from the heteronorm. Colleagues' reactions of shock or confusion to discovering participants' queer identities were believed to be the result of a discrepancy between the preconceived ideas they had about queer people's physical appearance and their queer colleagues' appearances that did not match those stereotypes.
- Participants, especially the two men, were concerned about the possibility of being inaccurately mapped as paedophiles with perverted intentions. Certain types of South African schools, such as mono-cultural and religious-dominated schools, were considered perilous terrains for queer teachers because of this societal stigma. Seeing that common misperceptions of homosexuals as paedophiles exist within the Afrikaner culture (Crous, 2006), it is unsurprising that Afrikaner schools were specifically singled out.
- In some schools, queer teacher identities were devaluated as pathological and subtly sanctioned through exclusion, silencing, and othering due to an 'us versus them' binary that favours heterosexuality (Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, & Suda, 2012).
- A majority of the participants had, somewhere along their journeys as South African teachers, experienced either anxiety or fear related to being exposed as queer and persecuted for it. Some participants constantly feared exposure, which encumbered their professional duties and opportunities for growth. Due to fear of jeopardising their careers in education, some concealed their queer identities, sometimes fabricating false identities.

This parallels findings from previous studies (Endo et al., 2010; Ferfolja & Stavrou, 2015; Griffin, 1992; Neary, 2013).

Novel Research Findings

The novel findings that contribute to the field of knowledge can be ascribed to the distinctive South African socio-cultural context of this study. Because of South Africa's cultural diversity, teacher experiences differed immensely depending on their specific school's ethos. The specific ethos is determined by the cultural and religious composition of schooling communities and schools' localities.

- Queer teachers relied on different combinations of virtues, defence mechanisms, support systems, and protective factors to help them adjust well within their schools. Some participants relied on primitive defence mechanisms such as denial to mitigate the effects of heterosexism, yet the use of mature defence mechanisms was more prominent among the study sample. Humour as a form of sublimation (Grohol, 2017), and suppression which is most highly associated with mental health (Vaillant, 1994), were commonly used to counter the effects of school-based heterosexism.
- In the experience of queer teachers, cultural conservatism is the fundamental hindrance to queer inclusivity in schools and it maintains heteronormativity.
- Monocultural schools were perceived by participants as spaces dominated by prejudice and intolerance. Schools dominated by Afrikaner cultures were singled out as particularly heterosexist, probably due to the religious milieus many Afrikaners reside in. On the contrary, the perceived liberal elements of the English culture provide for more openness and acceptance.
- Progress towards queer inclusion in schools has been perceived to be encumbered by societal ignorance. Fear produced by unfamiliarity created preconceived ideas and queer stereotypes that caused community members to close themselves off from queer teachers.

- Due to participants' own vulnerabilities, some unwittingly became complicit to being victimised by subtle and perhaps more insidious markers of heteropatriarchy in communities' heteronormative language usage.
- Experienced internalised heterosexism was nurtured by participants' own meta-perceptions, which fostered interpersonal misunderstandings and conflicts. As a result, queer teachers sometimes might have exaggerated or misinterpreted the effects and consequences of heteronormativity. Relating to "the spotlight effect" (Gilovich, Medvec, & Savitsky, 2000, p. 211), some participants might have overestimated their schooling communities' detection and evaluation of their appearances, actions, or attributes.
- Even though the sources of participants' discomfort differed, their frustration can essentially be attributed to a seeming lack of control over heteronormativity and experiences of heterosexism. Many participants felt disheartened by their perceived lack of control over their heteronormative schooling environments, together with their expectancies of aversive outcomes. As a result, some felt overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. While a majority of the study participants acknowledged that heterosexism had or may have had a detrimental effect on their own or other queer teachers' wellbeing, a few opened up about clinically diagnosed mental health issues which they believed were invoked by their heteronormative schooling experiences.
- A majority of participants were apprehensive about parents' influential roles in determining school policies and preserving school-based heteronormativity, perceiving them as antagonists of queer teacher inclusion. As a consequence, some were heedful of sharing information with their learners that may expose their queer identities to parents.
- Some participants perceived younger colleagues as more approachable and better informed about queer issues, while simultaneously perceiving older colleagues as more prone to judgement. Age was also believed to be an important determinant of queer

teachers' self-acceptance and self-confidence, making them better equipped to deal with heterosexism. As they have aged, some participants' self-worth in their identities as queer teachers developed.

- Participants singled out certain school categories as being more queer-inclusive than others. All three participants that worked at special needs schools perceived their colleagues as more prone to embracing diversity and learners as less concerned about their teachers' sexualities. In addition, rural or township schools were perceived as more inclined to being heterosexist, compared to urban schools. The majority of participants from urban settlements experienced greater freedom within their school environments, compared to those from non-urban areas.
- Religiosity, particularly Christianity, was believed and, in some cases, experienced to be one of the foremost predictors of heterosexism in schools. This was particularly prominent in the experiences of teachers in Afrikaans schools. Yet it was also considered a protective factor against participants' experiences of heterosexism and a potentially powerful source for promoting love and inclusivity in schools. Within this particular sample, six of the seven religious participants were able to master what Subhi and Geelan (2012) refer to as the difficult task of reconciling their religious and sexual identities.
- Some teachers believed school-based heterosexism to have been responsible for inhibiting their opportunities for professional development. Due to their sense of being othered, they made behavioural choices that may have helped them to evade being victimised (such as not participating in staff activities) but also limited their being part of and accepted as a team member. This may have contributed to them being overlooked for job opportunities or promotions.
- Unfulfilled desires of acceptance and inclusion of queer teachers was a significant impediment to participants' flourishing in schools. Five of the nine participants either

concealed their queer identities fully or partially by fabricating socially acceptable versions of themselves or resolved to self-isolation. Self-doubt, produced by misperceptions of queer teachers' professionalism, rendered them disinclined to seek collegial support and develop meaningful relationships with their schooling communities. These actions were the result of expected rejection produced by internalised heterosexism. The four participants who have not personally expected or experienced exclusion or othering at the time of the interview attested to the silencing of queer identities in other South African schools. Cultures of silence kept some participants voiceless in the face of heterosexism, often engendering their negative self-perceptions.

- As a reverberation of heteronormative socialisation, asexual teachers are particularly overburdened and exploited at work, while heterosexual teachers benefit from belonging to a traditional family unit.
- Some participants were disinclined to compromise their authenticity to deflect school-based heterosexism, despite the consequences they might have faced. Even those who protected themselves by conforming to the heteronorm in some or other way accepted their queer identities. Self-acceptance enabled some participants to develop compassion for those who were victims of heteronormative ignorance. Through social perspective taking, some participants showed tolerance for those who confronted them with heterosexist remarks or questions. They were able to perceive the social construction of heteronormativity as the true opponent of inclusivity, instead of the people who had been socialised to live according to its principles.
- Despite some challenges, all participants eventually made peace with their queer identities. They understood that human sexuality is complex and diverse, accepted being queer as natural, inherent parts of themselves, and were comfortable with their own and others' sexual and gender identities.

- Participants perceived themselves as unique role players in schools in that they may steadily deconstruct heteronormative thinking by habituating communities to members who do not reside within the prescribed restrictions of heteronormativity. Some participants provided guidance and support to queer learners by acting as mentors. Reassurance and encouragement from their queer teachers may help them to progress towards self-acceptance. Other participants advocated queer equality by bravely confronting queer discrimination and establishing queer support groups.
- All participants agreed that authenticity is beneficial to queer teacher wellbeing and suggested that queer teachers pursue it, if possible.
- Many participants emphasised the importance of having a sense of belonging and community. It was deemed an important determinant of self-disclosure and provided opportunities for communal outreach and encouragement to be hopeful about their prospects as queer teachers in a South African context.

Strengths of the Study

Donelson and Rogers (2004) noted various reasons for queer teachers being an underrepresented community in scientific research (see Chapter 1). The fundamental purpose of this inquiry was to understand, explore, interpret, and describe queer teachers' school-based experiences of heterosexism in a South African context. Despite only documenting the experiences of a selected few queer South African teachers, the study gap was successfully filled by giving voice to this underrepresented community.

- The double hermeneutic process of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is in perfect alignment with my paradigmatic orientation. It allowed me to attain a deeper understanding of participants' thoughts, behaviours, and beliefs. Through the detailed discovery of participants' sense making of their school-based experiences and my interpretations of these accounts, a rich, in-depth interpretive text was constructed.

- Moreover, the reciprocity of semi-structured interviews enabled me to engage in dialogue, modify questions, and probe important areas of participants' responses, as Smith and Osborn (2008) proposed it would. Participants were given the freedom and safety to describe their experiences in any way they felt comfortable, yet the predetermined field questions assured that the interview remained focused on the research topic. In my view, IPA is a useful methodology in that its flexibility and versatility allowed me to develop a deep, nuanced understanding of what the participants were experiencing.
- I consider my "insider-advantage" (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 68) a vital strength as it allowed me to secure the participants' trust. Prior to conducting interviews, as I was explaining the purpose of the study and the interview process, I also briefly introduced myself and my motivation for conducting the study. I communicated my understanding of the possible heterosexism queer teachers might have to deal with as I am a queer teacher who has personally experienced school-based heterosexism before. Shared language, knowledge, and, in some cases, similar experiences allowed me to develop rapport with my participants. In essence, belonging to the study population has allowed me to immerse myself in and densely portray the participants' experiences through empathetic and experiential understanding.

Study Limitations

The following limitations should be considered in the evaluation of these findings. The small sample obtained through snowball sampling was reached with the help of locators, which Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) describe as individuals with similar occupations, lifestyles, and social positions as those of the particular study population. The majority of these locators were white Afrikaners who located participants from the same cultural background.

- Even though some participants were English speaking, there was no racial diversity among participants as all were white. I am disappointed to have located such a racially and culturally homogeneous participant sample in a country that is known for being a rainbow nation. Although it is not a study requirement, it would have been interesting to compare experiences of different racial groups. The nature of heteronormativity as well as the manner in which it is perceived and experienced would possibly have varied, depending on the specific sets of traditions and ideas of different cultures.
- None of the participants worked at rural schools; rather, they worked at public schools that were formerly known as model-C schools or private schools. As with race and culture, I am of the opinion that richer data could have been obtained if the sample had been more heterogeneous with regard to school type.
- Despite the fact that it was not the intent of the research to make any generalisations, it is unfortunate that a majority of the participants were based in urban areas. International research found that those raised in urban areas generally have a higher tolerance for diversity (Herek, 1984), and its queer residents have better access to support systems (D'Augelli, Preston, Kassab, & Cain, 2002). A cross-national report that included South Africa found queer sexual behaviour to be more acceptable in urban areas, compared to small towns or rural areas, in 72 of 85 cases (Smith, 2011). I believe the findings would have been considerably different if more participants from rural communities participated.
- Due to my limited experience with conducting interviews, I consider some of the interview questions I decided on as well as minimal probing in-between questions to be study limitations. Participants, for instance, extensively elaborated on the first interview question "*Why did you decide to become a teacher*" without providing

significant information. On the contrary, other questions could have provided more meaningful detail if I had probed more. Due to being overly mindful of using leading questions, I probed less than I believe I should have.

Recommendations for Future Research

It would be meaningful to conduct similar studies with participants from other regions and school settings. Moreover, quantitative studies could provide useful information about possible relationships between queer teacher experiences and locality of schools, school types, cultural and religious ethos of schools, or participants' cultural and religious beliefs. Finally, if generalisations could be made about the nature of South African queer teacher experiences, it might inform the direction of future studies on the topic. This exploration might set the scene for larger-scale investigations and potential interventions to improve queer teacher wellbeing and enhance inclusivity in schools.

Personal Reflection

I developed some basic research skills from research modules that I completed during my honours degree in psychology, which were greatly improved on as a result of conducting the current study. At the commencement of the research process, I was fortunate enough to attend a workshop on queer voices in education, including presentations by experts in the field such as Professor Thabo Msibi, Dr Anthony Brown, Prof. Shan Simmonds, and Dr Jacques Rothmann. There, I was granted an opportunity to present my proposed research and the feedback provided helped me to focus my research and choose an appropriate theoretical framework. In order to be inclusive in my endeavour to give voice to all South African teachers who are oppressed by the effects of heteronormative socialisation, I spent months on end deciding on the most fitting terminology. Despite being a member of the study population myself, I had to deepen my understanding of the complexity of human sexuality, of which I had very limited knowledge at that stage. As a result, I was constantly altering my

research focus, as newer knowledge became available to me through literature and guidance from academic superiors. I initially found it challenging to prioritise data related to the research question from a vast amount of available literature. As a result, I was constrained by a personal inclination to write in a lengthy and discursive manner. Only after numerous efforts and continuous guidance from my supervisor, I improved my ability to critically dissect and synthesise relevant information in a concise, succinct manner.

I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities bestowed upon me and was humbled by the depth of knowledge, insight, and skills of the researchers who initially assisted me in focusing my study. It was then that I realised that, as a novice researcher, I was embarking on a journey of unsystematic, back-and-forth, trial-and-error learning. In retrospect, I am appreciative of both the challenges that disheartened me at times and the small victories and encouragements that kept me motivated. Experiencing such vicissitudes helped me to accept that research does not always follow a sequential and orderly procedure. In addition, the constant re-evaluation of goals and expectations based on changed circumstances and challenges in my personal life eventually desensitised me to the discomfort it created. Having moved to China and adapting to a new environment and workload, for example, helped me to set more realistic goals and expectations. In effect, these experiences enabled me to improve my time management skills and allowed me to perceive disorganisation and failure as opportunities for creative expression and, ultimately, personal growth.

Having engaged in primary data collection was an unprecedented experience that I have learnt much more from than I have learned in theory as a student. After analysing the information gathered from the interviews, I became aware of the limiting effect my novice interviewer skills had on the depth of information I gathered. By placing significant focus on using open-ended questions and separating myself from prompting my own expectations through probing, I may have missed some valuable information. In order to conduct ethical

research, my insider perspective of what participants may have experienced became a burden to me, as I was continuously reminding myself to stay aware of my own preconceived ideas. Contrariwise, being a queer teacher has allowed me to fully understand the queer jargon participants used and to immerse myself emotionally in what they had experienced. Because the research topic is personally meaningful to me, I am inspired to give voice to this unrepresented group in whatever way I can. This study, however, was not framed in a transformative paradigm and, at most, could serve as a potential precursor for future transformative research. Even though I have a personal desire to advocate for queer rights, research is not advocacy. Due to having an insider's perspective, I regularly had to reflect on my personal biases to avoid making assumptions or influencing the content of the interview process. In order to eliminate biases, I wrote down the assumptions and expectations I had in advance. Despite being a member of the study population, I was mindful of the idiosyncrasies of each participant's situation and experience. Nevertheless, my own struggles as a queer teacher in a heteronormative community enlightened me and enabled me to reflect on participants' personal positions. I was fine-tuned to the negative perceptions that they grappled with and could relate to the sensitivities they had developed to discourses in society. Participants' knowledge about queer identities and self-knowledge as members of the queer community evidenced that they had done deep self-reflection. This led to my speculation that outsider status might challenge queer participants to develop profounder self-curiosity and deeper self-reflection, enabling them to grow beyond their comfortable boundaries. I was fascinated by the participants' courage to accept and even embrace their authentic selves and endure their heterosexist environments. Despite having faced some or other form of discrimination, the majority of participants adapted well or even flourished as queer teachers. It was inspirational to learn that participants rather chose to face their circumstances than escape it. Having internal loci of control enabled participants to believe themselves to be

primarily responsible for the quality of their experiences, rather than victims of uncontrollable external circumstances. The adversities produced by heterosexism seemed to have inspired many participants to find meaning in being queer teachers. Ideally, queer teachers may serve as important agents for the promotion of queer-inclusive schools and societies at large.

Prior to this study's commencement, I allowed myself time to discover my paradigmatic orientation, the research design, and the associated research methods. To ensure that my study was ethically sound, I used tables to compare the ethical concerns and advantages of different methods and consulted experts on the topic to help me narrow my options down to what was deemed most fitting (lowest risks and highest benefits). Due to the dynamicity and evolution of terminology related to human sexuality and gender, I spent many months deciding on the most suitable terminology for this particular study. My research topic was only clear after I methodically planned and finalised the ethical procedures I had to follow. What then felt like stagnation eventually enabled me to work methodically and efficiently, without having to bring about remarkable changes to what I had written. I would advise that future researchers in this field put aside time to consider different research methods and the ethical concerns that they may hold before commencing with their literature overview, as it will enable them to focus their research.

Conclusion

The research findings imply that queer teachers frequently face school-based heterosexism in a South African context, either directly by means of exclusion, silencing, and othering, or indirectly through subtle micro-aggressions or heteronormative assumptions. Having been socialised in cultures that teach members to pathologise any identities that deviate from the heteronorm has left some participants struggling with internalised heteronormativity and reverberations that include self-isolation, poor collegial relationships,

anxiety, fear, and inauthenticity, inter alia. Yet through the use of mature defence mechanisms, self-acceptance, social perspective taking, religiosity and/or spirituality, and a psychological sense of community, participants were able to adapt well in their school environments. Some even excelled, having perceived themselves as unique and vital role players in schooling communities to mentor vulnerable learners, inspire change in the hearts of the young generations, and advocate for queer equality.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Participant 1. Henk, a 54 year old gay man, was teaching at an English-medium special needs school within an urban settlement, that has adopted a position of non-alignment to any religious denomination. He claimed to have never before had the job satisfaction he had, working as a teacher at that school. He identified as gay, but lived a heterosexual lifestyle for most of his life. Having believed the majority of South African schooling communities to be homophobic, he was of opinion that his pleasant schooling experiences were unique ones. He perceived queer South African teachers, on average, as not having such positive school-based experiences as he has had and believed that societal bigotry and ignorance were to blame for institutionalised heteronormativity and heterosexism in schools.

Both the school he was employed at during the interview and the former school he had worked at employed him regardless of their knowledge of his queer identity. He generally experienced his colleagues as accepting towards him, with very few exceptions. He regularly used humour to break down discomfort caused by heteronormative perceptions. Henk did not feel victimised at his school, yet has had a few uncomfortable heterosexist experiences. After many years of conforming to the heteronorm, he has become desensitised to the effects of heterosexism. He disclosed his queer identity to school management, colleagues and learners, who mostly acknowledged and accepted him. Some queer learners have also reached out to him for support and guidance.

Henk perceived societal misconceptions about queer people and especially queer teachers as a major obstacle. He said that gay teachers were regularly equated to paedophiles. In spite of that, he advised that pre-service teachers be honest about their queer identities. He experienced great freedom in his authentic living and have confidence in its ability to liberate people from fear of being outed, which may have damaging effects on their professional lives. He acknowledged that certain difficulties may accompany living an authentic lifestyle, depending on the schooling situation, but believed that through self-disclosure, queer teachers could transform schools into more inclusive spaces for future generations. He believed that regular exposure to queer teachers and could alter the heteronormative views of schooling communities and make South African schools more inclusive.

Participant 2. Joan, 25 year old lesbian woman, was teaching at an English-medium, public, high school in an urban settlement which has adopted a position of non-alignment to any religious denomination. A former art teacher inspired her to choose teaching as profession. She believed that she is still living in a time where queer individuals are not necessarily accepted by society, referring to a "blinded society". She perceived open discussions about queer related content as unusual, especially in schools, describing it as a taboo topic better left in the dark. Prior to becoming a teacher, Joan feared that her sexuality might hinder the quality of her professional life. During her first job interview, she experienced explicit heterosexism. The panel asked her if she was married, to which she replied that she was engaged. She corrected them when they assumed that she was engaged to a man. They were baffled by her response about being married to a woman and after the interview was cut short, she never heard from them again. Due to that experience, she decided to withhold information related to her sexuality, during job interviews. It left her feeling hopeless for her future in teaching. She did not want to teach in a heterosexist schooling environment, where she had to conceal details about her personal life.

No questions that she considered inappropriate were asked during her interview at the school she was appointed at. She received varied responses to talking openly about her sexuality with colleagues, as any heterosexual teacher would have. Some found the information about her queer identity to be upsetting or disturbing, while others received it with surprise. Joan felt comfortable with sharing these details with colleagues, despite having received strange looks and comments. Apart from this, Joan claimed to not have had experienced explicit, "childish" homophobia. She trusted that some learners were curious about her sexuality, because of the kinds of questions she had been asked before. However, she avoided answering them out of fear for persecution from parents and students. She avoided sharing any details about her sexuality with students, due to having believed it to be unprofessional. From her perspective, younger teachers showed more acceptance towards and understanding of queer identities. Joan claimed that being a queer teacher has not been a total taboo at her school, due to the large number of queer staff that was present. She considered these queer colleagues to be an important support group.

Joan recognised the challenges involved in coming out to a schooling community, yet considered it vital to do so. She believed that religion played an immense role in the upholding of heteronormativity in schools and also mentioned the damaging role mainstream Afrikaans schools played in maintaining such discrimination. As a result, she understood

queer teachers to be fearful of uncomfortable questions, being exploited or being judged by Christians.

Her advice to queer pre-service teachers was to step into their profession with self-confidence and authenticity; not compromising their values. She added that teachers should not even apply at schools that they believe might have extremist religious views or be anti-queer, since chances are good that they will be exploited or bullied. She lastly advised that teachers protect themselves by being cautious and selective about self-disclosure.

Participant 3. Koos, a 66 year old gay man, was teaching at an Afrikaans-medium, Christian-based, private, special needs school within a small town. He perceived teaching as his calling in life and believed that teachers have a great responsibility bestowed upon them. Koos emphasised that people do not have a choice over their sexual orientation. Therefore, heteronormativity forces queer individuals to reject or conceal a natural part of who they are, out of fear of persecution from those who conform to the heteronorm.

Koos rarely experienced explicit persecution, by his school community, for being queer. If they rejected his queer identity, they were very surreptitious and secretive about it. In his opinion, special needs education teachers have greater compassion towards and understanding of inclusion and diversity. Throughout his 30 year teaching career, he only experienced three cases of heterosexism; once when a principle warned him that being queer would keep him from getting promoted, another time when his male colleagues made fun of gay people at a social event and finally when an HOD informed him about his loathing of what he referred to as unnatural gay lifestyles.

Due to South Africans being better educated about inclusion and legal protection of queer identities, Koos believed that contemporary queer teachers are better respected. In his opinion, those responsible for heterosexism in schools are anomalies. Even if this was the case, he acknowledged that cases of heterosexism transpires over South African schools and may lead to extreme distrust and caution. Koos proclaimed that schooling communities' heterosexist attitudes and behaviour are commonly justified as stemming from their religious beliefs.

To flourish in a heterosexist environment, Koos advises queer teacher to be true to who they are. He believes that queer teachers should claim their right to be part of a schooling community and avoid internalising hateful heterosexist attitudes and behaviour towards them. As a final point, Koos believes that queer teachers are not fated to be victims

of heterosexism in schools, since enough accepting and accommodating schools in South Africa exist.

Participant 4. Anel, a 26 year old lesbian woman, was teaching at an English-medium, Christian-based, public special needs school. Her love for children and especially the need for special education teachers inspired her teaching career. When asked about schooling community members' attitudes towards queer teachers, Anel said that they can sometimes be prejudicial and judgemental if a teacher does not fit into the heteronorm. Having been treated with hostility due to her queer identity, she was unable to adapt at the previous school she worked at. She felt excluded and believed that she was perceived as inferior because of being queer. She, for instance, recalls when she was excluded from the group who organised the school revue, because of her sexuality. Anel experienced the most recent school that she worked at as accepting, since many of her current colleagues knew her from her childhood years. She said that it allowed her to experience a greater sense of freedom.

At the disclosure of her queer identity, Anel was accepted with open arms. She had not disclosed her sexuality to her learners, since she was avoiding advocacy of her personal beliefs. However, being queer herself, has allowed her to identify and support queer learners. Despite avoiding advocacy of queer rights, she encouraged overall inclusion and acceptance of all social groups.

Being queer has not affected her professional life, since she kept her personal and professional lives separated. On a social level, her sexuality has affected her relationship with colleagues. She has learned to cope with their unfriendliness by keeping conversations short and disallowing her professional standards to be negatively affected by their attitudes. Despite these efforts, heteronormativity has had a detrimental effect on her wellbeing. She perceived rejection as the biggest obstacle queer teachers have to face, due to their innate longing for acceptance and inclusion from their schooling community members. Nevertheless, Anel advised that queer teachers do not compromise their true identity, even at the expense of facing heterosexist remarks.

Participant 5. Mariaan, a 24 year old lesbian woman, was teaching at a parallel-medium (English and Afrikaans), Christian-based, technical high school. She aspired to make a difference in the lives of children, through the sharing of her knowledge and setting a good example as someone in a leadership position. Additionally, she believed being a queer teacher enabled her to act as a role model for queer learners. She has experienced most schooling community members that she revealed her queer identity to as accepting and supportive. There was, however, a few exceptions as some colleagues were aloof. Prior to becoming a teacher, she pondered about her future superiors' impression of her, but never felt that her sexuality would keep her from becoming a teacher.

In some instances she was asked about her sexuality directly, while other times only assumptions were made; because of the way she looked and behaved. Most of the learners, who asked, had accepting and unprejudiced attitudes towards her queer identity. Even so, not all learners were aware of her queer identity. Some queer learners have reached out to her for advice and support.

She aspired to become a role model for many queer learners, but also believed that her advice to queer learners should always be appropriate and aligned with her professional duties and responsibilities. In her opinion, queer teachers were regularly viewed as unprofessional or incapable of doing certain tasks. Being queer also kept her from having an enriched relationship with her colleagues. She did not have the confidence to disclose her queer identity to them and believed that it kept her from opportunities to learn and receive professional support. With regards to personal wellbeing, she believed that heterosexism deprived her of complete happiness, she would have had otherwise. She felt uncomfortable and excluded.

According to Mariaan, religion played a major role in queer teacher discrimination. She heard of cases where queer teachers were deprived of partaking in religious activities at schools, simply because of being queer. She believed that cultural and societal attitudes towards queer people, stemming from conservative ideologies forced upon students, also influences how schooling communities treat queer teachers. Her advice to pre-service queer teachers was to not have preconceived ideas about heterosexism in schools, to acquire self-acceptance and to embrace their queer identities, as far as possible.

Participant 6. Samantha, a 27 year old lesbian woman was teaching at an English-medium, Christian based public school. She has always enjoyed spreading knowledge and simplifying complex concepts. She believed that the attitudes of South African schooling communities towards queer teachers depend largely on culture. She explained that queer teachers at religious, Afrikaans schools, with mostly older staff members, might have particularly adverse experiences. Conversely, she believed English communities to be more accepting..

At the latest school she worked at, she found the community to be very accepting and supportive. Even though she disclosed her sexual orientation to colleagues, she did not want to share information about her sexuality with students. She said that the African children she taught were especially closed minded and she wanted to avoid possible conflict with parents. Otherwise, heteronormativity has not affected her professional duties, her relationship with colleagues or her personal wellbeing. Samantha believed that a heteronormative school environment, together with rejection from parents might be principal challenges queer teachers face. If a teacher, for instance, finds employment at a school that promotes traditional heteronormative values, she believes that they would have to climb back into the closet and would not be able to connect with their colleagues properly.

She would advise queer pre-service teachers to abstain from immediately disclosing their queer identities during interviews, since it could harm their probability of employment. She recommended that queer teachers get to know the school culture and its members' attitudes towards queer individuals prior to disclosing their sexuality or gender identity.

Participant 7. Ester, a 29 year old lesbian woman, was teaching at an Afrikaans-medium, Christian-based private school in a small city. She described herself as skilled at working with children and found teaching to be a rewarding vocation. Never having questioned the heteronorm before led her to marrying a man. Inauthentic living had a detrimental effect on her wellbeing, seeing that she tried to commit suicide because of it. With the help of her psychiatrist and psychologist, Ester reached a turning point in her life, when she accepted her queer identity.

However, due to her conservative school-situation, she was forced to hide her true identity. Heterosexuality is the sole validated sexual orientation in the school. Any deviation from heterosexuality was considered pathological or against the will of God. Ester firmly believed that disclosure or exposure of her queer identity could lead to job loss and condemnation by both the school and larger community. She described her schooling community as inflexible and conservative Christians, who left no space for any deviations

from or multiple interpretations of what has been written in the Bible. Discussions around sexuality focused merely on “healthy heterosexual relationships”. The traditional gender roles that accompanied their heteronormative standards placed great emphasis on male authority and superiority.

Out of fear, Ester has completely concealed her queer identity and conformed to heteronormative expectations at her school. She avoided socialising with colleagues, because of having to be inauthentic. She has been left voiceless, vulnerable and isolated from her schooling community. Due to living in a small city, Ester is vigilant and anxious about the possibility of being exposed as queer. She perceived parents as key role players in the preservation of heteronormativity, who believes that queer teachers would misdirect their children. Because of this, she was anxious about being misrepresented as a paedophile. Ester felt saddened by the thought of not being able to provide support to queer students, trapped in an unaccommodating schooling milieu. She believed that queer teachers have a better ability to recognise queer characteristics in students and provide better support, than their heterosexual counterparts. Even if some queer learners have reached out to her before, she felt too afraid to provide them with support.

Ester remained hopeful about general transformation in South African schools, believing that her school situation is unconventional. She claimed that heterosexism depends on culture, placing emphasis on the Afrikaner culture and religion. Conversely, she believed that religion may also potentially promote love and inclusivity in schools.

Participant 8. Barbra, a 36 year old asexual gender fluid person was teaching at an English-medium, Christian based high-school in a small city. She wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people and education seemed like a viable option. Despite having identified as an asexual, gender-fluid person, Barbra lived as a cisgender female. Her gender identity is closer to the masculine side of the gender spectrum, even though she identified as gender fluid. Yet, societal expectations have pressured her to exhibit a feminine gender expression. She believed that having an education system which obligates the acceptance of diversity, served as a good point of departure for social acceptance of queer people in education. She claimed that teachers were being thoroughly educated about diversity and inclusion. Parents, however, were perceived as unaccepting of anything that deviates from the heteronorm. Students were, in turn, socialised by their parents to conform to these heteronormative ideas.

Barbra believed people to be highly ignorant about asexuality in particular, compared to homosexuality and bisexuality. She believed that the latter mentioned were more common and better understood, compared to asexuality. From what she has experienced, her students seemed to have been socialised to believe that anything apart from heterosexuality, including not being interested in sex, was deviant and pathological. Furthermore, heteronormative language in schools influenced queer individuals, especially vulnerable queer learners, to question their normality. She believed that it, in turn, influenced their psychological and spiritual wellbeing. Nevertheless, Barbra has never before felt that her sexuality and gender identity might keep her from pursuing a career in education.

She has not witnessed any cases of hostility towards homosexual teachers, since she only had a single homosexual colleague, years ago. With regards to asexual teachers, she experienced schooling communities to be passive-aggressive and exploitative. Due to not having had her own family, she was given more responsibilities at school and did not feel permitted to discuss her sexuality and confront her superiors. She kept her asexuality hidden, out of fear of rejection. Having been “straight-passing”, as a cisgender female, she also believed that there was no need to disclose her sexuality. Additionally, she believed talks about sexuality or gender identity in front of students to be unprofessional. However, she encouraged and promoted inclusion of all social groups in class.

One of the biggest obstacles she has faced as a queer teacher was being overburdened with work. It influenced her relationship with colleagues in the sense that she avoided spending time with them. Conversely, her relationship with students was left unaffected, due to separating her private and professional lives. Moreover, Barbra regularly had anxiety

attacks, experienced insomnia and feelings of prolonged sadness, primarily because of having been overworked. She recalled a few incidences where she felt victimised by an HOD who regularly nominated her for doing extra work, since she was an unmarried woman. Some male colleagues also made offensive comments, but she is not really affected by them. Barbra supposed that the obstacles queer teachers had to face were internal. In her opinion heterosexism is very difficult to change, but the manner in which queer teachers react to it is of importance. She advised that queer pre-service teachers consult counsellors, queer positive psychologists or support groups who they could trust and be honest with.

Participant 9. Leah, a 42 year old queer cisgender woman was teaching at an English-medium, Anglican, private school in an urban setting. She completed her PGCE, after having worked as an artist. After 15 years working as a teacher, she still loved her job.

According to Leah, the occurrence of heterosexism in a schooling community depended vastly on the school context. She believed that non-religious, urban, English schools may be more open and accepting, compared to Afrikaans schools. On the contrary, she believed that township schools, religious schools and culturally dominated schools tend to be more intolerant. A large number of queer staff worked with Leah at her previous school, including the previous principal and the one who followed him. Because of the relaxed, open atmosphere she publicly disclosed her queer identity. Contrariwise, the Anglican school where she last worked at was more conservative. In spite of a large number of lesbian and gay staff, they were more private about their queer identities than she was. She described both schools as largely heteronormative.

Leah said that she never really felt victimised or excluded by the heteronormative experiences, but rather just noticed them. She was fortunate enough to never have been in a difficult or uncomfortable situation. The closest she came to such an experience, was when a suggested gay-straight alliance group was blocked by the principal of the school. She was also upset when the he claimed that the school were addressing queer inclusion, at a speech night, which she claimed to be untruthful. In her experience, speaking about queer identities is considered an inappropriate topic for school. Nevertheless, Leah showed passion for social justice and perceived the teaching profession as an ideal space for challenging and speaking out against heteronormativity.

Both colleagues and teachers had overwhelmingly positive reactions when Leah disclosed her queer identity. She explained how learners have particularly shown their

support. Heteronormativity has not influenced her professional duties; nonetheless her relationship with colleagues and learners was affected to some extent. They were confused when she first came out and sometimes made ignorant comments, but did not discriminate otherwise.

In general, Leah thought of schools as very uncomfortable spaces for teachers. She singled out religion and cultural perceptions, such as that of queer identities being un-African, as the driving forces behind heterosexism. She also believed queer teachers' preconceived ideas about others' perceptions of their identities be a major obstacle. She thought that teachers might even be surprised at how accepting some people might be. Leah believed that by being openly queer, she is able to offer so much more, professionally, than she would have if she concealed her queer identity. She recommended that pre-service queer teachers seek out schools that embraced and accepted queer identities. Lastly she advised queer teachers to be upfront about who they are and to build relationships with other queer teachers for support, while also avoiding any risk to themselves.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Data analysis Anel		
Biographical information **Age: 26** **Race: White** **Sex: Female** **School type: Special needs public school** **School location: Urban** **Religious practice: Christian**		
Transcribed interview	**Initial codes**	**Memos and ideas**
Anel, eerste ding wat ek by jou wil hoor is waarom jy besluit het om 'n onderwyser te word?		
Want ek is baie lief vir kinders en ek voel, omdat ek in 'n special needs education in is, daar's baie behoeftes is aan onderwysers wat die kinders wat minder het, ondersteun; emosioneel en fisies en vir hulle wys iemand stel tog belang, al het hulle 'n learning barrier of struikelblok waarmee hulle sukkel.	Solicitude for minority groups (children with learning disabilities) Advocate/agent for change	Solidarity Empathy
Hoe sal jy in jou eie woorde jou seksualiteit en/of jou geslagsidentiteit beskryf?		
Normaal, want ek het nog nooit gevoel dat ek comfortable is om anders te wees en in te meng met die samelewing nie.	Chalenges heteronormative standards Embraces her uniqueness/individuality	No expressed need to fit in or be as others
Maar daar is geen label of…?		
Nee, ek label myself glad nie.	Rejects heteronormative labels and categories	
Ek is Anel en what you see is what you get.	Values living authentically	Self-acceptance (precursor of other acceptance)
Hoe sal jy die algemene gesindhede of houdings van die Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskap teenoor queer onderwysers of ander queer rolspelers in die skoolomgewing beskryf?		
Soms is hulle baie vooroordelend, bedoelend as jy daar inkom en jy lyk dalk bietjie…jy's nou nie soos 'n meisiekind aangetrek of verstaan…	Rejects any deviation from traditional gender roles	Experience community narrow-minded Research stereotypes based on queer physical appearances.
Dis nie gemaklik vir van ons om skool te gaan hou en te weet ek moet my gesiggie mooi maak elke oggend en die haartjies moet altyd gedoen wees en die naeltjies moet altyd gedoen wees.	Discomfort created by heteronormative standards of gender expressions	Irritation with perceived expectation of feminine appearance
Partykeer kan dit nogals voel of hulle judgemental is en by 'n vorige skool het ek dit baie hard gevind om in te pas; baie moeilik gevind, want ja hulle het uitgevind ek is gay of 'n lesbian…watookal.	Felt othered/marginalised/rejected	Is ok with self, but fitting in is difficult
Ek is nie 'n moffie nie. Ek is 'n lesbian.	Internalised queerphobia	
In elk geval, toe begin hulle almal soos koud raak teenoor my,	Intolerant and bigoted towards queer teacher	Sanctions by closing ranks Memo-juxtaposing: I'm okay with myself, but the community is not okay with me

		(conflict)
maar nou by die nuwe skool...die mense ken my gelukkig van kleintyd af. Uhm, so hulle is baie meer oop en hulle aanvaar my nou baie meer en ek kan net wees wie ek is.	People are oblivious and ignorant about queer related matters, rather than deliberately hostile. Regular exposure to queer identities may constraint queerphobia	Incomprehension and ignorance gives rise to fear and rejection of queer identities. More acceptance in community were one is known
Jy't nou bietjie van jou persoonlike ervaring ook vertel. So waar jy nou is voel jy die omgewing is…		
Geriefliker en ek kan meer die kinders ook meer help, omdat ek dit raaksien en so.	Role model (able to provide support to queer learners) Greater awareness of typical queer mannerisms	Insider perspective
En die kinders struikel met dit, omdat daai kinders ook baie meer seksueel ontwikkel…uhm, sukkel hulle partykeer om te onderskei, is ek nou so of so en wat moet ek doen. So baie van die kinders, of hulle nou gay of straight is, kom gewoonlik na my toe en sê: "Juffrou, is dit okay dat ek so voel? Wat moet ek doen?" en dan ondersteun ek hulle maar daardeur.	Being part of a minority group makes her approachable (provides support and advice)	Valuable soundboard Authenticity is experienced by children
So jou seksualiteit, op 'n manier, help jou om 'n ondersteuningsfiguur…		
Yes		
By hierdie skool aanvaar hulle jou, maar by die vorige een, het jy gesê, was daar wel bietjie heteronormatiwiteit. Kan jy miskien 'n gebeurtenis herroep waar jy geviktimiseerd of uitgesluit gevoel het binne daai skoolgemeenskap?		
Soos pouses, byvoorbeeld, as mens nou kan bietjie sosialiseer en so, dan is daar hier en daar 'n onderwyser wat sê: "Kom ons gaan rook gou-gou of gaan drink 'n koffetjie" en dan is die res is alles soos in 'n groepietjie,	Being queer kept her from being part of a social in-group (othered and rejected)	Attributions (think they think so)
wat nou dink hulle is bietjie beter, want hulle is normaal. Dit het gevoel asof hulle dink hulle is normaal en wat de hel is jy?	Believes in heterosexual superiority. Queer is perceived as deviant/abnormal	
So ek het baie soos gevoel ek invade hulle spasie.	Felt alienated and lonely.	
Was dit soos 'n aanvoeling wat jy gekry het?		
Ja.		
Jy het nou reeds jou seksualiteit openbaar aan mense by jou skool, of jou geslagsidentiteit. Wat was hulle reaksie gewees toe jy dit gedoen het?		
Hulle het vir my gelag en vir my gesê: "Hoor hier, jy's Anel en ons aanvaar jou as Anel en moet asseblief nooit verander vir enige iemand anders nie".	Accepting and inclusive. Embrace and empower queer teacher	Heterosexual colleagues may be important agents of change (allies for queer teachers)
Dit was nou jou kollegas wat dit gesê het?		
Ja.		
En leerders?		
Okay, die leerders…omdat ek nie dit wil… Ek wil hulle nie beïnvloed, deur te sê: "Okay, gay	Does not want to impose/enforce her believes on children	

is reg, straight is reg, gay is verkeerd, straight is verkeerd…”.	Possible fear of prosecution (internalised homophobia)	
Ek is maar baie placid.	Fears being too vocal about queer rights	
As iemand iets oor die topic in ‘n klas sal sê: ‘Hierdie ou is ‘n moffie’, dan sal ek sê: ‘Dit is vieslik. Wat maak jou beter? Jy’s straight. Wat maak jou beter?’	Avoids pushing her personal agenda	
So, ja. Ek vat mense wat bietjie antigay is bietjie aan, maar ook as die straight mense, die kindertjies, nou sal baklei, sal ek ook sê: ‘Wat gaan aan? Hoekom baklei julle nou?’	Advocates for or general equality and inclusivity	Because queer teachers are part of a marginalised minority group, they might have especially well developed empathy for learner diversity. Therefore they may be especially important voices for inclusivity within education.
Hierdie gaan ook meer betrekking hê of die vorige skool, eerder as die een waarby jy nou is, maar jy’s welkom om te praat van die een waarby jy tans is ook. Hoe affekteer heteronormatiwiteit binne jou skoolomgewing jou met betrekking tot, eerstens, jou professionele verpligtinge, jou verhouding met kollegas of leerders en jou persoonlike welstand? Ons kan dit opbreek.		
Kom ons gaan eers met die professie self, want ek sien dit as ‘n professie. Dit is ‘n professie nou. Dit beïnvloed dit nie regtig nie, want jy’s nie veronderstel om jou persoonlike lewe saam met jou werk te kombineer nie.	Internalised homophobia/heterosexism Reinforces the separation of personal and professional identity as a means to avoid being confronted/questioned about personal matters (such as queer identity)	
So my ervaring is dat ek het op ‘n professionele vlak myself glad nie daaraan gesteur nie. My werk word gedoen soos wat dit gedoen moet word. Dis waarvoor ek geswot het.	Attempts not to internalise heteronormativity	Defence mechanism? Shifts focus from heterosexism to protect her wellbeing
Ek het ‘n liefde vir kinders en dit is al wat my motiveer om wel aan te gaan en net te maak of alles oraait is. En dan op ‘n meer sosiale…jy gesê sosiale vlak?	Passion for teaching and supporting children surpasses discomfort created by heteronormatve discrimination	
Ja, soos jou verhoudings met kollegas.		
Met die kollegas? Dit kan soms koud wees,	Some colleagues are inhospitable towards queer teachers	
maar ek het ook geleer om dit kort en kragtig te hou en in daai gevalle waar ek gevoel het ek invade nou hulle spasie, het ek maar besluit ag kort en kragting.	Accommodates heterosexist behaviour of colleagues at the expense of herself	
Ons praat maar wanneer ons moet. Wees professioneel voor die kinders. Stel ‘n voorbeeld van professionaliteit en doen waarvoor jy lief is. Dit help nie om op ‘n persoonlike vlak voor kinders, veral in hierdie professie, veral waar jy hulle moet ondersteun, teen mekaar te probeer werk nie. Dis tog een skool, so jy werk saam.	Avoids making conversations with heterosexist colleagues Avoids situations where she may be confronted (fears creating conflict at the expense of learners) Separates her personal and professional lifes	Values collegiality and professionalism.

So van hierdie goed waaroor jy bietjie meer moet stilbly en dalk nie te veel oor uitbrei nie, beïnvloed dit op enige manier jou welstand by die skool?		
Nie in die skool soseer nie, maar as jy nou maar huistoe gaan dan voel jy maar: 'Okay, wie de hel dink hulle is hulle'. Uhm, ja….dan vang dit jou so bietjie, maar eventually kom jy oor dit.	Feels humiliated/othered/victimised by colleagues. Frustrated with being vulnerable and powerless Oppression of feelings created by Heterosexism (coping mechanism)	
Okay, wat dink jy is die grootste struikelblokke vir queer onderwysers in Suid-Afrika?		
Die soeke na aanvaarding.	Participant perceives desires of acceptance and inclusion as queer teachers' biggest obstacle	Self-acceptance? Acceptance by others as part of the 'in-group'
Okay en as 'n queer onderwyser nou die onderwys betree, wat dink jy is die ergste vir hulle binne daardie situasie?		
Wel, ek dink die ergste is om te voel jy word verwerp deur jou kollegas, om te voel dat jy nie saam hulle kan werk as 'n span nie, want dis tog belangrik. Kinders se welstand is dan in jou hande, so jy moet met hulle kan werk en daarvoor. Jy moet aanvaar word en deel voel, sodat jy saam kan werk as 'n span. Dis hoe ek voel en ek dink dis 'n struikelblok vir mense om aanvaar te word, want dit is nie lekker om te voel jy word nie heeltemal gevat vir wie jy is nie. So dan word jy uitgeskuif uit sekere sake waar jy eintlik wil betrokke wees en jy wil die kinders help en jy wil weet van die kinders se welstand of jy wil hulle dalk help…hulle het dalk klere of kos of so nodig en dan weet jy nie daarvan nie.	Heterosexism leaves queer teachers othered and rejected (inhibits professional duties, cooperative activities and, therefore, professional wellbeing) Being left out of the loop, inhibits professional duties.	What are the effects of forced inauthenticity?
Kan jy vir my 'n voorbeeld gee van so situasie waar jy uitgeskuif was?		
Hulle het begin met die revue se reëlings en so en ek is 'n baie groot kultuurmens. Ek het gevoel, okay wel, dan is ek seker net nie goed genoeg om deel te wees van hulle nie, want hulle include my nie. Hulle skuif my uit hulle groepie uit en daar is eintlik baie talente wat dat verlore gaan. Dis waar ek dit gevoel het.	Heterosexism inhibits professional development and the level of involvement with learners.	
En dink jy dis as gevolg van jou seksualiteit wat hulle jou uitgeskuif het?		
Yes, want hulle aanvaar dit nie as die norm nie. Dis nie vir hulle normaal nie.	Queer sexualities are perceived as deviant and should be ostracised to protect a healthy, 'normal' schooling community.	
Okay en dan die laaste vragie wat ek vir jou het; gebasseer op al hierdie ervarings wat jy nou bespreek het, watter advies sal jy gee aan queer onderwysstudente wat nog nie die onderwyssituasie betree het nie?		
Weet jy, vat elke dag soos dit kom en moet jouself nie steur aan ander mense nie, want jy is uniek. God het almal geskape. Ek is regtig 'n groot christen. Die here maak nie foute nie en hy maak jou vir 'n rede soos jy is, hetsy dit is	Do not internalise negative heterosexist comments or behaviour. Embrace your uniqueness as a queer teacher Queer teachers have special	

om mense te help of bystand te gee of kinders te ondersteun. Die grootmense sal altyd probleme het. So, die onderwysers sal altyd baklei na die einde van ‘n kwartaal of whatever, moet jouself nie daaraan steur nie.	contributions to make in South African schools. Queer teachers should discover their purpose and live it, despite adversity aimed at their queer identity.	

APPENDIX C: EXTRACT OF POTENTIAL THEMES ACROSS CASES

Queer teacher experiences
Henk, Joan, Koos, Anel, Mariaan, Samantha, Ester, Barbara, Leah
1.Perceptions and experiences of heteronormativity in schools
1.1. Cultural heterosexism
Heteropatriarchy - Gender specific queerphobia? Male teachers are more prone to experience queerphobia - Men are generally more aggressive towards queer identities [p.3] - Some male colleagues had complete disregard and disrespect for the participant's queer identity, by mocking and belittling him for being different (othered and excluded) - Socialisation (through media and culture) maintains heteronormativity [p.3] - Lesbians are perceived as aggressive and intimidating [p.10] - Strict focus on gender roles (which should align with biological sex) Believes in male superiority and authority [p.2] - Participant perceives male, Afrikaners as strongly opposed to anything that deviates from the heteronorm [p.5] - Male learners especially will exhibit queerphobic behaviour [p.7]. -Various cultural stereotypes attached to queer individuals [p.10] -African learners are socialised to be unaccepting of any sexualities or gender identities that deviate from the heteronorm [p.2] - Queerphobic insults are generally made by male colleagues [p.6] - Perceives boys as particularly prone to making homophobic remarks (peer pressure) [p.7]
Perceptions of cultural heterosexism - Afrikaans culture is substantially heterosexist - English cultures are liberal with regards to queer rights - Queer teachers in Afrikaans schools mask their queer identities (fear) - Heterosexist comments at the African school he taught at were scarce - Perceives Afrikaans culture as particularly queerphobic/heterosexist - Generally speaking, the traditional, conservative South African society is still queerphobic - Being queer is still a cultural/societal taboo. - Perceives Afrikaans schools as highly religious, conservative and heterosexist -Believes that Afrikaans schools will agitate and discriminate against queer teachers until they resign [p.5]. - Occurrence and intensity of heteronormative attitudes and behaviour are culture specific [p.1] -Perceives Afrikaans culture as especially heteronormative [p.1] - English culture is more open-minded with regards to queer issues [p1] -African cultures are especially queerphobic [p.1] - Heterosexuality is die only validated lifestyle [p.3] - Fears any threats to the established heteronorm [p.4] -Participant knows of no openly queer teachers within Afrikaans school cultures [p.5] - Participant perceives homosexuality as a general taboo in the Afrikaner culture. Afrikaner people are especially heterosexist [p.6] - Perceives English communities as more open-minded [p.6] - Parents are especially heteronormative (predominantly within African cultures) [p.2] - Participant has experienced schools with English cultures to be more progressive and acceptant of queer identities [p.2] - Participant perceives Afrikaans schools as particularly heteronormative [p.2] - Perceives culture dominated schools as conservative with regards to queer inclusion [p.2] African cultures and the Afrikaans culture are generally queerphobic [p.2] - Heterosexual ideologies are forced upon children in households (learners are, in turn rewarded and sanctioned according to heteronormative values) [p.1]
Societal ignorance (stubborn, inflexible and rigid) -Societal ignorance - Bigotry - Misconceptions and ignorance held by many South African citizens hinders queer teachers' wellbeing - Heterosexism is difficult to reverse (ingrained in cultural and religious beliefs of South Africans) - Some communities are ignorant about what being queer encompasses, rather than deliberately hostile. - People are oblivious and ignorant about queer related matters, rather than deliberately hostile [p.1] - Schooling community is unwilling to depart from their exclusive, discriminative interpretations of the Christian religion [p.2]

- Believes that learners will perceive her as hypocritical/false, when her queer identity is exposed (her credibility as a role model will be lost) [p.7]
- Lesbians are perceived as aggressive and intimidating [p.10]
- Learners are indoctrinated to perceive queer identities as deviant/pathological [p.7]
- Learners will perceive her as hypocritical, because of her queer identity [p.7]
- People are ignorant about queer identities [p.10]
- Larger community are ignorant about terminology related to queer identification (Asexuality is especially scarce and unfamiliar) [p.2]
-People like categories- "easy way of understanding" (Asexual teachers are snowflakes): derogatorily described as a person with an inflated sense of uniqueness and unwarranted sense of entitlement (easily offended by opposing opinions) [p.2]
-Heterosexuality is advocated as the only normal/healthy sexuality [p.3]
- Perceives asexuality as pathological [p.6]
- Community members are outspoken about asexuality being perverse [p.6]
-Heterosexism is out of queer teachers' control (not easy to change deep rooted beliefs) [p.6]
-Purposeless to attempt explaining asexuality, since heteronormative individuals are too ignorant to be empathetic /understanding (Explain in socially acceptable terms) [p.7]
-Asexuality is not perceived as an authentic sexual orientation, but rather a deviation that can be corrected [p.7]
- Being socialised in a heteronormative environment, learners may perceive queer relationships as peculiar rather than pathological (uneducated about sexual and gender diversity) [p.6]
- The participant's colleagues were confused and surprised, rather than repulsed or disappointed when they found out about her queer identity [p.7]
- Colleagues were confused about changes in the participant's normal/regular behaviour (she conformed to heteronormative standards before)
- When given perspective of his discriminative/queerphobic language, the learner felt guilt/shame (he used queerphobic language out of ignorance and habit, without realising its negative impact) [p.7]

1.2. Internalised heterosexism

Meta-perceptions
-Perceives learners as suspicious of her sexuality because of the behaviour she exhibits [p.5]
- Heterosexism in mostly suggested implicitly.
- Participant perceives queer teachers as generally fearful of rejection (fear discomfort that may result from possible discrimination) [p.5]
- Perceives queerphobic schooling community as surreptitious about their aversion of queer identities [p.1]
- Believes that people talk behind his back regularly [p.2]
- Attributions: Believes being queer is keeping her from being part of a social in-group (othered and rejected) [p.2]
-Felt alienated when joining conversation
- Uncertainty/worry about superiors' impressions (Questioned validity of queer identity) [p.3]
-Believes disclosure of her sexuality will keep her from learning opportunities from superiors, since it would make them exclude/reject her [p.3]
- Fear of being exposed as queer causes over cautiousness of supporting queer rights [p.8]
-Preconceived ideas about heterosexism in schooling environments, based on personal experiences thereof [p.5]
-Expects being rejected by schooling community [p.5]
- Being part of a marginalised minority group, the participant has developed a sensitivity towards heterosexist remarks [p.7]
- Participant believes that the effects and consequences of heteronormativity are sometimes exaggerated in the minds of queer teachers [p.8]
- Participant believes that people are generally more acceptant of queer identities than they may believe them to be [p.9]
Exposure to competing ideologies
-Koos
-Anel
-Mariaan
-Ester
- Conforms to heteronormativity.
-Lives inauthentic, due to perceived religious obligation [p.3]
- Internalised queerphobia
For a long time could not reconcile her religion and queer identity [p.3]
- Hid/rejected true identity out of religious guilt (perceived heterosexuality as a purpose of her creation) [p.3]
- Felt obligated by religion to oppress any behaviour related to her queer identity [p.6]
-Feels ashamed and frustrated of the incongruity between her ideal self (morals and belief) and her perceived self

(adopting and reflecting morals and norms acceptable to the school community) [p.8]
Compartmentalisation
-Conforms or conformed to heteronormative expectations [p.1]
-She was forced to conceal her true identity and lie [p.3]
- Act against her own moral standards in an attempt to avoid discrimination (detrimental effect on wellbeing) [p.3]
- Participant believes that professional and personal lives should be separated.
- Heteronormativity forces queer individuals to live inauthentic and fearful of persecution.
- Reinforces the separation of personal and professional identity as a means to avoid being confronted/questioned about personal matters (such as queer identity) [p.3]
- Separates her personal and professional lives [p.3]
-Oppressed/denied her true sexual identity out of fear and shame [p.1]
- Conformed to heteronormative expectations, out of fear [p.1, 2 and 3]
- Complete inauthenticity at work [p.2]
- Indoctrinated by heteronormative religious beliefs (rejection of true self) [p.3]
- Conformed to societal and religious standards/expectations [p.6]
- Believes in the separation of professional and private lives [p.5]?
- Conforms to heteronormative expectations [p.7]
- Participant doesn't separate her personal live from her professional life, any more that a heterosexual teacher would [p.6]

1.3. Demographic factors related to heterosexism

Parents as perceived antagonists against queer inclusion
- Perceives parents as heterosexist and actively/aggressively opposed to queer teachers.
-Fear reactions of parents finding out that she is queer.
- Parents fear that queer teachers will influence children to question traditional cultural and religious believes [p.4]
Parents' attitudes and/or behaviour towards queer identities greatly impacts queer teachers level of concealment of their identity (queer teachers fear parents' reactions) [p.1]
- Parents are the main combatants of queer teacher inclusion and acceptance in schooling communities [p.2]
- Young queer teachers fear adversity from parents, due to inexperience.
-Fears exposure of identity to parents
Parents are key role players in the preservation of heteronormativity (queerphobia) [p.4]
-Parents perceive queer individuals as persuasive and influential. Believes that queer teachers will misdirect their children [p.5]
Participant believes that parents will feel betrayed when realising they entrusted a queer teacher with a in loco parentis role [p.7]
- Parents are especially heteronormative (predominantly within African cultures) [p.2]
-Parents may perceive a queer teacher as a threat to their traditional values and the wellbeing of their children (fear that queer teachers may brainwash their children with [what they perceive as] perverse ideas) [p.6]

Relationship between age and heteronormativity
-Perceives younger teachers as more accepting and open-minded
- Young queer teachers are more vulnerable or susceptible to be victimised by heterosexist individuals [p.3]
- Association between age and heteronormative attitudes/behaviour (older people tend to be more heterosexist) [p.1]
- Age plays a role in queer individuals' self-acceptance [p.6]
- Younger queer individuals are more fearful of exposure or disclosure of their identity [p.6]
- Younger, queer teachers struggle, flounder and languish more within their school environments, compared to older queer teachers [p.6].
-The staff and management made the participant and her wife feel welcome at school functions [p.8]

School category and location
-Special needs schools seems to have greater compassion for marginalised minority groups, resulting in more inclusive environments in which queer teachers may be comfortable.
- Participant perceives special needs education as accessible and accepting of queer identities.
- Special needs education teachers have greater compassion and understanding of inclusion and diversity [p.3]
-Special needs schools are more sensitive towards needs of minority groups
- Heteronormativity might be dependent on specific milieu/environment/location
-Teachers are more regularly scrutinised in smaller communities [p.3]
- Perceives private schools as more open-minded with regards to inclusion [p.5 and p.10]
- Perceives colleagues in public schools as supportive of queer rights (those not dominated by religion) [p.7]
- Conservative, small town schools has no tolerance for queer teachers (Queer sexualities are equated to criminal offenses) [p.10]
-Participant acknowledge that heterosexism in schools are context dependent [p.2]
- Participant has experienced urban schools to be more progressive and acceptant of queer identities [p.2]

1.4.Religious based heterosexism
-Religious colleagues more prone to queer discrimination - An HOD informed the participant that God and he loathes “unnatural gay lifestyles” [p.1] - Colleagues uses religion to justify their heterosexism [p.3] - Schooling community segregate queer identities from Christian practices (exclusion) [p.1] -Religious socialisation maintains heteronormativity - Religion is a main determinants of the prevalence of heteronormativity - Within the school, heterosexuality is the only validated sexual orientation, according to their religious believes. Anything that deviates from heterosexuality is deviant/pathological -Fundamentalism ingrained in school community and policies [p.1] - Conservative Christian influence is expressed in the vision and mission of school - Rigid, deep-rooted, conservative religious beliefs (unaccommodating and unadaptable) [p.2] - Queer individuals are ungodly and deviant [p.4] - Queer teachers have no religious/spiritual authority [p.7] - Fundamentalist interpretations of the bible determine acceptable sexual- and gender identities (sanctions asexuality) [p.5] - Perceives Muslim schools as extremely intolerant [p.2] - Participant has preconceived ideas about religion dominated schools being heterosexist [p.2] -Religions (Anglican) schools are opposed to queer rights [p.2] - Religion is a main determinant of a discriminative/oppressive culture in schools [p.8] -Depending on the specific school, religion may be a main motivation for queer discrimination. - Parents perceive queer individuals as persuasive and influential. Believes that queer teachers will misdirect their children [p.4] - Parents fear that queer teachers will influence children to question traditional cultural and religious believes [p.4] - Children should be kept/protected from queer individuals (being queer is equated to being deviant, perverse and pathological) [p.10]

APPENDIX D: THEMATIC MAP OF THEMES ACROSS CASES

APPENDIX E: LOCATOR AND GATEKEEPER FORM

Heterosexism within schools in the South African context:

Queer teachers' school-based experiences

I would like to invite you to assist me in conducting a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to participate or not, you need to understand the aim of the research and what your involvement would be. Please take time to carefully read through the research information. Feel free to contact the researcher if you have any questions or would like more detailed information. Take time to decide whether or not to facilitate this research.

Who I am and what the study is about

I am a queer teacher and a Master of Psychology student at the North West University (Vaal Triangle campus). From the limited literature related to this topic, it is evident that queer teachers are a marginalised group within a predominantly heteronormative schooling system. This study aims to expand the limited knowledge field on heterosexism in South African schooling environments and even scarcer research on queer teachers' school-based experiences. The researcher intends to document the experiences of a silenced, unrepresented and oppressed community. This exploration might set the scene for larger scale investigations and potential interventions to improve queer teacher wellbeing and enhance inclusiveness in schools. Finally, the nature of queer teachers' school-based experiences might inform the direction of future studies on the topic.

What I need your assistance with

Queer South African teachers may be considered a rather small, hidden population. Because of potential discrimination against these individuals, participant recruitment needs to be coordinated in a sensitive and careful manner. It raises ethical concerns when researchers directly contact potential participants, necessitating volunteers to act as locators. These locators will initiate a snowball by contacting their queer teacher acquaintances/friends and providing them with research information. If interested in participating, these potential participants may then directly contact the researcher, who will provide further in-depth information.

Who may participate?

Queer teachers may include any person who self-identify as non-heteronormative (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, demisexual, omnisexual etcetera); therefore any sexuality and/or gender identity included as part of the umbrella term 'queer'. According to Msibi (2012), anyone feeling marginalised by mainstream visions of sexuality, may be included in the queer population.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Participants should be trained for teaching within the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of educational structure or within the GET or FET band.	Due to dissimilar work environments, institutional cultures, roles, responsibilities and ethical requirements, lecturers within the tertiary phase of education may not participate in the study.
Participants should currently be appointed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), a School Governing Board (SGB) or other relevant authorities.	Pre-service teachers, retired teachers and qualified teachers, who do not currently teach, may not be included.
Participants should be able to understand	

and respond to interview questions in either English or Afrikaans	
Participants should be registered with SACE (South African Council of Educators).	
Participants should, for practical reasons, be based within any of the following regions: Limpopo, Gauteng or North West.	

What taking part in the research will involve?

Participants will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview, where they would have to answer 'n maximum of 15 open-ended questions about their school-based experiences of heteronormativity. Interviews will be held in a private, yet public place within a participants' hometown. Participants will be given an opportunity to choose an interview setting that is convenient for them to drive/walk to. Each participant will be reimbursed for travelling and refreshments will be provided during the interview. The interview will be recorded, transcribed and the data will be used in my dissertation.

What about participant confidentiality and anonymity?

Only my supervisor and I will have access will have access to the research data. Recorded data will be transcribed (the transcriber will sign a confidentiality clause) and immediately be transferred to various password protected cloud storage accounts (such as Google Drive, Dropbox etcetera). Additionally, data will be encrypted, so that transmission of data between the research team can securely take place. Participants' identifying characteristics, including race, demographic details, age and ethnicity, will be removed from the final article and substituted with pseudonyms. These pseudonyms will be constructed by making use of a coding system only known to the researcher, leaving participants' identities completely anonymised.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Anonymised results will be published in scientific peer approved journals. In this reporting participant details (e.g. name of your school) will not be included. When publication has been finalised, research findings will be shared with participants via email.

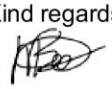
Who should you contact for further information?

Researcher: Melissa de Beer
MA Psychology student
North West University
Vaal Triangle Campus
082 497 1936
melispotch@gmail.com

Research supervisor: Dr Karen van der Merwe
School of Behavioural Sciences
Vaal Triangle Campus, NWU

Tel: (016) 910 3417
Fax: (016) 910 3424
Karen.vandermerwe@nwu.ac.za

Thank you in advance
Kind regards



Melissa de Beer

I, _____ have carefully read through the above research information and agree to act as locator for the research of Melissa de Beer. I will take the responsibility of contacting potential participants who meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria as set out above. I will thoroughly explain the research information to potential participants, before providing them with contact details of the researcher.

_____
Locator signature

APPENDIX F: ADVERTISEMENT

Are you a queer (LGBT+) teacher?

Tell us about your school-based experiences

You will be asked to participate in a single interview, regarding your experiences as a queer teacher in a South African school

You may participate if you:
-self-identify as non-heteronormative or queer (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, demisexual, omnisexual etcetera).
-live in either the Limpopo, Gauteng or North West province
-are appointed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), a school governing board or any other relevant authority as a school teacher

An interview will be conducted in your hometown, at a time suitable to you.

The interview setting will be private and convenient to travel to.

Information you share will be kept confidential and **your identity will be anonymised**

Should you be willing to participate, send a message to this group administrator. The researcher will contact you shortly with detailed research information

This study is led by Dr Karen van der Merwe of the Department of Psychology at the North West University, Vaal Triangle Campus (016-910-3417)

APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY ®
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa, 1900

Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

11/10/2017

Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee
HHREC
2017 -10- 11

C. van Eeden.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR SOUTH AFRICAN QUEER TEACHERS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences

REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-HS-2017-0150

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: MELISSA DE BEER

ADDRESS: Bendor Drive 74
Bendor
Polokwane
0699

CONTACT NUMBER: 082 497 1936

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my Master of Psychology studies. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This document is an adapted version of the one used by HREC, Potchefstroom Campus (HREC General WICF Version 2, August 2014).

This study has been approved by the **Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU-HS-2017-0150)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted in any town located in either the Limpopo, Gauteng or North West regions and will involve semi-structured interviews. The researcher has been trained up to honours level in Psychology, which included modules on counselling skills and interviewing, community psychology and crisis intervention. Interviewing with participants will be an ongoing, guided process. The research supervisor, who is a registered educational psychologist, will provide close supervision after each interview.*
- *No more than 10 participants are usually involved in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), due to the nuanced, detailed, verbatim analysis. The sample size will not exceed 10 participants, yet cannot be precisely predetermined.*
- *The objective of this research is: to understand, explore, interpret and describe the school-based experiences of queer teachers in South African schools.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because you self-identify as non-heteronormative or queer (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, demisexual, omnisexual), or any other sexuality and/or gender identity included as part of the umbrella term 'queer'. The term 'queer' may refer to anyone feeling marginalised by mainstream visions of sexuality.*
- *You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria:*
  1. *You received training for teaching within the pre-primary, primary or secondary levels of educational structure or within the GET or FET band.*
  2. *You are appointed as a teacher by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), a School Governing Board (SGB) or other relevant authorities.*
  3. *You are able to understand and respond to interview questions in either English or Afrikaans.*
  4. *You are registered with SACE (South African Council of Educators)*
  5. *You are based within any of the following regions: Limpopo, Gauteng or North West.*

- *You will be excluded if:*
  1. *you are a lecturer within the tertiary phase of education (due to dissimilar work environments, institutional cultures, roles, responsibilities and ethical requirements).*
  2. *you are a pre-service teacher, a retired teacher or a qualified teacher who do not currently teach.*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be expected to take part in a one-off semi-structured interview. The interview venue will be a publicly available, confidential and secure setting in your hometown. The researcher will provide you with the opportunity to choose such a setting, which is convenient for you to travel to. You will be reimbursed for travelling to the interview setting, where refreshments will be available. During the interview, you will be asked no more than 15 open-ended interview questions, which you may answer and elaborate on as you wish. The interview will be recorded, transcribed and analysed for use in the researcher's dissertation. Your identifying characteristics, including race, demographic details, age and ethnicity, will be removed from the final article and substituted with pseudonyms, leaving your identity completely anonymous.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *Your participation may hold no direct benefits for you; nevertheless voicing your experiences may provide self-acknowledgement, increase your self-awareness and empower you.*
- *The indirect benefit will probably be your contribution to the expansion of a especially scarce knowledge field in South Africa. This exploration may contribute to setting the scene for larger scale investigations and interventions to relieve heteronormative pressures experienced by teachers and enhance inclusiveness in schools.*

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

- *The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:*

Probable/possible risks/discomforts	***Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort***
You may be concerned with the date, time and duration of the interview and whether it will fit into your schedule.	The researcher will personally arrange an interview date and time that suits your schedule. You will be asked no more than 15 open-ended questions and receive refreshments for the duration of the interview.
Travelling to an appropriate interview setting may be inconvenient for you.	You will be given the opportunity to choose a setting, which is a convenient distance from your home.
You may be concerned about the costs of travelling to an interview setting.	The researcher will travel to your hometown. You will be reimbursed for traveling to an interview site, leaving you without travelling expenses at a rate of R4.00 per kilometre.
You may be concerned about your physical safety and the security of the interview setting.	Your safety is vital to the researcher. Therefore your choices of settings will all be secure and private, yet public spaces.
Due to possible discrimination against queer teachers, you may be concerned about your privacy and the anonymity of the information you will share during the	Recorded data will immediately be transferred to various password protected cloud storage accounts. It will also be encrypted, so that transmission of data

interview	between the research team can securely take place. All your identifying details will be replaced with pseudonyms, ensuring your anonymity.
Because you will be asked questions that may be sensitive in nature, you could feel uncomfortable.	You are under no obligation to answer questions, which you perceive as particularly sensitive. Should it become evident that you are in distress, the researcher will have procedures for interview termination. The researcher will arrange for a clinical- or counseling psychologist, whom you can contact to assist you with a debriefing session of 50 minutes, if necessary. If more therapy is indicated, the psychologist will refer you to a private practitioner.

- *However, the benefits (as noted above) outweigh the risk.*

Who will have access to the data?

- *Anonymity (that is, in no way will your results be linked to your identity) will be assured by substituting your identifying characteristics with pseudonyms (fictitious identifying characteristics). Confidentiality (that is, assuring that we will protect the information we have about you) will be ensured by transferring recorded data to various password protected cloud storage accounts. After transcription took place, the data will be encrypted. As mentioned above; the reporting of findings will be secured by using pseudonyms, leaving your identity anonymous.*
- *Only the researchers and her supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected.*
- *Audio-recorded data will be personally transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts will be stored on a password-protected computer. All co-coders will sign confidentiality clauses.*
- *Data will be stored for 5 years in the office of the research supervisor, at the North West University.*

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways: Anonymous results will be published in scientific peer approved journals. In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated (e.g., your address or the name of your school).

The data may be used for future research.

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study, but refreshments will be provided during the interview and you will receive compensation for travelling to the interview setting.

How will you know about the findings?

- The general findings of the research will be shared with you via email, when publication has been finalised.
-

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Melissa de Beer at 0824971936 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the chair of the Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (Prof Chrizanne van Eeden) at 016 910 3516 or chrizanne.Vaneeden@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. You can also contact, the co-chair, Dr Marita Heyns (016 910 3581 or marita.heyns@nwu.ac.za You can leave a message for either Chrizanne or Marita with Ms Daleen Claasens (016 910 30441)
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a research study entitled: Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I say) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I understand that my anonymised contribution may be used in further research project
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

....

Signature of participant **Signature of witness**

- I would like a summary of the findings of this research ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____

Postal Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:
Name & Surname:

_____

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email:

_____

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I *(name)* ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

....

Signature of person obtaining consent **Signature of witness**

Declaration by researcher

I *(name)* ..... declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use a interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) ..... 20....

....

Signature of researcher **Signature of witness**

APPENDIX H: ASSISTANCE IN DEBRIEFING

Dr Hayley Walker-Williams

B.A.(Hons) M.A.(Clin Psych) Ph.D (Psych)
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Practice no: 8645663

North West University
Hendrik Van Eck Blvd
Vanderbijlpark
Building 7
First Floor
Office 119
Tel: (016) 910 3416

The Vaal Therapy Centre
103 General Hertzhog Street
Three Rivers
Vereeniging
1935
Cell 082 383 7826
Email: Hayley.williams@nwu.ac.za

15-08-2017

Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the Faculty of Humanities North-West University

Attention: Prof C. Van Eeden and Dr M. Heyns

RE: Willingness to provide one debriefing session to research participants

I understand that Ms Melissa De Beer is working on the research study entitled: Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences. During this research study Ms De Beer will interview participants.

In the event that a participant should express the need for a debriefing session after the interview, the researcher may contact me and I hereby agree to provide a once off 50 minute face to face debriefing session to the particular participant concerned.

Should the participant require further assistance a referral source will be arranged.

Kind regards

HJ Walker-Williams

Dr H.J. Walker-Williams
B.A. (Hons) M.A. (Clin Psych) PhD (Psych)

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: (018) 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Tel: (018) 285 2388
Fax: (018) 299 1730
E-mail: Ruan.Spies@nwu.ac.za

To whom it may concern

WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IN DEBRIEFING OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If trauma occurs after an interview, I am willing to assist Melissa de Beer (research student), by conducting a 50 minute debriefing session with the traumatised participant of the research project titled:

Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences.

The researcher will inform me at least two weeks in advance when an interview will take place. She will be responsible for making arrangements for a participant to reach my office, if trauma occurs. If more therapy is indicated after the 50 minute therapy session, I will refer the participant to a private practitioner.

Kind regards

Dr. Ruan Spies

Clinical Psychologist

PS0105228

Postnet Suite 252
Private Bag X17
Weltevredenpark
1715

14 August 2017

To whom it may concern

WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IN DEBRIEFING OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If a research interview is in any way traumatic to the participants, I am willing to assist Melissa de Beer (research student), by conducting a 50-minute debriefing session with the traumatised participant of the research project titled *Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences*.

The researcher will inform me at least two weeks in advance when an interview will take place. She will be responsible for making arrangements for a participant to reach my office, if the need arises. If more therapy is indicated after the 50-minute therapy session, I will refer the participant to a private practitioner.

Kind regards

Ella Kotze

Community and Counselling Psychologist
HPCSA Reg No: PS 0117579
Pr No: 0529923

Cell no: 082 721 7863

To whom it may concern

WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IN DEBRIEFING OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If trauma occurs after an interview, I am willing to assist Melissa de Beer (research student), by conducting a 50 minute debriefing session with the traumatised participant of theresearch project titled:

Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences.

The researcher will inform me at least two weeks in advance when an interview will take place. She will be responsible for payment and making arrangements for a participant to reach my office, if trauma occurs. If more therapy is indicated after the 50 minute therapy session, I will inform the researcher before continuing with therapy so that an agreement can be reached in terms of payment and number of sessions indicated.

Kind regards

Zelda Buitendag

Clinical Psychologist (PS 0095303)

66B Burger st, Polokwane, 0699

Tel: (w) 015 2957588 / (cell) 0837895156

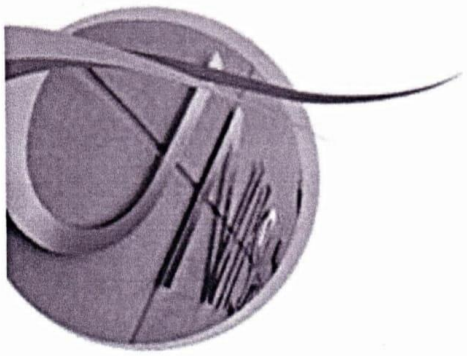
To whom it may concern

If trauma occurs after an interview, I am willing to assist Melissa de Beer (research student), by conducting a 50 minute debriefing session with the traumatised participant of the research project titled: *Heterosexism within schools in the South African context: Queer teachers' school-based experiences*.

The researcher will inform me at least two weeks in advance when an interview will take place. She will be responsible for making arrangements for a participant to reach my office, if trauma occurs.

If further intervention is indicated after the 50 minute debriefing session, I will refer the participant to a private practitioner.

Kind regards



UNISA university of south africa

Prof Juan A Nel

Research Professor working from home

Department of Psychology

College of Human Sciences

Member of Council: Psychological Society of SA (PsySSA)

Cell: +27(0)83 282 0791

E-mail: nelja@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX I: REOCCURRENCE OF SUPERORDINATE THEMES ACROSS CASES

Table 1

Reoccurrence of superordinate themes across cases

Superordinate themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Perceptions of heteronormativity in schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cultural heterosexism	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Internalised heterosexism	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Perceived factors related to school-based heterosexism		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Religious-based heterosexism	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Experiences of discrimination, stigma and prejudice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Heteronormative assumptions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reverberations of school based heterosexism		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Psychological consequences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Queer teacher adjustments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Defence mechanisms		X		X			X		X
Self-acceptance and social-perspective taking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Religiosity and/or spirituality as a protective factor			X	X			X		
Queer consciousness and -knowledge								X	X
Queer teachers as unique role-players in schools	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
A psychological sense of community		X				X	X		X

APPENDIX J: DESCRIPTION OF THEMES AND FREQUENCIES ACROSS CASES

Table 1.1

Description of theme and frequency across cases: Perceptions of heteronormativity in schools

Theme	Frequency	Description
Subordinate themes in bold		
Cultural heterosexism	9	Queer teachers' experiences of school-based heterosexism may be traced back to how heteronormative schooling community members have been socialised within their specific sociohistorical context to produce the heteronorm within a school.
Heteropatriarchy	7	Queer teachers' perceptions of heterosexism as intimately linked to patriarchy, where cisgendered heterosexual men perceive queer identities as a threat to their socialised ideas of masculinity and how it privileges them.
Perceptions of cultural heterosexism	7	Perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards queer communities are, to a large extend, dependent on the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular society or culture. The nature of heterosexism in a diverse South African society is dependent on particular groups' ethnicity and cultures, among other factors.
Societal ignorance	6	The presence or existence of queer communities are opposed, confronted, attacked, rejected, resisted, questioned or misunderstood due to a lack of knowledge about the community, leaving community members inflexible and rigid (set in their heteronormative ways).
Internalised heterosexism	8	
Meta-perceptions	7	The ideas and perceptions that queer teachers harbour about the ideas and perceptions of individuals or groups in their school community (preconceived, biased interpretation of what others think of them).
Cognitive dissonance	8	
Perceived factors related to school-based	6	Certain factors emphasised by participants as playing a significant role in the presence and nature of heteronormativity in schools

heterosexism		
Parents as perceived antagonists against queer teacher inclusion	5	Queer teachers express their fear of parental disapproval of queer teachers persuading their children.
Relationship between age and heterosexism	5	Queer teachers perceive the age or peer group an individual forms part of as an important determinant of their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards them.
School category and locality	5	The South African school category/type and its specific locality are important determinants of the presence and nature of heterosexism.
Religious-based heterosexism	9	The relationship between the religious affiliation of an individual and their prejudice against queer identities.

Table 1.2

Description of theme and frequency across cases: ***Discrimination, stigma and prejudice***

Theme	**Frequency**	**Description**
Subordinate themes in bold		
Heteronormative assumptions	7	Ignorant presumptions about queer teachers, based on heteronormative reasoning.
Preconceived ideas about physical appearance	4	Schooling community members' stereotypical perceptions about the physical attributes of queer individuals.
Perceptions of queer teachers as paedophiles	4	Heteronormative assumptions about queer teachers choosing to work with children because of perverse, pathological sexual desires and motives towards them.
Reverberations of school-based heterosexism		
Exclusion, silencing and othering of queer identities	7	Queer teachers' perceptions and experiences of being sanctioned as outsiders and/or left unrepresented.
Poor collegial and social relationships		The negative effect of heterosexism in schools on the quality of queer teachers' relationships with other schooling community members.
Limited opportunities for professional development		Heterosexism in schools restricts and limits queer teachers' opportunities for professional development.
Higher workload		Queer teachers are overburdened with work due to not conforming to heteronormative expectancies
Psychological		

consequences	
Anxiety and/or fear	Queer teachers' emotional responses to definite or perceived heterosexist threats.
Concealment or secrecy of queer identity	Queer teachers' concealment and/or denial of their actual sexual and/or gender identity, in an attempt to fit into the heteronorm of their school.
Discomfort and frustration	Feelings of discomfort and frustration created by internalised heteronormativity and heteronormative ignorance of schooling community members.
Self-isolation	Queer teachers separate themselves from casual interaction with the schooling community, in an attempt to protect themselves from heterosexism.
Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness	Deep-rooted societal heteronormativity creates feelings of powerlessness and in turn a sense of hopelessness for societal change of queer inclusion.
Mental illness	The negative effect of experienced heterosexism on the mental health of queer teachers.

Table 1.3

Description of theme and frequency across cases: Queer teacher adjustments

Theme	**Frequency**	**Description**
Subordinate themes in bold		
Defence mechanisms		Queer participants' use of defence mechanisms for relieving anxiety derived from experienced heterosexism.
Self-acceptance and social perspective taking		Queer teachers' ability to embrace all facets of themselves, including their sexual and gender identity. Due to lived-experiences of discrimination and/or marginalisation against them, queer teachers may have greater compassion and empathy towards others.
Religiosity and/or spirituality as protective factors against heterosexism		Religious and/or spirituality may provide a sense of personal meaning and self-acceptance, which may help participants to adjust well within a heterosexist school environment.
Queer consciousness		**Queer teachers' understanding of the complexities involved in**

and knowledge	**sexual- and gender diversity of humans.**
Queer teachers as unique role-players in schools	**Queer teachers have unique contributions to make in South African schools, since being part of a minority group heightened their sensitivity towards social justice issues.**
Advocate for social justice	Queer teachers educate and encourage those socialised by oppressive social norms, to reconsider their knowledges, in order to value and adopt new knowledges of inclusivity and tolerance.
Queer teachers as mentors	Queer teachers as valuable soundboards or support persons for queer community members, due to having insider perspectives of queer related challenges.
A psychological sense of community	**The importance of queer affirming support systems for countering the effects of heteronormativity on queer teacher wellbeing.**