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Bloomberg, Jonti Joey

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The Black Homoerotic Oedipus: An Exploratory Multiple-Case Study on the Possible Cross-Cultural Applicability of a Depathologized Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality

By

Dr. Jonti Joey Bloomberg

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, December 2022.

Supervisor: Prof. Katherine Bain

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Jonti Joey Bloomberg

19th December 2022

ABSTRACT

Classical psychoanalytic theory famously hypothesises a process in the aetiology of male homosexuality whereby a boy identifies with his mother and takes himself as a love-object. In addition to acknowledging that there may be various mechanisms in the development of a homosexual disposition, contemporary psychodynamic theoreticians have attempted to distance themselves from this view by emphasizing the primacy of the negative Oedipus complex and the 'heretical' possibility of one being able to identify with and lust the same object in the development of a homosexual object choice in adulthood. The present study sought to determine the potential cross-cultural applicability of this aforementioned depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality by way of three openly homosexual Black South African men. The study found that aspects of both the classical and depathologized psychoanalytic theories might have cross-cultural applicability. It also brought to the fore the many difficulties and forms of discrimination that Black South African homosexual men face within their communities.

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First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Katherine Bain, for assisting me in producing this research report. I have learnt a great deal from her, not solely in psychological research but also in terms of professional practice as a psychologist. I am incredibly grateful that I was afforded the opportunity to work with her.

I would also like to thank Andreas for all his assistance in so many ways. I would not have been able to achieve what I have had it not been for your continuous support.

Also, to my parents and my sister for all their support throughout this long and arduous journey. I know that in the end it will not be in vain.

A big 'thank you' to the three participants, without whom this study would not have been possible.

To my friends, Brett and Siya, for assisting me in finding the willing participants for the study.

To Michael, a psychologist with whom I had extended contact and who first brought my attention to a particular aspect of Freud's theory of male homosexuality.

And lastly – but certainly not least – to my beloved dog, Carrie, for once again remaining by my side throughout the process of writing my thesis.

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.[1]



The above image, taken from *The Collected Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume I* (1946), depicts Oedipus Rex conversing with the Sphinx. It appears to be based on the painting entitled *Oedipus* (circa 1805) by the French Neoclassical painter, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. The image became the logo of the *Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag* and appeared on the title pages of all its publications. I have included it here in order to indicate the significance that was once accorded to the concept of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalytic thought.

[1] "I am human, and I consider that nothing human is alien to me" – Publius Terentius Afer (Ricord, 1885, p. 25).

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1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of homosexuality is at once fascinating and complicated, for hitherto no one has as yet been able to definitively determine the aetiology thereof. Although the current study does not purport to solve the mystery of sexual attraction it is hoped that it will tentatively offer some indication as to the potential cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality.

Traditionally, in spite of Freud's open-mindedness regarding the matter (see, Jones, 1961), psychoanalytic practitioners have tended to regard homosexuality – unfairly – as a pathological condition (Friedman, 1986). According to this view, homosexuality was regarded as an aberrant and unhealthy form of sexuality, requiring both treatment and cure (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Contemporary theorists (see, Mitchell, 2012) have consequently sought to distance themselves from this prejudicial and erroneous view by regarding homosexuality as merely an alternative form of human sexuality (Sadock & Sadock, 2007) among a plethora of others, and introducing reinterpretations to Freud's initial theory and by acknowledging – along with Freud (1910/2001) – that there may in fact be many different varieties of homosexuality; hence that many types of 'homosexualities', as opposed to one type of 'homosexuality' (Freud, 1910/2001), may in fact exist. Recent updating of psychoanalytic theory has commenced, in order to move beyond previously pathologizing classical understandings of homosexuality (Lewes, 1998; Mitchell, 2012). In connection therewith the term 'depathologized' betokens the attempt to distance psychiatric conceptualisations of homosexuality from associations with illness and consequently the need for treatment and cure. This study explores the cross-cultural applicability of one type of this depathologized psychoanalytic theory from the perspectives of three Black homosexual males in South Africa;[2] thereby gaining some understanding of the

[2] Although I have serious reservations about classifying an individual's racial affiliation according to the colour of one's skin tone, I shall adhere to this custom in accordance with the way in which it is generally understood in South Africa. During the Apartheid era, the Population Registration Act of 1950 divided the South African population into three primary groups, viz., 'White', 'Black' and 'Coloured' (for people of a mixed and Asiatic descent) (Family Guide to the Law in South Africa, 1982). Although this act was repealed in 1991, the classification system has shaped the modern South African mentality and thus most, if not all, still widely follow it. Thus, I utilise the term 'Black' in connection with the way in which it was formulated by and understood according to the Population Registration Act. The term 'Black' herein, therefore, refers specifically to individuals of indigenous sub-Saharan African descent. However, it ought to be noted that although I am interested in the

possible cross-cultural applicability of the depathologized theory and also giving this largely unheard group of men a voice. In this respect it is significant to note that the Black community within South Africa does not constitute a homogenous group; rather it is comprised of various different and unique cultures, that share a South African identity and some overlapping values and beliefs. Due to its exploratory aims, the study has examined the experiences of participants from various local cultures.

There are therefore two primary contributions that this study makes. The first is with regards to investigations regarding the cross-cultural applicability of psychoanalytic theory, and the second is further contributing to literature that documents the experiences of a marginalised community i.e., the study sought to consider Black homosexual men as its population for exploration.

One must acknowledge the tremendous influence which psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory have exerted upon the subsequent development of the psychological discipline and profession as a whole (Hergenhahn, 2009). However, there have been numerous critiques of the cross-cultural applicability of psychoanalytic theory to non-European populations (see, Bregner, 1999; Pick, 2015). It is fairly well-known that Freud developed many of his psychological theories by way of his work with patients (Hall, 1961; Rennison, 2001). These individuals, however, were almost entirely from the upper to middle-class European Jewish population (Bregner, 1999) and subsequent analysts have likewise based their notions and theories upon White, Western individuals (Knight, 2013). As such one may question the applicability of the theory to individuals from various non-European cultural groups within South Africa (Knight, 2013); consequently it is not unreasonable for a study to explore whether or not a certain aspect of psychoanalytic theory has cross-cultural applicability within the South African context. Within contemporary South African discourse, wherein the country is grappling with the issue of decolonising academia, the matter of the cross-cultural applicability

possible cross-cultural applicability of the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality in connection with all the other cultural groups found in South Africa – such as the Indian, Coloured and White (both Afrikaans and English) communities – I have opted to focus exclusively on Black men in particular due to limitations in the scope of a Master's thesis, as well as the fact that the Black community constitutes the vast majority of the South African population; and yet there is scant literature regarding the applicability of the theory thereon; it is hoped, therefore, that the present study will begin to address gaps in the psychoanalytic literature.

of Western theories and concepts has become an extremely pertinent and pressing topic (Long, 2018).

While I have been unable to find any studies conducted on the possible cross-cultural applicability of the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality, specifically within the South African context, the cross-cultural applicability of one aspect of psychoanalytic theory – which incidentally has tremendous pertinence to the theory of male homosexuality – has already been the subject of much debate. In his concept of the Oedipal complex Freud (1905/2011; 1923/1947) describes a particular family constellation, known as the "referential axis" (cited in Pick, 2015, p. 53), between an infant and his parents, i.e. his mother and father; however, some cultures, as was already recognised by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s (cited in Pick, 2015), are not constituted in this way, thus bringing into question the applicability of the Oedipal complex in connection with those particular groups. As will be seen herein, both Freud's and subsequent contemporary 'depathologized' theories of male homosexuality are inextricably bound to the Oedipal stage of development and hence it is not unreasonable to question whether it, too, is cross-culturally applicable.

Lastly, and no less significant, in considering the cross-cultural applicability of the theory – or, rather, a depathologized form thereof – it is hoped that the study will bring attention to the stories of marginalisation of a group of Black homosexual men in South Africa, who still face severe discrimination in a society which remains largely heteronormative (Dlamini, 2006; Msibi, 2009) despite protection offered by the South African constitution (Massoud, 2003). It is also hoped that an example of dialogue between psychoanalytic theory and narratives of subjective cultural experience opens avenues for theory to evolve towards greater inclusivity and sensitivity to diversity.

This study utilises a psychoanalytic narrative analysis as applied to three case studies and presents an examination of the convergences and divergences between contemporary psychoanalytic theories of homosexual development and these individuals' own culturally-embedded understandings of their unique psychosexual developmental trajectories. To my knowledge, there have been no studies conducted on whether the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality has pertinence and applicability to this marginalised group; consequently, the study undoubtedly fills a lacuna in the analytical literature; thereby encouraging further research in this area. Given the theoretical approach taken by this study, which holds an

imperative for researcher reflexivity, the influence that I have undoubtedly exerted on the study's process and findings is also considered alongside the findings.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Firstly, it is important to define what is meant by the term homosexuality, which constitutes the principal subject of this study. Homosexuality may be succinctly defined – as it has been by others such as Podder et al. (2011) – as a consistent state or pattern in which one is exclusively attracted in a romantic, sexual and affectionate way to members of one's own sex. However, as previously mentioned, current views on multiple 'homosexualities' suggest that there are numerous aetiological paths which lead to the development of the phenomenon – just as, I might add, that there are numerous causes which render heterosexual individuals thus, thereby producing a plethora of 'heterosexualities'. The provenance of this notion, as will be seen in the course of my discussion, is to be found in Freud's (1905/2011; 1910/2001) musings on the matter. Hence one ought not consider either the classical psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality or the depathologized form thereof as definitive; these theories – if at all veracious – can only claim to explicate the development of certain types of the phenomenon.

Definitions aside, it is significant to note that it was only as late as 1980 that homosexuality was officially removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Although psychoanalytic theory cannot be charged with initiating the view that homosexuality is a pathological condition, it cannot be denied – as I shall attempt to illustrate in my discussion of the literature – that it undoubtedly contributed to the view and assisted in forming the modern psychiatric notion of homosexuality as an 'illness' (Drescher, 2022). This antiquated view, however, has been replaced by one which sagaciously regards homosexuality merely as "a variant of human sexuality" (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, p. 685). In spite of this radical transformation regarding the psychiatric view of homosexuality and other revolutionary changes within the discipline of psychology, psychoanalysis – although it remains a pertinent paradigm in so far as it still informs both theoretical and therapeutic considerations – has regrettably clung for far too long to the conservative, i.e. pathological, view regarding homosexuality (Drescher, 2022; Friedman, 1986). As a consequence thereof, some practitioners such as Lewes (1998) and Mitchell (2012) have sought to revise and modernise the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality.

In what follows I begin by presenting and critiquing classical psychoanalytic theory. A brief overview of this theory is important due to the fact that more contemporary theories refer to, build upon and distance themselves from particular core concepts in the original texts. Thereafter I shall present a modernised, depathologized form of the theory, drawing heavily from considerations expressed by Mitchell (2012) in his interesting article entitled *The Development of Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexuality: Moving Beyond Pathology*. In order to then contextualise male homosexuality within the South African context the literature review will briefly cover writing that has explored the subjective experiences of the group selected for consideration.

2.2 Freud's Equivocalness Regarding Male Homosexuality

Freud is often associated with the sexual libertarianism which swept across the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century (Rennison, 2001). However, it may come as a surprise to some that Freud was not entirely unprejudiced with regards to the phenomenon of male homosexuality (Nicolosi, 2016). Freud's equivocalness towards homosexuality is best reflected in his so-called "Letter to an American Mother" (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, p. 686); wherein he (cited in Jones, 1961, p. 502) maintains that homosexuality is not an illness, but "an arrest of sexual development". Thus it appears that although Freud did not consider homosexuality to be pathological, he also did not consider it to be 'normal', in so far as he did not hold it to be the ultimate *telos* of humanity's sexual development. In this respect Freud can be construed as considering homosexuality as betokening immaturity (Drescher, 2022). It is interesting to note that Freud (1905/2011) did not consider homosexuality to be a neurotic disorder, but a 'perversion'. In Chapter one of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud (1905/2011, pp. 13-26) lists "inversion" (i.e. homosexuality) under the heading of "Sexual Aberrations". Here, however, the term 'perversion' and its noun, 'pervert', must not be construed in a pejorative moralistic sense, i.e. in order to express one's disapprobation of the practice; rather, Freud utilised the term, as Nicolosi (2016, p. 36) explicates, "in a scientific sense" – or, rather, in a *biological* sense; for Freud regarded any sexual act which does not lead to procreation as 'perverse' (Nicolosi, 2016). It was primarily due to the fact that Freud did not consider homosexuality to be a form of neuroticism – i.e. it is not ego-dystonic, but rather ego-syntonic – that he precluded the possibility of 'converting' a homosexual into a heterosexual, as can be evinced in his 'Letter to an American Mother' (Jones, 1961).

However, it is significant to note that Freud actively advocated against the mistreatment and social exclusion of homosexuals. Indeed, Freud (cited in Jones: 1961, p. 502) held that "[m]any highly respectable individuals in ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest among them […]". He (ibid) also regarded it "a great injustice [and cruelty] to persecute homosexuality as a crime […]" and, as Friedman (1986, p. 84) notes, "[…] Freud twice argued that homosexuals might qualify for psychoanalytic societies unless excluded for other sufficient reasons". Moreover, unlike Wilhelm Reich and Carl Jung, Freud never refused to consult with male homosexuals as patients (Bocock, 1983).

In spite of this open-mindedness, Freud's theory is undoubtedly a product of the era in which he lived, hence as Friedman (1986, p. 80) correctly notes, "it was inevitable that Freud would have approached the study of homosexuality with an unexamined normative bias". Indeed, one ought to bear in mind that Freud "rather privileged the [heterosexual male] position" (Pick, 2015, p. 60). As a consequence, one such bias which is operative in Freud's thinking is the notion that sexual encounters are necessarily committed to the production of progeny; it thus appears that Freud never entertained the possibility of the sexual instinct as serving a purpose other than procreation. Indeed, this is an oft reiterated notion by those who seek to condemn homosexual activities; but I must remark here that the fact that homosexual practices have existed in all cultures – both extant and extinct – and, furthermore, that references to the practice of the phenomenon may be found throughout the annals of human civilisation (Schopenhauer, 1844/1969), glaringly attests to the fact that same-sex love cannot be considered an anomaly of nature, but must in fact serve some ultimate purpose.[3] Be that as it may, Freud did not entertain this alternative view of the ultimate *telos*, or rather, *teloi* of the sexual function and this assumption necessarily led him to the conclusion, as Nicolosi (2016)

[3] To my knowledge Freud never earnestly considered this possibility, he seems rather to have clung to the archaic biological model which regards solely heterosexual intercourse (i.e. the act wherein the penis is placed into the vagina) as biologically purposeful and consequently appropriate. But it is not in the least outlandish to conjecture that sex between consenting adults may serve other purposes besides reproduction. In this sense it may be beneficial to distinguish between primary and secondary purposes for the act of sexual intercourse: reproduction is undoubtedly the *primary aim* of the sexual function, for without the generation of offspring a species will inevitably go extinct; but this fact does not preclude the possibility of a *secondary function*, i.e. that sexual activities between members of a group also generates cohesion and bonding (among, perhaps, many other possibilities).

notes, that a homosexual object-choice in adulthood is aberrant. Thus Freud (1917/1971, p. 316) states:

> […] the abandonment of the reproductive function is the common feature of all perversions. We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse if it has given up the aim of reproduction and pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of it. […] Everything […] that aims solely at obtaining pleasure is given the uncomplimentary name 'perverse' and as such it is proscribed.

However, in spite of his teleological view of the sexual instinct as ultimately serving the purpose of producing progeny, Freud (1905/2011, pp. 23-24) also maintained that humans are innately bisexual and consequently an individual's libido is equally able to cathect in either a male or a female object in adulthood:[4]

> [P]sycho-analysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex – freedom to range equally over male and female objects – as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods in history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted [i.e. homosexual] types develop. Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature.

These two views, viz., the notion that reproduction is the ultimate *telos* of the sexual function and the concept of innate bisexuality of all humans, generates a tension within Freud's theoretical framework, which I maintain becomes most evident in his understanding of (male) homosexuality. For, on the one hand, the innate bisexuality of all individuals ought to render a homosexual object-choice in adulthood as an entirely acceptable possibility from a psychoanalytic perspective; on the other hand, however, the fact that reproduction is considered

[4] This theory of innate bisexuality was contested and rejected by Sandor Rado (Nicolosi, 2016). However, I wish to note here that Rado's theory (cited in Friedman, 1986) on the innate heterosexuality of all humans – even homosexuals – is disputable and, so far as I know, without any empirical corroboration. However, as will be seen herein, given that Freud (1905/2011) regarded the first love-object of all males to be the mother the notion that all males are fundamentally and essentially heterosexual (notwithstanding the view that they commence life as bisexual) can in fact be traced back to Freud's theory.

to be the ultimate goal of the sexual function precludes a homosexual object-choice from being considered 'normal'. It is within this tumultuous context that Freud (1905/2011; 1910/2001) propounded his theory of male homosexuality, which I shall subsequently present.

But, for the moment, the most significant point to be gleaned from the aforementioned discussion is the fact that individuals appear to be capable of making either a heterosexual or a homosexual object-choice in adulthood, given the supposed innate bisexuality of all individuals (Freud, 1905/2011). Now it is in Freud's notion of the Oedipal complex and its resolution that a tentative answer is given to the question as to how one becomes either a heterosexual or a homosexual in adulthood.[5]

2.3 The Oedipus Complex

Freud (1905/2011, p. 77) maintains that the sexual development of every individual passes through a twofold process, which he terms a "diphasic onset". In the initial phase, which lasts from birth until approximately the age of six (Burger, 2004), the child's libidinal energy is said to fixate upon particular "erotogenic zones" from which pleasure is ultimately derived (Freud, 1905/2011, p. 77). The phallic stage – which is undoubtedly the most significant (Burger, 2004) – closes the first phase of one's psychosexual development and ushers in the second. It is in the resolution thereof that the child experiences what Freud (1905/2011, p. 104) terms the "Oedipus complex". As the notion of the Oedipus complex is extremely significant to fully comprehending Freud's theory of male homosexuality I shall discuss it in some detail.

Freud (1905/2011) utilises the Greek myth of Oedipus Rex to convey his theory, which he takes as a prototypical expression of a universal human phenomenon, viz., that all individuals once lusted after one parent, while simultaneously having despised the other as a rival. Thus, in his work *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud (1900/1991, p. 364) states:

[5] I am of the opinion that some men are genuinely bisexual in their sexual object-choices; therefore, I do not maliciously intend to exclude them from this characterization, however my study is focused primarily on male homosexuality and as a consequence I shall disregard the matter of bisexuality in adulthood and focus solely upon that of homosexuality.

> His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours – because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so.[6]

Undoubtedly, the Oedipus complex, given its imputation of incestuous desires to all prepubescent children, ranks among the most controversial notions within the psychoanalytic theoretical framework (Hergenhahn, 2009; Nicolosi, 2016; Pick, 2015). For instance, the psychologist R. R. Sears declared "the whole idea [to be] a grotesquery of Freud's imagination" (cited in Clark, 1987, p. 171); while Juliet Mitchell (cited in Pick, 2015, p. 52) has argued that the so-called "referential axis", i.e. the triangular love relationship between the parents and child, "may have led people to pay too little heed to the psychic significance of siblings, real and imagined; the traumas of displacement and loss for the existing child when a new baby arrives, and siblings desire for each other, are perhaps less well theorized than the 'vertical' relationship to parents [….]". This point is particularly significant in relation to the present cross-cultural study, for siblings may well hold roles of varying significance across cultures. In response to scepticism regarding the reality of the Oedipal complex Freud (1915-1916/1964, p. 207-208) remarks somewhat indignantly:

> It cannot be said that the world has shown much gratitude to psychoanalytic research for its revelation of the Oedipus complex. On the contrary, the discovery has provoked the most violent opposition among adults; and those who had neglected to take part in the repudiation of this proscribed and tabooed emotional relationship made up for their fault later by depriving the complex of its value through twisted re-interpretations.

One extremely pertinent criticism levelled against the Oedipus complex was initially proposed by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s; he "famously disputed [Freud's] universalizing claims about the Oedipus complex, writing of cultures with very different kinship systems to those psychoanalysis assumed as standard" (Pick, 2015, p. 52). Indeed, in many communities grandparents and other members of the extended family are often responsible for the raising of children (Hunter, 1997; Pruchno, 1999), hence it would appear that Freud's 'referential axis' does not have the same degree of applicability to these non-European populations. However,

[6] It ought to be borne in mind that Freud's formulation of the phenomenon here refers to the way in which it occurs within males.

in response thereto, defenders of the theory, "such as Ernest Jones,", as Pick (2015, p. 52) notes, "[argue] that the underlying predicament was not in fact so different, whether it might be a father, an uncle, or some other figure representing the key anchor point, beyond the mother, in the life of the infant". Indeed, the applicability of the Oedipus complex in relation to non-nuclear, non-heterosexual families remains a point of contention to this day (Davies & Eagle, 2013).

Josephs (2010), for instance, notes that some psychoanalysts argue that not only is the so-called 'referential axis' different cross-culturally, but that incestuous and aggressive sentiments towards one's primary caregivers is not in fact a universal phenomenon. Thus, it may be that in some cultures the Oedipal conflict is entirely absent, or that it manifests itself in an extremely maverick or unusual way. For instance, Bhugra and Bhui (2002) maintain that incestuous and aggressive desires among Indians do not originate in and emanate from children (as in the classical psychoanalytic conception), but, rather, the parents – thereby, inverting, as it were, the psychoanalytic theory.

Writers such as Davies and Eagle (2013) have also brought into question the gendered nature of the individuals within the abovementioned Oedipal referential axis. It is important to note that Freud's (1924/1977) conceptualization of the Oedipus complex is necessarily committed to particular gender categories, i.e. the role of the primary care-giver or maternal role is necessarily associated with a biological female (i.e. the primary care-giver must have breasts), just as the secondary care-giver or paternal role is unequivocally associated with a biological male (i.e. the secondary care-giver must have a penis). In contradistinction thereto, Davies and Eagle (2013) contend that the biological gender of these caregivers is not of primary significance, but rather their functionality (or the way in which they perform their particular role) within the referential axis is what is most essential; thus, biological males can assume the maternal role as easily as biological females can assume the paternal role.

Yet in spite of the criticisms and controversies surrounding the Oedipal phase of one's psychosexual development the complex may be justly considered the *sine qua non* of the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality (Pick, 2015); for it is precisely within the chaos

of the Oedipal complex and the resolution thereof that psychoanalysts and psychodynamically orientated clinicians make sense of the sexual object-choices of adults.[7]

2.3.1 The Positive Oedipus Complex

It can scarcely be doubted that the Oedipus complex occupies the most significant position within Freud's psychosexual theory of development, for, as mentioned, it is precisely the point at which the initial phase of the diphasic process occurs whereby a child assumes the object-choice which will dominate his adult sexuality.

To begin with, it is necessary to discuss the first love-object of all individuals, i.e. their primary care-giver, which is usually, but not always, the mother. When one takes into consideration Freud's (1905/2011) observation that in the initial period of infancy one's libidinal energy is focused solely upon the oral cavity and that the child obtains satiation and satisfaction from feeding, i.e. 'suckling at the mother's bosoms', it becomes obvious that the mother, who is often solely responsible for the feeding of an infant, should occupy the most beloved position in the child's mind and become the child's first (external) love-object. This is a significant point which ought to be borne in mind, for Freud (1905/2011) argues that all children – regardless of sex and adult sexual orientation – initially experience intense incestuous desires for their mothers. The implications of this view have had a profound impact on the way in which psychoanalysts and psychodynamically inclined psychotherapists have approached the matter of homosexuality. For the intimation here is that all males – regardless of their adult sexual orientation – made a heterosexual object choice in infancy and thus are in a sense

[7] It ought to be noted that according to classical psychoanalytic theory one's instinctual desires are what necessarily lead to attachment to a caregiver (and subsequently to later sexual object-choice in adulthood). In other words, because an infant has an instinctual need for nourishment which he or she obtains by way of the mother's breast, the child forms an attachment thereto. Thus, one's attachment becomes a matter of *secondary* significance within (classical) analytic theory (as drives assume the primary position) (Fonagy, Luyten, Allison & Campbell, 2018). Psychologists nowadays tend to consider the matter differently, in so far as they maintain that the desire to establish a secure attachment with a primary caregiver is what is fundamental (ibid.), i.e. the infant does not attach to the mother merely because he or she suckles at the mother's bosom but, rather, because the infant has an innate (i.e. primary) desire to bond therewith in order to survive a harsh environment. I mention this fact as most modern analysts have attempted to reconcile attachment theory with analytical understandings (Fonagy, Luyten, Allison & Campbell, 2018).

'fundamentally' heterosexual. This accords with Freud's (1910/2001, p. 52) view that homosexual men are "in fact attracted by women in the same way as a normal man". The psychoanalytic notion that homosexual men are latently heterosexual can be evinced in Irving Bieber's (1991, p. 21) offensive pronouncement that "a homosexual is a person whose heterosexual function is crippled, like the legs of a polio victim". While this has undoubtedly had an influence upon so-called 'conversion therapies' which attempt to 'convert' homosexual men into heterosexuals, as previously mentioned, Freud (cited in Jones, 1961) was sceptical of psychoanalysis's ability to 'convert' homosexual men in this way, as can be evinced in his 'Letter to an American Mother' (Jones, 1961; Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

Freud (1905/2011; 1924/1977) then theorises that this desire for the mother causes murderous jealousy for the father to develop, as the latter is often competing with the infant for the mother's love and attention. It is in this way, according to the classical psychoanalytical model, that children find themselves in a complicated situation with their parents: loving (and lusting) their mothers, while concomitantly despising (and fearing) their fathers (Freud, 1924/1977). This relationship with one's parents is the first significant aspect of the Oedipal complex; I shall now turn to the second, albeit no less significant, facet of the theory.

Now, it is during the phallic phase that the child's libidinal energy focuses, as its name implies, upon the phallus in particular; i.e. "it knows only one kind of genital: the male one" (Freud, 1905/2011, p. 77). Hence, it is during the phallic period that both boys and girls become interested in the male genital (Freud, 1924/1977). Freud (1910/2001; 1924/1977) maintains that male children[8] find it intolerable that females lack a phallus and this subsequently leads them to conclude first "that little girls have a penis as well, only it is still very small; it will grow later"; when, however, this belief does not materialise, i.e. the female does not develop a penis, the male child is coerced to find an alternative explanation; he subsequently concludes "[…] that little girls too had a penis, but it was cut off and in its place was left a wound" (Freud, 1910/2001, p. 46). This belief fills the young boy with tremendous trepidation, for he must now attempt to explicate how the female child lost her phallus: as a result thereof, the boy surmises that the female child – like himself – once lusted for her mother and that her father, i.e. the rival parent, had discovered this fact and in an act of indignant retribution he castrated her (Freud, 1924/1977). In this way, the male child fears the loss of his beloved phallus, i.e. he

[8] Female children are also said by Freud (1924/1977) to believe that they once possessed a penis.

develops what Freud (1910/2001, p. 46) terms "castration anxiety". In an attempt to avoid this disagreeable result an alteration occurs in the male child, by way of a reaction formation and substitution, which causes him to identify with his father and substitute his mother with other females akin to her, to which he can then safely direct his amorous sentiments (i.e., without the fear of being castrated by a stronger, more dominant male). In short, according to the so-called 'positive Oedipal complex' the male child lusts his mother and fears retaliatory retribution from his father (Freud, 1924/1977); this in turn causes the (heterosexual) boy to identify with his father and direct his libido to other (non-threatening) female love-objects (Freud, 1923/1947).

2.3.2 The Negative Oedipus Complex

Most individuals who are superficially familiar with the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex will have encountered the abovementioned characterisation of the theory in the psychological literature pertaining to childhood development. However, the matter is far more complex than most realise, for it is necessary to mention the distinction between the positive and the negative Oedipus complexes (Freud, 1923/1947). The former refers to the popular understanding of the Oedipus complex, i.e. the state in which a child is said to lust the parent of the opposite sex and to experience sentiments of hostility towards the parent of the same-sex. While the so-called 'negative Oedipal complex' on the other hand is not as well known. It will be recalled that Freud (1905/2011; 1923/1947) regarded everyone to be innately bisexual. Thus, the little boy must not only experience incestuous desires for his mother, but also for his father. Thus Freud (1923/1947, p. 42-43) claims that:

> […] a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-relation towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy towards his mother.

This distinction led Freud (1923/1947) to dichotomise between the 'simple' and 'complete' Oedipal complexes. In short, the former refers solely to the positive Oedipal complex, while the latter refers to both the positive and negative forms thereof, hence it is 'complete'. Although Freud (1923/1947, p. 42) claims that the "simple Oedipus complex is by no means its commonest form, but rather represents a simplification or schematization", it cannot be denied that he regarded the positive Oedipal complex as being primary, while the negative Oedipal

complex occupies a secondary position. In due course the significance of this distinction will become conspicuous; for the moment I wish only to indicate that the 'simple Oedipus complex' refers solely to the positive form thereof, whereas the 'complete Oedipus complex' incorporates both the positive and negative forms of the phenomenon.

I ought to add that Freud (1924/1977) regards the same mechanism, viz., castration anxiety, to be equally as responsible for the resolution of the negative Oedipal complex as for the positive form thereof. For if a young boy is to possess his father, i.e. if he were "to take the place of his mother and be loved by his father" (Freud, 1924/1977, p. 318), he would of necessity have to lose his beloved organ, i.e. his penis. Thus, in both the negative and positive forms of the Oedipal complex it is the trepidation of the possibility of losing his phallus that effects the resolution of the complex in the boy. But I cannot desist from stating that it seems to me that Freud conceptualised this matter from an entirely heteronormative position, i.e. one in which all males wish to retain their penises and assume the penetrative role in their sexual encounters. In the case of receptive homosexual men, however, it appears that the possibility of castration would not induce such trepidation. I conjecture therefore, in contradistinction to Freud (1924/1977), that in the case of receptively inclined homosexual men castration desire may in fact be operative; but that this wish is emphatically (and in some instances, perhaps even cruelly) denied by the fathers of these boys, which consequently leads to a resolution of the Oedipus complex. I shall return to this matter in my presentation of a depathologized analytic theory of male homosexuality.

2.4 Freud's Theorising on Male Homosexuality

Now, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the development of homosexual tendencies in a boy would necessarily result from an incestuous amorousness directed by the young boy towards his father instead of his mother (Freud, 1923/1947). In other words, one would be forgiven to think that the boy who eventually identifies as a homosexual in adult life passes through the negative Oedipal complex, as opposed to the positive, and thus lusts for his father – as opposed to his mother – and that his murderous intentions would be directed towards his mother in order for him to fully possess his father. Indeed, the fact that Freud (1905/2011) considers all people to be bisexual intimates that a homosexual form of the Oedipus Complex must exist for all individuals, i.e. including heterosexuals. But, Freud (1905/2011) appears to reject this notion; for the mother must necessarily be the elementary love-object to all children,

given that she is (ordinarily) the first person to tend to the infant's instinctual needs. Instead, I assume that Freud (1905/2011) maintains that boys who eventually identify as homosexual in adulthood pass through the Oedipus complex in much the same way as their heterosexual male counterparts, but, paradoxically, the former are said to develop an *intense* – perhaps to a far greater extent than their heterosexual male counterparts – but short-lived incestuous amorousness, or 'fixation', for their primary female caregiver (which is usually, but not always, the mother) (Freud, 1905/2011).[9] In his work *Leonardo da Vinci: a Memoir of his Childhood* Freud (1910/2001, p. 52) maintains that this intense love for the mother is what paradoxically sustains the homosexual male's inclination towards his disposition:

> Psychological considerations of a deeper kind justify the assertion that a man who has become a homosexual in this way remains unconsciously fixated to the mnemic image of his mother. By repressing his love for his mother he preserves it in his unconscious and from now on remains faithful to her. While he seems to pursue boys and to be their lover, he is in reality running away from the other women, who might cause him to be unfaithful. In individual cases direct observation has also enabled us to show that the man who gives the appearance of being susceptible only to the charms of men is in fact attracted by women in the same way as a normal man; but on each occasion he hastens to transfer the excitation he has received from women on to a male object, and in this manner he repeats over and over again the mechanism by which he acquired his homosexuality.[10]

As a consequence thereof, the young homosexual boy, like his heterosexual male counterpart, still suffers from castration anxiety; but where the two ultimately differ, according to Freud's theory, is in their subsequent *identifications* upon resolution of the Oedipus complex: the young heterosexual boy is said to identify with his father and to search for a female – akin to his mother – to whom he can (safely) direct his sexual urges, whereas the young homosexual boy

[9] It is interesting to note, yet again, that given the fact that the mother is the elementary love-object of all children, all boys – regardless of sexual orientation in adulthood – exhibit a heterosexual tendency in infancy; whereas all females – once again, regardless of their sexual orientation in adulthood – manifest homosexual tendencies as infants.

[10] This view is subject to debate, as Friedman (1986, pp. 70-71) notes, "[…] research evidence and personal testimony of the men themselves show that most exclusive homosexual males distinctly prefer their own sex. It is their early experience with girls, in contrast, that is recalled overwhelmingly as sexually uninspiring and romantically insipid".

is said to identify with his mother "and takes [*himself*] as [his] sexual object" (Freud, 1905/2011, p. 23). It is the taking of oneself as the sexual object which regrettably introduces the narcissistic element into Freud's (1914/1984) theory of male homosexuality – for it is precisely this concept (among others) which renders the phenomenon a form of 'arrested development' (see, Jones, 1961) and consequently pathologizes it. As Freud (1914/1984, p. 81) states in his paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction*:

> We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance, such as perverts and homosexuals, that in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mothers but their own selves. They are plainly seeking themselves as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed 'narcissistic'.

For by taking the self as a love-object the male homosexual is said to have regressed to a much earlier infantile state, i.e. one in which autoeroticism exists, when the infant believed his body to be one with the world (Freud, 1905/2011; 1910/2001). However, it is significant to note that although the male homosexual does indeed take an external love-object (i.e. a handsome young man or boy who reminds him of himself as a youth) it is one which acts as a substitution, so to say, for himself; consequently the male homosexual must, according to classical psychoanalytic theory, be conceived as being caught between a desire to return to an earlier period of development and being unable to progress to the 'normal' adult state of taking a female partner as his love-object; his development is thus 'arrested'. Although Freud (cited in Jones, 1961) insisted that homosexuality was not pathological, his theory evidently did much to render it such in the hands of subsequent analysts (Friedman, 1986).

It is necessary to mention that the aforementioned theory of male homosexuality, wherein the boy is said to identify with his mother and take himself as a love-object, is regarded by some, such as Mitchell (2012, p. 8), as Freud's 'dominant' or, as I prefer, 'primary' theory of the phenomenon. However, in his article *The Development of Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexuality: Moving Beyond Pathology*, Mitchell (ibid) identifies three others, which he seems to believe exist independently of the so-called 'primary' theory, viz., (i) castration anxiety and animosity for the mother, (ii) the negative or the inverted Oedipus complex and (iii) the reaction formation theory. With the possible exclusion of the last, I maintain that Freud's 'primary theory' incorporates elements of (i) and (ii); for as discussed, Freud

(1923/1947) maintains that in the 'complete' Oedipal complex both the positive and negative Oedipal complexes are operative and thus even the heterosexual boy will experience a certain amount of animosity for his mother. But I am compelled to acknowledge that Mitchell's (2012) aforementioned list is incomplete.

Overall, I have been able to identify at least seven mechanisms identified by Freud as operative in the development of a homosexual disposition. I cannot unequivocally state that this list is definitive, and it is also important to note that not all of the mechanisms occur simultaneously in every case of homosexuality. According to my reading of Freud the seven aetiological mechanisms for the development of homosexuality are:

(i) Narcissism (solely in the case of male homosexuality) (Freud, 1905/2011; 1910/2001).

(ii) Identification with the opposite-sex parent and the taking of the same-sex parent as a love-object (particularly, according to Freud (1920/1949), in the case of female homosexuality), i.e. the primacy of the negative Oedipus complex in the development of a homosexual orientation (Freud, 1923/1947).

(iii) 'Retirement in favour of the other' (Freud, 1920/1949, p. 216), occurs when an individual selects same-sex love-objects in order to reduce competition with someone of the same sex – for instance between brothers, father and son, mother and daughter, etc. In short, one becomes a homosexual to avoid sexual competition with a member of one's own sex.

(iv) The 'reaction formation theory', wherein a boy 'transforms' the rancour he has for another male (usually a brother, whom he believes wins the greater part of their mothers' affections) into homosexual love (Freud, 1922/1949, p. 240-243). Two significant points must be noted in connection with this 'reaction formation' theory: firstly, it can only be applicable if the hated object is of the same sex as the child experiencing jealousy, for if the boy is jealous of his sister, the theory as an explanation for the aetiology of male homosexuality disintegrates. Secondly, the theory intimates that narcissism is not essential to the development of male homosexuality, for in this case the boy is taking *his brother as opposed to himself*

as a love-object. However, it is also evident that Freud (1922/1949, p. 243) did not consider this reaction formation theory as primary, for he (ibid) claims that in the cases he had observed, "it led only to homosexual attitudes, which did not exclude heterosexuality and did not involve horror of women".

(v) Hatred for the opposite-sex parent: in his article, *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman*, Freud (1920/1949) proposes that a young woman became homosexual out of an indignation directed at her father. According to Freud (1920/1949) every young girl wishes to have a son by her father, i.e. due to the effects of the positive Oedipus Complex, and thus when this young woman's mother fell pregnant, she became furious with her father for depriving her of her wishes; she consequently turned away from him as a love-object. Although this particular situation cannot be taken as a general causative mechanism in homosexuality, as Freud (1922/1949, p. 227) himself states, I think that the notion of indignation (or revulsion) and rancour for an opposite-sex parent might be taken as another potential mechanism in the development of both female and male homosexuality.

(vi) The 'castration anxiety theory' contains two principal elements, viz., fear of the father and the inability to tolerate the fact that females lack a penis. According to the former, a boy fears coming into conflict with his father (and later, other men) for the possession of his mother (and in adulthood, other women) and the subsequent punishment of castration associated therewith; thus he represses his desire for females and selects instead other males as potential love-objects (Freud, 1922/1949). The latter notion, viz., the inability to tolerate the absence of a penis in females is self-explanatory; for Freud regards the penis as a most extraordinary organ, worthy of great admiration. In this connection one ought to recall that according to Freud (1910/2001) all children believe that the mother possesses a penis. The ultimate discovery that she does not leads, in the case of heterosexual men, to a fetish for stiletto shoes, i.e. the lack of a penis in women (and in particular, the mother) is substituted by way of the long, phallic-like shape of the heel of such footwear (Freud, 1927/1977). Thus, one may say that in the case of homosexual men the desire for a penis has not been repressed and substituted as it has in the case of their heterosexual male counterparts.

(vii) Lastly, but by no means less significantly, Freud (1920/1949, p. 229), maintains that homosexuality might be due to "an inborn constitution", i.e. that some forms of homosexuality may in fact be entirely biologically based.

Despite Freud continually grappling with an issue he considered highly complex, it was his 'primary theory' of male homosexuality that "was generally accepted and followed by the psychoanalytic community" (Mitchell, 2012, p. 8); it has consequently been the most influential of Freud's theories on male homosexuality, which undoubtedly inspired subsequent understandings of the phenomenon.

2.5 Adler's Theorizing on the Inferiority Complex, the Masculine Protest and Male Homosexuality

At this point in my discussion I may be permitted a slight digression from my survey of Freud's understanding of male homosexuality to consider another classical theory which seems to me to have great pertinence to the matter under present consideration. Alfred Adler was initially a part of Freud's so-called 'inner circle', but he parted with Freud in 1911 due to theoretical disagreements and ultimately founded his own school known as 'individual psychology' (Handlbauer, 2007). As I shall illustrate Adler's theorising on the concept of the inferiority complex and the ways in which an individual attempts to surmount it have a bearing on the understanding of homosexuality.

According to Adler (1920/1950) every individual is necessarily born into a situation which will induce sentiments of inferiority. This aforementioned sentiment is primarily due to the child's smaller stature and relative insignificance (in comparison to adults). The feeling of being inferior may be compared to being 'below' or 'underneath' another, whereas the feeling of superiority can be thought of as being 'above'. In this way an individual may be said to be perpetually attempting to move from below to above. Now the way in which an individual attempts this ascension is, according to Adler (1920/1950), by way of compensations. It may seem as though the compensation that one employs in pursuit of superiority must necessarily correspond to the perceived inferiority; for instance, an individual ridiculed for being scrawny in childhood might be thought to be destined to become a bodybuilder in adulthood. But this is incorrect. A compensation does not necessarily have to correspond to the perceived

inferiority: an individual might feel inferior in one way, but compensate for it in another. To take another illustration: a physically weak child might compensate for this perceived inferiority by cultivating his intellectual abilities.

Although many individuals outgrow these inferiority-inducing conditions – such as a short stature and limited muscular strength – there are some states which are unalterable and which society regards as not ideal; they may be said therefore to coerce an individual into a perpetual state of inferiority; the two most self-evident illustrations thereof are femininity[11] and homosexuality. I maintain that this equation, i.e. between femininity and homosexuality, is vindicated by the erroneous view held by many in society, viz., that homosexuals are 'men who want to be women'. Furthermore, it seems to me that the acknowledgement that homosexuals sometimes feel themselves to be inferior and consequently resort to compensations in an attempt to gain some level of superiority (Adler, 1920/1950) will necessarily have pertinence in the psychological comprehension of the way in which homosexuality manifests and presents itself in our contemporary civilization.

[11] The view that femininity is 'inferior' to masculinity appears to be based upon a biological consideration of the sexes – or rather, the way in which sexual intercourse occurs between them. Given that the male must penetrate the female during intercourse he is necessarily considered the *active* partner, while the female – due to the fact that she is penetrated – assumes the role of the *passive* partner (Freud, 1923/1949). Indeed, I wish to observe that this accords with the way in which individuals ordinarily distinguish between the penetrative and penetrated partners in a homosexual relationship, i.e. as referring to the penetrative partner as 'the male' and the receptive partner as 'the female'. An historical consideration of this phenomenon may shed some light on the notion of superiority being associated with the penetrative role and inferiority with the penetrated. In ancient Greece and Rome it was considered unbecoming of a free adult male citizen to assume the role of the passive – i.e. the penetrated – partner, which the Greeks referred to as "*eromenos*" (Pickett, 2021, p. 2). Only prepubescent boys (i.e. those who had not yet grown facial hair), females and adult male slaves could assume the role of the *eromenos* (ibid.). In contradistinction thereto, adult male citizens assumed the role of the active or penetrative partner and were referred to as "*erastes*" (ibid.). This reveals the view that masculinity, i.e. to be the penetrative or active partner, is considered superior to assuming the role of the passive or penetrated partner. It is interesting to note that Freud (1905/2011; 1923/1949) characterizes these notions as sadism and masochism, respectively – i.e. the male is the sadistic partner and the female the masochistic; he (Freud, 1905/2011) observes further that if children happen to witness their parents engage in coitus they erroneously assume that the father is inflicting cruelty upon the mother. In so far as the sadist is able exert control or domination over the masochist, the former is considered 'superior' in relation to the latter.

It is also necessary to mention that closely related to Adler's notion of the inferiority complex is the active protestation an individual exhibits towards his own perceived femininity (Adler, 1920/1950). Due to the fact that femininity is often construed to be an inferior state it necessarily induces a revolt in relation thereto, which Adler (1920/1950) refers to as the 'masculine protest'. This phenomenon is found in both males and females alike and assumes the form of a desire to portray oneself as hyper-masculine (ibid.). As homosexuality is often associated with femininity in our civilisation the concept of the masculine protest may assume great significance in relation to male homosexuality and the way in which homosexual males portray themselves in response thereto, i.e. as a form of 'compensation' in Adlerian terms.

It is important to note, however, that Adler (1920/1950) maintains that homosexuality is pathological and in this regard he does not equate it with femininity as I have done. In his work entitled *The Theory and Practice of Individual Psychology*, Adler (1920/1950) propounds a view of male homosexuality which is, to my mind, flagrantly homophobic. In short, Adler (1920/1950) maintains that homosexuals initially feel a sense of inferiority in connection with their gender, i.e. they are not muscular or hairy enough to qualify as 'real men' or they believe they have small penises and testes in comparison to other men, etc. This then leads the individual to turn away from life (in the form of homosexuality) in an attempt to evade those sentiments of inferiority, which it seems would be brought to the fore if one were to engage with life in a socially acceptable and desirable way (Adler, 1920/1950).

Although I cannot claim that my understanding of Adler's views on homosexuality is definitive, what I found most disappointing about his (Adler, 1920/1950) consideration of the phenomenon in chapter XIV of his work, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, is that his discussion gives one the impression of a foregone conclusion, i.e. it seems as if Adler already thought that homosexuality was immoral and aberrant before he commenced his investigation of it and he consequently seeks merely to vindicate this view. Like Freud, it may be said that Adler was a product of the era in which he lived; however, it appears to me that Freud's writings on the phenomenon are less disapproving than Adler's. While Adler's notion of the inferiority complex can be said to have some pertinence to the experience of being homosexual, Adler's (1920/1950) understanding of same-sex amorousness was that it developed in response to a perceived inferiority and was therefore an aberrant or pathological compensation. But can it earnestly be denied that homosexuals often feel inferior due to the

marginalisation they experience at the hands of ignorant and prejudicial members of society? It is this perspective that one feels is most glaringly absent from Adler's (1920/1950) consideration of the topic; for instead of considering the way in which homosexuals are made to feel inferior in much the same way as their female counterparts are denigrated, Adler prefers instead to portray the homosexual as a neurotic individual, constantly trying to compensate for his shortcomings and over ambitious strivings by way of his 'aberrant' sexual orientation (Adler, 1920/1950).

However, it must be noted that like Freud, and unlike Carl Jung and Wilhelm Reich (Bocock, 1985), Adler was willing to consult with male (and female) homosexual patients;[12] however, given his understanding of homosexuality, the aims and effectiveness of his treatment thereof are questionable.

Yet in spite of homophobic undercurrents, Adler's theory still has pertinence if one construes a homosexual disposition as necessarily inducing a feeling of inferiority – due, of course, to erroneous societal presumptions of what constitutes the 'ideal male'. It is then not surprising to find homosexual males compensating for this perceived inferiority in some way. This compensation may then be misconstrued as a form of narcissism, which Freud (1905/2011) identified as operative in the aetiology of male homosexuality.

2.6 The Pathologizing of Male Homosexuality in Classical Psychoanalytic Theory

Before moving on to a discussion of the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theories of male homosexuality, it will be helpful to briefly clarify the aspects of classical psychoanalytic theory that have served to pathologize male homosexuality.

2.6.1 Male Homosexuality as a Form of Effeminacy

Although Freud (1905/2011, p. 22) himself acknowledges that many male homosexuals "retain the mental quality of masculinity [and] they possess relatively few of the secondary characters of the opposite sex", the concept of identification with the mother upon resolution of the

[12] My view is based upon the fact that Adler (1920/1950) gives illustrations of his theory from both male and female homosexual patients; hence I conclude that he must have consulted with them.

Oedipus complex (Freud, 1905/2011 & 1910/2001) intimates to me that the male homosexual is in fact 'feminine-brained' and thus it would appear that masculinity is incompatible with homosexuality upon the classical formulation of the theory. This point ought to be borne in mind, for in the subsequent section an alternative theory is proposed which appears to explicate the appearance of both feminine and masculine homosexual men.

2.6.2 Homosexual Men as Inclined to Paedophilia

Classical psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality seems to intimate a paedophilic tendency in all homosexual men (Freud, 1922/1949). This may be attributed to Freud's statement: "[…] for several years one of the 'conditions of love' [in the male homosexual] is that the male object shall be *of the same age* as he himself was when the change took place" (Freud, 1922/1949, p. 240-241). By claiming that a homosexual man identifies himself with his mother and seeks out "a young man who resembles [himself] and whom [he] may love as [his] mother loved [him]" (Freud, 1905/2011, p. 23) invites the unfounded notion that all homosexual men are in pursuit of younger, boyish lovers. The theory seems to neglect the possibility that many homosexual men are in fact in search of more mature partners and lovers.

2.6.3 Homosexual Men as Possessing Defective Super-Egos

Freud (1923/1947, p. 45) maintains that the identification with the father upon the resolution of the Oedipus complex leads to an internalisation thereof in the form of the 'super-ego'. The super-ego is, as is generally well-known, essentially one's moral standards, whereby the child is acculturated (Rennison, 2001). By internalising his father as an ideal upon the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the boy essentially becomes a man, akin to his father (Freud, 1924/1977). Now it ought to be noted that a controversial conclusion results from this notion viz., that the super-ego develops due to the identification with and internalisation solely of the father as an ideal, for it intimates that solely males are able to develop super-egos – or at least, as I shall shortly argue, that only *heterosexual* males are able to develop fully-functional super-egos.

It will be recalled that castration anxiety during the phallic phase of one's psychosexual development leads to the male child repressing his incestuous amorous feelings for his mother (which he will later substitute by way of a non-threatening female love-object) and identify with his father (Freud, 1923/1947). But it must be acknowledged that if the father did not pose

such a threat to the young boy he would not repress his incestuous desires and murderous intents; instead the young boy would manifestly continue to harbour those sentiments for the duration of his life, and as a consequence thereof he would not develop a fully-functional super-ego, for he would not internalise his father as an ideal. Although many psychoanalysts have long abandoned this aspect of Freud's theory (Fine, 1979) by claiming that the super-ego may develop by internalizing both or either of one's parents, the issue of superego functioning within the female and homosexual male remain contentious.

In order to render the criticism I am attempting to propound conspicuous, let us consider the development of the female child, which I maintain reveals significant conclusions regarding male homosexuals within Freud's theory. The female child – owing to the fact that she does not possess a penis – never develops 'castration anxiety', instead she develops what Freud (1924/1977) terms 'penis envy'. Initially the female infant, like the male, develops strong attachments to the mother, as the primary caregiver. But during the phallic phase of development, wherein the child fixates upon the male genitalia, the female child develops a fascination with her father – who obviously does possess the revered object. As such, the female child comes to believe that she once had a penis too, but that her mother somehow discovered her surreptitious incestuous desires for her father and consequently castrated her as a punishment (Freud, 1924/1977). Now because the female child does not fear her mother (for she has already lost her phallus) in the same way in which the male child is said to fear his father due to castration anxiety, she is never able to fully identify with her mother (and thus internalise the mother in the form of the super-ego) and repress her incestuous desires for her father (Freud, 1924/1977); as a consequence thereof, females are said to possess inferior super-egos.

In the same way, I maintain that a similar course of ratiocination may be applied to male homosexuals: for they are said by Freud (1905/2011), it will be recalled, to identify with the mother, who, according to the abovementioned theory, has a defective super-ego. It consequently follows that male homosexuals – much like females – possess an imperfect or inferior super-ego in comparison to their heterosexual male counterparts (Nicolosi, 2016). Here again, one is able to detect the heteronormative element which is operative in Freud's thinking, for, according to the theory, it is solely the *heterosexual* male who is able to develop a fully-functional super-ego.

2.6.4 Homosexual Men as Essentially Narcissistic

It will be recalled that in the introductory sections of the literature review I referred to Freud's 'normative biases' as (perhaps unwittingly) influencing his theoretical conceptualisation of male homosexuality. Indeed, it is in the concept of a narcissistic object-choice which the male homosexual is imputed to make that one discerns the pernicious influence of the era in which Freud wrote (Friedman, 1986). For the notion that a homosexual male essentially seeks out a boyish version of himself intimates that he is regressing to an earlier period in his psychosexual development (Drescher, 2022). Of course, the male homosexual is not entirely retrogressive, in so far as he has not taken himself *in actu* as his love-object, but the fact that he has found an external substitute for himself intimates that he has not developed in the same progressive manner as his heterosexual male counterparts. In short, the classical psychoanalytic theory regards the male homosexual's development as 'arrested' (Jones, 1961) or as 'immature' (Drescher, 2022), which intimates a pathological view thereof, even if Freud did not explicitly regard the phenomenon to be an illness.

2.7 Freud's Doubtfulness Regarding the Veracity of the Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality

It ought to be noted, that although the classical psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality has been extremely influential on subsequent analytical thinkers (Mitchell, 2012), Freud (1905/2011; 1910/2001) himself was never fully convinced or certain of its veracity. The primary issue, so it seems to me, is that the supposed aetiological factors (such as the so-called 'referential axis' of the family constellation) required in order for a boy to adopt a homosexual object-choice in adulthood are not a foregone conclusion, so to say (Friedman, 1986). In other words, an intense closeness with the mother in childhood and subsequent identification therewith does not necessarily portend that a boy will select a homosexual object-choice in adulthood, as Freud (1910/2001, p. 52-53) states:

> We are far from wishing to exaggerate the importance of these explanations of the psychical genesis of homosexuality. It is quite obvious that they are in sharp contrast to the official theories of those who speak for homosexuals, but we know that they are

> not sufficiently comprehensive to make a conclusive explanation of the problem possible. What is for practical reasons called homosexuality may arise from a whole variety of psychosexual inhibitory processes; *the particular process we have singled out is perhaps only one among many, and is perhaps related to only one type of 'homosexuality'*.[13] We must also admit that the number of cases of our homosexual type in which it is possible to point to the determinants which we require far exceeds the number of those where the deduced effect actually takes place; so that we too cannot reject the part played by unknown constitutional factors, to which the whole of homosexuality is usually traced.

And, again, in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud (1905/2011) candidly declares:

> It is true that psycho-analysis has not yet produced a complete explanation of the origin of inversion [i.e. homosexuality].

It was primarily for this reason, as Friedman (1986, p. 85) notes, "that Freud ruled out a purely environmental theory of sexual development and hypothesized a congenital homosexual predisposition". I conjecture, based upon my reading of certain crucial texts, that Freud (1923/1947) considered an innate inclination towards either a masculine or feminine disposition to be the determining factor as to whether a child will ultimately identify with his mother or his father in adulthood. But here again, Freud's view intimates that male homosexuals (who subsequently identify with their mothers according to his theory) are innately more inclined towards a feminine disposition than their male counterparts. Evidently and regrettably, Freud's "normative bias" (Friedman, 1986, p. 62) in this respect, which I mentioned at the outset of my investigation, was quite firmly established in his mind.

But I do not wish to give the erroneous impression that Freud was ignorant of the complexity of the development of a male homosexual orientation in adulthood. As mentioned, Freud (1905/201; 1910/2001) clearly did not take his theory of male homosexuality to be a definitive aetiological explanation of the phenomenon. Rather, it appears that his theory intimates the possibility of their being numerous varieties of homosexuality; *ergo* one should speak of 'homosexualities' as opposed to the singular and misleading 'homosexuality'. It will be

[13] My italicization.

recalled that in his work *Leonardo* Freud (1910/2001, p. 52) referred to his theory as "only one among many […] related to only one type of 'homosexuality'". Thus, although Freud's classical theory may be pertinent to some homosexual men – i.e. those that identify as effeminate – it is evidently not a universal theory in so far as it fails to explicate the selection of a same-sex object in males who identify fully with their masculinity and do not exhibit much, if any, effeminacy. Indeed, it will be recalled that Freud (1905/2011) recognised this fact, viz., the masculine identification, about many homosexual men and yet his theory fails to account for this particular group.

Indeed, when one considers the matter in earnest and from an entirely unprejudiced perspective it appears that at best the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality is, as I mentioned, only true of some – perhaps a minority of homosexual men – or, at worst, utterly erroneous and not applicable to any.[14] I, however, maintain, along with some contemporary thinkers such as Mitchell (2012), that the psychoanalytic theory may still be fruitfully applicable and shed light on the phenomenon of male homosexuality, albeit with certain emendations and qualifications. Consequently, in what follows I shall present a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality.

2.8 A Depathologized Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality

Freud's (1905/201; 1910/2001) doubtfulness regarding his psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality intimates that it is certainly in need of emendation or that an entirely novel hypothesis ought to be offered *in lieu* thereof. Historically, psychoanalysis has been extremely conservative in its view of male homosexuality, perpetually attempting to construe it in pathological terms (Friedman, 1986). As we have seen, the provenance of this pathological understanding of male homosexuality is to be found in Freud's primary theory of the phenomenon; for although Freud did not go so far as later analysts in declaring homosexuality to be an illness, it cannot be denied that he thought it problematic and, in the last analysis, 'abnormal' (Jones, 1961; Pick, 2015).

[14] In other words, it may be that Freud's theory of male homosexuality is applicable to a certain group of homosexual men who identify with females; but one may also wonder if it is not better suited to transsexuality.

Contemporary thought has attempted to distance itself from the pathological conception of homosexuality; for psychoanalytic practitioners no longer tend to regard the gender of one's object choice to be a point of pathology, focusing, rather, on levels of distress, identity integration and the quality of relating in relationships to be the most salient facets (Friedman, 1986; Sadock & Sadock, 2007). However, it is incumbent upon modern psychoanalysts to re-evaluate and re-consider the Freudian theory in light of recent investigations and understandings, and to consider the possible common pathways that young homosexuals may follow into adulthood. Historically, any attempt to reformulate analytic theory has been viewed as sacrilegious, as Ronald W. Clark (1987, p. 171) notes in connection with the Oedipus complex:

> To many devout Freudians [the Oedipus complex] is still the Ark of the Covenant, and for them any suggestion that its effects should be differently interpreted has at least a touch of heresy.

It is undoubtedly this dogmatism regarding analytic theory that has led to the not entirely unjust accusation that psychanalysis is less of a science and more of a religious creed (Pick, 2015). But if the theory is to once again assume a significant role in scientific understandings and conceptualisations of human psychology then it is necessary that it be receptive to alteration and evolve according to modern research findings. To that end, current psychoanalytic thinking that seeks to depathologize developmental accounts of male homosexuality, has challenged Freud's (1905/2011; 1910/2001; 1914/1984) imputation of a narcissistic element in the aetiology of (male) homosexuality, along with his notion that identification and sexual lusting cannot occur within the same object. What follows presents current debates within the field of literature that is attempting to re-read and update classical understandings of male homosexuality.

Firstly, the imputation of a narcissistic component in the homosexual disposition is at best questionable and at worst unjustified. Although some recent research has found a positive correlation between male homosexuality and narcissism (Rubinstein, 2010) – thus appearing to give credence to the classical psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality – the aetiological connection has not, to my knowledge, been sufficiently proved. In other words, it may not be the case that a narcissistic disposition in infancy inclines one to homosexuality in adulthood, but rather that homosexual men exhibit higher levels of narcissism as a consequence of the

persecution, ostracization and discrimination that many of them face on a daily basis (Wells & Polders, 2006), i.e. the 'positive correlation' found between male homosexuality and narcissism (Rubinstein, 2010) may in fact be a consequential defence mechanism or a striving for superiority in Adlerian terminology (Adler, 1920/1950). Depathologized psychoanalytic theories of male homosexuality appear to have jettisoned this element of the theory and have rather developed another of Freud's theories as an alternative.

As a point of departure, one of the most convenient emendations to the analytic theory of male homosexuality is to regard the so-called 'negative' Oedipal complex as primary in homosexual men (while, of course, the 'positive' Oedipal complex would assume a secondary position) (Mitchell, 2012). In this way the imputation of a narcissistic element in the development of a homosexual orientation in adulthood is removed, for the young homosexual boy is said, unlike his heterosexual male counterpart, to experience a different type of experience: one in which he lusts for his father and harbours animosity for his mother. In this way, the homosexual boy has taken his father, as opposed to *himself*, as his love-object and hence the claim that homosexuals experience an 'arrest of development' (Jones, 1961) cannot justifiably be made. Mitchell (2012) notes that this emendation to the analytic theory explicates why many of his homosexual male patients have sexual fantasies of heterosexual men, i.e. even in adulthood they still unconsciously long to possess their heterosexual fathers. But as Mitchell (2012) further notes, in this connection homosexual men have to settle for a man who is not identical to the father they lusted in childhood (assuming, of course, that one's father is or was a heterosexual man),[15] for their same-sex partner must of necessity be either a homosexual or a bisexual man.

Secondly, and no less important, it is necessary to turn to the claim that homosexual men identify with their mothers, as opposed to their fathers; thereby imputing a universal effeminacy to all homosexual men. Now although this identification with the mother may be true of some (perhaps even most) homosexual men – and does in fact explicate why some exhibit effeminacy (Mitchell, 2012) – it is certainly not universally accurate. For there are undoubtedly masculine homosexual men, as Freud (1905/2011) himself acknowledges. In such cases, i.e. of masculine homosexual men, it is necessary to hypothesise an identification with

[15] In this connection homosexuals differ from heterosexuals in that the latter group can seek out a partner identical in sexual orientation to the parent they once lusted for.

the *father* as opposed to the mother. Traditionally, of course, as Mitchell (2012, p. 22) notes, psychoanalytic theory has rejected the notion that one can identify with and desire "the same sex at the same time"; thus, such a possibility was never earnestly entertained by Freud. This emendation to the analytical theory allows for the possibility of masculine homosexual men, which the traditional theory appears to have denied. However, this naturally raises novel issues regarding the resolution of the Oedipal complex, something I found strikingly absent in Mitchell's (2012) interesting article. If a boy primarily lusts his father there would need to be a mechanism other than castration anxiety at play within that relationship, which will ultimately affect a resolution of the complex.

It will be recalled that what brings about the so-called 'dissolution' (Freud, 1924/1977) of the Oedipus complex is castration anxiety, i.e. the young boy's trepidation of being castrated. However, this notion requires qualification for it does not appear to be equally as applicable to homosexual as to heterosexual males. Of course, in the case of a heterosexual male it is perfectly reasonable to assume that he represses (Freud, 1924) his incestuous desires for his mother out of a trepidation of losing his beloved phallus (which he requires in order to penetrate a female); but in the case of a homosexual boy – one who "behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father" (Freud, 1923/1947, p. 43) – it seems peculiar to speak of 'castration anxiety', i.e. in so far as the young homosexual boy, we must assume, would like to be penetrated by his father. For this reason one must consider the possibility of a unique mechanism in the case (of at least some) homosexual males, which would usher in the dissolution or resolution of the Oedipus complex.

Within homosexual males who in adulthood assume a predominantly receptive homosexual orientation the notion of '*castration desire*' may be thought applicable. In other words, receptive homosexual males might wish to be castrated in order for them to be able to fully possess their fathers. In this scenario, the father still acts as the threatening object whereby the Oedipus complex is resolved (Lewes, 1998); for, it must be conjectured that the father – sensing that his son "displays an affectionate feminine attitude towards [him]" (Freud, 1923/1947, p. 43) – emphatically and unequivocally denies his son fulfilment of his desire (just as in the common form of the Oedipal conflict the father is said to act as the hindrance to the boy attaining his incestuous desires by threatening castration). This denial on the part of the father for the young boy's wish to be castrated then causes a repression of his incestuous desires for his father and thereby ushers in the resolution of the (receptive) homosexual male's Oedipus

complex. Thereafter, the homosexual boy's incestuous desires for his father are displaced onto other men and he consequently seeks out a man, similar to his father, with whom he can safely enact his fantasy. This is, of course, in accordance with Lewes' (1998, p. 341) so-called "plicate Oedipus complex", in which the father acts simultaneously as "both the object and the prohibitor of erotic excitement in the Oedipal-age boy".

However, this interpretation is unfortunately problematic. For the notion that a receptive homosexual male takes his anal orifice in place of sacrificing his penis intimates that he *regresses* to an earlier infantile state, i.e. to the anal period, in which he takes his anus as the erotogenic zone (Freud, 1905/2011) and displaces his urge to be penetrated thereon – i.e. *in lieu*, as it were, of a vagina. This understanding, therefore, like the imputation of a narcissistic component in the homosexual male, renders homosexuality pathological in so far as *it assumes a regression to an earlier infantile period of psychosexual development* (Freud, 1905/2011), which makes it a poor alternative solution to the predicament. In an attempt to resolve this difficulty one could argue that this process should be construed as a substitution as opposed to a regression; however, this would entail a re-reading of the stage theory of psychosexual development. This question, alongside others that continue to arise, such as in relation to the findings of a study by Podder and De (2011) which claims to have observed a more potent form of castration anxiety in homosexual male participants, suggest that the issue of multiple homosexualities may require further thought and that many areas of the theory require further exploration and clarification.

It may be that the heteronormative bias inherent to the classical hypothesis renders any attempt to entirely depathologize the theory impossible; for it is solely heterosexual intercourse (wherein the male organ is placed into the female) that may be said to constitute 'non-perverse' (Nicolosi, 2016) or 'normal' sexual relations. But given that homosexual intercourse can never attain this end, it must necessarily remain aberrant according to the classical theory. If the classical theory cannot be entirely depathologized it might seem necessary to rather abandon it (or the concept of psychosexual stages of development) and seek an entirely novel hypothesis. But as the classical understanding of the resolution of the Oedipal complex does not seem to contribute to a pathologizing of male homosexuality it may be retained in the depathologized conception. This is probably the reason that Mitchell (2012) did not discuss the matter in his article.

Having observed that it may be impossible to entirely depathologize the primary psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality, there are, however, and as mentioned previously, still aspects of the theory which may still be fruitfully applicable and shed light on the phenomenon of male homosexuality, albeit with certain emendations and qualifications.

2.9 Black Homosexual Males in South Africa: Contextualising the Study

As a point of departure I wish to note that, according to the so-called 'Immorality Act', homosexuality – under the guise of sodomy – was once considered a criminal offence within the South African context (Family Guide to the Law in South Africa, 1982). Although the post-apartheid era has ushered in a period purported to be more tolerant and inclusive of those who deviate from so-called 'sexual norms' (Massoud, 2003), the reality is, lamentably, extremely different – for many homosexual men in South Africa still experience marginalisation and discrimination as a consequence of their sexual orientation (Dlamini, 2006; Msibi, 2011; Wells & Polders, 2006). For many Black homosexual men in particular, experiences of discrimination are especially complex and layered. Experiences of racism occur alongside experiences of discrimination based on sexual orientation, thereby compounding traumatization. This is often further compounded by HIV stigma and the fact that HIV is often associated with homosexuality in males (Arscott et al., 2020). Discrimination experienced by these men also often relates to issues of gender, as sexual orientation in many instances intersects with gender expression.

Masculinity as a construct is currently theorised as being multiple and fluid (Demetriou, 2001; Langa, 2022). In studies on hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forms of masculinity, attention has turned to alternative forms of masculinity and men's continual struggles with positioning themselves in relation to 'ideal' forms of masculinity (Langa, 2022). Gender-nonconforming males in South Africa have been found to experience more discrimination and, in addition, higher levels of discrimination have been found to be associated with mental distress (Cook et al., 2013; Sandfort et al., 2016). Internalized homophobia is linked to depression in both feminine and masculine males (Sandfort et al., 2018). In feminine men, internalised homophobia is understood to develop due to the fact that males with a preference for a feminine gender presentation also tend to report more discrimination having been experienced when growing up compared to men with a preference for a masculine gender presentation (Sandfort et al., 2018). In masculine men, however, this is understood to occur differently:

> As masculine men, it is easier for them to pass as straight as their gender conformity does not raise any suspicion about their sexual orientation. In a social climate where rejection of same-sex sexuality is high, passing might be seen a safer option than coming out. It is possible, though, that not coming out precludes men from processing negative feelings about being attracted to members of the same sex and results in stronger internalized homophobia (Sandfort et al., 2018, p. 9)

It is clear that societal, cultural and familial attitudes towards homosexuality also play a role in the experiences of Black homosexual men. It is noted that homophobic attitudes within broad African culture are commonplace (Dlamini, 2006). It ought to be mentioned that for the purposes of this study, culture is not considered static or homogenous. Thus, it will be acknowledged that each participant in the study is likely to bring with him a unique experience of his culture and the way in which it has informed and influenced his experiences of family life and homosexual identity. Azuma (2019) has proposed the concept of 'personal culture' in order to capture the shifting nature of culture, individual variation within it and the fact that it is influenced by one's personal history. It is within this personal culture that constructions of masculinity and sexuality are formed.

Religious views on homosexuality likewise play a role in matters of stigma and discrimination. The complex interplay between religious dogmatism and the psychological understanding of male same-sex love in rendering homosexuality a criminal offence in modern societies (Pickett, 2021) is an extremely interesting and pertinent topic. It is interesting to note, as Dlamini (2006) does, that in the colonial era many European thinkers maintained that the so-called 'primitiveness' of Africans precluded them from homosexuality; the corollary of which is to erroneously portend that the practice is a scourge of, and limited to, individuals of a higher, i.e. European, civilisation. This notion, has, as Dlamini (2006) intimates, led to the ubiquitous view among many Black South Africans that homosexuality is 'un-African', i.e. an imposition from European civilisation and ought consequently to be resisted by Black communities.[16] This

[16] I wish to note here that the people of Africa (cited in Dlamini, 2006) – no less than the ancient Greeks, Romans (Pickett, 2021) and the Sambia tribe in Papua New Guinea (Barlow & Durand, 2005) – appear to have engaged in pederasty (i.e., a particular form of homosexuality wherein a sexually mature male will take a younger – often prepubescent boy – as a lover) prior to the incursion of Europeans into the African continent. It follows, therefore,

understanding has, in turn, led to the marginalisation and discrimination of homosexual Black men, which oftentimes manifests itself in acts of physical violence and rape (Wells & Polders, 2006). Msibi (2009) further intimates that the modern challenge to the historical heteronormative and patriarchal South African cultural and political atmosphere has compounded the situation, in so far as many heterosexual men construe it as an affront to their sense of masculinity; as a consequence thereof, some may feel compelled to lash out at both women and homosexual men in an attempt to 'reclaim' their dominant heterosexual male positions. Research has indicated that Black homosexual men – in particular those who live within rural areas and townships – are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, marginalisation and violence (Wells & Polders, 2006). However, against the backdrop of the myth of homosexuality as 'un-African', accounts of sub-groups of men who are finding ways to reconcile their cultural, gender and sexual identities can be found (Rudwick, 2011).

Despite recent attention being drawn to issues of toxic masculinity, power struggles for acknowledgement and visibility are complex and occur even within marginalised communities of homosexuals. Black homosexual men have been found to be marginalised within the 'queer community' itself and to have limited visibility in mainstream 'queer culture' (Sonnekus & van Eeden, 2009). Thus it may be said that Black homosexual males constitute 'a minority within a minority (or the 'other' Other)', in so far as Black homosexuality is underrepresented in comparison with White homosexuality (Sonnekus & van Eeden, 2009, p. 81). The current study therefore aims to fill a lacuna in the psychoanalytic literature by giving Black homosexual men within South Africa a voice. By considering the potential cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality, it is hoped that the study will not solely encourage further research into this particular, historically neglected, area from a uniquely psychoanalytic perspective, but that it will, moreover, highlight the plight of Black homosexual men within the South African context.

2.10 Debates in the Cross-Cultural Applicability of Psychoanalytic Theory

Bergner (1999, p. 222) notes that "psychoanalytic theory has tended to describe psychology in terms of universal frameworks that ignore cultural and historical specificity", intimating that

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that homosexuality – although not identified as such by the term – has always been widely engaged in throughout Africa; rendering the notion of it being 'un-African' ludicrous.

the discipline is not cross-culturally pertinent and applicable. Indeed, in a similar fashion Knight (2013, p. 18) states:

> Psychoanalysis emerged in a specifically Western tradition of intellectual and social values and is thus largely based on a philosophy of liberal individualism; it can therefore be argued that it [possesses] limited applicability across classes and diverse cultural groupings.

It must be pointed out that Freud believed psychoanalysis to be rooted in a biological understanding of human nature (Pick, 2015);[17] as such, any theoretical claims proposed are assumed to have universal applicability, just as any theoretical assumptions regarding the circulation of blood throughout the human body apply equally to all without exception. It is this particular tension which the present study aims to address, for although I assume Freud took his theoretical postulations to be cross-culturally applicable, there have been some serious concerns raised in connection therewith.

To my knowledge, there have been no studies conducted on the possible cross-cultural applicability of the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality, hence I cannot explore the matter here; however, there have been criticisms pertaining to the cross-cultural applicability of the Oedipus complex – which is an essential component of the psychoanalytic theory of homosexuality. It will be recalled that as early as the 1920s, Bronislaw Malinowski (cited in Pick, 2015) questioned the cross-cultural applicability of the so-called referential axis of the Oedipus complex. Indeed, nowadays the matter is equally – if not more – complex, in so far as there are high rates of both single-parent and same-sex parent families (Davies & Eagle, 2013) across all cultural groups, i.e. there are now many families not constituted according to the classic referential axis, with an anatomical female mother and an anatomical male father. Debates on this matter continue, and were even open to thought by Freud (1910/2001) himself, as can be gleaned from Freud's (1910/2001) psycho-biographical study of Leonardo da Vinci, wherein he demonstrated that it is not impossible for an infant to experience intense love for

[17] Here, of course, it ought to be borne in mind that Freud (1925/1986) – a neurologist by training – was, by his own admission, greatly influenced by the work of Charles Darwin. It must be assumed that when a thinker proposes a theory pertaining to the structure or function of a creature's anatomy (including its psychological composition), he assumes it to be applicable to all, without exception. It is therefore not outlandish to suppose that Freud's theorising ought to apply equally to all human beings, regardless of race.

his mother without concomitantly developing a murderous animosity for his father. However, it cannot be denied that the absence of a father-figure problematizes the resolution of the Oedipal complex (Freud, 1924/1977); for without the fear of castration it is difficult to comprehend how the boy can repress his incestuous desires for his mother. As previously discussed, however, modern analysts, such as Lewes (1998) and Mitchell (2012), have argued that one parent (the father in the case of homosexual males) can act simultaneously as both the object to which incestuous amorous desires are directed *and* prohibited.

In order to retain the Oedipal theory (if one considers it to be significant, as indeed it is in the present study), an emendation to the classical theory is necessary. In this regard it is beneficial to follow Davies and Eagle (2013) in extricating the concepts of maternity and paternity from the biological notions of male and female, respectively; for it is the *functional roles* assumed by the caregiver/s which is of crucial significance and not their biological genders *per se* (Davies & Eagle, 2013).

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that incestuous amorous desires for one parent and animosity directed at the other are universal phenomena (Josephs, 2010). While the main purpose of the Oedipus complex, as postulated by Freud, viz., to instil incest taboo, necessarily implies that the phenomenon is universally ubiquitous in so far as there is no evidence of any civilisation permitting the practice of incest among first-degree relatives (Josephs, 2010), it has been argued that this may not necessarily be due to the phenomenon of the Oedipus complex as Freud believed - it may be that another mechanism (perhaps a biological one, as opposed to a psychological one) is responsible for this universal prohibition. Instead, it has been proposed by some, such as Josephs (2010), that the complex may in fact serve as a prototypical model for later triangulated relationships in adulthood. If this is the case, then the Oedipus complex may not be as universal as Freud and his followers imagined it to be.

Furthermore, one cannot assume that the directionality of incestuous and aggressive desires – even when present within the referential axis – will present in the same way across different cultures. Bhugra and Bhui (2002), for instance, found that among Indian people the Oedipus complex was ‘inverted’, in so far as the parents – as opposed to their children – were found to harbour incestuous desires for their opposite-sex offspring. I reiterate that one simply cannot assume that the Oedipus complex will present in the same way across different cultures, if at all.

Likewise, even though there is a dearth of research on the topic, one should not hastily assume that the depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality presented herein will be cross-culturally applicable and present in accordance with the theoretical framework. It is in the spirit of earnest curiosity that the present study hopes to shed light on an area of psychoanalytic research which has hitherto remained concealed within so much obscurity.

There is one final, albeit significant, aspect which needs to be mentioned in connection with the cross-cultural applicability of psychoanalytic theory in general, viz., the possibility that in attempting to construe non-European individuals by way of psychoanalytic conceptions one unwittingly imposes a form of marginalization, discrimination, control or Westernisation upon them (Knight, 2013)., i.e. an intellectual form of colonisation which may be construed to limit non-Europeans in the expression of their lived experiences. For as Knight (2013, p. 20) notes, "psychoanalysis is an import from colonial Europe [and is therefore] alien to the various black cultures in South Africa". Closely related thereto, are difficulties pertaining to the racist currents which exist in psychoanalytic thought. Freud (1913/1989) and his followers clearly held ideas of racial hierarchizations and classifications. Like so many at the time in which he wrote – Freud held non-European people to be inferior; at least on an unconscious level. A remark in Freud's writings which has been construed as evincing racist sentiments is his characterisation of some non-European people as 'savages' or 'half-savages' in *Totem and Taboo*, which is subtitled 'Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics'. Freud (1913/1989, p. 3) defines a 'savage' or 'half-savage' as "[people] still living who, as we believe, stand very near to primitive man, far nearer than we do, and whom we therefore regard as his direct heirs and representatives". Although psychoanalytic theory has begun to grapple with issues of racism inherent to the theory (see, Altman, 2000; Knight, 2013; Layton, 2019), there is still much more work to be done with regard to considering ways in which the theory reflects bias in the areas of race, culture, gender and sexual orientation.

2.11 Conclusion

In concluding this literature review it is hoped that it has been made perspicuous that although Freud (cited in Jones, 1961) did not consider homosexuality to be an illness, his notion of homosexuality constituting an 'arrest in development' or form of immaturity (Drescher, 2022) (in so far as the male homosexual is said to regress to a narcissistic object-choice) as well as

the concept of ubiquitous identification with the mother among homosexual men (thus intimating a necessary connection between the phenomenon and effeminacy) has undoubtedly influenced the historical psychological view of homosexuality as aberrant and 'abnormal'. Furthermore, in spite of Freud's (1905/2011) assertion on the innate bisexuality of all human beings, his notion that a male takes his mother as his first (external) love-object intimates that all males were, initially at least, of a heterosexual persuasion. This notion has – perhaps unwittingly – influenced the development of so-called 'conversion therapies'; doing much harm to many men (Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002). As a consequence, a depathologized theory of male homosexuality is in order. This theory, which was presented herein, essentially takes the so-called 'negative' Oedipus complex as primary in homosexual men and further accepts the 'heretical' possibility that one can simultaneously identify with and love the same object (Mitchell, 2012).

As mentioned herein, the notion of the Oedipus complex was excoriated for, among other things, its assumption that all children are raised in a triangular family constellation with (at least) a mother and a father (Pick, 2015). Of course, some theorists such as Ernest Jones (cited in Pick, 2015) have attempted to resolve this difficulty by pointing out that other males or females closely associated with the infant may assume the surrogate role of 'mother' and 'father' in cultures in which children are not raised by their biological parents. However, to my knowledge, there have been no studies conducted on the question as to whether the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality is cross-culturally applicable; for the way in which a homosexual orientation develops in one culture may be vastly dissimilar to the way in which it forms in another. Thus, the present study seeks to address this deficit in the psychoanalytic literature by considering whether the depathologized theory presented herein has any cross-cultural applicability in connection with Black homosexual men in South Africa.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section I shall explicate the methodology which was used in order to conduct the research. The project was a qualitative study based on the interviews of three willing, openly-homosexual Black male participants. In the proceeding sections I shall discuss the participant inclusion criteria, the procedure which was used for gathering data and the analysis thereof. I shall also explicate the reasons that a qualitative research design has been selected, and finally discuss the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2 Research Design and Theoretical Framework

Whitley (2002) notes that data in the behavioural sciences can be classified as either quantitative or qualitative in nature. The former is "based on measuring variables for individual participants to obtain scores, usually numerical values, that are submitted to statistical analysis for summary and interpretation" (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009, p.147). In contrast, qualitative research "involves careful observation of participants (often including interaction with participants), usually accompanied by extensive note taking. The observations and notes are then summarised in a narrative report that attempts to describe and interpret the phenomenon being studied" (ibid).

Given that the study was exploratory in nature, i.e. it sought to explore the cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality, a qualitative paradigm was considered the most appropriate. So far as I am aware, such a study had not as yet been conducted in South Africa and hence there was scant literature on this particular topic; consequently, an exploratory study which could potentially generate information for further research was undoubtedly to be preferred. The qualitative research method, as previously intimated, allowed the participants to express themselves in greater depth and more liberally than the quantitative research method, thereby fulfilling this intention.

Given that the research sought to explore a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality a psychoanalytic theoretical framework was used. As is generally well-known, psychoanalysis is a 'depth psychology', maintaining that unconscious material drives much

behaviour in the life of individuals (Pick, 2015). Hence, the study required the researcher to explore unconscious material in relation to the research topic; it was thought that this could best be done by way of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview, as described by Duncan Cartwright (2002). Of course, the fact that the researcher necessarily had to make interpretations of the participants' information might be excoriated for being subjective and "lacking scientific rigor" (Cope, 2014, p.89); however, this perceived shortcoming was greatly mitigated by way of the so-called 'hermeneutic circle' (Cartwright, 2002), i.e. the researcher only attempted to extrapolate unconscious information based upon psychoanalytic theory and the content supplied by the research participants.

3.3 Research Question

There was one primary research question:

What are the convergences and divergences between the culturally-embedded understandings of three Black homosexual men's homosexual identities and current depathologized psychoanalytic understandings of the developmental origins of homosexuality?

3.4 Participants

The sample of the research study consisted of three openly homosexual South African males who volunteered to participate and who identified as Black. It was important that the participants were individuals with whom the researcher had no personal acquaintance or connection, as this could have potentially distorted the information reported by the participants. Non-probability, snowballing, purposive and convenience sampling (Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2011) was utilised and thus relevant participants were obtained based on a willingness to participate in the research study.

Given that a case study methodology had been chosen for the research, the sample was small and could not, of course, be generalizable to the wider population of homosexual Black men in South Africa (Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2011). However, it is hoped nonetheless that the documentation of these men's culturally-embedded understandings of the developmental origins of their sexualities, and an analysis of the convergences and divergences of these understandings with the depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality

presented in the literature review might tentatively begin to answer some questions (and likely raise others) about the cross-cultural applicability of psychoanalytic understandings of homosexuality, thereby encouraging further research in this area.

Although the study required that the three participants be comfortable with their homosexual orientation – thus requiring a certain maturity – age itself was not a particular variable of interest. As the psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality pertains to one's early childhood experiences these factors were, it was assumed, present in all adult participants, regardless of age. Hence, the participants were not selected from a particular age bracket. However, as maturity was required, preference was given to homosexual men who had been open about their sexuality for at least one year prior to the initial interview.

However, the study design had a heavy reliance on the participants' own curiosity, introspection and capacity to narrate their thoughts, feelings and understandings. For this reason participants with a capacity to express themselves in English were selected. It was likely that individuals who expressed curiosity about the study would have opinions and thoughts about their own experiences to share. Men with a history of severe psychopathology were excluded from the study in order to avoid any potential emotional strain the topic might have elicited.

Finally, the study limited the term 'Black' to the indigenous African population. Other people of colour, such as Indians and Coloureds, were excluded from the study due to cultural differences which might have caused great disparities in the information communicated by the participants. In connection with this point it ought to be noted that the indigenous African population within South Africa does not comprise a homogenous group; on the contrary, the larger community is made up of numerous unique and distinct cultures, with different practices and beliefs. As such, I acknowledge that attitudes towards homosexuality may be vastly dissimilar among the various communities, i.e. there may be differences in attitude and sentiment regarding homosexuality between, for instance, the Zulu and Xhosa communities. However, as there is scant literature on the topic and this particular study seeks to generate information pertaining to Black homosexual South African men in general, i.e. across the various cultural groups within the indigenous African population within South Africa, it shall not be restricted to solely one group within the larger South African Black population. Future research will be able to replicate this study utilising other cultural and racial groups.

The term ‘homosexual’ herein refers specifically to those individuals who identify with the term and exhibit exclusive same-sex attraction and sexual engagement with members of their own sex. Bisexual and curious men were therefore excluded from the study in so far as the depathologized psychoanalytic theory under consideration pertains specifically to self-identifying homosexual men.

3.5 Procedure of Gathering Data / Methods of Data Collection

Initially, finding participants was a challenge. However, colleagues and friends assisted the researcher in finding appropriate individuals who they speculated might be interested in participating in the study. First, the researcher’s friends and colleagues contacted the individuals to request if their details could be forwarded on to the researcher. Once the researcher had received the details of the numerous potential participants from the aforementioned individuals, he made contact with them via a telephone call or text message in order to discuss what participation in the study would entail: those that indicated a desire to participate in the study were subsequently sent an email with the information sheet, which further detailed what participation in the study would entail. Thereafter, the initial interview was arranged. Due to the current threat of Covid-19 all the interviews were conducted online. It was ensured that the participants were in a place that afforded sufficient privacy and if any technical difficulties were experienced during the course of the interview process, the session was rescheduled accordingly. Each participant was requested to sign an informed consent, wherein the nature of the research, confidentially and anonymity was explicitly mentioned (see, the appendix). In the initial interview the researcher attempted to build rapport with participants, as this allowed them to feel more comfortable with the researcher, thereby conveying more information liberally; this was done by way of the researcher asking each participant to introduce himself and to share as much personal information as he felt comfortable to share. In total, the researcher conducted three interviews, of approximately an hour each, with each participant. Following Cartwright’s (2002) suggestions for the Psychoanalytic Narrative Interview, the two initial interviews were more unstructured in order to encourage the participants to talk freely, while the third and final interview was more directive and structured: a summary of the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality was presented to the participants, allowing them to discuss pertinent areas and topics generated therefrom. This summary was written down and read out aloud by

the researcher. In order to ensure that each participant understood the summary the researcher told the participants that he could read it as many times as they required. All the participants requested that the summary be read at least twice. On the initial reading the participants seemed incredulous as to the veracity of the notions presented; however, upon hearing it for a second time and after some contemplation, the participants evinced curiosity and interest in the notions. The summary of the contemporary depathologized theory was structured and presented in the following way:

> Psychoanalytic theory hypothesises a process of identification that takes place in childhood, where the child identifies with aspects of their parents to form the self. A part of this involves gender identification. The development of sexual orientation is also thought to occur within these early relationships. Contemporary psychoanalytic theory holds that gay men can identify with either parent, or a caregiver, and take the father, or rather significant male caregiver or imagined father-figure, as the type of man that a young gay boy hopes eventually to partner with in adulthood.

As these interviews needed to be meticulously transcribed by the researcher, each was recorded. The researcher therefore gained permission from all participants for the audio and video recording of the interviews by way of a written consent form (See, the appendix). These recordings will be deleted after examination of the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

As the study is concerned with the cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality the researcher analysed the data by way of the Psychoanalytic Research Interview (PRI) method. This method is indicated primarily due to the fact that the study sought to explore an aspect of psychoanalytic theory.

The following procedure was utilised to analyse the research data generated by the three one-on-one interviews with the three research participants:

(i) During the interview process, which was recorded, the researcher paid close attention to subtle changes in the participants' tone, behaviour and affect, for these indicated unconscious

resistances or intrapsychic conflicts, which are particularly pertinent to the PRI (Cartwright, 2002).

(ii) After each interview, the researcher noted the abovementioned occurrences, as well as his own sentiments and thoughts regarding certain aspects of the interviews, as it is maintained by Cartwright (2002) that these may reveal significant information.

(iii) All nine interviews were meticulously transcribed by the researcher. The abovementioned observations were then incorporated into the transcribed interviews by way of square parentheses "[ ]".

(iv) The 'within case' analysis consisted of looking for information that explained each participant's subjective experiences of being homosexual within their respective families, cultures and communities, then looking for how each participant had come to understand their homosexual identity within this context, and then examining their responses to the 'psychoanalytic model' or theory of depathologized homosexual development, as presented to them by the researcher.

(v) A case study 'vignette' of each participant was then constructed, using excerpts from the interviews. Possible unconscious content and patterns were also noted, as this is essential to the PRI (Cartwright, 2002).

(vi) Then an 'across case' analysis was conducted to identify common themes as well as important individual differences in experience.

(vii) In order to ensure that the researcher did not engage in any 'wild analysis' (Freud, 1912/2002) an independent individual (his supervisor) was asked to read through the transcripts to make independent analyses; these were then compared with the researcher's analyses of the interviews thereby ensuring their validity (Cartwright, 2002).

(viii) Themes identified that presented the participants' understandings of the development of their sexuality were compared and contrasted with contemporary psychoanalytic views of homosexual development – this included participants' thoughts and feelings towards the presented psychoanalytic understanding.

(ix) A discussion section was then generated based on the key themes identified in the interviews.

3.7 Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness is extremely significant in qualitative research, as it ensures that data and the results obtained therefrom are accurate and do not reflect the researcher's biases (Cope, 2014). Following Lincoln and Guba (1985), Cope (2014) identifies five criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, viz., credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity. I shall briefly consider each in turn.

(i) Firstly, "credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participant's views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). The reflexive process (see, the section below) was essential to ensuring the credibility of the data, for racial and cultural differences could potentially undermine the credibility of the data conveyed by the participants and the researcher's interpretation and presentation of them. Interpretations were made, as previously mentioned, within the so-called 'hermeneutic circle' (Cartwright, 2002), i.e. the researcher only attempted to make interpretations based on psychoanalytic theory and the information supplied by the participants; in this regard the researcher attempted to refrain from making assumptions or 'wild analyses' when there was not enough information supplied by the participants.

(ii) Secondly, the researcher had to ensure that the results were dependable; which "refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). In this regard the researcher attempted to ensure that the participants felt comfortable enough to express their thoughts and emotions; and it was therefore imperative that the interview setting was non-judgmental and hence did not coerce the participants to acquiesce in views they did not fully concur with. It was also significant to ensure that the participants were in the appropriate frame of mind during the interview process. If, for instance, they had just experienced an event which had caused intense sentiments it might be concluded that the data would in some way be skewed in relation thereto.

(iii) Thirdly, given that the researcher has great admiration for Freud in particular and psychoanalytic theory in general, it was necessary that he ensured that he in no way distorted the data obtained in order to corroborate the theories he wished to investigate. This relates to the notion of confirmability, which "refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints" (Cope, 2014, p. 89).

(iv) Fourthly, every researcher ideally strives for the information obtained by way of his research to be transferable to other similar cases. This relates to the notion of transferability, which "refers to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). Although the conclusions obtained by way of qualitative research with a small sample are not generalisable to the broader population, it is hoped that the research would be transferable to similar individuals in similar settings. In this respect it was imperative that the participants be allowed to express themselves as freely and candidly as possible.

(v) Finally, it was imperative that the data are 'authentic', by which it is meant that the "researcher expresses the feelings and emotions of the participant's experiences in a faithful manner" (Cope, 2014, p. 89). It was imperative that the researcher did not conceal certain sentiments conveyed by the participants which might make the researcher feel uncomfortable or refute the theory he was attempting to explore.

As was intimated, the reflexive process, i.e. attending to the thoughts and feelings elicited in the researcher during the interview process, has great pertinence to the abovementioned five criteria for trustworthiness identified by Cope (2014); I shall therefore now turn to an earnest and detailed consideration thereof.

3.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity may be broadly defined as an act of contemplation upon one's subjective responses or sentiments during the research process (Blanch, Durrheim & Painter, 2011); thus rending it a form of phenomenology (Brown, 2007). This is considered significant in so far as identification or disidentification with research participants may unwittingly act as 'an extraneous variable' in the research process (Blanch, Durrheim & Painter, 2011), impacting the collection and interpretation of data (Brown, 2007). If a researcher were indeed a *tabula*

rasa – without any beliefs, thoughts, interests, likes and dislikes – then the reflexive process would be superfluous; however, given that one is necessarily a creature imbued with manifold beliefs, thoughts and sentiments which have in turn been influenced by one's lived experience, it is unrealistic to maintain that the researcher does not in any way affect the data collected – particularly in qualitative research, i.e. where interpretation is considered a fundamental aspect of the research process (Blanch, Durrheim & Painter, 2011). In psychoanalytic research reflexivity "is not", as Hollway (2016, p. 5) notes, "just another word for cognitive activity, it requires keeping an open mind, [which is] a supremely emotional process". In this respect it is imperative for the researcher to be aware of both transference – i.e. the thoughts and feelings elicited in the participants by the researcher – and countertransference – i.e. the thoughts and feelings elicited in the researcher by the participants (Hollway, 2016). In other words, it is incumbent upon the researcher to remain cognisant of both the positive and negative sentiments and thoughts invoked within himself, just as much as he needs to remain aware of the way in which he may unwittingly influence the information supplied and conveyed by participants. Thus, in what follows I shall present my most salient subjective thoughts invoked during and after the interview process, as well as my reflections thereon in order to illustrate my positionality as well as the topics that caused me to identify or feel myself at variance with the participants.

As mentioned, one is not a *tabula rasa* and hence I should first like to give some insight into my particular position. I am a White male with a doctorate in Philosophy. In particular, I have a penchant for modern Western philosophy from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first and primary area of divergence between me and the participants is the matter of race, and the obvious question as to whether I, as a White individual, should be writing about the experiences of Black people at all; an issue under debate in critical research is whether a White researcher can investigate Black experience (Simons & Usher, 2012). My whiteness situates me as representing the oppressor from the viewpoint of the Black participants – a matter I shall shortly elaborate upon. For it may be argued that my positioning may have influenced what was conveyed to me as an interviewer and also how I heard what was conveyed. In other words, I might have misunderstood significant aspects conveyed by the participants or the participants might have been reluctant to share certain information with me due to cultural differences and racial dynamics. This became most conspicuous through the intersection of my race and my academic background. A theoretical tension between myself (as the researcher) and the participants emerged as a consequence thereof, which I shall now elaborate upon.

Likely due to my interest in philosophy I have often described myself as 'a child of the Enlightenment', by which I portend – among other things – that I subscribe to the view that there is absolute Truth and that, like Socrates, "I am and always have been one of those natures who must be guided by reason" (cited in Plato, 2007b, p. 26); furthermore, and in relation thereto, I maintain that those who enter academia should live by the motto: *vitam impendere vero*.[18] However, the current *zeitgeist* is at variance with such a view, rather regarding absolute Truth to be a chimera, maliciously utilised by those in power to control those in less fortunate circumstances (Ermarth, 2005). I shall first attempt to clarify my views on absolute Truth and thereafter I shall discuss potential difficulties which arise due to my admiration of rationality.

The notion that truth is merely relative/subjective and utilised as a form of social control is the aspect of postmodernism to which I, as an aficionado of the Enlightenment tradition, do not subscribe, although I am able to appreciate its insights. For there are indeed instances where knowledge *has* been utilised as a form of social control, viz., in psychiatry and the pathologizing of homosexuality in particular (see, Sadock & Sadock, 2007). The question as to what constitutes psychological pathology is complex, for if one adheres to the current criteria, viz., that a condition must cause some dysfunction within an individual's social or vocational contexts, either for the self or for others (Sadock & Sadock, 2007), it may still be possible to pathologize 'normal' behaviour, which under different circumstances would not present as aberrant or problematic. For instance, in environments where homosexuality is considered aberrant or 'immoral' (whatever is meant by that) an individual may not be able to function adequately: this is not due to the individual's homosexual orientation preventing him or her from functioning, but the situation or context itself which causes the homosexual to be discriminated against may lead to the manifestation of problematical behaviour (such as depression, anxiety or even defensive narcissism). These secondary dysfunctions are then erroneously associated with homosexuality. As such, this then is a matter of determining the *vera causa* of dysfunctional behaviour, which I cannot unfortunately enter into at length. Suffice it to say that when it comes to the pathologizing of homosexuality I am in full agreement with the postmodernists. But I cannot, by way of induction, extend this view to every other psychiatric condition or to other themes in biology and the natural sciences. As someone who has experienced the debilitating effects of both anxiety and depression I cannot

[18] "To devote one's life to the pursuit of Truth" (Juvenal, cited in: Schopenhauer, 1851/1974).

be made to believe that these phenomena do not exist, but have been 'imposed' upon me by psychiatrists who wish to control and subdue me. This is not the appropriate place to discuss such matters and hence I shall leave my assertion unsupported; but I do wish to illustrate the way in which I have perpetually engaged with postmodern claims and attempted to reconcile them with my Enlightenment position.

Most significantly, the predicate that 'there is no truth' is self-refuting in so far as the claim that 'there is no truth' is in fact a truth – albeit the only one according to the postmodernists – and hence the claim itself is illogical. From this observation alone we can safely conclude that there is indeed Truth; but it is less certain whether one can actually attain such Truth. In other words, I portend that although there is absolute Truth, it is not certain that the human brain/mind is capable of acquiring it. This is due to the fact that knowledge is perpetually limited by the human organ of ratiocination which is inextricably bound to the world, the preservation of our lives and did not evolve to comprehend the ultimate mysteries of the universe. I reiterate that our knowledge is perpetually restricted to the world and its objects; as such it necessarily considers the universe, if I may be permitted to use the term, *sub specie durationis*;[19] whereas in order to acquire certainty or absolute Truth one would necessarily have to view the universe *sub specie aeternitatis*[20] – an impossibility in so far as one would have to transcend the universe itself and stand *outside* it in order to view it objectively. Thus, it may be justifiably said that my position falls somewhere in between the view which regards the acquisition of absolute Truth as something achievable and the postmodern claim that no absolute Truth exists.

I acknowledge that one may feel that I have become overly philosophical in my discussion and may wonder how all this relates to the reflexivity during the interview process, but I shall now vindicate the aforementioned discussion. In the course of the interview process certain responses elicited in the participants by particular questions led me to conjecture that all of the participants have, to varying degrees, been influenced by this contemporary postmodernist *zeitgeist*. Of course, the differences in outlook between me and the participants are hardly surprising when one considers the different lived experiences of both: for I am someone who greatly esteems the Western intellectual tradition – albeit not without criticism – whereas the

[19] "Under the aspect of time".

[20] "Under the aspect of eternity".

participants, who have experienced an entirely different reality as Black homosexual males, feel less enthusiastic towards it, rather regarding Western thought as a source of oppression. This is a significant point, for postmodernism developed in response to the Enlightenment tradition (Duignan, 2022); hence the tension between me and the participants revealed a significant dynamic which I am compelled to discuss further.

In connection therewith, I must acknowledge that during the Age of Enlightenment many of its most prominent and eminent thinkers maintained conspicuously racist views. For instance, two of the Enlightenment philosophers I most highly esteem, viz. David Hume and Immanuel Kant, held notions which can only be deemed blatantly racist by modern standards, maintaining that non-White people are primitive and incapable of attaining the same level of intelligence and civilisation as Whites. For instance, Hume (cited in Bracken, 2002, pp 124-125.) declared that "[non-Whites are] naturally inferior to Whites [and] there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than White, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation"; while Kant (cited in Hill Jr. & Boxill, 2001, p. 455) maintained that "humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the Whites. The yellow Indians have a meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them and at the lowest point are a part of the American peoples". This hierarchical characterisation of the human races was based, so it seems to me, upon Kant's (1784/2009, p. 1) view that in order for one to become enlightened he must "*sapere aude*"[21] by utilising his reason to emerge from a state of childish credulity to one more mature, in which an individual can think for himself and not blindly follow what has been inculcated into his mind by authority figures or popular opinion. However, Kant (cited in Hill Jr. & Broxill, 2001) held that non-White people do not utilise their reason to the same degree as Whites and hence they are 'condemned' to a state of perpetual childishness.[22] Furthermore, I indicated in the literature review that Freud (1913/1989) himself held similar notions of 'savages' or 'half-savages'. When one takes into consideration the fact that Freud's therapeutic technique may be considered an heir of the Enlightenment tradition (Fromm, 1959) in so far as Freud held that the ego (reason) ought to triumph over the id (passions), then the notion that Freud may have

[21] "Dare to be wise!" (Kant, 1784/2009, p. 1).

[22] I do not accept the claim made by some, such as Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (cited in Hill Jr. & Boxill, 2001), that Kant thought non-Whites utterly devoid of reason and that he did not regard non-Whites as humans, for it is important to note that Kant (cited in Hill Jr & Boxill, 2001, p. 454) subscribed to a monogenist account of human origins; thus correctly maintaining that all humans share a common ancestry.

been influenced on some level by the racism inherent in Enlightenment thought is not as outlandish as it may initially appear.

Even though the participants may not be conspicuously aware of the views maintained by eminent philosophers and psychologists, and my admiration of aspects of these individuals' theories (not their racist views), it is probable that in some way they have experienced the consequences thereof and hence it stands to reason that the participants should have expressed a certain suspicion or hostility towards the research topic in particular and the heteronormative (Western) tradition in general – and perhaps even towards me, at least on an unconscious level. Thus, I maintain that this was the most obvious difference between me and the participants and it was therefore necessary that I remained cognisant of this fact throughout the interview process: for I needed to remain aware that the participants may not necessarily feel the same way towards the Western intellectual tradition as I do; and that they may on some level associate me with it and consequently with oppression. On the contrary, their lived experiences seem to have made them suspicious of that tradition (and perhaps of me) and they therefore, so it seems, gravitated towards the postmodern position.

It is necessary to note that my admiration of Enlightenment thought and its most illustrious adherents might unwittingly blind me to other forms of understanding; for it may be argued that in venerating reason/rationality I have neglected other non-Western modes of understanding the world and life (Hill Jr. & Broxill, 2001). This was particularly significant in conducting interviews with participants from a different cultural background. Furthermore, I need to acknowledge one final point in connection with the racist views propounded by the thinkers I most admire, for although I do not consider myself overtly, i.e. consciously, racist it is highly possible that some of these racist opinions have influenced my thinking. Thus my position may not be as neutral or as benign as I imagine it to be; however, it is hoped that in acknowledging this fact its potential pernicious influences were greatly mitigated.

Closely related to the aforementioned discussion are the reservations I have with the word 'queer'. The postmodern critical gender theorists have attempted to 'reclaim' this term in order to render it benign or non-offensive (Sycamore, 2008). But try as I might I cannot utilise the term 'queer' without taking tremendous umbrage; this is probably due to the fact that the etymology of the term 'queer' does not in any sense betoken same-sex attraction, rather it seems it has become colloquially associated with homosexuality; presumably because the

attraction to members of one's own sex was considered 'odd', 'strange' or 'eccentric' by heteronormative standards. Thus, I feel that the term is intentionally malicious and denigrating. In contrast thereto, the term 'homosexual' – although not ideal in so far as it is a fusion of Greek and Latin, i.e. '*homo*' meaning 'same' in the former language and '*sexualis*' referring to erotic attraction in the latter[23] – concisely designates the object to which it refers without containing within itself any judgement, i.e. disapprobation. Thus, the utilisation of this particular term does not cause any ill feeling in me in the way in which the term 'queer' does. However, it is claimed that the term 'homosexual' is pejorative and offensive and ought therefore not to be used (GLAAD Media Reference Guide, 2022). This is most probably due to the pathologizing of homosexuality by the psychiatric profession (Sadock & Sadock, 2007), wherein the term is most often employed, thus rendering it laden with negative, i.e. pathological, connotations; however, I cannot comprehend why this term – which does not in-itself betoken any judgment – has not been 'reclaimed', whereas the intentionally offensive term 'queer', has been! In my estimation the neutral word 'homosexual' is the appropriate term which should be reclaimed and hence I have favoured the utilisation thereof, whereas the participants – imbued with the postmodernist narrative – have often preferred the term 'queer'. Although I consciously refrained from using the term, the participants (some more than others) were inclined to utilise the term 'queer' and I often found myself vexed and offended by it. This in itself was an interesting dynamic, for from the standpoint of the participants I probably appeared as if my mind is held hostage by those who seek to oppress and that by refusing to acquiesce in the utilisation of the term I have not liberated myself therefrom; whereas from my perspective, I felt denigrated by the participants utilising the term. However, in remaining aware of my dislike of the term 'queer' and the fact that the participants do not share my sentiments regarding the utilisation thereof (and hence intended no offence thereby) I was able to remain outwardly nonchalant and respectful of this difference between me and the participants.

[23] Consequently, a far better term would be 'homoeroticism'; 'homo-eros' would likewise be preferable (see, Freud, 1905/2011, p. 25; wherein a similar view is expressed). As a correlate the term 'heteroeroticism' or 'hetero-eros' would likewise be applicable for opposite sex attraction. However, as the latter term does not exist and due to the fact that 'homoerotic' is not taken as a term for an individual who is attracted to members of his own sex I have utilized the hybridized 'homosexual' instead.

However, I also do not want to give the erroneous impression that I found myself perpetually at variance with the participants. On the contrary, there were often moments in the course of the interviews where I felt a kinship and affinity with them. One such instance was on the point of religion. For like the participants, I feel myself at variance with outmoded religious notions. Interestingly, in this respect the participants expressed Enlightenment views, which regard religious dogmatism as erroneous. Thus, it cannot be said that the participants were entirely committed to the postmodern outlook – just as I cannot be said to be entirely in concurrence with every view propounded by the Enlightenment thinkers I admire; and while they discussed their views of religion I felt a profound concurrence and empathy with them. While I did not explicitly convey this to the participants it may be that they could feel my implicit agreement. In this respect, I was most surprised at how similar the participants' experiences were to my own in spite of us coming from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In like manner, I felt indignation when the participants expressed the difficulties they had encountered within their communities merely for the fact of being homosexual. Once again, I did not convey my thoughts or sentiments to them explicitly, however, the tone of my responses and my facial expressions may well have communicated my empathy.

Lastly, I wish to comment on the way in which the interaction with the participants contributed to my psychological understanding. Prior to conducting this study I did not fully comprehend the significance of contextualisation; however, my interaction with the participants has taught me the significance thereof. I had also, in this respect, to remain cognisant of my unwavering admiration for Freud and some of his theories; lest I should unwittingly attempt to coerce the participants, or my interpretation of the data they supplied, to corroborate Freud's notions. Although I still greatly admire Freud I have come to realise that one of the primary shortcomings of classical psychoanalytic thought is its lack of contextualisation. In this sense my reflexivity allowed me to explore alternative possibilities and thus, I believe, to arrive at a more balanced understanding of the way in which an individual develops.

In concluding this discussion I wish to return to the question as to whether a White person can investigate the experiences of Black participants – I feel that this is possible when the researcher approaches the topic with integrity, remains alert to bias, and grapples with difference in experience – allowing for this to be acknowledged and engaged with – hopefully resulting in mutual growth.

3.9 Ethical Concerns

Ethical clearance was obtained from the university and confidentiality of the participants was strictly adhered to. Participants were asked to sign a consent form and an audio/video recording consent form (see, the appendix). These forms explained the nature of the research to the participants and that their participation was entirely voluntary, that their identities would be kept confidential and not linked in any way to the data they supplied; furthermore, the consent forms explicitly state that the participants may decide to cease participating in the research study at any stage of the process, that no harm or benefit would come from participation in the study, and finally, that if the participants have any questions about the research they could directly contact the researcher. The audio/video recording consent form requested that anonymised transcripts of the recordings be stored and used for future research; however, none of the participants agreed to this in writing; hence they will be deleted once the study is completed. Recordings will also accordingly be deleted.

Although the participants were not anonymous to the researcher, their identities have been concealed by way of pseudonyms, thus ensuring anonymity in the reporting of the findings of the study.

In anticipation of any distress that may have emerged during the interviews all participants were told that should they require counselling sessions, they would be referred to the Wits Emthonjeni Centre, where they could access such services at no cost.

As the research involved interpretation of aspects of participants' narratives that may lie outside of conscious awareness, it was imperative that this was done within the parameters of the research topic. Care was taken in the write up of this study to ensure that participants who may read the study and recognise themselves do not feel overly exposed or misrepresented. Respect for participants' narratives was prioritised.

4 RESULTS

The findings are presented in the form of three case studies. Each case study comprises a description of each participant's subjective experience of homosexuality within their family and community; as well as the ways in which they have grappled with issues of identity. Their understandings of homosexual development are then presented; and lastly, their responses to a contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic understanding of homosexual development are provided.

4.1 First Participant: Nokwazi

4.1.1 Background

Nokwazi is a thirty-six year-old, Tswana male who grew up in a rural area in South Africa. Although his parents were married, his father's job necessitated that he resided away from his family in Johannesburg; as a consequence thereof Nokwazi grew up surrounded by his mother and his two older sisters. When he was still a young boy Nokwazi's father tragically passed away while working in the city. Although this came as a terrible shock to the family and was undoubtedly a tremendous loss for Nokwazi, he indicated that the loss was mitigated by the fact that he was always closer to his mother.

After completing school, Nokwazi went on to complete a BCom degree with the ultimate intention of becoming an accountant. However, Nokwazi came to realise that his interests lay elsewhere and he now works in regulatory compliance for a major company in Johannesburg.

Growing up Nokwazi always felt himself to be different, but it was not until he was in high school that he actually realised that he was sexually attracted to other males and consequently identified as homosexual. He characterises himself as 'quite effeminate' and mentioned that as a child he preferred playing with girls and girls' toys as opposed to boys and boys' toys. This preference for females inevitably led to a special bond between Nokwazi and his mother, whom he considers himself to be closest to. He speaks of his mother as extremely open-minded – even if initially shocked at her son's revelation – and as accepting of his sexual orientation. Indeed, Nokwazi indicated that his mother's approval was the most significant to him and that her acceptance of him allowed him to live in accordance with his desires:

> *She was very reassuring, very supportive. And that's all I needed. And from then on I was unapologetically myself, from then on, because she's the only person I needed approval from, and no one else. So from then on, I really didn't care about anyone else* (Nokwazi).

Nokwazi's mother's open-minded attitude towards her son's sexual orientation contrasts sharply with the attitudes held by the rural community at large:

You are sort of looked at as this black sheep…this…. yeah, you're just less than. And that's how you're viewed, you know… (Nokwazi)

Although not all homosexual men are effeminate, the stereotypical view within the community in which Nokwazi grew up, as understood by Nokwazi, is that homosexual men aspire to be females and are therefore effeminate [and present a comical spectacle]:

[…] about the upbringing of being gay in my community…sort of, the sort of battles that we have to, we were faced with at such a young age where there wasn't really much acceptance or yeah, just recognition and of the kind of people that we were. I was not really openly out but I'm quite, I present myself quite effeminate; so it's easy for people to pick…to pick up right? So going through like primary and secondary…high school, you do get…I used to get teased around, I used to get bullied for being too girly, or I think I'm a girl, or I'm too soft, not man enough, you know, those kind of things. So I was raised in a sort of environment, or I was exposed to that sort of environment where I was seen as less than or trying to be something that I'm not…um, like a girl, you know. So, so for me, it was that. So it was quite a lonely upbringing. And just like, battle that I had to deal with myself, I had to do my own research in terms of where…is there such thing as what I'm going through, out there. And I think for me, I think the primary motivator for me to even do well in school was to actually leave home and leave my town and leave the rural areas where there wasn't really much opportunities, there wasn't much space for me to express myself and who I was (Nokwazi).

Furthermore, Nokwazi reported that many people in his community regard homosexual men as promiscuous and likely to contract HIV/AIDS:

[…] Gay men are viewed as very promiscuous in the black community. So we've seen it, we've buried a lot. So they've seen it, it's not like it's a myth that they just dream up or this…it's something that we've seen in the community. We've lost a lot of gay people, people that I…when growing up the one or two people that I knew were gay, died of HIV. So it's sort of attached to that stigma of HIV and so…I think more than anything, that's how it's viewed (Nokwazi).

These prejudicial attitudes towards homosexuals held by many in Nokwazi's community have affected Nokwazi's expression of his homosexuality, and they seem to be related to the patriarchal nature of society and the culturally-embedded heteronormative activities males are expected to perform. As Nokwazi mentioned:

> *Till today, I think it's just something that just learned to just like, accept, but not…um, I'm thinking of the word…not recognise, but, um… acknowledge, acknowledge. They're not there, they just don't want to acknowledge it [the existence of homosexuals] because…we grew up in a very patriarchal society where men need to be men, men can't cry; so if you're anything other than that, you're less than, or something's wrong with you, or…if I remember one of my uncles at the funeral, I think two years ago, cause my dad had already passed away, and I'm working and doing well, whatever, and he said to me, you still very…you still behave like a girl; if your dad was alive, I don't think he would have allowed this to happen. Okay, he said that to me. Now, I've never quite forgotten that. And, you know, I don't recognise him anymore. He's not my uncle, but like he's a relative of the family from my dad's side. So it's still there, it's still, it's still sort of like a taboo sort of thing where people know it's there, but just don't want to acknowledge it* (Nokwazi).

The aforementioned excerpt intimates that Nokwazi's father would not have been accepting of his son's effeminate disposition and leaves the question of whether his father would have ultimately accepted his son's sexual orientation unresolved. It appears that Nokwazi's father sought to uphold the culturally-embedded heteronormative ideals of male behaviour. Indeed, this tension between culturally-embedded heteronormative expectations and familial acceptance of Nokwazi's sexual orientation seems to recur throughout his discourse:

> *You feel it, I always feel it, even if I'm home, I always feel it. Where I…it's tough, because the culture does not provide that sort of environment for you to express your homosexuality. So it's something that I always, I wouldn't say I supress it, but it's something that I'm aware of it. And I've come to accept it, that this is what my community is. And I'm not, I'm not gonna fight it, I'm not trying to be a martyr, and fighting for me; no, I'm not, I'm not doing that. I'm*

just, I'm just going to do me because our culture expects, for example, males are expected, when we go to the burial, right, when we bury someone in our homes…when you at the cemetery, and they do the service at the cemetery, from the church they have a service and then you go to the cemetery they have a service; after the service when they take the coffin down, and then the men have to line up, to put in the sand with you know, shovels…and all the men are expected, it's an expectation, when you're at a funeral, at a black funeral, it's an expectation for men to line up, grab a shovel, and help to close. And I don't partake in that at all, because I'm like, I'm gonna be dirty, there's dust [laughing]. And I really don't feel guilty about not doing it because I really don't want to do that, I don't. It's announced to all the men must come and line up after the service to like, shovel the sand. And I'm like, 'no', so I never go – ever – I've never been, I probably did it for my dad's funeral. But also, I was young, I didn't even quite shovel, just like, because we were part of the family, so we just put flowers and just like a heap of it. But no…so there's an expectation around men to act a certain way, in certain situations. When there's weddings, where you have to slaughter things, or put up the tent, and those sort of stuff. And it's an expectation that men are supposed to do this manual, hard labour stuff. And I just don't, I don't partake in that. Everyone knows in my family, I don't do it; I'll do other things, I'll help with the salads [laughing]. But I'm not going to rough it up. So…and it's accepted. They've accepted me for me now. But yeah, it's the culture sort of still rigid in that sense of men are supposed to act this way, men are supposed to do this. So it's there, it's just me; I just choose not to do it... But like, yeah, even then, like it's ingrained in everything, everything that we do. Men are expected to act or do certain things. So if you don't do it, it's frowned upon somewhat. So yeah, definitely, the community is still sort of backward in that sense, where they just don't acknowledge homosexuality, to be honest, in my experience anyway (Nokwazi).

It appears that Nokwazi's identification with females renders the culturally-embedded heteronormative expectations difficult for him and he consequently finds himself trapped in a double-bind, for if he does engage in the cultural activities he is necessarily made to feel uncomfortable, but if he does not then he is excoriated for not taking part in activities he is

expected to engage in as a male. Interestingly, in one instance of a culturally expected practice, viz., ritual circumcision, Nokwazi's father was explicitly opposed:

> *So the initiation schools are still very, are still happening in Limpopo, right. When boys are taken to the mountain for three, four weeks, for circumcision, and they must live there, and they teach them how to be men, you know, and my dad was like, 'you're not going there'. But all my cousins have been there, to be taught how to be the men, and they come back and the committee celebrates it, you know. And so it's, it's really is, it's ingrained in everything that we do, they have to force you if you don't want to toe the line, you get forced, directly or indirectly, somewhat to conform to this view of what men should be. So it's ingrained in everything. You know, so yeah.* (Nokwazi).

Importantly, in the above excerpt, Nokwazi's experience of patriarchal culture becomes clear in that he sees the community as forcefully upholding particular ideals of masculinity. It is not clear why Nokwazi's father did not want his son to engage in this particular practice: perhaps he was opposed to it for medical or ethical reasons, or perhaps he comprehended on some level that Nokwazi was unlike other males and his insistence that Nokwazi not attend the circumcision ritual was an unwitting acknowledgement (and perhaps a protective gesture), if not an acceptance, of his son's sexuality.

Nokwazi attempted to make sense of his community's homophobia and indicated that there are other reasons for his community – including, to some extent his family, and in particular his father – maintaining a prejudicial view of homosexuals. Most significantly, Nokwazi considered religious views to play a prominent role in the formation thereof:

> *Religion is a big part in the black community. And so…because we believe that the Bible talks about a man and a woman, they don't talk about anything else, so anything other than that is viewed as a taboo, it's viewed not in a good light. So, because the religion is deeply entrenched in the black culture, so what's in the Bible is it; that's it, that's all people believe in. So anything outside of the norm is considered not good. So it's associated with very negative or bad connotations. So, apart from the HIV thing, religion plays a big part of it, in it* (Nokwazi).

Indeed, Nokwazi indicated that his father was extremely influenced by religious ideas and hence had his father lived to see him mature into an adult he is not certain that he would have told his father about his sexual orientation. He stated this even though he acknowledged that his father showed him affection, something Nokwazi considers rare among black heterosexual men.

Due to the prejudicial attitudes and restrictions he experienced as a homosexual boy, Nokwazi indicated that he always had intentions of leaving his rural community:

> *[…] I think the primary motivator for me to even do well in school was to actually leave home and leave my town and leave the rural areas where there wasn't really much opportunities, there wasn't much space for me to express myself and who I was. So having the biggest motivator for me, that made me work hard, was to leave, and to see what's out there* […]. (Nokwazi).

It appeared that Nokwazi felt that he needed to leave his community in order to be able to explore the possibilities of an independent life as a homosexual. However, in stating this Nokwazi does not define himself solely by way of his sexual orientation; he considers it merely one facet of himself. In moving towards a more holistic sense of himself, Nokwazi appeared to be able to maintain a healthy self-esteem despite the culturally-embedded prejudicial views of homosexuals within his community and family:

> *Look, I think it's a part of you…. I just don't think it should… it defines you... so for me personally, it is something that's a part of me it's not… I don't think it's a big factor in my life, it is part of me, but it doesn't define who I am… values and my beliefs define me more than a label, so for me, um yeah… I don't… it's… that's how I perceive it. Um, but yeah, it's still a part of me that I know is there... [laughs]… because I live it, but yeah, I don't let it define me because I think I'm more than that as a person* (Nokwazi).

4.1.2 Understandings of Homosexual Development

In the second interview, in which I asked participants what they believe causes someone to become a homosexual, Nokwazi indicated that he believes homosexuality is biologically determined:

> *[…] I think for me, it's natural. And that's what I think… I think it's quite natural. It's not like a flaw in a character of a person or human being. I think it's just, you're just born biologically as this person […]. I think you're born… you're born with it… I don't think people are conditioned to become, I think you're simply just born with it, it's not something that you choose… so I definitely think it's something that you really can't control, you're just born with it, um, yeah… I think so, I think you're just born with it* (Nokwazi).

The notion that homosexuality is biological or innate stands in opposition to the erroneous societal view that homosexuality is a choice and that it can consequently be altered. During the course of the interview Nokwazi seemed to take umbrage at the task of trying to understand the factors which contribute to the formation of a homosexual identity in adulthood. Nokwazi directed this reaction in his interview more at society for its historical prejudicial views towards homosexuality, as opposed to directly at the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, perhaps to protect me as the interviewer (whom it is clear he was acutely aware is a psychologist – this is evident when he refers below to our interviews as 'sessions'). Indeed, the fact that homosexuality had at one time been listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and thus pathologized seemed to render the task of trying to comprehend the development of (male) homosexuality unpalatable to Nokwazi. He thus subsequently denied that either biological or environmental factors contributed to his homosexual orientation. Nokwazi maintained that due to the fact that homosexuality is not pathological its possible aetiological factors should not be explored:

> *[…] we're not trying to figure out why hetero people are the way they are, you know what I mean? So why am I questioning my identity that way? So I don't think any environmental or biological influences have had any part in in me being gay, no…* (Nokwazi).

4.1.3 Responses to Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexual Development

In the final interview, however, wherein the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory was presented, Nokwazi felt that it was applicable to him, thus contradicting his former position and intimating that environmental factors might have played a role, albeit, unconsciously. In particular, after reflecting, and initially presenting some doubt as to the applicability of the theory, Nokwazi appeared interested when reflecting on the fact that many of the men he is ordinarily attracted to, including his current partner, have attributes which his father also possessed:

> *Um, yeah… I think for me, I think I go for people that are quite responsible…. And, you know, um, and where they regard family as very important… I think those are the qualities that neither… and I think I mentioned this in one of our sessions, where I said my dad always taught me to look after my family… that's the something that he instilled in me. And I feel like that quality, I think I do look for it when I look for a partner, or potential partner, because that's the kind of person I want to be with. I've never attributed it to my father [laughs]... so this is mind blowing to me, to make this realisation… but, yes, I look for a responsible… a responsible individual who looks after their family and they're about family, it's very important; because it is to me, that was something that was instilled in me, so I look for someone who sort of has the same qualities that I believe in and that my dad believed in. So that's why I'm saying I think the wheels are turning because like… I never thought about it that way at all! [Laughs]… because my current partner the… and when I think about it now he's quite a… people go… look up to him, so he's like the breadwinner of his family, same as me, so we have that in common, so… but in his family, everyone goes to him for everything, right? So he's got this authoritative persona in his family in how he's regarded and how he's viewed, no matter his age, and even including his friendships; I mean all his friends go to him for like advice… and… and this is something that I've gotten accustomed to being with him so far, is the fact that like, he's the go to person, who people know will give you good advice… and yeah, so they respect him. This is the level of respect that people have for him. So that I find very attractive… and yeah, and I think that*

> *my father was the same way! [Laughs]… I never thought about this at all! [Laughs]… Wow! Yeah, yeah, maybe… maybe I'm dating my father! [Laughs] […] Yeah, I think the whole theory applies in my case, based on the revelation of my father and the type of men I find attractive […] My father was just always a naturally born leader and I think that's the type of partner I want, I want a leader* (Nokwazi).

It was evident that Nokwazi concurred with one part of the theory, viz., the notion that a young homosexual boy takes his father as the porotype of the ideal male he eventually hopes to partner with in adulthood; but Nokwazi also indicated that he feels that the other aspect of the theory applies equally to him in so far as he identifies more with his mother, describing him and her as 'twins':

> *I think I identify more with my mother because she was the one who was there for us through it all, with the absence of my father through the tumultuous separation and then getting back together and then all of that, so through it all… so she's been with us, so my mother has… probably has similar qualities, in terms of my mother is very caring, like she… she does so much for so many people, and that's what she's known for in the family… and she laughs the same way I laugh, and it's not so much my sisters hey, I think me and her have sort of… like twins, yeah... because we sort of have like the same qualities... um, and how we approach life and how we approach family, our mannerisms are more or less the same… and, yeah, I think that is definitely true, I think she sort of shaped my identity as the type of person that I've become. It had a lot to do with that upbringing, because I feel like that was the figure that was there and that's what I held on to and sort of me forming this identity, I had that to look for… at, or look at… in order to make me. So definitely, I think I agree, I definitely agree… cause me and my mother are exactly the same… and I have two sisters, and it says a lot… you know, two older sisters, it does say a lot… and how similar we are, it's quite strange... and maybe I latched on… I latched on to the qualities that she had possibly and bring up… and maybe I did it subconsciously, without realising that when I was trying to form an identity I had that figure to aspire to. And so yeah, I think that could be true, so definitely my mother, yeah, in my case…* (Nokwazi).

Nokwazi then went on to indicate that although he feels 'the whole theory applies in [his] case' he has doubts about its universal applicability; indeed, he indicated that the theory may not be as applicable to him now as when he was younger. He indicated that as a younger man he was attracted to older, masculine men; but he now finds himself attracted to some effeminate men. However, Nokwazi intimated that he still finds masculinity more attractive and after reflecting on the matter he came to realise that his attraction to effeminate men is actually a circuitous attraction to masculinity:

> *Maybe it's not the…. I think it's possibly the way… maybe it's envy. Maybe it's envy that they've [feminine men] sort of embraced their full self and they're confident about their full self, which you do look at it and you admire it and you find it somewhat attractive. But… I don't know what that means…. Does it mean it's envy, in the sense that like, I wish growing up I had that because I feel like part of me had to be suppressed for so many years, before I came to Jo'burg for me to fully become myself. And then I see someone and I meet someone and I hear them talking about how they've been like this throughout, unapologetically so... and they're quite confident about it… that, yeah…that… I don't know, I don't know where I'd place it. To be honest, yeah, I don't know where'd I'd place it… I don't know […] cause as I unpack it further, if I'm being honest with myself, I think that's what it is. I think it's just, it's the confidence that… and the other qualities that are with them, that I admire and I wish I had those… that's why I'm saying I don't know if it's like envy or just admiration. So yeah, I think the lines are sort of blurred there… […] because it's not surface, right? Because the masculinity… to see it is just surface… that one is much deeper…* (Nokwazi).

4.1.4 Summary

Nokwazi was a warm and friendly participant, who supplied the research study with a great deal of interesting and pertinent data. He revealed that although he loves both his parents he always felt closer to his mother than he did to his father; this closeness appears to have been in some way associated with an identification with the former. This could be due to the fact that although Nokwazi's father was loving and affectionate he appears to have enforced culturally-

embedded heteronormative ideals upon Nokwazi. However, at other times Nokwazi's father appears to have tacitly and unconsciously acknowledged his son's differences. Growing up within his community was difficult for Nokwazi due to prejudicial attitudes towards homosexuality, which Nokwazi indicated he felt are intimately associated with religious dogmas. He discussed the tension generated in him by cultural expectations and his desire to express his own nature and sexuality. Ultimately, his desire to escape the restrictions and prejudices of his community became the primary motivating factor in encouraging Nokwazi to study and become financially independent. Although Nokwazi was initially hostile towards any attempt at understanding the origins of homosexuality, upon reflection of the depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality he acknowledged that the theory was indeed applicable to him – at least at a certain period of his life. He discussed his identification with his mother and the fact that there are many attributes, such as leadership qualities, which his father possessed which he now looks for in a romantic partner. However, Nokwazi expressed doubt as to the theory's universal applicability: he was not sure if it would be applicable to other homosexual men and he also felt that the theory was not as true for him now as when he was younger. This last point indicated that one's sexual identity is fluid, perpetually going through transformation throughout one's life.

4.2 Second Participant: Sipho

4.2.1 Background

Sipho is a twenty-seven year-old, Zulu male who was born in Kwazulu-Natal, but grew up in Johannesburg. He identifies as queer, which he distinguishes from same-sex attraction, arguing that it encompasses an alternative culture, i.e. distinct from the broader, heteronormative culture. He attended university as an LLB student but left in his penultimate year in order to pursue his real passion in the arts and entertainment. Sipho grew up as the youngest son in a family with two older sisters and both his parents.

Sipho indicated that he first realised that he was attracted to males at a very young age:

> *I'm gonna say five, when, um, you know, when kids play games… I used to play with, excuse me, another little boy as well, because we're all little boys. And that's when I knew that I was attracted to men, or the same sex because that's not a man, that's a boy. But that's when I first knew that like, okay, chapter two, same sex, I didn't know it was called gay at the time, but in retrospect, that's when I knew… that's when it was confirmed* […] (Sipho).

However, it was only at the age of sixteen that Sipho first explicitly came out to his sisters; he describes the experience as being 'mixed': although his younger sister accepted him he indicated that his eldest sister did not. Interestingly Sipho did not make mention of his parents in the anecdote about him coming out; he later intimated that his mother is still in denial about his sexuality, while he described his relationship with his father as being 'excellent', albeit tinged with friction in certain respects.

Sipho indicated that growing up in his community as a queer individual was incredibly difficult as he was often subjected to homophobic aggression:

> *In my immediate community…it's very limited, and it's very hidden, I guess…and it's hidden, because it's my hood child; I mean, I don't, I don't talk to nobody really [laughs], I just be walking to the streets, you know, but I mean, there is that antagonism that exists. I happen to live not too far away from a*

high school, and I remember the one time I was much younger, maybe like 21…I was walking, and then these high school kids and I was in in a crop top or something…and these high school kids started heckling, and I just got triggered! I was just like: 'wow, why do I feel this way?' It's high school kids, they don't know anything about life, they probably even think, you know, LO is sex, like, you know… (Sipho).

This prejudicial attitude towards homosexuals within the community and the fear that those prejudices might lead to overt forms of discrimination and violence has necessarily caused Sipho to hinder the expression of his sexuality:

[…] and it was, I think that moment, I think has been more prominent in my expression of my queerness in my community than I thought, because I think from then on, and generally, I've always just, like, gone about doing my life in a very mundane, non-expressive manner. And I think sometimes, and with a lot of people within their, like immediate communities, and their queerness is less expressive, because we can't…I can't help the type…I can't hide the fact that I'm queer, it's quite clear to see I'm a femme bitch, you know, so it's pretty clear, you know…but nonetheless, there's a hidden expression or restrained expression of self that exists, because of the desire not to face micro-aggressions, you know […] Definitely affects the way that I dress like… I mean, the only time I dress up…or see me dressed up in my hood is when I'm standing outside waiting for my Uber to arrive, and then I see, cause the eyes look at me; and they're like, 'Oh my God! He can dress up, he's pretty, what's going on? Like yesterday, he was literally in rag tags!' [Laughs]. So yes, it definitely affects the way that I dress. And like I said, because I can't help that my femininity is part of my expression. That side of it is just, like, is a non-starter but I definitely believe in terms of the way that I dress, and the people I engaged with this, just…there's just little to no like room to manoeuvre… because I just don't want stress… I'm at home guys, it's my community… I just don't want stress… like if I'm in Jo'burg, well, of course there's gonna be stress… there are gonna be those who heckle me and whatever… but I'm cute, so of course, I'm gonna get heckled, you know… it doesn't make it okay! But I move, you

> *know, but I don't want that at home. I don't want that at home. I don't want that kind of attention. Like, no, I want to be relaxed, it's my place of comfort* (Sipho).

In Sipho's narrative it appears that he negotiates life in his community by dressing down and keeping a lower profile, but it was evident that he took some enjoyment in being able to shock and confuse members of his community when he dresses up to go out. His comment: 'oh my God! He can dress up, he's pretty, what's going on? Like yesterday he was in rag tags!' (Sipho), suggests that he perhaps imagines his 'prettiness' or 'cuteness' to evoke confusing attraction in onlookers. This appeared to be a defence in so far as it seemed to comfort Sipho to perceive the looks he receives from community members as emanating from shocked admiration. Sadly though, although he indicated that he likes attention he feels he has had nonetheless to 'walk around certain [heteronormative] parameters' and adjust his behaviour and overt expressions of his sexuality accordingly – in particular the way he dresses – in order to avoid unnecessary confrontations and altercations with members of his community who have imbibed homophobic attitudes and sentiments:

> *[…] But I guess I make the choice to walk in… walk around certain parameters in order to protect myself, you know…so yes, the community is a hindrance in the sense that like, if… even if it isn't explicit, there's a tacit, like, antagonism that exists within the community… I think that's a better way to put it. And because of that, I make the choice to, like, take certain decisions and work within certain parameters in order to be a happy… or unbothered member of society, because I love attention, but not every day […] So I think it just goes back to what queerness is in South Africa, you know, I think on paper, it's great, but ultimately, there hasn't been a buy in in society yet, to the point where… the lived experience is one that isn't tainted by external prejudice. I think it's still… it's still a reality. And because of that, I mitigate the situation by being less expressive than I would honestly prefer to be* (Sipho).

The prejudice against homosexuals and the potential violence which may ensue as a consequence thereof has, in Sipho's estimation, led to homosexuality becoming somewhat invisible within his community. This in turn has led to homosexuals in his community becoming isolated from each other:

> *But yeah, I think part of that is also because I'm yet to meet… ah, I lie, I met one on Grindr [laughs]… one queer person, in my community, but like, I mean other than… I mean, you know, just because we're all queer doesn't mean we can all kiki [a social gathering of friends for the purpose of gossiping] and be girls and have, like, tea. But like, I mean, to find that there's another queer person. Also, I think it's easier to identify queer people who are femme; and I struggle to find femme queer people. And I'm sure there are masc [masculine] queer people, maybe tons of queer people that exist in the space, but they definitely like, they don't… I've never seen them. And so I think part of that is also… part of that… part of what makes the experience I guess, I don't want to say disempowering, but with… it makes the experience lack a sense of commune within the queer community, within my community. If that makes sense?* (Sipho).

Based on what Sipho had said it seemed as if he were torn between two opposing forces: on the one hand he felt that he – and other queer members of his community – had to conform in order not to be heckled by those who espouse homophobic sentiments, and in this regard he harbours an antagonism towards the heteronormative and patriarchal society in which he and other queer people find themselves, but he also appears to feel disappointed in the queer community too – that there is very little coming together in order to support one another.

Like in Nokwazi's interview, the issue of religion also emerged in Sipho's narrative. One way in which Sipho stated that homophobic attitudes and sentiments have entered his community was by way of religion, which Sipho indicated has had a far greater influence on his life than his ethnicity:

> *Well, this is gonna sound weird, but I think people who grew up in churches will feel the same… I think I grew up more Christian than I grew up Zulu because I don't come from a household that practices like ancestral… customs, you know, like, I think we're fourth generation Christian, you know, so it was never… and I think the cultural impact is more so in the way in which they have been… I don't wanna say design, but by… honed by society, you know, to have the ideas of masculinity, which I think are just generic, despite anywhere you are… like you could be in the Balkan states, and masculinity is still doing the most, you*

know, and you know Zulu masculinity, it's… child, like that shit is unnecessary. I always say Zulu people are like, the white people to black people… and Zulu people are Zulu people to every other Zulu people… or other ethnic races… because, obviously, there's privilege that comes with it, you know… speaking to the access that Zuluness has over the country, you know, so I guess there's that, but more than anything, the cultural impact was Christianity (Sipho).

Despite emphasising his background as having been most notably impacted by his family's Christianity, Sipho draws attention to his Zulu culture. The way he speaks about being Zulu in the above excerpt appears to reflect mixed feelings. On the one hand, he appears to say that Zulu prescriptions regarding the performance of masculinity are too much or 'unnecessary', however, his follow on statement that positions Zuluness as powerful, enabling access, and comparable to Whiteness suggests some, perhaps less conscious, idealisation of Zulu masculinity and what it represents. This is affirmed later when Sipho speaks about the characteristics he looks for in a partner. Mixed feelings were also evident with respect to religion:

You know, I think that was so stifling because it was like, I'm growing up with this thing and I'm being taught it's love, but like, girls I'm gay, and I know ya'll be saying things at the pulpit and I'm just like, 'girl…are you telling me I'ma burn in hell, child? What's this honey?' Like, you know, it just didn't make sense. So I think that like, that affected me a whole lot more, which also informed my departure from Christianity when I turned eighteen. You know, because I just like… this makes no sense anymore. Like, there's no way this makes any sense. […] So I think more than anything, like, the Christian expression, really, is the one that mucked up, all other… informed…lemme not say 'mucked up', shame… lemme be kind, not everything was negative. But a lot of it informed, like how I saw myself, you know, and what I saw to be valid within myself… more so than my Zulu culture. So by the time I've engaged with Zulu culture, and like, all the other honeys are going to – and by honeys, by the way, I mean men, I use these terms very loosely – all the other honeys were like, completely, like, 'oh my God, what a Zulu man', and this is whatever… and I'm like, 'girl, I ain't doing that impression, child! I just speak the language, and I know it's in my blood', but that's not something that affects me like that, it's like, you know, if anything,

> *and my, my new work that's gonna come out this year, really speaks to the redefinition of culture, you know, the redefinition of culture, because I don't think… there's nothing for me to go reclaim. I don't want to claim anything, you know, that exists, because it exists in me intrinsically. But I want to redefine that which has informed my experience. Yeah, I think that's what up* (Sipho).

Firstly, there is an affected way of speaking that becomes evident in the above excerpt. At points in the interview Sipho would lapse into an accent that resembled that of a stereotypical older Southern American Black woman. His reference to the interviewer as 'child' and his reference to other Black men as 'honeys' were notable, and comment on this is made later in this section. With regards to the content of his narrative, however, it seemed as though Sipho feels that religion as he experienced it in his childhood left him feeling judged and 'mucked up…how [he] saw himself' (Sipho). He seemed to feel that Christianity has defined masculinity in a particular, narrow way which has, perhaps unwittingly, caused animosity towards more effeminate men, a view that he feels has, in turn, been adopted by his Zulu culture, which now likewise harbours a similar animosity for effeminate men. He appeared to find it easier to distance himself from his 'Zuluness' – despite it being 'in his blood', he states that he 'just speaks the language' and that it 'is not something that affects him' in the same way as religion did. It was also clear that Sipho – perhaps as a consequence of these aforementioned observations – harboured a certain animosity for religion – Christianity in particular – for its role in the persecution of homosexual men:

> *[…] I mean, this is kind of petty, but when gayness is seen as something that just speaks to like one sexual interaction, really, right. And I think a part of that is also brought about as a result of religion and like religion has, well, always seen gayness to be just the act of like quote, unquote the biblical term sodomy, or whatever* (Sipho).

However, Sipho was then quick to denounce his devaluing of religion by stating that he has recently been reconnecting with his spirituality. Here, too, a certain tension was discernible: an admiration and denigration of religion; which it seemed Sipho was trying to clarify in his own mind by turning to a consideration of the connection between colonialism and the introduction of Christianity into Africa. Initially it appeared as though Sipho felt that homophobia was foreign to Africa, but was introduced into the culture by the colonialists who equated

homosexuality with the 'sinful' act of sodomy. However, Sipho then went on to claim that it is erroneous to think of Christianity as European in so far as its origins are 'African and Arabian'. It was impossible to determine how he reconciled these contradictory notions, for if Christianity and the Bible are indeed of African origin and yet contain within its doctrines the seeds of homophobia it is not clear how the European colonialists could be held responsible for the spread of homophobia in Africa. In spite of this and his evident ambivalence towards religion it was clear that Sipho considered religion responsible in some sense for the homophobic sentiments and attitudes within his community.

4.2.2 Understandings of Homosexual Development

Sipho's understandable hostility towards heteronormative conceptions of masculinity and sexual expression was most clearly evinced in his response to the question as to how he believes homosexuality develops in an individual. When Sipho was asked what he thought causes someone to become homosexual he initially responded by stating he did not know, but he then seemed to become indignant as he moved into a postmodernist stance by stating that the question has 'a tinge of violence in it' because it implies a form of social control:

> *[…] I mean, I… I don't know… honestly, that I can honestly say, I just don't know… I don't know! I just know this has always been me and this has always been… and the only part of it that has ever doubted it is only because someone has told me to doubt it, other than that, like I told you I was doing the damn things at five years old honey, like I was ready… my first crush was Glenn on Generations, a whole man, you know… I never once looked at like 'ta-tas' and thought, 'Ooh, let's play with those!' [Laughs]… I was always like, 'okay girl, that's a nice feature on you, in fact I don't even think I look at it ma'am', you know, but I'm… I look at a bulge though, you know, that like that just… that's just what's up. So I think… and this is not to come for your question, but just generally because of course this is a study but I mean the question in and of itself has a tinge of violence in it because that kind of question doesn't exist to a heterosexual person… because we don't ask heterosexual people, 'how do you become heterosexual?' You know? And it's like… it's antagonistic… it's so antagonistic, cause it's like… 'Is that what you think? Cause that must be your thoughts because I mean, how do you not fathom the fact that this is the same*

way you are the way you are, it's just the way I am', you know? And I appreciate and understand the importance of like rational and particularly scientific evidence to help because of the fact that like queerness has been… or science has in the past used queerness… science in the past has been used to defame queerness in and of itself… so to that degree I understand why the inverse is as important, but I mean we're not investigating how straight people become straight, like you know, so I think the sooner people just accept that, like, there's nothing to this other than what it is… it's… such a simple concept dude, it's just you're attracted to women I'm attracted to men, that's all there is… 'why are you asking me so many questions dog', you know what I mean? So… but I think that also, that's just the reality of… that's just a symptom of privilege, you know, where you just think you can question everything as a heterosexual, like, society because you can get away with it and you can, like, be in charge of the narrative because you're in, so we think, the majority, you know…. so yeah… (Sipho).

Again, as in Nokwazi's interview, it felt as though Sipho's response was directed at the homophobic elements in society – both intellectual and religious – which have tried to pathologize homosexuality or render it sinful and thus 'control' it by way of penance, a treatment or a cure, as opposed to directed at me. However, interestingly, in his response Sipho's language transforms into a more masculine and aggressive stance, using the word 'bro' and 'dog' as opposed to 'honey' or 'girl'. It was clear that Sipho felt that the research was an extension of the homophobia he had experienced in his community:

[…] it's nit-picking at something that doesn't need much nit-picking… and by much, I mean none, you know? And I think you're right, like pathological is the right term, they're trying to make it seem pathological, you know… and it's just… it still has the remnants of what they were doing in the 1950s and 40s, like, you know… like classifying it as some mental state of being like, what is there to discover, bro? What's so hard to accept? You know? And like, and it's a… it's like… it's a means… like I said it's privilege and power because the… even then they didn't know what to do with that information… like, you're going to ask me this then what are you gonna do with the information? You know? And it always boils down to, 'no, it's wrong'… like really? Wrong?! That's your answer? Like on an intellectual basis, like, we're not equivalents if that's how

you're going to come for me, and if you're going to come for me with religion, that's even worse really… that just shows me that you're not even well read…. which means you're not even intelligent… that's an issue, you're not even intelligent, you know? So like, why should I even like engage you? You're not even going to come from a point of intelligence… and intelligence isn't something that comes as a result of like education… that's something that you apply, like do you apply your mind? And I don't think a lot of people do in these contexts because they just apply what they've known to be true from what society has told them, you know? It's cynical… it's cynical, and it's inhumane, that's just all it is really… it's inhumane (Sipho).

Sipho's feeling that the research question is 'tinged with violence' seemed to have evoked a highly defensive response, and in the above excerpt, where it felt at points as if he was talking directly to me, as opposed to the 'powers that be' out there, I was left wondering if he experienced me as a White researcher as someone who would abuse my power and privilege to use his information to judge him as 'wrong'. His feeling of persecution was evident in his statement: '…if that's how you're going to come for me'. The hurt underlying his defensive positioning was evident in his use of the word 'inhumane'.

When encouraged, however, to give his opinion on whether he felt homosexuality was biologically or environmentally constituted, he responded that he felt the former must necessarily be true. In this, Sipho's indignation at societal homophobia could also be evinced, undoubtedly because he felt that if homosexuality is induced by one's environment it can potentially be altered, whereas if it is biologically based it is utterly irrevocable. Instead he indicated that he believes one's environment can either assist or hinder one in expressing one's biological sexual orientation, which is not binary but multifaceted:

[…] I don't think the environment has anything to do with the attraction becoming a rea… the attraction existing, maybe the attraction becoming reality, like I said, enable… embracing… maybe that environment can inform that. But it doesn't just… you can't just… boom! And that's it, like it's not magic, like it's really not… I wish it was magic, sweetie, like whoo! I would… listen if I were a witch I'd be, yoh! But it's not magic, it's literally just… it's human expression… it's just… it is what it is, and your environment allows you to use it or not, and

you allow yourself to embrace it or not, you know? So I don't think like people ask me like… because I'm the last born of two… of three… and I've got two older sisters and people are like, 'oh, is it because you have two older sisters?', and I'm like 'no, it's not. No, it's not'. My best friend is the eldest son and like he was the only child for the longest time, he's queer… I mean what would have informed him, you know, like… so it just… it just can't be so linear, and it can be so binary, it just quite clearly is just as natural as heterosexuality is… it's just a matter of do you embrace it or do you not? […] it is what it is… (Sipho).

4.2.3 Responses to Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexual Development

Given his hostility to environmental factors influencing one's sexual orientation it was unsurprising that Sipho initially did not think much of the contemporary psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. However, after reflecting on the notions Sipho indicated that he does consider the theory pertinent to himself, in so far as he takes himself to be more similar to his mother and to look for attributes that his father possesses in a male partner. However, this was not a definitive conclusion, for there was also a tension in Sipho's account which it is necessary to mention; for at first Sipho seemed to intimate that he is more similar to his father and looks for qualities in a male partner that his mother possesses. It could be that this tension is generated by an observation made by Sipho in the second interview; for although he considers himself to be conspicuously effeminate, and feels the need to stand up against the demeaning of femininity by masculinity, he is also grappling to find a place within himself for his masculinity – 'I still have that man thing in me':

Yeah… well I think like I said, most of it is informed by my own personal experience, but also I think society… in society like there's just like an understanding that like when a person is gay, they are just inherently femme, which isn't the case, we all know this now, you know…. but there is undoubtedly a greater capacity to embrace one's feminine energy. And I think it translates in the way that society like treats queer people, gay people, particularly as if they were women sometimes, you know, which shows mainly in the disrespect, because women are so disrespected, you know, and so disregarded because women are so disregarded, you know, and I think… I mean, the mere fact that

like, when people think of gay, they just do that [moves his hand], you know, like, which is to put your hand down and like, make it shake… I don't know what they do! [Laughs]… cause none of us actually do that, like it's just so random but anyway… straight people! And it's just like, I think there's this understanding and this… or rather this assumption that the proximity to femininity is the only means with which we can identify one's gayness or one's queerness, and I think it's informed in the way that even I visualised myself and visualised queerness right now, like I said, when I think of it aesthetically, is that of the feminine gays and… or through the feminine gays rather, which, like I said, has elements of truth to it, but also has a huge element of misinformation and misinterpretation of gay people and queerness in and of itself. So I think it's more of society thing reflecting through my interpretation and my visualisation of gayness slash queerness, quite honestly […] but the reason why it's a hard truth to accept is because it's a truth that has been weaponized against queer people and against gay people… because femininity is a means to demean in the gaze of the heterosexual male in the world, you know, and that goes in any race, in any situation, that's just the reality of it... I think that's where the resistance even in people who have like a sense of like femininity in themselves and in the expression resist because of the fact that it's not celebrated, it's weaponized, it's a means to take away the dignity and the… what's the word I'm looking for? It's just a means to use to demean the existence and the validity of that body and I think what makes it even more challenging, particularly with gay men, is because gay men are still men and because they're still men, they still have like patriarchal and like, in some instances, chauvinistic ideals that have informed their queerness and informed their gayness as men…. and so when that is weaponized against them, it's like, well, even though I might be okay with the fact that I'm gay, because it's not just a case of talking about… us talking about closeted people, this could be the case of people who are also out and already like acceptance of their… accepting of their gay, I don't want to say tendencies child, I want to say their gayness and of who they are, but there's still that resistance because that resistance is linked to having to fight against the prejudice that exists from the heterosexual world of like, okay, cool, you're still a man and I still have that man thing in me, and therefore if you associate anything that comes close to femininity, you're also coming for my manhood…

and it's like 'girl, what manhood are you coming for honey, because he's not fit the bill of what a man is to these people anyway. So what's the deal, what do you even mean?' But it's not… it's not a… I say that in that tone, with like sarcasm, yes, but it's still valid on their part because they have still been conditioned as men to be as men and want to aspire to some level of manhood despite the acceptance of their queerness and so I think it all boils down to the… how femininity is just like disrespected, and feminine energy… feminine energy is disrespected and used to demean when it's actually a sign of huge, like self-empowerment, quite honestly, in my view… (Sipho).

Sipho's equivalence of male homosexuality with femininity seems to explicate his focus on the discrimination directed at females in society. In short, it seems that Sipho considers the masculine heterosexual world to be the ultimate source of prejudice, i.e. masculinity itself is the provenance of both sexism and homophobia. Indeed, the equivocation with which Sipho discussed his attraction to men in general revealed yet another tension within him. For he maintains that when he was younger he was attracted to both masculine and feminine men; however he now feels far more attracted to masculinity, even though it has the potential to become 'toxic', i.e. to descend into crude sexism and homophobia, far more easily than femininity. Interestingly it seems Sipho finds something sexually attractive in this toxicity as can be evinced in his seemingly flippant remark for a masculine man to 'be abusive' to him:

[…] But I definitely feel like my hard and fast attraction to masculinity was solidified when I went to a particularly masculine space. When I grew up as a teenager, you know, that's when it kinda like, masculinity became really attractive to me. It was like, 'Oh my God, you're so sexy, be abusive!' You know [laughs], but like, over time you just, you're like… I'm still learning to this day to just like, understand that there's no one way to live life. There isn't, there isn't hard and fast. But yeah, in the same vein, also I don't want to vilify attraction to masculinity… masculinity is attractive, it is attractive, it's good to be attracted to it. And in as much as it can have its toxic traits, more toxic than femininity… and I say more toxic because doesn't mean femininity isn't in and of itself, have toxic… I mean I shouldn't use 'toxic' because it's such an involved term, but… it's also problematic because there's also… there is nuance to the experience, I should say, there's nuance to masculinity, and there's nuance to

femininity, that exists. But yeah, love masculine people, guys, they're human too! [Laughs] (Sipho).

It seems that this attraction to masculinity made Sipho consider the applicability of the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality in earnest. Initially he seemed uncertain as to its definite applicability, stating that there was a period when he wanted to be bald, but never imagined he would have a partner who was bald, like his father. Instead Sipho indicated that he had always wanted to date a person who was caring, like his mother. However, he also intimated that upon reflection there are some male partners he finds have similarities to his father:

I think it's very interesting… I think it's very, very interesting because it makes me wonder a lot about myself, you know, and my like I… or what I see in my ideal partner, right… and I think the extent to which I can relate to it is that for some reason, I've always like thought of myself getting… being like… going bald, personally going bald, like when I'm like… I said, when I was twenty-five, but I don't know what I was thinking child, I should have known I would still have hair… but like, I always thought I'd go bald and I never imagined my partner would be bald and got a beard… and my dad's bald, not much of a beard, but he's bald most of the time, and that's not because he doesn't have hair, but it's just he goes bald… and I wonder, is that why… and then like the person I most recently fell in love with, he was a scorpion like my father, enigmatic like my father, problematic like my father [laughs]... and it was just like a lot, you know, and in the moment… I mean I never made the correlation, but there's… stubborn like him as well... yes, there's, there's… I can't help but say there's an element of truth in that, you know, there is an element of truth in that… although I was speaking with my sister the other day, and like, I'm certain that I want someone to look after me, like how my mother looks after me, or has an ability to do it, cause my dad's a bit more aloof… and I can be aloof, but never to that degree of him… and I'm like, yoh, if I had a partner like that child, what would I do? Like does it mean like I've taken in the… the habits of my mother in terms of like, being like… being more active, like not caregiver but expresser of love… that's a word… you know, and I don't know where I stand with that, I still don't know whether I'm okay with that… and there's always

*been a denial about like, how much of… what parts of my dad that I like… I've always just denied how many… the parts of my dad that I like… I like a lot of parts of him, shame, he's a nice guy… but, I mean, and he's like… I mean my parents have been together for thirty one years now, they've been in… and they do great and they're like great together, but like, I mean, there's parts of it that I wish that I didn't understand, but I'm like, I was a part of this, I just do not get it… but also I just recognised that heterosexual people just have a different way of doing things, and everyone has a different way of doing things… so I don't know, perhaps there's a truth to it? To the theory, you know? Yeah, I think there's a truth to it… it's just scary because I don't want to deal with a Scorpion, child! Nah uh! [Laughs]… that can't be how my life ends! That can't be the plot! That can't… who's writing the script? So yeah… that's what I think…(*Sipho).

In the course of his discussion Sipho gradually came to realise that he concurred with the theory, and he eventually came to wonder whether his attraction to 'affirming' men was based on his father as an ideal male prototype. Although Sipho feels that he has attributes from both his parents, he indicated that he feels that he is far more similar to his mother:

Yeah, definitely... definitely… I think that it applied, definitely applied, you now? I do think… and also like I've had an issue for the longest of times, which is like what I coined 'the big brother complex', you know… and it's this thing, where, like, wherever I find like boys in my life… or men… it doesn't have to be romantic… who like are a tad bit more affirming than usual, I cling on to them so quickly… and I think when I think about it, like it's probably partly to do with the fact that like, I've had to fight for this one man's attention… but this man, oh my god, do I have daddy issues?! Ooh, child! Anyway [laughs], like when I think about it, it's like, 'oh, it makes sense', I feel the need to thingy… I do the exact, I notice that I do the exact same thing with those men that I do with my father, when for instance, I'd like… say I have like a big deal, like say I got a piece published or something… I ain't gonna tell nobody like that! I ain't fazed, if you know, you know, I don't need to prove it… but when it comes to my dad I always feel the need… even when I tried to bite my tongue, I'll sneak it in a conversation, like I'll contrive it in… just so that I can see him know that I know

or see, so I know that he knows that he knows and… does that make sense? You know? And similarly with those guys… one… like off the top of my head, I think one was a friend, like in second year, he was so affirmative, like he was so affirming… and like he would just like do the coolest thing ever, like I didn't know that people can have platonic love like that, and it was so dope, like you know? Like we chilling and next thing, boom, 'I got you a thing', I was like 'oh my god, you're so sweet… like, you don't have to be so sweet, like be cold, be mean' you know? And they weren't, you know, and that was like a lot… and yeah, but I think also there's parts of me that I've also taken in… because I think there are… in the inverse, where I have been people who are… who are more transparent about their feelings towards me or whose feelings towards me seem to be greater than mine for theirs… I kind of picked up the position of my dad in a way…. I've also seen that in… so I see myself as well in them, but I'm definitely more of my mom… got to express it, what I feel I say… and my dad's… my dad keeps it to himself, my mom says exactly what she feels and I say exactly what I feel, you know? This is now worrying because it means I'm going to implicate this boy… yoh! Lord! (Sipho).

Interestingly, it was observed that when Sipho would speak about masculine men he would, almost inevitably, adopt a Southern female African-American accent, perhaps because he unconsciously assumed the female role as a counterpart to the masculine type. Interestingly, it is a stereotypical 'strong, Southern matriarch' role he takes on in order to challenge masculinity, chiding the children for their silly beliefs. This view was corroborated by the fact that Sipho also indicated that he considers himself to be more akin in his personality to his mother and his aunt (strong, loving women) than to his father:

[...] I just don't know, I just don't know, I just don't know… because I think a lot of my love language is akin to my mom's, so I wonder if that will mean I'm going to naturally attract someone who's like my dad… Ohhhhh, ohhhh, oooh… this is not good, I just told you everything and more! […] I think in lots of ways I'm like her… so like my parents have always been together, we were always raised like together with my sisters in a… the home, just like traditional home: mom, dad, kids… but we've always lived with other people, and originally we lived with my aunts… and so there were three aunts, there were three kids… every

aunt had a kid essentially… so my parents didn't raise me for the first like, five or six years essentially, because they'd be at work and then my aunts would …my aunt who was actually born on the same day as me, is like super affectionate, like she's kind… she's like, is just sweet and she's a lot like my mom as well in that sense… caring, love languages, service… and I think I picked up a lot of that from her and then when I lived with my mom and my dad I think that also grew on me, you know? I just always find… yeah, I just always find my father's way of showing affection to be very… sporadic and very random and… I will… at some point I felt it was disingenuous, I was just like, pretending this to be the case… but I just learned him over time, that he's not, it's just who he is… whereas my mother is very deliberate about her love, in showing her affection... and I'm much the same, like I'm very deliberate about it... I want you to know I love you when I love you, you know? Whereas with him like, you'll see it, you'll just see he loves you… and I didn't… I've never really resonated with that because I've always wanted to show… hence why I say it'd be shocking if I didn't end up with the person who's like that, because I want to be shown I'm loved, you know? Because I show it, you know? (Sipho).

Yet in spite of his partial concurrence with the theory Sipho also indicated that he was reluctant to be categorised or to intimate that the theory is universally applicable. It was felt that this stance emanated from the fact that Sipho regards pigeon-holing as a form of social control. Hence his reluctance to accept the universal applicability of the theory was felt to be a consequence of his justifiable combative stance towards intellectual homophobia:

[…] I think… I think it applies to me... I just think I'm just unconsciously making an effort to not have it apply in a linear way, like I want it to be the be all and end all… I don't want… of course, I mean I wasn't aware of the theory till now, but I mean, in theory, excuse the pun, like it's true, but it's not something I want to be true of me at all times, because I still and always will believe in my duality and my… rather my multiplicity as a human being and as a person with expression, and the fact that I don't need it to be brought down to a particular thing… but yes, it applies, it definitely applies. (Sipho).

When asked what he might change about the theory Sipho reiterated his view that he does not believe it has universal applicability. It seems he felt that the theory could only apply to homosexuals who grew up in a so-called 'traditional' family, i.e. one with both a mother and a father. It appeared that Sipho could not conceive of the mother or father role being filled by other females or males respectively:

> *I mean the only thing I'll question about it is, like I said, what I just said now, but like how it applies and understanding that that application isn't necessarily true to everyone… I don't think it's like… I mean we live in a world that has so many possibilities, you know, so I don't think that it's true in all instances, but I think in my experience it feels true, you know, and definitely worth exploring even more... particularly, like particularly with, I think, queer kids who didn't grow up in traditional homes, you know, because my question then would be… rather it's more a… an avenue for an extension is… then what is it? Look, or rather how is it that the young queer body identifies what the idealistic partner is? Or the idealistic male figure is in their life, in an instance where they don't have a, like a traditional nuclear home? You know what I mean? Like how is it that they make… like, if I didn't have a dad, like, what would I have known to say like is the perfect male figure? And where do I find it? And how do I make that a reality for myself? And how does that then inform my queerness over time? I think that's the only extension I've been on to it, like just outside of the fact that like, I just don't think you can apply in a linear manner…* (Sipho).

Sipho was emphatic that one should not theoretically pigeon-hole of homosexuality. Again, it seemed that Sipho understandably felt that doing so would render homosexuality amenable to social control, which was something that evidently troubled and vexed him:

> *Well, yeah… I just… yeah… I just think it's not… I don't know how to elaborate on it... yeah, I mean, I just think… without being long winded… it just… I just think it's just… I don't think it can… I don't think you can just like copy/paste, copy/paste, copy/paste, copy/paste, because our experiences aren't like homogenous, they really aren't…. everything everyone experiences things differently… and also I think… I think maybe… I'd love to hear the role trauma has to play in this whole process, you know, because I don't think it's like…*

because we all experience trauma, I mean I recently heard that like being born is considered a pretty traumatic experience, which I can imagine… I mean like, boom, now I don't live in water, you know, like, I get it. So I wonder how much trauma also has a part to play in it, and not just sexual trauma, you know? Trauma of all sorts… yeah, so I think… I just think at the core of it is just that the importance I think and the value of looking at the nuances, opposed to just generally applying it… kind of theory that is… I think the nuances are important because the nuances offer light and I think those nuances could be different, particularly for every particular person, but no nuance is unique to one person. And I think it's important to experience and rather to engage those nuances because that's where we can find the interconnectedness and then create a greater understanding within… amongst queer people, for queer people and ultimately for the world to understand queerness in a holistic manner of course, to the… opposed to what we know it to be right now... I just think generally without queer… or queer theories, queer ideas, I just think it's important that none of them are applied like on a linear manner, because in a linear manner… because that's how we have been stuck in a particular age in terms of queerness that hasn't had enough momentum to get us to a point where we aren't having conversations about whether homosexuality is a sin or not, you know what I mean? Like the fact that those conversations still happen, I think speak to how the discourse of queerness is still very, very, very, very linear, and very, very, very unnuanced… and so yeah, I think nuance is important, very important… (Sipho).

4.2.4 Summary

Although Sipho was a complex participant in so far as he presented numerous tensions within his psychological makeup, he contributed a great deal of valuable and pertinent information to the study. Sipho discussed that the homophobia he experienced in his community caused him to blunt the expression of his sexuality; he was coerced to do this in order to protect himself from macro- and micro-aggressions; this is something Sipho maintains all homosexuals in his community have to do in order to protect themselves, thus rendering homosexuality largely invisible therein. Sipho discussed that in his view the prejudices towards homosexuals and the sexist attitudes of many people in his community have their provenance in religious doctrines

and colonialism. The last point, although somewhat contradictory in the way it was expressed, was interesting in so far as it intimated that homosexuality was once widely accepted across sub-Saharan Africa, but that the advent of Christianity brought along with it the now lamentably well-known prejudice against homosexuals. Sipho indicated that he concurred with aspects of the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality: he feels himself to be more similar to his mother and it was thought that this identification expressed itself in Sipho's focus upon 'femme bodies'. His attitude and sentiments towards masculinity were quite complex: Sipho indicated that although he finds masculinity attractive he also holds it responsible for toxic prejudices, such as sexism and homophobia. Yet the attraction to masculinity seems to have its origins in Sipho's father, whom it seems was a prototypical masculine character. Sipho expressed a great deal of animosity towards both religious and intellectual endeavours which seek to render homosexuality sinful and pathological, respectively. Although he accepted the applicability of the theory to himself he explicitly stated that it could not be generalised. It was thought that this antagonism towards the theory emanated from Sipho's concerns regarding the attempt to comprehend homosexuality, which it seems Sipho felt would necessarily lead to attempts to control and prevent its occurrence.

4.3 Third Participant: Thabang

4.3.1 Background

Thabang is a thirty-eight year old, Zulu male who was born and grew up in Soweto. He is the youngest child and only son in a family of twelve siblings. Thabang's father passed away when he was only two years old and he was subsequently raised by his mother whom he loves and respects. Thabang completed a BSc degree at a South African university and currently works in a large company in Johannesburg. Growing up Thabang always felt himself to be 'different', in so far as he identified more with females:

> *[…] because it was only girls at home, so the only thing I knew was dresses and skirts, I saw more was dresses and skirts, and my sisters, you see…. and doing makeup. So when I grew up, I wanted to do the very same things. But I knew that if I was… because I mean I have to mention this... so we Christians at home. So when you go to church, because my friends at church… because the friends that I had, they were girls because I thought I was also a girl you see… but a girl with a… with a penis and then it kinda like didn't make sense, but I was hit with it. Cause at some stage I asked my mother, 'so my friends are wearing the pleated skirts at church, I also need one' […]* (Thabang)

It was only when he was in grade twelve (at the age of seventeen or eighteen) that Thabang fully realised he was sexually attracted to males. Thabang indicated that his immediate family always knew that he was homosexual and consequently he did not have to come out to them. He describes his family as accepting of his sexuality, even though at times they appear to conform to societal norms, in so far as they expect Thabang to engage in certain activities considered befitting of a male. However, acceptance in the larger community was not as forthcoming. Thabang indicated that it was difficult growing up homosexual in his community in part because homosexuality was viewed as a foreign imposition. Thabang indicated that he grew up with a great deal of uncertainty as a young boy, for at times his sexuality was accepted whereas at other times it was explicitly rejected; when the latter occurred Thabang would be subjected to both verbal and physical assaults. The uncertainty in the way others would respond to him seems to have necessitated a hypervigilance to the responses of others in Thabang:

I grew up being called names, like street names as well, because I was just seen as this foreign boy within the community. I was… I'd get involved in fights, I'd get involved in like arguments, just trying to prove my existence of being a homosexual. Also, is the acceptance wasn't there… I think the acceptance was there, but it wasn't given a blessing because one minute you… they're okay that you're gay and the next minute they're not okay that you're gay, you know… so it was just a mix of emotions… then I grew up in that very same space, and then eventually people got to realise that I do exist, and this is what I stand for […] I mean, it was challenging… challenges in everything you know, like you'll go to a shop you know, your parents sending you to go buy something at the shop and then you bump into these homophobes and it starts… it's either they'll take whatever you bought and then come back home crying […] So there's my childhood… one, growing up as a gay boy, it was the most difficult. I mean, there was like, violence, name calling… derogatory, running up and down, also form of abuse, you know…. (Thabang)

One extremely interesting tension which Thabang experienced within his community was that between his sexuality and his ethnicity; for some members of his community did not consider black men capable of homosexuality, as though the two states are incompatible, much like oil and water. This evidently left Thabang with much confusion and there appears to have been a need to reintegrate both aspects of himself into a coherent whole:

[…] okay, so let me start it from the childhood… I grew up in a society that homosexuality was just seen as un-African […] that was a difficult one, actually, because my racial… I mean, being black is not gay… when I grew up, when I started knowing gay, they say 'being black is not gay', I was like, 'well, I'm black… so what does this mean?' You know? Also, it was a sense of trying to challenge the… let me… I think this one is a… this one is… it has a lot of influences. I've never seen… I've never seen myself as a black gay boy, initially, okay, until it was forced to me that you are actually a black gay boy. Then it kinda, because for me gay was gay, you know? They're like, 'no, this is not for black people'. You see? I was like: 'but I'm black, so what does this mean?' They're like 'no, it cannot be you', you see (Thabang)

Even though homosexuality was considered 'un-African' in Thabang's community many erroneously equated homosexuality with hermaphroditism and femininity, assuming that homosexual males have both copulatory organs and ultimately desire to be females. In this way homosexuality is viewed as a threat to patriarchy and this may explicate – although it in no way vindicates – the verbal and physical violence Thabang encountered within his community. Thabang related one particularly harrowing anecdote in which such a view led to him being humiliated and violated:

> *[…] I mean, I remember at one stage they wanted to… they took off my clothes to see if… what do I have? Because their understanding was that if you're gay, it means you've got two… two sexual parts, you see, so they said: 'you probably have a…. like…. you have a vagina, and then you've got a dick; so we want to see how this is', and that was traumatic… as a child to go through all that. And I was just defenceless, because these were the older people, I didn't know what to do. And yeah, it was just this difficult […] And also it's like you had to work twice as hard as any other straight boys. You know, because you're seen as this… you're a stupid, somebody who tries to be a woman and they are not a woman. So you had to prove twice as hard when it came to everything, you know… being sports, being school, you had to be there […]* (Thabang)

Unlike his heterosexual counterparts, Thabang also often felt that he had to constantly explain himself and justify his existence as a homosexual. He was thus (reluctantly) coerced to assume the role of advocate and educator to his friends who harboured the same prejudicial attitudes towards homosexuality that the broader community did:

> *[…] then I had friends, you know, so it had to be a subject now of like, now educating people right about homosexuality, you know, like, because everybody had their own understanding and connotation around what homosexuality is, especially within the gay community, I mean, one… the first question that they'll ask you is, like, 'how do you have sex?' You know… who is the man, who is the woman now? You know? Your typical, like… how do you get a boyfriend? You know… things like that. So it became an… it became my stance to say, I needed to educate my people at least, not the whole community, the people that I was close to, to be comfortable around me, you know, because they will… you'll*

hear things like, 'oh no, you're a guy, but we can't be around you because we think that you want us', or something like that… nah-uh, it doesn't work like that. So with my little… educating them around homosexuality… again, the stance was that every gay person was the same, and which is not true, you know […] (Thabang)

In spite of the difficulties experienced within his community and his circle of friends, Thabang indicated that his immediate family had always known and been accepting of his sexuality:

[…] So, you know, it was difficult as a childhood, like, it was very difficult. The fortunate part around that was that my family accepted… or knew that I was gay, so I didn't have to come out. So this is the only bonus that I have. Because my family already knew that I was gay, which was good. But the community at large, it was just difficult, you know […] (Thabang)

Thabang indicated that his mother in particular was extremely accepting of him; Thabang maintains that it was her love and support which kept him going during the most difficult moments in his life:

[…] and the support of… my mother was just amazing in the whole thing. I mean, I remember, if my mother is in the most, I think we were like this, like… still early years of primary school, I mean, I must have been like eight…. So this is how my mother, I knew that I didn't have to come out. Actually, I still remember. So she was called into the school by the principal. So she's like… 'the principal called me'. I'm like 'yes', and then she, then she asked me like 'why', I'm like, 'another boy kissed me and the principal saw me', you see. And then she thinks that it's me, because, I mean, I'm just way feminine around the school. My mother was like, 'okay, I'm going there'. Then when she got there… shame, my principal, she was very homophobic, but my mother put [her] into her place. She started like explaining how your child kissed this boy; and the boy's mom was there as well. And then my mom was like, 'so what's wrong with boys kissing? Well, why are we having this meeting? It doesn't even make sense'. 'No, they're boys. They shouldn't be kissing.' And then my mom was like, 'no, leave my boy alone, he is what he is. And these are boys, we cannot even

> *want to justify that…my child is gay. Just leave the kids alone.' I was like, 'Okay. My mother knows I'm good here. I'm not coming out. I already came out. She experienced that' [Laughs], yeah. So I think she's… she kept me going, you know, it was difficult for her on something, on some other things because, I mean, my mother raised only girls, I was just there normally for her. So on other things she was struggling because she did not know how to raise a boy. And it's worse, not just a boy, but it's like a gay boy. So it made it too difficult for her, but she tried, you know. So that's what kept me going over the years […]* (Thabang).

While the above excerpt details a highly protective mother standing up for her son, this view of his mother seems to be somewhat idealised, for at other times she appeared ambivalent about her son's sexual orientation. She would suggest to Thabang that he 'meet a girl from church' and on one occasion, when Thabang was confronted by homophobic bullies at a shop, his mother seems to have insisted that Thabang assume a stereotypical masculine role and physically fight his bullies:

> *[…] and my mother was one of those, she didn't take nonsense from anybody. And then she'll send you back to say you go fight for yourself, don't come here crying, you know and you didn't know where to go now; you're trying to get home to find peace, they're sending you back to the abusers to continue… I was like 'okay, so what must I do?' It was just there was no… there was no safe space for me growing up…* (Thabang)

It thus seems that Thabang's mother would assume a particular stance depending on the context in which she found herself: when confronted by a prejudiced principal who ostracised her son she would assume the role of a protector and guardian; however, when she felt that Thabang was not behaving in the appropriate way for a male she would encourage him to do so. While we cannot definitively know Thabang's mother's intentions, it might be that she was trying to 'toughen up' her son, knowing he would have to stand up for himself. Nonetheless, the view of his mother as both a supporter and defender of his sexuality seems to have legitimised Thabang's identity in his own mind. In contrast to his mother, Thabang indicated that his extended family appeared to harbour the prejudicial attitudes of the community and were consequently less understanding:

> *[…] I mean, my family, my close family understood that I'm gay, but my… that was, I mean, my immediate family, but my relatives… it was difficult. I mean, I remember my aunt coming at home, [she] was like, 'Oh, you haven't changed. You still like being like a girl?' I was like, 'Oh my word, why are we talking about this conversation?' […]* (Thabang).

The patriarchal nature of Thabang's community necessarily entails the view that males are expected to perform certain activities and roles therein; this has made it extremely difficult for Thabang in so far as it has brought into question his masculinity and sexuality. One can discern that Thabang identifies more with femininity and the cultural activities associated therewith; consequently while growing up Thabang was often coerced to engage in activities he did not want to. This in turn has caused a seemingly irreconcilable split in Thabang's identity in so far as the community considers homosexuality and African-ness to be incompatible:

> *[…] my culture and being gay, they don't mix basically. I mean, culturally I'm supposed to be a man, marry a woman and then have kids. That's my culture, that is how it's been defined from my, from all my current grand, grandparent, you see, it's expected that as a boy you have to extend the family by marrying a woman and then have babies. So me being gay became an anomaly, or a very, a taboo… it became a taboo around my culture, because there were certain things that they were questioned around, because now I've got sisters, I will be an uncle… as a gay boy, are you expected to now sit into those lobola negotiations when you grow up? Are you as a gay boy, are you expected now to go slaughter that cow, you know, like it was… it was really something interesting to manoeuvre around because certain things are done differently by men, you see. And also is I didn't have that whole cultural men teachings as a gay man, because I mean I was raised by my mom […]I think it's my dad's side, my mom's side is a very easy, okay… my dad's side is… they are very Zulu cultural, like you know, you're a man and that's where you're at, like, you will never as a man be seen doing dishes, it's unheard of and it's not allowed, you know, so it's that type of a family... so when I go there, because it's expected of me to be a man, I will kinda like want to live for what they are expecting out of me at the time… I mean, I remember when they taught me how to slaughter a*

cow, I didn't want to but I had to know, you see, because it's: 'you're a man, you are black, and therefore is… you need to know how to slaughter a cow', you know? It escalated to slaughtering a goat... I mean poor chicken, I was already a master of slaughtering animals... so it's that and also you get… they don't force you, but it's like it's expected of you to do certain things as a man, you see? And in that case… in that space, you are only allowed to be what they want you to be, it's not what you are, you see, and you must show them what they want to see to avoid the whole… it is not a homophobic rant, but it's… it's a whole derogatory… and also trying to educate people who are not willing to listen to you, you see, so I always avoid those… so in that situation, I go like, 'how long am I here for?', they're like, 'two nights'… I'm like, 'let me just breathe for two nights, I'll be fine. I'll just have to smoke something high… just to be unknown or to feel numb, that's all'… yeah, no… it's tough… (Thabang).

For Thabang, the cultural duties expected of him as a male were compounded by the fact that Thabang's father passed away when he was extremely young and that he was the eldest and only male child in the family. Thus, as the eldest and only male child, Thabang was considered the heir to his father's role and he was therefore expected to perform certain duties, which it seems Thabang resented:

[…] I needed to be my dad at a very young age, you know, I mean, at some stage, I mean, I remember when I got into my teens, my mother was like, 'well, you're going to study but just make sure that you come and look after me'. I'm like, 'that's huge, you know, I'm literally not even twenty, but I need to come and look after you. What does that mean?' You know, like, 'no, your dad looked after me'. I'm like, 'yes, but he did not look after me because I grew up I didn't see him'. And then there was this, yeah, no, the black community is rough. So being gay or straight it's just rough. You are expected as a boy to look after your family, not only your immediate… your closest family, but everybody else, being your cousins there, you expected to say you have to look after them; hence we have this whole thing of 'black tax', my mother, I didn't even understand it at the time, you know, what the black tax is about until I started working, because my mom was like, 'no, your first salary has to come to me', I'm like 'what about me?' You know… 'no, I need to use it'. So yeah, it's…. it's

actually… there is something that's actually derangement, cause now it's… I had to assume a role of my dad, of which I didn't even know what he was doing. But I did the best way that I could, by being told what to do, you see, his sense of saying, you have to give us…. mostly, it was more on, if my mother cannot resolve things, they have to come to me, they didn't matter. Being my sisters having arguments with their husbands, my mother will say 'I can't deal, I can't deal with this one, go and speak to Thabang'. And then I'm like, 'what will I tell these people?' It just doesn't make sense, you know…. so yeah, it was a lot: financially, emotionally. You become like a psychologist of the family. And you're expected to be because you are a man. This… you are a man […] (Thabang).

Yet in spite of these challenges Thabang indicated that he tried to alter cultural practices to suit himself, rather than having to change aspects of himself in order to accommodate his culture:

I think I influenced my homosexuality into the culture, the way I wanted it to be, because I've got a strong will of just turning things around within my family, you know, or seeing things the way I probably understand them. Yeah, it's a… this is a an interesting one Jonti because my culture did not influence anything for me, I think I influenced my culture, rather, you see. Because there was nothing else that I knew apart from what I needed to do as like the youngest son in the family. I mean, I sat in my first lobola negotiations when I was like twenty because one of my sisters was getting married. And then they… so and I did not even know what to do, and then my mother was like, 'you sit, they'll ask…' they were, like elderlies from the other provinces, they came, and the neighbours, then we sat, and I saw how they do things. I was like, 'what is my role here?' Because I needed to know. Then they told me, 'I'm like okay, so if this is it, then it's just talking, then I'm good in talking. I'll just talk', you know. And then they ran the first round because lobola negotiations, they go on for days, my word, or even months. So first one they spoke; second one, I knew exactly what was happening. And then I just started speaking. And then I just became, you know, the… that gay uncle in the lobola negotiations (Thabang).

One way in which Thabang confronted the societal norms and prejudices in his community was to challenge the *status quo* when he was able to. It appears that there is an element of antagonism in his behaviour, which it was felt probably emanates from the suffering Thabang experienced due to the prejudicial attitudes and beliefs that many in his community maintain:

> *[…] there [are] instances where culture literally I have to embrace it, okay. And there [are] other instances whereby I could feel that this is just someone's opinion, wanting to impose it on me, and that I'm not gonna do it. And I just challenge them, I challenge most of the things. If it doesn't make sense to me, I'm not doing it. I mean, it was the same thing with my… so what happens culturally, because my dad passed on, so we needed to put in a tombstone on his grave, so my sister, when she got married, they put in a tombstone, then they covered it, and then later on, they did like the whole ritual, inviting people in and I'm like… and she comes and they're like, 'yeah, we need to do this', I'm like, 'no, that is what you know, how we're gonna do it is, as soon as we put in that tombstone, we're not going back again to have a ritual, we are done. We are literally done. That's it.' You see? So I do challenge, I bring my… bring me, my own logic into the whole culture, and making people to understand, because some of the things are just ridiculous, just doesn't make sense* (Thabang).

I asked Thabang if he solely challenged cultural views and practices which conflict with his homosexuality, but he indicated that it was not restricted solely thereto. It seems, however, that this antagonistic stance towards his society and culture emanates from the tension between his sexuality and his community. This could be evinced rather subtly in his comment that 'I change it to be gay sometimes, because I just put […] my flavour in it' (Thabang). It appears that in this way Thabang is able to attack his culture before it can attack him for being homosexual:

> *It's just in general… I change it to be gay sometimes, because I just put in my flavour in it. Yeah, no, it's the sense of saying, 'this is what I know, and this… the logic tells me that actually this is how it should be'. You know… and then because, I mean, we'll, it's simple things… when the, they'll tell you, 'you don't cut your nails inside the house', but I'm like, 'but why?' 'It's culture', but who came up with that? And then I'm not being gay here, but I'm just questioning the logic here. 'Yeah, but it's at night you're not supposed to cut your nails' – but*

why? Okay, you know it's, it's those silly things like, 'no, you don't look at yourself in the mirror when it's raining'; I'm like, 'hell no!' How am I gonna go out without looking my… like, so I bring in me in all these, you know, it just becomes, I suppose it becomes extra because I'm gay, so they think like… but it's just logic, you know what I mean? It's just some of the things I push back… (Thabang).

In particular, it appears that Thabang's combative stance is directed in particular at societal expectations of males. Often it is thought that because males have traditionally occupied privileged positions in patriarchal societies that it must be 'easier' to be a male; but Thabang challenges this view by arguing that males have many restrictions placed upon them in addition to having to complete many illogical practices. It was felt that this was in fact the source of Thabang's combative stance towards his culture and community as he was often made to feel that he was not fulfilling cultural expectations as a homosexual male. Interestingly, Thabang's stance on this matter seems to be stereotypically masculine, even though he explicitly challenges the cultural views of what masculinity is essentially:

[…] it's a sense of what is the role of… like maybe… I know we're keeping it within homosexuality, but what is the role of a boy you know, like, what is a boy expected to do in life? You know what I mean? Let's leave culture, let's leave everything else… like I'm a boy what is expected of me to be… to do, you know? I find that we have turned to take the male gender as a whole and created a monster out of it. What I mean is, we are wanted to perform miracles that were performed by the elders… some lessons were things that their forefathers taught them and then it became a descendant lesson to every boy that is being raised today, you know… I see it happening with my sisters as well to say, um, 'you'… like everything has a 'cannot' when it comes to a boy – 'you cannot!' You see? And then you're like, 'why are you limiting me? You know, what if I like this thing?' So now… that is one part, okay? And now that I do… I identify as a gay male, I know there are cultural things that have to be done… but certain instances, I need to have a choice. My sisters have a choice of not marrying a guy where you either… it doesn't matter whether it's been chosen for them or not, they can tell them like, 'no, I don't want to'. So, for example, if I don't want to slaughter a cow, it's me, it's my moral belief that cow slaughtering is not

something that I want to do, but now I'm forced to do it, you know what I mean? And it's got nothing to do with now being homosexual, not wanting to slaughter a cow… it is about me as an individual, what are my beliefs on certain things… some of them they don't make sense, like taking your hat off when you come into my house… what does this have to do with it? You know like… but those are things that you question and they are logical to you, and then if you ask for clarity, there's never a clarity. You asked them, 'why am I taking off my hat?' They're like, 'no, it's a sign of respect'. I'm like, 'okay, let's unpack this… it's a sign of respect. So I am going to walk in here looking like drunk, starting to curse everyone in the house. Does that now make me respectful because I don't have a cap on?' You know it's like… it's those things, you know, they go beyond homosexuality… they're just… there's nothing… it's got nothing to do with us, then it's the sense of saying, 'does this make sense to you? I understand, maybe it's your culture, but does it make sense to you?' So yeah, I question the status quo… but I become… as I said, I switch off when I go there and I don't… I don't question anything, I just say, 'okay, let's do it' (Thabang).

Yet in spite of his attempts to reform cultural beliefs and practices, the intolerance that Thabang experienced from both his extended family and the community at large naturally led him to want to leave his community, in search of a more accepting and tolerant environment:

[…] And then I had a goal of saying, 'I need to leave this community'. So for me to leave here, just need to go and do better, and then eventually I did […] I wanted a better life than what I was exposed to. Because I knew that there is something greater out there, you know… for me, I mean, as I mentioned, like my sister's never went to school, they just wanted to get married… as much as I wanted to get married… but it didn't feel like a fulfilment for me, you see. I wanted better, I wanted to do much better than they did… I wanted a game changer actually, for everybody, you know… to say, I'm just gonna rise from the bottom of this. And then I'll do it. And I did, I did, I did […] (Thabang).

4.3.2 Understandings of Male Homosexuality

When I asked Thabang what he thought causes someone to become homosexual he identified three aetiological paths thereto. He maintains that some individuals are born homosexual; others are attracted to the supposedly luxurious homosexual lifestyle, which appears to be based on the assumption that homosexual men are necessarily affluent; whereas a third group become homosexual due to being hurt in heterosexual relationships:

> *[…] So there was a notion when we used to grow up… I'll tell you how everything came about... so we used to say there's a gay by nature, there's a gay by choice, and there's a gay… there's a made gay, okay? And so those were the notions that we… I grew up with…. I'll tell you why… so gay by nature is like you're born gay, you know… if you were to see another opposite sex that did not attract you at all, you know, so you're born gay… and everything that you aspired was to be somebody's boyfriend, you know, as a man... there is the… that was it, okay.... then the gay by choice were people who really get inspired by gay people, in a sense that they get literally attracted to the lifestyle… they're not gay, they get attracted to the lifestyle, you know… it is… we associated it with a quick… what is it? Quick wins in life whereby…. like the queens, if you've got money, they'll date you… they don't care how old you are, they want the money, you see. So within the gay community we found that there will be straight boys who aspire to have what gay people have… and then they'll start hanging out with them, eventually… because there has to be a transaction, that transaction will lead into sexual attractions or whatever it is, you know… so it becomes a transactional sex basically, you see, and then by so doing as they get used to it and then somehow they don't realise that they've slept with a man because of money, and then it just continues... and then later on they come out and they identify as 'I'm bi' or 'I'm gay', whatever it is, you see, but they were not initially but… because if you asked, it started somewhere, you see… you know they'll always say, 'there was this guy, man, you know, he had money, man, I wanted to find out how he makes money, you know, I hang out… I used to hang out with him', like, 'oh okay', that was that… and then there's ones that are by choice… the choice one is… they'll say, 'I don't think'… because they don't know, they're like, 'I've dated girls... I think I'm done with girls, I want to*

try men', you see, so there'll be those as well... so I'm not sure which one [laughs]… but that was my… that was my discovery in growing up... and this… I promise you it still… I still pick it up […] (Thabang).

As I did not fully comprehend what Thabang meant by the third type of homosexuality I was prompted to ask him if he could elaborate upon it; to which he replied:

[…] It was by choice… so you're like… the girls are hurting me, I can't keep up with them, I'm trying the other… my gender… (Thabang).

Thabang maintains that he belongs to first type of homosexuality, i.e., that his homosexuality is biologically based. However, he also seemed to intimate that at one time he speculated that he may have become gay due to his home environment, i.e. growing up with so many sisters:

Ah… by nature… I think I was born gay… yeah…. you know, I've been an advocate for gay people, as young as I was... yeah, I think I was born gay… yeah… I've always seen the opposite sex as my sisters… is it that because I grew up with sisters? But they're always seen as my friends because I had a lot of those… yeah… I've always identified as gay…. (Thabang).

4.3.3 Responses to Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexual Development

After Thabang had expressed his views on the matter I presented him with the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. Initially he seemed to disagree with it because he felt that he could neither identify with nor take his parents and siblings as prototypical love objects; instead Thabang indicated that he felt he identified more with friends:

[…] so I think there's… there's like… I think I took out of this quite a few parts… like the childhood one, the child who identifies with either their parents or their caregiver... um, yeah, so my… culturally I'll never identify with my parents, I'll tell you why, because as an elder is… you're seen as this thing that I cannot touch and I cannot speak back to, you see, so what I'll find my association rather will be my peers or the people that I play with, or the people that I socialise

with, you see, and then I'll find my identity within that because parents are seen around… I mean it still happens now... as a gay black boy is you're not… your parents… you cannot even talk about things that you really… are bothering you, in terms of you as a man or young man growing up you're experiencing, you know, you cannot even have a conversation about sex, for example, I mean I learned sex from the streets, not from my parents because we knew that those are discussions that you're not gonna have, you see… so that childhood, that identification part is each to their own, you see, I mean, my one is my parents they were not even… I could not, that woman was something else, so yeah… that is one part and then also the development of the sexual orientation… I don't know, like I couldn't… it was a sense that when parents are bathing, for example, or my when my sisters were bathing, because I'm a boy I had to be left outside or I don't have to enter the room or there's always a curtain or there's something always you know, and then when now I'm growing up I see them, like especially my sisters, because my mother, I mean, I knew her the way she is, she's got breasts and then my sisters now growing up and they've got… they're developing breasts and it's like 'ha! what is happening?!' I mean a typical example, when I started growing puberty, I was scared to show my mother that I was growing puberty, and I had to go to my peers because my peers were in understanding and some of them already were having puberty, but me it was kind of like developing, it was an exciting thing... I mean, I could not find that identity within my parents, or the caregiver, you see, it was amongst my circle, my safest circle that I could talk to about these things because I was scared, like my mother, what is my mother going to say now that I've got like an armpit hairs? It's like this is not spoken of in the house, you see? So there is another one, each to their own, but I mean I can tell you people who did, but me personally, no... and then the other one, that gay men can identify with either parents or caregivers, I think it speaks to the other one… um, you probably can… I remember as a gay man, you only identify with things that are… you can associate yourself with, so if your… if your parents are not… let's say… let's talk about me, let's leave everybody else… for me, it was I enjoyed… so I loved fashion, first things first… so my mother, she was not a fashion fundi, and so is my dad, he was never a fashion fundi, but my sisters were stylish, so as a mother of a fundi, she was very stylish, so I could really identify myself as that

person, I don't know if I'm making sense? But it was never within my family that I could identify… yeah, my sexuality within, you see what I mean? I was like, 'I think it exists, but not here, it's like next door… you know, next door I think they've got me'… yeah, so that's on a very high level what I took from this… (Thabang).

However, as the interview progressed it seemed as though Thabang had initially misunderstood what was meant by the theory because later on he intimated that he considers himself similar to his mother. For instance, he claimed that while growing up 'everything was all about my mother':

[…] my mother was my role model. It was because there was nothing else I knew apart from home. I knew they existed, but I didn't feel comfortable with anybody else except for my mom… I remember we'll go and visit them [relatives], but I would not go if my mother is not there, so we'll visit them only if my mother is there [laughs], or my sister is there and then we come back, I'm not gonna go there and visit alone (Thabang).

It appears that this strong attachment to his mother ultimately led to Thabang identifying with her:

[…] most part of me is my mother, you know…. except for the other part of me being a street child… of being naughty of course… my mother was never naughty, but maybe she was? I don't know, but I didn't see that side. […] I only looked up to my mother… I mean, I did… I'll tell you, so my mother didn't do much in terms of… I think I only… what did my mother do in life? When… I think when I was in primary, my mother worked as a domestic worker and then she worked at the shop and then a factory… but I remember her working at… as a domestic worker, but because she was my role model I knew that when I finished school I want to go and be a domestic worker, you see, because there was nothing else that was inspiring… or that I could look up to, it was only her, you see, because she was able to feed her family... I mean, we were like the twelve, so we all raised by this woman, so I'm like, 'she can, she did it... I'm doing it as well'… you know, so that was the only thing that I knew. […] I'm

> *more like a mommy's boy… or I'm more of my mother in me… yeah, no… everything… everything I am I'm just my mother, you know, from the… I'll just look like my mother, I'm funny just like my mother… everything is just my mother, you see, just that I'm more enhanced than her, but it… literally everything, you know, from… except for the voice, but you put my mother here we both speak… you're just gonna think like this cannot be because we literally, yeah… we everything, it is just my mother…* (Thabang).

Thabang revealed that this identification with his mother extends to the way in which he behaves in relationships:

> *[…] I emulate that woman in every relationship, you know… for me, it's all about 'now we've met, okay, so where do you come from?' Because my mother was like that, 'where do you come from? Who are you?' You know? Like the key little things that my mother will always ask people… I'm also bringing that into my relationships, like little things, you know, except for when it's a one night stand and then I couldn't be bothered, but my mother was never there, so that's more on me side, you know, I don't ask any questions, you're lucky if you get my name but it is what it is! [Laughs]…* (Thabang).

The identification with his mother can also be evinced in the fact that Thabang stated that he always wanted to play the female role as a child:

> *I identified with more females because that was the closest thing that I could speak to, you see? So it was easier for me to say, 'let's go play house, I will be the mother, somebody else was going to be the father', you see… I will say… I will assume that role of being a mother at that young tender age, because it was… it was a cool idea for me because I saw the mother next door, what she does, so I'll try to even imitate or replicate what she does in a house when I'm there, and then when we play house I'll bring in her in me as we play along, you know, like let me cook for you, let me, you know, like those things, yeah…* (Thabang).

It was therefore not initially clear why Thabang had reacted dismissively towards the presentation of the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. However, as the interview progressed it appeared that Thabang's dismissal was indicative of a similar hostility towards the theory as emerged in the interviews with Nokwazi and Sipho. His indignation had also been aroused by the fact that I should even wish to explore the aetiological mechanisms of homosexuality in our current day and age, when the same is not done with regards to heterosexuality. In addition, Thabang feels that due to the fact that homosexuality is not monolithic, but polylithic, it is an injustice to the different types thereof to attempt to explicate it in a singular way. As such, the study necessarily pigeon-holes homosexual males by attempting to ascribe solely one cause to the phenomenon. He indicated that due to the complexity of the matter he feels it is insoluble:

> *[…] ahhh, you and I cannot solve this, but it's always a question I've found the male homosexuality, why are we still being discussed in 2020? Like this is something that I actually sit down and saying, straight people don't go around justifying themselves that they're straight, but why is it always a… why are we justifying ourselves? I mean, we got gay rights, like nineteen whatever, you know, but it's still a discussion, and I just got to realise that we are just a different… we just different people worldwide, it's not only in [South Africa] … worldwide… and we will always find people that are just different, you know… also is I find that male homosexuality… it's just evolving, it's like English lately with the…. we were sitting over the weekend, we just unpacking the whole thing… it is just getting too complicated… for even when they asked me I go like, 'I really don't know, maybe you must ask that person why… how they are finding a mind attractive rather than the body?' You see… because I don't see the mind like… it's just… it just gets confusing… the whole identity is just… it's just evolving into avenues that we as gay community, we also don't even understand… yeah… but that's just my two cents comments on this one….* (Thabang).

As Thabang had lost his father at a young age it was unsurprising that he did not mention his father as being either a role-model or as the prototypically ideal male that he hoped to partner with in adulthood. Thabang did however mention later identifying with a heterosexual male cousin and modelling himself on him:

[…] so I had elder cousins, who were predominantly… typical straight cousins, you know, like when I grew up I knew that if I did something, they know they will call this one, okay? So he… we were very close, he was… he was older actually… we're very close in a sense that he… because he saw that they were… cause at home it was only me and my sisters, my mother didn't know how to raise a boy, so he took the role of wanting to teach me everything that a boy needs to know, you see? Yeah, he shaped the… the black male in me, I'll tell you how… because there were certain things that I kind of like looked at him and said, 'I want to be like you', you see… one is he was an academic, and he knew that I loved books… the reason as well we got close… some of them tried, but we couldn't really gel because there were certain things that were missing, we couldn't connect… so with him particularly we connected in the sense that he was an academic, I was also an academic and also his… he had an… his teachings were all about, if it doesn't make sense to you, it means it's not right… don't look at me as an elder and say… and think that everything that I say it's correct, in a sense that you should be able to challenge me… at the time I didn't understand what he meant, you know, but he will put me into tests to see if I can challenge him, you know… at first it was difficult, but eventually I became… I was able to challenge him in like most things, you know, like I remember he was teaching me how to cut a wood and I'm like, 'but why would I want to know how to cut a wood?' You know, he didn't say 'because you are a man', he'll say, 'one day you'll go camping, maybe you guys will need to… a smaller, just wood to burn, and therefore you should be able to know how to do this, you know? Or maybe one day you'll want to start a fire, you don't know'… like he'll give me good examples, you know to say 'this will help you in the future, maybe right now it's a 'no', but in the future it will help you, you see'… so he… oh and interestingly enough is… also he's… when I told him that I was gay, he's like, 'but I knew you were gay, that's the reason that I brought you closer… because your mom told me and I was like, there's no father figure here, so I really need to step in, you see?' Yeah, so I got all that from him, he was a better man than any other man that I've ever met… he was liberal… mentally, how he did things, you know… I mean there were so many lessons I got from him, I mean for my first time starting to shave, he taught me how to touch a blade because I asked

my mother, I'm like, 'how do I shave?' My mother looked at me like, 'I don't know, maybe buy a Veet?', I'm like 'oh, okay, I'll buy Veet' and then I ask him like, 'no, no, don't buy Veet!' I'm like, 'okay, what do I buy? How do you do this?' So it's a little things that he taught me... I remember when I had my first wet dream, then I woke up I'm like, 'mom, look!', my mother screamed, she didn't know what to do, then he was called in, I'm like, 'help here!' And then he sat me down and says, 'okay, what happened?' 'Like I don't know… another boy was touching me... I don't know, this and duh, duh, duh'… like, 'okay, this is what's happening… from now you don't do the following things, duh, duh, duh', and I'm like, 'okay, why?', he's like, 'these are the reasons; because now you're getting into a stage whereby you are becoming a teenager'. I'm like, 'what is a teenager?' And then he explained, I'm like, 'so before I was not a teenager?', he's like, 'no, you were not', I'm like, 'okay, so what does it mean?' Then he told me and he says 'you'll figure it out as you grow, you see?' So he did… yeah, he shaped the better of me… also is because I've already gotten that from him when I started… (Thabang).

It appears that because this particular male cousin was liberal and therefore tolerant and accepting of Thabang he assisted Thabang in lessening the rift between his African and homosexual identities. Furthermore, it seems that this particular male cousin became the prototype in both a physical and psychical sense of the 'ideal male' which Thabang ultimately hoped to pair with in adulthood:

[…] so I… my father figure was coming from… I mean I'll move from one house to another or make friends, they've got a dad, you know, it's like a combo of everybody that kind of like I got to interact with or I got to spend time with, so it's a combination of everybody else but with that is there were good and the bad ones, whereby like, 'nah, this one is not a good… is not a good father figure, or is not a good role model, I'll never do this' You see? So with my one is probably more on… I mean I had somebody that I looked up to, I think I touched on it… he was more like an uncle, but it's not an uncle, but he was my brother... so that man who actually gave much of me, because I would look up to him, you see? But it's also not from home… home, home, home… it's like home, but outside…. Yeah […] he was a very attractive man, I think that's why I liked him

too…. yeah, he… yeah, he did possess everything that I liked... I think ideally he… I would look at him and say, 'if I were to find a partner, he tends to be like this man'. You see? Mmhmm, because he was doing everything right…. yeah, no… he… no, he was…. yeah, it was a good one, that one… (Thabang).

However, Thabang initially claimed that in a potential partner he looks for qualities that his mother possesses; but it seems that this view pertains more to his mother's heteronormative standards:

I mean I grew, as I said, like I was moved from one family to another and I could see how my sisters' husbands were treating their… my sisters, you see, so in every relationship… but in my mind, my cue one is in every male partnership that I try to establish I always look for some similarities to my mother, you see, like she was very caring, loving, kind, you know, God-fearing woman... so those are the things that when I kind of like want a partnership and a great listener, because my mother was one person who'll say, 'if you ever want to date, just find somebody who's just like me', so I knew her as that sense, you see, so if I'm looking for a partner, it has to be…. yeah, these qualities my mother will appreciate, okay, there we go… so I always do… yeah, no, no, it's… I think that's a key thing, I mean we all have preferences but apart from preferences that are non-negotiable in any partnership, you see, and if you don't… if you don't exude any of what qualities that I'm kind of like looking for, that are adopted from my mother or instilled from my mother, you are out of it, you cannot be… No, no, no, that is one… one thing that we… like I always look for, you see, and no, even my sisters, they'll say, 'oh no, this one does look… does have mama's character', I'm like 'Mmhmm, that's was she taught me', yeah… (Thabang).

4.3.4 Summary

Thabang was a warm, friendly and engaging participant. He described how difficult it was growing up as a homosexual in his community: how he was often exposed to both verbal and physical danger due to his sexual orientation. This prejudice seems to have been due to societal perceptions of homosexuality being incompatible with African-ness; Thabang was thus made

to feel that he could not be both a homosexual and an African simultaneously. This naturally led Thabang to adopt an antagonistic attitude towards his community and culture. Although Thabang stated that his criticism of cultural practices is based on logic and not necessarily connected with his homosexual orientation, it was felt that on a deeper level he had adopted a hostile stance towards his culture and community as a defence, i.e. in order, in some way, to protect himself from homophobic attacks which he had experienced and might experience in the future within his community and due to his culture. Thabang indicated that he identified more with femininity and this undoubtedly made certain heteronormative cultural expectations difficult for him. Thabang presented an interesting, albeit unusual, causal explanation for male homosexuality; he claimed that some individuals are born homosexual, others adopt the orientation because they are drawn to the lifestyle, whereas others turn to homosexuality after being emotionally hurt in heterosexual romances. Thabang expressed doubt about the contemporary depathologized theory of male homosexuality. He seems to have felt that a study on the causes of homosexuality belongs in a bygone era, when homosexuality was considered 'pathological'. Thabang also indicated that he considers the phenomenon of homosexuality to be polylithic and hence insoluble. In spite of his explicit reservations concerning the theory, Thabang indicated that he took his mother as a role-model and finds that he is extremely similar to her in many ways. Due to the fact that Thabang's father passed away when he was young, he did not consider his father to be as influential on his development. However, Thabang indicated that he had a heterosexual male cousin who was accepting and loving towards him. Thabang considers him to be the prototypically ideal male partner that he always hoped (and still hopes) he will be able to partner with in adulthood.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In what follows I shall discuss the findings of this study. It will be recalled that the research aimed to explore the convergences and divergences between the lived experiences of the three participants and the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality in an attempt to explore the theory's cross-cultural applicability. In essence, the aforementioned theory's claim is twofold. Firstly, it maintains that identification with either parent is possible and, secondly it maintains that one's father (or father-figure) acts as the prototype of the ideal male that a young homosexual boy hopes to partner with in adulthood. On both these points the contemporary theory diverges from the classical, for the latter holds that a homosexual boy necessarily identifies with his mother and takes *himself* as the prototype of his ideal love-object (Freud, 1905/2011). Significantly, one ought to note that in classical analytic thought one cannot concomitantly identify with and lust for one and the same object (Freud, 1905/2011). In this regard the current findings appear to refute this classical analytical claim and thus offer corroboration to the contemporary theory; however, it must be noted that among the three participants of the present study it appears that the process of both identification and the setting of a prototype for the erotic-object were revealed as more complex, with both the mother and father/father-figure featuring across both processes.

Before I commence my discussion in earnest it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of the theme of trauma, which emerged in all three of the narratives. These narratives of the participants in this study support the findings of other studies on the experiences of homosexual males in South Africa – studies that have documented high levels of prejudice, harassment and abuse (Dlamini, 2006; Msibi, 2011; Wells & Polders, 2006). In light of the traumatising contexts in which these men have lived, and which, as a consequence thereof, they have been compelled to grapple, in order to establish a coherent identity in connection therewith, it is perhaps not surprising that all three of the participants exhibited a twofold tension within their narratives with regards to their identity. It is felt that these are significant themes in so far as all three of the participants discussed them in great detail. The first tension to which the participants alluded was a conflict between their masculine and feminine aspects; while the second tension emerged in connection with the participants revealing themselves to be perpetually grappling with the conflict generated by their ethnic/cultural identity and the

outward expression of their sexuality. I have attempted to explicate these phenomena by recourse to theoretical considerations. In what follows I shall attempt to make these tensions as conspicuous as possible as they indicate potential themes for future research.

Lastly, it is significant to note that an interesting observation was made in relation to the participants' engagement with the brief theoretical outline of the contemporary psychoanalytic understanding of homosexuality which was presented to them. After initial hostility and dismissal, the participants appeared surprised, curious and at times even enthusiastic, contemplating the pertinence and applicability of the theory to their own histories. This process will be explored in greater detail below.

5.2 Divergences Between Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Homosexual Development and the Participants' Views

As a place of departure I shall begin my discussion with a consideration of the two primary ways in which the participants' narratives appeared to diverge from the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. As shall become perspicuous, these divergences did not appear to offer serious impediments to the cross-cultural applicability of the theory.

5.2.1 Hostility Towards the Contemporary Depathologized Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality

It was considered highly significant that the initial response of all three participants towards the theory presented to them ranged from dismissiveness to hostility. In light of the fact that all three of the participants have some level of tertiary education and consequently appeared to draw on thinking of postmodern and postcolonial critique, a sceptical response was unsurprising. However, the hostility evident in parts of their narratives appeared defensive: it seemed that all of the participants felt that any attempt to explore the topic of male homosexuality must necessarily be motivated by sinister intentions, i.e. that the research must in some way be wishing to perpetuate the view that homosexuality is aberrant and that it ought therefore to be limited in its outward expression or entirely eliminated. When one takes into consideration the lived experiences of the three participants it is not difficult to comprehend their initial resistance towards the study in general and the theory in particular; for all of the

participants described – often in poignant detail – the manifold traumas they were subjected to merely for the fact of being homosexual.

Lamentably the psychological discipline itself has been responsible for perpetuating the view that homosexuality is an aberrant form of sexuality. For instance, one can find traces of this view in the work of Alfred Adler (1920/1950), who viewed homosexuality as a neurosis which required cure, as well as in the work of Sandor Rado, Irving Bieber and Charles W. Socarides, et al. (Drescher, 2022). The theoretical views of these particular individuals undoubtedly influenced the psychiatric discipline's decision to include homosexuality as a psychological disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Drescher, 2022). Homosexuality was only officially removed as a psychiatric disorder from the Diagnostic Manual in 1980 (Sadock & Sadock, 2007), much to the disappointment of many psychoanalysts (Drescher, 2022). Consequently, it is understandable that the participants initially appeared suspicious of the motives for such a study. This suspiciousness was most conspicuously observed in the participants' initial denial of the applicability of the theory to themselves and they therefore seemed to be utterly dismissive of it. But as this initial response transformed into one of ultimate acceptance of the theory, albeit with qualifications – a matter I shall shortly discuss in greater detail – it was felt that these responses were a result of the past traumas that the participants had experienced.

It is interesting to note that although the participants initially presented with hostility and rejection of the theory, they did not explicitly mention the psychological discipline as being ultimately responsible for the homophobic views held by many in their communities; although one participant (Sipho) did indicate that historically the psychological and psychiatric professions have been, at least partly, responsible for the preservation of such homophobic notions. Instead, the participants indicated that they hold religion and the patriarchal nature of society as ultimately responsible. Thus, the participants' hostility towards the theory appeared to be a displacement of anger directed primarily towards the patriarchy and prejudicial religious views, which they indicated had in some sense restricted their homosexual expression. I shall discuss these themes in due course, but for the moment I wish to further explore my theoretical understanding of the hostility the participants exhibited.

5.2.1.1 Homosexuality in Contemporary Society as Potentially Engendering An Inferiority Complex

The marginalisation of homosexual men in their communities, which the participants described in poignant detail, may have induced sentiments of inferiority in them, i.e. not feeling that they were (perhaps still are) able to live up to a particular ideal of what it means to be the ideal man/male. The concept of the so-called 'inferiority complex' is most closely associated with the work of Alfred Adler (Way, 1956). As mentioned in the literature review, Adler (1920/1950) describes this notion in the language of 'above' and 'below'. If an individual feels himself to be 'below' he will resort to one of two possibilities: either he will attempt to coerce the other to descend, below the level he believes himself to be situated or he will attempt to raise himself, i.e. above the individual he perceives as superior; for he who cannot succeed in raising himself necessarily resorts to lowering the other (Adler, 1920/1950, p. 131). Both phenomena, viz., raising and lowering, could be observed in the participants' narratives and I shall consider each in turn by way of illustrations from the narratives. In connection with the phenomenon of ascension – which may be considered a form of compensation (Adler, 1920/1950) that individuals employ in response to perceived shortcomings – two of the participants (Sipho and Thabang) described how heterosexual men lust after them. It appeared that in this way the participants could exert some power or superiority over heterosexual males by being able to reject them, i.e. it was as though the participants were declaring: 'he wants me, but I do not want him!'. One of the aforementioned participants (Thabang) also described homosexual males as necessarily affluent and living a lavish lifestyle, which he maintains is one of the ways in which individuals become homosexual. In this way he was able to raise homosexuality above that of heterosexuality and thus render it the more desirable of the two.

Other forms in which the desire for superiority could be evinced were in the way in which the participants characterized themselves, viz., as intelligent and physically attractive. Interestingly, this striving for superiority may appear, from a Freudian perspective, to be a corroboration of the narcissistic element which Freud (1905/2011) identified as operative in male homosexuality. However, as mentioned in the literature review, considered from an Adlerian stance it becomes evident that such narcissism is not necessarily pathological but defensive in nature, in so far as it attempts to protect the individual from the prejudices within a heteronormative society.

In contradistinction to the attempts to raise themselves, the 'lowering' attempts assumed a more belligerent stance and could be evinced in the participants' challenging of the patriarchal *status quo* and cultural/religious belief and practices. In both instances the participants appeared to be motivated by a desire to regain some form of superiority, which they understandably felt had been lost due to the restrictions imposed upon them by a heteronormative society. These points will be elaborated upon in due course, for the moment I wish only to draw attention to the fact that defences against a feeling of inferiority in relation to the patriarchal culture/civilisation was observed in all of the participants.

5.2.1.2 Incredulity as to the Theory's Universal Applicability

My above reference to the qualification in all three of the participants' acceptance of the theory refers in particular to the only explicit divergence the participants presented in connection therewith, viz., doubt as to the theory's universal applicability. For although the participants felt the theory to be applicable to themselves – at least to the earlier parts of their lives (as explored below) – they indicated that they hold the phenomenon of male homosexuality to be polylithic and consequently they did not believe the theory would or could be applicable to all varieties of same-sex amorousness. This significant point must be borne in mind, for some of the participants in the study did in fact present a culturally modified form of the referential axis in connection with Juliet Mitchell's (cited in Pick, 2015) notions.

This is indeed a valid criticism; but it ought to be noted that the current depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality does not purport to be the exclusive theory for the explication of male homosexuality (Mitchell, 2012). Furthermore, when one takes into consideration the fact that Freud (1910/2001) himself proposed numerous theories for the aetiology of male homosexuality – such as his primary hypothesis (Freud, 1905/2011), retirement in favour of another (Freud, 1920/1949) and the reaction-formation theory (Freud, 1922/1949) – one will inevitably regard the criticism as not truly a divergence but rather a convergence between the two positions. For in presenting the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality no attempt was made to illustrate that it is the only acceptable theory for explicating the phenomenon. Homosexuality may be compared to a wheel with manifold spokes leading to its centre, i.e. there must undoubtedly be numerous aetiologies leading to the one and same phenomenon. The participants appear to have intimated that homosexuality may be so difficult to causally explicate precisely because it does not

possess solely one aetiological mechanism: some forms of homosexuality may indeed be biologically based, whereas others may develop along numerous environmental paths, such as Freud (1905/2011; 1910/2001; 1920/1949; 1922/1949, et al.) intimated in numerous places his writings. The study therefore does not purport to resolve this fascinating, albeit exceedingly complex, subject and hence the apparent divergence is not, upon further consideration, a genuine one.

I shall turn now to a consideration of the convergences between the participants' lived experiences and the theory.

5.3 Convergences Between Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Homosexual Development and the Participants' Views

In this section I shall discuss the convergences between the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory and the participants' responses. It was found that there were two primary convergences, viz., identification with the mother/femininity and attraction to males who in some sense have similarities to the participants' fathers or father-figures.

In presenting these discussions I shall also make mention of the way in which the participants attempted to reconcile their homosexual identities with their African-ness. Indeed, this division revealed itself to be a primary theme in the participants' narratives; indicating that contrary to the classical psychoanalytic understanding, one's sexual attraction does not evolve within a vacuum but rather that it is profoundly embedded and enmeshed within particular *cultural contexts*. For instance, even though the participants indicated that they had a desire to be female at an extremely young age it is not entirely clear if identification with one's mother/femininity was a consequence of marginalization within the community or if it preceded that particular experience and the sentiments associated therewith. For instance, one may justifiably wonder how the participants would have presented had they experienced acceptance – as opposed to rejection and prejudice – from their patriarchal communities. Might they have aligned themselves more closely with masculinity? And might that have led to identification with their fathers/father-figures becoming more prominent and pertinent?

Two of the participants (Nokwazi and Sipho) described their fathers as upholding patriarchal conceptions and yet being understanding and accepting of them in another sense. One can only

conjecture that the fathers' alignment with patriarchal values is what alienated their sons from identifying with them, causing the sons to turn instead to their more accepting mothers. However, it was not evident that the participants' mothers were in fact less susceptible to prejudicial views and upholding the patriarchal *status quo* than the participants' fathers. Two of the participants (Sipho and Thabang) intimated an ambivalence towards their mothers: although they evidently felt a closeness to them, they suggested that their mothers were not always as accepting as they had wished for them to be. It is not evident why the participants appeared to overlook this fact in connection with their mothers (and not with their fathers), but perhaps it is related to the fact that females have historically been considered the *sexus sequior*[24] and thus marginalized in much the same way that homosexuals have been. In this sense identification with the mother/femininity may in fact be *a necessary consequence of societal views and attitudes* as opposed to an innate biological predisposition in homosexuals. In other words, it appears as though society itself has necessarily alienated homosexual males from masculinity and rendered identification with femininity far more amenable. This observation also seems to explicate the (non-sexual) attraction many homosexual males have towards powerful types of females and femininity (Jennex, 2013). In a sense, the admiration and identification therewith may be motivated by a desire to circuitously empower themselves.

It is worth observing that this phenomenon, viz. identification with the powerful female or femininity, as a means to gain a sense of superiority was most conspicuously observed in one of the participants (Sipho) who at times took on the persona of a strong Southern African-American woman. In this way the participant was unconsciously able to gain a sentiment of strength or power while retaining his identification with femininity.

5.3.1 Identification with Femininity and the Mother

As has been anticipated in the introductory paragraphs, the most striking convergence of all was the fact that all three participants felt themselves to be effeminate and identified with femininity. It was thought that this identification with femininity must have its provenance in childhood, and in particular with the identification with the mother. Interestingly, however, all the participants had multiple older sisters, and all three of them intimated an identification therewith. It will be recalled from the literature review that contemporary psychoanalytic

[24] "The second sex" (Schopenhauer, 1851/1974).

research, based primarily on the work of Juliet Mitchell, holds that the so-called 'referential axis' of the Oedipal complex – which according to classical psychoanalytic thought is the triangular love relationship between parents and child (Pick, 2015) – may in fact be far broader and include relations between siblings (Mitchell, 2003). However, identification with their sisters seemed to be penultimate to the identification with their mothers in the current research study. Indeed, all of the participants indicated that they identified more with their mothers than they did with their fathers or other significant males. In this way, one of the central tenets of both the classical and depathologized theories was corroborated. For it will be recalled that the contemporary theory, much like the classical (Freud, 1905/2011), considers identification with the mother to be a possibility that will have consequences in adulthood (Mitchell, 2012).

However, the participants also indicated an identification with their fathers and significant father-figures; a notion inadmissible upon the classical understanding (Freud, 1905/2011) but entirely possible for the contemporary theory (Mitchell, 2012). In this the participants appeared to be unwittingly refuting the classical theory in favour of the contemporary understanding. But one should not hastily arrive at any definitive conclusions in connection thereto, for this matter presents itself as something worthy of explication. While the participants discussed this particular theme I wondered if they were perhaps motivated by a desire to present themselves as masculine.

Here again, the Adlerian notions of inferiority and superiority can be evoked (Adler, 1920/1950). If, as was discussed, femininity is considered inferior and therefore undesirable, it could be that the participants did not wish to fully identify with their mothers in an attempt to avoid the imputation of being weak and inferior. The identification with their fathers/father-figures may therefore have been a subtle striving for superiority. Indeed this relates to the oscillation often observed in the participants. At times they would attempt to portray themselves as necessarily superior in more effeminate forms – for instance, in the claim that heterosexual men lust after them – or they would attack the heteronormative *status quo* and the patriarchy (itself a form of masculine identification). In both instances, i.e. whether by means of masculine or feminine lines, the ultimate *telos* of the participants was identical, viz., to attain a feeling of superiority.

However, as previously stated, it is interesting to note that in spite of the identification with male father-figures all three of the participants considered identification with their mothers to

be far more fundamental and intense. In the literature review I made reference to Adler's individual-psychological views and how homosexuality can – like femininity and femaleness – be construed to be something inferior. Thus Adler (1920/1950) describes at great length the so-called 'masculine protest' and the way in which both females and males often revolt against their femininity. I consider these Adlerian observations to be extremely pertinent in the current case, for like females our society regards homosexuality as moving a male away from the masculine ideal.[25] Thus the so-called 'masculine protest' could be evinced in the participants' discussion on their identification with their fathers/father-figures, i.e. the phenomenon exhibited itself in the participants' attempt to align themselves with masculine heterosexual males. As mentioned, in the case of one participant (Sipho) the striving for superiority was at times conjoined with his identification with femininity and thus exhibited itself in the form of a strong Southern African-American woman's accent. However, on other occasions he would assume a more masculine style of expression; it was thought that in the latter case he was identifying more with the masculine father-figure. However, it is significant to note again that in both forms of expression the ultimate *telos* was the same, viz., to attain a feeling of superiority. Thus, it appeared that the participants could attain a feeling of superiority either by way of identification or by way of attack and it seemed as if the participants constantly vacillated between these two positions.

It is possible that there are aspects of genuine identification with their father/father-figures that coexist alongside attempts to deliberately position themselves as aligned with the masculinity represented by their fathers/father-figures. However, the question remains as to why the participants did not present it as the primary identification. I shall attempt to explicate this interesting observation in due course.

5.3.1.1 Hostility Towards the Patriarchy and Religion

The difficulty between the feminine and the masculine was one illustration of a likely split in the psyches of the participants – for although they are anatomically males they consider

[25] In my estimation this explicates the fact that male homosexuals often form close bonds with heterosexual females, for both feel slighted and depreciated by the dominant patriarchal, masculine culture and hence they tend to form an alliance in opposition thereto (Jennex, 2013).

themselves to be more identified with the feminine – and we should pause here to consider the significance of this splitting phenomenon, which is often utilised as a defence mechanism.

As a prelude to my discussion, I must here invoke an observation I previously alluded to, viz., the fact that the mothers of the participants – at least Sipho's and Thabang's mothers – were not as accepting as their sons had wished for them to be. Thus their beloved mothers must necessarily have presented with conflicting attributes, viz., acceptance and rejection. It is exceedingly difficult for an individual – especially an infant or a young individual – to accept that one object can possess two diametrically opposed qualities – for sentiments of guilt are aroused when indignation and rancour are directed towards a beloved object – and thus, in an attempt to obtain a sense of composure or equanimity an individual may resort to the phenomenon of splitting. Following Klein's (1946/1986) notion of the paranoid-schizoid position, wherein aspects of an object are divided in order to retain or introject its positive attributes and project its negative qualities, I maintain that the participants exhibited such a phenomenon. In this case the homosexual disposition may be said to have been equated with femininity and femaleness, i.e. the accepting mother, which in turn have been identified with the so-called 'good-breast' and thus introjected into the participants' egos, whereas the broader culture and community at large, i.e. the rejecting mother, have been equated with masculinity and the patriarchal *status quo*, which have in their turn been identified with the so-called 'bad-breast' and thus projected outwardly.[26] This phenomenon was most conspicuous in the way in which the participants adopted a hostile attitude towards the broader culture and the community at large, which they wanted to subdue or destroy in much the same way as the infant wishes to bite the so-called "bad-breast" (Klein, 1946/1986, pp. 180-181).

This attitude was likewise observed in the participants' stance towards religion. Most religious systems are patriarchal in nature, placing the male above the female and thus considering the former more valuable than the latter. This conception can easily be observed in one of the more ubiquitous practices with which many are undoubtedly familiar, viz., the marriage ceremony. For an analysis of the traditional wedding ceremony reveals most conspicuously the patriarchal nature of religion: the female is an item of property, an animate object which necessarily

[26] This was initially observed in the participants' hostility towards the contemporary depathologized theory, see section two herein, entitled 'Divergences Between Contemporary Psychoanalytic Understandings of Male Homosexual Development and the Participants' Views'.

belongs to some male – in much the same way as livestock. At first, she is the property of the father and it is therefore incumbent upon him to hand his daughter over to the male to whom he is giving her, viz., the groom. The traditional African custom of '*isilobolo*', in which the groom is obligated to pay the 'bride price' to the bride's father (Posel & Rudwick, 2014), is another conspicuous illustration of the way in which a female is regarded as an item of property and therefore placed below the position of the male. It is within these rituals and practices that we discern the most blatant form of patriarchy. But this view, although most conspicuous in the wedding ceremony, extends far beyond, for much in our civilisation is coloured by these patriarchal conceptions, and it was therefore unsurprising that all of the participants expressed animosity towards traditional religious beliefs and practices.

This hostility may likewise be interpreted as emanating from the masculine protest (Adler, 1920/1950). It was interesting to observe in one of the participants (Sipho) in particular the way in which his protestations directed towards the patriarchal nature of religion manifested themselves; for on the one hand the participant felt his religion to be far more significant to his identity than that of his ethnic background, but on the other hand the participant could not surmount the fact that religion was responsible for both misogyny and homophobia. Thus, when speaking of the ills of religion he equated it with colonialism, but when he attempted to salvage his Christian beliefs he argued that they are in fact of 'African and Arabic' origin. This split permitted the participant to concomitantly venerate and denigrate his religion: the meritorious parts being African/Arabic (the good-breast) in origin were introjected, while the lamentable aspects were European/colonial (the bad-breast) and thus projected (Klein, 1946/1986).

5.3.1.2 Tensions Between African and Homosexual Identities

Another far more significant case wherein this phenomenon of splitting was most conspicuously illustrated was that between the participants' homosexuality and their African-ness. As was mentioned in the literature review, homosexuality is often considered 'un-African' (Dlamini, 2006; Msibi, 2011) and it seems the participants have been coerced to split their identities accordingly. For if being a homosexual is un-African then one cannot espouse both simultaneously. Hence, prejudicial attitudes emanating from the participants' cultures and communities appear to have been the impetus for such a splitting to occur. Indeed, it was often

observed how the participants appeared to oscillate between their two different identities, at times siding more with the one than with the other.

But there were also occasions, albeit rare, in their discussions wherein a reconciliation between the two appeared to have occurred. This necessary redefining of cultural identity to incorporate sexual orientation has been previously explored by Rudwick (2011) and accounts of African men finding ways to express their sexuality through alternate forms of masculinity have been documented (Langa, 2022; Rudwick, 2011). In this study, this was most conspicuous in the case of the participant (Thabang) who described influencing culture to suit himself, as opposed to having been influenced by culture. Notably, Thabang reported having had an accepting heterosexual male cousin. In this particular situation the acceptance permitted the participant to hold both aspects of himself, i.e. his African-ness and his homosexuality, simultaneously. The participant also related an anecdote in which his mother – her heteronormative views notwithstanding – defended the participant when he was verbally attacked by a homophobic school principal for kissing another boy at school. In the course of his discussion another participant (Sipho) attempted such a reconciliation. It will be recalled that at first the participant maintained that religion is responsible for the homophobic attitudes held by many in his community; but he then went on to claim that Christianity is not of European provenance, but is African/Arabian. This dichotomisation permitted the participant to absolve his African culture of responsibility or guilt for homophobia and instead transferred it onto the European colonialists. It appeared that by making this distinction the participant was able to reconcile himself with his religious beliefs, which he indicated he was in some sense returning to. Another participant (Nokwazi) mentioned that his father – ordinarily a traditionalist – did not want his son to engage in ritual circumcision; although it is not entirely clear why he did not want his son to partake in this activity it can justifiably be interpreted as affecting an integration of the participant's homosexual and African identities; for his father – a symbol of the patriarchy – permitted his son to abstain from a ritual which may be taken to symbolize traditional African masculinity. All of the participants also related experiencing acceptance from some, albeit not all, of their older sisters. In these anecdotes of demonstrative acceptance the participants were permitted to hold both their homosexual and African identifies concomitantly.

5.3.2 The Father/Father-Figure as the Prototypically Ideal Male Romantic Partner

Yet another point of convergence between the theory and the lived experiences of the participants was their acknowledgement that they often look for attributes from their parents in their partners. Although all the participants stated that there were aspects of their mothers that they desire in a potential partner – a possibility according to the contemporary depathologized theory (Mitchell, 2012) – it seemed as if the father or father-figure played a more prominent role in this regard. It was interesting that in the case of the participant (Thabang) who lost his father at a young age, the surrogate male who assumed the role of father-figure in his mind was likewise a heterosexual male. As Mitchell (2012) notes in his article entitled *The Development of Psychoanalytic Understanding of Male Homosexuality: Moving Beyond Pathology*, heterosexual males, i.e. the father or father-figure who are ordinarily heterosexual, are usually the first men that homosexuals direct their love and lust towards; hence many homosexuals lust for heterosexual men in adulthood. Indeed, this particular participant (Thabang) indicated in a humourful manner that he and his homosexual male friends consider themselves (heterosexual) females in search of (heterosexual) males. In this regard, the psychoanalytic theory possesses tremendous explanatory power, for it would appear that by identifying with their mothers and seeking their fathers or father-figures in the ideal partner the participants are in some sense attempting to recreate the lived experiences from their infancy and childhood.

5.3.2.1 Attraction to Effeminate Males

A potential complication in this account which must be mentioned was the fact that the participants indicated that at certain periods in their lives they have been attracted to and sexually involved with effeminate men. Although this may seem a possible refutation of the notion that the participants are ultimately seeking their fathers/father-figures in a potential partner, the matter was most elegantly reconciled with the theory's view by one of the participants (Nokwazi) who indicated that what attracts him to femininity in a male is not necessarily the femininity as such, but rather the courage to be unashamedly oneself. Upon reflection the participant came to realise that this mindset was in fact a masculine one. Hence, in spite of outward appearances what the participant realised he was attracted to was in fact masculinity, albeit disguised or obtained in this circuitous manner.

5.3.2.2 Ambivalence Towards Masculinity

Closely related to the seemingly paradoxical attraction to femininity was the tension generated in the participants by the attraction to and aversion from masculinity. This was most conspicuous in one of the participants (Sipho) who dichotomised malignant-sadistic and benign forms of masculinity. On the one hand the participant felt that homosexuals and females – it appeared these notions were in some way conjoined in his mind and thus corroborate my equation of homosexuality therewith – had been subjected to abuse and discrimination at the hands of masculinity; however, on the other, the participant expressed his attraction to masculinity. The only way in which he was able to resolve the tension between his two opposing sentiments for masculinity was to dichotomise them in the way previously stated. Thus, the participant explicitly indicated that he was attracted to the benign form of masculinity and not its malignant-sadistic variety. However, it seemed that on an unconscious level he did indeed feel an attraction to this malignant type of masculinity. However, due to the fact that this aforementioned variety of masculinity had been responsible for his marginalisation and discomfort within his community and society at large he could not explicitly acknowledge this fact. Instead, his unconscious attraction to the malignant-sadistic type of masculinity expressed itself in an extremely curious way, viz., as an identification therewith, in an attempt to attack and ultimately subdue it. In this one can yet again discern the so-called masculine protest and the subtle striving for superiority (Adler, 1920/1950).

Indeed, it was by way of identification with the aggressor (A. Freud, 1936/1984) that the participant most conspicuously revealed his identification with masculinity, and thus with his father. It ought not to come as a surprise that although the participant felt himself to be more akin to his mother that a certain portion of his psyche should also identify with that of his father.[27] For one ought to recall here that, according to Freud (1923/1947), both the positive and negative forms of the Oedipus complex are operative in every individual. In the case of heterosexuals the positive form of the Oedipus complex is thought to be the more dominant; whereas in the case of our participants, the negative Oedipus complex must be conceived as possessing primacy, while the positive form thereof occupies the penultimate position. In other

[27] As mentioned, at times this duality in the participant's psyche expressed itself as a fusion of both in the form of a strong Southern African-American woman's accent, i.e. a female with stereotypical masculine psychic attributes.

words, the data obtained indicates that homosexual males tend to identify far more with their mothers and posit the father/father-figure as the primary erotic-object.

This aforementioned observation is extremely interesting and it appears to reveal a lacuna in the contemporary depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality – although, as mentioned, Freud (1923/1947) had pointed it out long before – viz., what caused the participants to identify more profoundly with their mothers and to take their father/father-figures as erotic-objects? We have acknowledged that one can simultaneously identify with both parents/parental-figures and consider both parents/parental-figures as possessing attractive qualities that one may hope his future partner will likewise possess; but why did the mother identification assume ascendancy over the father/father-figure, who it appears occupies the secondary position? And, conversely, why did the father/father-figure assume ascendancy over the mother as the erotic-object? It seems that in Freud's (1923/1947) view – which incidentally aligns with the participants' views that their homosexuality existed from birth, i.e. that it was innate – an underlying biological predisposition to effeminacy is the causative agent responsible for these phenomena, i.e. the young homosexual boy feels himself to be inclined to effeminacy and so naturally identifies with his mother and, according to the depathologized theory (Mitchell, 2012), takes his father as the erotic-object[28].

Current research intimates that society – that is to say *the context within which an individual finds himself* – may, however, also be determining in this regard. As I have attempted to render as perspicuous as possible throughout my discussion of the data, it seems that society's view of what constitutes the ideal male/man had alienated the participants from their masculinity. Thus, due to these societal prejudices it was a foregone conclusion that the participants would necessarily have to identify with their mothers as opposed to their fathers/father-figures. I reiterate that it remains an open question – and may in fact be worth exploring in future research – how the participants would have presented and identified had they not been exposed to such prejudicial views; perhaps then, as I stated, these participants would have presented as identifying far more with masculinity than they in fact did.

[28] Here again, I remind readers that this is not the classical psychoanalytical understanding of male homosexuality according to Freud's (1905/2011) primary hypothesis; but the interpretation given is, I think, quite understandable and one may justifiably wonder why Freud himself never proposed this view but instead insisted that male homosexuals take *themselves* as a love-object.

On both these points of concurrence between the identification with the parents and the taking thereof as the prototypically perfect partner that one hopes to pair with in adulthood one finds that the contemporary depathologized theory assumes prominence in so far as it appears more pertinent, for the participants indicated that they identified with both mother and father-figures in addition to the fact that there are attributes of both parents that they admire and hence hope to discover in an ideal partner. However, identification with the mother and the consideration of the father-figure as the prototypically ideal type were far more prominent and hence, in a sense, the classical theory was also indicated to have some pertinence in connection with the former finding, i.e., identification with the mother. In stating that the classical theory seems to have relevance it ought however to be borne in mind that it necessarily regards the negative Oedipal complex as pathological; whereas the contemporary theory considers the negative Oedipal complex to be merely an alternate developmental trajectory with equal possibility of a healthy resolution.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Findings

In summation, the data indicate that although a more contextual understanding is necessary in connection with the psychoanalytic conceptualisation of male homosexuality, the contemporary depathologized theory appeared to be applicable to the participants. All three indicated that they identified with both male and female parent-figures, but identification with the mother or mother-figure was far more prominent. Likewise, the participants concurred with the notion of parent-figures acting as the prototype of the ideal partner that one hopes to partner with in adulthood. Although the participants stated that there are attributes of their mothers that they look for in a potential partner, it seemed that the father or father-figure was far more significant in this regard. Therefore, in spite of a lack of contextual understanding, aspects of both the contemporary depathologized and the classical psychoanalytic theories seem to have cross-cultural applicability.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

There are numerous limitations which need to be acknowledged. These included the following: (i) the size of the sample, (ii) the type of participant selected and (iii) the assumptions made by the researcher. As there is much overlap between all three I shall discuss them collectively.

It ought to be evident that the sample size was extremely small in the present study. Therefore, the results obtained therefrom are not generalizable to the broader population of Black homosexual males in South Africa. Interestingly, the three participants interviewed all presented as the youngest and only male siblings in families with multiple sisters. The study did not take birth order or the gender of siblings into consideration; but it may be that birth order and having multiple brothers (as opposed to sisters) will have an impact upon the information supplied by the participants in connection with identification with mother-figures/father-figures. Moreover, the three participants all had some level of tertiary education: two of them had university degrees, while one had been in university for a number of years. Consequently, the participants have been exposed to certain notions that other Black men – i.e. those who have not been at university – will not have been exposed to. This too, may have

influenced the results in some way and consequently the information obtained cannot be generalised to the broader community of Black homosexual men in South Africa.

There are also limitations on the study which emanate from the researcher. Given that he must necessarily have engaged with the research from a particular position, with certain preconceived notions, it is inevitable that these have influenced the conclusions of the study. In this regard, reflexivity was essential in illuminating these influences upon the interpretation of the results as far as possible. But there may, of course, be other blind-spots which prevent the researcher from taking cognisance of certain impediments to the research.

6.3 Clinical Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

One of the most fundamental implications of the research is the intimation that homosexuality cannot be comprehended in isolation, i.e. one must necessarily take into consideration the multiple contexts within which an individual is necessarily embedded in order to be fully comprehended. This is particularly significant in connection with homosexuality due to the historical pathologizing of the condition (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). In other words, some of the negative behaviours ordinarily associated with a homosexual lifestyle, such as the utilisation of illicit substances, promiscuity and alcoholism (Mattison, et al., 2001), may in fact be a consequence of marginalisation and prejudice which many homosexual men experience within their communities, i.e. these behaviours ought to be regarded as compensations (Adler, 1920/1950) which many homosexual men employ in order to evade feelings of inferiority caused by society, which often disdains homosexuals (Msibi, 2009; Wells & Polders, 2006) .

Contextualisation may also be regarded as a theme for future research in connection with the depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. In particular it would be interesting to consider whether a more accepting environment would lead to identification with the father/father-figure becoming more prominent or significant (Mitchell, 2012) than it presented in the results of the present study.

Another particularly interesting theme was that of homosexuality in contemporary society as possibly engendering an inferiority complex. As there appears to be scant literature on this particular topic it might be an extremely interesting area for future research. It is hoped that the

present study will encourage others to research this interesting topic, which could have valuable implications for both homosexuals and the psychotherapists who work with them.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

8.1 Informed Consent Statement

Study Title: *The Black Homoerotic Oedipus: an exploratory multiple-case study on the possible cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality*

Researcher: *Jonti Bloomberg*

The researcher has proposed to conduct his research on the possible cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. In order to gather relevant data, you have been invited to participate in this research study. By agreeing, you are requested to attend, at your convenience, three interview sessions.

In order to participate, it is necessary that you give your informed consent. By signing this this document you are indicating that you understand the nature of the research study and your role in the research project, and that you agree to participate. Please consider the following points before signing; please tick to agree:

- ☐ I have been given a participant information sheet, which explains the nature and processes involved in this study.
- ☐ I was given time to read it, or I had it read to me, in the language I best understand.
- ☐ I understand that my identity will not be linked with my data, and that all information I provide will remain confidential.
- ☐ I understand that I will be provided with an explanation of the research in which I participate; and furthermore, that should I have questions about the research I can contact Jonti Bloomberg via email (jonti.bloomberg@gmail.com).
- ☐ I understand that no harm or benefit will come from my participation in the research.
- ☐ I understand that my participation in this research project is entirely voluntary, and that I may refuse to participate at any stage thereof, without penalty. I understand that even if I initially consent to take part in the study, I may subsequently withdraw at any time before submission of the thesis or publication of the findings. Moreover, I will not be required to give any reasons, if that occurred. Any data collected about me for the purposes of the study will immediately be destroyed, unless I give my consent for it to be retained.

By signing this form I am stating that I am over 18 years of age, and that I understand the above information and consent to participate in this study being conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

First Name(s): _____ Surname: _____

Witnessed by (Name of Witness): _____ Date: _____

Signature (of Witness): _____

8.2 Informed Consent for Video/Audio Recording

Study Title: *The Black Homoerotic Oedipus: an exploratory multiple-case study on the possible cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality*

Researcher: *Jonti Bloomberg*

The interview sessions will need to be recorded in order for the researcher to transcribe them at a later stage; this requires your informed consent. By signing this document you are indicating that you permit the recording of the interviews for research purposes only.

I understand that (please tick to agree):

- ☐ The interviews will be audio/video (in the case of online interviews) recorded and transcribed.
- ☐ Transcriptions will be anonymised and all identifying details removed.
- ☐ Quotations from the transcripts will be used in the final research report, but these will not be linked to the participant's identity.
- ☐ The audio/video recordings will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer and deleted after examination of the research.
- ☐ The anonymised transcripts will be stored on the researcher and his supervisor's password protected computers, and only with the participant's permission (see below) used for possible future research by the researcher and his supervisor.

I do / do not (please ~~strike through~~ the option which does not apply) give consent for the interviews to be used in future research.

By signing this form I am stating that I am over 18 years of age, and that I understand the above information and consent to my interview being audio/video recorded.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

First Name(s): _____ Surname: _____

Witnessed by (Name of Witness): _____ Date: _____

Signature (of Witness): _____

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Dear potential participant,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jonti Bloomberg as part of the requirements for the completion of his Master's degree in Educational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

The research, which is under the supervision of Prof. Katherine Bain, seeks to determine the possible cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. In essence the research aims to explore the convergences and divergences between Black South African gay men's culturally-embedded understandings and current depathologized psychoanalytic understandings of the developmental origins of homosexuality.

As part of the research, I would like to invite you to participate in three interviews (of approximately sixty minutes each). Interviews will be a week to two weeks apart and will be scheduled around your availability. With your permission, I would also like to audio (and for online interviews, video) record the interviews using a digital device. These recordings will be stored on a password protected computer, and only the researcher will have access to them. The recordings will be deleted once the research project is completed. Anonymised transcriptions of the interviews will be stored on the researcher and his supervisor's password protected computers; and, with your permission, stored for future possible research use by the researcher and his supervisor.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in the research. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation and there are no disadvantages or penalties if you decide not to participate, or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time prior to examination and you are not obligated to answer any question(s) that you choose not to. The information obtained from the interview will be kept completely confidential and anonymous; and the information given to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you would like to access free support or counselling services, these are available at the Wits Emthonjeni centre (please email: Paballo.Lepota@wits.ac.za or Gillian.Eagle@wits.ac.za to make a booking).

If you have any questions during or after the interviews about the research, please feel free to contact me on the details listed below. The study will be written up as a research report, which will be available online through the University library website. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone: +27 11 717 1408, email: hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Jonti Bloomberg

Email: jonti.bloomberg@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof. Katherine Bain, email: Katherine.Bain@wits.ac.za, tel: +27 11 717 4558

Appendix C: Interview Schedules

Although Cartwright (2002) recommends that the two initial interviews be largely unstructured, the following set of open-ended questions will be put to participants in order to generate pertinent information on the research topic.

Interview One

In the initial interview the researcher will attempt to build rapport with participants and obtain general information on the topic by way of the following questions:

(i) Could you please tell me your experience of being gay in your community?
(ii) When did you first know you were gay?
(iii) How did your family respond to you coming out?
(iv) How did your culture influence your understanding and expression of being gay?
(v) How did your racial context influence your expression of being gay?

Interview Two

In the second interview the meanings constructed by the participants' regarding homosexuality will be explored. The researcher proposes to ask participants the following questions in order to obtain information in relation thereto:

(i) How do you understand being gay?
(ii) How do you think a person becomes gay?
(iii) What environmental (family) or biological influences, if any, do you think cause a person to become gay?

Interview Three

The final interview will focus on the participants' responses to the depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality. After the researcher has briefly explained the core tenets thereof the participants will be asked:

(i) What do you make of this theory of male homosexuality?
(ii) Is there any part of the theory that you think applies to you as a gay man?

(iii) Are there any parts you would question or change?

Thereafter, any pertinent and interesting material mentioned in the two initial interviews will be explored in greater detail, thereby deepening the content thereof.

Appendix D: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MEDPSYC/21/09**
PROJECT TITLE:	The Black Homoerotic Oedipus: an exploratory multiple-case study on the possible cross-cultural applicability of a depathologized psychoanalytic theory of male homosexuality.
INVESTIGATOR	Bloomberg Jonti (0415824V)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	07 June 2021
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Minimal Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2023

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 21 June 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** *Z. AMOD*
(Prof. Zaytoon Amod)

Cc Prof. Katherine Bain (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Jonti Bloomberg
Signature

25 / 06 / 2021
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES