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Teachers' Perceptions of Homophobic Victimisation among Learners within Independent Secondary Schools

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

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Education (Educational Psychology) in the Department of Psychology, School of Human and Community Development, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed: _____

Hendrik Petrus Mostert

Date: _____

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ABSTRACT

Discrimination based on sexual orientation takes place on a regular basis in schools today. A major form of discrimination among learners in secondary schools is homophobic victimisation. South Africa is a democratic society with laws that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, yet discrimination towards these learners still occurs. The objective of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

The researcher adopted a phenomenological approach. The research design was qualitative and of an exploratory, descriptive and contextual nature. Information was gathered through questioning participants via an open-ended, structured questionnaire. Teschs's eight step method of data analysis was used. An independent coder, together with the researcher, analysed the data. Three themes (and attendant categories) were identified, discussed and supported with literature.

The first of these themes pertains to the institutional level and the school context, in particular. The categories identified under this theme pertained to teachers' thoughts regarding a culture of acceptance of homosexuality and school policy regarding sexual orientation and homophobic victimisation. The second theme related to the individual level of the teachers and their perceptions regarding, firstly, homosexuality and, secondly, homosexually-oriented learners. The third and final theme identified was that of the individual level of the learners and the difficulties they experience. In particular, these difficulties pertain to social difficulties, acts of verbal, physical and emotional victimisation and the learners' self-concept.

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And finally, I want to express my sincere empathy and compassion with all learners who experience homophobic victimisation in schools based on their sexual orientation.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my late grandmother Mrs. J. A. Mostert and grandfather Mr. H. P. Mostert. I miss you so much more than words can express.

In the next room

"Death is nothing at all:
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I and you are you;
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.
Call me by my old familiar name,
Speak to me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference in your tone;
Wear no forced air or solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near,
just around the corners.
All is well."

Canon Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918), in Braybrooke (2001, p.142)

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

> Baha'I faith: Epistle to the son of the Wolf - "And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself."
>
> (Johnson, 2003, p.379)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a rationale for, and overview of, this study will be provided. The chapter highlights the need for such a study to be conducted within the South African context.

1.2 RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

Athanases and Larrabee (2003) describe heterosexism as a social issue in which heterosexuality is perceived as being normal and better than other sexual orientations. According to Clarke, Ellis, Peel and Riggs (2010), heterosexism is seen as a form of prejudice primarily directed towards all non-heterosexual people. This term acknowledges the marginalisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people as a social issue rather than an individual one (Clarke et al., 2010).

Heterosexism poses the risk of homophobia, which is a fear of homosexuality in oneself and others (Murray, 2001). It was George Weinberg, a psychologist, who introduced the term, "homophobia" to society in 1972. Homophobia results in aggression towards LGBT people (Hirschfeld, 2001). Verbal behaviour intended to victimise is referred to as 'hate speech' and negative physical behaviour towards others as 'hate crime' (OUT LGBT Well-being, 2008). Victims of homophobia can experience major adverse effects concerning their health and general well-being (American Psychological Association (APA), 2008a). Michaelson (2008, p.81), once said, "life is more valuable than any set of beliefs on homosexuality."

A research study conducted by Hirschfeld (2001) in the United States indicates that many schools do not sufficiently accommodate for the well-being of LGBT learners and families. This research demonstrates that school environments that fail to embrace the acceptance of marginalised sexual orientations are breeding grounds for fear and a lack of awareness. Furthermore, this encourages teasing of LGBT learners in early grades and acts of violence

when the learners reach secondary school. The study also highlighted the fact that there is a lack of research regarding negative attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation. This is because many view anti-LGBT prejudice as acceptable (Hirschfeld, 2001). According to the APA (2008a), American lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience widespread homophobic victimisation due to the nature of their sexual orientation. Many surveys pinpoint the fact that verbal abuse is a worldwide phenomenon among gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Discrimination towards both homo- and bi-sexuality impacts on victims in a personal and social capacity (APA, 2008a).

According to Mason and Palmer (1996), as cited in Forrest, Biddle and Clift (1997), homophobic bullying can take the form of violent attacks, damage to personal property, threats, isolation and unpleasant looks and stares from peers. Bullying of LGBT learners has a negative impact on the education, health and general well-being of these learners (Clarke et al., 2010).

In 2004, the United Kingdom government began an initiative entitled, "Every Child Matters." The aim of this initiative was to provide more efficient services to all children. As this strategy is inclusive, professionals have a chance to take a closer look at the services being provided to children who are LGBT (Biddulph, 2006). Such an initiative is a positive move towards not only accepting, but accommodating the needs of LGBT learners. In British schools, homophobic bullying has nearly become an epidemic. Recent research, conducted by YouGov for Stonewall, revealed that nine out of ten teachers admitted that their learners were victims of homophobic bullying (Nunn, 2009).

In a recent South African research study, it was demonstrated that aggression towards learners perceived to be homosexual and learners with a homosexual orientation does take place (Mostert, 2008). This research was conducted in an independent secondary school in Johannesburg, Gauteng. The study focused on the perpetrators' experiences of aggression towards victims.

The results indicate that perpetrators experience internal feelings of discomfort, anger, irritation, fear, hatred and disgust towards victims. It was also found that the external feelings of these perpetrators manifest in both verbal and physical forms of aggression. The former

includes rumours, bad jokes, name calling, teasing and mockery. The latter includes ganging up against the victims, bullying and hitting (Mostert, 2008).

According to Gunkel (2009, p. 207), "post-apartheid South-Africa was the first country in the world that explicitly incorporated lesbian and gay rights within the Bill of Rights of the post-apartheid constitution." As South Africa is a democratic society with laws that protect the rights of all sexual orientations, it is imperative to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

According to Betteridge and van Dijk (2007), section 9 of the new South African Constitution (entitled 'Equality') states that:

> "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (p.86).

According to Sooka (2010), social justice is a framework based on the acceptance of differences and diversity worldwide and South Africa is moving towards a more inclusive society that respects diversity. This social justice transformation in South Africa should lead to the minimisation of inequalities based on sexual orientation (Sooka, 2010). As inequalities toward LGBT people are a pertinent issue in South Africa, further research within an educational setting should be conducted. Even though bullying can link with homophobia, there has been little attempt to combine these two areas of research (Espelage & Swearer, 2008).

A Canadian research study (Meyer, 2008) investigated the perceptions of six teachers within a single urban school district regarding gendered harassment in Canadian secondary schools. Gendered harassment is a term that encompasses all behaviour that promotes traditional heterosexual norms such as homophobic victimisation. A more comprehensive understanding of factors that prevent teacher intervention in such acts of discrimination can assist secondary schools in finding solutions to solve the problem of gendered harassment.

In the South African context, there has been little to no research done regarding teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. It is therefore argued that this research is essential in addressing this gap within the

literature. In a recent study conducted by Mostert (2008), Grade 11 learners' perceptions of aggression towards learners perceived to be homosexual was explored and described. The research design followed a phenomenological approach in which focus group interviews, essays based on a published newspaper photograph and field notes were used to gather data. The results of Mostert's (2008) study revealed three key themes: acceptance of homosexual orientations, ambivalent feelings towards homosexual orientations and lastly non-acceptance of homosexual orientations. This study revealed a high prevalence of homophobic victimisation among learners.

In contrast, Meyer (2008) focused on teachers' perceptions regarding gendered harassment in secondary schools within Canada. This includes heterosexual harassment, homophobic victimisation and harassment of people who do not conform to the stereotypical roles assigned to their gender. Meyer (2008) used in-depth interviews with a small target group. The results revealed that teachers experience both internal and external factors that prevent them from intervening in the gendered harassment of learners.

This being said, the present study investigates the perceptions of teachers in two independent secondary schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng, in order to understand this form of discrimination from a South African perspective. Open-ended, structured questionnaires with a large group of teachers (in relation to Meyer's target group) will be used to gather data.

An accepting school environment can only be achieved if school staff understand the nature of sexual orientation development and provide the necessary support for all youth so that they are able to develop healthily (APA, 2008b). In light of this, this study will investigate the current perceptions held by the target group so as to better understand how teachers understand homophobic victimisation among learners in independent secondary schools. An under-researched, yet significant issue continues to be that of homophobia among adolescents, which relates to the school context (Poteat, 2008) and this further provides a rationale for a study such as this.

A more positive school environment towards lesbian, gay and bisexual learners can decrease harmful psychological effects, as the American Psychological Association states: "It is important that . . . school environments be open and accepting so these young people will feel

comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns, including the option of disclosing their sexual orientation to others" (APA, 2008b, p.4).

1.3 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This report on teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools is divided into five chapters, as per Roberts' (2004) outline of a typical dissertation structure. This first chapter has introduced the research topic and highlighted the significance of such research in a South African context; it has also provided the rationale behind the research. Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literature related to the research study. It provides insight into what is already known and what gaps exist in the literature. Chapter 3 explains the methodology that was followed in the study; this includes the main research question and research sub-questions, design and method, sample and sampling, data collection, data analysis, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the research and provides a discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 highlights the conclusions of the study and discusses the limitations of the study; it also provides recommendations for action and future research.

1.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to provide a rationale for, and overview of, this study. In addition, the chapter has outlined the structure of the report. In the following chapter, a review of the literature will be provided.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

> Hinduism: The Mahabharata – "This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain."
>
> (Johnson, 2003, p.379)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter one, both a rationale for, and overview of, this study were provided. In this chapter, the existing literature related to teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools will be discussed. Past research studies regarding homophobic victimisation will provide a background understanding of the theoretical evidence at hand and the implications thereof.

2.2 HOMOPHOBIC VICTIMISATION

In a foreword on homophobia as a crime against humanity, Archbishop emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu (2007) stated the following:

> "Discrimination and persecution of people because of their sexual orientation is as unjust as the crime of racism. Homophobia is a crime against humanity. We overcame apartheid. We will overcome homophobia" (p.vii).

The initial global workshop on education towards accommodating the needs of homosexually-oriented learners took place in 1998 under the direction of Amnesty International and HIVOS (Dankmeijer, 2007). The fundamental message of this workshop was to increase the effectiveness of interventions to tackle homophobia within educational settings. During the period between 2003 and 2006, a diversity of respondents linked to education were interviewed within seventeen countries, namely: South Africa, Sweden, Italy, USA, Finland, UK, France, Austria, Columbia, Mexico, India, Thailand, Argentina, Namibia, Australia, Peru and Brazil. The outcomes of these interviews revealed the necessity of global collaboration in order to create a balance between the similarities and differences in approaches towards combating homophobia across different cultures and regions (Dankmeijer, 2007). It is evident that homophobia is interpreted differently across the globe, hence the need for global collaboration focusing on self-esteem, tolerance, social competence and respect for all (Dankmeijer, 2007).

Homophobia does not only have historical-cultural roots, but emotional roots as well (Madureira, 2007). Herek (1990), as cited in Clark et al. (2010) states that heterosexism manifests itself in two main ways: cultural heterosexism and psychological heterosexism. Cultural heterosexism refers to homophobia that takes place within an institution, such as a school, whereas psychological heterosexism refers to negative attitudes and actions directed towards LGBT people. Current research indicates that heterosexism and homophobia occur on both an individual and institutional level in schools (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005 and MacGillivray, 2000, both cited in Prettyman, 2007). Stigmatisation factors such as isolation, harassment, knowledge of difference, lack of family support and aggression towards homosexual youth, put them at risk of intense psychosocial problems, including emotional problems (Chutter, 2007). As Mullen (2001) argues:

> "Heterosexism and Homophobia create a climate of Fear and Shame that encourage Silence that reinforce Invisibility and Isolation that reinforce or leave unchallenged Assumptions, Myths and Negative Attitudes that legitimise Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment, Invisibility, Isolation and Violence which encourage and engender Internalised Homophobia, Heterosexism and Homophobia and Social Exclusion" (p.9).

South African research indicates that homophobic victimisation is a prevalent part of the country. Research conducted in the province of Gauteng (Nel & Judge, 2008) suggests that the occurrence and nature of hate speech and victimisation towards LGBT people is motivated by hate crimes. Research results from this study indicate an alarmingly high rate of homophobic discrimination (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Theron and Bezuidenhout (1995), as cited in Nel and Judge (2008), compared a 1992 South African study with seven United States anti-gay violence victimisation surveys done during 1988 to 1991. They concluded that South Africans were more prone to physical acts of assault whereas Americans were more prone to verbal abuse and violent threats. Children mainly socialise within schools and anti-gay name calling is problematic for victims who may or may not be attracted to the same sex (Michaelson, 2008).

Another study conducted in Gauteng by OUT LGBT Well-Being in conjunction with the UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology (UCAP), finds that despite the guarantee of equal rights and services in the South African Constitution, one cannot assume that discrimination towards sexual minorities has been dealt with (Nel & Judge, 2008). In the findings of Polders and Wells (2004) as cited in Nel and Judge (2008), 76% of the surveyed respondents believe

that the criminal justice system does not support the rights of LGBT people and 61% were of the opinion that their rights are not met within the constitution. The study further alluded to worrying occurrence of homophobic victimisation in Gauteng.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual learners are not the only targets for homophobic victimisation. Any learner who does not conform to traditional masculine and feminine behaviours can become the victim of both verbal and physical bullying (Warwick & Douglas, n.d.). Learners who do not conform to specific, traditional, stereotypical roles, can be accused of being of the opposite sex or homosexual and therefore exposed to bullying (Forrest, Biddle & Clift, 1997). Norman (2005, p.5) states that homophobia is seen as a "negative consequence of gender role stereotyping." According to Little (2001, pp.108-109), people who work with youth should keep the following in mind: "We must move beyond stereotypes and ask ourselves if we can perpetrate and condone ignorance against ten percent of our client population and still believe we are working for all youth."

2.3 HOMOPHOBIC VICTIMISATION AMONG LEARNERS WITHIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In reality, society comprises LGBT people and yet there are schools that pretend that their school population is entirely heterosexual (Lucas, 2004). According to Wild (n.d.), as cited in Mullen (2001, p.1), the "neglect of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) issues in schools, and the associated problem of homophobic bullying, have been a persistent blight for LGB communities." According to Markow and Fein (2005), as cited in Wright (2010), LGBT learners do not feel safe in many school environments, due to their sexual and gender orientations. This is not only a problem of the past but remains an issue currently.

Learners who identify themselves as having a homosexual orientation do not only suffer from prejudice, but also deal with difficult circumstances at school on a daily basis (Forrest, Biddle & Clift, 1997). Both homophobia and heterosexism still govern the majority of school classrooms and playgrounds (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2000).

A reachOUT study conducted in Reading, in the United Kingdom, found that one third of the participants had been victimised at school based on their sexual identity (Mullen, 2001). It was recommended in a Bradford education issue, that secondary schools give learners who

would like to talk about themselves the opportunity to do so if they wish. Any young person should never experience the feeling of being isolated and therefore invisible (Mullen, 2001). As discussed in Rivers and Noret (2008), one of the biggest surveys conducted (by Hunt and Jensen in 2007 in the UK) with gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) youth in secondary and tertiary education, found that three quarters of schools did not have behaviour policies on the injustice of homophobic bullying (Rivers & Noret, 2008). The same study revealed that 65% of GLB learners experienced bullying within the public school system. In religion-oriented schools, however, 75% of GLB learners experienced homophobic victimisation (Rivers & Noret, 2008).

Within the United States, there are arguments both for and against protecting the rights of LGBT learners in schools (Horn, Szalacha & Drill, 2008). Although all learners should be given the opportunity to receive an education without discrimination, harassment and harm, the argument opposing this advocates that by protecting the rights of LGBT learners, schools in turn are violating the personal beliefs of others when it comes to homosexuality (Horn, Szalacha & Drill, 2008). Homophobic bullying appears to have doubled from 37% to almost 74% since a literature review was conducted by Rivers and Duncan in 2002 (Rivers & Noret, 2008).

Norman and Galvin (2006) conducted a study in Dublin that investigated the beliefs and experiences of homophobic victimisation within second-level schools. The target group for the study consisted of school principals, teachers, parents and learners within five second-level schools within Dublin between October 2004 and February 2005. Five themes relevant to homophobic bullying were highlighted in this study: fear, stereotyping, religious influence, heteronormativity and pervasive terms.

The theme of fear was evident from interview data in all five schools and pertained to a fear of anything homosexual. Learners greatly feared that a homosexually-oriented person would make sexual advances on someone of the same sex and that they would not know how to react. Parents feared their own son / daughter admitting to being gay / lesbian because of how other learners and society as a whole would treat them. Many parents were in favour of homosexuality being included in the curriculum as it may curb discrimination against homosexually-oriented people. Parents believed that learners' fears were due to a lack of

education regarding sexual minorities and a lack of personal experience of homosexually-oriented people (Norman & Galvin, 2006).

The theme of stereotyping emerged because many of the learners and parents were ignorant when it came to defining what it means to be gay, as these ideas were often based on media characterisations. The stereotypes employed were limited in nature and indicated a lack of real knowledge of homosexually-oriented people in day-to-day life (Norman & Galvin, 2006).

The theme of religious influence arose in schools with Catholic trustees. According to Ratzinger (1986), as cited in Norman and Galvin (2006), Catholicism promotes the belief that homosexuality is both evil and immoral. Heteronormativity is the belief that the only normal way to live is to be heterosexual. This was evident in most interviews conducted in the five schools. Parents were aware of the importance of appearing 'normal' so as to fit in. Learners were concerned about what behaviour is appropriate for males and females. Interview data showed that school value systems are strongly heteronormative. The final theme, pervasive terms, emerged from the fact that, in all five schools, derogatory terms for homosexually-oriented people were used as part of everyday language. The learners in the study failed to see the severe negative effects of such terms. Parents condoned the use of such pervasive terms as acceptable behaviour between adolescents (Norman & Galvin, 2006). The above findings are indicative of the prevalence of homophobic victimisation within secondary schools and suggest that a transition towards acceptance of all sexual orientations should become a part of schools' cultures.

According to Epstein (2003), as cited in Lucas (2004), the most oppressive homophobic victimisation occurs in the form of official silence regarding sexual orientation. This takes place in the vast majority of mainstream schools in countries where English is one of the main languages. Since the early 1990's, homophobic victimisation in schools has been a topic of scholarly investigation (Meyer, 2008). According to Meyer (2008, p.555), "these studies have shown that sexual and homophobic harassment are accepted parts of school culture where faculty and staff rarely or never intervene to stop this harassment."

According to the Hate Crimes Act in the Laws of New York (2000), as cited in Nel and Judge (2008), hate crimes do not only threaten the well-being and safety of all citizens, but go

against a free society and results in both physical and emotional damage on the part of victims. Such crimes send a potent message that sexual minorities are not tolerated, but discriminated against. Whole communities can and are disturbed by hate crimes and such acts do not support healthy democratic processes (Nel & Judge, 2008).

According to MacGillivray (2000) and Quinlivan and Town (1999), both cited in Prettyman (2007), the victim-blaming mentality of school officials shows the manner in which heterosexism and homophobia are institutionalised in both school formations and practices. United States' schools are still among the most controversial sites regarding the ongoing struggle for homosexual rights, together with the general struggle for sexual freedom (Prettyman, 2007). A research study conducted in the United States by Brown and Henriquez (2008) quotes a survey carried out by Andrew Peters (2003) among secondary school learners, where 94% of students claimed to have heard anti-gay remarks in their school either on a frequent or occasional basis. It was also indicated that school officials rarely or never intervene in homophobic victimisation acts. The same study reported that one in ten learners have been exposed to physical harassment due to their sexual orientation or perception thereof.

A recent review paper written by Chan (2009), in Singapore, advocates that homophobic school victimisation is the most important sexual orientation-related problem affecting learners of all ages around the world. It is not only school authorities, but parents and society as a whole, who deny that homophobic school victimisation occurs and has a negative impact. A large number of learners who are victims of homophobic bullying within schools struggle and suffer without their plight being seen, heard, noticed and believed. In the review paper, Chan (2009) states that homophobic school bullying in particular has traumatic consequences for victims, not only in the short term, but in later life too.

An Australian study revealed that learners who may be homosexual have to deal with challenges on a daily basis that are not adequately acknowledged by school administrators (Michaelson, 2008). LGBT learners do not have equal educational opportunities and schools are unwilling to accommodate them in educational communities. However, targets of homophobic victimisation do not often complain, as they are afraid the bullying will increase and they do not wish to continue being accused of being a LGBT learner, regardless of whether they are or not (Michaelson, 2008).

According to Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher and Astbury (2003), South Africa's education systems are now recognised as inclusive and take both cultural diversity and individual rights into account. In a recent study conducted by Butler et al. (2003), however, gay and lesbian participants mentioned that they were victims of homophobia in South African secondary schools. They also reported that their school climate was not accepting of non-heterosexual learners.

According to the participants, schools followed a conservative philosophy; in addition, the participants claimed that they were made to feel that their homosexuality was not right (Butler et al., 2003). In order to curb the current issue of homophobic victimisation among learners within secondary schools, research on teacher's perceptions is crucial in order to gain a better understanding of homophobic victimisation among learners in such educational settings.

2.4 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOMOPHOBIC VICTIMISATION AMONG LEARNERS WITHIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Gay and lesbian equality as a concern of every teacher has long been argued for by the National Union of Teachers (NUT in Lucas, 2004). Meyer (2008) conducted a research study on gendered harassment in secondary schools within Canada, in order to understand teachers' intervention or lack thereof. Gendered harassment is a term that refers to any verbal, physical or psychological behaviour that controls the boundaries of traditional heterosexual gender norms. This includes heterosexual harassment, homophobic victimisation and harassment towards people who do not conform to the stereotypical roles assigned to their gender.

Six secondary school teachers were interviewed within one urban public school district in Canada so as to gain insight into the phenomenon of gendered harassment from the point of view of those teachers. How teachers understand and perceive gendered harassment has an influence on when and how they decide to intervene in school incidents that they witness. The research findings indicated that four factors influence teachers' responses to gendered harassment in schools: internal influences, external influences, perceptions and responses.

Teachers' perceptions of learners' behaviours are shaped by the interaction of internal and external influences. Internal influences refer to teachers' personal identities and experiences

within an educational setting (Meyer, 2008). External influences, on the other hand, consist of two categories, namely institutional and social influences. The former refers to formal structures that influence how teachers view their school culture (Meyer, 2008). In this regard, Meyer (2008) states that the four most important factors of the organisation are: (1) the structures for and responses of administrators, (2) the demands of the curriculum and teacher workload, (3) teachers' professional development, and (4) written policies. The latter refers to schools' informal structures: the social norms and values within the school. A school's social values and norms have the most powerful influence over the behaviours of teachers.

Teachers' perceptions of administration, interpersonal relationships and community values, affect their behaviour within a school (Meyer, 2008). Meyer (2008) continues:

> "Through the process of listening to teachers talk about their experiences with gendered harassment in secondary schools it is clear that it is not possible to create safer and more positive learning environments until school leaders initiate a whole-school process that engages students, families, teachers and community members in a process of transforming the formal and informal structures of the school" (p.568).

Research conducted by Norman (2005) indicates that a high number of educators within Irish secondary schools were aware of verbal bullying of a homophobic nature. In the study, 64% of teachers indicated that the leading factor preventing the effective handling of gay and lesbian concerns was the inexperience of staff members in dealing with such issues. A lack of formal guidelines and a fear of parental approval also featured high on the list of prohibitive factors. A study conducted by Douglas et al. (1997), as cited in Mullen (2001), found that the top three factors preventing teachers and schools from addressing homophobic bullying were concerns regarding parental disapproval, a high number of inexperienced staff and a lack of policies. Norman and Galvin's (2006) previously mentioned investigation of attitudes and beliefs held by school principals, teachers, parents and learners regarding second-level school homophobic bullying within Dublin, revealed that teachers were aware of the fact that learners were scared of being perceived as having a homosexual-orientation. The findings of the study also revealed that both teachers and parents believed that a lack of teaching and personal experience of homosexually-oriented people were the main reasons behind learners' fears.

As mentioned previously, it was also illustrated that teachers and school administrators held narrow views regarding the term 'gay' and that these beliefs were strongly influenced by the

media. The influence of religion was also evident in Catholic schools. Where some of the staff indicated that their Catholic school would accept homosexually-oriented people, other staff did not. It was also made clear that teachers working in the five schools were aware of the manner in which learners observed the limitations of what was considered normal and abnormal. School principals appeared to indicate that being perceived as different within a school is the main cause of being bullied about one's sexuality. Finally, the study also revealed that teachers are tolerant of the use of negative terms by adolescents towards homosexually-oriented people and choose to ignore such behaviour unless it takes place in a blatant way (Norman & Galvin, 2006).

Findings were unclear with regard to whether homophobic victimisation continues in schools due to a lack of teacher intervention or whether teachers do not intervene because it would be impractical due to the commonness of this victimisation. It is apparent that teachers seem to be anxious over perceived disapproval by the school community in the event that they take action against homophobic victimisation within their schools (Norman & Galvin, 2006). Norman and Galvin (2006, p.18) states that "it is the power of silence that ultimately controls how teachers and students alike react to this issue." In a study conducted by Rudoe (2010), it was shown that in schools of high social deprivation or those comprising many religious learners, teachers have a diminished ability to intervene in acts of a homophobic nature and therefore to challenge homophobia.

According to a study by Harris Interactive and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] (2005), as cited in Espelage and Swearer (2008), homophobic remarks are made in schools where teachers are present but do not address these incidents. Lack of teacher intervention can intensify homophobic victimisation. Poteat and Espelage (2007), as cited in Gross (2008), argue that teachers and administrators at times perceive homophobic victimisation among learners as harmless fighting between friends. Some teachers fear how they may be perceived if they support anti-homophobic acts. They are concerned that they may be accused of being disloyal to the school's heteronormative construction and therefore of being unprofessional. In addition, they are concerned that it will be assumed that they are homosexually-oriented themselves. Lastly, they fear that they may be exposed to reactions of a homophobic nature from the school community (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2000). According to Pallota-Chiarolli (2005, p.2), "the 'problem' is *heteronormativity*: the political, institutional and social acceptance that discrimination, exploitation and exclusion of GLBT people is

'normal' and justified." According to Michaelson (2008), teachers should be encouraged by schools to react against all incidents of homophobic victimisation.

In another Irish study, conducted by O'Higgins-Norman (2009) in Dublin, participants included learners, parents, teachers and senior management teams in six secondary schools. The results suggested that teachers rarely intervene in homophobic victimisation and that the perceptions of teachers play a crucial role in what is considered to be normal or not. In his previous study (2008), as cited in O'Higgins-Norman (2009), results indicated that 41% of teachers reported homophobic bullying as the most challenging form of victimisation. Teachers within the study were hesitant to intervene in homophobic victimisation incidents. Clarke et al. (2010) argue:

> "Since teachers fail actively to promote sexual and gender diversity, infrequently address homophobic bullying when it occurs, and in some cases perpetrate prejudice themselves, it is hardly surprising that homophobic bullying in schools is under-reported and that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer (LGBTQ) young people do not feel supported" (p.167).

According to DePalma and Jennett (2007), homophobia is a cultural phenomenon which can only be challenged by promoting the equality of LGBT learners as part of school philosophy. School culture, as a whole, needs to be transformed and this transformation should be evident as soon as a learner enters school property. Learners spend a significant amount of time at school and it should be the responsibility of the principal, teachers and all school staff to create an environment of non-discrimination. This can lead to a better understanding of minority sexual orientations and may help to limit the occurrence of homophobic victimisation. As Warwick and Douglas (n.d., p.13) state, "teaching staff are one of the most important resources available to a school in tackling homophobic bullying." According to Wright (2010), safe schools are positively linked with teacher effectiveness. Loutzeheiser (1996), as cited in Little (2001), states that teachers must be educated about diversity in sexual orientation and must explore their own beliefs and emotions before trying to educate. Teachers can best accommodate their learners by understanding their own subjective beliefs and prejudices (Little, 2001). Teachers should look beyond their own personal beliefs in order to fulfil their duty to all learners (Murray, 2001).

Butler et al. (2003, p.40) mentions that "if children are to grow into playing effective adult roles in a democratic South African society, then the tenets of non-discrimination and

tolerance need to be both taught at school and modelled by educators." The workshop manual for an Educator Awareness Project called "Understanding Sexual Diversity in the Classroom", initiated in 2005, states that role players should be identified within various educational groups, such as learners, teachers, school staff, principals, parents, governing bodies and the Department of Education (Betteridge & van Dijk, 2007). Within this manual, recommendations are made on how to respond to sexual diversity within schools. Schools should have policies on how to deal with homophobic acts, school staff should implement these policies and learners should be educated on acceptable behaviour towards LGB people and informed of the process involved in dealing with homophobic victimisation (Betteridge & van Dijk, 2007).

A survey of LGBQ youth in UK schools conducted by Hunt and Jensen (2006), as cited in Clarke et al. (2010), advocates that schools – in which homophobic bullying is seen as inappropriate, where teacher intervention takes place and where learners are educated positively about homosexually-oriented people – are educational settings in which LGBQ youth are more likely to feel safe and less likely to experience bullying. Such findings are indicative of the fact that schools play a major role in whether or not equality towards all youth, including homosexually-oriented learners, is achieved. Horn, Szalacha and Drill (2008, p.810) state that "school staff need to actively cultivate a safe climate that both protects students from undue social, emotional, and physical harm while still providing a space where adolescents are able to develop a healthy sexual identity." According to Farr (2000), as cited in Pérez-Testor, Behar, Davins, Conde Sala, Castillo, Salamero, Alomar and Segarra (2010), teachers are professionals within schools and their educational duties dictate that they have an influence on whether or not their learners develop beliefs that are respectful of sexual diversity.

2.5 SOUTH AFRICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL LAWS: EQUAL RIGHTS REGARDLESS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Samelius and Wägberg (2005), as cited in Nel and Judge (2008), state that the majority of countries in the world lack constitutional protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender. South Africa's history of institutionalised discrimination under the rule of apartheid and colonialism created the conditions for hate crime within the country (Nel & Judge, 2008). South Africa's constitution was the first in the world to eradicate unfair

discrimination based on sexual orientation, which guaranteed equal opportunities within the law for homosexually-oriented people (Betteridge & van Dijk, 2007). In 1998, homosexuality was decriminalised by the South African government which had a positive impact internationally (Thoreson, 2008). The success of this transformation was due to a clause within the South African constitution which prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. South Africa was the first country in the world to promote equality for all LGBT people within its constitution (Thoreson, 2008).

According to Isaack (2003), South Africa has one of the world's most developed and inclusive constitutions in that it includes a specific prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation. Sexual orientation was included in the Equality clause for four reasons (Oswin, 2007). Firstly, post-apartheid, the climate was right and tolerance was being encouraged. Secondly, minority rights needed to be addressed. Thirdly, the influential allies of the gay and lesbian lobby were very sympathetic towards the rights of sexual orientation minorities. Lastly, the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, released a very successful campaign to promote inclusion (Oswin, 2007). According to Betteridge and van Dijk (2007), the Equality clause states that:

> "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (p.86).

According to Butler et al. (2003), constitutional laws can attempt to eliminate blatant homophobic behaviour, but cannot easily rule against concealed homophobic acts. South Africa is very fortunate to have a constitution that focuses on the transformation of their "society into one in which there is respect for human dignity, freedom and equality; a just society" (Sooka, 2010, p.193-194).

According to Nel, however, as cited in Thoreson (2008), activists perceive South Africa as a country that is extremely conservative and based on heterosexual norms. Although South Africa's constitution recognises homosexual rights, it seems as though schools have been inattentive to implementing this law within educational settings (Butler et al., 2003). According to Betteridge and van Dijk (2007), a number of human rights and LGBT organisations exist that educate both students and teachers regarding equal rights, including sexual orientation and sexual diversity. The National Department of Education, however,

fails to support these organisations and excludes them from the national curriculum. Although some regional and provincial aid is provided to individual programmes, no financial aid is given. Michaelson (2008, p.810) states that "children are our future, and children who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender are equal contributors in that future".

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an in-depth review of the literature related to teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools was provided. Chapter three will discuss the research methodology that was used in order to gather data for this particular study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

> Confucianism: Mencius VII.A.4 – "Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence."
>
> (Johnson, 2003, p.379)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, literature related to the research topic was discussed. This chapter will discuss the research objective, research questions and research methodology used in order to gather data on teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Creswell (2008) asserts that the research objective is a statement that specifies the aim that a researcher plans to achieve in his/her study. The objective of this study was:

- to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions, in qualitative research, "narrow the purpose into specific questions that the researcher would like answered or addressed in the study" (Creswell, 2008, p.70). The main research question describes the decisions made in the formulation of the research problem and what the researcher wants to find out (Mouton, 2001). In this research, the following questions were set out.

3.3.1 Main Research Question

- What are teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools?

3.3.2 Research Sub-questions

1. What are teachers' personal understandings of homosexuality?
2. What do teachers think of homosexually-oriented learners in school?
3. Do teachers feel that school culture accepts homosexually-oriented learners?
4. What do teachers think school policies should say about homosexually-oriented learners?
5. What do teachers think school policies should say about aggressive acts towards homosexually-oriented learners?
6. What difficulties do teachers think homosexually-oriented learners might face in school?
7. Are teachers aware of occasions when homosexually-oriented learners have been treated differently because of their sexual orientation?
8. Are teachers aware of acts of aggression towards homosexually-oriented learners?
9. Do teachers feel that their school is dealing adequately with victimisation towards homosexually-oriented learners?
10. Which types of aggressive acts towards homosexually-oriented learners occur in the schools studied?

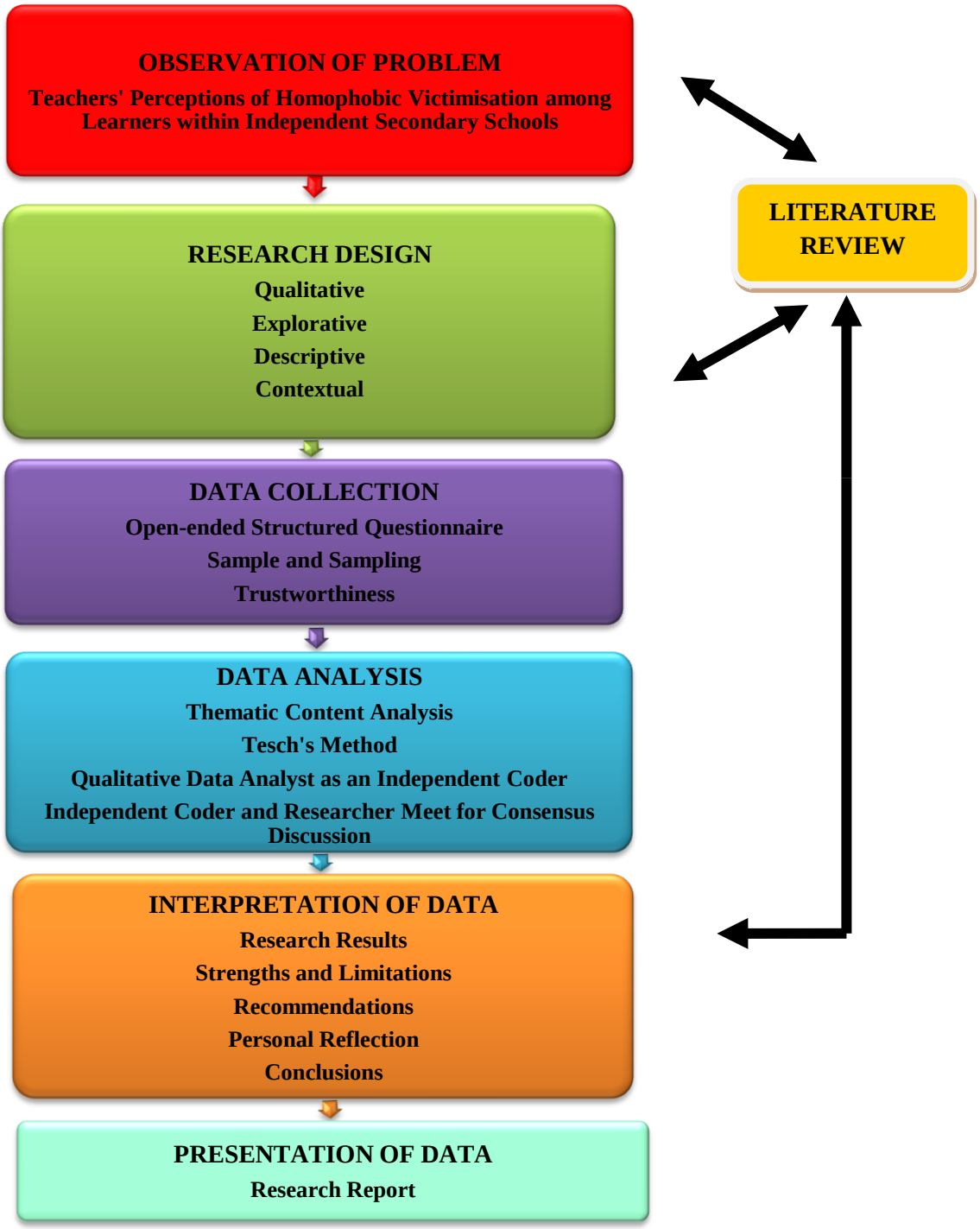
3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Mouton (2001, p.55), "a research design is a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research." According to Roberts (2004), the research design selected should be founded on both the purpose and nature of the research study. In this study, a phenomenological approach was adopted. The research design is qualitative and of an exploratory, descriptive and contextual nature. Phenomenology is not concerned with what causes the experience, but rather with the nature of the experience and participants' conscious thoughts about the experience (Brewer, 2007). The flow diagram below (Figure 3.1), adapted from Hooijer (2004), illustrates the research process that was followed in this study.

In qualitative research, it is important to "discover and understand how people make sense of what happens in their lives" (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000, p.97). This study aimed to investigate the current perceptions held by teachers, regarding homophobic victimisation among learners within their independent secondary schools. Qualitative research captures the

natural development and freedom of action and representation by not controlling the "variables" (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.3).

Figure 3.1: The Research Process



Bryman (1988), as cited in Silverman (1993), provides a good explanation of exploratory, descriptive and contextual research. As far as exploratory research is concerned, open-ended

structured questionnaires were used to gain a deeper insight into teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. Bryman (1988), as cited in Silverman (1993), indicates that events, actions, standards and morals can only be understood from the viewpoint of the participants being studied. The focus of this study was on participants' viewpoints regarding this form of discrimination. Descriptive research, according to Bryman (1988), as cited in Silverman (1993, p.31), is used to help the researcher "to understand what is going on in a particular context and to provide clues and pointers to other layers of reality." A thorough description of the participants' perceptions has been provided within the context of two independent secondary schools. Bryman (1993), as cited in Silverman (1993, p.31), mentions that we can "understand events only when they are situated in the wider social and historical context." In this research, participants' perceptions were considered in relation to their specific educational setting.

3.5 RESEARCH METHOD

3.5.1 Sample and Sampling

Participants in this study were selected through non-probability, purposeful sampling. According to Strauss and Myburgh (2007), purposeful sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which participants are purposefully selected. In this study, participants were selected purposefully as the study was concerned with the perceptions of teachers and the implications thereof. Non-probability sampling requires that the researcher select participants who are conveniently available and who demonstrate the specific characteristics that the researcher wants to investigate (Creswell, 2008). This sampling approach was selected as teachers were convenient, available and representative of the desired participants needed for this research study.

The target population for this research was 103 teachers (27 from School A and 76 from School B) between the ages of 23 and 75 years within two independent, co-educational, secondary schools. Both schools are located within a relatively affluent area of Johannesburg, Gauteng. One school has no specific religious or cultural foundation (School A), while the other (School B) is a Jewish school. Two schools were purposefully selected with the aim of including a broader spectrum of the population under study. Convenient sampling narrows the sample so as to avoid cultural and religious bias. In light of the researcher's previous

research conducted on learners' perceptions of aggression towards homosexually-oriented learners, including those learners perceived as having a homosexual orientation, the aim of this study was to further investigate homophobic victimisation within independent secondary schools, but from the perspective of a different target group, that being teachers. A heterogeneous group of teachers was used in this study. As School A is a multi-cultural system with no specific religious and cultural foundation, the influence of various institutional and social factors was taken into account regarding the influence they may have on teachers' perceptions when it comes to homophobic victimisation. As School B has its roots in Judaism, the external influence of this particular religion and culture on an institutional and social basis was taken into account as it may have contributed to teachers' perceptions regarding sexual minorities.

3.5.2 Data Collection

The procedures used in the collection of data for the research are described below. Creswell (2008) mentions that data collection is a process wherein participants are selected for research, and where consent is obtained to study their responses. In this study, information was gathered through questioning the participants via an open-ended, structured questionnaire. Qualitative research often makes use of open-ended data in order to identify overlapping themes (Creswell, 2008); this strategy was adopted in this study.

During a staff meeting the researcher invited all teachers to complete an open-ended, structured questionnaire. Time was allocated at the end of the staff meeting for any questions and concerns that the teachers may have had. The staff meeting lasted approximately thirty minutes.

The researcher left a private sealed box placed in an allocated area of the school premises in which participants could post their questionnaires. The box was collected after one week. Demographic details were requested in the open-ended structured questionnaire, followed by ten open-ended questions (Appendix D).

3.5.3 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2008), data analysis is a process which involves drawing conclusions about the collected data and explaining these conclusions in written words to provide answers to the research questions. This process requires "craftsmanship and the ability to capture understanding of the data in writing" (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.101). In this study, data analysis was undertaken using thematic content analysis, as described below. Tesch (1990), as cited in Creswell (2003, p.192), provides a qualitative method of data analysis. Tesch's eight step method of data analysis was followed in this research. According to Creswell (2003), these eight steps are useful in providing researchers with a structured process through which to analyse data. Tesch's eight steps appear below:

1. Read through all open-ended structured questionnaire responses with care and make notes of "ideas as they come to mind."
2. Choose the shortest or most interesting questionnaire and find the underlying meaning. Write your notes in the margin.
3. Follow this procedure for the remaining participants. Make a list of all the topics which arise and cluster similar topics together. Arrange the topics in columns of "major topics, unique topics and leftovers."
4. Take this list and refer back to the data. Give these topics codes, and write the codes next to the appropriate parts of the text to see if new categories and codes arise.
5. Find the most descriptive words for the topics and turn them into categories. Try to reduce the total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other.
6. Make a choice on the abbreviation for each category and "alphabetise these codes."
7. Put the data material belonging to each category together in one place and do a preliminary analysis.
8. Re-code the data that exists, if necessary.

In this research, Prof. J. E. Maritz, an Advanced Research Methodologist, was the qualitative data analyst and an independent coder in the analysis of the data, in order to give the research greater specificity regarding qualitative findings (Appendix E). The external auditor is responsible for reviewing the diverse aspects of the research study (Creswell, 2008). Three themes and seven categories were identified by the independent coder, as will be discussed in

Chapter 4. After the analysis was conducted by both the independent coder and researcher, they met for a consensus discussion.

3.5.4 Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, there are a number of ways to ensure trustworthiness. Research is valid when the various approaches, methods and techniques used by the researcher relate to the research topic under investigation (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006). Reliability is concerned with how effectively the researcher has conducted the project and whether the study has been conducted in such a way that another researcher could do the same research and obtain the same results (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness in this research, the following four criteria, as identified by Strauss and Myburgh (2007, pp.59-60), were adhered to: "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability".

1. Credibility refers to "accountability for the entire research process and includes actions in preparation of the field of research, authority of the research ... participants' control of the data, and peer group evaluation" (Strauss & Myburgh, 2007, p.59). The researcher was supervised by the University of the Witwatersrand. All of the participants in this research were given the freedom to express their views regarding homophobic victimisation among learners within their independent secondary school. The researcher attempted to remain objective throughout the study. Evaluation of the research will be conducted by the university supervisor.

2. Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to comparable contexts (Strauss & Myburgh, 2007). Although current research regarding homophobic victimisation in various educational institutions exists, there is a gap with regard to the study of teachers' perceptions of such acts within independent secondary schools. The research was compared with research conducted on other secondary schools both worldwide and in a South African context.

3. Dependability means that if other researchers go through the raw data, they will come to the same conclusions (Strauss & Myburgh, 2007). The researcher analysed the raw data rigorously to decrease the risk of errors. In addition, as mentioned previously, an independent coder and university supervisor ensured that the conclusions reached were accurate.

4. Strauss and Myburgh (2007, p.59-60) mention that "confirmability measures are applied to prevent research bias." The researcher was partially known at School A, but totally unfamiliar to school B. An analytical discussion of the findings was held with the supervisor of the research, and a qualitative independent coder was used to verify the results.

3.5.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics should be a primary consideration when conducting research. According to Strydom (2005), ethics is defined as a set of generally accepted moral principles that indicate the most appropriate behaviour a researcher should display towards the participants. Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2006), as cited in Creswell (2008, p.13), state that "researchers should reflect on ethical issues throughout the research process, from defining the problem to advancing research questions to collecting and analyzing data to writing the final report. Ethics should, at all times, be at the forefront of the researcher's agenda." There are certain ethical principles that were adhered to in this research. The research was only conducted once permission from the Ethics Committee of the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand had been obtained. Furthermore, the research was only carried out once the university had issued an ethical clearance certificate and permission had been granted by the two school principals (executive members of the independent secondary schools). The ethical clearance number for this research was MED/11/007IH (Appendix A).

The principal of each school received an individual principal information letter (Appendix B) that informed them of the exact nature of the study and how the researcher was to conduct the study, whilst ensuring confidentiality of the school and the anonymity of the participating teachers. In line with the recommendation made by Creswell (2002), as cited in Creswell (2003), signatures from all involved, including the researcher, were obtained thereby indicating their agreement with the conditions of the research. Once permission from the school principals had been obtained, teachers were invited to participate in the research during a staff meeting. In this meeting, they were informed of the exact nature of the study. The teachers were told that the research aimed to investigate and explore teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. All teachers were presented with a participant information letter (Appendix C). Informed consent in research from the participants and relevant institution should be obtained

before data collection takes place and the participants should be fully informed about the research (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). The researcher explained that the data would be gathered via open-ended structured questionnaires (Appendix D). It was also explained to the participants that by completing and returning the open-ended structured questionnaire, it would be understood that they have consented to participate in this research (Appendix C).

The researcher explained to the participants that participation in the study was voluntary and that each participant had the right to hold back information and withdraw from the research at any point in time without disadvantage or prejudice (in line with the recommendation of Strydom, 2005). This information was communicated to the participants both verbally and by means of a participant information letter (Appendix C). The letter (Appendix C) stated that all written responses would be anonymous as they did not need to write their name on the participant information letter or on the open-ended structured questionnaire. It was also made clear to the participants that the name of the school would be kept confidential. All personal information obtained during the data gathering process would be kept confidential by the researcher.

The participants were assured both verbally and in writing that the open-ended structured questionnaires would only be read by the researcher, supervisor and the independent coder, and that their anonymity would be safeguarded by the researcher, by requesting them not to write their name or any identifying information on the participant information letter and on the open-ended structured questionnaire. This is highlighted by Dawson (2006) who states that the privacy of all participants should be safe-guarded by the researcher in order to guarantee that the participants will not be identified through their personal information or what they have revealed.

The research has been written up and will be placed in the university's library and may be published in an academic journal. The research will also be available on the university's database. According to Dawson (2006), the collected data should be stored and handled in a professional manner. All open-ended structured questionnaires will be kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet at the university and will be destroyed five years after the research is completed.

The researcher explained to the participants that although there is no direct benefit from their participation in this research, by completing the open-ended structured questionnaire regarding homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools, further knowledge and understanding of the research topic will be gained. This information was also clearly stated in the participant information letter (Appendix C). The researcher's contact details were also included in the participant information letter (Appendix C) in case any of the participants had any questions or concerns regarding the research.

One of the most significant ethical requirements of a researcher is to protect the well-being of participants (Chapin, 2004). Participants in research should be guarded against "physical or mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger or deprivation" (Strydom, 2005, p.67). If any feelings of distress were elicited on the part of any of the participants after completing the open-ended structured questionnaire, the Emthonjeni Centre could be contacted on 011 717 4513 or LifeLine on 011 715 2000, both of whom are able to provide counselling (Appendix C). According to Dawson (2006), it is important for participants to know who will receive information about the research results. A summary of the findings and recommendations of this research were made available to the school and feedback was given to the participants on request.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research methodology used for the study on teacher's perceptions on homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools was discussed in detail. Chapter four will focus on the results obtained from the data collection and provide a discussion thereof.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

> Zoroastrianism: Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29 – "Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others."
>
> (Johnson, 2003, p.379)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, the rationale behind this study was explained. Thereafter, in chapter two, a review of the relevant literature was provided. In chapter three, a detailed description of the methodology followed in this research was provided. In this chapter, the results obtained by following the data collection methods described in the previous chapter will be outlined and analysed in relation to relevant, existing literature.

4.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The sample for this research was drawn from two English-speaking independent secondary schools in a relatively affluent urban area of Johannesburg, Gauteng. Teachers were purposively sampled and asked to volunteer in the study. An open-ended, structured questionnaire was provided to the participants. In School A, 27 teachers were approached, but only 21 teachers participated. In School B, 76 teachers were invited to participate in the research, but only 22 volunteered. Consequently, 43 teachers (out of a total sample of 103) participated in the research. The table below (Table 4.1.) provides a demographic overview of the participants at both School A and B.

4.3 RESULTS

The objective of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. Two schools were purposefully selected with the aim of providing a broad spectrum of the population being studied. Convenient sampling was used so as to narrow the sample and avoid cultural and religious bias. Both schools sampled are independent secondary schools and no significant differences between the two schools were identified. As such, the results will be considered together.

Table 4.1: Comparison of Demographics for School A and School B

DEMOGRAPHICS	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
GENDER	9 Male 12 female	7 Male 15 Female
RACE	18 White 1 Black 2 Indian	18 White 2 Coloured 2 Indian
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	19 Heterosexual 1 Asexual 1 Not indicated	21 Heterosexual 1 Homosexual
RELIGION	13 Christian 2 Hindu 2 Jewish 1 Atheist 1 Spiritual (no specific denomination) 1 Secular Humanist 1 Keylontic Science	11 Christian 2 Hindu 7 Jewish 1 Atheist 1 Eclectic
HOME LANGUAGE	9 Afrikaans 1 isiZulu 9 English 2 Bilingual (Afrikaans/English)	3 Afrikaans 18 English 1 Hebrew
AGE RANGE	23-64 years	25 -63 years
YEARS IN TEACHING	2-41 years	3-40 years
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Tertiary	Tertiary

The results were obtained by considering the feedback of an independent coder who analysed the data together with the researcher. After the analysis, the independent coder and the researcher met for a consensus discussion. Tesch's (1990), as cited in Creswell (2003), eight step method of data analysis was utilised. The results were grouped into themes which were further divided into categories. These were identified by both the researcher and the independent coder through the analysis of the various written responses obtained from the open-ended structured questionnaire which each participant completed.

In this chapter, the themes and categories identified from the results of the open-ended structured questionnaire are supported by certain quotations, which in turn are substantiated by relevant literature. The quotations are stated verbatim with no alterations, in order to maintain both the reliability and validity of the research findings.

Three main themes were identified. The first theme pertains to the level of the institution, specifically, the school context. The second theme identified was individual teachers' perceptions. The third and final theme to be addressed is that of learner difficulties. The

results will be discussed within these themes which are further divided into categories. The following table (Table 4.2) summarises the themes and categories identified through analysis of teachers' responses to the survey instrument.

Table 4.2: Summary of Identified Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories
Theme 1 **Institutional level: school context**	**Category 1: Thoughts on the culture of acceptance** • School society reflects general heterosexual society • Homosexuality should be accepted by both teachers and learners • Discrimination from heterosexual male learners **Category 2: Policies** • Debated need for specific policy on homosexuality • Promotion of equity and tolerance • Prevention of discrimination • Protection of learners' rights (freedom to choose one's sexuality and to not be harmed according to their chosen sexuality) • Psychological and academic support to be provided to homosexually-oriented learners • Education on homosexuality • Management of homophobic victimisation
Theme 2 **Individual level: teachers' perceptions**	**Category 1: Understanding of homosexuality** • Physical attraction or preference • The debate on choice of one's sexual orientation as opposed to a genetic/biological predisposition **Category 2: Perceptions of homosexually-oriented learners** • No different to heterosexual learners (sexual orientation is irrelevant) • Respect and acceptance with equal rights to heterosexual learners (no discrimination) • Freedom of sexual orientation
Theme 3 **Individual level: learner difficulties**	**Category 1: Social difficulties** • Discrimination • Stereotyping and stigmatisation (non-acceptance by social networks) • Peer victimisation resulting in humiliation, isolation and a need to belong **Category 2: Acts of verbal, physical and emotional victimisation** • Most teachers are unaware of acts of homophobic victimisation among learners • Teachers aware of homophobic act witnessed • Verbal acts • Physical acts **Category 3: The learner's self** • Emotional distress (fear, anxiety, forced silence, stress) • Identity struggles • Poor self-concept (low self-esteem and confidence)

4.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The themes and categories summarised above are discussed in detail below, in the order in which they are listed in Table 4.2 above. Direct quotations from the teachers' responses to the open-ended structured questionnaire are given. Thereafter, literature is used to verify the findings of the research.

4.4.1 Theme 1 – Institutional Level: School Context

The first theme identified pertains to the institutional level and school context. It has been sub-divided into two main categories. The first category relates to a culture of acceptance of homosexually-oriented learners. It was evident that the school society is representative of general heterosexual society. Discrimination against homosexually-oriented learners on the part of heterosexual male learners was noticed. Despite this, the teachers surveyed argued that homosexuality should be accepted by teaching staff and learners.

A second category identified, however, deals with the need for schools to draft policies pertaining to homosexuality. Included in such policy, according to the responses gathered, should be the promotion of equity and tolerance for all learners, the prevention of discrimination and the protection of learners' rights regarding the freedom to choose one's sexual orientation and not be harmed in light of their choice. According to the responses, such a policy should also make provision for psychological and academic support for homosexually-oriented learners, education on homosexuality and the management of homophobic victimisation. Each of these two categories is discussed in depth below.

4.4.1.1 Category 1: Thoughts on the Culture of Acceptance

Recognition and acceptance of differences can only occur when individuals are respected despite their social and sexual affiliations. Participants in this study felt that learners often reflect the norms set by society and that the school culture is a microcosm of society. Therefore, if broader society demonstrates limited acceptance of and tolerance for minority sexual orientations, school culture will mirror this predisposition. It is evident from the quotes below that there is a tendency for schools to reflect the opinions of broader society, which is predominantly heterosexual.

- *"In most instances it does, but there will always be exceptions. Learners usually reflect the norms set by society."*

- *"No - unfortunately the school culture is a microcosm of society and I think gay children are seen as a threat and 'different' – …"*

Heterosexism, a form of prejudice towards all non-heterosexual people, is a social issue which results in discrimination towards LGBT people (Clark et al., 2010) and poses the risk of homophobia (Murray, 2001). South Africa has undergone a social transformation which should result in inequality with respect to sexual orientation being minimised (Sooka, 2010). Nevertheless, participants feel that although there has been a positive movement in society towards the acceptance of homosexuality, the reality is that heterosexual norms still dominate and schools are a microcosm of this reality, as mentioned in the quotes above. According to Francis and Msibi (2011, p.159), "as a result, societal and organizational institutions are designed to award privileges and benefits to members of the dominant group (heterosexuals) at the expense of members of the subordinated group (GLB)." As the term GLB refers to gay, lesbian and bisexual people, it is clear that such sexual orientations are a minority and are seen in a different light within educational settings within society.

Although society comprises LGBT people, there are schools which act as if the school composition is heterosexual in nature (Lucas, 2004), as was evident from the participants' responses. Heteronormativity is the view that LGBT people are 'abnormal' and is often held by political, institutional and societal bodies (Pallota-Chiarolli, 2005).

Participants indicated that acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual learners themselves, should have its roots within school culture. If school culture promotes equality and tolerance of all learners, despite sexual orientation, then the educational setting conveys the message that homosexually-oriented learners are accepted as part of the school culture. In this way, school culture can become inclusive with regard to sexual orientation. This creates a safe environment in which homosexually-oriented learners can learn without the fear of being perceived as different.

According to DePalma and Jennet (2007), school culture needs to be adapted to accommodate LGBT learners from the moment they enter into the school premises. An environment which welcomes diversity and does not discriminate against sexual orientation is a safe environment in which equality for all is promoted. Warwick and Douglas (n.d.) state that a school's general ethos will control what should and should not be done to address homophobic victimisation. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2005) states the following:

> "Schools need to take action to clean out the homophobia that's affecting the health and education of our young people. It may take a lot of scrubbing, some gentle soaking and some strategic pegging on the clothesline: not too much sun at first, enough shade and shelter so that the initial efforts don't get buffeted by storms and bird droppings. But put on the washing gloves, make it a team effort, and clean OUT your school" (p. 85).

This view is supported by the participants of this study as evident in the quotes below, which highlight the fact that most of the sampled participants feel that homosexuality should be accepted by both teachers and learners. Although teachers within schools appear more accepting of homosexuality, it seems as if the learners themselves are particularly judgmental of their peers' sexual orientation.

- *"Teachers generally do but often learners do not accept those that are different to them."*

- *"I think that they would generally be accepted but they may have a hard time from some children."*

According to Poteat (2008, p.197), "it is possible that specific peer groups could be responsible for much of the occurrence of homophobic aggression directed toward LGBT individuals as well as toward some heterosexual students;" this view supports those put forward in the quotes above. Poteat (2008) suggests that homophobic banter is more likely to occur in aggressive, homophobic peer groups as opposed to peer groups that are less aggressive and homophobic in nature. On the whole, the participants' responses from both Schools A and B were accepting of homosexuality. This indicates that teachers can be open-minded and accepting of minority sexual orientations.

It must be noted, however, that despite participant's positive perceptions regarding learners' sexual orientation, the participants indicated that if school culture is not accepting of such learners and does not promote equality for all, teachers may not share their personal views with the school community and may not intervene in homophobic victimisation among learners for fear of being discriminated against themselves. According to Norman and Galvin (2006), teachers appear to be reluctant to take action against homophobic victimisation within their schools because they fear the disapproval of the school community. Meyer's research findings (2008) also indicated that teachers do not intervene in the gendered harassment of learners, due to the external factor of the school culture, which then has internal impact in that they do not want to intervene in fear of prejudice. Epstein (2003), as cited in Lucas (2004), states that official silence regarding sexual orientation is the most oppressive form of homophobic victimisation. Official silence can exert power over how both teachers and learners react to homosexuality. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2000) states that teachers who take a stand against the heterosexual norms of their school culture, are likely to be assumed to be homosexual themselves, accused of being unprofessional and may face reactions of a homophobic nature from learners, colleagues and principals. According to Wild (n.d.), as cited in Mullen (2001), the neglect of LGB issues within educational settings and the related dilemma of homophobic bullying have been a continual affliction faced by LGB communities.

Some of the participants in this study are of the opinion that male heterosexual learners are more likely to discriminate against homosexual learners. The quotes below illustrate this perception held by some of the participants.

- *"Some degree of discrimination exists among male, heterosexual learners towards the idea of homosexuality."*

- *"Social acceptance by peer (male), aggressive behaviour by male learners, isolation from social events."*

According to Poteat and Espelage (2005), as cited in Poteat (2008), research aimed at comparing verbal homophobic victimisation among males and females suggests that even though males are more prone to displaying such behaviour, it is largely related to numerous

forms of aggression for both females and males. Aggression towards minority sexual orientations is a consequence of homophobia (Hirschfeld, 2001). Poteat and Espelage (2005), as cited in Poteat (2008) also state that aggressive behaviour towards homosexually-oriented learners appears to be more evident among male heterosexual learners.

According to Nayak and Kehily (1997), as cited in Norman (2005, p.5), "there seems to be a consensus that young men tend to develop negative attitudes toward homosexuality as a core dimension of their masculine identity." This may be a result of the nature of males to express anger in a manner that is more physical.

4.4.1.2 Category 2: Policies

There appears to be disagreement among participants regarding the need for school policy that addresses the issue of homosexuality. While some participants from both Schools A and B felt that a specific policy on homosexuality is necessary, others felt that a specific policy addressing homosexuality would merely exacerbate the issue by placing an unhealthy emphasis on homosexuality.

Meyer (2008) states that written policies are an important factor in organisations' ability to manage the issue of gendered harassment effectively. This is in line with those participants of this study who advocate that written policies on homophobic victimisation can be instrumental in managing school homophobia successfully. Those participants who advocated a specific policy on homosexuality raised a number of topics such a policy should cover, namely, promotion of equity and tolerance; prevention of discrimination; protection of learners' rights regarding sexuality; psychological and academic support for homosexually-oriented learners; education on homosexuality; and lastly, the management of homophobic victimisation. The quotes below illustrate the differences of opinion regarding the need – or not – of a policy that promotes equity and tolerance regarding sexual orientation.

- *"I don't think it should single out anybody. Just like black, white, Christian or Muslims should not have specific policies about them. To single out people is never a good thing."*

- *"I don't think there should be any special policy for them. They should be treated equally."*

- *"Policy should always lean toward tolerance and acceptance."*

According to Mullen (2001), the following recommendation was made for secondary schools in Bradford, United Kingdom:

> "All schools should ensure that they have anti-bullying, confidentiality, equality and sex education policies which specifically make reference to lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. All pupils, staff and parents / carers should be made aware of these policies" (p.14).

It is evident that some participants believe that a policy promoting tolerance for and acceptance of all learners, regardless of sexual orientation, is fundamental. Based on this, it can be argued that intervention in cases of homophobic victimisation without employing further aggression should be part of such specific policy on homosexuality. As such, it will provide guidance when it comes to dealing with the issue in an effective way.

The quotes below highlight participants' perceptions of the need for a specific policy on homosexuality in order to prevent discrimination relating to learners' sexual orientation. In order to move away from the ideology that certain sexual orientations are more acceptable that others, every individual, regardless of his/her sexual orientation, should be treated on equal grounds.

- *"Equality and acceptance for all."*

- *"It all comes down to tolerance and this should be part of that policy."*

- *"Aggression cannot be tolerated but should not be met with further aggression. If tolerance is promoted, aggression can be handled through counselling."*

- *"I don't believe it should have special rights for homosexually-oriented learners but rather prevent any form of discrimination or scrutiny from occurring. The school policy should be of such [sic] that it allows all learners to live out their personality and sexual orientation."*

- *"Our constitution states that there must be no discrimination regarding race, sexual preferences etc. This policy should be added to all school policies."*

- *"School policies should protect from all forms of discrimination."*

These responses indicate that providing special rights to homosexually-oriented learners within a policy is not a viable solution to the issue at hand as this may lead to such homosexual orientation receiving greater privilege.

Consequently, this may result in further discrimination towards homosexually oriented learners. It is only right that all individuals be treated with the same rights and respect as others regardless of their sexual orientation. It was also felt that a specific school policy that includes the prevention of discrimination is essential within schools that form part of our democratic society.

The South African Constitution has an equity clause [9(3) within the 1996 Government Gazette of South Africa] that prohibits any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Francis & Msibi, 2011), and this should feature in school policies. Such policy should include the prevention of all forms of homophobic victimisation among learners, namely verbal and physical. Butler et al. (2003) state that children will only be given the opportunity to develop into adults who take on successful roles, within a democratic society such as South Africa, if non-discrimination and acceptance is taught at educational settings and modelled by teachers. To this end, the participants pointed out that the requirements of the constitution's equity acts should be met in school policy that prevents non-discrimination relating to sexual orientation, thus protecting the rights of homosexually-oriented learners.

The quotes below make it clear that a specific policy on homosexuality should include the protection of learners' rights regarding the freedom to choose their sexuality and to not be harmed as a result of this choice.

- *"It has to be adapted to suit the requirements of the equity act (non-discrimination) and be implemented correctly (as determined by the constitution)."*

- *"Should support and respect their right to dignity, etc. Should uphold the country's constitution."*

- *"School policies should protect the rights of all learners including homo-sexually-oriented learners, ensure that they are catered for."*

The South African Constitution acknowledges the rights of homosexuals, but schools have been negligent in making this a reality within educational environments (Butler et al., 2003). The constitution deals with the rights of people within a democratic country, and equality for all is a constitutional law which should be supported by school policies. These policies can guide teachers with regard to how to protect learners' rights when it comes to the freedom to choose a sexual orientation and not be exposed to harm as a result. It is clear from the participants' responses that the needs of homosexually-oriented learners, which are the same as the needs of heterosexual learners, should be addressed within policy so that they can learn without being discriminated against.

The quotes below highlight participants' views that policy should provide for homosexually-oriented learners, deal with the issues these learners experience and emphasise learners' right to have same sex relationships. Responses also indicated the importance of providing psychological and academic support for homosexually-oriented learners.

- *"I think that policies should make provision for these learners and address issues that learners face on a daily basis."*

- *"Assist in mental, psychological and academic, (social and sport development as stable understanding and accepted), learners with rights to stable relationships with partners of their own choice."*

It can be argued that a lack of support for such individuals is an act of silence and a denial of the existence of minority sexual orientations. The issue of homophobia has both psychological and academic impacts for homosexually-oriented learners. Schools should be a safe environment for all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation. A school's responsibility does not only lie in the education of learners, but also in their psychological well-being. Homosexually-oriented learners who feel victimised may not be able to learn according to their full potential, due to the negative psychological effects of their victimisation.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2008a), homophobia can significantly affect the general health and well-being of victims. Clarke et al. (2010) states that bullying perpetrated against minority sexual orientations can impact negatively on the education of the learners who are victims of such bullying. In order for an educational setting to be truly educational in nature, it needs to ensure that all learners, regardless of sexual orientation, feel included and supported within the school, so that they can learn in the absence of the fear of being judged and rejected. Provision for homosexually-oriented learners was evident in the participants' responses, including the need for these learners to be offered psychological and academic support.

In the quotes below, it is mentioned that learners should be educated on homophobia in the curriculum, such as in Life Orientation lessons or in English lessons where literature on homophobia is used. It is also mentioned that homosexually-oriented learners choose to remain invisible as a means of self-protection. It is further stated that perpetrators need to be educated. This highlights that specific policy on homosexuality should include provision for education on sexual orientation to all members of the school community.

- *"Policies should (and do) condemn homophobia along with other forms of prejudice. The subject should be discussed in Life Orientation and does*

come up in English Literature. Most gay students wish to remain invisible – it would be tough to be the only 'out' student in the school."

- *"Educate the aggressors."*

The subject of Life Orientation, within the South African curriculum, needs to be adapted to include education on the diversity of sexual orientation. In doing this, knowledge and understanding of all sexual orientations can be provided, which may address fear of the unknown. This in turn may minimise acts of homophobic victimisation among learners. In addition, teachers also need to receive education on homosexuality as part of their training and at the educational settings in which they work. Meyer (2008) states that teacher training does not adequately prepare teachers to deal with incidents of bullying or harassment relating to gender and sexuality.

A study conducted by Norman (2005) reveals that the chief factor that prevents effective management of sexuality-related concerns was the inexperience of school staff in dealing with such issues. School staff need to have an understanding of sexual orientation development and should be able to offer support to all youth in order to assist them to develop in a healthy way; this will facilitate the development of an accepting educational setting (APA, 2008b). It is thus evident that adequate education will provide teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed in order to address homophobia effectively. Perpetrators, who are responsible for victimising homosexually-oriented learners, need to be educated in order to discourage their inappropriate homophobic behaviour. This may help minimise the occurrence of homophobic victimisation within educational settings.

The quotes below highlight the participants' views on the need for a specific policy on homosexuality to include effective management approaches with regard to how to address acts of homophobic victimisation among learners.

- *"Once again, the bullying policy of the school should incorporate all pupils regardless of their orientation."*

- *"Should state that discipline procedures as per our policy towards bullying will be followed."*

- *"That it is unacceptable and punishable in the same way as any discriminatory aggression is – whether it is racial, sexual, social for disabilities, etc."*

- *"Based on the school's code of conduct, aggressive acts should be punished accordingly."*

Acts of homophobic victimisation are a form of bullying aimed at homosexually-oriented learners; management of this homophobic bullying can be addressed within the school's bullying policy. According to some responses, in order to maintain equality for all, discriminatory aggression of a homophobic nature should be dealt with in the same way as any other form of bullying, regardless of its intention.

Acts of homophobic victimisation need to be acknowledged and managed effectively so that learners can come to the realisation that homophobic aggression is taken seriously by the school and will not be tolerated. This may result in fewer cases of victimisation among learners, based on sexual orientation. According to Betteridge and van Dijk (2007), a school policy should address the issue of how homophobic victimisation should be managed.

4.4.2 Theme 2 – Individual Level: Teachers' Perceptions

The second theme identified pertained to the individual level of the teachers and their perceptions regarding homosexuality. It was also sub-divided into two categories. The first of these categories relates to the ways in which teachers understand the term 'homosexuality'. Views on this matter included homosexuality being seen as a physical attraction to or preference for the same sex, and it raised the debate as to whether sexuality is a genetic / biological predisposition or whether individuals choose their own sexuality.

The second category related to teachers' perceptions of homosexually-oriented learners. In this regard, the responses indicated that homosexually-oriented learners were often seen as no

different to heterosexual learners and that sexual orientation is irrelevant. It was further evident from the participants' responses that homosexually-oriented learners should be respected and accepted, and accorded the same rights as heterosexual learners. It was further argued that homosexually-oriented learners should not be discriminated against. The respondents generally felt that such learners should have the right to express themselves freely and to learn, regardless of their sexual orientation.

4.4.2.1 Category 1: Understanding of Homosexuality

A number of the participants indicated that they understood the term 'homosexuality' as a physical attraction to the same sex or a preference to be involved in a relationship with a member of the same sex. The quotes below indicate that the participants from both Schools A and B perceive homosexuality as a result of a physical attraction or preference.

- *"It is either two males or two females are [sic] in a sexual relationship."*
- *"Same sex physical and emotional interactions and dependence in relationships."*
- *"It is an attraction often leading to a sexual relationship between two people of the same gender."*
- *"Being sexually attracted to someone of the same gender. Falling 'in love' with someone of the same gender."*
- *"Those that prefer to be with the same sex."*
- *"Preferring to be in a same sex relationship."*

According to Clark et al. (2010, p.262), homosexuality is a term that is generally used "to refer to the phenomenon of same-sex attraction." This attraction or preference results in a same-sex relationship, which is both a physical and emotional one. From the majority of

participant's responses, it is apparent that there is a basic understanding of what it means to be homosexual.

In our society, there are people who believe that homosexuality is either a personal choice or that it is a result of genetics. The quotes below, taken from the participants' responses, highlight this debate within society regarding sexual orientation as either personal choice or genetic / biological predisposition.

- *"People choose same sex partners."*

- *"It is a choice individuals make regarding their sexual preference."*

- *"It is a preference by individuals in the way they want to live and what sexuality they want to be. I personally think that most homosexuals are born the way they are. It is in their genes."*

- *"I think some people are born such that they are sexually attracted to people of the same sex as them. I don't think they choose to be gay – I think their 'bodies' react this way."*

When it comes to choice of sexual orientation, preference is once again highlighted. Instead of conforming to societal expectations, there are those people who choose to follow their internal desires and attractions for the same sex (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005).

However, the responses revealed that some participants' perceptions of homosexuality are that one is born with a homosexual orientation, without having a choice, which clearly indicates a strong role played by genetics. According to Pallotta-Chiarolli (2005, p.45), "the theories out there are unfortunately still couched in that 'nature versus nurture' boxing ring." She also highlights the fact that even now, no one really knows what causes sexuality.

4.4.2.2 Category 2: Perception of Homosexually-Oriented Learners

The quotes below indicate the belief held by the participants that homosexually-oriented learners are no different to heterosexual learners. Teachers' perceptions of homosexually-oriented learners within the two educational settings were mainly positive. It is evident that teachers attempt to see and treat all learners equally, regardless of sexual orientation. According to Norman and Galvin's research findings (2006), many learners and parents were ignorant when it came to the understanding of homosexuality. Most of the teacher participants in this study, however, are not as ignorant as Norman and Galvin's (2006) learner and parent participants. They have a better understanding of homosexuality.

- *"I think nothing different of them to heterosexual learners. Kids r Kids! [sic]."*

- *"I don't think differently about them than I do about heterosexual learners – they are all children."*

- *"In school there should be place for every type of learner, no matter sexual orientation, race, culture or religion."*

- *"I don't consider (or try not) sexuality [sic] when dealing with students. I am aware of the fact that the learner may be homosexual but treat it as irrelevant to what happens in class."*

Sexual orientation is irrelevant, according to most participants. In the same way that race, culture and religion are not a basis for discrimination within an educational setting, so is sexual orientation similarly viewed. Most participants from Schools A and B expressed the view that learners' sexual orientation does not interfere with the teaching they provide within the classroom. In other words, most participants are accepting of homosexually-oriented learners at their school and do not treat them differently to heterosexual learners. DePalma and Jennett (2007) state that learners attend school for a considerable amount of time and, as a result, the entire school staff need to take responsibility for generating an atmosphere that welcomes diversity and does not tolerate discrimination.

The quotes below are indicative of the fact that many participants respect and accept homosexually-oriented learners and feel they should be treated as individuals with equal rights to heterosexual learners.

- *"Respect them as individuals."*

- *"They should be treated no different from other learners or/and [sic] offered ongoing support by the school."*

- *"No discrimination at all – completely acceptable. They are pleasant, peace-loving individuals."*

- *"They have the right to learn like all others – no problem."*

Homosexually-oriented learners should be respected for who they are and not treated indifferently due to their sexual orientation. Such learners should not be discriminated against by teachers. As teachers are role models within an educational setting, their acceptance of homosexually-oriented learners can have a positive effect on the behaviour of learners within the school. According to Warwick and Douglas (n.d.), one of the most imperative resources available to educational settings that should be used to address homophobic victimisation are the teaching staff themselves.

The quotes below express certain participants' perceptions that all learners should have the right to choose the sexual orientation they desire. Because heterosexually-oriented learners have the right to their sexual orientation, it should also be acceptable for homosexually-oriented learners to have the right to their sexual orientation.

- *"I believe they have a right towards their sexual orientation just as heterosexual-oriented learners have a right to their sexual orientation."*

- *"They are entitled to make their own choices."*

- *"Each should be allowed to express their own sexuality."*

Butler et al. (2003) states that educational settings within South Africa are now seen as inclusive in that they consider cultural diversity and the individual rights of each learner. It can be argued that if different cultures are accepted within schools, so should different sexual orientations. Although Butler et al. (2003) mentions that the individual rights of each learner are considered, sexual orientation is an individual right which does not appear to be recognised in the majority of South African schools in light of the literature review undertaken above.

4.4.3 Theme 3 – Individual Level: Learner Difficulties

The third theme identified was that pertaining to the individual level of the learner and the difficulties that homosexually-oriented learners experience, as seen from the perspective of the sampled teachers. This theme has been sub-divided into three categories, each of which focuses on the treatment of homosexually-oriented learners. The first category highlights the social difficulties experienced by homosexually-oriented learners. These difficulties include: discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatisation, peer victimisation, humiliation, isolation and a need to belong. A second category of response deals with homophobic acts (whether verbal, physical or emotional in nature). Most teacher participants are unaware of homophobic victimisation acts taking place among learners within their school. Those participants who are aware of such acts, have witnessed bullying and intimidation such as teasing, mocking, ridiculing and gay-bashing. The third and final response category reveals teachers' perspectives on how homosexually-oriented learners may feel. Emotional distress, identity struggles and a poor self-concept are mentioned in this regard.

4.4.3.1 Category 1: Social Difficulties

The quotes below highlight the participants' perceptions that discrimination is a social difficulty that homosexually-oriented learners face. Ignorance of what it means to be homosexual is one factor that leads certain learners to be nasty toward homosexually-oriented learners.

- *"No, as learners are generally nasty to these learners. This is not due to them not being 'good' people, but due to fear of the unknown."*

- *"Not being accepted, victimized, abused from others."*

The participants' responses indicate that discrimination can take place in many forms. According to Nel and Judge (2008), results from a study conducted in Gauteng show a high rate of homophobic discrimination.

The quotes below indicate that stereotypical beliefs may, according to some participants, play a role in the prevalence of homophobic victimisation.

- *"The issue of abuse that is directed towards homosexually-oriented learners. The stereo-typical [sic] beliefs that people have and the discrimination that the homosexually-oriented learners get from fellow learners and the community."*

- *"Issues of acceptance. Issue around 'traditional' gender roles."*

- *"Stigmatism, acceptance, peer pressure, 'normal culture'."*

O'Higgins-Norman (2009) states the following:

> "Both males and females maintained strong friendships and associations with their own 'pack' as a base, where heteronormative values were promoted and maintained. Those who did not comply with the pack's values were then rejected and ridiculed by their peers" (p.386).

Societal norms and the belief in traditional gender roles have a major influence on the existence of homophobic victimisation, despite being based on what people perceive to be acceptable gender roles, thus being subjective in nature. This concurs with Norman's research finding (2005) that homophobia results from gender role stereotyping.

The participants' responses above highlight the issue at hand: those learners who do not adhere to expected traditional stereotypical roles, can be blamed for having a homosexual orientation and exposed to victimisation as a result (Forrest, Biddle & Clift, 1997). An adverse result of such gender role stereotyping is homophobia (Norman, 2005).

The influence of stigmatisation (non-acceptance by social networks) on homosexually-oriented learners results in homophobic victimisation, as indicated in the quotes above. According to Butler et al. (2003), "most gays internalise at least some homophobic stereotypes, and some experience self-hatred resulting from their beliefs and fears about their homosexual feelings." Little (2001) states that those people who work with youth should move away from stereotypes and ask themselves whether they can claim they are really working for youth if they are responsible for and accept ignorance against sexual minority groups.

Peer victimisation results in feelings of humiliation, isolation and a need to belong on the part of the victims. The quotes below indicate the social difficulties that homosexually-oriented learners face, according to the participants' perceptions. Within the school environment, homosexually-oriented learners experience victimisation from their peers and are often excluded from peer-related social activities.

- *"They might be bullied, teased, isolated – they might feel 'rejected'."*
- *"Acceptance from other learners, finding partners, fitting in, making friends."*
- *"Certain learners may make fun of them, but this must be nipped in the bud."*
- *"Intolerance of others, teasing, disrespect."*
- *"Their biggest difficulties will probably come from their peer making fun of them. They will also struggle to fit in and to make friends."*
- *"They may not be included in the social activities of the peers and therefore feel ostracized."*
- *"Loneliness, no friend, can't talk to people about being different."*

- *"Wider acceptance, bullying, fitting in."*

- *"To fit in with the crowd, to grow and develop into who they are."*

Participants indicated that humiliation results when homosexually-oriented learners are teased and made fun of by their peers, as can be seen in the quotes above. According to Mason and Palmer (1996), as cited in Forrest, Biddle and Clift (1997), learners experience homophobic bullying from their peers in the form of damage to personal property, violent attacks, threats, unpleasant looks / stares and isolation. Due to homophobic victimisation from peers, homosexually-oriented learners feel rejected and ostracised, which results in such learners being isolated and experiencing feelings of loneliness.

Participants feel that this isolation results in homosexually-oriented learners not feeling accepted for who they really are. Consequently, they long to be a part of the school community and to fit in. Victims of homophobic victimisation usually do not complain as they fear that this will lead to an increase in bullying and that they may continue being accused of having a sexual orientation that is not accepted, despite whether they do or not (Michaelson, 2008). It is evident that homosexually-oriented learners want to increase their chances of belonging within their educational setting. It is therefore understandable that homosexually-oriented learners do not publicise homophobic acts that occur at schools.

4.4.3.2 Category 2: Acts of Verbal, Physical and Emotional Victimisation

It is apparent that the majority of teachers in this research study are unaware of any acts of homophobic victimisation taking place among learners within their schools. The quotes below highlight the view that even though such acts are not visible, it is suspected that such acts are a reality within school environments. In addition, it is reported that teachers themselves are involved in verbal homophobic victimisation of an indirect nature.

- *"Personally I'm not aware of anything but I'm sure it happens on a regular basis."*

- *"I have not physically witnessed this; however I have heard teachers make snide comments in the staffroom."*

The research results indicate that an overwhelming majority of the participants from Schools A and B are not aware of any homophobic acts of a verbal, physical or emotional nature among learners. According to Chan (2009), many learners who are targets of homophobic bullying within educational settings struggle and suffer in the absence of their troubles being witnessed and / or believed. It is evident that teachers themselves may take part in victimising homosexually-oriented learners in a verbal manner. According to Butler et al. (2003, p.6), "South African gay and lesbian youth report homophobic attitudes and actions perpetrated by their fellow students and, most alarmingly, their teachers and role models within the high school context." A recent research study conducted by Butler et al. (2003) indicated that homosexually-oriented participants voiced that they were being victimised in secondary schools within South Africa.

The following quotes indicate, in contradiction to the above, that some participants have witnessed homophobic acts among learners within their school. These acts have either been verbal or physical in nature.

- *"Yes, they are ridiculed and marginalized."*

- *"Verbal, i.e. you are a moffie, gay, homo, etc."*

- *"Yes, taunts and cyber-bullying is fairly common in schools. Teasing, talking behind the backs, etc. I believe that some of the most vicious bullies of either gay or straight learners perceived to be gay, are actually repressed homosexuals themselves, much like the character played by Chris Cooper in American Beauty."*

- *"Acts of verbal aggression rather than physical."*

- *"Mostly verbal abuse, isolation – rejection, teasing – name calling, some cyber-bullying – not much violence – this is generally not a violent school in that the days really resort to fighting [sic] at school."*

- *"Teasing, malicious verbal victimization, bullying and physical contact, group isolation and ridicule."*

According to Mostert (2008), the external feelings of perpetrators of homophobic victimisation manifest in verbal and physical aggression. In Norman and Galvin's research findings (2006), all five schools that participated in their study experienced the use of derogatory terms to refer to homosexually-oriented people. These terms were part of the everyday lingo. This corresponds with this study's research findings in that the teacher participants highlighted that verbal homophobic victimisation among learners is more predominant than physical homophobic victimisation. Examples of verbal homophobic acts towards homosexually-oriented learners include: teasing, homophobic epithets, ridiculing and talking behind the victims' backs (as can be seen in the participants' responses above). Francis and Msibi (2011) state that labels such as 'gay', 'moffie' and 'faggot' are widespread epithets used in schools. They too state that "in many instances, perpetrators do not realize the harmful impact that these labels inflict on people who are gay or lesbian" (Francis & Msibi, 2011, p.164).

An interesting research result was the reference that was made to cyber-bullying as a public form of homophobic victimisation within schools. With the advancement of technology, the internet has unfortunately become a means for homophobic victimisation that is readily available to the public.

4.4.3.3 Category 3: The Learner's Self

The quotes below, taken from the participants' responses, indicate the emotional distress (fear, anxiety, forced silence, stress), identity struggles and poor self-concept (low self-esteem and confidence) that many homosexually-oriented learners are perceived to experience within school environments. This was evident in the participants' responses from both Schools A and B.

- *"Lack of acceptance, teasing if mannerism not socially acceptable, stress due to being different to the 'norm'."*

- *"Pressure to conform to pre-established stereotypes. Struggles with identity, fears to come out of the closet. General confusion, anxiety, pain, possibly liberation freedom and confidence if they have accepted who they are and are not ashamed of it."*

- *"Understanding themselves and feeling the same – having identical rights as others, but that it is expressed in a different way."*

- *"Few friends, being ridiculed, lack of confidence."*

- *"They could be teased. Lower self-esteem as a result."*

Homosexually-oriented learners experience emotional turmoil in light of the fact that they receive the underlying message from society that homosexuality is not 'normal' or 'acceptable'. This leads to homosexually-oriented learners being unable to identify with who they really are, which in turn results in a lowered self concept. According to Chan (2009), homophobic bullying at schools can result in trauma for the victims, both at present and in the future. According to Horn, Szalacha and Drill (2008), school staff need to create a safe environment that not only protects learners from unjustified social, physical and emotional harm but provides them with a safe space where adolescents are given the opportunity to develop a healthy sexual identity.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. By considering the three themes that were identified from the results, the sub-questions were answered.

Theme one, the institutional level of the school context, indicates that there are varied thoughts on the culture of acceptance of homosexually-oriented learners within schools. It is

apparent that the school society is a microcosm of society's general tendency to accept heterosexuality over homosexuality. Consequently, homosexually-oriented learners are aware of this stigmatisation within their educational setting and this may well impact on their psychological state. Although it is felt that both teachers and learners should be accepting of homosexuality, the participants' responses regarding whether or not their particular school deals with homophobic victimisation in an adequate manner fluctuated between positive, negative and uncertain responses. In terms of a specific school policy that addresses issues of a homosexual nature, there were those in favour and those not. The majority of the participants indicated a need for a specific policy to address homosexuality. Those who were in favour of a specific policy expressed the need for the following to be addressed in such policy: promotion of equity and tolerance; prevention of discrimination; protection of learners' rights; provision of psychological and academic support for homosexually-oriented learners; education on homosexuality; and management of homophobic victimisation. The participants were of the opinion that aggressive acts towards homosexually-oriented learners should not be tolerated and should be dealt with in the same way as other forms of discrimination. Those not in favour of specific school policy felt that this would only exacerbate the issue at hand.

Theme two, the individual level of teachers' perceptions, shows that the participants have a general understanding of the term 'homosexuality'. Where some view it as a genetic predisposition, others believe it to be a physical attraction or preference towards the same sex which is indicative of their personal choice. On the whole, the participants view homosexually-oriented learners in the same way as heterosexual learners. These participants perceive sexual orientation as irrelevant in terms of such learners' education and do not believe they should be discriminated against on the grounds of their sexuality. The participants are of the opinion that it is a learner's right to have freedom of choice regarding his / her sexual orientation.

Theme three, the individual level of learners' difficulties, indicates that homosexually-oriented learners do experience social difficulties within their educational setting. These learners are victims of discrimination, stereotyping, stigmatisation and peer victimisation. As a result, these learners experience emotional distress, identity struggles and a poor self-concept. Most of the participants are not aware of homophobic victimisation acts among learners occurring in their independent secondary schools. Those who are aware indicated

that the acts are of a verbal and physical nature. Types of aggressive acts that were mentioned included teasing, ridiculing, humiliation and gay-bashing.

It was through these three emergent themes that an understanding of teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within an independent secondary school was gained. It is evident from these themes that a positive change towards the acceptance of homosexually-oriented learners within educational settings can well take place. This is based on the positive responses obtained from the participants as a whole. Although change takes place over time, a culture of acceptance has its roots in the perceptions of teachers. If teachers treat homosexually-oriented learners with equal rights, then the prevention of homophobic victimisation among learners can begin.

Chapter four has described the results obtained from the data gathered from the open-ended structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was provided to teachers so as to investigate their perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. Relevant literature was referred to during the analysis in order to support the findings.

Chapter five will highlight the strengths and limitations of this study and will also provide recommendations for future action and research. In addition, the researcher will provide a personal reflection regarding the research study experience and a final conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

> Judaism: The Talmud, Shabbat 31a – "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow men. This is the entire law; all the rest is commentary."
>
> (Johnson, 2003, p.379)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive conclusion for the research report. Firstly, both the strengths and limitations of the research study will be discussed. Secondly, recommendations for future research based on the results of this study will be made. Thirdly, a reflection on the researcher's personal experience concerning this particular study will be stated. Lastly, a holistic conclusion to the study will be provided.

5.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The strengths and limitations of the research are discussed in this section.

5.2.1 Strengths

Strengths were identified in this research study. The researcher was prepared to approach a sensitive topic in today's society. Homophobic victimisation among learners within schools is a reality and conducting such a study within a South African context, where such studies have been minimally undertaken, adds to existing literature on this topic and provides a baseline from which to compare South African findings to the results obtained in international studies on this topic. This research has given the participating teachers the opportunity to voice their knowledge and beliefs on a topic that is rarely addressed within an educational setting.

5.2.2 Limitations

In this study, six limitations were identified. Firstly, the research was conducted by a single researcher which prevented a diversity of academic views regarding this topic. Secondly, the target group was limited to two independent secondary schools within Johannesburg,

Gauteng. Thirdly, most literature consulted was from an international perspective due to the limited South African literature available. Fourthly, only 43 out of 103 participants volunteered to participate in the research, which is less than half of the initial target group, thus a bigger sample would have been beneficial. Fifthly, it is a pity that in-depth focus group interviews or individual interviews, observations and other forms of data collection were not used in conjunction with the open-ended questionnaires. This would have allowed for the triangulation of data sets. Lastly, the researcher, although attempting to remain objective throughout the research study, did make pre-research assumptions, which were clearly stated in the objective of the research. These pre-research assumptions are further based on the researcher's previous research which was on a similar research topic.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The recommendations for future research that should be conducted in South Africa, based on the results obtained in this study are as follows:

- Research topics should be tailored to a certain culture and/or religion so that the results will be more specific to the views which certain demographic groups hold. Various research topics that focus on different demographic groups can then be compared with each other so as to ascertain similarities and differences in the perceptions of different cultural and/or religious groups.
- Research on teacher's perceptions should be conducted in all types of schools and should not be limited to independent secondary schools.
- Teachers in different provinces within South Africa should be included in future research so that a comparison of teacher's perceptions regarding homophobic victimisation among learners across regions can be made.
- The research topic should be conducted by a significant number of researchers in order to prevent a limited view on the topic.
- Future research on why teacher's perceive homophobic victimisation among learners in a certain way and act accordingly should be conducted.
- Research focusing on intervention models and programmes for The Department of Education should be conducted in the future.

- Future research should target parents and learners regarding their views on homophobic victimisation among learners in order to gain better insight and understanding of this topic.
- The role of Educational Psychologists in rendering support, in order to create school cultures that reflect respect and tolerance for the rights of those deemed different, is an important topic for future research.
- Homophobic victimisation in the form of cyber-bullying is an important reality in a technologically-advanced world. It would be important for future research to investigate how homophobic cyber-bullying can be addressed within a school community.

Such future studies are fundamental in order to gain a more holistic understanding of different target groups within the educational community and monitor any possible change in perceptions over time.

5.4 PERSONAL REFLECTION

The researcher found it extremely important to conduct research on a topic about which he is very passionate because of the unacceptable discrimination that is exhibited towards sexual minority groups at present. The researcher believes that although the South African constitution is advanced and promotes acceptance of all sexual orientations, cohesive action towards intervention in and prevention of homophobic victimisation is not a reality in South Africa. An educational focus was chosen by the researcher because he was a teacher in the past and the harsh reality of such victimisation in schools inspired him to investigate how teachers' perceptions regarding homophobic victimisation among learners contribute to the prevalence of such acts. In addition, as a former teacher, he personally had to deal with negative emotions and reactions regarding homophobic victimisation.

In a previous masters dissertation (Mostert, 2008), the researcher conducted a study on "Learners aggression towards learners perceived as having a homosexual orientation in an independent secondary school environment." In this study, it was evident that teachers struggle to address this issue in the best way. It was found that teachers have vastly different

perceptions on homosexually-oriented learners and homophobia. This makes the issue far more complicated than meets the eye.

Although the researcher expected the majority of teachers to reject homosexually-oriented learners, it was surprising to discover that most teachers who participated in this study are accepting of minority sexual orientations. The researcher's hope is that this research study will contribute positively towards accommodating the needs of LGBT learners within educational settings. It is hoped that this research will provide proof for the necessity of providing learners who are not coping with their sexual orientation and the discrimination it causes with the psychological support they need and deserve. The researcher strongly believes that change can only occur if people take the courage, as he did in his previous and current research, to voice the issue at hand as opposed to keeping it silent. It became evident from existing literature that teachers' ignorance of school homophobia among learners plays a major role in their inability to understand and address homophobic acts between learners in an adequate way. How ironic it is that teachers who are responsible for educating learners need to be educated themselves regarding homophobia because of their fear of the unknown. For, as Dr. Wayne W. Dyer (2004, p.29) once said: "The highest form of ignorance is to reject something you know nothing about."

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study intended to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools. Three main themes were identified from the results obtained. The first theme – the institutional level of the school context – highlighted divided thoughts on the culture of acceptance and the need for specific school policies on how to accommodate homosexually-oriented learners and intervene when such acts occur. The second theme – teacher's perceptions on an individual level – revealed that the participants understand homosexuality in different ways and perceive homosexually-oriented learners to be no different from heterosexual learners. The third theme – learner difficulties on an individual level – indicated that homosexually-oriented learners are treated differently to heterosexual learners. In addition, this theme shows that homosexually-oriented learners, who experience social difficulties with other learners, are struggling psychologically and that the majority of teacher-participants were unaware of homophobic victimisation acts among

learners within their particular educational setting, although some were aware of verbal and physical abuse among learners.

If teachers are provided with the necessary knowledge and understanding regarding all sexual orientations, equality for all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation can be promoted. With adequate knowledge and understanding, teachers can develop the necessary skills they need in order to approach homophobic victimisation among learners in an ethical way and no longer be fearful of taking a stand against homophobia. In conclusion, as Dr. Wayne W. Dyer (2004) states:

> "Quality rather than appearance . . .
> ethics rather than rules . . .
> knowledge rather than achievement . . .
> integrity rather than domination . . .
> serenity rather than acquisitions" (p.213).

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MED/11/007IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Teachers' Perceptions of Homophobic Victimisation Among Learners within Independent Secondary Schools
INVESTIGATORS **DEPARTMENT**	Mostert Hendrik Petrus Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	06/07/11
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 30 June 2011

CHAIRPERSON _____
(Professor K. Cockcroft)

cc Supervisor: Dr Charmaine Gordon
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

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

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2013

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B: PRINCIPAL INFORMATION LETTER

The University of the Witwatersrand
Department of Psychology
Mr. H. P. Mostert
Supervisor: Dr. Charmaine Gordon

Dear Principal

My name is Henk Mostert. In partial fulfilment of completing my Master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, I am engaged in a research study entitled **"Teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools."**

Discrimination based on sexual orientation takes place on a regular basis in schools today. A major form of discrimination among learners in secondary schools is homophobic victimisation. South Africa is a democratic society with laws that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, yet discrimination towards these learners still takes place. The objective of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

I would like to ask your permission to give open-ended structured questionnaires to all the teachers at your school. Demographic details will be requested, followed by ten open-ended questions. Both the supervisor and independent coder will verify the conclusions of the research, based on this data. All teachers will be invited to participate in the research. Each teacher will be given the opportunity to complete the open-ended structured questionnaire within their own time during a one week period. A private sealed box will be placed at an allocated area within the school premises so that the teachers can post their completed open-ended structured questionnaires. This box will be collected after the one week period.

Ethical clearance will be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Human and Community Development, of the University of the Witwatersrand. The research will only be conducted once the university issues an ethical clearance certificate.

The researcher will explain and discuss the following ethical principles with the teachers: participation is voluntary; participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate; participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without any negative consequences; a open-ended structured questionnaire will be given to the participants; all open-ended structured questionnaires for the study will be kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet at the university and they will be destroyed five years after the investigation is complete; the researcher will guarantee participants' anonymity, by requesting them not to write their name or any identifying information on the participating information letter and on the open-ended structured questionnaire; the name of the school will not be mentioned at all; the research will be written up and placed in the university's library and may be published in an academic journal; a summary of the findings and recommendations of the research will be made available to the school; feedback will be given to participants on request and the name of the researcher and contact telephone number will be made available to the participants.

The open-ended structured questionnaires will only be read by the researcher, university supervisor and independent coder. The researcher's contact details will be provided to the participants so that they can ask questions or discuss concerns regarding the research. If any feelings of distress are elicited by any of the participants after completing the open-ended structured questionnaire, the Emthonjeni Centre can be contacted on 011 717 4513 or LifeLine on 011 715 2000 who will be able to provide counselling.

The researcher will explain to the participants that although there is no direct benefit for their participation in this research, by completing the open-ended structured questionnaire regarding homophobic victimisation among learners in an independent secondary school, further knowledge and understanding of the research topic will be gained.

By completing and returning the open-ended structured questionnaire it will be understood that the participants have consented to participate in this research. Please see the attached copies of the participant information letter, and the open-ended structured questionnaire that the teachers will be provided with. If you have any additional enquiries regarding the research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Kindly sign the principal information letter if you are in agreement.

Yours faithfully

_____	_____
Mr. Henk Mostert	Dr. Charmaine Gordon
Researcher	Research Supervisor
Tel: 073 375 1005	Tel: 011 717 4527
henk@ianopperman.com	Charmaine.Gordon@wits.ac.za

I, _____, have read the above information and hereby grant permission for this research to be conducted with teachers at my school.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

The University of the Witwatersrand
Department of Psychology
Mr. H. P. Mostert
Supervisor: Dr. Charmaine Gordon

Dear Teacher

My name is Henk Mostert. In partial fulfilment of completing my Master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, I am engaged in a research study entitled **"Teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools."**

Discrimination based on sexual orientation takes place on a regular basis in schools today. A major form of discrimination among learners in secondary schools is homophobic victimisation. South Africa is a democratic society with laws that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) learners, yet discrimination towards these learners still takes place. The objective of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of homophobic victimisation among learners within independent secondary schools.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research and ask permission from you to complete an open-ended structured questionnaire. Demographic information will be requested followed by ten open-ended questions in the open-ended structured questionnaire. Both the supervisor and independent coder will verify the conclusions of the research, based on this data. You will be given the opportunity to complete the open-ended structured questionnaire within your own time during a one week period. A private sealed box will be placed at an allocated area within the school premises so that you can post your completed open-ended structured questionnaire. This box will be collected after the one week period.

Ethical clearance will be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Human and Community Development, of the University of the Witwatersrand. The research will only be conducted once the university issues an ethical clearance certificate.

The following ethical principles will be adhered to: participation is voluntary; you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing whether to participate or not; you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time without any negative consequences; a open-ended structured questionnaire will be given; your open-ended structured questionnaire used in the study, will be kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet at the university and will be destroyed five years after the investigation is complete; the researcher will guarantee your anonymity, by requesting you not to write your name or any identifying information on the participating information letter and on the open-ended structured questionnaire; the name of the school will not be mentioned at all; the research will be written up and placed in the university's library and may be published in an academic journal; a summary of the findings and recommendations of the research will be made available to the school; feedback will be given to you on request and the name of the researcher and contact telephone number will be made available to you. Your written responses will be anonymous as you will not need to write your name on the participant information letter and on the open-ended structured questionnaire.

The completed open-ended structured questionnaires will only be read by the researcher, university supervisor and independent coder. The researcher's contact details will be provided to you so that you can ask questions or discuss concerns regarding the research. If any feelings of distress are elicited after completing the open-ended structured questionnaire, the Emthonjeni Centre can be contacted on 011 717 4513 or LifeLine on 011 715 2000 who will be able to provide counselling.

Although there is no direct benefit for your participation in this research, by completing the open-ended structured questionnaire regarding homophobic victimisation among learners in an independent secondary school, further knowledge and understanding of the research topic will be gained.

By completing and returning the open-ended structured questionnaire it will be understood that you have consented to participate in this research. Please see the attached open-ended structured questionnaire. If you have any additional enquiries regarding the research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Henk Mostert
Researcher
Tel: 073 375 1005
henk@ianopperman.com

Dr. Charmaine Gordon
Research Supervisor
Tel: 011 717 4527
Charmaine.Gordon@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX D: OPEN-ENDED STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Information

Please note that this information will be used statistically to describe the sample of this study and is not intended to offend or exclude participants.

Please complete in the questions below by ticking (√) the appropriate box:

Gender:

Male ☐ **Female** ☐

Race:

Black ☐ **White** ☐ **Indian** ☐ **Coloured** ☐

Sexual Orientation:

Homosexual ☐ **Heterosexual** ☐ **Bisexual** ☐

Religion:

Christian ☐ **Muslim** ☐ **Hindu** ☐ **Jewish** ☐
Agnostic ☐ **Atheist** ☐ **Other** ☐ **(Please specify) _____**

Home Language:

Afrikaans	**IsiZulu**	**Northern Sotho**	**Tshivenda**
English	**Xitsonga**	**Sesotho**	**IsiXhosa**
IsiNdebele	**SisSwati**	**Setswana**	**Other (Please specify)** _____

Age (in years): _____

Years in teaching: _____

Level of education: _____

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

1. **What is your personal understanding of homosexuality?**

2. **What do you think of homosexually-orientated learners in school?**

3. **Do you feel that the school culture accepts homosexually-orientated learners?**

4. **What do you think school policies should say about homosexually-orientated learners?**

5. **What do you think school policies should say about aggressive acts towards homosexually-orientated learners?**

6. **What difficulties do you think homosexually-orientated learners might have in school?**

7. **Are you aware of occasions when homosexually-orientated learners might have been treated differently because of their sexual orientation?**

8. **Are you aware of acts of aggression towards homosexually-orientated learners?**

9. **In your opinion, do you feel that the school is currently dealing adequately with victimisation towards homosexually-orientated learners?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **As far as you are aware, which types of aggressive acts towards homosexually-orientated learners occur in your school?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX E: DATA ANALYSIS CERTIFICATE

DATA ANALYSIS CERTIFICATE

Teachers' Perceptions of Homophobic Victimisation Among Learners within Independent Secondary Schools

FOR: Hendrik Petrus Mostert

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

Prof. Jeanette Maritz has co-coded the following qualitative data:

43 Open-ended questionnaires

I declare that Hendrik Petrus Mostert and I have reached consensus on the major themes of the data during a consensus discussion. The student has been provided with a report.

J E Maritz
9/17/2011

Prof. Jeanette Maritz (D.Cur; M.Cur; B.Cur (Ed.et.Adm); Advanced Research Methodology

maritje@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX F: PROOFREADING AND LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Memorandum

To: Whom it may concern
From: Mr ZS Simpson
Date: 15 July, 2012
Re: Language and technical editing of research report

This is to confirm that I, Zachary Storm Simpson, undertook a language and technical edit of the research report entitled:

"TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOMOPHOBIC VICTIMISATION AMONG LEARNERS WITHIN INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS"

by HENDRIK PETRUS MOSTERT, which is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Masters in Education (EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY) in the FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES at the UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND.

The editing was undertaken in July of 2012.

Kind regards,



Zach Simpson

(cell) 084 775 9427
(e-mail) zachsim@gmail.com