# An exploration of the impact of homophobia within the Muslim community in the Western Cape.

By

YASMIN TAJUDIEN

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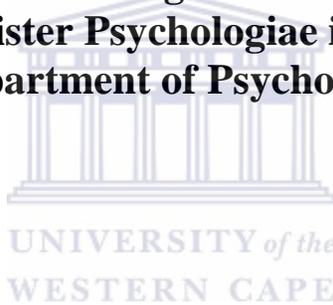
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Supervisor: Maria Florence

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ABSTRACT

South Africa, like many other countries has a population of individuals who are practicing Muslims and simultaneously gay. The ability to integrate these two identities is hindered by the stigma and discrimination of traditional interpretations of religious texts, religious clergy, and the Muslim community's response to homosexuality. In the present study, the experiences of gay Muslim men was investigated as a scarce body of literature is available that focuses on the experiences of these individuals. The focus of this research was fuelled partly by the belief that homosexuality is a reality within the Muslim community and that contemporary attitudes affect and marginalize individuals who are both gay and Muslim. A focus group was conducted with six individuals. The main aim of the study was to understand the personal disposition of men who are both Muslim and homosexual and to explore how attitudes of people impacts on their sense of 'self'. The transcripts were analysed using thematic content analysis to determine the themes that emerged from the research material. The main findings of the study included that Muslim religious identity was a salient discourse that informed how they understood, made meaning of, and internalised their gay identity. The majority of the participants responded to measures of internalised homophobia, gay identity development, religious commitment, scriptural literalism, and post conventional religious reasoning. Themes and trends observed in the discussions indicated that levels of religious commitment did not predict positive adjustment; scriptural literalism was not related to internalised homophobia or sexual identity development; and high levels of post conventional religious reasoning signifies lower levels of internalised homophobia and higher levels of sexual identity integration.

These findings provide a basis for future research that may lead to the development of interventions for gay individuals experiencing religious conflict.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work and that I have not submitted it, nor any part of it, for a degree at any other university.

Yasmin Tajudien

Date:

Signed:

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The University of the Western Cape who opened its doors to my search for knowledge as an undergraduate and granted me the opportunity to grow academically.
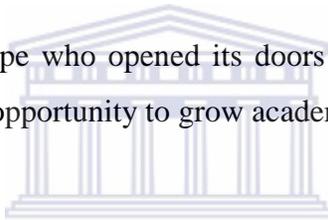
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PREFACE

"Dost thou consider thyself a puny-form when within thee the universe is folded?"

(The Quran)

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Our society essentially only recognises two distinct gender roles i.e. one being the masculine and the other being the feminine role. These roles are characterised by the qualities and characteristics attributed by a given society. In most cultures, children are raised to take on specific roles associated with their biological sex very early in life. Thus, in many cases, people maintain an identity of themselves in terms of gender (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1989). Contrary to the popular held belief of two gender roles, a third gender option - although not sanctioned by western cultures - and many other cultures - does exist. It consists of the integration of both maleness and femaleness. Thus, gender relations theory recognises that gender is a social construct and conceptualises gender on an emergent accomplishment, situationally and historically located and accountable to common cultural beliefs (Connell, 1995; Ferree, 2003; Risman, 1998). However, it is common practice, that when a person steps outside of the gender role ascribed to them, they may be branded with a label, ostracised and rejected.

International research exploring the incidence of homosexuality amongst several population groups consistently reports that 10-15% of any population is comprised of individuals who are homosexual (Bozett, 1990; Fassinger, 1991). Although researchers have examined homosexuality in relation to Islam, the research predominantly has been conducted abroad (Bullough, 1977) and focuses on the religious teachings. Even though this may provide insight into the issue at hand, it may not be reflective of a South African context. Keane (1977) believes that the problem in getting accurate information is that some homosexuals may fear to indicate themselves as such while others may aggressively seek inclusion in statistical surveys to make society more aware of the phenomenon of homosexuality. No statistics to date are available on the prevalence of homosexuality amongst Muslims in South Africa or abroad, nevertheless, Aslan (2005) reflects that 10 % of the human population is gay.

Kimmel and Messner (2001) asserts that research on men and masculinity is currently entering a new stage in which variations among men are seen as central to the understanding of men's lives and lived experiences. According to De Cecco, (1981), homosexuality has many facets i.e.

psychological, socio-psychological, and a sociological dimension. Each of these dimensions - intra-psychic, interpersonal and environmental - contributes to the total image and understanding of being gay. Not only do we have difference of causation, the phenomena spans the entire age range and has no social or class boundaries. Equally varied are the responses to homosexuality which produces a divided picture.

The term homosexuality is based on the Greek word 'homos' meaning the same and the Latin word 'sexus' meaning sex (Keane, 1977). Literally homosexuality would mean the same sex or the same sexuality. Keane states that some authors have used the literal definition to describe all relationships and friendships involving people of the same sex regardless of whether any physical, genital or erotic attractions are involved (Keane, 1977). However, the more common meaning of homosexuality is that homosexuality is an erotic or sexual attraction towards people of the same sex.

Keane also states that it is important at this point to acknowledge the variety of manifestations of homosexuality. This means that there is a significant distinction between slight and occasionally acted out tendencies towards homosexuality as opposed to homosexuality that is deep and permanent. Often these permanent homosexual orientations are described as true homosexuality and they sometimes involve a clear aversion towards members of the opposite sex. The distinction between occasional tendencies towards homosexuality and true homosexuality is important because occasional tendencies, especially those that occur in teenagers will often be grown out of, as the individual matures (Keane, 1977).

To date a clear definition of the word 'homosexuality' which is acceptable to all has not been made and may not be (Coleman, 1995). For the purpose of this research, we shall use the definition as provided by Hyde and Delamater (1997), of homosexuality being "a sexual attraction, emotional attachment, and/or sexual relations with someone of the same sex over a period of time in adult life. This does not preclude sexual acts or emotional attachments or even marriage with a person of the opposite sex, neither does it preclude a decision to remain celibate" (p.15).

Gay is a term that predates the use of the word homosexuality and has generally been used with greater precision (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). It is said to define people who acknowledge an erotic preference for their own gender. Throughout this study, the terms 'gay' and 'homosexual' are used interchangeably.

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There is much confusion in the literature between sexual orientation and sexual preferences. Ross (1983) state that how we choose to express ourselves sexually may be quite different from the way nature has made us. The concept of homosexuality has come to define an integral part of an individual's identity in a way that other equally well-defined terms do not. For example, straight people do not think that being straight is an integral part of their identity (Searle, 1997).

From a biological perspective, a genetic predisposition to homosexuality would be just that - a precursor - and nothing more. Sexual preference on the other hand may be learned and may even go against one's nature (Ross, 1983; Malcolm, 1997).

Historically, researchers (Condit, 2000; Fejes, 1989; Gilmore, 1990; Wood, 2005) have used three general models to carry out social scientific research. These are:

1. Biological models that attributed the difference in social behaviour between males and females (also differences amongst males and other males and differences amongst females and other females) to innate biological differences;

2. The anthropological model that stresses the variation in the behaviour and attributes associated with being a man to cultural differences;

3. Sociological models that have stressed that the accommodation to a sex role specific to one's biological sex is due to socialization

Although each of these approaches provides us with some understandings of the meaning of sexuality, they are limited and do not fully explain and account for influences of cultural differences (Kimmel & Messner, 2001).

Despite the openness of medical and other professions to new legal guidelines, translating constitutional rights into real freedom is especially difficult when one lives in a minority religious community. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that the same constitution protects the right of citizens to practice their religion. For most of the Muslim community, this means the right to regulate affairs internal to community and family by Islamic custom. It might appear that South African Muslims who are gay, lesbian or Trans-gendered are empowered by their new constitution to assert their identity and rights. However, the issue is not that simple, for the ties that bind together family and religious communities are certainly more immediate and stronger than the forces of law. The reality is that most gay Muslims (men and women), when they 'come out'

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voluntarily or are 'outed' by force, leave their homes and the Islamic community. Little scope is given to gay Muslim's to find a role within their religious community and also live with dignity and honesty with their sexual orientation or gender identity. Most Islamic authorities assert that gay sex is prohibited by Islamic law, and most even declare that homosexual orientation is sinful and reprehensible.

The main aim of the research was to explore the experiences of South African men who are both gay and identify as Muslim, and the impact attitudes and behaviors towards them has on their sense of self. The goal being, to gather information that may feed into the knowledge and the development of specific programs for assisting homosexuals who wish to 'come out' to do so without any fear. The specific objective of this project was to explore their experiences of the psychological, emotional and social impact of being gay and Muslim. It also hopes to provide additional insight into understanding how participants reconcile their often passionate love of being Muslim with the drastic Islamic prohibitions that forbids their sexual expression.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
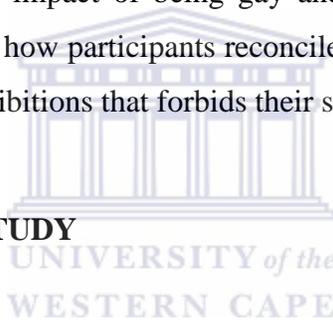
Even with the new constitution, rights to protect the gay men and women from social injustices do not exist (Dhladla, 2001). Dhladla (2001) asserts that being a gay man today in South Africa is the same as it was during the old government. Gay men and women remain locked into the status of social deviants (Isaac and McKenderick, 1992) and are seen as a threat to the nation, deserving of eradication and attack (Gevisser and Cameron, 1995).

Muslim gay individuals may be protected constitutionally; however, there is no definitive work on homosexuality in Islam, merely a series of cross-references that stress the 'abnormality' of gay individuals and their sexual relations (Doi, 1996; Zafeeruddin, 1996). Research with respect to homosexuality and its prevalence in Islam has primarily focused on the interpretation of religious texts with a dearth in the literature on the impact this phenomenon has on the psyche and lives of the individual. This study is of crucial importance in the South African Muslim community since homosexuality is an area that remains a taboo in society at large. Gevisser (2000) believes that gay

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men in western societies put themselves into gay worlds where their sexuality becomes their dominant identity for this very reason. Societies seldom understand the dynamics of what constitutes homosexuality and it is often embedded with stigma and stereotypy. In Africa, a culture of secrecy exists in which more is possible than in the west (Luirink, 2000). Whilst macro-level theoretical work is important in promoting understandings of what constitutes homosexuality, knowledge is also required of how central concepts are reproduced, reinvented, resisted and negotiated at the interpersonal level (Gough, 2001).

For the aforementioned reasons, the need to research issues relating to homosexuality is strongly advocated by others internationally and in South Africa (Potgieter, 1997; Kitzinger, 1992). This study will contribute to the current sparse body of knowledge concerning the battles homosexuals face on a psychological and emotional level. It also aims to assess the individual's construction of themselves regarding their sexuality and how they negotiate regulatory conceptions of their sexuality and the practice of their religion. On a theoretical level, this study assists in improving and adding to our knowledge of homosexuality in relation to the Islamic way of life. This in turn could provide the building blocks in facilitating the manner in which to educate Muslim's on the issue of homosexuality.
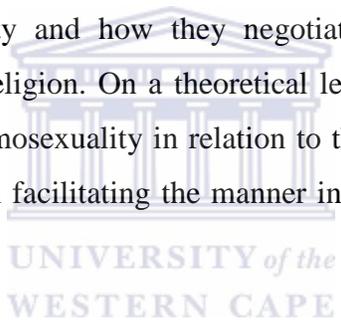
1.3 OUTLINE OF THESIS

Chapter one has provided an introduction to this study in addition to stating the significance of research in this area. In chapter two I review the literature on homosexuality with particular reference to Islam. I concentrate on the contemporary debates, discussions and research conducted in this area locally and internationally.

In chapter three I provide an overview of the methodology used and the procedure followed. In chapter four I present the findings and discuss the interpretations according to the literature and theory. In the final chapter I bring it all together and present some recommendations on a practical and theoretical level. I discuss some methodological issues concerning its limitations based on the problems encountered. At a practical level I suggest ideas for future and further research.

A social constructionist epistemology is used in my exploration of this topic. The general

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underpinning of this approach asserts that human interaction merely mirrors some aspects of the world; that we invent concepts to make sense of experiences and that we constantly test and modify their construction in light of new experiences. This generally means that we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against the backdrop of shared understandings and practices (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Although previous studies on homosexuality have examined the religious aspects of the dynamics surrounding homosexuality, a review of the literature suggests that very little research has been conducted in the field of homosexuality within the Islamic context focusing on the impact it has on the homosexual individual. Of the limited research available, the focus has been on religion with a view that homosexuality in 'unnatural' and should not be condoned. This view is shared by many faiths and is strongly emphasized in the literature.

When turning to the Islamic texts for insight, the position taken by Siddiqi, (1982, p.87) is that "Homosexual behaviour is sinful and shameful. In Islamic terminology it is called 'al fahsha'-an atrocious obscene act". Vahed (2003), supports this view and claims that the experts on homosexuality and other forms of sexual deviation, advance a series of groundless assumptions in their discussions on the causes of unnatural sexuality by attributing it to hereditary traits, genetic causes, and environmental influences.

According to Vahed (2003), Islam does not accept any type of justification for the "unnatural sin of homosexuality" (p.68) regardless of any biological, psychological or environmental factors which may influence a man to participate in this type of "unnatural immorality" (p.69). This should not be interpreted to mean that Islam does not recognise the reality of the existence of the various factors which sway man to partake is such acts. However, the presence of any negative influences which lead man towards this "unnatural act of immorality" (p.69), does not constitute a valid excuse for indulgence in acts of inhumanity for sexual pleasure (Vahed, 2003).

2.2 THEORIES OF CAUSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuality is different from the norm and sometimes puzzling to the curious observer. It is common for people to be categorized if they differ from the greater part of the population. For a large part of human history, it was thought that homosexuality has a biological basis; however there

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is no certainty as to what that basis is.

As homosexuality has been identified as a sexual orientation, many experts from a variety of disciplines have offered a range of theories to account for its existence. For the present study it is not possible to provide a brief overview of all the competing theories; instead, representative theories will be put forward as a way of providing a conceptual basis for the explanation of homosexuality.

2.2.1 Biological Theory:

This theory seeks to find some physical explanation for homosexuality. It proposes biological differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Though these theories do not discount the importance of environmental and experiential factors, they all share the view that biology is the primary determinant of sexual orientation (Bleier, 1984).

According to Thurer (2005), the differences studied have been for the most part in the area of endocrinology and genetics. There has been and continues to be great interest in, and research into the complexities of the physiology of human sexuality. Dr John Money of the Johns Hopkins psycho-hormonal research unit states "Researchers have not figured out as yet the formula whereby hormonal behaviour patterns are built into the system" (Money, 1975, p.23). The earliest search for the cause of homosexuality focused on the genes. Genes are the biological building blocks which transmit inheritable characteristics from generation to generation (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1989). Much research has been done in this area and although the results appear conclusive, there appeared to be many problems in the studies which made the results scientifically questionable (Kallman, 1952). Dawkins (1978) proclaims that it is very difficult to prove a genetic cause of sexual orientation. He does not suggest that genetics has nothing to do with sexual orientation but rather that it is not sufficient to account for it. He declares that there is a basic theoretical difficulty in all genetic research. He argues that for transmission within families it would make sense to study family members. However, besides genes, families share a wide range of environmental factors i.e. parental attitudes, religion, friends, schools, etc. To reveal the connection, the genetic component of the behaviour needs to be separated from the non-genetic component which is almost impossible.

Although heritability is an easy concept to define it can be very difficult to handle on a practical

level. There may be many different ways in which genetics and environment interact to affect eventual sexual orientation. Some forms may be genetically determined while others may have a genetic base with environmental input. There may also be some other kinds of homosexuality that is less directly controlled by genes. Dawkins (1978) thinks that to assert that sexual orientation has a genetic component is a fairly modest claim as all human behaviour has a genetic component of some sort.

The other main contingent put forward by biological theorists in the explanation of the causality of homosexuality is hormonal differences. "Hormones are excretions of the endocrine glands distributed in the bloodstream or in bodily fluids which stimulate certain specific functions which occur in other parts of the body" (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1989, p. 127). The major hormones being referred to are androgen, testosterone and estrogens. Although these hormones have been commonly labelled as male and female hormones, both types are found in each sex with similar chemical makeup. Early sexologists believed that homosexuality was hormonal in origin. That although there were male and female elements present in everyone, gay men had an unusual proportion of female elements (Birke, 1982). Recent hormonal research on homosexuality has focused on testosterone levels in gay men. These studies were grounded on the hypothesis that gay men had a deficiency in testosterone. Results on studies conducted where men were injected with high levels of testosterone did not change their sexual orientation as expected. Instead it increased their sexual drive. Other theorists have hypothesized that prenatal excesses or deficiencies of certain sex hormones predispose individuals to eventual homosexual orientation. Based on this assumption, Dorner (1975) studied the effects of estrogen on adult male homosexuals and heterosexuals. He and his team studied the effects of prenatal testosterone deficiency on adult male sexual orientation. The results revealed that homosexual males responded to the oestrogen in ways that were more characteristic of females. With these findings, he hypothesized that gay men experienced a deficiency of testosterone at some time prior to birth. Although these findings are presented as being conclusive, this data has never been able to be replicated by any other researcher nor did his study provide information about other relevant characteristics of his homosexual and heterosexual groups.

One assumption underlying all of these hormonal studies seems to be that sexual orientation is a

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purely biological phenomenon and that homosexuality and heterosexuality are homogenous unitary categories. Another assumption of this research is that male and female constitutes two opposing categories in both behavioural and biological traits. According to Blumenfeld and Raymond (1989), these assumptions are being presently challenged by many scientists who find that biological characteristics overlap in the two sexes.

It is difficult to pin point biology as the cause of homosexuality. Present evidence strongly indicates both prenatal and postnatal components of everybody's sexuality, whether homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual (Money, 1975). However, there is presently no conclusive evidence that homosexuality is organically caused.

2.2.2 Environmental/Behavioural Theories:

Another contender regarding the cause of homosexuality is the environmental/behavioural theories. There are many popular beliefs that may emerge from an environmental perspective. Various family systems propose views which seem to predispose a person to homosexuality (Bieber, 1962). Blumenfeld and Raymond (1989), reports that there are some who believe that homosexuality was caused by excessive masturbation. Others believe that homosexuals try to recruit children to be homosexuals; that homosexuality is a result of contact with other homosexuals or that same-sex orientation is a result of an unhappy heterosexual experience. However, there is no evidence to support any of these contentions.

Other researchers (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1987) hypothesize that certain family constellations may account for the phenomenon.

Studies done are based on data about families, available from the memories and experiences of homosexuals. Through several decades of gathering information and compiling reports there seem to be re-appearing patterns. Some of which are listed below:

- A powerful mother figure who is both feared and needed and a father, who is passive and ineffectual, often absent
- A hostile, aggressive, rejecting father with a seductive but sexually inhibited mother who needs the attention and dependence of her son for her own self worth.
- Constant devaluation or idealization of either men or women generally-often by a single parent.

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- Seduction or erotic exploitation during childhood by an older sibling, parent, or other extended family member over a period of time. This can be the same or opposite sex family members (Bieber, 1962).

Freund and Blanchard (1983) disagree with the above assertion. They question why siblings have different sexual orientation when they come from the same environmental exposure and familial constellations. In lieu of the above, none of the behavioural/environmental theories to date has provided sufficient evidence to warrant its acceptance.

2.2.3 Developmental Theories:

Another major theoretical approach to the cause of homosexuality is developmental. This theory proposes that as a child develops from infancy into adulthood, there are a multitude of events, external and internal, physiological and psychological, which eventuate in a unique self (Papalia & Olds, 1992). The child is also born into a larger context of community (and world) in which specific events and conditions take place which can and do have a critical impact on parents and the child as well. During the course of growth, a child begins to make observations and comes to conclusions about himself and the world. The basic task for each child is to survive and to feel comfortable and safe. Then the task is to grow and begin to be a separate person capable of caring for him/herself. As each child goes through this process, there are conclusions reached which are perceived as the hard and fast rules of life. Because of traumatic incidents or maybe a poorly functioning family system, a child may not go through a developmental stage successfully or completely. The child goes on growing and going through the rest of the stages, but a distortion is created which remains to be corrected.

Throughout the stages of development, there is discovery and decision about one's body, including factors that influence sexual identity i.e. how one views oneself as a male/female and how one relates to the same and the opposite sex.

Various theories of homosexuality are derived from either and essentialist approach or a social constructionist approach (Sullivan, 2003). Essentialist theories of causation, like the above, accounts for the birth of a core homosexual self either by biological predisposion or by development from familial childhood experiences (Seutter, 2004). They claim that homosexuality

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is a construct that is both ahistorical and acultural. They rest on the assumption that there are underlying true essences to homosexuality and heterosexuality; that they are two distinct, separate categories, rather than points on a continuum; and that there is constancy of these true essences over time and across cultures (Seutter, 2004). Constructionists on the other hand posits that homosexuality is defined more by temporal periods and cultural context (Sullivan, 2003).

Sayer (1997) argues that a moderate degree of essentialism is necessary in order to explain the concept of social forces. He believes that both constructionialsm and essentialism in their pure forms fail to fully provide a significant explanation for homosexuality. He readily acknowledges that credit needs to be given to a biological explanation because empirical validity is hard to refute, however, he still sees society and culture as having a greater influence upon an individual's identity. It is with this view that social constructionists argue that reality is socially constructed, and the product of a particular culture, its language and institutions. (Seutter, 2004).

Clearly, no single cause and effect theory can explain homosexuality. It is not a single clinical entity. There are a large number of variables which determines the outcome of one's sexuality. Despite the large number of studies done on homosexual behaviour, no clear explanation of the cause or causes of homosexual orientation has emerged. Although sexuality is inherent in all aspects of life, human motivation and activity should not be explained on the basis of sexuality. The labels homosexual and heterosexual are inadequate labels for humans as people. Homosexual experiences are so diverse with many originating factors that to term someone homosexual says nothing about the person other than that he or she engages in sexual behaviour with someone of the same sex.

2.3 HOMOSEXUALITY AND RELIGION
Sexuality has been a major concern of religion from the earliest of time. Donaldson (1993) believes that this may be because both endeavours tap into the deepest emotional and psychological currents of the human species. Due to emphasis on "traditional" gender roles, the "nuclear family", procreation and conservative religious values, many gay individuals feel a sense of alienation from their community and develop a conflicted relationship about their religious identity (Fishman, 2000; Schnoor, 2003).

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Like other religions, Christianity rests on natural law. Natural law teachings argue that the sexual nature of man is naturally linked to both emotional fidelity and procreation and that outside of this context, sex is essentially destructive of the potential for human flourishing (Comstock & Henking, 1997). This view is shared by the Jewish faith which states that the "sexual purpose given to male and female was procreation, continuing the divine creation. The first human beings were told to be 'fruitful and multiply' so that sexual intercourse was used in order to perpetuate the race" (Parrinder, 1996, p.242).

Drakeford (1977) holds an opposing view. He states that our major emotional reaction against homosexuality is not primarily on the basis that the bible condemns it, but instead that, we humans condemn it. We condemn it because of what we have learnt from our society, because of our erroneous perceptions of homosexuals i.e. who they are and what they do. Because of this misguided portrayal of homosexuality we have become aroused with fear, revulsions and anger towards homosexuals (Drakeford, 1977). This view is shared by Davies in Comstock and Henking (1997), who state "it is the religious leaders of a society who are usually most concerned to condemn deviant sexual practices which in themselves do not inflict any direct harm on particular individuals. Such deviant sexual practices are often depicted by the religious leaders of a community as essentially disordered, as a threat to the entire social order; to society as a whole" (pg.39).

This is not to suggest that if people had accurate information they would inevitably think that homosexuality was perfectly alright, but simply to state that the intensity of emotional reaction against homosexuals comes from a variety of our social learning factors and from personal experiences rather than from the interpretation that the bible says that it is wrong.

Although the position of religions and religious institutions are clear, it is rather difficult to find references to homosexuality in any of the holy texts. This study however, aims to understand the individual in relation to the relevance of religion in his life.

2.4 ISLAM AND HOMOSEXUALITY
Before turning to the literature on homosexuality in an Islamic community, it is important to

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understand that this study focuses on the impact people's understanding of homosexuality and their behaviour has on the lives and experiences of gay Muslims.

Being gay and Muslim forms the basic identity of actual people in Muslim communities throughout the world. South Africa has a long-standing Muslim minority community living under a new secular democracy. According to Kugle (2003), "Scholars in the contemporary period have not lived up to the standards and frankness of pre-modern Islamic scholars, and much work still needs to be done in this area. Many scholars and Islamic leaders in the present shy away from honest discussions of sex and sexuality, with all its promises and problems".

El- Rouayheb (2005), reports that Islam forbids homosexual acts between men, just as it forbids heterosexual sex with a partner without the legal relationship of marriage. Gonsiorek (1991) supports this orthodox Muslim view by proclaiming that homosexuality is a deviation of a man's true nature and purpose. He continues by iterating that homosexuality is "sinful" (p.24) and "perverted" (p. 24) and is viewed with contempt in Muslim societies and countries. Kugle (2003) opposes this view and declares that if Muslims face the issue at hand, they will find that the Quran offers many resources to creatively, compassionately and caringly address sexuality and gender diversity.

While members of a particular school might generally agree on certain points of law, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the Islamic code on a given issue. Islam has various sects which disagree on the interpretation of key religious and secular issues. The Sunni sect emphasizes strict dogma and practice while believing in the separation of religion and politics. On the other hand, the Shiite sect views politics and religion as one (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1989). Despite differences in interpretation, Islam does have a powerful legal tradition (Sharia) which aims to provide comprehensive guidance for all areas of life (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1989).

Nasr (1975) states, like all other major religions, Islam has specific teachings which prescribe patterns of behaviour for individual life to create a sense of community. The Sharia (pre-eternal divine law), contains general teachings as well as concrete ones. The guidelines provide the believer with what in Islam is referred to as the "straight path". In other words, they are provided

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with knowledge of right and wrong. They are also given a free will with the capacity to choose. In stating this, Nasr (1975) also articulates that the possibilities for sexual pleasure –with reference to homosexuality- are not so clearly expressed in the Islamic tradition.

Most gay Muslims assert that their sexual orientation and gender identity are essential components of their personality: either an innate quality they were born with, or an unalterable character from before rational cognition (Tayob, 1999). For some gay muslims, spiritual growth is a process of stripping away the sense of having a "false self" that is imposed by family, society, and religion, in order to free a "true self" through which they can sincerely turn to God (Tayob, 1999).

In Islam, sex is a joy, a blessing from Allah. Traditionally, Islamic scholars regard all intercourse – including heterosexual sex- between persons not legally married as a sin. Yet according to Blumenfeld and Raymond, (1989) Muslim men may have four wives. They may also have concubines who they may use for sexual pleasure but may not legally marry. This seems to suggest that the Qu'ran does not condemn particular actions rather; the chief virtue appears to be to avoid excess. With this said, the Qu'ran also seem to be ambiguous with respect to homosexuality per se. Though the Sharia warns against the abuse of sexuality, the Qu'ran does not condemn homosexuality per se nor does it recommend specific punishment for it. Gay support groups contend that this condemnation is based more on patriarchal presuppositions than upon a clear reading of the scriptural texts, especially the Qu'ran (Tayob, 1999).

Blumenfeld and Raymond, (1989) states that some Islamic interpreters of the Qu'ran views sodomy as a transgression, but in the Sharia - Islamic tradition - transgressions are a minor violation equal to not observing certain religious rituals. Historically, among the Sunni sect, the practice of homosexuality was fairly widespread among mystic orders in North Africa. On the other hand, Islamic Shiite fundamentalists have used the Qu'ran to justify harsh penalties against people engaging in consensual homosexual acts. Boswell (1980) suggests that homosexual practices were tolerated in Islam as long as the participants had heirs; he also states that in Sufi literature homosexual eroticism was a major metaphorical expression of the spiritual relationship between man and God. Furthermore, he articulates that the Arabic language contains a huge vocabulary of gay erotic terms with dozens of terms to describe male prostitution.

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It is impossible to know precisely to what extent practice reflects theory especially when we are referring to an era hundreds of years ago. It is difficult to assess how reliable reports about a given culture may be, especially when those reports emerge from hostile ethnic and religious groups. The Quran rises above conventional Islamic mores and speaks to the existential search for a path towards living sincerely according to one's own inner disposition. While some keep this search for a true self hidden out of fear, others face the difficulty of a bewildered family and often hostile community (Tayob, 1999).

The present study operated from the premise that there are dissident voices in Islamic communities and that the hegemonic interpretation of the Quran is not the only one.

2.5 IDENTITY FORMATION, CULTURE AND CRISIS

In a country where prejudice towards minorities has traditionally been a way of life, so too, homosexuals remain a socially unacceptable group. It has been declared that homosexual orientation (as a personal understanding of one's self through emotional and psychological forces) is sinful and reprehensible (Tayob, 1999). Gay men and women are liable to discrimination for the expression of their sexual preference, subject to religious condemnation, discriminated against in many work settings and they themselves often become active agents in their own oppression (McDonald, 1989).

Being homosexual in a predominantly heterosexual world has many consequences. One is that developmental and life transitions - that would otherwise have been well within the person's coping capacities - become stressful and demanding, leading to crises that disables and immobilises the individual (Tessina, 1989).

Since homosexuals do not obtain social support from the major South African culture which rejects their identity as invalid and unacceptable, a homosexual sub-culture has evolved which validates the homosexual identity and at the same time entraps the individual in a sub-culture milieu that stresses 'difference', contributing further to an identity crisis. Gay Muslims cannot presume full acceptance from the broader queer community as movements that focus on sustaining a collective identity (for an oppressed group) sometimes overlook the concerns of sub-groups found within the

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larger movement (Ederetal, 1995). As a result, Muslims often struggle to find ways to successfully negotiate their sexual and religious identities.

It seems inaccurate to define anyone by their sexuality. Society does not label people heterosexual as if it was a complete description of them nor should this approach of labelling be attached to individuals with a homosexual orientation. However, Morales (1990) suggests that research in relation to homosexuality tends to simplify this element by advocating that the minority gay individuals will simply choose to prioritize one of these identities while repressing the other.

Although numerous studies on Islam and homosexuality in the west (Manji, 2003; Kugle, 2003; Bouhdiba, 1998; Safi, 2003) highlight the particular struggle in reconciling sexuality and religion, it appears that there has not been a single study in South Africa, particularly within the Muslim community that explored the issue of homosexuality and religion focusing on the individuals and their strife for integration within their communities and themselves. It is not certain whether gay Muslims can help create a more open and accepting atmosphere in Cape Town or in the wider South Africa. However, they will aim to create for themselves a social niche in which they can practice Islam in ways that grant them dignity (Tayob, 1999).

2.6 SEXUAL IDENTITY AND GENDER ROLES

Inevitably, lesbian and gay men commonly go through a period of uncertainty when they begin to define their sexuality. This can be a period of great emotional turmoil, confusion and isolation (Savin-Williams, 1989). Overlooking the diversity of its nature, Mass (1990), states that sexual identity has usually been conceptualised as if it were no more than a simple dichotomy. A person is either heterosexual (straight) or homosexual (gay). Hart, (1979) contends that while gender differentiates the male and the female physiological attributes - that are genetically inherent - identity relates to gender only in as far as the male or female physiology is incorporated into the psycho-social structure of the individual. Hence, identity is not the 'body of reality' (p.23) but the 'perception' (p.23) of reality - the personal meaning - for a given individual. "The combination of these perceptions is called the 'body image' (p.23) and it is made up of "unconscious, preconscious and conscious elements" (1979, p.23). This assertion corroborates the key issues that emerge from recent studies that declare that homosexual behaviour reflects feelings, attitudes and sexual

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expressions within the context of relationships which are held by individuals (Mass, 1990).

In re-viewing the literature, both past and recent, a sense of disquiet is engendered - a result of the explosion of varied and often conflicting academic and literary forays into the nature of homosexuality.

Weeks (1977), captures this when he concludes that "homosexual behaviour cannot be crammed into any one pre determined mould because it pervades many different aspects of social experiences" (p.17). This opinion is shared by Potgieter (1997) and Bigner (1999) who states that it is imperative to understand that there is no uniform or singular gay experience. However, despite their diversity, homosexuals share a common experience of oppression and rejection.

Concern can indeed be voiced over the mushroom-like cloud of contradictory thinking about homosexuality that hangs over the heads of people who wish to understand the phenomenon and who have to sift through diverse and opposing opinions in order to establish a sense of verisimilitude for themselves. Being gay may be intolerable and unacceptable to individuals as a consequence of the meaning they manufacture in order to understand and manage their world. The most urgent step to be taken is to break the pervasive grip by homosexuals on the information and disinformation which has emanated for so long from journals - science and medicine - and from the media (Seale, 1986). Since sexuality does not exist in a vacuum, understanding can be further promoted by examining human sexuality in its many dynamic cultural relationships. Gay identification, subsequent to feelings of alienation and estrangement from mainstream heterosexual lifestyle choices, can give rise to feelings of belonging (Cross and Epting, 2005).

2.7 SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem has been linked to body satisfaction, self image as well as to aspects which comprise features of an integrated ego (Stricklin, 1974). Through the forms of social interaction, homosexuals seek to establish and maintain a stable identity. This process is linked to the growth of patterns of self–esteem and self image which can be defined as the "selective appraisal of the self which is influenced through interaction with the environment and people with whom individuals come into contact" (Finch, 1973, p.20-1).

In effect all homosexuals are reared in heterosexual families, heterosexual peer groups and

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heterosexual educational institutions (Hammersmith, 1987). Consequently, they grow up with the same stereotypes, moral judgements and homophobic responses as most other individuals. Gay individuals' first introduction to lesbian and gay issues is often in terms of encountering the homophobic attitudes of people (Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Elwood, 2000; Rivers, 2001). As a result, many young people internalise this homophobia. Thus the stigma in the context of social relationships creates a distancing between those with the stigma and those without it. (Hammersmith, 1987). This stigma threatens a gay person's self-esteem and his sense of identity by denying him social and emotional support.

McCarthy and Bayer (1984) outline some of the stereotypes widely accepted as applying to all individuals with a homosexual orientation. They are:-

- All homosexuals are attracted to children and wish to have physical contact with them
- All homosexuals are effeminate and lack the male characteristics of courage, aggressiveness and strength
- All homosexuals are sexually active
- All homosexuals can change their orientation merely by being willing to do so.

Keane (1977) concurs with the above. He states that classic stereotypes have been developed for both male and female homosexuality. In these stereotypes, males are portrayed as effeminate in appearance, dress and occupation. He further states that these stereotypes are unfair to both homosexuals and heterosexuals as there are some homosexuals who appear effeminate, however, there are males who are heterosexual in orientation that also appear effeminate. These stereotypes produce an incorrect and unfair image of all gays yet it is commonly accepted by many heterosexuals. Because they are a minority and have a different sexual orientation from the majority, they suffer the same problems all minority groups do. McCarthy and Bayer (1984) states that because of this widely accepted stereotyped image of them, homosexuals keep their sexual identity a secret and avoid arousing suspicion of their true identity. Furthermore, the strain of being unable to "come-out" as being gay, having to hide their identity in a mixed society facilitates feelings of delayed emotional development, estrangement and loneliness, depression and self hatred, and loss of confidence; especially when they are victimized by cruel jokes. (Elizur and Zui, 2001).

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This position of society seems to be an immoral response to minorities within society. Changing ones attitude does not mean that homosexuality becomes morally right or good. Erasing the unjust stigma attached to homosexuality does not mean that it becomes viewed as natural or morally equivalent to heterosexuality. However, a distinction needs to be made. The psychological evaluation of homosexual behaviour should not be confused with the evaluation of its morality.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted a social constructionist framework. The term social constructionism has a myriad of theoretical sources. Its key concern was to provide an alternative to the positivist-empirical philosophy that characterized the knowledge production of the social sciences in the 1960's and 70's (Gergen, 1973). A key tenet of all social constructionist approaches is its challenge to the notion that knowledge is based on objective observation of the world. Social constructionist's approach to identity rejects any category that sets forward core features as the unique property of a collective's members. It also challenges essentialist dichotomies of gender and dismisses notions of gender's primordial roots (Smith, 1990). It therefore advances a critical stance towards taken-for-granted understandings of the world which includes questioning how we perceive and categorize the social world (Burr, 2004; Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Gergen, 1985). Thus, the premise of social constructionism is that members of a culture construct beliefs, values, institutions, customs and laws that make up their social reality as they interact with others (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1997; Freeman & Combs, 1995).

Social constructionists believe that categories such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, and nationality are socially constructed which may vary across time and culture depending on the specific circumstances, processes and forms of interaction (Freedman & Combs, 1995). This may hold true for homosexuality as a construct to preserve values and beliefs that constitutes the social reality of the Muslim community, Religious institutions and society at large. Homosexuality indeed challenges our constructed empirical realities, our stigmatization, and our objective understanding of the world. Subjective definitions imprison individuals in spheres of prescribed actions and expectations (Smith, 1990). To engage with this phenomenon may disillusion and destroy the normative constructs of long standing traditions and beliefs. Goffman (1963) regards homosexuality-related discrimination as embedded in the individual; in that it is an attribute that is

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significantly discrediting in the eyes of society, and serves to reduce the person who possesses it. This view is shared by Bem (1993) who argues that socially defined maleness and femaleness severely constrict human behavior. He further explains that an individual has a characteristic which constitutes a spoiled identity; hence, society devalues the individual who is regarded as socially undesirable. This would lead to social devaluation and discrimination of this individual.

There are two key themes which most social constructionists subscribe to (Burr, 2004). The first theme is that of multiple perspectives. From an ontological position, social constructionism is concerned with the construction of meaning and not truth. Social constructionism holds that there can be no one absolute truth and favours a view that multiple truths exist. It describes the process through which our perceptions and interpretations of reality is inevitably coloured by the assumptions of our culture as encoded in our language (Searle, 1997).

The second theme concerns the function of language. Social constructionists hold that language is both a precondition for thought and a form of social action. Within psychology there exists a polarized view of the relationship between thought and language. While traditional psychology perceives language as an expression of thought, others such as social constructionism in particular hold a resolute view that language is in fact a precondition for it. Burr (2004) claims that our understanding of the world does not transpire from our perception of objective reality, rather it stems from the conceptual frameworks and categories used by others within specific socio-cultural contexts. In other words, the impossibility of communicating complex ideas without the use of language forces us to conform to the assumptions of the language that we speak in. As soon as you use a word, you have bought into the assumption of that word and how it relates to other words and concepts. As soon as you speak in a language, you have tacitly accepted its assumptions and worldview.

Gergen (1973, 1985) challenged that all knowledge, including psychological knowledge, are socially and culturally situated. He states that psychological inquiry should take social, historical and cultural life as its focus of investigation rather than the individual. He proposes that psychology cease its quest for objective knowledge and focuses on the discursive practices that are used to construct the world.

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With its varied genesis, attempting to provide a single all - encompassing definition is a complex task. While it is often referred to as a movement, others see it as a theory, a position, a theoretical orientation or an epistemology (Stam, 2001). Burr (1995) outlines four key assumptions of a social constructionist position, 1) a critical stance towards taken for granted understandings of the world; 2) the way in which we understand the world is historically and culturally specific; 3) knowledge is created and sustained through social interaction; 4) knowledge and understanding sustains social action.

Social constructionist methods are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. Willig (2001) shares the above conception that it 'draws attention to the fact that human experiences, including perceptions, are mediated historically, culturally and linguistically' (p.7). It states that people's thoughts, feelings and experiences are products of systems of meaning that exist at a social rather than individual level. "That which we perceive and experience is never a real reflection of environmental conditions but must be understood as a specific reading of the conditions" (Willig, 2001, p.7).

An essential aspect of social constructionism is the role of language and discourse in the construction of knowledge (Gergen, 1985). Different discourses allow for the development of different kinds of identities and action. As argued by Kizinger (1992), our identities are formed by the language that we use. They are shaped by the countless 'discursive practices' which locates us in the world. Bem (1993) agrees that it is an interactional accomplishment, continually renegotiated through linguistic exchange and social performance. These identities are not an intrinsic part of us. Instead, we are defined through language, the categories ascribed to us, and it is from the meaning that these categories convey that our identities are formed. The major implication of adopting this notion of language is that what we understand to be human, i.e. our personalities, emotions etc, are contingent on and structured by language. Campbell (2001) posits that theoretically, homosexuality-related discrimination should incorporate explanations of the complex dialectic of individual and society in order to be understood more holistically. However, social constructionists in general and Gergen in particular, argue that it is important to remain cognizant of the fact that language is a social phenomenon.

The conceptualization of language as a social phenomenon - at a basic level - points to the notion

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that the world is constructed during social interactions. This essentially means that how we understand the world is dependent on human interchange concerning "agreements or rules of interpretation shared within particular communities" (Hubberd, 2005, p.23). Furthermore, the meanings of words and concepts are never permanent but rather indeterminate and contingent on specific contexts wherein it is used. Social constructionists are generally in agreement that the meanings of words are context-dependent and intricately tied up to specific contexts wherein it is used. Hinsch, (1992) states that same sex bonds were seen as a perfectly acceptable and natural way of life in empirical china. There was no word or label for this phenomenon in Chinese because it was never seen as a defining or integral part of a person's personality. Hence, the focus of constructionism is therefore on the function of talk within particular contexts and traditions and not the truth or falsity of the statement.

Thus, research from a social constructionist perspective is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that is available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and to trace the implications for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2001). This is essentially important as we have been raised to think about sexuality in an essentialist way (Potgieter, 1997). The essentialist view postulates that human beings have an in-built sexual essence which would include a natural disposition to a particular sexual orientation. This then leads to the assumption that 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' are intrinsic differences within individuals (Potgieter, 1997).

This research is concerned with broader patterns of social meaning. Durheim (1997) states that social constructionist's value data collection in context with minimal disturbance to the natural setting. It makes use of unstructured, open ended qualitative material as a data collection technique as multiple versions of the world and reality exist; no one account is 'more' true or real than the other. This alignment to relativism has been the foundation of social constructionism.

Whilst social constructionism formed the theoretical basis of this study, and as gender, identity, culture, sexuality and self esteem are central aspects of the study, it takes a thematic perspective in order to understand the interplay of discourse between religion and sexuality (sexual identity) paying particular attention to how it influences people's perceptions and attitudes towards

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homosexuals.

2.9 CONCLUSION

We divide reality arbitrarily to create normative categories: right vs. wrong, acceptable vs. unacceptable, and good vs. bad. Tacit in every language is the construction of a social reality that frames individuals and concepts as inside or outside the boundaries of social norms.

In this chapter I looked at some of the current debates, discussions and research on homosexuality. I have shown that there are diverse forms of homosexuality as well as an array of propositions put forward in attempting to allocate its cause. It is precisely for this reason that I adopted a social constructionist perspective in my approach to this study. In the following chapter I discuss the methodology employed in conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Methodology connotes a set of rules and procedures to guide research. It is thus important to the construction of all forms of knowledge and provides the tool that one can use to create understanding (Daly, 2003). Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) support the above view and state that methodology is as concerned with how we as researchers conceptualize, theorize and make abstractions as it is with technique or methods that we utilize to assemble and analyze information.

This chapter will include the methodological framework which focuses on social constructionism, the framework within which this study was located. This will be followed by a discussion of the research method used – qualitative method in the form of focus group discussions. A discussion of the selection of participants, interview schedule, procedure, trustworthiness and credibility of the study, data analysis, ethical consideration, reflexivity and a chapter summary will follow.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

Pretorius (2002) asserts that research methodology means different things to different people but that researchers' use it as if there is a consensual meaning attached to it. He states that the term methodology refers to the concrete mode of doing research as well as the models that influence the concrete decisions (Pretorius, 2002).

Traditionally, methodology approaches can be subsumed under two main paradigms, i.e. qualitative and quantitative (Daly, 2003; Pretorius, 2002). On the quantitative side, techniques have come to mean randomized experiments, quasi-experiments, objective tests, statistical analyses and sample surveys. In contrast, qualitative methods include ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews and participant observations (Pretorius, 2002; Rabinowitz, & Waseen, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state that, researcher's, working from the qualitative paradigm emphasize the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the situational constraints that shape the research. In contrast, quantitative researchers emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables. The research

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process is thus believed to be within a value-free framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

This study adopted a qualitative framework which focused on the experiences of South African men who are both Muslim and gay with particular focus on the meaning they attribute to their experiences, and the manner in which it affects their concept of 'self'.

This research method has been selected as the research seeks to highlight social issues from the standpoint of South African men who are both Muslim and gay. This was an exploratory study as the area that is being investigated is under-researched. Babbie and Mouton (2000) suggest that qualitative research always attempts to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves; the primary goal being to describe and understand rather than explain human behaviors.

This research project aimed to work within a social constructionist framework because it is in agreement with Dean and Rhodes (1998) in Meyer, Moore and Viljoen, (2003) who posit that the way we make sense and give meaning to our world, our ideas and attitudes, is informed by our interaction with the particular social and cultural context in which we exist. Social constructionist research analyses social phenomena as the product of meaning-making human interaction set in concrete structural and cultural conditions (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Horowitz and Newcomb, 2002; Loseke and Cavendish, 2001).

It is within this framework that I sought to understand how gay Muslim men construct their realities, their ideas, their attitudes and responses to homophobia within their socio-cultural context. According to Collin (1997), reality is a social process and it is what is believed to be 'real' or a 'fact', hence, societal cognitions create social 'fact'.

3.2.1 Participants

A critical look at the literature available indicates a shortage of information on homosexuality within the Muslim community in the South African context.

Due to the sensitive nature of this study, I believed a smaller sampling size to be more appropriate. It is my belief that the ability to extract the richness of the discourses of social beings and the

attempt at corroboration is what renders a study well grounded, not the number of participants forming part of the study. This position is supported by Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) who suggests that small groups are favourable when conducting focus groups.

For this research, six male homosexual participants from the Islamic faith were selected from a faith based organization. The organization was first formed as a Social Support Group in 1998 and only looked at the needs of gay men. It then moved into a small organization in 2000 and finally moved into a more organized structure in June 2004 in it's current form that not only caters for - lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual, queer individuals-(LGBTQi)- from the Muslim community but all faith based queer communities who identify with the struggle to reconcile their faith with their sexuality. For the purpose of this study, only the gay men from the Islamic faith were focused on.

Although race, culture or socio-economic status was not factors of consideration, the group of participants came from diverse backgrounds and varied in age (early 20's – late 40's). This served to provide a range of view points across different generational representatives and varied discourses concerning male homosexuality. The sample consisted of men who were "out" to both their families and community. Some of the participants had been married before. The sample also consisted of an imam (Islamic priest) who helped explore the role religion plays in individual construction. Other members of the group where much younger men- of a consensual age - and brought the richness of their own struggles of an era that presents itself as more accepting.

3.2.1.1 Sampling:

Patton (1990) asserts that when selecting a sampling strategy it is important that it fits the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked and the restraints being faced.

In this study, the six participants were chosen on the bases of being Muslim, gay men, and of an age of consent. No consideration was given to their race, culture or socio–economic background. This type of sample is referred to as purposeful sampling in which information rich cases are selected for in-depth study. There are different types of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). The type used in this study is known as mixed purposeful sampling which combines various sampling strategies to achieve the desired sample. This type of sampling allows for flexibility and meets multiple interests and needs (Patton, 1990).

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I asked the leader of the organization to assist in gaining access to gay male (Muslim) participants. The latter informed members of the organization about the research being conducted; and asked those interested to inform him about their availability to meet me. I only came in contact with the participants who were selected from those who volunteered.

3.2.2 Data collection methods and techniques

Data was collected using a focus group interview - with 6 male participants - in conjunction with a semi structured interview schedule. This method of data collection has been selected as it provides an opportunity to understand how culture and religion is used to construct one's social reality. Patton (1987), Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) explains that focus groups involve conducting open-ended interviews with small groups of between six to 12 participants. Optionally, a general interview schedule can be utilized. This interview schedule serves as a basic checklist during the interview process and ensures that the same information about the phenomena studied is obtained from all the focus group discussions. Focus groups present an environment in which participants influence each other, as happens in life, in relation to their perceptions, feelings, and thinking about particular issues (Krueger & Casey, 2000). People make meaning of situations, and meanings are typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (Creswell, 2003).

This method has been proposed to be an appropriate method of data collection when using a social constructionist theoretical framework (Willig, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2000); Denzin and Lincoln (2003); Morgan, (1993) all agree that focus groups are an ideal strategy to use when collecting data since they allow a space in which people create meanings among themselves rather than individually. In addition, the researcher is able to observe interactions on the topic of discussion which provides direct evidence about differences and similarities in participants' opinions and experiences.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) postulates, that when working in groups one is able to access inter-subjective experiences that are defined as experiences shared by a group of people. They suggest that by accessing these experiences, one can gain knowledge of the differences between groups otherwise thought of as homogenous. Thus, this research focuses on the meaning these men – the participants- make with regards to their experiences as Muslim gay men and cannot be used to

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generalize to the gay Muslim population because of the diversity of how people experience and engage with their sexuality.

3.2.3 Procedure

Because English and Afrikaans were the dominant languages amongst the participants, they were offered to communicate in either of the language mediums. Most of the men chose to communicate in English. The aims and nature of the study were explained to the participants before we commenced the group. Participants were also reminded about the sensitive nature of the study and were asked to commit to not discussing the contents of the discussion in the group with anyone outside of the group. The focus group commenced after all members committed to not divulging any of the contents of the discussion. My intention was to keep the focus group as informal as possible in order to create an environment conducive to comfort, where participants felt free to express their views and speak openly about their experiences.

The focus group was conducted on the premises of the organization that was approached to participate in the study. The organization is a non denominational faith group that runs groups and workshops with individuals who struggle to reconcile their sexuality with their faith. Muslim male homosexuals of all sectors viz. single, married, divorced, etc. were approached by the organization to participate in the study. I only came into contact with those who wanted to participate in this research project. Initially eight men indicated that they were interested in participating in the group discussions. However, only six individuals arrived at the venue on the day. It was decided by all parties involved that we would proceed with the focus group as the minimum member requirements - for the validation of material elicited from a focus group - is 6 participants.

A semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions was introduced to participants at the beginning of the interview. This was used to act as a focal point around which discussions centered. It also highlighted the aims of the study. The focus group discussion was digitally audio-recorded. The duration of the group discussion was two hours long with a 15 minute break midway through. The group was moderated by both me and a co-facilitator whose genders were different from that of the participants. Both I and the co-facilitator were registered intern psychologists. The participants of the group verbally consented to her presence. The co-facilitator took notes of the process of the group discussion that was used as a back-up to the audio-recorded research material.

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It was also used to facilitate the data analysis process. The interview was transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis. Thematic analysis was used to examine the transcripts whereby each segment of text is categorized in detail during the initial reading of the transcript. Several themes that were grounded in the talk of the participants were identified, combined and contrasted.

3.2.4 Limitations:

As with any qualitative, exploratory study, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. Some participants were initially nervous about being recorded. They were very conservative in their participation and shared more on an academic level. Since we continuously assured our participants as part of the procedure, they soon became more at ease and were able to share some of their personal experiences. Some participants felt uncomfortable that they were participating in and sharing very private and personal experiences in the presence of people they knew - fellow participants - and worried about what that meant once the discussions were over. This was addressed and we assured participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could leave at any time with no consequences.

3.2.5 Interpretation of information

Data Analysis is a dynamic and creative process and the product of analysis is a creation that speaks to the heart of what was learned (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This study is of a qualitative nature because of the explorative objectives of the study. Qualitative research begins its studies with minimal commitment to any prior assumptions and theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967).

Thematic content analysis, which falls under the umbrella of interpretive methods, was used to analyze the research material. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) postulate that interpretive methods assume people's subjective experiences are real and should be regarded seriously. This facilitates our understanding of others' experiences when we interact with them and listen to what they tell us. Furthermore, using qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006). I endeavored to regard participants' subjective experiences and perceptions as real, hence, helping me to understand them, as described by Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006), from a position of empathic understanding.

I did not work in exactly the way the analysis steps will be described. I broadly followed the steps of analysis as described by Terre Blanche *et al.,* (2006). They argue that in reality, interpretive analysis rarely proceeds in an orderly manner as suggested by their step-wise presentation. The main process of analysis that was followed is that described by Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006).

Step 1 is that the researcher is to become familiar with and immersed in the research material (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006). I was both the researcher and the facilitator in the focus group. After the research material was collected and transcribed, I checked the transcription. This process enabled me to become familiar with and immersed in the research material and to develop some ideas of various interpretations that could be made.

Step 2 is the induction of themes that means the researchers has to look at the research material and work out what the organizing principles are that 'naturally' underlie it (Terre Blanche *et al*., 2006). I used the language of the participants rather than abstract theoretical language, which is in agreement with what is advised by Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006). I endeavored to look for similarities and contradictions as well as the processes and functions that were present in the research material. This process was facilitated by coding, which is the next step that was followed.

Step 3 is coding, which, according to Terre Blanche *et al*. (2006), is the process of coding a word, phrase, line, sentence, or paragraph that becomes the textual quotes (free code) that are linked to the themes under consideration. I found many quotes that were linked to more than one theme and sometimes quotes contained possible sub-themes. In this process some themes changed and additional ones were identified.

Step 4 is elaboration. According to Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006), it entails moving the research material around so that it is no longer in the linear sequence of the transcript, but that it is organized in a manner that groups material according to the themes. The process of elaboration is when you engage with the text in such a way that you compare the quotes that you grouped together, and in so doing might discover sub-themes and/or differences of opinions relevant to the same theme. I first 'free coded' the research material, then the 'free codes' were grouped under 'tree codes' (quotes grouped together to support a theme). This process was used to organize the numerous quotes that supported a theme or sub-theme. In doing so, it enabled me to engage with the elaboration process that Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006) speak about. I coded, recoded, elaborated and recoded the research material until no more significant new themes emerged.

Step 5 is interpretation and checking. Terre Blanche *et al*., (2006) explained this as using the thematic categories of the analysis of the research material, interpreting and checking it, and then giving a written account of the phenomenon studied. I first wrote up the themes that emerged from the research material and included the quotes linked to it. Then I checked it, to identify whether the quotes matched and explained the themes optimally. At this point I also reflected on how my biases might impact on the interpretation process. This was to make sure that the interpretation of the research material would optimally reflect the participants' experiences and perceptions.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Senate and the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences Higher Degrees Committee, UWC. The participants were fully briefed on the nature of the research. The participants agreed to take part in the project after fully understanding the aims of the research, and the methodological process. Participation was voluntary with informed consent. Those who agreed to participate signed a participant consent form as well as a consent form to allow the material to be audio-recorded. They also approved the venue that was used for the focus group. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured and participants were asked to keep the content of the discussions that emerged among the members of the group confidential and not share any part of the discussions with individuals outside of the group. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the research at any time without experiencing any negative consequences from me. The research material - audio-recording and transcript - will be kept locked up in a safe place and will be destroyed six months after the completion of the transcription process. While there are political and ethical considerations as to the usage of acquired data, it is hoped that the outcome of the research would outweigh the discomforts experienced. I am aware of, and acknowledge that the manner in which concepts are used could be regarded as problematic and even offensive to certain individuals. Consent was sought for documentation of the audio recording of the focus group interview. This – audio recording - is important as social constructionism requires a detailed analysis of the language being utilized in the discussion.

3.4 REFLEXIVITY

When undertaking a qualitative study, the researcher is both the instrument and the medium of doing the research. Thus, the researchers influence on the data needs to be recognized (Smith,

1995). This position is shared by Malterud, (2001), who states that a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to research, the angle of investigation, the methods considered most adequate for the study, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing of the conclusions drawn.

The content of the material covered in this research is of a very sensitive nature and it is often hidden from society. It was important that I constantly reflected on my perceptions and bias while collecting and interpreting data. I also take into account that research is never a value free practice thus it is important to be cognizant of the ideologies that are believed and to be aware to what extent it influences the research process (Willig, 2001).

The personal lives of researchers often play a serendipitous role in their choice of research topics. My selection of an object of study for my Masters research is a case in point. I am aware that my personal disposition, i.e. a heterosexual Muslim woman impacted on the research. My preconceptions, beliefs, values, assumptions and position may have come into play during the research process – the data collection and the analysis thereof. It may come forth that my knowledge of homosexuality - and its position in Islam - is one of theoretical exposure with no rooting in the real experience of this phenomena. This may be true and may contribute to the short comings of this research. However, as a young Muslim woman who has been exposed to the restrictions and limitations and often injustices carried out in the name of religion, I embarked on this research to explore the voices of another minority group (gay Muslim's) whose sexual identity is in conflict with their religious identity.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provided an overview of how (methodology), where and with whom this study was conducted. I also provided the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the method employed. I aimed at giving an accurate account of each step in the research design and also to provide a rationale for the particular methods and techniques that I selected. In the following chapter I will present the findings, discussion and my interpretations of the discussions with the participants.

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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTIONS

Masculinity can be viewed as the common characteristic that marks men as men in a given society, independently of biological identities (Hearn, 1996). It has to do with gender or social sex, a concept that has become essential to obtaining a relatively clear picture of the nature of our mixed societies (Hearn, 1996). As explored in chapter three, religion, sexuality and identity reveal cultural stereotypes, conformity to roles and images, and ethnic and generational identities. It reflects the complexity of different ways of being a man, in both time and space, and in terms of different cultures and of the individuals' concerned (Connell, 1995; 2000; Kimmell & Messner, 2001; Morrell, 1998).

The following discussion will consider the main themes that emerged from the focus group in relation to the impact homophobia in the Muslim community have on gay Muslims. The main themes included are, 'Scriptural literalism', 'the communities reaction to homosexuality, 'Sexual identity development', 'Othering and belonging', 'understanding homosexuality', 'families response to sexuality', Stigmatization and derogatory language', and 'Post conventional religious reasoning'.

The research revealed that constructions of homosexuality were complex, multifaceted and at times contradictory. Although individuals who took part in the focus group were self-identified homosexuals, they were diverse in their histories, their cultures and levels of engaging with their sexuality. Although age and socio-economic status was not a factor of analysis for the research, participants ranged from their early 20's to late 40's. They were ordinary working men some of whom were single, some were fathers and had been married before, as well as a religious leader. The nature of the participants' discourses revealed that individual experiences conflict as a result of the tension between their religious beliefs and their sexual practices. In analyzing the transcripts, I also became aware that the majority of themes reflected the most salient underlying discourse - that of religious identity and the effects thereof on how the person perceived, understood and experienced the world.

4.2 SCRIPTURAL LITERALISM

Islam and the interpretation of religious text:

A strong sentiment across the group was that Islam was viewed as oppressive to the world at large. All participants in their personal understanding of Islam did not feel this to be the case. Instead, they felt that people's interpretation of the Quran was oppressive. This general feeling by the participants is similar to studies by Kugle (2003) who iterates that religious leaders and institutions impose interpretations of religious text on the Muslim community which prohibits honest open discussions and facilitates intolerance.

> *"I don't think that the Quran is oppressive. I think that Islam as we've come to know it today especially to those outside of Islamic background or upbringing see it as something as irredeemably oppressive so I don't think it is the Quran but I think it's Islam as we come to know it the way it is being carried over and inculcated."*

> *"as far as I am concerned according to the Quran God is all forgiving, all loving, all compassionate and all these wonderful things, so why would he be restrictive in some cases you know."*

> *"if the Quran was oppressive, why was it written by God. Why was it authored by God? Who is this person that is compassionate, loving?"*

> *"I can start just by saying that the interpretation of the texts is what creates an oppressive view"*

Participants felt that learned thoughts about Islam (in its various interpretations) creates a blanket condemnation and marginalizes minority groups. This they believe is the result of a patriarchal system.

> *"the writers of these scriptures or the scribes of these scriptures they were men and we know according to our understanding they were more hard to accept homosexuality than women and I am wondering whether that it's not because of this whole machoness"*

"it's interpreted through the eyes of the patriarchy and therefore we find that women in Islam and gay people have been marginalized through the ages"

"women come to accept that homosexuality is wrong because it is taught by men that it is wrong."

Participants felt that homosexuality challenges the idea of manhood and all it has come to mean. Individuals believed that if men were to accept or tolerate and engage with the phenomenon of homosexuality that would challenge their patriarchal beliefs of dominance and control. This idea is verbirated by Fone (2000) who postulates that homophobia is derived from sexism and that sexist attitudes are important in sustaining masculine patriarchal societies. He declares that cultures and communities that accept homophobia and sexism, perpetuate inequalities. This sentiment is shared by Brownell and Wesserstrom, (2002) and Mosse, (1996) who agree that the image of a masculine gay man challenges the Western notion that masculinity is characterized by heterosexuality. Thus, the desire to reinterpret the Quran arises from the fact that the interpretation and subsequent discourses have been exclusively undertaken by heterosexual males thereby creating a hegemonic heterosexual context to analyze Islamic discourse.

" they have a problem with because it takes away their own manhood"

Work in the sociology of religion has described a phenomenon referred to as religious individualism (Wuthnow, 1998). He emphasizes the fact that the individual no longer feels constrained by ascribed characteristics, but rather, constructs his/her own personal religious identity by pulling together elements from various repertoires. Roof (1999) argues similarly that we have become "meaning-making creatures" who selectively choose interpretations to authenticate our own convictions.

In the above section it is clearly observable how these men attempt to renegotiate the boundaries of their Islamic identity by conceptualizing their sexuality within a religious context that emphasizes the concepts of love and compassion; characteristics fervently associated with God. It further emerges from the men's perspective that the oppression faced by homosexuals taints the image of God as an all - loving and merciful deity. Thus, from this understanding, Islam's prohibition against homosexuality emanates from societal norms and values and not from a sacred decree.

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4.3 THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY'S REACTION TO HOMOSEXUALITY

Participants appeared to have varying experiences of how they are treated by members of their community. Generally though, they were at great pains with the divide and alienation that the construction of manhood - what it meant to be a real man - had on their acceptance or lack thereof in the community. Some seem to have disengaged themselves. Although participants felt that this was a progressive way of dealing with homophobia, others felt conversely; they believed it to be a defense against the overwhelming feeling it creates.

> "*I don't have a story about difficulties and all that because I come from a very open background. I come from a diverse background. I come from a family of Muslims, Christians, Hindu, and a wide spectrum of the different faiths and for me it wasn't really that important whether I was of a specific faith and that diversity, that openness within the family created a platform for me also to be open within my sexual orientation*"

> "*people doesn't bother me because I know they are speaking out of ignorance and intolerance*"

> "*I can surround myself with positive people and this is my kingdom that I seek ultimately and if somebody breaks me down then I am definitely do not want to be in that space*".

An important aspect from the above extract is the participants expressed desire to be his "own man". By expressing his individuality and autonomy from social and religious forces, he is demonstrating an alternate way of being (Barren, 2000, 1996). At the same time, other voices in the group felt that it was impossible not to be affected by the impact these religious and social forces have on one's life. Social constructionists contend that the world we experience is the product of social processes. In other words, how we perceive things, how we understand the world is not derived from how the world really is but rather constructed by people during social interaction.

> "*I mean I'm a man unto myself with independent reasoning and all those things but we are affected by what the broader community sees because mainstream society is very orthodox as well and you as a being need to co-exist as a human being through those different areas*"

Those who felt that they are accepted also relayed a distinction in the type and levels of acceptance.

They expressed a sense of being accepted as a person void of their sexuality - a sense of part of who they are being split off in order for people to engage with them. This experience appears to engage the individual in a compromise in which they are forced to separate rather than link these two identities.

"She is very negative when it comes to homosexuality but yes she loves me dearly and she still believes in the back of her mind that I am going to be getting married one day to a woman."

Some felt that they have independent reasoning and are not affected by the notions and perceptions of society at large. Other members contested this way of engaging and felt that it was a defense to help cope with the alienation.

"I am a master of my own thoughts. So it's just my thing. So I am not really influenced by outside normality, I'm all about independent reasoning."

Others participants expressed feeling stuck and angry. Through all the talk, one was left with a strong impression of the difficulties these men had to face in attempting to find their place in society and particularly in their own community. They faced many physical and internal challenges and some found it easier to retaliate against God than to members of their community.

"I was just so angry at everyone and everything"

"I decided to not fast at Ramadan anymore, not to go to mosque anymore, not to go to any Muslim gatherings and not even to have respect for like at first when the' athaan' –call for prayer- goes off I'm in the mosque already. But after I came to this crossroad where I had to decide am I going to stay Muslim or am I going to do this or that then they would instill some kind of hatred and anger in me for all this stuff that I'm hearing and I couldn't reconcile my faith with my sexuality this is now two or three years back and then I decided then okay then I'm not going to do all these other things."

Some individuals who experienced acceptance by members of their community felt it to be of a superficial nature. Interactions and engagements appeared to be menacing and mocking. Others felt

that parts of them were accepted; that certain members of the community could only engage with them on a level that was void of acknowledging their sexuality.

> "I used to frequent a lot of Muslim's people's houses and after they found out I'm gay they said you not allowed to come here anymore but after sometime some of them say, "No, ag man we just said so you just come to our place." and they would even ask me questions when I come and stuff like that and even though they would still make fun of me behind my back"

> "people accepted me because I'm a nice person and the conversation would be come about my gay side then the truth comes out, the lack of being able to connect with that sort of thing and that comes out"

Most participants however agreed that they felt forced to choose between their need to be part of a community, their need for acceptance, and their sexuality. There was a strong association between being a conventional man and the roles it encompasses – patriarchal in thought and behaviour - and one's acceptance in the Muslim community.

> "It creates a sense of confusion. You know you have got to fit into a specific box in order to be a specific person."

> "go to mosque and people know at mosque that you are queer then they will look at you strangely. If you go to other places of faith, not only the mosque I mean even if you just go to prayer meetings with the family or so. There once more people are looking at you - why are you here? So as a queer Muslim it's often thought that you out of the fold of Islam. So therefore what are you doing at all these practicing occasions? You don't belong here you don't have a right here."

> "I know a few people that's Muslim and queer and they have their partners and whatever and at the same time they are practicing their faith as well but deep down inside they still feel that what they are feeling and how they are being is wrong and that causes great stress for them so their lives aren't that workable because there is always this thing hanging there because they can't reconcile their sexuality with their faith."

Participants agreed that the general feeling was that they had to either suppress their homosexuality

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to be accepted or cut ties with the Muslim community. There was also a strong association between being seen as a man and marriage. While it was seen as an unavoidable feature of the teachings/interpretations of Islam, the participants in the focus group distanced themselves from this understanding and were outspoken about the negative outcome of such involvement.

> "*over the past year now I have just made a decision to just cut myself loose and just not worry what people think*"

> "*By 'hak uit' by not caring anymore and whatever not necessarily having that respect anymore not practicing anymore because when I couldn't reconcile my faith with my sexuality I also 'hak uit'*"

> "*You angry with yourself for not being able to express who you are and you angry at the world for not giving you that space to express yourself*"

Some felt that although there were members of the community that wanted to accept them, these members were bound by their own fear of being rejected if they did so. Another issue that arose was what it meant - on a personal and religious level - for members of the community to accept someone who was homosexual. Participants felt that it would make them question their own faith and belief structure and create a feeling of sinfulness.

> "*a lot of orthodox people don't want to express themselves but look I totally accept you and I'm totally Ok with it because like you said they would have to go back and question themselves and they don't really want to do that because if they do question it then it's going to be something sinful.*"

Thus by extension, if the unclean/impure persons existence in the community is seen to disrupt the relation of the community with it's God, the members of the community may feel that it is necessary to reform the person or to remove them from the community. They are inclined to believe that not to do so will provoke the wrath of God and bring punishment on the community (Green, 2005).

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The extracts in the section above suggests that thoughts and beliefs are influenced by a myriad of local, social, political, historical, cultural, gender and religious factors (Ackermann, 2005; Deacon *et al*., 2005). Thus, a series of shared beliefs underlie much of the false perceptions against homosexuality. This makes it a social process in which individuals use their existing social representations to perceive, understand and respond to this phenomenon (Deacon *et al*., 2005; Joffe, 1999; Patient & Orr, 2003).

4.4 SEXUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Negotiating one's own sexuality:

Discussions on heterosexuality and homosexuality, 'straight' and 'gay' are often used to refer to clear cut categories in terms of sexual behavior which are often conflated with sexual identities (Khan, 2001). In other words, that one's self-concept as a sexual being is consistent with one's sexual behavior and sexual identity is fundamental to the sense of self. Eichberg (1990) declares that these segments are not as clear cut and linear, instead it is cumulative progression and that gay men face unending situations where the decision to come out or not has to be made. However, society at large does not allow for deviation of this nature as per the experiences of these men. Participants identified a range of processes involved in negotiating their sexuality within themselves. Some struggled to engage with the fact that they are gay while others report accepting it openly and freely.

"When I came out of the closet, yes it was easy for me to talk about it without being on the defensive."

"I actually feel safe inside that gay box"

"I have always known that I was gay and I accepted myself like that even while I was in the closet"

Some men in the study identified and relied on a range of social gender stereotypes to construct what they thought it meant to be a real man. Religious minorities are likely to consider homosexuality as egocentric indulgence which works to the detriment of the community. Homosexuality is a deviation from collective thought because it makes the person evaluate his own physical needs above the teachings of national consciousness (Gates, 1993). This is especially so

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when the minority groups are small in relation to their community. Gates (1993) states, that there is a need for each member of the group to play their expected roles in their family and their community. The group/community cannot approve individual eccentricity like homosexuality. Because the need of the group seems so compelling, the common wisdom is more inclined to believe that disregard for mores and morals must be willful.

"*I will ask Allah a few questions, why are you making me this way. I didn't choose to be gay.*"

"*that gave me sleepless nights*", "*I was afraid and shameful*"

" *I convinced myself I was a mistake*", "*I didn't even want to live this life and I almost committed suicide*"

There are several things worth noting in the above extracts. The first is the manner in which the participants engage with their sexuality. All of the above extracts depict a sense of something that is bad and shameful; something that has been thrust upon them; a sense of not having control or an option. An interesting point of note is that the above extracts indicate how participants indirectly ascribe to a hegemonic masculinity as being normal and desirable. Yet, the popular belief amongst the broader population is that homosexuality is a conscious choice made that is based on deviant sexual desires. Conversely, the above extracts depict the struggle these men had to go through at some point in their lives to come to terms with their attraction to men as well as the guilt and conflict that accompanied this process.

4.5 "OTHERING" AND BELONGING
Fitting in:
All participants were able to engage and relate to the theme of belonging or lack thereof. All felt rejected by and isolated from the Islamic community. Some experienced abuse. Those who reported to have been married before experienced and felt a sense of rejection from the gay community as well. There was a strong sense of having to protect themselves by either splitting these experiences, by avoiding challenging situations and by finding comfort and acceptance outside of their community and religion. Some felt that they had to steer away from talk about their sexuality while others felt that they had to overextend themselves in hope that their sexuality

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becomes irrelevant to the person.

> *"The teenage guys they swear at me why you walk like this, why you are like this, why you talk like this. I couldn't go to the mosque. I was praying in my house."*

> *"people speaking when I go to the mosque and speaking why you come to pray", "we are rejected by the neighbours and swear and all that we can't go to the mosque"*

> *"I have been looked for spirituality elsewhere. I have gone to a gay church where I spoke to somebody about it. I have cried, I have sobbed in a church like I have never sobbed in a mosque."*

Contemporary sexual behavior does not preclude different practices existing in the history of cultures. They have undoubtedly had an impact on ideologies of gender, sexuality and sexual behavior. However, the denial of variations in contemporary discourses has given rise to a prevailing construction of sexuality where a 'procreative' sexual ideology is the only sexuality that is seen as relevant (Khan, 2001). Conversely, any other form is categorized as deviant. At the same time, the construction of patriarchal social systems has created a pattern of destruction and marginalization concerning other frameworks of sexualities. This is evident in the experiences of these men who have to negotiate different ways of coping with this form of intolerance.

> *"While I was studying at the College of Cape Town campus some of the students classmates used to call me moffie and every time they were greeting me, morning moffie."*

> *"my community there wasn't much acceptance. I used to walk down the road and I used to get assaulted by groups of guys. I didn't know them from a bar of soap so whether or not I was nice to them I think was irrelevant at the time because there was a lack of acceptance."*

> *"I would always try and steer people away from my gayness so people that I wanted to be accepted by, I wouldn't do anything or say anything that make them or remind them of the fact that I'm gay. Talk about everything else, except that."*

> *"People accept you as a person but not as a gay person because you are always nice to them."*

In the above section of the discussions in the focus group setting it was observed that members of the group were quite involved and expressive of their experiences. It felt as if the space became a place for a cathartic release of a lot of unheard emotions. Individuals started speaking over each other in fear of not being heard. Some individuals expressed irritation towards others either for taking up too much of the space and not allowing others the opportunity to express themselves. Irritation and impatience was also displayed to those whom they felt were holding back. This interaction clearly depicted the different levels of personal growth and acceptance in relation to their sexuality. It also enacted the intolerance and judgments experienced - although on a more subtle scale - by others.

4.6 UNDERSTANDING OF OWN SEXUALITY

Nature vs. Nurture:

Nature-nurture questions are complex by disposition. While the nature construct has been connected to physically observable traits, the nurture perspective considers gender as a socially constructed attribute (Condit, 2000; Fejes, 1989; Gilmore, 1990; Wood, 2005).While some of the participants drew on popular understanding to account for their understanding of their homosexuality, others felt that it was biological - since birth - and not the result of any socialization or trauma. Some participants could accept that they were different from the normative population while others desperately wanted to be the same as a result of the enormity and intensity of the rejection. Some felt forced to face their difference before they were ready to, which had a negative emotional impact and psychological repercussions.

> *"I was gay ever since I was born.", "something in me, mechanical in my brain"*

> *"I knew I was always gay. I was dressing up since I was five, six and for me to and of course playing with dolls and everyone at home knew that"*

> *"I thought that I was a girl. For me I felt at ease with myself and I felt comfortable when I used to dress up, and I put make up on and a wig and high heels on and stuff. I felt comfortable."*

The above extracts indicate a sense of understanding regarding sexuality as a biological factor. These individuals understood themselves to be of a particular sexuality and accepted themselves as

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such. They did not experience their behavior or think of it as deviant.

> *"I was 16 when I started dealing with this stuff for the first time", "I started to ask certain questions about myself for the first time. So I like guys, I knew what being gay was but I didn't necessarily associate it with what I was doing."*

> *"for me it was admitting that I was everything that I despised. It was horrible. Nobody ever had good things to say about gay people"*

> *"I prayed that God should change me, like transform this homosexuality into heterosexuality and after some time we saw that it didn't work"*

> *"So it's like you naturally, inexplicably attracted to the same sex. But you have a choice to sleep with the same sex or if you want, to force yourself to sleep with a woman. I don't think it speaks to what we naturally feel.'*

While some researchers argue for a biological bias, others argue that most human sex-linked behaviour is learned (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). From this perspective, men are taught to be masculine (Cancian, 1989; Doyle, 1994; Wood, 2005). Masculinity in this perspective is taught to boys through behaviour that is rewarded and naturalized. Studies in the U.S. show that fathers encourage and reward gender appropriate behaviour (Caldera, Huston, & O'Brian, 1989; Fagot & Lienback, 1987; Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995). Hence, explanations of gender differences about appropriate behaviour have been explained through gender role socialization. The quotes below suggest that these participants felt that it was the lack of masculine input in their upbringing that predisposed them to homosexuality.

> *"He never played with me when I was a child."*

> *"For a long time I thought that the emotional absence of my father that made me think that's why I'm gay but my brothers are one year old than me and my other brother is one year older than him. We all shared the same household and the same upbringing but they are straight, so it must be the way that I was receptive to that situation.'*

In contemporary construction and understanding of sex and gender, sex is commonly considered biologically determined and gender socially constructed. However, gender is more accepted if it coincides with one's sex. Similar to the nature/nurture debate, the gender/sex debate remains unresolved in many cultures (Braudy, 2003). This is illustrated by the tales of conflict expressed in the above extracts in which some of the men relate that they experience a great sense of confusion and disorientation with their sexual feelings. Others, despite praying to God that their same-sex feelings would 'go away' in the hope that they too would eventually develop feelings for the opposite sex, no longer felt that their sexuality was 'abnormal' in any way. The catalyst for this change was perhaps the eventual acceptance that 'God had made then this way'. This was a profound issue as it allowed the two identities to be integrated to some extent. This connection however was not forged for all participants.

It is my belief that if we step outside of our own beliefs, it is clear that masculinities are culturally communicated through social construction, biology, behaviour, roles, cultures and other factors.

4.7 FAMILY'S RESPONSE TO SEXUALITY

The process of 'coming out':

The term "coming out" often is used to define the direct or indirect divulgence of a gay individual's sexual orientation and is commonly a period of confusion for individuals (Savin-Williams, 1989; Valentine et al, 2003). Baetz (1984) adds that coming out is a twofold process: making internal, as well as external changes. For some, coming out is a daily process, one of deciding where and how to share this information with others.

Participants reported a varying range of experiences when speaking about their family -immediate and extended - and their acceptance of their homosexuality. Because sexual orientation is not necessarily a visible characteristic (Morris, 1997), the negative stigmas associated with being gay often delay the coming out process (Bigner, 1999). All participants reported an initial reaction of rejection, however some participant's families had grown to accept their sexuality completely, others hoped that they will change, while some experience complete rejection and alienation.

Another central belief to some participants was that although members of the family wanted to accept them, they feared the implication that would have on their own position in the Muslim

community. This fear of being ostracized and alienated plays a role in the way Muslim heterosexuals respond to fellow Muslims who are homosexual. Although this was quite painful for some to accept, others however could understand their family's disposition.

"I actually took my mother out for lunch one day and I sat her down and explained to her that I'm gay. I was 28 years old at the time and yes my mother said why do you think that you gay? I said I'm drawn to men, not women in a sexual way. She made peace with it. I'm just grateful that I have a very liberated mother and my father is quite staunch."

"when I came out to my mother, so she didn't want anything to do with me anymore so I never see or hear her"

"For my sister in law not to accept me before I came out and it's because she's part of this 'jamaat' she mixes with a certain type of orthodox Muslims and so within those circles that she it's not possible for her to accept me.", "I'm sure she knows it within herself that is being hypocritical because her circumstances dictate how she must respond to me but deep down inside. Because she is orthodox she is afraid to let herself be expressed because she's afraid that if she allows herself be expressed then she would be punished or sent to hell or something."

"We've got to engage with them we can't only surround ourselves with positive people, likewise with the rest of family. I mean it was a battle for them to acknowledge that I'm going to sleep with another man for example. So we have got to actually live within the negative and the positive but we have got to live positively even living with both worlds."

4.8 STIGMATIZATION

Interpretation and utilization of derogatory language:

This theme also elicited a variation in the participants' feelings and views about being called a 'moffie'. Some felt that the term 'moffie' was used to refer to those men who were rejected and seen as non-men, while others felt that it has become inculcated into normative language use and does not have an emotional impact. Those who were affected negatively by being called this felt that it was one of the reasons they stayed in the closet. Being a 'moffie' meant things that denoted

being dirty which they did not identify with. There was a strong feeling that those who did not object to the use of such terminology adopted it as a defense and re-invented it without the oppressive power the word holds. Others felt that this was a dangerous position to be taking as it sent out a message to the general population that all gay men were ok with being called 'moffie'; thus the use of this term within the gay circle creates and promotes stereotypes and stigmatization.

> *"growing up we hated being called moffie and that's why we stayed in the closet because we didn't want to be known as a moffie. Because it meant all these things, lovable and rejectable and unclean and things like that man and anything that is not to be respected and so on."*

> *"when someone calls me moffie I get so angry because my understanding of a moffie is something that I've always tried not to be", "I can't change my sexual orientation but the normative heterosexual understanding of what a gay person is, is someone that sleeps around, someone that is going to bring diseases someone that is filthy and things like that and that's not what I'm like."*

> *"If someone else is comfortable with being called a fag or whatever then that's your thing but like I found it almost like a blind spot in the poorer community if they don't see the political, oppressive power that these derogatory terms can have and so we have adopted it in our own circles in trying to reinvent it or recoin it thinking that it's going to be better and it is not because when we say "daar gaan 'n moffie, kyk hoe gaan daai moffie aan" we forget that we saying it as wise and as learned as we have come to be. We saying it with the understanding of the word as it used to be and we see that person as just that, a moffie and we think it's Ok to use these terms."*

The above extracts focus on the problems of social inequalities in society to which homosexuality-related stigma is inextricably linked, in that it reinforces existing relations of power and domination - based on language usage - that contribute to maintaining social control (Ackermann, 2005; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Parker and Aggleton (2003) understand homosexuality-related stigma as inextricably linked to the existing hierarchical power relationships through which people discriminate against those seen as different/deviant. Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue that, "it is the social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices that principally constitutes both our relationships and ourselves" (p.4). One can see in the above extracts, individuals experience suffering social exclusion and dominance by

society through the imposition of the dominant ideology of heterosexuality in discourse. It is also interesting to observe in the extracts below that not all individuals seem to experience this segregation and isolation created by the power discourse and language and the appropriation thereof.

"I am neither for a moffie, nor against a moffie because the power in words lie in the meaning or the essence of it and it depends on what your intentions are by the use of that word and that is what will offend me."

"if I walk with... and go to the shop or something and then he would be standing at the till and he would say "moffie kom hier, stig nou" and I would laugh but the problem I would have is that other people hear and they might think these are two effeminate guys or maybe they don't even notice that but they would think that it's Ok to call someone that."

"If we do it in public, on some level there's a promotion of discrimination there", "if other people hear then they would think that it's Ok to call you that. And then they would call another person moffie that is not comfortable with it and they would say that nee eendag in die winkel I heard this saying so or that person saying so. Isn't that how gay people are supposed to react to the word?"

Both social context and interpretation are critical in a struggle for tolerance and acceptance by the wider Muslim community. These conflicting responses above appear to be related on the one hand to the disapproval of the wider Muslim community and on the other hand, the belief that God has made them this way coupled with their proclivity towards people of the same sex. Adherence to faith then not only provides a theologically sanctioned system of authority and a social framework with set practice and attitudes, but is also a source of condemnation and stigma of certain social and sexual practices (Delamanter, 1981).

4.9 INDIVIDUAL PROCESSES OF RECONCILIATION
Although this process is diverse for all participants and although all of them are at different points of reconciliation, one overriding and common theme that emerged was that many still struggle with

the idea of what it means religiously to express their sexuality and hence still prayed for the strength to suppress it. Some found that they don't need to be in a physical relationship to profess their gayness - that their relationship with God was sustainable, while others felt that being in a sexual relationship did not distance them from their connection with God. Although most felt that they have reached a balance between expressing their sexuality and connecting with their religion, others felt that they have not mended things yet.

"it's difficult to make that choice so you were saying something about like selling out one to the other but it's not really a sell out, it is not really a cop out and you can be both at the same time."

"I just let go of a lot of my Muslim beliefs because I was telling others outside that to not believe in hell or to not believe in the day of judgment all those things, make it easier to not be Muslim and to be queer at the same time"

"not really believing in those things makes it comfortable for me'

The above extracts suggests that these individuals deal with their conflicting identities of being both a Muslim and homosexual by separating the two; faith on the one side and sexuality on the other side. Despite the contradiction, they felt that the two identities could co-exist and in support of this, sexuality was held to be an innate characteristic.

"I think it's got to do with my spirituality with God, with my relationship with Him and that is sustainable."

"I am honest and open. I am gay and I am ok with it"

"I had to interpret the Quran in a way that was all inclusive because that is how I see God"

One can clearly see that some of the participants place a particular importance on their relationship with God. This seems to be an essential element as the men are able not only to feel comfortable with their sexuality but also rebuild their identity as Muslims. As a result, some of the men account for their sexuality in which they feel that by understanding, accepting and justifying their sexuality

using Islam, they deepen their religious attachment to their sexuality.

> *"To be honest I haven't really mended all these things together and for me to be Muslim and Gay at the same time, I just took some parts of being Muslim away out of the picture so that it can be more comfortable for me. I actually let go of some of the beliefs and stuff that I had and mainly the stuff that doesn't make sense."*

> *"I won't say I am in a state of confusion all those nagging thoughts and stuff that he also said those things aren't going through my head anymore it's just making me more comfortable and stuff and if someone would say that I am still confused then I am pretty comfortable in my confusion because it doesn't bother me that I had to let go of certain believes for me to be comfortable with the way I am."*

> *"God made no mistake when he created me"*

The above extracts reflect that the question of reconciliation serves as a painful reminder of Islam's - or more so the interpretation of Islamic doctrine's - rejection of these men as homosexuals. Thus, by dividing these discrete identities, they are able to live their life as a Muslim who also identifies as a homosexual.

> *"After a while I discovered TIC and things started to become clearer again that when I started making spiritual and sexual connections and started answering those questions for me. That was my process."*

> *"I am firstly human before anything else and then I'm gay before any other thing and then I'm everything else after that"*

It appears that the participants anguish is exacerbated by the fact that the prejudice against homosexuality is both culturally and religiously sanctioned. Beck (1992) argues that released from the constraints and social norms of tradition, individuals are freer to choose between a range of options in the pursuit of their own happiness. In justifying their sexuality, several participants resorted to a divine conception to provide them with an explanation to their sexual feelings. In essence, the participants argued for a legitimate expression of their sexuality, faith and spirituality

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and faulted the wider Muslim community for failing to address the issue.

4.10 POST CONVENTIONAL RELIGIOUS REASONING

Current beliefs and practices:

Participants described organized religion as the most oppressive factor in their coming out process (Johnston and Jenkins, 2004). A strong sentiment across the group was that they had to re-interpret the rigid views and propagated version of what the scriptures postulate about homosexuality. Some felt that they had to forego some of their old belief structures in order to make peace with their sexuality; others felt that they would suppress their sexuality in fear of being punished while some expressed a sense of confusion. Individuals expressed an understanding of the difficulty it would pose for orthodox Muslims to accept them. And in lieu of this, requested to be respected as different if acceptance was improbable.

> *"I can't believe in certain things and other things I don't. So not to believe in heaven or not to believe in hell, besides the fact that it's very confusing and not adding up"*

> *"now I can be freely Muslim and gay without the fear of burning in a fire after death or having my skin pulled off on the day of judgment and having to be pulled on my face towards the fire of Jehanam and not believing in that makes it easy for me to be Muslim and queer"*

> *"I think it would be lovely if the world could reach a point where there isn't this great need to understand everything but rather to accept things that you don't understand."*

> *"I'm a man of many boxes and I'm happy that way"; "God does not lay a burden on anybody"*

> *"so I just say to Muslim communities that they must not accept but they must just respect us as human beings"*

The above extracts convey the tension participants felt between their faith and their sexuality. The contemptuous issue of revising the contemporary Islamic thought on homosexuality by reinterpreting and reformulating the traditional perspective in light of contemporary social change would suggest that the Quran – it's commentary and interpretations- are context based and should

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be open to reinterpretation in order to reflect contemporary society.

4.11 CONCLUSION

Working within theoretical frameworks that emphasize the fluidity and shifting nature of identities, this study has offered a focus group exploring how these men produce and respond to meaning of being gay and Muslim. Their varied experiences underscores the complexities and nuances involved in negotiating intersecting religious and sexual identities. Participants described organized religion as the most oppressive factor in their coming out process (Johnston and Jenkins, 2004). They indicated that they received the most negative messages about who they were as gay men from organized religion. Several of these messages included describing "homosexuals" as abominations, degenerates, sinners, and threats to family life (Johnston and Jenkins, 2004). Because of internalizing these heterosexual messages, participants related feelings of guilt, shame and low self-esteem.

In general, secular Muslims are more likely to repress the Muslim identity and or dismiss the importance of following what they consider to be outdated religious text. Traditional Muslims are more likely to repress their gay identity. In addition, both secular and traditional Muslims participate in various forms of identity integration. Beyond these general patterns is the important realization that these identities are continually negotiated and re-negotiated. Individuals move in and out of identity roles depending on social context. These identities often change or evolve over the life course (Gamson and Moone, 2004).

The conclusion in the literature cited that gay men and lesbian women either fully repress their gay identity (Greene, 1998; Morales, 1990) or fully embrace their gay identity by repressing their religious identity (Chan, 1989; Garcia, 1998) can now be looked at in a different light. By broadening our perspective to include a more fluid and shifting understanding of identity construction, we see that there is a great multitude of ways to negotiate intersecting identities. While viewing religion as oppressive, many of the participants talked of using their religious faith to help them get through coming out. The coming out process produced great pain and hurt to some however they dealt with these feelings through the use of faith and other tools of spirituality. Ironically, many participants found this strength- their religious faith- used against them.

Ultimately, all the participants made the decision that coincides with Eichberg (1990), that "rather than putting a lot of energy into trying to change the belief held by one's religion, it may be more productive to change one's own belief about religion" (p.102).

To date, Islam remains overwhelmingly hostile towards homosexuality despite a few dissenting voices. Whitaker (2006) postulates that eventually, Islam and religion in general can be brought around to a more positive, tolerant attitude towards homosexuality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present a synthesis of the findings reflected in the previous chapters. A summary of the impact homophobia in the Muslim community has on homosexual Muslim men as well as the patterns of negotiating ways of coping with attitudes and behaviors from homophobic members of the Muslim community. Some of the limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research are also discussed.

5.2 CENTRAL ISSUES

This study was conducted in lieu of a lack of empirical data relating to the issues of homosexuality in Islam. As mentioned in chapter two, research in this area has focused on the religious interpretations of what is considered to be sexually deviant behaviour with little focus on the individual, their experiences and their internal processes.

Whitaker (2006) asserts that Islamic law does not have a clear cut unified position on homosexuality which leaves much open to interpretation and revision. He believes that it is not carved in stone that Islam condemns homosexuality. With this said, traditional gender roles have strongly been associated with being a 'man'. A key characteristic of this being that a he is always heterosexual. Heterosexuality appeared to be the constant amongst the range of masculinities and narratives from which men were expected to construct a secure identity worthy of acceptance. Even though most of the men who participated in the group had reached a point of self acceptance, they still seem to express a desire to conduct themselves in a manner that is socially acceptable in order to gain acceptance in their communities. Nonetheless, they generally distanced themselves from these aspects that impacted them negatively - stigmatization and alienation - and presented images of self respect and progressive thinking.

The findings have also indicated the numerous, diverse, conflicting and contradictory beliefs held by these participants in the various contexts. The following conclusions can be drawn from the information gathered of the experiences of this group in terms of religion, spirituality, family support, Islam and sexual diversity. Participants generally felt that they received little support from their family and their community regarding their sexual orientation. They felt a great sense of

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alienation and often suffered verbal and physical abuse at the hands of their community when trying to practice their religion. They also felt that they were considered to be less spiritual but in fact relayed that they struggle profusely with reconciling their practice of their religious beliefs and their sexual practices.

Most participants considered leaving Islam at one point in their life. They found the rejection and alienation from both their community and their family made it difficult for them to seek acceptance within themselves. They also experienced the patriarchal interpretations of holy text as a barrier to any attempt they made to find reconciliation. It is because of the rigid approach taken by the leaders of the community - as the Quran makes no direct interpretation to homosexuality - which the members of the group felt that an Islamic Reform of the interpretations held is necessary. They experience the view of orthodox Islam to be oppressive to sexually diverse human beings and other minority groups.

In terms of relationship issues, gay individuals appear to have a loyal attitude towards their partners. Most expressed that they were in or desired to be in a long term relationship. Most expressed a sense of disgust towards casual sex with many partners with no desire to partake in such acts. Those who did admit to having casual sex also felt that it was physically and emotionally risky as well as morally wrong. The participants believed that Muslims in general had a negative view about sexually diverse individuals and that their views and intolerance was influenced by their religious beliefs. Some participants expressed being abused at the hands of fellow Muslims because of this intolerance and homophobic beliefs.

When looking at personal issues relating to their sense of identity, all participants identified – at various levels - with their religion. All participants had a sense of their faith being a part of their identity. Some felt their sexuality to be a part of their identity as a Muslim while others expressed their sexuality as their strongest identifying feature. There appeared to be a dissident in what this meant in terms of its religious implications. All participants considered themselves as activists and 'out of the closet' however this being said, some individuals disagreed with the manner in which others portrayed or projected the face of homosexuality in order to challenge homophobic attitudes.

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The following conclusions were drawn with regards to the issue of support and acceptance. Most participants currently experienced some form of discrimination and received very little support from anyone other than the gay community. Not only does the gay scene provide a transitional space where gay individuals can express their self-identities, but also offers a space where others can validate these identities (Barth, 1981). In other words, it offers these men an opportunity to step out of the hetero-normative world where they often feel marginalized. Other participants felt that even the gay community has not provided them with the level of support and acceptance they need. Some felt like they were under a lot of pressure to conform to particular hegemonic gay male identities in order to fit into the scene while others felt rejected as a result of them being in a heterosexual marriage or relationship prior to 'coming out'. These individuals felt a lack of acceptance within the gay circle because they are proposed to be 'confused moffies'

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This section allows for reflection on the areas within the study that presented challenges and difficulties, which may prove useful for future research in this field. Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996) posited that the intent of the focus group interview is to report the views of participants, rather than to generalize to larger groups. Not being able to generalize the outcome of the study can be seen as a limitation of the study. This study aimed to explore the experiences of gay Muslim men and the impact of homophobia within their communities. Although the overall aims of this study were achieved as far as possible, the exploration of the topic is not exhausted.

A great challenge in this study on a theoretical level was the lack of literature available in relation to Islam and homosexuality. Most of the literature available was international studies of which all focuses on the religious taboos of homosexuality. There was a scarce body of local literature available on homosexuality and Islam in general. On a methodological side, having more than one focus group would have enriched the quality of the material elicited. Even though focus groups are useful in extracting themes and observing interactions within groups, individual interviews would have allowed individuals to be more open about their feelings and experiences. Some participants found it difficult to reveal personal information that would leave them feeling vulnerable and exposed to other group members.

The above experience points to a shortcoming within the approach and methodology of the research. Although research states that focus groups is an appropriate way in which to conduct qualitative research, the sensitive nature of this research may have warranted individual in-depth interviews. This may have created a greater sense of ease for individuals and enhanced the richness of the material elicited. Another shortcoming identified was in the instrument used i.e. guiding questions on the interview schedule. Labeling has individual and social implications that are neither all good nor all bad. Nor do those implications exert the same influence on all individuals, with the same effect (Cross and Epting, 2005). The implications of owning a homosexual identity may be positive or negative, depending on the consistency of this identity status with an individual's personal notion of their ideal self. Even though individuals engaged with self identifying terms in the focus group, the interview schedule failed to critically engage with the use of the term homosexuality and the use of it. In hindsight, the impact of the sex of the co-facilitator also comes into question. Her role – to track the process of the group- as opposed to the role of the facilitator – to focus on the content- may have been better suited for someone who was gay and Muslim. The division in sexes may have created or contributed to the experience of a power imbalance.
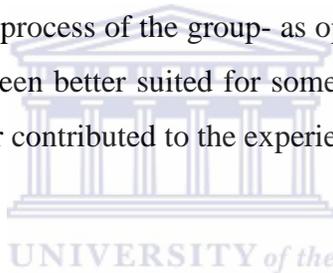
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the experiences of these participants that Islam and religion play a significant role in their lives. It is also clear that homophobia within the Muslim community has a great impact on the quality of life of homosexual Muslims. The manner in which the general Muslim community views sexually diverse issues impacts greatly on the way they treat individuals who do not conform to societal norms and religious interpretations thereof.

I recommended for future research that a study be done that includes qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study of homosexuality amongst Muslims in the Western Cape, using the indicators of internal and external experiences based on stigma amongst this group of people. In this way it will help to have a broader and deeper understanding, and to aid in the development of programmes.

The following recommendations are also to be considered for future development. There is a need to create and maintain more awareness to both Muslims who are gay as well as the Muslim community – with a view to clearly outline the ways assistance can be provided.

Educational and anti-stigmatization programmes are also needed to target stigma amongst Muslims; particularly that of the concept of what it means - religiously - if they accept individuals who are gay in their family and community. This should be done in a manner that will help Muslims realize that they are not betraying their religion by accepting individuals who are gay. It is important that programmes of this nature are developed to reach gay Muslims and members of their community effectively.

The process of breaking down the barriers between religious leaders and minority groups should also be considered in future endeavors. This in turn will have a great impact in the attitudes of the general Muslim population who currently believe that it is sinful or punishable to accept homosexual individuals. Hence, programmes should target religious leaders of this community because if religious leaders engage in less stigmatization and rejection and have more knowledge about homosexuality, it would have a positive effect on how they deal with and address the topic in the community.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study is part of a learning process and has hopefully shed some light on the experiences of gay Muslim men - in the Western Cape - within their respective communities. This study set out to explore the impact their communities' attitudes and behaviors have on their ability to reconcile their sexuality with their faith. The focus of the study was primarily on the participants' experiences as well as establishing the need to develop strategies to promote tolerance of those who do not fit into society's pre-constructed ideologies of acceptable normative behavior. The findings suggest that these men - individually and as a group - drew on a range of strategies in an attempt to cope with a unified sense of rejection and alienation. It also looked at how participants constructed a sense of self in the face of and amidst homophobic attacks.

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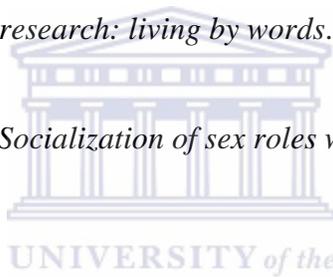
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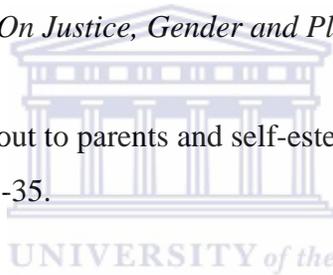
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UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa, Telephone: (021) 959-2283/2453
Fax: (021) 959-3515 Telex: 52 6661

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RECORDING INTERVIEW

I understand the aims of the study and the procedures involved. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw myself anytime I want to.

I understand that my name will not appear on the interview schedule and it will not be used in the final report.

Any information I reveal to the researcher will be treated with confidentiality.

I agree to take part in the study by answering questions during the interview.

I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by the researcher.

I am aware that excerpts from the focus group will be used in the final written report and any further publications.

…………………………….. ………………………………

Signature   Date

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INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWEES

I (print name in full) _____ state that I am over 18 years of age and agree to participate in an M PSYCH study being conducted by Yasmin Tajudien in the discipline of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to my personal experiences of being both Muslim and homosexual. I understand that excerpts from written transcripts and tape – recorded verbal communication will be studied by the researcher and may be quoted in a research report that will be written.
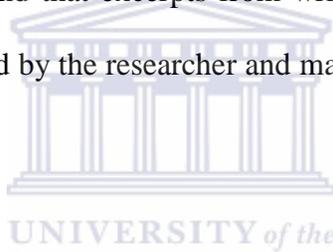
I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my full name or other identifying information will never be disclosed. Confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that transcripts – both paper and computer versions – will be secured in a private place and that these together with the audio – tapes will be erased no later than the period required for completion of the researchers degree.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate at anytime without explanation.

_____   _____

 Signature   Date

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1.   <u>Family History</u>

Could you tell me a little about your family life and experiences of growing up -what was your family's initial reaction to your sexuality?

2.   <u>'Coming Out'</u>

Could you talk a little about questions of 'coming out' – how do you define coming out to self, to other gay people and to straight people?

3.   <u>Religion</u>

Could you tell me something about your relationship between your religion and your sexual orientation- how do you reconcile your sexuality with your faith?

4.   <u>Ethnic Community</u>

Could you tell me something about your life as a member of the Muslim community- are you accepted in your community?

5.   <u>Sex and Sexuality</u>

Could you tell me more about your sexuality- do you identify with the gay sub culture?

6.   <u>Psychology of sexual orientation</u>

Could you tell me how you understand yourself in terms of your sexual orientation?

7.   <u>Social life</u>

Could you tell me about your present social life as a gay person- do you socialize with people of your own culture?