A STUDY INTO THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH PROFILE GAY MEN IN SOUTH AFRICA – AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF LOGOTHERAPY

by

Grant-Mark Durston

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Supervisor: Dr Teria Shantall

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT  6

CHAPTER 1: AIMS AND ORIENTATION OF RESEARCH ......................................................... 6
  1.1 A personal motivation ............................................................................................ 6
  1.2 Theoretical context .............................................................................................. 7
  1.3 Research approach ............................................................................................... 7
  1.4 Aims of research .................................................................................................. 8
  1.5 Dedication ............................................................................................................ 9
  1.6 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER 2: THE MODERN HISTORY OF GAYS IN THE WORLD ..................................... 11
  2.1 A glimpse into gay world history ........................................................................ 11
    2.1.1 Germany during World War II ...................................................................... 11
    2.1.2 America’s riots that turned the tide on gay rights ....................................... 16
    2.1.3 The aftermath – America forced to look at gay rights issues .................... 23
  2.2 The history that shaped gay communities in South Africa .................................. 29
    2.2.1 Gay rights and the Apartheid Government .................................................. 30
    2.2.2 A turning point for gay awareness .................................................................. 33
    2.2.3 Dealing with homosexuality in the military forces ...................................... 34
    2.2.4 Political change and gay mobilisation ............................................................ 36
  2.3 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 39

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONTEXT ........................................................................... 41
  3.1 The matrix of the research: A brief outline of Logotherapy ............................... 41
    3.1.1 The spiritual dimension of being .................................................................... 41
    3.1.2 The concept of conscience ............................................................................ 43
    3.1.3 Choosing to become what we were meant to be .......................................... 45
    3.1.4 The Unconscious God .................................................................................... 46
    3.1.5 The meaning of life and self-transcendence ..................................................... 48
    3.1.6 Self-transcendence ....................................................................................... 54
    3.1.7 The existential vacuum .................................................................................. 55
  3.2 Suffering as a process ......................................................................................... 57
  3.3 Shame based trauma and toxic shame ................................................................. 60
    3.3.1 Living with a secret ........................................................................................ 61
    3.3.2 Five basic emotions ...................................................................................... 63
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PARADIGM .......................................................................................................................... 77

4.1 Background: A Heuristic Study .......................................................................................................................... 77

4.2 Heuristic Inquiry: an internal search to know .................................................................................................... 81

4.2.1 The preparatory phase: The refinement of the researcher as instrument .................................................. 85

4.2.2 The formulation of the research question .................................................................................................. 86

4.2.3 Eliciting the aid of mentors ...................................................................................................................... 87

4.2.4 The heuristic interview or research session .............................................................................................. 87

4.2.5 The time frame of heuristic research ....................................................................................................... 88

4.2.6 The study of the data: Gaining and Intuitive, Holistic Grasp ................................................................. 88

4.2.7 The phase of explication ......................................................................................................................... 89

4.3 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................................... 90

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................ 91

5.1 New paradigm research .................................................................................................................................. 91

5.2 The research intent .......................................................................................................................................... 93

5.3 Choosing five gay men as research participants .......................................................................................... 95

5.4 Arranging the interviews ............................................................................................................................. 99

5.5 In-depth interviews as vehicles to real life-worlds of my research participants ...................................... 100

5.6 The question of reliability and validity of this type of research ................................................................ 103

5.7 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 105

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH INTERVIEWS ...................................................................................................................... 106

6.1 The personal life stories of high profile gays ............................................................................................... 106

6.1.1 Andre Carl van der Merwe ....................................................................................................................... 107

6.1.2 Gerhard Pienaar ......................................................................................................................................... 125

6.1.3 Andre Muller ............................................................................................................................................. 157

6.1.4 Marius Oelschig ......................................................................................................................................... 171

6.1.5 Justice Edwin Cameron .......................................................................................................................... 183

6.2 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 199

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA THROUGH THE LENS OF LOGOTHERAPY .......... 200

7.1 A qualitative and heuristic research approach .............................................................................................. 200
7.2 The emerging themes ................................................................. 201
  7.2.1 A relatively short period of “innocence” in early childhood .......... 202
  7.2.2 An emerging reality of being “different” .................................. 206
  7.2.3 Social rejection and shame and attempts to cope .................... 210
  7.2.4 A spiritual battle and fear .................................................... 216
  7.2.5 A personal “Stonewall” experience – the attitude of defiance .......... 220
  7.2.6 Victory in defiance and a self-transcendent life ...................... 224
7.3 Gays talking about what it means to be gay .................................. 229
7.4 A discussion of the findings through the lens of Logotherapy ............ 232
  7.4.1 Survivor responsibility – a discussion on “freedom” and lessons learnt 250
  7.4.2 A discussion on the “re-humanisation” of the gay subculture .......... 258
  7.4.3 Why are Christians so cruel? ................................................ 262
  7.4.4 Gays, epigenetics, religion and society .................................... 270
7.5 Conclusion .................................................................................. 274

CHAPTER 8: THE HOSTILE SOCIAL CONTEXT AS THE BACKDROP AGAINST WHICH TO UNDERSTAND
THE GAY EXPERIENCE .................................................................... 275
8.1 Typical gay stereotypes .............................................................. 285
  8.1.1 Gay men ............................................................................. 285
  8.1.2 Appearance and mannerisms .............................................. 285
  8.1.3 Sex and relationships ........................................................ 286
  8.1.4 Sex and drugs .................................................................... 286
  8.1.5 Paedophilia and predation .................................................... 287
8.2 The perpetrators ......................................................................... 289
  8.2.1 Ignorance ........................................................................... 289
  8.2.2 Fear of own gay tendencies ................................................. 291
  8.2.3 Pseudo acceptance ............................................................... 291
8.3 Gay hatred .................................................................................. 293
8.4 Conclusion .................................................................................. 297

CHAPTER 9: WHEN GAYS GO ASTRAY ...................................................... 298
9.1 The Gay Existential vacuum ......................................................... 298
9.2 When there is nothing ‘gay’ anymore about being gay .................. 306
9.3 Conclusion .................................................................................. 310

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION ................................................................ 311
10.1 Social contextual findings .......................................................... 311
10.2 Primary findings regarding spiritual development of gays in accordance with the Logotherapeutic context ........................................................................................................ 311

10.3 Legal findings .................................................................................................................. 314

10.4 Peripheral issues related to this study .............................................................................. 315

10.5 Afterword ....................................................................................................................... 315

List of references ................................................................................................................... 317
ABSTRACT

Following the heuristic research method of inquiry and using in-depth interviews as the vehicle of investigation with five gay South African men; who have either attained a high standing in gay society or have achieved a high level of functioning - the real life experiences of these men were investigated.

The premise was that their experiences would be similar in terms of rejection and non-acceptance in a prevailing homophonic South African society.

The core investigation was to plot the spiritual development they underwent in order to attain the high level functioning evident in their social standing and position.

The theoretical backdrop, against which the research was investigated and the findings described, was Viktor Frankl’s theory of Logotherapy, with specific emphasis on his descriptions of the avenues to meaning in human existence.

Historical perspectives on gay history and legal breakthroughs were provided to further illuminate the real life experiences of gay men.

CHAPTER 1: AIMS AND ORIENTATION OF RESEARCH

1.1 A personal motivation

The topic of this research has been a lifelong dream of mine, given my own journey as a gay man growing up in the South Africa of the sixties, seventies, eighties and all the way up to the present time, which is now termed the post-apartheid era of this country.

Gay people in South Africa celebrate one of the world’s most progressive Constitutions, with regard to what it states in terms of protection of people of different creeds, religions and sexual orientation. It would seem to offer a genuine reprieve from the suffering that gay people had to endure in the years prior to 1994 when it was illegal to be gay – not by identity, but in any act that was deemed a homosexual act.

I hope to illustrate in my research, by taking a brief look at the history of the fate of gay men in South Africa, that indeed it is a celebration and a monument of human rights in legal terms, but that the deeply entrenched attitudes, cherished by society overall and more
specifically by the clergy of our churches, point towards a still long and treacherous road ahead for the gay segment of society.

I want to keep the tone of this research personal, real and above all worthy of respect for the life experiences of my research participants – that one ingredient painfully lacking in the offering society brings to gay men. I want to honour the real life stories of these men who were willing to share with me their lives, their dreams, their victories and also periods of anguish in their lives.

I hope to illustrate that the suffering of these people is not just on a physical and emotional level, but has its true origin on the social level and that it echoes into the domains of the spiritual. I will show how the suffering of these men happened in a landscape that includes the emotional, the social and the spiritual and in some cases even today, the physical.

### 1.2 Theoretical context

I will use the theory of Viktor E. Frankl, the father of Logotherapy, as well as secondary writers on the nature and process of suffering, and others, to plot and bring deeper understanding of the hard journey these men had and have to follow to finally arrive at a place where they can give a victorious ‘Yes’ to their lives, a clear ‘Yes’ that has become audible despite the societal ‘NO’ that often still prevails – and more importantly a ‘Yes’ that reverberates from the core of these gay men’s own authentic lives.

### 1.3 Research approach

I am following a heuristic approach. This involves eliciting in a qualitative way, the experiences of high profile gays in South Africa. Heuristic research can be defined as “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life [in this instance the gay experience], through the internal pathways of the self.” (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40.) Launching his or her research from a platform of personal experience of the phenomenon of research, the heuristic
researcher can seek to further illuminate the phenomenon through intensive and in-depth
dialogue with those who have experienced the phenomenon first-hand, that is, in their own
lives.

1.4  Aims of research

I want to highlight that the suffering that the gay man experiences still today has its origin in
the same prejudices and uninformed attitudes that reach back to times when gays were
seen either as sick, criminal or sinful abominations as far as church doctrine is concerned. I
will attempt to weigh up, dissect and carefully weave together from the real life experiences
a cloak of many colours, just like the Biblical character Joseph wore. I use this analogy not
light heartedly, as I have become convinced that the suffering of these men and the
victorious outcomes, are indeed reminiscent of the Biblical character of Joseph. It is also my
hope that when the interviewees read this work that they will feel anew the courage, which
they have wittingly or unwittingly shown, and experience the inspiration which their stories
have brought.

I hope to also cast some understanding on the perpetrators of their suffering and cast some
light on the origin of the incredible matrix of misinformation that still prevails in this age of
technology, where information is at the fingertips of almost all echelons of society and
access to material written by enlightened writers are readily available.

I will also offer some explanations from the theory of Viktor E. Frankl to cast light on the sad
story of numerous gay men today who succumb to the devastating onslaughts on their
persons and who give up the search for their own authentic selves, and end up drifting in an
existential vacuum, which in the gay milieu has its own distinct profile, flavour and sad
outcome.

To help orientate the reader of this thesis the following is thus important. While the primary
focus is the process of spiritual development which the five research subjects underwent in
order to arrive at a place of self-transcendence and an optimally functioning life while
setting an example to others; this thesis needed to take a broader look at the context in which gay people function.

It is important to bring to the reader’s awareness that gay people worldwide have their own history on the collective. Chapter 2 looks at this history and the legacy it has forged. The legal criminalisation and medicalization of homosexuality had wholesale discrimination of gay people as an obvious consequence. Access to jobs and housing and even social events were affected. Another phenomenon which could not be excluded from this thesis was the nature of the hostile perpetrator of gays, discussed in chapter 8. Driven by this prevailing socially enforced narrative that gays are of no value and deserve no rights, they continue to commit atrocities against gay to this day.

Chapter 9 looks at the factors that play a role in many gay people’s lives, who give up the battle for dignity and self-worth and sink into what Viktor Frankl called the existential vacuum.

It is however of the utmost importance to view these important discussions as ‘secondary’ and they should not detract from the ‘primary’ discussion and aims namely “HOW” exemplary gay men such as the five interviewed in this study broke through to meaning and self-transcendent lives through the defiant power of the spirit as Frankl often stated.

Chapter 7 thus forms the core of the primary findings of this thesis. Secondary discussions and findings are only useful in their support of and elucidation of the primary findings.

It follows that findings discussed in the conclusion of the theses in Chapter 10 must be viewed in the same light. In every instance and throughout the paper, secondary findings serve as supportive descriptions of the reality that gay people face still today. Simultaneously they are necessary to understand the spiritual development of these men. This is true given the fact that Logotherapy gives ‘suffering and hardship’ centre stage in its theory of spiritual development. This is outlined in Chapter 3.

1.5 Dedication

And finally I want to bring honour and express my gratitude to these modern day heroes who have volunteered to open themselves up yet again to scrutiny; and have in many cases
had to revisit dark places and seasons of pain on the journeys through their lives. The honour that these men deserve is an honour reserved for those who do not give up and break under the onslaughts of life, but glean meaning of the highest and noblest quality not only despite, but also because of the hardships they were and are forced to suffer.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed how my own experiences as a gay person, my career as a Logo therapist and the questions I have long carried inside me, finally lead to my registering for this research thesis and set me on my way of exploring other gay men’s realities in a homophobic social context.
CHAPTER 2: THE MODERN HISTORY OF GAYS IN THE WORLD

2.1 A glimpse into gay world history

Gay world history in the twentieth and the twenty first centuries is a history fraught with persecution, murder and bloodshed.

A brief glimpse into this history is a necessary backdrop against which to more fully understand the gay man or the gay person. The focus of this research is on the gay male. Divorcing him from this backdrop would be doing him an injustice and diminish any attempt at more closely understanding the gay person’s reality. The gay man’s reality includes who he is or hopes to become. It also has to do with his socio-geographical, as well as his religious and family context. I have thus selected some well-known periods in world gay history to illustrate that the gay man (or woman) has not ever really had an easy time in modern history as far as political, social, religious and family contexts are concerned.

2.1.1 Germany during World War II

As an illustration of the fate that gay people suffered in the past, I chose Germany during the Second World War. Nazi Germany will forever be associated with the atrocities committed against the Jewish people and literature is plentiful detailing the horrors that Jews suffered during World War Two (WWII). Nothing can ever detract from the sadness and the horror that this chapter in the history of humanity tells (online at http://www.hardenet.com/homocaust/liberationforothers.htm, retrieved on 12 December 2015).

It is however relevant to point out that the world has since then been trying to come to grips with and understand the factors and the dynamics that preceded and motivated what can only be described as a total moral collapse in Europe during WWII in specifically Nazi Germany, but also in other parts of Europe.
The absolute beastly brutality with which humans were treated there in the factories of destruction can hardly be put into words and human imagination are unable to fully comprehend or digest the evil that was the reality of the inmates of those death and labour camps.

I would like to add an extract from one of perhaps only two books written by gay survivors of the death camps as an introduction to a short discussion on the unique reality of the gay person in the concentration and death camps. Heger (1980, pp. 83-85) writes in “The men with the pink triangle: the true life-and-death story of homosexuals in the Nazi death camps”:

“While I was held prisoner in the bunker, a prisoner from Innsbruck in Austria was tortured to death while I was watching. He was stripped naked and his hands tied to a hook in the wall so that his body hung in the air, and he couldn’t touch the ground with his feet. Two or three SS men who were assigned to the cell block, as the bunker was officially known, stood around and waited for the ‘performance’ to start – that is the torture of the Tirol lad. The first ‘game’ that the SS sergeant and his men played was to tickle their victim with goose feathers, on the soles of his feet, between his legs, in the armpits, and on other parts of his naked body. At first the prisoner forced himself to keep silent, while his eyes twitched in fear and torment from one SS man to the other. Then he could not restrain himself and finally broke out in a high pitched laughter that very soon turned into a cry of pain, while the tears ran down his face, and his body twisted against his chains. After the tickling torture, they let the lad hang there for a little, while a flood of tears ran down his cheeks and he cried and sobbed uncontrollably.

But the depraved SS men were set on having a lot more fun with this poor creature. The bunker Capo had to bring two metal bowls, one filled with cold water and the other with hot. ‘Now we’re going to boil your eggs for you, you filthy queer, you’ll soon feel warm enough’, (This is a word play on a derogatory term used in German for a gay person – namely ‘Warmer Bruder’ which translates to ‘warm brother’) the bunker officer said gleefully, raising the bowl of hot water between the victim’s thighs so that his balls hung down into it. The prisoner let out a shattering scream for help, the pain hurt him so much.
He tried to struggle free or roll to one side, but the ties on his hands and feet held him tight.

‘Give him the cold water, then, he’s already hot, the filthy swine,’ one of the SS men laughed brutally, whereupon the SS butcher took up the cold water and placed this bowl between their victim’s thighs. Again he screamed in agony, for the cold water must have been excruciating after the extreme heat. Time and again he tried to break free from his chains, but he just exhausted himself fruitlessly.

This procedure was repeated several times, until the tormented victim lost consciousness, after he had screamed himself hoarse and could now only emit a kind of gurgle. A bucket of cold water was thrown over him to bring him round, then the torture was started again, with bits of skin now hanging visibly down from the victim’s scalded scrotum.

While carrying out these tortures, the SS monsters got through a bottle or two of spirits that they passed round. They were already quite drunk when they hit upon a new torture that could only have been thought up in the brain of someone totally perverted.

‘He’s a butt-fucker, isn’t he, let him have what he wants’, growled one of the SS men, taking up a broom that stood in the corner and shoving the handle deep into the prisoner’s anus. He was already incapable of screaming anymore – his voice has simply seized up with pain – but his body jerked and tore at the chains; there was still a lot of life left in the lad. But the SS men only laughed the louder at the ‘filthy queer’, who moved his lips as if to cry out without any sound emerging.

Finally they cut the fainting man down and let him fall on the floor, where he lay in a heap without stirring, his limbs bent under him. The drunken men staggered out into the open, but the last one stumbled over the martyred prisoner who was still lying on the ground. Angrily he kicked the victim with the toe of his boot, and he began to stir again.

‘The filthy queer is still alive,’ he burbled, taking up a wooden stool that was standing next to the wall and bringing it down with all his force on the victim’s head. This finally freed the poor martyr from his pains, for now he was really dead.”
This is from the biography of an Austrian gay man who spent six years in the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen and Flossenbuerg.

How different the homecoming story of Viktor Frankl compared to the homecoming of the gay Austrian or the gay German after liberation. I would like to highlight the uniqueness of the suffering of the gay prisoner that extends beyond that of any other category of inmate, including the Jewish inmates:

- No other group of prisoners were sent back to prison after liberation.
- By implication, sympathy and empathy with the men with the pink triangle were withheld on the understanding that their suffering was not 'unjust' but 'just' and 'deserved' and that they had to complete their sentence in German and Austrian prisons and were often imprisoned again as repeat offenders. As seen in the above extract, the torture and murder of gays in the camps were wholesale and together with the Jews they were earmarked for total annihilation, but the difference came at the end of the war when liberation was not granted them. They were not seen as worthy of liberation. Their suffering by implication was fair and just.
- Frankl’s statement that ‘the crowning victory of the homecoming survivor, was the liberating thought that he henceforth need not fear anything, but his God’ also did not apply for the gay survivor; as he had to live in continued fear of persecution.
- While many survivors of the holocaust could claim compensation for crimes suffered against humanity, this was never granted to gay survivors.

One must try and enter into the psychology of the gay survivor of the camps as well and not only view the events in the camps, but also the aftermath. While a comparison of the sufferings between the different groups is not in the slightest the intention of this discussion (as that would be absurd), it is relevant to point at the unique profile of the gay person’s suffering. How was he to make sense of a post-WWII Europe that was battling to understand and unravel the horrors that had come to light about the death camps and Nazi atrocities in the Nuremberg trials, which for the first time talked about crimes against
humanity, when he was continuing a sentence in German and Austrian jails for the crime of loving another man? How was he to understand that he was excluded from compensation on the grounds of having suffered crimes against humanity? There are only two possible answers and they are that he is either not human in the eyes of the law written by society or the implication is that what he had suffered was just and not a crime.

The authorities reasoned that as the laws against homosexuals were in place before the war they were not unique to the Nazi regime and hence could not qualify for compensation. It is true that many poor homecoming Jews were also killed and ill-treated in Poland for example; after liberation, but this was not a consequence of a written law that justified their treatment. Paragraph (or Article) 175 of the German Criminal Code of 15 May 1871, amended on 28 June 1935 (referred to commonly as Paragraph 175), against homosexuals remained in full force until 1969. It could also easily be argued that the torturing to death of a gay person in pre-WWII Germany or Austria was also never part of the sentencing under Paragraph 175 and that this would in fact be an unjust and inhumane interpretation of the law. But we see that they were tortured and killed, denied mercy and then silenced out of history.

Is it possible to add to the pain that these men suffered? I want to venture an answer in the affirmative and say yes, that incredible as it might sound, new dimensions to the suffering of the gay survivor were added in that their experiences were silenced out of the Holocaust memorials and out of history. When I visited the Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem) I was anxiously waiting to find a corner where the cruel story of gay Jewish boys and men would be told. For example, gay Jewish men had to wear two triangles: the pink triangle (showing that he was a “gay” prisoner) and the yellow triangle (indicating that he was a “Jew”), sewn on top of each other to form a Star of David. These poor boys had a very short life expectancy as they belonged simultaneously to the two groups that were earmarked for total extermination, namely the ‘Homosexuals’ and the ‘Jews.’ Were their stories not worth telling? Was their suffering not the same? But I found nothing! The unique circumstances of the gay men in the camps were not told. Their suffering was not worth remembering.
It is also ironic and worth telling that amongst the German men with the pink triangle and the gay Jews wearing the double triangle Stars of David (in a deprived mockery of the symbol of the Jewish faith) there in the death camps, the Nazi ideology had no power, as they suffered together and consoled each other in their suffering. This segment of society ‘most hated’ did not distinguish between German and Jew.

I truly believe that these facts constitute a unique dimension to the suffering of gay men in WWII in both a legal as well as a social sense.

While these events happened seventy five years ago, it must be understood that the book, “The men with the pink triangle: the true life-and-death story of homosexuals in the Nazi death camps”, was only published in the nineteen eighties and has since then become a commonly read book amongst gay people, who have in some sense become watchers of the global events that befall our gay brothers and sisters all around the world.

2.1.2 America’s riots that turned the tide on gay rights

The harshness with which homosexuals were treated was a worldwide phenomenon. The first signs of visible political and societal change emerged in the United States of America during the 1950s and 1960s. Carter (2004, p. 14) writes:

“This history [of political activism] is one in which almost all the action takes place in the 1960s. The phrase ‘the sixties’ inevitably brings to mind images of freedom and rapid social and political change. The irony is that for almost the entirety of that decade homosexual men and women, far from experiencing a great burst of freedom, found themselves in the worst legal position they had been in since the republic [the United States of America’s] birth. Because of a Puritan heritage, America’s laws had traditionally oppressed those who engaged in same-sex lovemaking. With the increasing shrillness of the far right after the WWII, exemplified by a rapid anticommunism and the demand for total conformity that characterized the 1950s, laws aimed at homosexuals became so harsh that at times they were draconian.”
Carter (2004, p.15) continues to state that, by 1961, the laws passed were harsher than in Cuba, Russia and East Germany, countries criticized by America for their “despotic ways”. An adult convicted of the crime of having sex with another adult of the same sex (even if consenting and in the privacy of a private home) could be sentenced to between five years to life imprisonment. Importantly, it should be noted that no statute explicitly outlawed being homosexual; only homosexual acts were illegal. But, as Carter (2004, p. 16) points out: “while this is technically true, the effect of the entire body of laws and policies that the state employed to police the conduct of homosexual men and women was to make being gay de facto a crime”.

The first signs of sustainable political resistance came in the 1950s with organisations such as the Mattachine Society starting to organise homosexual men and women in Los Angeles, later spreading to New York and Washington (Carter, 2004, pp. 17-19). An increasing awareness of political power, linked to a common feeling amongst gays and lesbians alike of “enough is enough” lead to protest action and riots. Two examples stand out during this time that had an immense impact on the emerging “gay revolution”.

But it was not until the mid-1960s that violent resistance started to emerge. By 1967, after years of increased police maltreatment and harassment, Mafia exploitation and blackmailing, homosexual men and women started to violently react. The first recorded occurrences happened in San Francisco, sparked by a police raid on the Council on Religion and the Homosexual’s (CHR) New Year’s Eve Ball at the California Hall, which was aimed at raising funds for the homosexual community. As guests entered the dance, police filmed and photographed every guest, shut down the dance and arrested several persons who had helped to organise the event (Carter, 2004, p. 105). This was followed by a riot at Compton’s Cafeteria in the so-called Tenderloin area.

Not much has been recorded on this event, but Carter (2004, p. 109) tells the story as studied by historian Susan Stryker:

“On a hot night the following month [August 1966], when a policeman grabbed the arm of a transvestite, she threw a cup of coffee in his face. As if on signal, other gay customers
began throwing cups, saucers, and trays at the police and security guards. Compton’s immediately closed, and ‘with that, the gays began breaking out every window in the place’. As other gay men ran outside to escape the breaking glass, the police tried to catch them and put them in patrol wagons...Those leaving Compton’s fought hard, with gay men hitting the police in their groins and ‘drag queens smashing them in the face with their extremely heavy purses’. One police car had all of its windows broken and a newspaper stand close to the restaurant was burnt down as ‘general havoc [was] raised that night in the Tenderloin.”

But being widely credited with being the motivating force in the transformation of the gay political movement, according to Carter (2004, p. 1), the Stonewall Riots of New York City were a series of violent protests and street demonstrations centred around the Stonewall Inn gay bar on Christopher Street in the Greenwich Village neighbourhood of Manhattan. These riots, also referred to as the Stonewall uprising or the Stonewall rebellion, started on the early morning hours of 28 June 1969.

As a pretext to the riots, it should be remembered that very few establishments welcomed openly gay people in the 1950s and 1960s. Those that did were often bars or bathhouses. At the time, the Stonewall Inn was owned and run by the Mafia (Carter, 2004, pp. 67-68), which, while providing security and discretion to its clientele, also exploited them with high alcohol prices and blackmailing. The Stonewall Inn was especially known to be popular among the poorest and most marginalized people in the gay community: drag queens, transgender people, effeminate young men, butch lesbians, male prostitutes, and homeless youth.

While police raids on gay bars were routine at the time, officers quickly lost control of the situation at the Stonewall Inn. It started with the bouncer being summoned to the peephole in the front door of the club. “He looked out and saw ‘Lily Law, Betty Badge and Peggy Pig’ as policemen were called by campy village queens, and when police shouted ‘Police! Open up!’ a bouncer had to open up. Six officers of Manhattan’s First Division Public Moral Squad invaded the place. Two undercover policewomen were already inside.” (Faderman, 2015, p. 172.)
Faderman (2015, pp. 172-173) continues to describe what happened next:

“The Stonewall’s dimly lit rooms, jammed with two hundred revellers, were suddenly flooded with harsh light [a code used at the time to signal police presence]. The jukebox whirred to mute. The patrons knew what this meant and they froze...Those whose IDs showed they weren’t minors or ‘masquerading’ as the opposite sex were shooed out the door. Several ‘drag queens’ said they were ‘ladies’ and were taken by the two policewomen to the toilet, where it was determined they violated New York Penal Code 240.35 section 4, against ‘unnatural attire or facial alterations...

[While the New York Court of Appeal ruled two weeks before that homosexuals could be served in drinking establishments] the excuse for the June 28 raid was that through the Stonewall Inn claimed to be a private club requiring membership (people signed the ‘member book’ with names such as Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland and Daffy Duck), liquor was being sold there and the bar did not have a liquor licence. Regardless of the reasons for the raid, the history of police harassment of gay bars was old enough so that gay people knew what to do. If they were lucky as to be shooed outside instead of carted off to the police station and booked, they quickly skedaddled. But on this night, they didn’t.”

Patrons that were released that night gathered outside the Inn, waiting for their friends to be set free. With each one being freed, the crown started to applaud and cheer, giving “the whole proceeding...the aura of a homosexual Academy Awards Night”, according to an eyewitness reporter for the New York Daily News, quoted by Faderman (2015, p. 173). The mood was described as “a sort of skittish hilarity”.

The turning point came when:

“...several policemen dragged a butch lesbian out of the bar. They’d handcuffed her because she struggled with them. The paddy wagon was full, so the officers pushed the hefty, dark-haired woman who was wearing a man’s suit into one of the squad cars...But she wouldn’t stay put. Three times she slid out of the driver’s –side back seat and tried to
run back into the Stonewall, perhaps to a lover still being questioned. The last time, as a beefy policeman wrestled her back toward the squad car, she yelled to the crowd, ‘Why don’t you guys do something?’ “(Faderman, 2015, pp. 173-174 & Carter, 2004, p. 151.)

The crowd exploded, starting to throw anything from pennies, loosened cobble stones, beer cans, glass bottles and bricks from a nearby construction site, at the policemen. Faderman (2015, p. 174) continues to tell of a black drag queen, Marsha P. Johnson, who stuffed a bag with bricks, then shinnied up a lamppost despite her high heels and tight dress, taking aim at the windshield of a squad car below and shattered the windscreen with one throw. “If some among the crown suggested it was time to cut out, others answered...‘Are you nuts? I’m not missing a minute of this. It’s the revolution!’” (Faderman, 2015, p. 174.) People were soon ‘rallying the troops’ by rushing to phone booths, calling other gays and straights alike to help. At 02:55, after the officer in charge, Inspector Pine, and his officers were forced back into the Inn, threatening to shoot anyone that dares to enter, police buses arrived carrying the Tactical Patrol Force, whose main job is was to quell New York City’s race and anti-war protests. The Force, according to Faderman (2015, p. 182) and Carter (2004, p. 194) managed to disperse the rioters by 03:30 in the morning. Feeling energised, several gay Village members began running through the streets yelling “Gay Power! We want freedom!” the next evening, and a second riot soon ensued which ended only at five thirty the next morning. Three days later, all was quiet in Christopher Street.

People who witnessed the riots testify of the liberating importance of the event. According to Faderman (2015, p. 176), one witness, Martha Shelley, a committed activist herself, initially thought the bottle-and-brick throwing crowd was an anti-war demonstration. It was inconceivable that gay people were rioting. Dick Leitsch, executive director of the New York Mattachine Society, is later quoted to have thought, as he was running toward the crowd that was now occupying half a dozen of blocks, that “…this is what Lenin must have felt like at the revolution. It’s the best thing that could happen for gays” (Faderman, 2015, p. 176).

Outside New York, the Stonewall Riots and its significance were mainly ignored or mocked in the local newspapers. But, by the following year, gay radical groups had been established all
over America (Faderman, 2015, p. 197), inspired by Stonewall and the Gay Liberation Front’s awareness raising activities. Carter (2004, pp. 256-266) concludes that:

“The received wisdom about the Stonewall Riots is that such an event was inevitable. This proposition is untenable, however, for there were many raids on gay bars before and after the raid at the end of June 1969 on the Stonewall Inn, and none for them resulted in any kind of sustained uprising... [But] the true legacy of the Stonewall Riots is the ongoing struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. While this fight is far from over, it is now a worldwide movement that has won many significant victories, most of them flowing from those six days in the summer of 1969 when gay people found the courage to stand up for themselves on the streets of Greenwich Village.”

A decade later, in 1979, another shining example of gay courage in the USA was what was to become known as the “White Nights Riots” following the death of Harvey Milk, the first officially elected and openly gay member of the city’s Board of Supervisors in the area of Castro in San Francisco. A recent Hollywood movie, “Milk”, released 26 November 2008 and produced by Dan Jinks and Bruce Cohen, starring Sean Penn as Harvey Milk, has become a must-have item amongst collectors of gay-themed movies.

The riots were sparked when fellow supervisor, Dan White, who shot and killed Milk and city Mayor George Mascone, got off with a rather light sentence, namely “guilty on two counts of voluntary manslaughter” (Faderman, 2015, p. 406). As Young (1995, p. 153) puts it: “Dan White’s trial was a farce. White was presented to the jury as an upstanding citizen. The prosecution seemed timid and inept...A phone call White admitted to having made immediately before the killings were never investigated. The foreman of the jury was an executive of a company which had contributed to White’s campaign fund. And so on.” His defence used as an argument; Dan White’s ‘diet’ as in indication that he had stress-induced depression. The diet they were referring to included Twinkie bars, and the defence argued that this was indicative of White’s condition, seeing as he had up until then been a very health conscious individual. This successful lawyer’s trick became known as White’s “Twinkie Defence”.
Gays experienced this as a parody of justice and revolted, marking the most violent gay riots ever in the world. The sentence was seen as adding insult to decades of injury and it unleashed the uncontrolled rage of the gay community in the Castro area of San Francisco.

Lillian Faderman (2015) in her book, based on years of rigorous research and more than 150 interviews, entitled “The Gay Revolution – the story of the struggle” reports on the reaction to the verdict as follows:

“The jury deliberated for six days. The verdict came down on May 21st 1979, a day before Harvey Milk’s birthday – had he lived he would have been forty nine. In a packed and emotion charged courtroom, the jury foreman handed the written verdict…Several jurors wept as she read aloud: the jury found that Dan White was guilty of two occasions of voluntary man slaughter. For shooting George Mascone five times and then Harvey Milk five times, Dan White was given the maximum penalty for manslaughter; seven years and eight months in prison. ‘Well no one could come up with any evidence that indicated premeditation’, the foreman later told the press.” (Faderman, 2015, p.406.)

This was outrageous according to the gay community. The California legislature had just two years prior, in 1977, passed a statute that reinstated the death penalty for first degree murder under “special circumstances”, which included murder of multiple victims as well as assassination of a public official, which Harvey Milk was. According to researchers, Dan White had purposefully driven to the San Francisco city hall where Harvey Milk’s office was armed with a gun. He climbed through a side street window to avoid detection of his weapon by the metal detectors at the main entrance and proceeded to kill Mascone and Milk with five shots each. While most gays were radically opposed to the death sentence, they at the least expected a life imprisonment verdict.

“…the slap on the wrist the jury gave Dan White felt like a slap in their collective gay face. The verdict was announced a little before five in the afternoon … A mob had massed in front of the Polk Street entrance to city hall. Those standing closest to the building, looking up at the second floor where Mascone and Milk had been murdered, suddenly couldn’t contain their fury. They started ripping apart the building’s ornate grill work,
using the pieces as make shift battering arms, smashing the glass doors. Then others picked up chunks of pavement and broke rocks off the new aggregate trash containers that lines the streets and hurled them at city hall windows. In minutes, the sidewalks were covered with glass. ‘We just want justice’ the rioters screamed. ‘He got away with murder!’ ’Avenge Harvey Milk!’ Gay rage lulled for ten years after the Stonewall riots was spreading through the huge mass. They uprooted parking meters and newspaper vending racks and used them as javelins to shatter ground floor. They broke windows of parked police cars and hurled burning shrubs and newspapers into them…Civic centre plaza turned into a battlefield. Hundreds of rioters broke limbs from the plaza’s trees and used them to smash every car window in sight. Squad and police cars arrived, officers suited up in riot regalia. The crowd was too big and unruly to control. …‘Don’t run! Don’t run! Slow down! Turn around! Fight back!’ Cleve Jones and others shouted. And the crowd did. ‘Skinny little queens in tank tops and blue jeans hurled themselves against the police!’ Jones marvelled and exulted. Bottles and rocks bounced off riot shields and helmets. The police fired tear gas till the plaza was hazy with it…‘Political trashing’ they named their looting for a ‘San Francisco Chronicle’ reporter. ‘Make sure you put in the paper that I ate too many ‘Twinkies!’ one rioter screamed as he helped torch another police car.

By one in the morning, fifty nine police officers had been injured, most cut by flying bottles and rocks. Seventy demonstrators had to be treated for injuries from police billy clubs. Twenty rioters were arrested. The cost of the damage was over one million dollars. Harry Britt - the man Harvey Milk had chosen to succeed him as supervisor ‘in the event’ that he was assassinated told the media the morning after the riot, ‘Now the society is going to have to deal with us not as nice little fairies who have their hair dressing salons, but people capable of violence. This was gay anger you saw. There better be an understanding of where this violence was coming from” (Faderman, 2015, pp. 407-409).

2.1.3 The aftermath – America forced to look at gay rights issues

The increased resistance of the 1960s and 1970s saw many more demonstrations, protest actions and “zapping” (coined, according to Faderman (2015, p. 218) by activist Marty
Robinson, referring to impudent, high spirited actions in which “the good guys publically embarrass the bad guys” as mock warnings to the “bad guys”, as in “Zap! You’re dead!”

A key example was when twenty “zappers” of the Gay Liberation Front disrupted the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Convention on 3 May 1971 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington DC. Some of the psychiatrists speaking at the convention, such as Dr Irving Bieber, had been the zappers’ target as he was a chief propagator of the idea that male homosexuality was a mental disease. Faderman (2015, pp. 280-281) describes what happened:

“[Activist Frank Kameny]…jumped up and seized the microphone from the moderator, who was trying to restore order. ‘We are here to denounce your authority to call us sick or mentally disordered’… ‘For us, as homosexuals, your profession is the enemy incarnate. We demand that psychiatrists treat us as human beings, not as patients to be cured! You may take this as a declaration of war against you!’…But some doctors in that ballroom had listened...”

At the 1972 APA conference, the activists presented an exhibition; a gay booth with the title “Gay, Proud, and Healthy: The Homosexual Community Speaks”. At the 1973 APA Convention in Honolulu, which included a symposium on “Should Homosexuality be in the APA Nomenclature?”, Robert Spitzer, a member of the APA Committee on Nomenclature, the group responsible for determining what went into or out of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders, having been convinced by the arguments that he heard, and seeing the bullying techniques of the APA, wrote an APA resolution removing homosexuality from the DSM. He stated according to Faderman (2015, p. 295) that: “The only way that homosexuality could be considered a psychiatric disorder would be the criterion of failure to function heterosexually, which is considered optimal in our society and by many members of our profession...homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgement, stability, reliability or general social or vocational capabilities.” At this point in time, as Faderman puts it, gays and lesbians stopped being crazies.
During the 1970s, the legal process also started in the USA to declare gays and lesbians as not being sex criminals. By 1972, a handful of states had joined Illinois in repealing its sodomy laws. However, “until the Supreme Court repealed all sodomy laws, the Department of Defence would keep using them as an excuse to refuse gays and lesbians security clearances. Judges would keep denying gays and lesbians custody of their children and the right to adopt. Public and private employers, and landlords, too, would keep on treating lesbians and gays shabbily” (Faderman, 2015, p. 537). Fuelled by the creative thinking of one of the gay movement’s brainiest strategists, Frank Kameny, activists started to look for the ‘perfect case’ that could be taken to the Supreme Court of Appeals. This case was found in Baker vs Wade in 1979, whereby model student and Christian, Don Baker sued Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade for the wrongful application of statute 21.06 (which targeted only gays and lesbians having sex in public or private places). While the presiding judge, Judge Jerry Buckmeyer declared that the sodomy law promoted no state interest and acquitted Baker, the ruling was overturned in 1985 and Statute 21.06 reinstated in Texas (Faderman, 2015, pp. 541-542). The team turned to the Supreme Court, which rejected the appeal.

It was only in 2003, when couple Lawrence and Gardner was “roughed up, paraded in the street in their underwear, thrown in jail...[and ] fined $125 apiece for violating statute 21.06 and $141.25 for court costs”, according to Faderman (2015, p. 548), that the Supreme Court declared all sodomy laws throughout America as unconstitutional.

But the battle was far from over. In 1993 21-year old Brandon Teena (a transsexual woman, originally named Teena Brandon) from Nebraska was assaulted and raped by Tom Nissen and John Lotter. While this case brought the murderous violence perpetrated against LGBT people to wide national attention, it was the murder of 21-year old Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, which finally rallied the masses. On 6 October 1998, Matthew was “driven out to a Wyoming field of prairie grass and sage bush, and was beaten on the head twenty times with the butt of a seven-inch gun. His skull was fractured and his brainstem crushed” (Faderman, 2015, p. 556). His assailants, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, then tied him to a split-rail fence, took his possessions and left him in near-freezing temperatures. He died six days later.
McKinney’s lawyer would argue in his client’s defence that Shepard was killed out of “gay panic”. National gay organisations rallied immediately with a vigil on the Capitol steps and demanded that a federal hate crimes law be passed in Matthew Shepard’s name to protect LGBT people. Vigils and protests were also held from Denver to the University of Maryland. President Clinton urged Congress to pass a federal hate protection act, while 75 percent of Americans in a poll indicated that they were in favour of such a law. But it was only on 28 October 2009 that the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed into law by President Barrack Obama. James Byrd Jr, a black man from Texas, was killed in a race related attack in 1998 (Faderman, 2015, pp. 555-562).

And it was only on 21 July 2014 that President Obama, under the banners stating “Opportunity for All”, signed an executive order, amending President Bill Clinton’s 1998 Executive Order 11478 that protected those directly employed by the federal government from discrimination based on “sexual orientation”, to also include now protection based on “gender identity”. Executive Order 11246 now also was amended to ban discrimination by federal contractors based on race, creed, colour, national origin, women or sexual orientation/gender identity (Faderman, 2015, pp. 579-580). However, the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit discrimination in hiring and employment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity by employers with at least 15 employees and which was introduced in 1994, has not been signed into law yet (online at http://www.advocate.com/enda retrieved on 9 August 2016).

As in America, gays worldwide have become more and more aware and assertive and above all, they have become more organised. This is necessary at times for a gay person’s very safety and well-being. Today, gay travel guides, for example, are available with a section for each country on the laws and social attitudes towards gay people detailed, while Gay Prides marches provide a powerful political and social platform for the LGBT community.

However, there is a latent awareness that gay people are, globally seen, not welcome everywhere and that when countries like Malaysia, Turkey, Ethiopia, countries in Northern Africa, the Arab countries, Uganda or even Malawi are visited, that special precaution has to
be taken (see for example https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Uganda, retrieved on 14 June 2016, which indicates that the LGBT community, estimated to be about 500 000 people have no specific legal protections, with a threat of lifelong imprisonment should two males be caught out, with a possibility of a death penalty for “repeat offenders”. According to a 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 96% of Ugandan residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept). Again, this is an indication that being gay constitutes also living with an awareness of constant latent discrimination and hostility ready to be unleashed.

Modern day gay activism is normally linked to the courageous battle fought by gays in the USA, with Stonewall forming the light beacon for gays around the world. This is the reason Gay pride marches are often organised worldwide around the month of June.

Today there are many gay publications and newspapers, radio and platforms and organisations discussing and dealing with gay issues. Social media ensure that world news regarding the fate of gay people are more readily available and form the topic of discussion amongst gay people when and as the news break. This is an important point to consider in understanding the shared intersubjective reality of gays today, which influence the psychology of gays in any part of the world.

Hatred against gays and lesbians still abound. As a point of illustration, the world learnt of the recent public execution of four gay men by ISIS, members of which bound the gay men and threw them off a five story building, while the crowds were watching and cheering on the road below. This was placed on YouTube and the impact on gay people worldwide is immense. The article can be read on http://www.towleroad.com/2015/10/report-isis-executes-4-men-in-iraq-for-being-gay (retrieved on 15 June 2016).

Also, at the time of writing this paragraph, it is only a few weeks after what has become known as the Orlando gay club massacre on 12 June 2016. A short extract from Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Orlando_nightclub_shooting (retrieved on 18 June 2016) outlines the incident:
“On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen, a 29-year-old American security guard, killed 49 people and wounded 53 others in a terrorist attack—also considered a hate crime—inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, United States. He was shot and killed by Orlando police after a three-hour standoff. Pulse was hosting Latin Night and most of the victims were Hispanic. It was both the deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter and the deadliest incident of violence against LGBT (Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual and Transgender) people in U.S. history, as well as the deadliest terrorist attack in the U.S. since the September 11 attacks in 2001.

In a 9-1-1 call shortly after the attack began, Mateen swore allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He later told a negotiator he was "out here right now" because of bombing campaigns in the American-led intervention in Iraq and American-led intervention in Syria, and that the negotiator should tell America to stop” (retrieved on 18 June 2016).

A week later at a vigil organised in a parking lot in front of a gay club in Pretoria, we watched the faces of the 49 people of which the majority were gay men in their twenties flash across a screen, accompanied by a gunshot for each one. It sounded like an eternity. Gay, lesbian, transgender and heterosexual people made speeches and tried to come to grips with this senseless deed.

We listened to a profoundly moving public address by Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel, speaking out strongly and unapologetically against this act against innocent boys “who were in the privacy of their own club, having a party”. While this was all deeply emotional, the highest point of his speech was when he added that Jews believe that man is created in the image of God, and therefore is deserving of “dignity” despite his sexual orientation. I observed an intensified emotional outpouring by the crowd of gay people attending the Vigil at hearing these words spoken by the Israeli Prime Minister. What moved the crowd was that he had said that gay lives too have a God ordained “dignity” about them.
2.2 The history that shaped gay communities in South Africa

While the legal battle has been won in South Africa regarding gay rights, as enshrined in the South African Constitution, the social discrimination and persecution continues for many gay people in the country. While the persecution is not written in law anymore, it is continued in the places that gays call their ‘homes’, their ‘places of work’, their ‘churches’ and ‘their families.’ Ongoing reports are streaming in on corrective rape and beatings or murder of gays, especially amongst the black communities. While gay rights were attained with the new Constitution in the nineties, Nel (2005, p. 247) cites Theron (1994, p. 111) who, in comparing the findings of seven United States anti-gay violence victimisation surveys (1988–1991) with a South African study conducted in 1992, found that while the South Africans were less likely to experience verbal abuse and threats of violence than their American counterparts, they were, however, more prone to be physically assaulted and substantially more often sexually assaulted.

One is tempted to believe that such findings were still the aftermath of a legislation hostile to gays, but Nel (2005, p. 247) also quotes from Reuters (2004) and Special Assignment (2004) that in the “new” South Africa, the situation is not much better as still a disproportionate numbers of LGBT persons continue to face oppression, marginalisation, discrimination and victimisation because of their sexual orientation and/or gender presentation. During 2003 and 2004, so called “corrective rapes” by members of their own communities of black lesbian women living in Gauteng-based townships received substantial media coverage.

Breen & Nel (2011, p.33) states that:

“[despite the fact that] South Africa’s Constitution outlines the vision of an equality-based society and in the preamble notes that ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity’…a range of civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights actors and academics have observed ongoing patterns of crimes specifically targeting people on the basis of their race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or other such factors. Such
crimes, known internationally as hate crimes, undermine social cohesion and have been shown to have an especially traumatic impact on victims.”

2.2.1 Gay rights and the Apartheid Government

Nel (2005, p. 247) states that as with racism and sexism, prejudice and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was also entrenched in apartheid South African legislation and highlights the fact that homosexuality was criminal until 1996. Nel (2005, p. 250) quotes De Swardt (2003, pp. 1-2) saying:

“The emotional and psychological impact of hate crime potentially extends beyond the individual victim. Other individuals from the targeted group may similarly be left feeling isolated, vulnerable, unprotected and intimidated, but so too may the victim’s larger community experience fear, distrust and renewed conflicts around previous areas of division in the community, resulting in further polarisation and/or destabilisation.

[As an example of hate crimes in South Africa] the disproportionately violently slaying of nine male sex workers during a so-called armed robbery in 2003 at Sizzlers, a Cape Town-based gay massage parlour, also sent shock waves through not only LGBT circles, but also society at large and even internationally among LGBT communities, as Cape Town is a favourite travel destination for international visitors who have grown to know it as the “gay capital” of South Africa. While disdain for sex workers may have been at play, the incident was widely interpreted as indicative of high levels of homo-prejudice.”

There is a close link between the Apartheid history of South Africa and legislation that shaped the lives of homosexuals in the country. Nel (2005, p. 252) eloquently describes the devastating legacy of the apartheid government:

“Apartheid was more than a system of institutionalised racism that denied black people the opportunity to vote and their freedom of movement, and restricted where they could live and attend school, or with whom they could have intimate relations. Discrimination in
general and also on the basis of gender and sexual orientation amongst others, was institutionalised. Social engineering by the state via active interventions, institutionalised discrimination and systemic oppression was the order of the day, and every sphere of life was controlled and prescribed. Power and privilege to varying degrees were reserved for the generic human described above. The harm has been done, and today the devastating and long-lasting after-effects of the apartheid system, such as inequalities, disadvantage, disempowerment and disqualification, are recognised.”

Gevisser and Cameron (1994, p. 4) writes that homosexual experience in South Africa can be seen as unique because of the country’s history of division and resistance.

“Our identities have been formed by our country’s history of racial struggle. And our identities have been deformed by a system that classified us into those with freedom and those without. Apartheid legislated who we were, what work we could do, where we could live, who we could associate with, what we could read and see and what kind of sex we could have. Apartheid even tried to dictate to us our self-conception and our self-regard” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, pp. 4-5).

According to Pushparagavan (2015) on South African History Online (www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-lgbt-legislation, retrieved on 4 August 2016), while millions were affected by Apartheid, the group that has been seemingly forgotten during this era is the LGBT community. The origins of the opposition towards homosexuals in South Africa stem from predominantly religious doctrines and traditions. Most denominations of Christianity rejected homosexual practices as it was deemed as unnatural and sinful in the Bible. “Ever since colonization, Christianity has played a role in shaping society. Christian based education began during the 1730s with arrival of German missionaries, and ended in 1953 when the Bantu education system was introduced.” Through this system, the message of sexual purity was spread.

There is, however, evidence that pre-colonial African societies accepted homosexuality on a situational basis. Sanders (1997) is quoted by Pushparagavan (2015) stating that the practice of “boy-wives” was evident amongst the Zande tribes of Sudan, while South African
gold mine workers often had relationships or even married with younger males, who fulfilled the role of a “wife”. Homosexual acts were also known to occur in the Zulu and Ngoni tribes.

With the rising of the Afrikaner nationalism in the 1900s, with its foundation in Dutch Reformed Calvinism, religious ideology of homosexuality being “unnatural and immoral” became a dominant view, influencing policy during the Apartheid years. “The apartheid government operated in a state of constant paranoia. It believed that ‘their’ South Africa was under siege from exterior as well as interior forces.” (Pushparagavan, retrieved on 4 August 2016.) Any opposition or resistance would be met with harsh repercussions. The Apartheid Government believed in a society where every aspect of societal life was controlled and where its values and norms could be forced onto its citizens. Retief (1995), as quoted by Pushparagavan (2015), states that black consciousness and civil rights movements were considered as threats. Sexual deviance was seen as a “degenerative virus that would weaken South African stock”. “In keeping with the grandiose rhetoric of Afrikaner nationalism, the apartheid government believed that if South Africa wanted to avoid the fates of ancient Rome and Greece, it must maintain its Christian purity and avoid homosexual debauchery, since sexual deviance would lead to the downfall of South Africa. Homosexuals were also seen as child molesters and this rhetoric was used to pass the Immorality Act amendments of 1968” (Retief, 1995, as quoted by Pushparagavan, retrieved on 4 August 2016).

The Immorality Act of 1957, as part of the much larger oppressive system, was aimed at curbing relationships between people. The Act prohibited sexual intercourse between people of different ethnicities. During this time, the Afrikaner Nationalist movement gained momentum, the sole purpose being to establish an Afrikaner State that would be seen the bastion of civilisation, grounded on Afrikaner culture, language and religion, separated from English influence and isolated from perceived dangerous races and ideologies. The Immorality Act is indicated as an example of the extent to which the government of the time would go to restrict and outlaw anything not in line with its strict definition and criteria of “Afrikaner culture”, be it different race, ideology or lifestyle (Pushparagavan, retrieved on 4 August 2016).
2.2.2 A turning point for gay awareness

More draconian amendments were introduced to the Immorality Act of 1957, predominantly after the so-called 1966 Forest Town Raid in Johannesburg. Although enforcement up to that point was relatively slack, Gevisser (1995, p. 30) states: “The 1966 raid, however, was the largest, most organised and most publicised the police had ever attempted.” The raid saw the arrest of nine men on the weekend of 20 January 1966 for masquerading as women and one for “indecent assault on a minor”.

Gevisser (1995, p. 31) continues to state:

“Whether or not the police deliberately targeted Johannesburg’s liberal northern suburbs, the impression following the raid was definitely one of decadent, immoral high-living. Newspapers fixated upon the fact that prominent professors, doctors and lawyers were present at the ‘sex orgy’...and the police head office immediately sent a circular to all [South African Police] divisional commissioners warning that ‘there are indications that homosexuality and gross indecency is being practiced between male persons throughout the country and that offenders are now pursuing an organised modus operandi.”

Following the raid, Minister of Justice, PC Pelser, proposed the 1968 amendments to the Immorality Act. The amendments sought to make male and female homosexual activity an offense, punishable by compulsory imprisonment of up to three years. Gevisser (1995, p. 32) writes that this had the result that a wave of panic swept through the South African gay communities, especially amongst lesbians, who had previously been ignored by the law. This forced the homosexual community to mobilise to protest the proposed amendments. “By April 1968, the [Homosexual Law Reform Fund] was already engaged in frenzied activities throughout the Pretoria-Johannesburg area, holding house-meetings to explain the purpose of the organisation and to raise funds” (Gevisser, 1995, p.32). This included the first ever gay public meeting on 10 April 1968 at the Park Royal Hotel in Joubert Park.
This initial political mobilisation was confined to the urban, white middle class gay community of South Africa, which, along the lines of the 1950s organisation in America (with the likes of the Mattachine Society) aimed to work quietly and professionally, attempting to protect themselves “by carving a niche within apartheid South Africa while not disrupting the status quo”, according to Gevisser (1995, p. 35). The Law Reform Movement had its success: the Parliamentary Select Committee charged to review the proposed amendments to the Immorality Act, dropped the legislation and instead adopted only three amendments: first, the age of consent was increased from 16 to 19; second, the use of dildoes was outlawed, and, third, the infamous “men at a party” clause was accepted. The latter criminalised any male person who commits with another male at a party any act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification. In essence, these amendments were designed to minimise the presence of homosexuals and to protect society from “corrupting influences” of the LGBT community (South Africa History Online, retrieved 4 August 2016).

2.2.3 Dealing with homosexuality in the military forces

The 1970s and 1980s was a period of turmoil for South Africa. While an increasing number of African countries became decolonised and gained independence, South Africa was economically and politically increasingly isolated due to its Apartheid ideology. During this time, the country started to engage in military conflict with Namibia, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. To increase its military ranks, conscription - which was implemented from 1957 onwards - intensified between 1972 until 1989 (Van Zyl, et al, 1999).

Similar to the shock and horror regarding the history of the fate of gays in Europe (such as Nazi Germany) and Soviet Russia, becoming readily available only now in research findings, publications and books; we are learning with similar horror about the fate of gay men in the military here in our own country during the apartheid years.

“In general, men in the armed forces were also subject to the law regarding sodomy and indecent behaviour between men, as spelt out in the Immorality Act of 1968. Members of
the forces could be reported to the South African Police, and prosecuted in a criminal court. However, the [South African Defence Force] generally preferred to deal with matters on their own terms. The armed forces were also in somewhat of a dilemma when faced with the conscription of gay recruits. At no time was homosexuality deemed a reason to be exempted from conscription, but there was nonetheless an explicit and implicit understanding that homosexuality was regarded as ‘gedragsafwyking’ [behavioural disorder]” (Van Zyl, et al, 1999).

The treatment of homosexuals in the armed forced included electric shock treatment, imprisonment, public humiliation and beatings. It is now estimated that the South African Defence Force forced about 900 gay service men into sex change operations during the 70s and 80s (Simo, retrieved 25 November 2015), and subjected them to electric shock treatment during the infamous ‘Aversion Therapy’ era of Dr Aubrey Levine. Dr Levine is today a convicted sex offender in Canada, where he fled to evade prosecution with the dismantling of apartheid.

“The part-man, part-woman who still calls himself Harold is trying to gather the courage to finally fight back against South Africa’s military. It was the army, after all, which abandoned him more than a decade ago, part way through ‘treatment’ to turn him from a male to a female under a discredited policy of trying to ‘cure’ homosexual conscripts.

‘I now know that in one sense I was just unlucky. The army had whole gay battalions who they just shunted aside and let be. But if things went wrong and you ended up in the hands of the psychologists, then it could get very bad. In my case it began with the electric shocks and only ended after they’d already given me breasts, and then the army said it had abandoned the whole policy,’ he said.

He is not alone. Thousands of other gays were subjected to electric shock therapy, hormone treatment and chemical castration through the 1970s and 80s, when national service was compulsory for white males and homosexuality was a crime. Some lesbians were also given ‘cures’.
An as-yet unpublished report, called the Aversion Project, commissioned by gay rights groups and South Africa’s Medical Research Council, details the extent of the abuses and is expected to form the basis of demands for corrective treatment, and demands that the doctors behind the ‘treatments’ be held accountable by the medical authorities.

The attempts to ‘cure’ homosexuals began after the creation of the infamous ward 22 at the Voortrekkerhoogte military hospital near Pretoria in 1969. The ward, which ostensibly catered for servicemen with psychological problems, was under the command of an army colonel and psychologist, Aubrey Levin” (McGreal, online at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/jul/29/chrismcgreal, retrieved on 25 November 2016).

2.2.4 Political change and gay mobilisation

Gevisser (1995, p. 48) notes that: “In many respects, the early 1980s signified an opening-up for South Africans, socially as well as politically. At the beginning of the decade, President PW Botha began instituting his ‘reform’ programme…and, in the aftermath of the Soweto upheavals, a massive upsurge of black liberationist activity swept through the townships.” While, urban gay men participated in this new counterculture, having already consolidated their subculture in the 1970s. By 1982, they were ready to assert themselves also politically. This period saw the formation of the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), which “facilitated a groundswell of gay activity that focused the gay community and provided a basis for the more radical and politically explicit lesbian and gay activism that was to follow” (Gevisser, 1995, p. 48).

The 1980s also witnessed the formation of two other, more representative, gay rights groups: the Gay and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), established in 1988, and the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA), which marked a movement away from the White-centred, apolitical stance of former gay rights activists, and aligned
themselves with the anti-Apartheid groups such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Front (UDM). After the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990 and the unbanning of the ANC and UDM, and others, LGBT movements were able to engage in political discussions, which would include sexual freedom as a fundamental human right under the new Constitution (South African History Online, retrieved 4 August 2016).

De Waal & Manion (2006, p. 7) states that the process of addressing rights based on sexual orientation began in the late 1980s when the ANC was first confronted with this issue while still in exile. Questions were raised by foreign journalists and activists just as the ANC was developing from a traditional national-liberation movement to one dedicated to the realisation of human rights in the style of Western liberal democracies. Former President Thabo Mbeki at the time “saw to it that gay rights were acknowledged as an integral part of the broader remit of human rights”.

“Some of the impetus for this came from within the exiled ANC, where people working on the legal and constitutional framework for a free South Africa, such as Albie Sachs, saw that gay rights would have to be part of it. Much of the impetus, too, came from within South Africa, where individuals such as Edwin Cameron...and the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists, particularly, played a key role... [the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW)’s] driving force, in turn, was Tseko Simon Nkoli, who has been one of the accused, in the Delmas Treason Trial, for anti-apartheid activities. He was ultimately acquitted, but his experiences in jail while awaiting trial, when he was forced to disclose his homosexuality to his colleagues in the liberation struggle, convinced him that gay rights were human rights” (De Waal & Manion, 2006, p. 7).

The new Constitution, which is seen worldwide as one of the most progressive pieces of legislation, made discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal. The 1998 Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) further ensures that employees could not be discriminated against based on sexual orientation.
In 1990, South Africa’s Pride March in Johannesburg, organised by GLOW, was the first lesbian and gay pride parade to take place on the African continent (De Waal & Manion, 2006, p. 6). The Pride, as it is commonly referred to, has over the years changed from a protest march which demanded the recognition of rights, to a celebration of attaining those rights. Several Gay Pride parades have also been held in Cape Town (in the form of a night-time mardi gras), Durban, and Knysna with the Pink Loerie Carnival.

However, as Nel (2005, p. 253) pointed out, despite the progressiveness of our Constitution and the multiple statutes that prohibit discrimination against homosexuals:

“most overtly gay or lesbian people are more often the targets of anti-gay violence or bashing, specifically in response to their transgressions of traditional gender roles and expectations. South African society is also particularly vicious towards gay and transgender males who in respect of their gender presentations pose a strong subversive threat to the traditional gender norms and patriarchal ideals of aggression and dominance. Their real or perceived sexual orientation is thus considered a threat to the social order.”

There is growing interest amongst gay people today to formalise a group identity (my own observation) and to follow the events in our own country and globally, that shape the destiny of gays. There is also an eagerness to uncover the injustices and to speak out for those who could not speak for themselves in the past. But I also feel that as the awareness grows about the fate of gays in general, that there is also a growing awareness of the personal reality that we find ourselves in.

An example of this growing awareness of the plight of gay people and the South African Government’s increasing positive response became evident in September 2016 when the Department of Home Affairs banned American anti-gay pastor Steven Anderson from entering the country. Pastor Anderson is the leader of the Faithful World Baptist Church in Arizona and planned to visit South Africa and Botswana as part of a “soul winning” mission. He, and members of his congregation, was banned on the grounds of spreading anti-gay hate speech, saying that, according to the Bible, all governments should execute gays. He
especially caused widespread anger by celebrating the mass shooting at Pulse, the LGBTI nightclub in Orlando, saying there are “less paedophiles in this world”. The banning came after a joint international venture between gay rights groups and engagement between the South Africa Government and South African organisations such as OUT and Gay Radio SA. He was also subsequently deported from Botswana (Southern Poverty Law Centre, 2016, online at https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/09/13/hate-group-leader-steven-anderson-banned-entering-south-africa, retrieved on 27 September 2016, and Pather, 2016, online at http://mg.co.za/article/2016-09-13-the-law-the-pastor-of-hate-and-why-malusi-gigaba-barred-him-from-sa, retrieved on 28 September 2016).

I have covered only the very tip of the iceberg here, with the intention to not only share the historic reality, but also to illuminate a dimension of the psyche of the modern gay person in South Africa. We have a common history, both globally and locally, and that history has also shaped who we are today and how we relate to society.

I have also tried to capture a backdrop for the context in which the gay person in South Africa found himself in Apartheid South Africa as well as under the new democratic, post-Apartheid government, which at least in a legal sense is a new dawn for gays in this country. However, social attitudes change much more slowly than legislation and vestiges of the legacy of the “generic man” do survive, even more than twenty years after democracy has become a reality and gays are protected by law.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the history of gay people in society with particular focus on Germany during WWII, on the USA and then also South Africa. The aim was to point out that historically gays had no civil rights; but that they were either seen as ‘criminal’, ‘sick’, or ‘sinful’ and needed to hide and deny who they were for survival purposes. It was also investigated how gay activism has led to the liberation of gay people on a political level, but that the social acceptance is still lagging behind. International successes are being seen in
the news and it would seem that there is enlightenment about sexual orientation, although the process is slow.
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONTEXT

3.1 The matrix of the research: A brief outline of Logotherapy

I have decided to use the existential theory of Viktor E. Frankl, which is called Logotherapy, as a model against which to compare, explain and describe the life experiences of my research subjects.

Logotherapy, which was formerly called “existential analysis”, and which deals with the meaning or lack of meaning that impacts the individual’s life; is ideally suited for this research as it is a tool and a lens to look at gay men’s lives in their entirety. Logotherapy looks at life as unconditionally meaningful, and that means that there is meaning also in suffering and hardship. My hypothesis was that gay men suffer much in their lives at the hands of society and that some overcome and grow spiritually, while others succumb. Logotherapy also holds that this ‘meaning’ is subjective and individual, but that it is the key factor in human motivation and health. It is hence important to tap into, and illuminate the meaning these men found lost or had to battle to rediscover and hold on to.

A review, in brief summary, of the fundamentals of Logotherapy serves to emphasise why this is the model of choice to glean the deepest understanding into the experiences and the realities of gay subjects.

3.1.1 The spiritual dimension of being

In line with all other existential theories, Logotherapy also sees man as a free agent, acting in a real life environment, with all aspects of life involved and the choices which this interaction brings about. Logotherapy focuses on man’s free will and the choices he makes in the world. The idea of ‘becoming’ as a consequence of choices made, places immediate and immense responsibility and dignity into the realm of human reality and existence. Every single person is a precious soul and has unique abilities, likes, dislikes, sensitivities and
talents. As human beings, we are interested in the world around us, in our role in it and are also future-directed. As we gain experience and our lives move forward, we reach higher states of awareness and effectiveness and efficiency. This is a growing process. When we hear the ongoing call of life and we heed it and deal with its complexities and dilemmas, we flex so to speak our spiritual muscle and we transcend the mundane animalistic levels of existence and enter into a highly energised and highly aware spiritual dimension of meaning. As we move forward with this understanding and with determination, we are lifted above our present state of being.

The distinction between man and animal is the spiritual capacity to ‘think’, to ‘evaluate’ and tell right from wrong via our conscience, to self-distance and view our own lives as an object of interest.

The following caption from Frankl’s book illustrates the spiritual capacity in operation. Thinking about ourselves and evaluating ourselves and our lives, help us to gain perspective and make new choices.

“‘My life was no failure!’ Viewing her life as if from her deathbed, she had suddenly been able to see a meaning in it, a meaning which even included all of her sufferings” (Frankl, 1984, p. 139).

As spiritual beings, our lives have meaning in that we can think about it in context of the present moment, and take appropriate action.

“What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment. To put the question in general terms would be comparable to the question posed to a chess champion: "Tell me, Master, what is the best move in the world?" There simply is no such thing as the best or even a good move apart from a particular situation in a game and the particular personality of one's opponent. The same holds for human existence. One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment” (Frankl, 1984, p. 130)
In our journeys through life we are thus in constant contact with a questioning of life, and the meaning of our lives is in the answers we give to our lives. We respond and thus become responsible. We have freedom of choice.

“Man is capable of changing the world for the better if possible, and of changing himself for the better if necessary.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 153.)

This freedom must not be misunderstood as a ‘freedom from’ life’s demands and its restrictions, but a ‘freedom to’ impact it and make changes even to us if the need arises.

3.1.2 The concept of conscience

Frankl’s theory also clearly implies the origin of man as the product of a Creator who is in constant contact with His creation via the conscience, as a task master and a source of all things good, true, just and loving. Although Frankl kept his theory secular in his writings, he does acknowledge in writing and through his life and his biographies, that his understanding of the Divine as an integral part of human reality, is a given.

Frankl speaks in this regard of the Supra-dimension or Transcendent dimension of being, which man, on the dimension of the human, cannot fully grasp or explain, but can relate to only through faith. That faith in Ultimate Being, flooding man’s life with ultimate meaning, is an orientation that fills all of man’s life with meaning. But Frankl strongly insists that we operate on the human level and not on the level of the Divine. Faith is a manifestation, an undeniable phenomenon in human experience as are other features such as love, loyalty, hope, which are values; not available to human experimentation or manipulation.

He sees these values operating through human conscience, another undeniable fact of human experience. Frankl describes conscience as the organ of meaning, through which the voice of the Transcendent “personats”, that is, whispers through. Conscience is, therefore, the guiding “voice” for authentic, true and right choices in each and every situation in life.
“Logotherapy conceives of conscience as a prompter which, if need be, indicates the direction in which we have to move in a given life situation. In order to carry out such a task, conscience must apply a measuring stick to the situation one is confronted with, and this situation has to be evaluated in the light of a set of criteria, in the light of a hierarchy of values. These values, however, cannot be espoused and adopted by us on a conscious level - they are something that we are. They have crystallized in the course of the evolution of our species; they are founded on our biological past and are rooted in our biological depth.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 169.)

Higher or spiritual values exercise a demand quality on life. Living by the yardsticks of these higher or spiritual values and directing our lives accordingly, we experience a deep sense of personal integrity and fulfilment. Abrogating these values, leads to a loss of meaning and of life without a task or mission. Life becomes something haphazard, arbitrary and basically senseless. Frankl describes the dynamics of ‘conscience’ as a meaning compass that picks up meaning potentials against a background of reality.

“Sweepingly, I would locate the cognition of meaning - of the personal meaning of a concrete situation - midway between an ‘aha’ experience along the lines of Karl Bühler’s concept and a Gestalt perception, say, along the lines of Max Wertheimer's theory. The perception of meaning differs from the classical concept of Gestalt perception insofar as the latter implies the sudden awareness of a "figure" on a "ground," whereas the perception of meaning, as I see it, more specifically boils down to becoming aware of a possibility against the background of reality or, to express it in plain words, to becoming aware of what can be done about a given situation” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 168-169).

Man, therefore, is most deeply motivated by a search for meaning and purpose in life which, if he has found a meaningful reason for living, imbues him with a sense of personal integrity. That integrity is based on living life in a highly and personally responsible way. Frankl asserts that human functioning at its intended best makes responsibility the essence of human existence.
3.1.3 Choosing to become what we were meant to be

What then is a right choice and what is then right living? Frankl is very clear about one point: although man is a thinking being and will approach wonders and riddles of life with many questions, trying to fathom the truth of things, it is to be understood that it is ‘life’ that questions ‘us.’

Logotherapy is not pastoral counselling and it is not based on a specific religion, but it does not shy away from religious convictions, which the client holds. If the client’s meaning involves the concepts and understandings and relations with a personal God, or only relates to the world in terms of his conscience is for the client to determine. In both cases though, the meaningful call from life is the object of attention in Logotherapy. In this thesis I interviewed gay men who were either atheist or Christian believers. In three cases the interviewees took the concept of meaning beyond the conscience and two drew on rationalistic frameworks. Logotherapy makes no distinction in its application as it sees all human life as a quest for meaning, which can either be found or not.

Based on the above statement, it follows that a right choice will always be that choice which is in alignment with laws of meaningful and responsible living. For the religious, the dictates or the guiding voice that flows to man through the conscience is the voice of his Creator or the transcendent as Frankl called it. Man’s entire thinking apparatus, as a creation of God, is naturally bearing the fingerprint of God and is to operate in harmony with His good pleasure.

While man is a creature of creation he is also not the entire creation, but part of it. He may learn about his Creator via the rest of creation, his conscience and the events in the world around him, which are offered to him by the Creator through the world and the life of man in the form of questions, dilemmas and puzzling situations, which are catalysts to action. These questions demand of him to act – but not just act in a haphazard way, but in the right way. Listening to the guiding voice of the Creator via his conscience, and taking action in accordance with his guiding voice, man receives a spiritual reward higher than, but not
necessarily excluding, bodily sensations and emotional positives. Frankl calls this trans-human ‘Yes’, ‘meaning’.

For the non-religious the quest for meaning is the struggle to make the right choice between different values held dear. These values may not always be opposing, but nuanced in importance and influenced by context. It is a battle in the conscience of the individual to find the right answer to the questions of life. Below the concept in Logotherapy of the “Unconscious God” is explored.

3.1.4 The Unconscious God

It should be understood that Frankl’s ideas about religion and spirituality are considerably broader than most. His God is not the God of the narrow mind, not the God of one denomination or another. It is not even the God of institutional religion. God is very much a God of the inner human being, a God of the heart. Even the atheist or the agnostic, he points out, may accept the idea of transcendence without making use of the word "God."

“This unconscious religiousness, revealed by our phenomenological analysis, is to be understood as a latent relation to transcendence inherent in man. If one prefers, he might conceive of this relation in terms of a relationship between the immanent self and a transcendent thou. However one wishes to formulate it, we are confronted with what I should like to term ‘the transcendent unconscious’. This concept means no more or less than that man has always stood in an intentional relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level. If one calls the intentional referent of such an unconscious relation ‘God’, it is apt to speak of an ‘unconscious God’." (Frankl, 1975, pp. 61-62.)

On the other hand, turning away from God is the ultimate source of all the ills we have already discussed. “...Once the angel in us is repressed, he turns into a demon." (Frankl, 1975, p. 70.)

Frankl’s concept of the Unconscious God as a latent and unconscious relatedness to the Divine underlies his contention that there is no such thing as an irreligious person. However,
the importance of meeting the client at whatever stage of his life’s journey in his or her authentic search for the meaning is paramount.

Frankl urges counsellors and therapists, and in this case the researcher to stay with the client even if this means remaining secular and not to preach religion. Thus Logotherapy is effective not only for the believer but also for the humanist and the atheist. The difference between the believer and the non-believer will in the final instance be a question of depth and breadth of understanding of meaning.

To illustrate this one step further, a non-believer or atheist may also follow the dictates of his conscience, and make a choice that is ultimately the right one, even in the eyes of His Creator, and even though he will deny the existence of a Creator. The choice might be to help a person who is in a difficult situation. He might justify this by reasoning that he wants to promote helping behaviour, because in a world where people help each other, everyone gets help in the end. This would be in line with a rationalistic and humanistic world view.

The religious man may help because he feels prompted to do so by his understanding of the Will and the Character of his Creator – and this will be in line with a religious faith.

Ultimately, the difference between the one who professes the faith that God is the ultimate guiding force in his or her life and the rationalist, is the understanding of the working of the conscience and its access to ‘Logos’ as opposed to just cognitive reasoning using ‘logic’. Frankl says that ‘Logos’ is deeper than ‘Logic’ and in this he also firmly acknowledges the divine interaction with human existence.

Finally, there is an important distinction which Frankl makes between a genuine faith, earmarked by morally right and meaningful choices and behaviour, and an inauthentic and lip-service religiosity that can be cruelly motivated. Hatred and prejudice of those not sharing his or her particular religious persuasions, earmark this particular kind of fanatic type of faith. For religion to be genuine, Frankl maintains, it has to be profoundly personalized.
3.1.5 The meaning of life and self-transcendence

Frankl describes three pathways to meaning or, otherwise seen, as those spiritual contact points and moments and experiences with the Transcendent. The meaning of life cannot be given to a person as an instruction, but must be carefully searched for, and when found it must be ‘lived’.

“We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life - daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment. Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. ‘Life’ does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life’s tasks are also very real and concrete. They form man’s destiny, which is different and unique for each individual. No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 98.)

These are illustrated in Figure 1. Frankl delineates three aspects or ways in which meaning can be experienced.

Note must be taken of a key element of Logotherapy and the dynamics of meaning. Frankl always said and illustrated that meaning in essence has a self-transcendent character. With this he meant that it happens above the animalistic psychobiological level, namely on the spiritual level. For biological and psychological aspects of our reality to be imbued with meaning they have to be reflected on, and interpreted, on the spiritual level of human existence.
However for purposes of clarity let us approach the three avenues to meaning in their elemental states.

3.1.5.1 Experiential meaning

The understanding of experiential meaning is that we may witness and experience, yes, even merge with and have a share in that which is good, true, just, courageous and right. Also here Frankl’s theory is dazzling in its accuracy and here also the Biblical principle of man created in the image of God finds its proof. It is only man who can be moved to tears and emotional heights and physical strengths by a spiritual grasp of beauty and truth. They inspire us as life-bringing energy and light-bringing understanding and must ideally lead healing and peace bringing action, which is the next aspect of meaning to be considered.

3.1.5.2 Creative meaning

Using our understanding of the experiential meaning as a stepping stone to creative meaning, let us look at what is right action again. Fed and inspired by our experiences of what is true and right and experiencing the surge of uplifting energy that that entails, we now view the world around us and we seek and see areas where there is a lack of the true,
the just and the beautiful and we apply our efforts there. We sustain that which is true and
good and we combat that which is against it.

As in a huge global controversy between darkness and light and good and evil we align
ourselves. The conscience now does not only serve as the nurturing navel of truth but also
as a prism that cast open in front of our spiritual eyes the gaps and the discrepancies
between what ‘IS’ and what ‘OUGHT TO BE’. Any act aligned with a value of truth and
beauty and goodness leads to spiritual experiences called “meanings”.

It is also in our actions and as a sum of cumulative actions and discerned decisions that we
become. Frankl describes this ‘becoming’ as either becoming that which we were created,
intended or meant to be or departing from that and spiralling away from the original plan
into a day-to-day chaotic directionless existence, fuelled by our desires, instincts and
momentary pleasures and filled with doubt, despair and anxiety. It may also manifest in a
will to power where we want to control, dominate and rule over others in an attempt to
bring order.

3.1.5.3 Attitudinal meaning

In aviation we talk about the attitude of the aileron of an aircraft, which is the ‘position’ of
the aileron in the air stream around the aircraft. The position of the aileron will determine
the direction in which the aircraft will fly.

In a similar way our positions in life will determine the direction our lives take. The question
is then: how do we know what position to adopt in the stream of life? How do we know
what stand and stance to adopt in order to glean from, or add to, the situation we are in,
the optimal meaning possible? I see this as a stance of wisdom and courage. ‘Wisdom’ in the
sense of knowledge about what is true, right and good, and ‘courage’ in the sense of having
the determination and the will to act in accordance with what we already know is right and
good. The right attitude is the wise attitude, called for in every life situation, although Frankl
traditionally talks about the need for a right and courageous attitude in the face of suffering brought about by injustice and no wrong doing of oneself.

We are not to be passive bystanders of our own lives and the lives of others, but to be active participants.

As an illustration of how life and suffering can form our attitudes and enrich us instead of crushing us, a look at the following extract from Frankl’s writings will suffice:

“The story of the young woman whose death I witnessed in a concentration camp. It is a simple story. There is little to tell and it may sound as if I had invented it; but to me it seems like a poem. This young woman knew that she would die in the next few days. But when I talked to her she was cheerful in spite of this knowledge. ‘I am grateful that fate has hit me so hard,’ she told me. ‘In my former life I was spoiled and did not take spiritual accomplishments seriously.’ Pointing through the window of the hut, she said, ‘This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness.’ Through that window she could see just one branch of a chestnut tree, and on the branch were two blossoms. ‘I often talk to this tree,’ she said to me. I was startled and didn’t quite know how to take her words. Was she delirious? Did she have occasional hallucinations? Anxiously I asked her if the tree replied. ‘Yes.’ What did it say to her? She answered, ‘It said to me, ‘I am here—I am here—I am life, eternal life.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 90.)

To be responsible means to use your spiritual abilities and faculties to give an accurate response to the questions and situations in life that present themselves. We often hear people say how they grew in stature and wisdom through their suffering, and how it has taught them new perspectives and new values in life. In the above mentioned extract we see how the woman discusses with gratitude and an uplifted spirit – confessing that she was spoilt and ungrateful before the camps and that her suffering brought her to a far more appreciative attitude towards life.

There are many examples of suffering bringing individuals to a new position of humility and gratitude for small things in life they took for granted before. Many report that they are
glad they went through that period and feel quite ashamed when they think back on how selfish and arrogant they had been before. In this sense suffering can teach us new attitudes and corrects our behaviour. But we might also be subjected to unjust and wrongful attitudes and action by others, and then it would be incorrect to seek change in ourselves.

This might mean that we have to oppose that which we feel is wrong, hurtful and false in life even if it leads to times of discomfort, humiliation of outright suffering. This is what Frankl calls the defiant power of the human spirit.

To live a life of meaning is to live a highly responsible and moral life, sensitive to that which you are called upon to do and to that which you are to support and promote. However, if the sufferer has internalised worthlessness, shame and interprets his suffering as deserved and just, the world of meaning will remain obscure and hidden to him or her. Why? Because the sufferer him or herself will be in hiding from the world.

To use the words of Dr Teria Shantall (an authority in the field of Logotherapy) in a personal email dated July 2016, a secure “self” is a vital component in the process of meaning, which operates in a minute by minute relationship between the “self” and the “demand quality of life”. The “self” has to be healthy and open to the world. She describes this healthy “self” as follows:

“A secure, at-home-with-oneself, a settled kind of contentment in being ‘you’; self as an inspirational platform to launch into the world in every area of being (doing your part, making your mark, giving your contribution: creative values). (a keen sense of openness to everything in appreciation, wonder and gratitude, even the smallest of blessings, an immediate response to beauty, truth, loving kindness, a joy in living - the full availability of self to the moment: experiential values), (the confidence and full sense of worthiness as being called upon to take a stand, to act decisively, heroically, courageously, with wholehearted commitment: attitudinal values), have everything to do with vibrant mental health and optimal being. Living this way we achieve, become more and more, what we most deeply want and are meant to be. To become yourself, what you were created to be, is a victory over self-doubt. We take possession of ourselves. As we do, we make
history, as you say. ‘Having been (in this way), is the surest way of being.’ We grow in wisdom and maturity, human stature!’

A quote from Frankl’s work will cast more light on this point of spirit and defiance of spirit:

“Most important, however, is the third avenue to meaning in life: even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by so doing change himself. He may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph. Again it was Edith Weisskopf-Joelson who…once expressed the hope that logotherapy ‘may help counteract certain unhealthy trends in the present-day culture of the United States, where the incurable sufferer is given very little opportunity to be proud of his suffering and to consider it ennobling rather than degrading’ so that ‘he is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy.’” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 170-171.)

Life ultimately has a questioning and confrontational nature asking us: ‘Who are you?’ and ‘What are we going to do about the situation?’ The following quote from Frank’s writings illustrate what he means by this:

“Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. ‘Life’ does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life’s tasks are also very real and concrete. They form man’s destiny, which is different and unique for each individual. No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a man finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action. At other times it is more advantageous for him to make use of an opportunity for contemplation and to realize assets in this way. Sometimes man may be required simply to accept fate, to bear his cross. Every situation is distinguished by its uniqueness, and there is always only one right answer to the problem posed by the situation at hand. When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task. He will have to acknowledge the fact that even in suffering he is unique and alone in the universe. No one can relieve him of his
suffering or suffer in his place. His unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden.” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 98-99.)

3.1.6 Self-transcendence

A brief look at the meaning of self-transcendence is very necessary as we are living in an age where many new-age theories are available and flourishing. There are thus many interpretations of the term. In the Logotherapeutic understanding it is something very practical. It is to be understood in the breaking through out of an inner world of thought and reflection only, and grasping at opportunities, experiences and difficulties ‘out in the real world’.

Again the ‘duo’ of meaning, namely ‘man’ and his ‘world’ come to the fore. The two must have contact and interact for meaning to transpire. This is what self-transcendence means in Logotherapy: reaching out into the world to live a real life.

“I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic ‘the self-transcendence of human existence’. It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself - be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself - by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love - the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called selfactualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence. Thus far we have shown that the meaning of life always changes, but that it never ceases to be. According to logotherapy, we can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 133.)
3.1.7 The existential vacuum

Frankl is very clear about the meaning “potential of life”, as existing objectively outside of ourselves. However, the lens through which we perceive it is subjective. In other words, we subjectively view an objective reality, which exists and is not created by us, and which also possesses a “demand quality” (Frankl, 1988, p. 59). In Logotherapy there is a “real” world which presents a “real” individual with meaning potentials and possibilities, which have to be grasped and rescued into the present and stored in the past. This the individual can only do by responding to life’s tasks, invitations and challenges in his or her unique and personal way.

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibleness the very essence of human existence... Again I quoted a poet - to avoid sounding like a preacher myself - who had written, ‘Was Du erlebst, kann keine Macht der Welt Dir rauben.’ (What you have experienced, no power on earth can take from you.) Not only our experiences, but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we have suffered, all this is not lost, though it is past; we have brought it into being. Having been is also a kind of being, and perhaps the surest kind.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 130.)

It is in this “having been” that man finds himself born into a new “self”, every time we take the cues from life to respond to its many demands, we graduate one step further into a process of becoming.

However, finding oneself in a situation where a frustration, or a false belief blocks this meaning from presenting itself to the individual (perhaps because the individual is too busy tending to more urgent matters within the self and he finds himself hyper reflecting on ailments and mistakes society is constantly reminding him of), he will soon find himself alienated and divorced from his own life.
“...logotherapy defocuses all the vicious-circle formations and feedback mechanisms which play such a great role in the development of neuroses. Thus, the typical self-centeredness of the neurotic is broken up instead of being continually fostered and reinforced. To be sure, this kind of statement is an oversimplification; yet in logotherapy the patient is actually confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life. And to make him aware of this meaning can contribute much to his ability to overcome his neurosis.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 119.)

“Having shown the beneficial impact of meaning orientation, I turn to the detrimental influence of that feeling of which so many patients complain today, namely the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives. They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the ‘existential vacuum’. The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).” (Frankl, 1984, p. 127.)

Social shaming and rejection can and does (at least temporarily) lead to an inner void, created by endless mulling over of rejection by society and doubt about one’s own worth and which – if not overcome by a will to meaning and a defiant spirit, can grow and swallow the individual, into a vacuous existence void of meaning, and render him vulnerable to all ailments of such a directionless existence.

The manifestations of this existential vacuum according to Frankl (1984, p. 128) are addiction, depression and aggression: “Such widespread phenomena as depression, aggression and addiction are not understandable unless we recognize the existential vacuum underlying them.”
3.2 Suffering as a process

With a general outline of the essence of Logotherapy above, we will now look specifically at the attitudinal meaning that is dormant and ready for the harvest in the midst of suffering.

As the research deals with mainly the suffering of gay men as they face a condemning society on an ongoing basis, we need to study the process of suffering in detail and have our eyes peeled for signs in their stories of courage, address and articulate injustices and defiance in the face of unjust suffering inflicted upon them.

We will see that the world and its condemning social norms try to isolate, silence out and wish away this unwanted blemish on society from a mainstream perspective, but Frankl emphasises that the human spirit wants to relate to something or someone other than oneself. We have to acknowledge this need and we will see that the suppression of this need will lead in every case to a defiance of the oppressors and an outcry regarding the injustice of denying gay people their dignity and the respect that they as human beings deserve. Frankl speaks about the inherent worthiness as a core principle and orientation of Logotherapy.

The extensive research of Shantall (2002) into the nature of suffering, and the meaning potential that slumbers inside this dark side of life, revealed the following process which suffering takes. Inspired by the work of Frankl, she launched her own investigation into the nature of suffering. Over a period of two years she interviewed five Holocaust survivors in South Africa and meticulously analysed the data captured. This is a long and tedious method, but its end result is a report true to life, from the mouths of the sufferers, analysed but not altered.

Her research reveals the following:

“Suffering has a confrontational and questioning character. It brings us into the stark reality of the immediate moment. Standing naked and exposed, our ordinary defenses and securities stripped from us, we can become aware of being addressed by our
conscience. We are cornered and challenged with a choice. If we do not give in to panic at this point and do not look for a way out of what we sense is a deeply personal confrontation, a call to take stock of ourselves, we begin to discern what course it is we are called upon to take.

Suffering thus commissions us, calls us to be responsible, to give an account of ourselves. What we have previously taken for granted in our lives, is now presented to us as valuable, as something to appreciate, preserve and realize. As we heed the call, we feel ourselves sustained by these values. We become aware of these values as existing independently, outside of ourselves. Beyond human manipulation and destruction, those things in life which really matter to us, exist as values in an eternal sense, on a dimension beyond the transitory.

In exercising these values in our lives, we become more authentically ourselves. Our lives gain in meaning and content, become unique, irreplaceably valuable. In the final analysis we experience a sense of fulfillment, triumph and joy which we have not previously known in quite such depth. Our lives have risen above blind fate. We are living on the dimension of meaning.” (Shantall 2002, p.47.)

The surprising and paradoxical nature of “finding meaning in suffering” is that the sufferer can even experience moments of heightened – yes nearly ecstatic or euphoric – meaning while still entangled and trapped inside the suffering phase and period of his life. Both Frankl and some of the survivors Shantall studied, reported the almost unthinkable and paradoxical; namely, that there in the midst of their struggle, they experienced moments of pure bliss, and connectedness with the essence of life, as being born from an origin of good, beauty and truth. They also reported NOT having experienced such moments since!!

The following example from Frank’s suffering during WWII illustrates this paradoxical bliss amidst suffering:

“Another time we were at work in a trench. The dawn was grey around us; grey was the sky above; grey the snow in the pale light of dawn; grey the rags in which my fellow
prisoners were clad, and grey their faces. I was again conversing silently with my wife, or perhaps I was struggling to find the reason for my sufferings, my slow dying. In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious ‘Yes’ in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose. At that moment a light was lit in a distant farmhouse, which stood on the horizon as if painted there, in the midst of the miserable grey of a dawning morning in Bavaria. ‘Et lux in tenebris lucet’ - and the light shineth in the darkness. For hours I stood hacking at the icy ground. The guard passed by, insulting me, and once again I communed with my beloved. More and more I felt that she was present, that she was with me; I had the feeling that I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers. The feeling was very strong: she was there. Then, at that very moment, a bird flew down silently and perched just in front of me, on the heap of soil which I had dug up from the ditch, and looked steadily at me.” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 60-61.)

Frankl finds meaning in the midst of abject suffering and gloom. It is also true, however, that not all people experience meaning in suffering, given the fact that the first phase is extremely negative and powerful; we are shaken to our roots, stripped of all our physical comforts and all our psychological securities, and in this phase many turn away in anger and become cold and embittered, according to Shantall (2002, p 46).

But as a process in the opposite direction, as a process of eventually finding meaning in suffering (namely as a task and as something to be borne bravely and heroically), the following phases in the process unfold. For those who keep the courage, the following path opens up (Shantall, 2002, p. 48):

- Suffering is experienced as having a confrontational nature;
- It fixes us to the immediate moment, we feel cornered;
- We feel called to responsibility;
- We are presented with the reality of choice;
• We feel compelled to do something about the situation, and that which is threatened becomes precious to us and present themselves to us as tasks as we move towards the preservation and intense appreciation of them;
• Our actions towards the preservation and realization of these values become self-sustaining actions, and
• Our lives take on a much deeper spiritual content and meaning.

The process of suffering described above is illustrated graphically in Figure 2.

Living on the dimension of meaning, we experience a sense of true destiny with peak moments of triumph and joy.

Figure 2: From pain to triumph and joy

3.3 Shame based trauma and toxic shame

I was not very far into this research journey when I realised that the topic of “shame” and “feeling embarrassed” or being “shamed” and “shunned” was very pervasive, prevalent and common to the lives of gay persons.
This triggered my search into the Logotherapy literature, seeking what I could find on “shame”. Guilt is a very well-known and well researched phenomenon in Logotherapy and celebrated in its healthy form as a spiritual faculty which stems from the conscience and serves the purpose of course correcting the individual who has acted against a value he holds dear. But “shame” was a different matter. What I found was not plentiful. The five times the word “shame” appears in Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning”, were all situations in which Frankl talks encouragingly about fellow prisoners crying, but that there was no need for shame. For example:

“But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer. Only very few realized that. Shamefacedly some confessed occasionally that they had wept, like the comrade who answered my question of how he had gotten over his oedema, by confessing, ‘I have wept it out of my system.’” (Frankl, 1984, p.99.)

I was referred to the work of a psychologist and specialist in therapy with gay men in the United States named Alan Downs by one of my research participants who strongly recommended that I read Downs’s book – “The Velvet Rage.” I thoroughly studied his book and obtained a series of lectures by Dr Alan Downs on the Internet, available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj33c40f0-c. What follows is an outline of the findings of his research and his many years of treating gay patients. His theory of shame based trauma is an illuminating addition to more fully understanding the reality of many gay men, navigating a hostile society.

3.3.1 Living with a secret

Downs opens his lecture stating the purpose for his writing the book: “When I wrote the Velvet Rage, I wanted to cut to the core, of what it is like to live with a secret – a secret that I am fundamentally unlovable, that I am fundamentally flawed!” (Downs, retrieved 14 July
Speaking as a gay man himself he relates not just from years of experience in therapy with gay men, but also from personal experience.

Downs talks about living with this fundamental defect, which must be hidden as far as possible from society, for if it were to be found out or exposed, the gay person would be rejected and not loved. He talks about an immediate urge to want to compensate for this. He emphasises that living with a secret that one is flawed, has a profound and negative impact on the individual. It makes you anxious, makes you unavailable to your own life and what it has to offer and even inhibits your relationships.

What follows are some of the questions and recurring themes his clients came up with during therapy. These were the dilemmas, the nagging questions they bore inside themselves and the yearnings they expressed.

- How do I find a lasting sense of purpose in my life?
- Why am I never really satisfied?
- When will I finally be content with my accomplishments?
- Why do I eventually get dissatisfied with almost all of my relationships?
- How do I find the courage to eventually be my own person?
- Why am I so sensitive to criticism?
- Will I ever find lasting joy and passion?

Downs argues that while there is currently no Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) category for what he calls “shame-based-trauma”, there perhaps should be, given the prevalence and devastating impact on the sufferer’s life. Condensing these questions, Downs comes up with the following criteria for “shame-based-trauma”:

1. Chronic dissatisfaction;
2. Lack of meaningful purpose and direction;
3. Hyper sensitivity to invalidation, and
4. Inability to maintain lasting, fulfilling relationships.
If we try to imagine the combination of the above criteria, it becomes apparent that the lives of these sufferers must indeed be a miserable state of being.

3.3.2 Five basic emotions

Downs works in a Dialectical Behavioural Therapy framework primarily with gay people and with people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. In order to understand the dynamics of shame, the five basic emotions and their “action urges” are discussed (Downs, retrieved on 14 July 2016). In summary, these are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic emotion</th>
<th>Action urge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Strike out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Deactivate/ seek comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Activate/ pursue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Hide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, he mentions that “love” is not a basic emotion, but that it is rather “joy” experienced in the presence of another person. There is a clear physiological change when we experience these five emotions, and all the other emotions are derivatives of these. There are also four negative emotions and only one positive emotion, namely “joy”. He claims that our emotional system is really a biological warning system that enables us to pay attention to something.

He explains that on the simplest level, emotions operate as summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Action Urge</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone says your haircut is really ugly</td>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Hide</td>
<td>Wear a hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone scratches</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Strike out</td>
<td>Yell and run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Action Urge</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your car</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>towards the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You meet a snarling dog in a driveway</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Flight</td>
<td>Run away/ stay in the car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this context, effective therapy should focus on the segment between “action urge” and behaviour. He describes mental health as individuals who are very literal about their emotions and feelings and have a great amount of self-control. They may express their feelings but not damage or hurt anyone in the process. Addicts, on the other hand, lack self-control, even though they may have insight about the debilitating consequences of their repeated actions, they feel relentlessly pulled into a vortex of repeated self-destructive behavioural patterns.

He compares emotions with taking a shot of liquor, which leads to a full system response. A shot of anger may alter your perceptions, thinking, give you tunnel vision, limit your options and physiologically bring about changes such as blood pressure, blood rushes to the face and muscles and dilated pupils. He indicates that new research shows that expressing emotions such as anger are not cathartic as was once believed, but that it increases the tendency towards anger and can be activated by thinking the event over again; and worst of all, may even exacerbate the tendency towards anger outbursts. He claims that the key to mental health is not to suppress emotions, but to increase the “contemplative moment between emotions and behaviour” (Downs, retrieved on 14 July 2016). The key is to learn to respond and not to react and to have enough time to contemplate a level headed and rational response.

The very powerful emotion; namely “shame “has the action urge to hide away and can lead to some typical behaviours:

- Lie about yourself to avoid shame;
- Avoid the person or situation that triggers your shame;
- Appear to be someone different from who you actually are or be non-authentic;
• Compartmentalise yourself, and
• Live under the radar.

When Dr Downs appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show, he was asked if gay acceptance and self-acceptance is wider now that we have “Will and Grace” on television. His response was no! – that is not so, as we are hard-wired to be like our parents, and if we fall short we are triggered to feel shame. Gay children normally have heterosexual parents and this is the first source of shame. Gay children have a unique rite of passage in their lives, and that is called “coming out”. It sets them apart from heterosexual youths and can be very traumatic [my own thoughts]. Downs describes shame as a social warning system in our emotional make-up, and maintains that we cannot socially survive with ease if we are not acceptable to others in society.

When young gay people are confronted with social rejection and the shame accompanying rejection, it is at a vulnerable age when they are unskilled to handle shame, and it leads to anxiety, fear, panic and hiding – sometimes behind false personas and sometimes for a very long time, even a lifetime.

3.3.3 Vulnerability to shame and internalisation of shame

According to Downs (retrieved on 14 July 2016), we are born with an innate vulnerability to shame as a social warning system to adapt and fit in. This is most strikingly apparent in adolescence. As children, we have few effective ways of processing shame, and when we are constantly exposed to shame, we begin to believe that we are critically flawed.

Downs argues that validation during childhood is the most effective defence against shame, and that that is why children seek it so much. The fact is that gay children often get less validation and much more criticism or interaction with them is awkwardly limited, given the fact that the parent is often also experiencing shame at what their offspring is turning out to be. He points out that the drawback is when we keep seeking validation externally and obsessively, given the fact that we have already adopted a belief that we are flawed.
Downs talks about the maturation from external validation to “self-validation” – which is very close to the understanding of “meaning” in Logotherapy. Shantall (2002, p. 19) quotes Frankl as follows: “…meaning is experienced within the context of personal ideals and values, life’s goals and purposes. Meaning is found in serving a cause, or pursuing a vocation or mission in life – endeavours that have an inspiring and uplifting effect on us.”

As we will see later on in this section, Downs does in fact understand that his term “self-validation” to be – “in a limited way” - the same as the Logotherapy understanding of “meaning”.

Downs identifies various levels of validation and invalidation. The levels of validation are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Person supports your most treasured dreams, or another person shares his vulnerability with you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>You are treated as equal, not incompetent, sub-ordinate, fragile or less than; or someone normalises your experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Another person reflects your feelings back to you in a non-judgemental way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Being noticed and listened to when you speak.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various levels of invalidation are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>Treasured dreams are made to look foolish and ridiculous, your weaknesses and vulnerabilities are highlighted; or another person or institution threatens your safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>You are treated as incompetent, fragile, less than and sub-ordinate; or you are made to feel that your experiences are not normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Others judge your feelings as insignificant, foolish or wrong; or you are never given the benefit of the doubt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>No one listens to you or tells you to be quiet; or too busy or conflicted to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Downs provides a description of an invalidating environment and categorises types of invalidating environments for children growing up. The definition is as follows: “Chronically and persistently rejecting a child’s communication of private experiences and self-generated behaviour, such as ignoring, punishing or contradicting such communications and behaviours.” (Downs, retrieved on 14 July 2016.)

He adds that there is a growing body of evidence that shame and shaming lead to emotional dysregulation in children and to psychological distress in adulthood.

The following are typically damaging environments for children and are understood to be at the root of shame-based-trauma:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invalidating environment</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The over-expected child</td>
<td>Setting the bar too high, all the time. Withholding validation is misconstrued as a motivator for the child to perform better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overlooked child</td>
<td>Children of alcoholics, depressed parents of workaholics/ ignored and neglected in terms of attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rejected child</td>
<td>You’ll never make it / You are not mine/ Not of my flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sexually shamed child</td>
<td>Gay children are shamed for involuntarily displaying non-typical gender characteristics and behaviour/ ‘sissy’ like behaviour and tomboyish behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The religiously shamed child</td>
<td>God and the Bible say you are flawed and an abomination / sinful and demon possessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The controlled child</td>
<td>Over pampered / Not allowed to make decisions and attain mastery and autonomy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4  Bradshaw’s understanding of toxic shame and dynamics of toxic shame

Another researcher and therapist who contributes much to the understanding of toxic is John Bradshaw, whose lectures on the Internet (available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnMuEX9zuEk), together with his book, “Healing the shame that binds you”, were most insightful.

Bradshaw (retrieved on 17 July 2016) maintains that: “Shame is the missing link to self-acceptance and to have shame as an identity is the belief that one is flawed and that one is defective as a human being. Once shame is transformed into an identity it becomes toxic and dehumanising.” He believes that toxic shame has a social genesis and that we become shame-based through a process of social conditioning.

Because our identities are not fully developed when we are small, we are dependent on what society reflects back to us about ourselves in order to develop an idea of who we really are.

Through negative social experiences such as abandonment, abuse, violence and incest we experience extreme shame, which in turn forms the foundation of a myriad of problems in our lives.

He groups these “problems” under the following clusters of ailments:

- Depression;
- Social anxiety;
- Aggression, and
- Addictions

Bradshaw further elaborated on Downs’s forth criterion for a diagnosis of “shame-based-trauma”, namely “…the inability to maintain lasting, fulfilling relationships…” as follows: people who have shame internalised and as an identity would suspect other people who
show an interest and a like in them, as “having bad social intuition” and if the situation continues, they might reject the source of admiration, and perhaps even love. The pain at the core of toxic shame is so excruciating that it may lead to the need of another self to protect the sufferer from its impact. This pseudo-self is inauthentic and immediately leads to a lack of spontaneity and being in immediate touch with the world around us. Distracted by the perceived crookedness of the self, the individual is left withdrawn, scared, angry, and sad, raging and hiding. The pseudo-self is either an over compensating self (super achiever) or one that is making itself even less than it could be (one that totally and utterly has given up all hope).

Bradshaw also describes shame as a primary emotion; that, if it has become toxic and forms the identity of the sufferer, it has the ability to bind to other emotions. Such a person might feel shame and guilt for being happy, as they see themselves us undeserving and a farce. He also states that shame begets more shame. Because the sufferer cowers away from a situation in shame, the feelings of shame are exacerbated. The sufferer becomes more shameful as he is now ashamed of his “giving in to shame”.

An individual who has a shame-based-identity always has a different private versus public persona. The reason for this, he argues, is that the trigger for shame is the “social eye” that will find out our secrets and will judge us as worthless. It is triggered by being “seen” as we are.

Remaining in hiding is very comforting as shame based people also feel that their deepest darkest secrets are very evident to society.

Bradshaw also compares guilt with shame as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guilt</th>
<th>Shame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I made a mistake”</td>
<td>“I am a mistake”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What I did was no good” (action or</td>
<td>“I am no good” (identity or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>)</td>
<td>self)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changeable behaviour - curable</th>
<th>Unchangeable self - doomed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The dynamics of the super achiever with a shame based self, is that they try to “heal” shame with “doing” in an obsessive way, but as with any behavioural addiction, it brings temporary relief and is no solution. Bradshaw sees the following as cover ups for shame:

- Perfectionism
- Rage
- Blaming
- Criticism
- Righteousness
- Power

Bradshaw argues that shame based personalities (those with the above mentioned characteristics) often actively “dish out shame” as well. Shame thus is handed down in the family or in society. He puts shame squarely at the root of all addictions such as sex addictions, cruising, food addictions, fantasies, spending addictions, as well as alcoholism and recreational drug addiction. Addictions as described here are defined as any pathological addiction to mood altering experiences (Bradshaw, retrieved on 17 July 2016).

Bradshaw (1988, p. 121) feels that the only way out of toxic shame is “through” it:

"Since it was personal relationships that set up our toxic shame, we need personal relationships to heal our shame. This is crucial. We must risk shame. There is no other way. Once we are in dialogue and community, we will have further repair work to do. But we can’t even begin that work until affiliative relationships are established...Because we are essentially social we cannot live happily and fulfilled without a social context. Another way to say this is that we humans have to love and be loved. We need and need to be needed. These are basic. We cannot be fully human unless these needs are met.”
Ultimately the crux of Bradshaw’s view is that healing from toxic shame entails the healing of relationships. Because the pain is the pain of shame, the impulse is to hide and be alone and isolated – free from the ever accusing social eye. But hiding can bring no healing. In order to heal, the sufferer must endure being “seen” and loved and validated, not just by others, but to be the self.

In line with Downs’s understanding of self-validation, Bradshaw argues that the sufferer must attain the five basic freedoms, which all human beings possess, namely:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom to</th>
<th>Expressing your reality</th>
<th>See it be validated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See</td>
<td>And say it</td>
<td>See your truth exist and be validated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear</td>
<td>And say it</td>
<td>See your truth exist and be validated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel</td>
<td>And say it</td>
<td>See your truth exist and be validated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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3.3.5 Down's view on developing the ability to “self-validate” and failure to do so

Downs (retrieved on 14 July 2016) sees the development of the ability to self-validate, as having its roots in parental and societal (external validation). This then develops into a greater autonomy in that the individual now feels confident and autonomous enough to make own choices about likes, dislikes, pursuits and passions and feels fine with them. The pursuits and choices bring a feeling of contentment to the individual, and in this sense I believe that he is on par with what Frankl describes as meaning, even if only in Frankl’s understanding of creative meaning.

Downs argues that the ability to self-validate is an absolute necessity for experiencing passion, purpose and contentment.
On the other hand; failure to attain that ability leads to the individual struggling with the following:

- Recurring feelings of self-doubt;
- Chronic inability to maintain feelings of satisfaction and contentment;
- Wavering and unstable sense of self-purpose and direction;
- Feeling as if you were an imposter, false or pseudo;
- Splitting – by being one way in public and another way in private, and
- Recurring need to escape pain through addictive behaviours.

Without the ability to self-validate (and in this he talks about hearing the true voice of the self), yes, in failing to hear that true guiding voice, the individual becomes vulnerable to the changing whims of the “committee in our heads”. Downs explains that there is no “chairperson” taking charge, and that we fall victim to conflicted and confused states, as rage, lusts, doubt and shame battle it out within us.

In this state of being, he identifies six ineffective coping mechanisms which he terms “deficit defences”:

- **Overcompensation** – the individual hides his feelings of inadequacy behind a mask of overachievement. Covering up a shameful self in a life where things are larger than life, fabulous, famous, and bigger and better.
- **Decompensation** – life is too painful to experience directly, so the individual opts for a life through a veil of chemical addiction, or they simply retreat into illness and a “don’t care” lifestyle.
- **Judgementalism** – the world is divided up into good and bad people. From a place of no self-esteem, others are judged so harshly as to devalue their person and their abilities.
- **Fantasy** – Living a life slightly removed from reality. “When I am successful I will no longer be shameful.” They also idealise and then devalue things and people in their
lives. An example is a person “going all out” on a diet and raving about it, but then finding fault with the doctor that developed the diet when the novelty has worn off.

- **Attack** – “I must destroy anyone who exposes my shamefulness.” Attacking when feeling judged by others. Downs feels that rage is almost always rooted in shame and feeling exposed.
- **Adopt expectations** – “If I am to be loved, I will have to adopt my dream person’s expectations of me.” It gives the person with no sense of self a feeling of momentary safety to be what someone else is expecting of him or her.

### 3.3.6 Downs’s treatment of “Shame-Based-Trauma”

Downs asks a provocative question saying: “How do we treat a person’s self, where there is no sense of self? How do you put something there, when there is really no there, there”. (Downs, retrieved on 14 July 2016.) He states that as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a disorder of fear, so shame based trauma is a disorder of shame, and thus the two must be treated profoundly differently if we are not to cause harm and damage to our clients.

Shame based trauma is not to be treated by helping the client relive his or her shame, as this revisiting of shame has debilitating and detrimental effects of the client’s self-efficacy. The path to health and recovery from shame is the birthing of a self that was in hiding. The path to follow is the path to joy he says. As the only positive emotion, “joy” is the “voice of God. It is that part of our emotional system that guides us to “where we are meant to be in our lives”, to use his words. It is as if joy, amongst all the other negative emotions is beckoning the individual to follow and pursue a path of self-discovery. It is reminiscent of Frankl’s notion of meaning setting the pace for being – beckoning from the future for us to step into a new space – and becoming in the very process something bigger than before, as noted by Shantall (2002, p.19).

However, Downs adds that joyful moments are fleeting and hard to access. He normally asks his clients to recall joyful events in their past. This is a technique not dissimilar to one used in Logotherapy to evoke in the client past meaningful experiences and waken up his or her will to meaning. This enables the client to make a choice to try out what he or she found joy
in the past; and in the process return to an engagement with the invitations and opportunities of his or her life.

Downs claims that identifying things to do in the external world that could bring joy to clients, acts as their own inner key to healing from shame and building an identity. Action is key. Healing happens in the behaviour. And it is also the genesis of self. The emotion of joy comes from an authentic experience of validation where the individual is fully engaged and present in the moment.

Downs asks the questions: “How many of us actually and skilfully populate our lives with these moments of joy? – Or do they just happen?” “Can we set up our lives in such a way that these moments occur more often?” What does not help, he argues, is to obsess about past hurts, feelings of worthlessness and harbouring anger and resentment towards those that do us injustice. These states are nothing but obstacles, keeping us disengaged from the moment, where joy potentials are to be found and lived. Negative emotions crowd out the small still voice of joy.

As a treatment practice, Downs asks his clients to go where, and pursue what, they feel will bring joy to their lives. However, more often than not the shame kicks in – “others might laugh at me – who do I think I am – I’m making myself look ridiculous!!” He then teaches his clients to ask the simple question: is what they are intending to do in violation of something they value or not? If the answer is yes – then he encourages them to back off as this is an experience of “healthy shame”, but if the answer is no, then he encourages them to push through despite the shame. “Feel the shame and do it anyway.” The end result is a diminished sense of shame, which continues to dwindle as the pursuit of joy is strengthened into passions.

He ends by saying that when we observe the way we start acting in accordance with our own passions and values and dreams, it changes not only the way we feel but also the way we think.
For the person recovering from shame based trauma, Downs warns that we are more vulnerable when we are hungry, tired, angry and lonely. He encourages self-care. He concludes by saying: “Chase your passion as if it were the last bus of the night!”

Comparing and reflecting on the work of these two people, Frankl and Downs, I am of the opinion that Downs brings much more to the understanding of the pathology that is so prevalent in gay society, whereas Frankl cuts through all that and calls the spirit of the sufferer to come out from his place of hiding and engage with his or her own life. Frankl goes further and deeper into the dimension of meaning as he not only includes joyful experiences as meaningful, but also bitter hardship. His optimism is sensed in his claim that all of life is unconditionally meaningful, depending on the attitude we adapt to it.

“Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. ‘Life’ does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life’s tasks are also very real and concrete. They form man’s destiny, which is different and unique for each individual. No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a man finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action. At other times it is more advantageous for him to make use of an opportunity for contemplation and to realize assets in this way. Sometimes man may be required simply to accept fate, to bear his cross. Every situation is distinguished by its uniqueness, and there is always only one right answer to the problem posed by the situation at hand. When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task. He will have to acknowledge the fact that even in suffering he is unique and alone in the universe. No one can relieve him of his suffering or suffer in his place. His unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden.” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 97-98.)
3.4 Conclusion

The theory of Viktor Frankl was briefly outlined as the context against which the spiritual lives of the interviewees were to be studied understood. The choice to use the logotherapy framework as a theoretical context was born from my years of experience in Logotherapy as a lecturer at UNISA. The emphasis which Logotherapy places on the spiritual dimension of being human, which entails the human ability to ‘think’, the fact that we have a ‘conscience’, our subjective experiences of ‘morals, values and right and wrong’, and the dynamics of all of the above in our lives and specifically hardships and suffering, fascinated me.

I decided to study and explore the dynamics of dealing with social suffering, setbacks and obstacles using the context of Logotherapy and augmented it with the work of Downs and Bradshaw to elucidate the etiology of socially caused toxic shame.

Having the tools to understand shame and shame-based-trauma, the focal point of this thesis was then the overcoming of that shame using the concept of Frankl’s understanding of the ‘defiant power of the human spirit’.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PARADIGM

4.1 Background: A Heuristic Study

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, I was lead to this research by a desire to explore how gay men reach heights in society despite social rejection and hardship.

While my own experiences are not the object of research in this thesis, they have also shaped my research questions to some degree. I can remember so many instances when I was a child, of my intuitively feeling that I was not a right fit for the cultural environment I was born into. That came sometimes with very much anxiety. From my childlike perspective, I knew I could never measure up to what was expected of me.

I knew my father felt uneasy about my not being “rough and tough” enough and wanted me to take up boxing. I really hated it and opted for wrestling rather. It was not so brutal, and as I was not exactly weak and developed good technique, I did well at wrestling but never enjoyed it. I was very attracted to the big guys in their wrestling suits and had fantasies about them. This very fact would also put me into a state of anxiety, as I knew this was wrong and if anyone had to find out I would die of shame, and so would my dad.

An outstanding moment was perhaps once at school. It was still in primary school when we studied an Afrikaans poem by Jan F. E Celliers, called “Trou” [Loyalty].

We had to learn it and recite it. Looking back now, I am absolutely amazed at a child’s (my) ability to intuitively grasp things for what they are, even though the child lacks the experience and linguistic ability to articulate them. Somewhere on a fuzzy, pre-verbal level I knew just how deep in trouble I was.

I heard the booming voices of my fellow male classmates almost like the cadence of a dark wild galloping animal approaching – I saw the one hundred percent identification with the content of the poem, and I felt sickening anxious nausea at the core of my being.
My English name and the fact that I had an English father were already enough to put me on the wrong side of my classmates, but my less than sporty, definitely not rough and tumble, person was often the criterion against which to match and outdo me in masculinity.

I was horrified at how teachers would agree with this element and I wondered if I was a mistake of nature. Yes, there were other boys at school who seemed more like me and even more refined, but the majority of them were rugby playing, cadets who in every aspect of their lives could identify with the poem below.

_Trou - Jan F.E. Celliers_

_Ek hou van 'n man wat sy man kan staan,_
_ek hou van 'n arm wat 'n slag kan slaan,_
_'n oog wat nie wyk, wat 'n bars kan kyk_
en 'n wil wat so vas soos 'n kliptsteen staan!

_Ek hou van 'n man wat sy moeder eer,_
in die taal uit haar vrome mond geleer,_
die verraiersgeslag in sy siel verag_
wat, haar verstotend, homself kleineer.

_Die oog wil ek sien wat 'n traan nog ween_
vir 'n helege slag, in hul rus daarheen,_
maar 'n blits van trou in die traan van rou,_
wat aan liefde weer gee wat haar bron is ontleen.

_Vir my d'Afrikaner van durf en daad,_
wat mammon's eer en loon versmaad,_
sy hoof en sy hand vir sy volk en sy land_
en 'n trap van sy voet vir laag verraad!

_O, 'k hou van 'n man wat sy man kan staan;_
_ek hou van 'n daad wat soos donder slaan,
In later conversations with gay men, we often would compare life stories, especially regarding the first time the parents officially found out, and cognitively and emotionally took hold of the information that their child is gay. This has come to be called the ‘coming out’ conversation in gay circles. The little phrase is loaded with meaning, and can be used as a noun as well as a verb. When did you have your ‘coming out’? How was your ‘coming out’? Have you still not ‘come out’ to your dad, and others?

I also feel that any gay person with the slightest degree of sensitivity would be able to gauge and discern from the reaction to this question to another gay person about his ‘coming out’, whether the conversation in that direction should be terminated or continued.

It is almost as if there is a nonverbal secret code amongst gays in this regard. There is a common understanding that certain things are painful in the lives of most gays regarding their families. We read and understand and avoid the topic and we get on with our lives. It is not uncommon to hear from gay people that they have had no contact with parents, a parent, a sibling or a whole segment of their family.

I also noticed the same types of reactions regarding the church. Given the greater distance to people in the church, typical responses to the questions of church affiliation would be negative in the sense that they avoid church, as it makes them feel bad, and choose to pray and read their Bibles in private and in the safety of their own homes.

My decision to do a proper and in-depth research into this phenomenon was triggered by a visit to an exhibition in Pretoria brought from Europe, documenting the stories, illustrated by photographs, of gay people who have suffered through history and whose stories were never told. Completely choked up with emotion and also a mixture of rage and a need to do something about the situation, I realised then that I know many people who suffer under the continuing yoke of social rejection and non-acceptance and that became a call to

(Malherbe, 1965, pp. 55-56.)
meaning for me. I could think at once of many gay men and women who live beautiful lives filled with principles and values, who serve others, are loving and helpful, and who seek to have a relationship with their Creator, but who were not granted that dignity, should they be ‘found out’ to be gay.

I use the words ‘found out’ on purpose. It has become a little phrase loaded with prejudice if carefully considered. When one is found out, it is normally in the context of having concealed something bad such as a crime, or a lie, or something devious. However, gay people and non-gay people alike use this little phrase very frequently when talking about the others learning about the fact that their sexual orientation is towards the same sex; in other words that the person is gay. So from the onset ‘being gay’ is something that is ‘found out’, like a dirty secret to be concealed. What I have found even more staggering is the fact that the overwhelming negative social narrative has indoctrinated even gays to buy into and talk about being ‘found out.’

I saw and sensed the dire need for gay role models and I wanted to find modern day gay heroes to tell their stories. I wanted to uncover the perpetrators and try to make sense of the continued injustice that gay people have to suffer.

This is a nutshell forms the immediate background to my making the decision to study a group of gay men. As a practicing Logotherapist and lecturer in the field of Logotherapy, I knew that the theoretical framework would be Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy, but the research methodology would have to afford me the freedom to explore, elucidate and soak up so to speak, the meaning which these men found in their lives, their trials and tribulations. I wanted to find out what it was that made them so exemplary in the face of the negative social background. The only methodology that could work was the Heuristic Research approach as it fits the theoretical context of Logotherapy like a glove. The meaning of these men’s lives belongs to the realm of phenomenology which had to be merged with and interpreted. The heuristic approach is thus required given the emphasis on the role of the researcher as research instrument.
4.2 Heuristic Inquiry: an internal search to know

The heuristic inquiry falls into the so-called “new paradigm research methods” and the only methodology I considered applicable as I was working within the “meaning” context. Meaning can only be thoroughly grasped within the relationship where there is intersubjective understanding. If I was going to learn anything worth reporting from the study of the lives of gay men, I would have to get into and share with them their inner worlds of meaning.

Douglas & Moustakas (1985, p. 40) gives the following definition of heuristics: “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life, through the internal pathways of self.”

It was a perfect fit for my research question, namely ‘how’ gay men managed to get to positions of status and social position and meaningful and fulfilling lives in the face of a rejecting society. I needed to tune into the lives of other gay men; find access to their deepest meanings, understanding, attitudes and experiences, and listen to the finer nuances of their lives. I needed to enter into their “worlds” in order to find the information my research was out to get. Reported speech would not do! Cold clinical observation would not do! I needed to get involved in their inner worlds, where they made sense of their lives, where attitudes and opinions were formed, where decisions were made and where inner battles were fought. I needed to learn the language of their souls in order to contribute something worth knowing about this delicate, yet enormous, task.

“Our aim is to awaken and inspire researchers to make contact with and respect their own questions and problems, to suggest a process that affirms imagination, intuition, self-reflection, and the tacit dimension as valid ways in the search for knowledge and understanding…..the researcher must remain with the search relentlessly in order to root out its meanings completely.” (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40.)

The heuristic method was the method - if any - that was going to gain me access to the inner world of other gay men. Frankl’s understanding of meaning is a very personal core
experience, perhaps, I thought, on a pre-language level. As language was the only means of communicating with other gay men and I was aware of its limitations, I set myself the task of exposing myself to as many experiences of the gay men I would canvass as my participants, as possible. I would look at photographs with them, read books they had written or books they recommended, listen to music that meant a lot to them, and try to find out what being in their shoes might have been like. I would also watch them closely and attentively and observe responses from them.

In Logotherapy we are trained to look out for what are called logo- hints and logo-moments. These can be strongly stated opinions, a change in body posture, a dream or yearning expressed, a quickening of thought and a change in tone of voice, a regret, anger or anything that may point to a meaning yearned for or a meaning frustrated or blocked. In Logotherapy we are trained to listen to and stimulate the “will to meaning” (active or frustrated) behind the problems and setbacks that are bound to beset everybody, and speak directly to the spiritual meaning core of the individual, calling them out from behind a veil of hurt and shame, to face their lives and even turn their pain into triumph. The focus is on the dignity of the human being:

“In view of the possibility of finding meaning in suffering, life's meaning is an unconditional one, at least potentially. That unconditional meaning, however, is paralleled by the unconditional value of each and every person. It is that which warrants the indelible quality of the dignity of man. Just as life remains potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable, so too does the value of each and every person stay with him or her, and it does so because it is based on the values that he or she has realized in the past.” (Frankl, 2011, p. 175.)

I would like to elaborate on the statement Frankl makes in the quotation above to illustrate the amazing energy and optimism that Logotherapy embodies. Frankl says that “life’s meaning is an unconditional one” and he used to provoke his audiences in asking them if there was anyone present who could claim that they would never fail, that they would never suffer and that they would never die. Naturally the answer from every person would have to be no, no and no again.
And these three irrevocable truths Frankl called the tragic triad of life, but he went straight on the give every reason for a tragic optimism in the face of these facts:

“In brief it means that one is, and remains, optimistic in spite of the ‘tragic triad’, as it is called in logotherapy, a triad which consists of those aspects of human existence which may be circumscribed by: (1) pain; (2) guilt; and (3) death. This chapter, in fact, raises the question, How is it possible to say yes to life in spite of all that? How, to pose the question differently, can life retain its potential meaning in spite of its tragic aspects? ... In other words, what matters is to make the best of any given situation. ‘The best’, however, is that which in Latin is called optimum - hence the reason I speak of a tragic optimism, that is, an optimism in the face of tragedy and in view of the human potential which at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action. It must be kept in mind, however, that optimism is not anything to be commanded or ordered. One cannot even force oneself to be optimistic indiscriminately, against all odds, against all hope. And what is true for hope is also true for the other two components of the triad inasmuch as faith and love cannot be commanded or ordered either. To the European, it is a characteristic of the American culture that, again and again, one is commanded and ordered to ‘be happy’. But happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to ‘be happy’. Once the reason is found, however, one becomes happy automatically. As we see, a human being is not one in pursuit of happiness but rather in search of a reason to become happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation.” (Frankl, 2011, p. 161.)

The crucial point made above by Frankl, is that even “hope” and “optimism” need reasons for them to be operant in our lives. I therefore wanted to know exactly what is was that gave gay men who had achieved such meaning and purpose in their lives the hope, courage and determination to achieve what they had; in other words, I wanted to know why they had not just capitulated, given up and died alone and abandoned as much of society would
see them do! How had they creatively turned their suffering on its head and made it serve
them?

Logotherapy views man as equipped with an inherent “will to meaning” that may find
meaning in all aspects of life. There is meaning in the bright and there is meaning in the
dark; yes, even in guilt, suffering and death. And it is with this personal and optimistic
attitude that I wanted to know more of in the orientation of high profile gay men. I wanted
to learn how each one of them had crafted and gleaned meanings in their lives, despite
setbacks and against all social odds.

In my quest to soak myself into the lives of such men, I would also visited places where they
lived, or where they had experienced key moments in their lives, very much like an
investigative journalist or a writer researching a character for a book.

This type of research; if compared to the more traditional paradigm, Douglas & Moustakas,
as cited by Shantall (2002, p. 116), noted that while empirical studies presuppose the
actuality of cause and effect – heuristic inquiry challenges the scientist to uncover and
disclose “that which is, as it is”. The object is not to look for causal relationships in heuristic
research, but to elucidate and tune in to the nuances of meaning of the phenomenon and to
explicate it as it exists in human experience. This was my aim and my mission.
From a Logotherapeutic context, I wanted to explore how gays can transcend the hurts and
pressures of societal judgementalism and find great meaning in their lives, despite their
difficulties. At the same time this is, in fact, exploring Frankl’s dictum: “Say ‘Yes!’ to life,
despite everything.”

Shantall (2002, p. 117-121) outlines an eight phase process, which she describes in her own
heuristic inquiry, into the meaning discovered in suffering by survivors of the Holocaust in
Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

She describes the following phases in the heuristic process:

- The preparatory phase: the refinement of the researcher as research instrument
• The formulation of the research question
• Eliciting the co-operation of research participants and the aid of mentors
• The heuristic interview or research session
• The time frame of heuristic research
• The study of the data: Gaining and Intuitive, Holistic Grasp
• The phase of explication
• Creative Synthesis

4.2.1 The preparatory phase: The refinement of the researcher as instrument

What is important here is to get into the theme of your research topic in a way that own thoughts reflections and ideas are stimulated, by perhaps a literary review, exposure to news articles, documentaries, movies and stories from others. The aim is to allow the “theme” to occupy the inner world of the researcher, and to monitor own thoughts and responses to it.

In my own case, as I mentioned in the introduction, I am a gay man too, so my challenge was to bracket own specific feelings and experiences – not numbing them out – but allowing them to take a back seat in order for experiences and information of the gay men whose lives I aimed to explore to enter into the foreground. I am intensely aware of diversity within the gay sub-culture, “Differences within differences”, as Nel (2005, p. 249) calls it.

I needed to make sure that my own reality as a gay man did not eclipse the inner worlds of my research participants.

During this research phase, I expanded my understanding through watching movies with a gay theme, such as “Bent”, “Brokeback Mountain”, “Eyes wide open”, “My private Idaho” and “Milk”. I monitored my characteristic responses, which I took note of and diarised. Intuitively I understood that if I was going to enter into intersubjective meaning with my research participants, I would need to know my own responses to be able to tell them apart from theirs. I needed to be open to “other”, clear of distortions and preconceptions.
Shantall (2002, p. 117) quotes Douglas and Moustakas (1985), who noted: “Deepening into a pre-reflective, more subjective dimension of knowing, the researcher draws upon perceptual powers which allows him or her to grasp beyond the known, the expected and the merely possible.”

4.2.2 The formulation of the research question

I chose the title of my research to read as follows: “A STUDY INTO THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH PROFILE GAY MEN IN SOUTH AFRICA – AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF LOGOTHERAPY” originally, and at the time my interest was basically to describe how gay men made sense of a hostile society (which was a point I was certain of). But as I immersed myself into the theme as outlined in phase one; I became compelled to widen my research question to include:

i) Is the world gay men in South Africa find themselves in hostile and unaccepting or is this just my own private perception?

ii) What did they do to overcome this?

The second point was my criterion for selecting my group of participants. I identified those gay men who had seemingly overcome all that life could throw at them and still life an exemplary and self-transcendent life of service to others and an inspiration to behold.

This was indeed for me, to quote Moustakas (1990, p.176):

“Discovering a significant problem or question that will hold the wondering gaze and passionate commitment of the researcher is the essential opening of the heuristic process. It means finding a path!”
4.2.3 Eliciting the aid of mentors

I had the invaluable luck to have as my mentor for this research paper, the person who first introduced me to Logotherapy some 15 years ago, namely, Dr Teria Shantall. I have myself been lecturing in Logotherapy for more than a decade under her guidance and mentorship. She was fortunate to light her torch from the father of Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl, himself.

Her influence on my understanding of Logotherapy has been profound and her guidance and input is always firm, crisp, clear and illuminating. It was a great honour for me to be selected as course co-ordinator and senior lecturer in her team of lecturers, when she moved to Israel, where she has started a new Logotherapy branch – a first in Israel. Due to her nurturing fountain of wisdom, my knowledge and experience in Logotherapy has never stopped growing over the past decade.

New paradigm researchers, Reason and Rowen (1981, p. 247), state in this regard: “there is always a need in research for colleagues, peers, mentors, and friends to act as enemies who can challenge and shock one out of habitual ways of thinking and experiencing.” In this, Dr Shantall thoroughly succeeded on a few occasions, but always guided into a direction that proved to yield much fruit.

4.2.4 The heuristic interview or research session

Dialogue is at the heart of the heuristic interview. A relationship of trust is a prerequisite and the style of inquiry is an informal, and an “as close to normal as possible”, discussion. I soon learnt that the best way to conduct the interview was to ask my participants to tell me their life stories as developing gay men. I needed not do much more. The conversation took on its own dynamics. When necessary, I would ask for clarification and deeper understanding. I was also aware of the fact that I needed to be present as a full person, and not as a clean clinical slate. I found at times that divulging small bits of my own life proved invaluable in their opening up on a more trusting and enthusiastic level.
Never did I feel that the participants were simply relating memories...the atmosphere was always “alive” – they were really there with me, relating and reliving parts of their private lives with me. Emotion was also never a taboo. Tears flowed, laughter echoed through the air and attitudes, and life lessons were enthusiastically and energetically spelled out to me in meticulous detail. I very often felt that my participants enjoyed the interviews. Perhaps having someone documenting their lives was validation for their lives and who they had become.

Pain was often viewed as a trusted friend, and the language used was often symbolic, metaphoric and colourful. Through these experiences I felt assured that my participants had allowed me to share in their inner world of meaning.

I truly believe that any other conventional method of research would never have afforded me the privilege of “seeing” their lives through their eyes.

4.2.5 The time frame of heuristic research

Moustakas (1990) states that heuristic research is rooted in experiential time and not clock time, and is thus fluid and works itself towards a natural closing. What is important is that a point of understanding is reached.

Looking back I can only agree with this statement. I cannot say that the length and frequency of interviews were discussed beforehand, but that I always left with an option and invitation to return for clarity and follow up interviews – until the core of the experiences were shared to satisfaction and to a place on understanding.

4.2.6 The study of the data: Gaining and Intuitive, Holistic Grasp

When I first transcribed the interviews of my participants, the result looked very much like anecdotal stories of their lives. Looking back now, I feel that perhaps the data which I had gathered was still too fresh and digestion still needed to take place. This was very much the case after the first two interviews with two different participants. I was at a loss for a while,
feeling that although they all had the elements of social rejection and overcoming, there was no strong pattern. Reading over and over again the notes of the sessions and also giving myself a break period of a week or two between listening to the recordings, the most incredible thing started happening. I started “seeing” demarcated milestones in the individual men’s lives that were completely different in content, but almost identical in nature.

I started noticing a movement from pain, rejection, shame to deep struggles and eventually rebellion, to peak experiences and breakthroughs, to victory and ending in peace and contentment. It was illuminating.

I felt that there was rhythm and rhyme to the stories. It was like a road had been taken by these men, and there were similar landmarks along their journeys. I was struck by this beautiful image that arose from my understanding of these five different men, somehow bound together by a common journey. Taylor (1990) talks in this regard about “seeing” things stand out as significant, over and above the surrounding phenomena.

Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 249), state:

“The process involved is what has been referred to as the hermeneutic circle: Instead of a single cycle of data collection there need to be multiple cycles, where the theories, concepts and categories are progressively extended and refined, differentiated and integrated. This is a rigour of clarity, accuracy and precision.”

The beauty of the process is that the researcher can go over the data again and again involving the participants for fuller clarity until the process is fully grasped.

4.2.7 The phase of explication

It soon became clear to me that the process was one of victory over suffering, but that was no surprise to me as it was part and parcel of my original research idea. The unexpected
parts that did clearly emerge were the concepts of anger and shame which were now presenting themselves to me very clearly.

Once I had been “alerted” to the concept of shame, and my discussions with participants started moving in that direction, another concept opened up to me: there were nuances of “shame”, “rage” and “loneliness” in all the participants’ stories.

The process of overcoming was then pieced together. I matched the experiences of the different participants and saw astounding results. To quote Moustakas (1990, p. 185): “When the individual depictions are put together to form a composite depiction, the composite depiction should be vivid, accurate, alive, and clear, and should encompass the core qualities and themes inherent in the experience.”

The themes that emerged from this phase of explication will be discussed in the later and appropriate section that can be seen as the last phase of heuristic research, namely, to conclude the research findings in the form of a creative synthesis.

4.3 Conclusion

The characteristics and the different phases of the heuristic method of research and inquiry were discussed.

This was an important chapter as the heuristic method is unique in many ways, and a departure from more traditional and conventional methods of research.

The perfect ‘fit’ between the heuristic method of inquiry and the meaning oriented content of this thesis was also discussed. This was substantiated in the focus and intention of this thesis namely to reveal and describe the subjective experiences of gay men in a hostile social environment.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 New paradigm research

The idea and interest for this study arose, as I have mentioned, out of personal experiences as a gay person in South Africa. I was questioning my own experiences, and I now wanted to explore, in a phenomenological research way, the life experiences of exemplary gays in South Africa.

Many times over did I experience the rage and anger, the disappointments and the abandonment in my own being from what I could only describe as an ignorant and unfeeling society. I had developed a so-called “thick skin”, and I had carved out for myself a real place in this world. But at some level, I had always felt that I was one of those people who at first had to “tap myself on the back” and praise myself, as very few others would do it.

With the discovery of Logotherapy more than sixteen years ago, I was engrossed by the clarity and precision with which Frankl described ‘my life’ sentence after sentence. I started looking at my life as a triumph and a victory as I truly had very few backing me. I was never beaten or insulted or hated (that I know of), but as soon as my gay identity was known to people in society, I was definitely marginalised and ignored, and it was as if I could sometimes hear my values and their perception of me “crash”, just like a personal “Wall Street”. Investing in me would immediately be deemed worthless and risky. I became transparent. Tolerated!

Looking around me, I saw a gay society grappling with the same things I was, and we sorely lacked strong and positive role models. I started finding them in the oddest places. More and more gay men who were real anchors in society were starting to declare their sexual orientation. They were coming out and it was exhilarated. I felt like I was one of them – I wanted to know them or know about them. I was never one for self-pity and felt that I soon learnt that I chose things in my life, and that society does not define me. But pain remains pain. I intuitively knew, or felt that if I grew a “thicker skin”, I would be blocking out the beauty of life as well. There was plenty of that too.
Then after almost a decade of being a lecturer at UNISA in Logotherapy under the guiding supervision of my mentor, I finally decided to start a research into the question that had always fascinated me: how did the strong characters and the winners in gay society get to where they are, and how did the journey feel and unfold?

Just one sentence from Moustakas (1990) was enough to convince me that no other research methodology would do or could capture that what I wanted to illuminate for myself, firstly, and secondly for the scientific community.

“The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries.” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 2.)

Not only the essence of my research participants’ experiences and their emerging meanings, but also valuable personal and deeper knowledge, would have to be described or the scientific community. My involvement would have to be “up front and personal”.

Quantitative research methodologies for all the good purposes they serve could simply not capture and describe nuance of “a meaning”. Facts and figures make statements for sure and they are worthwhile indicators, but they would never resonate in my own soul as would a life experience shared and grasped in its full volume and dignity. The “person” of the research participant could easily be overlooked by old paradigm research approaches.

So, as discussed in the previous chapter, the heuristic research methodology was tailor-made for my type of research. To quote again Douglas & Moustakas (1985, p. 40): “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life, through the internal pathways of self.”
I felt personally drawn to make sense of other people in my subculture, and to dedicate time and effort to the understanding of gay men and their struggles. And— as to the quote above about a growing self-awareness and self-knowledge—it is a fact I bear witness to.

5.2 The research intent

The research intent is simply stated “to have the unusual, not properly researched area of the spiritual development of gay men, highlighted and described”. I had read many biographies of people and they always intrigued me. But “conversations” with people have always been my passion. Even as a young person, I used to love finding mature older people to tell me their stories. They were always amazed at how many questions I asked. I have felt that lives are unwritten books, which are only available through inquiry and with special permission. Once you enter into this world you can never undo it. You are changed, educated and enriched.

My own experiences growing up in South Africa as a gay man, my experiences and conversations with other gay men, as well as my observations in the South African gay community, brought me to the conclusion that we do not enjoy benefits that heterosexual men and woman enjoy, growing up in a society which upholds their norms and values. My studies and many years of lecturing in Logotherapy brought the realisation that we as gay men, more often than not, go through a very tough development, fraught with rejection, shame, fear, doubt, secrets and hiding. These were my personal observations and feelings and have no claim to scientific fact.

But I also observed a minority of gay men, who seemed to muster the power to transcend and transform all these societal handicaps into a genuine service to their fellow sufferers. As a Logotherapist, I started comparing their lives to that which Frankl called “exemplary sufferers”. I discovered that there existed real life gay heroes, who managed to hold up a torch for other gay men and women. They served and inspired and brought much needed healing as positive social examples from our own community.
I wanted to explore and find out what it was that gave them the strength and the tenacity, the courage and the humility to overcome and not to succumb, to serve and not to dwell on self-pity and hide in shame. This is what Frankl calls the “defiant human spirit”.

Logotherapy is solidly based on the human capacity to think. As spiritual beings we are capable of putting a distance between ourselves and our world. We can exercise the defiant power and act contrary to what circumstances or instincts dictate. We can laugh at our fears. We can get in touch with our will to meaning and ask ourselves “What do I really want?” In inner dialogue the human being can ask himself; “What is it that I want? Then why am I not there in pursuit and in commitment to it? What is it that I don’t want? Why am I not rejecting it? What is fair? What is beautiful and just? Why am I not populating my world with THAT? Who has bound and gagged me? Is this true, or are these shackled shameful lies about myself, which I have opened up to in a weak moment? How do I cleanse myself of this ‘cancer’ of all that is true, beautiful and just?

Tragedy and suffering can be changed into a triumph of the human spirit. Not only is it possible to self-transcend but the choice remains to turn suffering on its head: to make it serve us instead of victimize us. We can grow through suffering through the heroic and dignified choices we make in the face of any tragic situation, e.g. the discrimination suffered by gay men from the self-righteous and hetero-centric society.

In choosing to follow a qualitative and phenomenological research methodology, I wanted to ensure that the meaningful essence of these men’s lives was described. What I was after was the “Eureka!” or the “Aha!” as Moustakas (1990, p. 2) put it, relating to Archimedes and one of his discoveries.

“The cousin word of heuristics is eureka, exemplified by the Greek mathematician Archimedes’ discovery of a principle of buoyancy. While taking a bath, he experienced a sudden, striking realization—the ‘aha’ phenomenon—and ran naked through the streets shouting ‘eureka!’ The process of discovery leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human phenomena, but also to realizations relevant to their own experiences and lives.”
I felt that the “aha” could not be found in listing a number of rejections gay persons had experienced, but in how they experienced them, what it felt like, how they started viewing themselves as a result of and what they felt was to be done about it. I could not get results from binning unique experiences in boxes; I would have to use their language, hear their voices, visit places and fill up with experiences relating to them.

This is the new paradigm research I chose and followed.

5.3 Choosing five gay men as research participants

I want to be clear that I do not claim to be researching phenomena which apply to the entire LGBTI community. That would be presumptuous and even absurd, as the differences between the groups clustered under what is called the LGBTI community are so vast.

In honesty I feel that I would be doing Bisexual individuals, Lesbians, Transgender people and Intersex people a disservice by implying that this research and its findings could be generalised to their sub groupings. It is very likely that there will be overlap, but many further studies in the heuristic research tradition would need to be done, to compare the realities of these groups.

I feel that the two factors that do in fact justify grouping LGBTI people together, are firstly our variance from the heterosexual population respectively, in our sexual expression; and secondly the rejection of that difference by mainstream society. If I am to describe the inner “meanings” of gay men, then it follows that part of the research participant’s reality and self-understanding, must be that of a gay man. The fact that he is male in a patriarchal society and goes against gender prescriptions in the South African society means something very unique and different from that of members of the other groupings which make up LGBTI people.

My target group was thus gay men. I wanted to find gay men who had done something unusual, or served as an inspiration to others in the way they conducted their lives and had
shown spiritual strength and defiance in their area of influence. Before I introduce the research participants with regard to confidentiality; it needs to be clarified that I have the consent of each of the men to use their stories as well as use their real names. Below I provide the reasons I chose these men and sketch the very deep and unique impressions they have left on me.

- When I read the book “Moffie” the story of a young South African gay man, and his touching journey as he tried to navigate the perils of a hostile society, and the South African Defence Force of Apartheid South Africa I knew that I wanted him to tell the story behind the story in his book. I contacted Andre Carl Van Der Merwe via a friend of mine and was pleasantly surprised when he agreed to interviews with me.

- Gerhard Pienaar, close and well known to me, has always inspired me by his unfailing smile and optimism, his genuine inner strength and ability to adapt and bend like the reed in the wind, yet always bounce back and remain intact, which often make him seem strangely detached; but once one knows him one realises that, this is his way of celebrating his “hard fought for” inner self, while respecting those he encounters together with their differences. I chose him not only for his position in the diplomatic circles, but also for his enormous strength shown as a deacon in his church, at the very heart of this traditionally most condemning segment of society. Like Andre Carl, his story was riveting, and remains a source of inspiration for me.

- Andre Muller has become a household name in Pretoria Gay circles. He is the pastor the church didn’t want. Deemed unfit he was released from his position as Dutch Reformed pastor for being gay. Society was ready to crush his dream and his vocation which went back to his boyhood, when he discovered his love for God and the church. As a small boy standing on a cut off tree trunk, he would preach God’s Word to the other cut off tree trunks, with fervour and passion. I too belonged to Andre’s congregation in Pretoria; a gay friendly church where many have healed wounds of spiritual violence. He intrigues as a beautiful blend of genuine humility and fearless gay activism in a pacifist kind of way. He married the first lesbian couple in South Africa. I wanted to hear and tell his story and he obliged.
• **Marius Oelschig**’s presence is immediately felt when he enters a room. He is a skinny tall man with a bass voice, which he uses optimally as part of a chamber choir. His sense of humour is sharp as is his intellect. I once described him to a friend as having only one defect, namely that he cannot read. He cannot read the societal signs that spell out – “gays not welcome!” Obstinately defiant he joined the Permanent Air Force back in the time when gays were not allowed to join permanent force. This he did in ambitious pursuit of a career as an air traffic controller. This seed had been planted one evening during a storm, when his portable radio picked up the cockpit to tower communications for a few minutes. Marius graduated that evening as an air traffic controller. In his mind it was just a matter of time and formalities before it would finally happen. His unflinching belief in himself and his ambition stand in stark contrast to his tender love for his pugs and also for his partner. I enjoyed the interviews with him tremendously.

• **Justice Edwin Cameron** was a key note speaker at an exhibition at the Apartheid Museum one afternoon, dealing with gay people and their faith. It was a spur of the moment decision to ask him if he would be willing to be interviewed by me. I did not have the courage at first and hovered around the exit of the museum in an attempt to get him alone when he left. My strategy proved fruitful. He was strong yet courteous and asked me to mail him details of what it was exactly that I wanted from him. In my email I explained that he would be part of a qualitative research on high performing gay men in South Africa and I added a brief sketch of Logotherapy and its optimistic tenets. He wrote back saying that it sounded interesting and offered a time for an appointment. There in his office at the court on Constitution Hill I spent very memorable hours of this research journey. He’s impression on me was a blend of his very sharp intellect, his eloquence, his personal strength and his openness and approachability all in one. He works extremely hard and he kept strictly to our time limits. I transcribed the entire interview with him verbatim, given the fact that it was so eloquent and densely packed with information and depth and carefully reflected thoughts. Transcribing the interview, I also realised that I was quite incapable of taking in everything he said during the interview. I knew at once that I was dealing
with a man who had suffered much in his life, but had reached a place of peace in his life. He demands respect through his persona yet simultaneously treated me as a respected somebody, who had at least partial understanding for what and who he was as well as the journey he, had walked in his life. His parting words to me were always – “Keep up the good work!” My short time with Judge Cameron will always be treasured moments to reflect on.

The connections had been made and the research was well on its way. I tried to take in as much of these men’s stories and make them my own. I visited places they had been to and that they told me about or wrote about. I was grateful and honoured that they had allowed me to visit with them their inner private lives.

I needed an open spirit, a keen ear, a delicate research tool and a quickened intellect to record and process these men’s stories.

“As from the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem, or question, I enter into it fully. I focus on it with unwavering attention and interest. I search introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively into its nature and meaning. My primary task is to recognize whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then to dwell on its nature and possible meanings. With full and unqualified interest, I am determined to extend my understanding and knowledge of an experience. I begin the heuristic investigation with my own self-awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until an essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience.” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 3.)

As a trained Logotherapist and lecturer in Logotherapy I have become accustomed to listening to the inner nuances of meaning in both clients, as well as students at university, and the heuristic style of inquiry is second nature to me. Free from dogged referencing in
every instance, true artworks of meanings can emerge. In a strange way, the sources in heuristic inquiry are both the investigator as well as that which is being investigated.

“The heuristic process challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and intuitions; to accept as authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic, question, problem, or puzzlement.” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 5.)

5.4 Arranging the interviews

I spontaneously asked my participants if they would be willing to participate in a research into the spiritual development of high profile gay men.

An informal discussion would ensue, in which I could state what my interest was. I explained this as being threefold. I wanted to compare my own experiences with those of other gay men and learn in the process. I wanted to tell their stories, as I felt theirs were stories that could contribute to the present day history as it is being written of the South African gay subculture. Finally, I felt that what I already knew of them was inspiring and constituted something for which there is a dire need in the South African gay culture.

Once they agreed, we would set up an appointment. I normally asked for two or three appointments to record and transcribe their stories. Follow-up conversations on specific points would be done on the telephone. Even WhatsApp messages were used. Marius liked that kind of communication. I would ask him a question, or ask for clarity in a specific area, and he would normally say: “Ok give me some time to think it over and I will get back to you when I have mulled it over.” Many of his WhatsApp messages were used in this paper verbatim. They convey his wit, his attitude as well as his freedom and natural unproblematic being.

I would visit them at their homes or at their churches or places of work for the recorded interviews. I preferred visiting them in their own environments as it enabled me an insight into the way they arrange and create their living spaces.
I asked often if I could leave the ending as an open end, until I had a clear picture.
I also read whatever I could find about and by the participants. I visited many of Gerhard’s choir concerts and visited Kuruman, his place of birth with him. I even sat in the judge’s chairs at the Constitutional Court and imagined what immense authority and responsibility Judge Cameron carries on his shoulders. I could compare it with the run down Rebecca Street where he lived as a child in Pretoria West. Incidentally, the school where I also teach is located in Rebecca Street.

I listened to tender sermons by Andre Muller and wondered about the wounds the words of another pastor must have made in his soul when he was rejected in the Dutch Reformed Church.

We made arrangements before visits to view photographs. In a very real sense we became, respectfully, spiritually intimate during those months of research.

5.5 In-depth interviews as vehicles to real life-worlds of my research participants

The typical way of gathering material in heuristic investigations is through extended interviews, which would best serve the purposes of my research. I needed to be given access to the real-life worlds of my participants, their most intimate experiences and their inner thoughts and feelings. These phenomena, if I wanted to grasp, understand and depict them in stories of subjective meanings of these men, could only be accessed in this manner.

Old paradigm thinking and methods would fail me in my quest for understanding and describing subjective realities such as the spiritual aspects of human nature: man’s higher strivings for meaning in life, his will to meaning and freedom of will, his frustrations, his anger and also his defiance and his victory.
I wanted to find out and understand what it was like to develop as a gay man who broke through to spiritual victory and live by the standards of higher levels of being where personal integrity and personal responsibility hold sway.

Moustakas (1990, p. 9) cites Patton (1980, pp. 197-198) who present three basic interviewing approaches that are employed in collecting qualitative data appropriate for heuristic research, namely the “informal conversational interview”, the “general interview guide” that outlines a set of questions and issues to be explored and the “standardised open-ended interview” of carefully worded questions that each participants would answer. Moustakas (1990, p. 10) mentions that the “conversational interview” is most clearly consistent with the rhythm and flow of heuristic exploration and search for meaning. It also encourages expression, elucidation and disclosure of the investigated phenomenon.

Jourard (1968) also quoted by Moustakas (1990, p. 10) has found that self-disclosure elicits disclosure, and that it is part of the heuristic interview for the primary investigator to (at the appropriate times) share an experience to inspire and evoke the fuller, richer and more comprehensive responses. Jourard (1968) sees this process as a “mutual unveiling which seeks to be experienced and confirmed by the other”.

Moustakas (1990, pp. 10-11) lists the following questions which the primary researcher might ask about the co-researcher:

- What does this person know about the experience being studied?
- What qualities or dimensions of the experience stand out for the person? What examples are vivid and alive?
- What events people and experiences are connected with the experience?
- What feelings and thoughts are generated by the experience?
- What bodily states or shifts on bodily presence occur in the experience?
- What time and space factors affect the person’s awareness of the meaning of the experience?
- Has the person shared all the significant ingredients or constituents of the experience?
Moustakas (1990, p. 11) cites Weber (1986, p. 68) who emphasises (and which epitomises my own experiences during this research) that the heuristic researcher is ‘affected’ by the process of heuristic research:

“*We cannot and should not be unaffected by what is said, unless of course we are either not listening or are simply denying what we feel under the false and smug cloak of scientific objectivity... On the contrary it is only in relating to the other as one human being to another that interviewing is really possible... when the interviewer and the participant are both caught up in the phenomenon being discussed.*”

Throughout the process I felt a ‘freshness’ and ‘aliveness’ of the data that we discovered through the interviews, and I became aware of the ‘sacredness’ – in a sense – of the moments with the clients and the total ‘dignity’ of their persons as they shared with me real human experiences from their lives.

Moustakas (1990, p. 11) mentions that it is correct heuristic research to give depictions of the stories in the form of:

- Stories;
- Examples;
- Conversations;
- Metaphors, and
- Analogies

He also states that interviews may be supplemented with diaries, journals, logs, poetry, and artwork, which all offer additional meaning and depth to the data discovered.
5.6 The question of reliability and validity of this type of research

Bridgman (1950, p. 50) cited in Moustakas (1990, p. 17) emphasises the subjective bases of validation, the dependence of validity on the judgement and interpretation of the researcher:

“The process that I want to call scientific is a process that involves the continual apprehension of meaning, the constant appraisal of significance, accompanied by a running act of checking to be sure that I am doing what I want to do, and of judging correctness and incorrectness. This checking and judging and accepting that together they constitute understanding are done by me and can be done for me by no one else. They are as private as my toothache, and without them science is dead.”

Going back to the outset and intention of this research paper, namely to find and describe the meaning that gay men in South Africa have found in a world that is homophobic and poses a challenge to them, is a subjective story. The validity in this research must therefore be an accurate depiction of these experiences and meanings on the individual level as well as on the collective level. The individual depictions in rhyming with other individual depictions finally harmonise into the composite depiction of gay experiences in a homophobic world.

The process of heuristic inquiry is thus a process from initial formulation of the question, the incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis of the findings, distilling out the essence and accurately depicting and describing the experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17).

After the many months of listening to their recordings, follow up phone calls, emails and WhatsApp messages, and hours and hours of thinking of nothing else but their stories and experiences, I am confident that my composite depictions of the themes that emerges are real, truthful and honest. I believe that they are a true reflection of phases and experiences in all gay people’s lives, also because I have randomly read and discussed my findings with other gay men. They agreed without hesitation and identified immediately with what I
shared with them. It was also exciting to hear from them, that I had given words to processes that they were aware of but had not been articulated.

In that sense I am confident that the findings in this paper are valid and true as from the real life accounts of these five gay men.

Frankl beautifully describes the inadequacy of “scientific detachment” and of “dry theory” to convey “live” and subjective meaning from the core of a spiritual being. Before he published his book “Man’s Search for Meaning” he struggled with the old paradigm requirements of “scientific detachment” in portraying and reporting on the experiences of prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps of World War II.

In describing his predicament, Frankl makes a very beautiful argument for the validity of Heuristic Inquiry as a quest for valid and necessary meaning that can expand and enrich understanding in the reader.

“To attempt a methodical presentation of the subject is very difficult, as psychology requires a certain scientific detachment. But does a man who makes his observations while he himself is a prisoner possess the necessary detachment? Such detachment is granted to the outsider, but he is too far removed to make any statements of real value. Only the man inside knows. His judgments may not be objective; his evaluations may be out of proportion. This is inevitable. An attempt must be made to avoid any personal bias, and that is the real difficulty of a book of this kind. At times it will be necessary to have the courage to tell of very intimate experiences. I had intended to write this book anonymously, using my prison number only. But when the manuscript was completed, I saw that as an anonymous publication it would lose half its value, and that I must have the courage to state my convictions openly. I therefore refrained from deleting any of the passages, in spite of an intense dislike of exhibitionism. I shall leave it to others to distil the contents of this book into dry theories.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 24.)

However, after reading the book “Man’s Search for Meaning”, the reader is touched and deeply moved, by the accounts and experiences Frankl and other prisoners had and
survived. It is only via the real meaning and its accurate depiction that the reader can gain access to and gain understanding. This is the power and the validity of heuristic inquiry. In this sense again, I feel that the findings in this paper have validity in contributing to the understanding so lacking in the world about the lives of gays.

5.7 Conclusion

The reasons for choosing the ‘heuristic inquiry’ as my research paradigm were discussed. If the starting point to this research was a question ‘whether my own experiences and hardships as a gay man growing up in a homophobic society were unique, or whether they bore resemblance to the experiences of other gay men in South Africa’, the heuristic method of inquiry proved itself to be ideal.

The practical steps taken to make this a reality, such as the arranging and conducting of the interviews, the reliability and validity of this form of research and the process involved in selecting the participants were discussed.
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

6.1 The personal life stories of high profile gays

As already discussed, the heuristic interview was my vehicle into the real life experiences of my participants.

During the interviews I was guided by the questions Moustakas (1990, pp. 10-11) lists, which the primary researcher might ask about the co-researcher.

- What does this person know about the experience being studied?
- What qualities or dimensions of the experience stand out for the person and what examples are vivid and alive?
- What events people and experiences are connected with the experience?
- What feelings and thoughts are generated by the experience?
- What bodily states or shifts on bodily presence occur in the experience?
- What time and space factors affect the person’s awareness of the meaning of the experience?
- Has the person shared all the significant ingredients or constituents of the experience?

Moustakas (1990, p. 11) cites Weber (1986, p. 68) who emphasises that the heuristic researcher is ‘affected’ by the process of heuristic research. I could totally identify with this statement as I was deeply affected by the stories of these men. I started seeing them as co-sufferers in a common story - global drama where the conflict was between the understandings of mainstream society of ‘what normal and acceptable was’ and what these men were. It became clear to me on one level, that the crime of these gay men often had nothing to do with their ‘doing’ but with their ‘being’!
6.1.1 Andre Carl van der Merwe

After reading the book Moffie by Andre Carl Van Der Merwe, I was raging inside once again. I was raging at the injustice and cruelty that gay men had to suffer at the hands of an ignorant society that was neither equipped to think properly about this minority group, nor did they seem willing to find out about gay sexual orientation. I just needed to tell the story of the man behind the book that captivated and brought healing through understanding to so many South Africans, and perhaps to many more people around the world, as the book has been translated into many languages. The interview with Andre Carl used his book as a departure point. He agreed that the story of the main character in the book is really his own story. For this reason the interview with Andre Carl does not follow a chronological order, but jumps in at the age of fourteen, when the main character in his book suffered a major crisis and he relates to me that this was also the case in his own life. A deeper understanding of Andre Carl’s interview would be gained by reading his book as well.

6.1.1.1 Early years

Andre Carl describes his years around thirteen and fourteen as the most difficult of his life, in that those were the years when he had to come to terms with the fact that he is gay. Simultaneously, he was going through a powerful spiritual awakening on which he later elaborates.

His father was in the Dutch Reformed Church and his mother Catholic. He became a reborn Christian at school and had conflicting emotions and ideas about how evil and sinful he was. The inner turmoil was so engulfing and perplexing that he failed one year at school. He mentions that, in his family that was simply unacceptable.

He explains that this period was worse than anything he subsequently had to go through, including the army and everything after that. Looking back, he feels that he had probably suffered a nervous breakdown during this time. It was impossible for him to sleep peacefully at night and during these long nights, fraught with anxiety, he worried and imagined being condemned to hell, because he was “evil” and was “demon possessed”. He considered homosexuality to be more sinful that any other sin.
At the same time he had to be honest with himself and couldn’t deny the fact that he was gay. Andre Carl explains that he knew he was gay since the very early age of six, but that during puberty things came to a head.

He feels that at this point of his life; the sexual awakening of puberty together with the spiritual awareness rendered his mind and his body a battleground of two conflicting and irreconcilable realities – his awakened carnal lust and his religious convictions were involved in a head-on collision.

Reflecting on that period, he feels that the fact that he is creative and sensitive led to this inner conflict being experienced more acutely, resulting in – as he expressed it - the hardest period of his life.

6.1.1.2 The brother

Andre Carl describes his brother, two years younger than him, as the perfect child, being a top performer, not just academically but also in sport. He describes his brother also as a very ‘good guy’ and most probably the total opposite of himself. Andre Carl uses adjectives and phrases to describe his brother such as “amicable”, “a model student”, “excellent at tennis” and “an excellent business man”.

He reflects and expresses the difficulty he experienced with having a younger brother who was in actual fact much like a third parent to him, in that his brother modelled to him what would be good and acceptable in the eyes of his parents.

He turns his attention to the character “Nicholas” in his book “Moffie” and acknowledges that this character in fact possesses many of the characteristics which Andre Carl himself has, such as his rebellious and stubborn or obstinate traits.

He responds with a resounding ‘NO!’ to my question on whether he regrets anything in his life. He feels that his book has helped a lot of people as he has come to learn through the
numerous letters and mail he has received over the years. Regarding the army, he feels that it did serve a purpose in his life, although he can only retrospectively acknowledges this as he did not see the point of it at the time.

Since then, Andre Carl has appeared on television and on radio for interviews, his book has become a prescribed book at University of Cape Town for two courses and it has been published in Canada and the USA. It is currently being translated into Italian.

He continues his reflection of this period in his life, stating that writing his book has been the most rewarding thing he has ever done in his life. He knows in his heart that his army experience happened to him in order to help others. He feels that parents, children and even the Deputy President of the country have responded to him in the most positive ways, thanking him for this book.

Andre Carl related an incredible story. One day he received an email via his publishers from the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of 1 Military Hospital where the infamous “Ward 22” was. The RSM had already retired from his position, but was so moved by the book “Moffie” that he felt compelled to write the email to him. The RSM explained that he had never told or admitted to anyone that he was himself gay and that he had himself committed atrocities to protect his own identity as a gay man while in his position in 1 Military Hospital. The RSM admits to having tortured gay men during this period and he feels that that is something that he would have to live with. Nevertheless, he also felt that he needed to open up and confess this to Andre Carl.

Andre Carl continues that this kind of response was in no way unusual and that he has received many letters from married men who are gay, elaborating their circumstances to him. He says he even received a suicide note from a small holding in Gauteng saying that the writer of the note was in doubt whether he could return home that evening. The note had no return address.

However, the majority of his mail has been an avalanche of notes and letters from parents and kids stating gratitude for the sensitively written book. Andre Carl feels that he has just
been incredibly blessed by this experience in his life, which he has been able to turn into a blessing for others. This is especially important as he was not encouraged by anyone else to write down his experiences, but that it was an authentic impulse and desire.

He was looking through his diaries and the work he had done with “Koevoet”, a special unit on the border of South Africa, and he again realised that he simply had to write this book. As a born writer, Andre Carl always kept diaries. He had written two suitcases full of diaries during his time in the South African Defence Force, but it had taken him twenty years to feel ready to open those suitcases and reread the diaries.

Andre Carl takes some time when he reflects on the experiences that washed through him when he did eventually start reading his writings. He repeats a few times the feelings of stunned disbelief at the fact that he had never spoken about what happened and what he and his fellow soldiers had gone through on the border and the war that was raging there then. He describes the emotion that accompanied that as “overwhelming”. He feels that people in general protect themselves from re-experiencing or even remembering such experiences. He repeats that he does not delve into those memories of traumatic events and hardships suffered on the border but that he was himself astounded at just how intense these events were especially during the first year of his army service.

He did not suffer any depression and moved on to the second year of his army life much easier as he spent that in art school. He sighs with relief as he explains just how different this second year was.

6.1.1.3 Ward 22 revisited

The interview now moves back to the experiences in Ward 22 and subsequent news headlines that have been disclosed since the years when South Africa was in the grips of the war on the South West African borders with Angola’s South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO).
I ask about the authenticity of the incidents and scenes described in his book, such as gay boys being put into cooler rooms with body parts and the beating of gays by a professional boxer named ‘Charlie Weir’ for the entertainment of the Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and the officers at 1 Military Hospital. He confirms that this has subsequently been confirmed via many sources.

The conversation moves to an infamous character active during the South African conscription years, “Dr Shock”, a named coined by the media for Dr Aubrey Levin, the chief psychiatrist at the Voortrekkerhoogte military hospital during the 1970’s. Levin was a key figure in the Aversion Project (online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Aversion_Project quoting McGreal (2000), retrieved 23 August 2015):

“Between 1971 and 1989, victims were submitted to chemical castration and electric shock treatment meant to cure them of their homosexuality. Electrodes were strapped to the upper arm with wires, then run through a dial calibrated from 1 to 10, varying the current. Homosexual soldiers were shown pictures of a naked man and were encouraged to fantasize, at which a point the person-in-charge would administer a shock if the soldiers showed any form of sexual response and voltage was increased throughout the treatment if the soldiers continued to exhibit sexual responses.

Levin claimed the same procedure could cure other groups. These included drug addicts (mostly men caught smoking marijuana) and the disturbed (those who did not want to serve in the apartheid military).

Project staff would force a sex change operation on those for whom the procedure failed and fake victims’ birth certificates. As many as 900 homosexuals, mostly 16–24 year-old who had been drafted, were surgically turned into women and given birth certificates to fit their modified anatomy. The reassignments were often incomplete, as victims typically lacked the means to pay for the expensive hormones needed to maintain their new identities.”
“Dr Shock” received much attention in the media many years later when his past was uncovered and he was already living and practicing in Canada. He moved there after the years of border conflict had come to an end and was employed in Calgary, Canada, as a psychiatrist and state witness in the Canadian court system (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aubrey_Levin, retrieved 23 August 2015.) Levin is today listed as a convicted sex offender in Canada after he was found guilty of sexual assault on male patients.

6.1.1.4 Reconciliation with his father

Andre Carl’s relations with his farther had deteriorated to a point where he lost all respect for his father and decided to live his own life, the detail of which will become apparent later in the interview.

When I ask Andre Carl during one of our interviews just when he actually could become reconciled with his dad he laughs and says:

“Reconciliation is a big word and it conjures up the idea that everything is all right. It is a slow process. I have made a conscious decision to carve out a relationship with my father. I tolerate, accept and forgive a lot regarding my dad.”

He hardly sees his dad, however, who lives in Stellenbosch, but he calls him once a week. His mother passed away in 2009 and his father now has a partner.

Andre Carl relates that just after reading the book “Moffie”, his father called him and asked to see him without his mother present. He had discussed the book with his father and had explained that it was going to be a novel and that his father might recognise himself in it, but that it would have been impossible to write a South African novel set in the 60s and the 70s with a gay main character, without describing a dysfunctional relationship between the son and the father.
Andre Carl describes his father’s mood during this conversation as “sullen and even down” during the visit, but that his father managed to give him a compliment in that he said the book was “very well written”. His father said that he did not like the ending of the book, given its sexual content. But father and son were able to discuss this very difficult topic.

Andre Carl does however make a very heartfelt statement: “During the visit, my father told me that he felt I described our relationship accurately in my book. I feel that this in some way was an admission of guilt.”

Andre Carl’s father explained some aspects of his own childhood during this conversation. His father had grown up in a strictly Calvinistic-principled town in the Karoo where even the word “underpants” would never be used. His father explained that in terms of his upbringing there was an expectation that the child would be like the parent– if a child was not the way the parent was, it was considered being disobedient.

Andre Carl emphasises that he in all honesty has no anger towards his father, although he had a lot of anger in the past. He feels that since “Moffie” was published, and even during the process of writing the book, he stopped letting his father “get to him”. Andre Carl feels that, since the abuse he suffered from his father was mostly mental and emotional in nature, he had developed the skill to simply not allow his father to “push his buttons”.

6.1.1.5 Full circle

Andre Carl thinks back to 1980 when he was called up to the army and had to report to the Kasteel (the “Castle of Good Hope”) in Cape Town. He recalls how it was then still being used as the military headquarters, with Mr Magnus Malan and the like operating from within its walls. Andre Carl relates with a sense of spiritual victory how twenty six years later his book “Moffie” was launched in the very same room from where the reigns of tyranny against gays in the SADF were held.
The day that he had to report for duty at the Kasteel marked the beginning of the second most traumatic journey of his life – second only to the inner battle which raged during his teenage years at school – between the physical and the religious at the time, his convictions and his beliefs. He can thus not miss the irony that the very same building and room would 26 years later be the setting of his own personal and spiritual victory.

In conclusion to an early interview we discuss the principles of Logotherapy and the application to our work together, namely that we want to uncover the many silent and often cruel struggles which gay men in South Africa have to face. Andre Carl expresses his concern for the gay community of South Africa and their tendency towards a very day-to-day hedonistic and over-eroticised lifestyle. We discuss the possibility of it being a manifestation of perhaps personal, social and even spiritual despair in a world which does not often have a “Yes” for its gay population.

Andre Carl makes specific reference to the issues of cruel using and abusing of people by people, the planet and how it is being abused, as well as the explosion in drug addiction and HIV/AIDS in South Africa. He expresses concern for the ever more and in-your-face addiction to sex and material possessions. In this context he talks about the “aggressiveness” of the gay community in Cape Town, which, according to him, has become one of the main gay tourist destinations of the world. He talks about the activities that take place at Sandy Bay, Waterkant and the gay night clubs. He mentions that even the gym where he trains has become an embarrassment to him given the overt sexual activity that takes place there, with apparent disregard for the heterosexual members. He states that he sees this aggressive sexual behaviour as evidence of “an emptiness and of an inner void”.

During another set of interviews, I ask about Andre Carl’s early years, prior to him fully realising that he was gay and perhaps early warnings from family, society and religious figures which might have conveyed negative messages regarding homosexuality, and how he might have interpreted and processed them at that time.

Andre Carl realised that he was gay at a really young age and that he had sexual thoughts about men as far back as he could remember. These happened even before he went to
school. He felt then that they were wrong or rather dangerous. He had not had any sexual experiences and no one had told him that this was wrong; he simply intuitively felt that they were dangerous. He says: “I instinctively felt that these thoughts and fantasies were probably to be kept to myself.”

Andre Carl feels that his sexuality was very prominent. He gives an example of himself in primary school (Standard 1) playing games with his mates with a sexual undertone, and where they did “explore”. He says that it was something they did, but did not speak about.

Then Andre Carl explains an interesting phenomenon. During school time sleep overs, there would often be a big bed prepared for himself, his friend and also his brother’s friend. During these sleepovers he says he was amazed that the sexual advances would always come from his friend or his brother’s friend and that he would be happy to oblige, yet these individuals today are heterosexual.

This happened between the ages of six and nine. He says that the sleepovers did not happen very frequently, only about three times a year. He says that no discussions followed these incidents, but that he experienced them as “sexual and pleasurable”.

Also from a very early age on, he knew his father was embarrassed or ashamed of him and who he was. His father was emotionally abusive in that he called his son names, and frequently showed his irritation with Andre Carl. He got the impression that his father did not like him.

Andre Carl explains that he never was an effeminate boy, but that he was more refined and not keen on sports. He never felt the urge to play with dolls of even dress up like a girl. On the contrary, he found pleasure in “playing with cars, building stuff and making things”.
6.1.1.6 Childhood at Banhoek

Then Andre Carl relates the time when he and his family moved to Banhoek, Stellenbosch, where they rented a farm. It was there at Banhoek that his mother ran the family side of things, while his father would work in town. His brother excelled in tennis during this time as well. Andre Carl recalls that during this period he was very much left to his own devices as a young teenager, as his mother had to drive his brother to and back from tennis practice.

He tells of the friends he made during that particular period, and that they were from liberal families. He points out one particular family from Norway. Andre Carl and one of the boys in this family sexually experimented quite a lot. Nobody knew about this and Andre Carl emphasises that he always felt guilty about it afterwards. Later on as the Norwegian boys started to develop sexually, the particular boy started distancing himself from Andre Carl and the “experimentation”. In the process, he also distanced himself from Andre Carl as a friend and person. He felt rejected and hurt as the friendship was for him more than just mechanical sexual experimentation.

Andre Carl elaborates on the issues of quality time spent with the family and describes his family life back then as “dysfunctional”. The family basically only had breakfast and dinner together and the rest of the time each family member pursued his or her own goals. He virtually had no time with his father.

Dinners, he explains, were taken in the strictest of silence, given the fact that his father watched the news during the same timeslot. Andre Carl laughs when he adds that his father harshly disciplined the children on table manners and he himself was mostly in the line of fire. He reminds me almost with a touch of glee: “I was the rebellious one and also the more disobedient.” There is a sense of defiance in his voice.

He received quite a lot of hidings from his father, including his farther sometimes using his fists. But, with the same defiance he continues that he would not just blindly accept his father’s opinions on issues, and that he was obstinate. He admits that he most probably
sometimes pushed his father’s buttons to a point where he himself felt that he had crossed a boundary too many.

The conversation moves on to the name calling which Andre Carl had to endure from his father. He remembers his dad calling him “sissy” or “Moffie”, but he adds that his father was also very subtle in running him down. A very good example was that his father would praise other kids specifically for things they did if he knew that that was something Andre Carl was not good at. His father would also actively ignore and disregard things which Andre Carl partook in or excelled in. Even things he was generally interested in were marginalised by his father.

With audible pain in his voice Andre Carl tells me that he remembers when he tried to tell a story or relate something to the family or a group of people, with his father present, that his father would appear “embarrassed”. He adds a quiet: “Well maybe he was…”

He also recalls his father never agreeing with him in a discussion and would always try and silence and contradict his point of view. He gives examples of discussions and debates around racial issues where, according to Andre Carl, his father would behave as a stereotypical Dutch Reform-Afrikaans-National Party supporter, which he disagreed with.

On the more general level, his father never, in any circumstance, condoned or affirmed who Andre Carl was, what he stood for, or what his person was about – ultimately, he never experienced any respect from his father. He feels that his father viewed him as inferior and that his father’s attitude towards his son impacted him to the extent that he lost all respect for his father.

Already at the young age of ten, he decided that he had had enough and that he was going to boarding school. It only materialised two or three years later but he was determined to pursue this. He relates the story of how he went to the headmaster of the boarding school in standard seven (Grade 9) and announced that he wanted to be allowed into boarding school. The headmaster explained that there was a waiting list, but Andre Carl insisted that he would pay for himself. He had at this point not even consulted with his parents on the
matter. He planned to finance his stay in the boarding school from a business which he had been running from an early age.

Andre Carl tells the moving story of how he had saved money from mowing the lawn and doing odd jobs around the farm. Once he had saved enough money he bought one of his mother’s sows (his mother was running a successful pig farm at the time with about seven hundred pigs). He explains that this was quite a risk as the sows often died while giving birth to their offspring, but that his sow did very well and brought in quite a bit of money when the litter was taken to the market twice a year. With pride in his voice he tells me that his sow had the number 64 and that she was quite a winner, not dying and bringing in great returns. He had to pay for his sow’s food from his own profits.

He reflects on the other children in Banhoek. He considered them quite wealthy as they had motorbikes.

At this stage of the interview Andre Carl becomes quite emphatic about the confidentiality of our discussion and that he would not want his father to get wind of what he was to share with me. He reasons that his father is already 81 and he does not want his father to be punished in any way. Andre Carl feels that these events lie in the past and that by now his father has evolved and that he also probably regrets many things he did in the past. I assure him that nothing will be published without his prior consent and we continued the interview.

Andre Carl relates the story of his father giving his brother a sow too when he noticed that Andre Carl’s little business was so lucrative. Andre Carl then wanted to invest his returns back into his business by buying a second sow from his mother, but his father put a stop to it saying that Andre Carl was not working for his money and that his business had become a kind of passive income. His father did not approve of that. Andre Carl’s counter argument was that he was investing his young life savings into this and that he was learning about taking business risk.
I ask Andre Carl if he felt that his father wanted to put him and his brother on an equal level by giving the brother a sow. He responds with pain very evident in his voice: "Mark, my father did not treat us equally...My brother was the blue eyed boy.”

Andre Carl reflects back on his and his brother’s childhood comparing and concluding that his brother always got more than he did, but he feels that the ‘respect’ which his brother got from his father outweighs all the material advantages which his brother had. Andre Carl felt invalidated in his person and in his being. He has no hard feelings towards his brother, saying that he is amicable and he acknowledges all the good attributes which his brother has – that he is a “good guy”.

Andre Carl further reflects on him being a difficult child. He feels that the injustice of being treated as inferior always made him very angry already by age ten. He recalls that he frequently vented his anger both towards his father and his mother. He tells me that he was aware even then of his fighting spirit, in that although he knew that keeping quiet and agreeing would lead to peace and harmony in the family, he did not. He stood his ground and voiced his opinion. He acknowledges that he could have made it easier for his parents and for himself, but given the injustice of it all, he didn’t.

6.1.1.7 **Boarding school**

Andre Carl’s voice is charged with energy as he begins to tell me about the year he went to boarding school. He says it was one of the most important years of his life.

The headmaster of the boarding school got back to him a week after he initially approached him with his plea, saying that there had been a cancellation and that he was going to give Andre Carl the place. His motivation was that he never before encountered a boy who had wanted to go to boarding school and was so adamant about it.

Andre Carl spent the last three years of his high school career in boarding school and feels that for some reason then he truly discovered himself – his own personality. Instead of just being this quiet, shy and insecure person, he tells me how his confidence grew. He was on a
journey of self-discovery and it was good. It culminated in him being voted in as Head Boy of the boarding school in matric.

Andre Carl turned down the position as he had a disagreement with the headmaster of the school, who wanted to change the format of the boarding school. He explains the set up at Paul Roos Gymnasium, where he went to school, as predominantly Afrikaans with one English class. Andre Carl says he was certainly not a mainstream pupil. He was English, he did not play sport, he did not play rugby in particular and he did do art.

Despite all of this he was voted in as prefect – not by the teachers but as one of two positions left over to the vote of the pupils and he feels that given that, he had become one of the first non-rugby playing male prefects at Paul Roos Gymnasium. Andre Carl puts his confidence and ensuing victory down to that one year in boarding school, where he could be and become who he truly was, not under the critical yoke of his father. He calls that one year in boarding school his ‘FOUNDATION YEAR’.

6.1.1.8 A deep spiritual crisis

Andre Carl calls me back to his standard eight year, when he failed the academic year. He describes this year as by far the most difficult year of his life. He was 14 years old at the time.

He was now acutely aware of his sexuality and at the same time of his deep rooted desire to know God his Creator. He also recalls three mentors at school, whom he describes as remarkable people in his life journey. First, he mentions the head of scripture union at Paul Roos Gymnasium. Secondly; the librarian, whom he describes as an unmarried and very spiritual Christian lady, but who was not very popular at school. Lastly, he mentions his male art lecturer.

Andre Carl expresses to me the excruciating agony of that year, when he was convinced that he was going to hell as he felt he was evil in the eyes of God. He knew that there was this
‘thing’ he could not rid himself of – his homosexuality – and he also was acutely aware of the fact that it would guarantee him eternal damnation. Yet, he lusted after men all the time.

From the books that he had read in the Scripture Union, Andre Carl was by now convinced that he was demon possessed. He was also sure that he was occupied by an evil spirit, causing his homosexuality. He describes the excruciating fear which this realisation brought about, of “sleepless nights fraught with terror and anxiety”. He says he hardly slept at all.

Sleep deprived and anxious to breaking point, he continued to read books. There were no books at that time in favour of homosexuality and that shed light on the situation he was finding himself in. This trap became an iron cage as he had nobody to turn to and nobody to trust and speak to. He had no tools to manage this situation and his self-image was at level zero. He was constantly feeling that he was “evil, inherently bad and very sinful”.

Andre Carl tells me that he had an aching need to worship the right God, but that he simultaneously felt that he was only a Christian because he had been born into a Christian home. He then believed that had he been born into a Hindu, Moslem or Jewish family, he would have been just that. He also believed back then that the Christian picture painted of the other religions was fear-based and hence biased.

One day he had a discussion with the mentioned librarian. Andre Carl posed the following question to the librarian: “Miss Du Toit, how do I know that God is real, and how do I know that God wants me to worship Him through the vehicle of Christianity?” The librarian’s answer was remarkable. She responded: “Why don’t you ask God?” Miss Du Toit’s response made an enormous amount of sense to him as he believed in a real and living God. He subsequently did just that and actually got an answer back from God. The answer was – “Whatever is comfortable for you.”

Andre Carl decided that, in future, with every problem he had, he would speak to God like that loving parent he felt God to be. He concluded that he was going to take religion, dogma and the like out of the way and solely focus on his relationship with God. He feels that by
doing that, his relationship with God has grown and today God is not the God of the Hindus, the Christians or the Jews, but his own personal parent God. He started to view God not as male or female but as a personal force, intimately involved in his life. Andre Carl recalls a diary entry which reads as follows: “*Considering the uniqueness of relationships between people .... How much more unique is the relationship with the Master of the cosmos.*”

He then developed that relationship and believes that this loving parent God would resolve any problems that he would face. He tells me that he did something peculiar, in that he gave his gay urges to God as well, saying to God: “*If you don’t want me to be gay then please take it away...*”

Andre Carl believes that God could take away his homosexuality if He so pleased and subsequently he has made peace with his sexuality in this way, notwithstanding what society would say and their opinions on the matter.

6.1.1.9 The Norwegians

We return during the interview to the topic of the Norwegian friends. Andrew and John were living on a neighbouring farm in Banhoek. They had a stepmother and a very absent father.

According to Andre Carl, they had complete freedom from a very young age. They also had no guilt concerning sex. They viewed their experiences as purely mutual masturbation and nothing more. The two youths viewed their experiences as “helping each other out” and did not invest many thoughts into the matter. However, he got quite close to the younger brother, Andrew. Andre Carl mentioned that Andrew is not well today and in a psychiatric home. He adds that Andrew also didn’t do well at school.

He feels that the beautiful, carefree environment around Banhoek probably was conducive to their experimentation. He describes the landscape there as a valley with mountains, rock pools, rivers and waterfalls. They would spend whole weekends there and swim in the nude; things always developed from there on.
But amongst all this there was a forbidden something, a secret which the boys were never to find out: Andre Carl actually enjoyed these experiences in a “gay kind of way”. He had to quickly master the role of the heterosexual boy just experimenting sexually with his friends “as all boys do”. In this spirit he was careful to never initiate anything and he would always let the other boys set the boundaries, which he would then be very careful not to cross. But he says that even back then it was crystal clear to him that he was gay and that his friends were straight. He says he knew this as they would also sexually experiment with girls.

He would hide his desire for them and would take great caution not to be discovered. His infatuation with Andrew was also a deep secret. With sadness in his voice he relates to me that these boys must have gathered later on that he was gay, after which they rejected him.

6.1.1.10 More on the spiritual crisis

Andre Carl diverts back to the year he had his deep crisis as if he had just remembered something important he wanted to share with me. He tells me again of the sleepless nights and the accumulative effect of the sleep deprivation:

“I drifted in and out of sleep and during the sleep phases I had terrible dreams. I was beginning to hallucinate from sheer sleep deprivation. I was at the time reading a book called ‘From witchcraft to Christ’. The book focused on the life story of a witch who converted to Christianity. This book described the Satanist ceremonies during which there would be a lot of homosexual sex. I was in absolute agony.”

He continues that at one point he simply could not endure it anymore and he went downstairs and woke his mom. He consider how hard she was working, not wanting to wake her up, but felt that he needed her at that point, as a child needs his mother. She went upstairs with him to his room. Andre Carl remembers telling her: “Mom I can’t sleep – I am in trouble”. She wanted to know why he felt he was in trouble and he showed her the book he was reading. Andre Carl laughs as he related his mother’s reaction, which he describes
as typical. His mother said something like: “Why are you reading a book like this? If I find you reading such a book again you will be in trouble”.

He relates this incident with his mom as a backdrop to describing her personality and nature to me. He describes her as very practical. He explains that this does not make her a bad person, but serves as an example of who she was and that it also serves to demonstrate her inability to sit down and discuss his spiritual crisis with him. His mother always had a matter-of-fact attitude about her. In her eyes things happened and people dealt with them.

I ask if he was trying then to reach out to his mother, perhaps hoping for guidance, wisdom, help and compassion in the light of the fact that there was no relationship between him and his father. He confirms my thoughts and elaborates that he would have loved to get clarity and comfort; and peace from all the turmoil and angst he had inside himself. This was not the only time he tried to reach out to his mother – the urge was strongly felt often. Despite all of this, Andre Carl feels that his mother loved her family and he could feel it.

On another occasion, after afternoon art class at Paul Roos Gymnasium, when he felt the dire need to connect with someone, he noticed that Miss Du Toit’s red Peugeot 404 was still parked at school and he went into the library to find her there alone. He had this overwhelming urge to tell her that he was gay. He relates how they sat in her little red Peugeot 404 for almost two hours. Miss Du Toit realised that he was absolutely desperate to tell her something very important. He could literally not utter the words “I am a homosexual” to her. Andre Carl vividly describes how he was staring at the vents on her car dashboard, and that she was just patiently sitting in the driver seat of the car, waiting.

And then eventually he said it and that her response was so beautiful. She said: “Andre, all you need to know is that God loves you”. Miss Du Toit then invited him to join her during the June-July holiday period on a trip to a mission station in KwaZulu-Natal. The place was called “Kosizo Bantu” and “ran entirely on miracles”. Miss Du Toit was going with another student and the student’s mother. With much laughter and humour Andre Carl relates how he as the popular standard nine learner; was now invited by Miss Du Toit, “a fat short, uncool,
spinsterish type of odd school teacher”. Having to explain that to his fellow learners was an issue. But he did go.

Miss Du Toit only said one thing to him: if he felt the need to discuss the problem with anyone at the mission, he should feel free to do so. Andre Carl didn’t feel the need during this school break to speak to anyone about his homosexuality. Miss Du Toit subsequently offered to take him to a psychologist in Cape Town. She assured him of the confidentiality of the matter. She also added that the psychologist felt that Andre Carl could be healed.

He tells me that he felt that this was impossible, and in his typical non-judgemental way explains to me that Miss Du Toit only did what she felt was best, and that she felt she was reaching out and helping him.

He then shares with me his disappointment and fear, at the fact that the first person he had confided in, believed he was sick and in need of healing. Again he turns back to God in all of this as he says: “My saviour in this situation was God”.

In conclusion to our last interview, Andre Carl makes the following statement with I feel is at the core of who he really is:

“While these three mentors were so very important in my life in helping me develop as a human being.... the crisis and the clash between my sexual awakening during puberty and my spiritual self were only resolved by my personal and intimate relationship with God.”

6.1.2 Gerhard Pienaar

6.1.2.1 The early years in Kuruman

Our interview takes place in the early morning and Gerhard is bright and smiling as I have come to know him, full of energy and enthusiastic to tackle this new project in his life. Gerhard works as deputy head of section and as Project Manager in the donor country’s
economic development cooperation office of a European Embassy in Pretoria. They manage huge investments into South Africa and in his daily operations he works with ministers of state, Government and Municipalities. He manages and coordinates international delegations to South Africa for his Embassy and he generally has a high stress job. But he maintains that he is good at it and he loves it.

He was born in October 1975 in the Cape Province (Northern Cape region) as it was called then as the first child in a family of five. He has a brother two years his junior and a sister six years younger. Gerhard’s father was at the time working as a transport agent for a family business in the asbestos mining industry.

Briefly Gerhard mentions that his grandfather was quite an entrepreneur, having worked in the diamond fields, farming and owning his own aeroplanes. Gerhard’s father grew up in the Vryburg-Kuruman area, on a farm in the Kalahari region. The age difference between his dad and his eldest uncle is almost fifteen years, which made his dad the ‘laat lammetjie’ in the family. Given this great age difference, his father had to adhere to the dictates of his father (Gerhard’s grandfather) and brothers (Gerhard’s uncles) in the business and in general family life. This caused a lot of bitterness and resentment.

His mother was from Lydenburg in Mpumalanga, where she grew up, and later studied BSc Pharmacy in Potchefstroom. When she qualified, she moved to Kuruman to take up her first position as a pharmacist (she had a to-be-fiancée living in Kuruman at the time which attracted her to the area, although this did not work out in the end). Gerhard explains that his parents were introduced to each other by his aunt. A relationship ensued and they got married in 1974.

Gerhard explains life in Kuruman as predominantly family orientated: “I come from quite a big family with twelve male and four female cousins. My family was quite close-knit and we saw each other almost every day and definitely on the weekends, either at church or for lunch afterwards. Children’s parties were celebrated as huge events; there were barely space for other friends between all the cousins and neighbours.”
The family all attended the same church in Kuruman, the Apostolic Faith Mission. This was considered quite different at the time in the Afrikaner history; most people belonged to one of the sister (Reformed) churches. Gerhard’s mother grew up in the Dutch Reformed Church and moved over to the Apostolic Faith Mission as she did not want the family to be divided. Gerhard’s father did not attend church for a very long time.

Gerhard laughs again when he describes the handing down of clothes amongst the children in the family: “*With me and my brother being the youngest, we often became the proud owners of hand-me-downs, whether we liked the colour (normally brown or blue) or not. And these could include anything ranging from rugby socks (which neither my brother nor I played at the time) to school uniforms.*” But his childhood was a happy time full of people and protected and full of life and energy.

He describes his early childhood as stable and elaborates that even though his mother was a qualified pharmacist, she chose to stay at home taking full charge of rearing the children. His grandmother on his mother’s side, “Grandma Jorrie” (taken from her surname “Jordaan”) stayed with them.

With that amount of guidance and supervision, his mother and grandmother made sure that the children remained creative at home. Gerhard spend a lot of time drawing and reading. His mother ensured that all the children had library cards and he was expected to read a book a week. The teachers at the time in the Cape Province very much encouraged reading. He says that the curricular standards were then still very high and he indulged in reading and exploring, encouraged by his family and teachers. Gerhard thrived under these conditions and was thus more drawn to the indoor activities, whereas his sister and brother would almost spend all of their time outside. He laughs when he adds that he does not think his brother ever read a book in his life. But enough time was also spent riding bicycles and swimming on the agriculture holding where he grew up. He describes the intense heat in the Northern Cape and tells me that they used to swim and splash all day and do their homework late in the evening, much to his mother’s disapproval as she had to jump in to help at times.
Gerhard’s parents did not hide real life events from them that unfolded at the time:

“Big changes came when the mines started to close down around 1987 due to threat of asbestosis and decline in commodity prices. I was in Grade 5 and the impact that that had on our family business was devastating. I remember my father calling us into the main bedroom and explained the possible implications of what was happening. He told us that we would probably at some point be forced to move.”

Gerhard recalls that many of his school friends had already by that time moved away from the Kuruman area given the economic impact of the asbestos mines closing down.

Coming back to the topic of the research and the interview, namely, early signs and early dealings with being gay, Gerhard says that there was almost nothing there; it was just not part of their frame of reference and he was certainly not aware of anything he felt was away from the norm. He then interjects and says that as much as he hates to say this (he considers these words, although true, as too much of a standard phrase amongst gays), but he did notice small differences in how he viewed boys (as “more interesting than just best friends”), but that he feels these differences were absorbed and not made into an issue in his family at the time.

Gerhard specifically mentions his one cousin, Johan, who was born only two months after him, with whom Gerhard spent most of his time, sharing a love for drawing and being creative. Gerhard reflects and says that when he, from the present point of reference, looks back, he must admit that there were things that could have been seen as early signs. An example is how he and Johan used to play, with great fun, with his aunt’s wigs (popular at the time) and his mother’s clothes. He relates how Johan and he would play house-house, eating condensed milk and Milo quite innocently, or also imagining that they were in an aeroplane, serving the passengers, with Gerhard playing the role of a female flight attendant, but doing so without really feeling anything being wrong or any guilt. “We simply did not see anything wrong with that; there was a need for a female character in the setting and I was happy to oblige. There was nothing more to it.”
Unlike his brother, he loved playing with dolls, but in his mind he got the greatest enjoyment from dressing them up and letting the dolls’ characters come to life and play out different roles. He says that that was for him much like on stage where he could be the director of a production.

I ask him if there were any comments made from anyone in the family. He reflects and says that he doesn’t think that anybody frowned upon it when they were very small but when they were bigger Gerhard does remember a male family member looking at their playing while on a caravan holiday, with a sense of amazement on his face. He adds that his mother did in a sense discourage them from playing with the dolls outside the caravan at the time.

I ask Gerhard when and why he felt that he had to hide the doll playing at this point. He responds that it was most probably towards standard two (Grade 4) that he became more and more aware of the gender roles that were active and operant in society, namely, that boys play more outside and girls more inside, occupying themselves with sewing and helping out in the kitchen, and he most probably felt that he had to align himself with these social dictates.

Gerhard became aware of what was expected of him, such as playing sport, and especially rugby. He laughs when he tells me that he was on the rugby field only twice for practice, after which he went to his mom and told her that he hated it and “was not going back there”. She accepted this as she herself did not like the sport. I ask him why he hated rugby and he replies that it was just so physical and rough and he did not like that. He was very skinny and quite tall for his age at the time. He says that it did not help that his teacher put him in the scrum. He feels that he was not in any way targeted by anyone but that he just did not like this game at all and made his mother understand this without any doubt. “It certainly was easier in primary school, but later on this lead to a lot of mocking from other boys and they called him a sissy,” says Gerhard.

Gerhard reflects on my question of being targeted and he says that people in Kuruman, at least at face value, being an old fashioned farming community, there was not that much aggression amongst the kids at this young age and much was overlooked that did not
exactly fit the stereotypical norm of a young male. He gives the example of skipping with the girls. He says that most boys did part take in the skipping and that it was not a big deal. He described the community as benevolent and accepting. Maybe that is seen through the eyes of a kid, but he felt that it was a healthy and friendly environment to grow up in.

I ask Gerhard to tell me more about his academic performance at school and how he was received as a top performer. He pauses a moment and says:

“They [cousins and peers] probably looked up to me in some way, particularly my cousins who were not performing all too well. My brother, Cobus, also did very well (although he hated reading). My mother was very active in helping us siblings with our school tasks, such as helping to source material and sitting with us through reading exercises. She did however insist at some point that we do the work ourselves. Given the fact that my sister is six years younger than me, we did not have that ‘academic connection’. My mother would sit with us through all the school work, which was probably the results of her also being the best educated in the family back then, knowing what commitment it required. My mom was the pioneer in her circle as girls did not really study pharmacy back then. My mom’s class at university only had five women studying pharmacy. But it was not only studying that dominated my life at this age. I really loved the cultural activities in school and sang in choirs basically my whole life, still today. You could also find me on any day busy reading a story book.”

I ask Gerhard to tell me more about his mother and to give me a feel of who she was. He says that his dad probably summarised it best after the death of Gerhard’s mother in 2007 (she died of asbestosis). He simply said: “You [meaning the children] were everything to your mother.” Gerhard agrees with this in that he remembers his mom as pouring herself out into her children, stimulating, guiding, coaching and just being a real loving mother. He remembers that she ‘locum’ed’ often at pharmacies. Even though she was a qualified pharmacist, it was her choice to spend much time in the rearing of her children with a very much hands-on approach. She was very active in the community, going to talks at the Women’s Federation, often taking Gerhard with her if there was an interesting topic, studying First-Aid, baking for the church and the women’s league. There was an active
academic and open mind which she lived and instilled in her children. She could speak German and played the piano. She loved history too and Gerhard relates how she would study the local history of areas and towns they would visit during their family trips around the country during the long December holidays. She would take on the responsibility of planning their routes with the caravan, read up on the shells they discovered on the beach and tell them about biology and anything she felt could stimulate and feed their minds. She was also a stunning cook and baked very well. Even in that Gerhard feels that his mom was different as she always tried new things (especially recipes) and explored new horizons, much to the delight of the family. Gerhard’s father loved his wife very much.

Moving on to Gerhard’s father, he related to me that his father had the dream of studying accounting as he had a true gift and passion for numbers. Gerhard’s father (Gerhard senior) did bookkeeping while serving in the Army in Voortrekkerhoogte and in De Notter Air force Base near Nigel. After finishing his conscription period, he went to study accounting at the University in Bloemfontein. This was however short-lived as Gerhard’s father was ordered back to the farm to help with the family business during his second year. Gerhard feels that that left a sense of bitterness with his dad. The family could sense that there was something strained in the relationship between his father and their grandfather – an unhappiness and feeling that his father was in a place in life that he did not want to be in.

In 1987 the asbestos mines started closing down due to the drop in the market and health considerations. Both mines in Kuruman closed down, leaving a lot of people unemployed. The family business went bankrupt and the whole family moved away from Kuruman to seek other employment. Gerhard’s grandfather retired.

Gerhard’s father and two uncles started working in Witbank, Mpumalanga, and the family moved to Fochville in order to be closer to his father’s work. Fochville was chosen as it was central to possible work relations with the mines and the fact that his grandfather owned property in the town.

Gerhard explains how the family pulled together to get through this and subsequent tough financial times. Although the business functioned, it became apparent in 1992 that certain
changes were eminent. His father called the family together and explained that the company would be scaled down given the fact that they could not make the profits that they did before. The relationship with the uncles broke down and the business was dissolved. This left Gerhard’s farther and one uncle to manage a few trucks to transport goods all over the country. The business finally closed down in 1997.

His mother had instilled in the children from a very early age the habit to save money. They did not get pocket money but got R1 on a Friday which they could use as they pleased. Towards the end of primary school, they started to get pocket money which they had to save to buy the small things that they wanted (such as music tapes). In order to cut costs, Gerhard remembers how she went to school and made arrangements with the head master that the kids would not have their haircuts as often as before and made practical steps in navigating the family through that period of financial difficulty. Gerhard says with a smile that this was quite embarrassing for him. Also they took wise steps such as transferring all the assets in the family to Gerhard’s mother’s name in case the liquidation of the company would swallow everything the family owned. Gerhard also allures to the fact that the anxiety around finances increased with the move to Fochville. From his perspective, he could see a difference in the community life in Kuruman, where people helped each other often, and in Fochville, where people had more of an “everyone-for-himself” attitude.

He feels that with this change and the precautions he witnessed first-hand in his family and seeing the anxiety in his parents at the time, he became very cautious financially and that this perhaps left him with a bit of a fear of being poor or financially not well off.

Ending off the first interview and getting back to the gay issue Gerhard concludes that all that he had experienced in his early childhood was experienced by him as normal and that the idea or even the understanding of homosexuality did not really feature. Whatever he did, created, dreamed, liked or dislikes – it was all normal to him and he saw nothing wrong with any of it.

Perhaps the earliest real stirrings of a true sexuality he relates to me was in standard three (he was eleven at the time), while on tour with a standard fives group to Cape Town (the
best performers in standard three and four were allowed to go along). This was his first time away from home alone. Seeing the bigger boys in the showers did make an (sexual) impression on him and left him feeling that it was perhaps more that it should be for a boy, but nothing earth-moving or nothing to worry about.

6.1.2.2 Fochville

Gerhard continues his brief overview of his early years by telling me that he and his family moved to Fochville at the end of 1987 was a life-changing time. Fochville was a very different environment, and he was now the “new kid on the block”. He did not know anybody and he experienced the culture of the new town as very different. The majority of the learners came from mine worker families with different views than what he was used to.

Gerhard explains that he did what he knew best and threw himself into his academic work and within one year he had won the Dux Pupils Honours Award and almost all the book prizes as top achiever in his subjects. On top of that he was selected as head boy, which he feels did not really win him the popularity contest with the more popular boys, he adds laughing. He says that the group which especially did not receive him with openness and warmth were the sporty (rugby-playing) boys who were up until then the main stars of the school given their sport achievements. One teacher was actually overheard saying that Gerhard only was able to be a top achiever as he did not do sport and had all the time in the afternoons available to him (this Gerhard heard from an old teacher only many years later).

Gerhard explains that times at home became a bit more difficult. His parents still tried to create a stable environment for them, but his mother now also had to work and his father was working in the transportation of coal in Middleburg/Witbank and sometimes further afield. His father was therefore away during the week and only made it home on weekends, sometimes every second weekend. This bothered his farther a lot, but there was little that he could do.

“With me growing up now, my sexuality also became more prominent and I started viewing other boys with a lot more ‘curiosity’. During a caravan holiday in Knysna in
standard five, for example, my cousin Johan joined us for the holidays. It was during this period that we experimented with each other sexually and ended up in mutual masturbation. I really got a fright as I did not know what was happening, but this led to a period of more intense experimenting and fantasising about boys and male teachers. But I was also very ashamed of what I was thinking and doing."

Gerhard tells me that he started doing volkspele (Afrikaner folk dances) at that period and that he really enjoyed the dancing very much. He also excelled in that and ended up getting provincial colours during standard four to seven. He says that his mother initially did not like the idea but went along with it as Gerhard was performing very well and really enjoyed it. Also here Gerhard tells me that during the camps for volkspele he was becoming more and more interested and attracted to the boys around him. He tells me that he had close friendships with girls but looking back now, he did not view girls as the ‘other sex’, with that excitement that heterosexual boys normally would during their sexual awakening. It was the boys who had this effect on him.

He met a friend during one of these camps, Pierre, whom he got very close to. With humour Gerhard says that nothing happened between the two of them, but one night when it was very cold, he suggested to Pierre that they should sleep in one bed. Pierre declined, but Gerhard did not see anything wrong with this. There was a sense of normality for him regarding his feelings.

Gerhard moves on to say that the dancing, his singing in the school choir, playing piano and his participation in the revue group had started to alienate him totally from his male cousins. By then, his cousins (some who had finished school already, while others attended the technical school in Potchefstroom) were all playing rugby and were good in sport, quite popular at school and chasing after girlfriends. Some of them jokingly started referring to Gerhard as their ‘nigge’ (female cousin).

“'My mother’s support sometimes had limits, based on the drive to protect me as far as possible. I wanted desperately to join the local school play in Standard 6. The theme of the play that year was about stereotyping and how people put other people in little
boxes, so to speak. I was cast as the sensitive gay boy who wanted to make music and then get bullied. At the first rehearsal I fell on my back, straining a muscle or two. My mother did not like the role that I was cast in at all and actively encouraged me not to participate in the play any longer. I obliged, but was very disappointed.”

Gerhard relates another incident which serves as an example of him being increasingly victimised at school. While the students were assembled in the hall rehearsing sport songs for the upcoming athletics events one day, he turned around to look behind him and an apple hit him right in the eye. It was coming from the direction of a group of boys where one of his remaining cousins at school was standing. This specific group was quite bad and Gerhard tried hard to avoid them throughout his high school life. The name calling also came from some girls at school.

His mother tried to support him by telling him simply to ignore them and to do what he did best. That is exactly what he did. He just focused on his studies and cultural activities at school, kept his head low and stuck to those he could trust. Gerhard performed well. He got colours for culture and academics and was selected as a prefect. He says he really did very well and that he missed the Dux Honours with point nine percent to the ‘dominee’s’ daughter. Gerhard laughs and says that he had harder subjects than she had, such as science and technical drawing, but he acknowledges that she studied very hard and deserved the prize. “That’s life for you.” His teachers and parents were really supportive during his high school years.

Gerhard looks back and reflects that although he had become “alienated” from the popular group in the school, he says he had never become “isolated”. He was still part of a close group of friends who studied hard and partook in cultural activities such as the choir. He remembers the choir teacher putting in a lot of effort to make the choir life interesting for them, arranging day camps and outings. With all that happening Gerhard says that the members really bonded and became close friends.

While he was in Standard 8, he started to date a girl called Anel. They continued seeing each other until matric. I ask him why he dated Anel, when he had clearly experienced
strong feelings towards boys prior to that. He replies that it was most probably the way he interpreted the world. That a boy is supposed to have a girlfriend and he just went with it. He says that he liked Anel very much and that she was a close friend. They would kiss and cuddle but that nothing sexual ever happened between them. His sexual feelings were directed at boys, although he was too scared to think in that direction, let alone act upon it.

Gerhard says that during this period he also drew a lot closer to God, God becoming a central part of his life. This however caused a lot of conflict in him as he knew that what he was feeling towards boys was wrong as far as his understanding of God and the Bible was concerned. He really fought against these feelings and prayed that God would take this away. All this happened while he was with Anel, and he adds that his sexual fantasies when masturbating were about boys and not about Anel. This was very confusing and worrying to him. He knew something was ‘wrong’.

Gerhard was closest to three friends: Anel, Riaan and himself. After university, Riaan married Anel. Gerhard describes Riaan as a strikingly attractive boy at school who did his own thing always, such as scuba diving and bird watching. This very much attracted him to Riaan: he was an independent male figure who followed his own ideas and was not mainstream and conventional. Gerhard found himself fantasising about Riaan a lot and knew that he had a crush on him. It came to a crisis in matric when Gerhard broke up with Anel, while Riaan had warned him not to break up with her. Gerhard knew then that Riaan loved Anel and that he lost both friends. And this all happened right before the final matric exams. Gerhard made friends with a straight boy, Johan Bosman (‘Bossie’). This friendship helped him and carried him through that time. They never spoke about Gerhard’s feelings for boys. Gerhard raised it one day just to test Bossie’s reaction. Bossie just said that he needs to believe what the Bible says, that it is a sin, and that he never thought about it more than this. They left the discussion there.
6.1.2.3 University years and beyond

Gerhard describes his years at university as a happy time in his life. He went to university at a time when the political situation in the country also started to change and he was exposed to many new ideas. This was the period 1995 to 1999. It was a time of finding himself and becoming more independent in his thinking and in his doing, being amongst people on the same age and from diverse backgrounds. He had enrolled to study town and regional planning full time. He was staying in a men’s dormitory during his university years. He knew now that he was gay but was unaccepting of it and was fighting it.

I ask whether there was a moment where he actually realised it and or accepted that he was gay. He explains that the realisation was there fully by now, and that it had been a cumulative process all of his life to come to such a realisation, but that there was no talk of acceptance then. Acceptance was to come much later. Being gay was in conflict with his religion and with God and he fought it, to the extent that in his second year he started dating a girl called Anlie, whom he dated for three years. He says that there was never anything physical between them, but that they had a good relationship. They were very close and he really liked her. She was studying B Commerce and he describes her as very sweet and very innocent, being two years his junior. Riaan and Anel attended the same university, but he rarely saw them.

His other two close friends at university were Johan and Martin. Gerhard is still in touch with Johan, who also turned out to be gay. Gerhard reiterates that he was happy during those years and that he threw himself into his studies, while enjoying the social and cultural life at university. He says that nobody at university was openly gay back then, or maybe he just did not know anyone who was openly gay. Men in the dormitory were threatening anyone who would try and be verbal about being gay or flaunt it, with physical “punishment”. There were therefore some guys who you suspected were gay, but no one was open and verbal about it. Those that were openly gay left the dormitory very soon.

He tells me that Potchefstroom University was actually very conservative, but then he interrupts and corrects himself that in a heterosexual way this was not the case, as guys
were very much open about pursuing sexual relationships with girls. So while the gay issue was totally taboo, the heterosexual awakening and freedom was very much celebrated. He elaborates on the heterosexual dictatorship in the dormitory and relates to me that in his third and fourth years he witnesses new young gay guys coming into the university with residency in the dormitory, who left after a few months due to verbal abuse and social shunning by the straight guys.

Then Gerhard makes a very interesting remark: there was a total lack of visible role models for gay people back then, and that that was a real issue for him. He reflects back and tells me that he recently tried via the social media to make contact with his friends and acquaintances from those university years, only to find out that half of them are today gay and openly so. He laughs and says that it was such a lost opportunity to live and develop his world view and experiences as a young gay person. He was silenced by the dominating heterosexual narrative and so were they. He regrets this missed opportunity and says that they could have had better friendships and could have learnt from each other so much more.

Again he excelled in academics and got an award in his fourth year for top performer in the entire BA faculty (applied BA degrees as they called it). He also won various prizes for town planning, regional planning and economics. His school academic performance definitely followed him to university.

Gerhard started working in 1999 as a junior development economist. He describes the following years of his life as very lonely. He was in his early twenties and was in the big world and had to now carve out a life for himself. While he had the support of his family, he tried to stand on his own feet. Still the realisation that he was gay was clear to him, but he was still fighting it.

He tells me that he preferred to get involved in church activities back then rather than going to gay clubs. He says that he didn’t even know where these clubs were and that he also did not seek them out. Still the awareness that he was gay would not let go of him and he tells me how he would go to book stores desperate to find something positive in books about
being gay and finding nothing but condemnation. He says that the majority of religious books were especially against it, emphasising homosexuality as being “an abomination”, “against nature” and even the “result of being demon possessed”.

Gerhard explains to me his transition during his university years from the “happy clappy” Apostolic Faith Mission Church, as he puts it, to the Dutch Reformed Church as simply following his “gut feel”. He felt more comfortable worshipping in the mainstream and more reserved Dutch Reformed setting. He recalls that the members of the Apostolic Faith Mission had become very Pentecostal during the first years of university and that it did not sit comfortably with him.

He joined a home cell group at the Dutch Reformed Oosterlig congregation and he tells me how isolated he was feeling in that setting. The fellow members of the cell group had been to primary and high school as well as university together, and knew each other inside out. He being new was not a problem, but having gay feelings was something he could definitely not raise with them.

Members in the group would from time to time verbalise anti-homosexual sentiments and Gerhard shakes his head when he reflects on the matrix of misinformation which was at the core of their understanding of being gay. This was one of the main reasons in the end why he left the group. One remark made by one of the women stuck with him that: “men only become gay because they were molested by older men”. He also says that the word “moffie” was used a lot in church, and also a lot in social settings and that none of them felt that one could be gay naturally and be healthy and content with that. It had to be a “perversion” of the pure original heterosexual male. What Gerhard found very hypocritical at the time, was that outside of the cell group many of these people actually had gay friends. So it was almost for them a religious duty to express anti-gay sentiments within a church setting.
6.1.2.3 Coming out

Gerhard joined a choir in Pretoria called F# (F Sharp) where he had his first interaction with gay people. Most of these men were not openly gay in order to avoid open prejudice and conflict in the choir, but that they were comfortable with whom they were. Gerhard become close friends with them and considered them his first role models in gay life. He says that that made him feel safer. At that time, through the choir, he met his best friend for the next five years of his life – Lelanie. She was six years younger than him. He describes her as being very practical in her way of thinking and that she was an artist. It was to her that he first came out that he was gay. What is noteworthy here is that Gerhard had totally identified himself as gay before he had ever had a gay sexual experience.

Gerhard qualifies the coming out to Lelanie as not entirely voluntary but that it was a result of Lelanie confronting him while at a wedding celebration of a mutual friend. He explains:

“Lelanie was very concerned that I had more feelings for her than just platonic friendship, as she assumed that I was gay. The closeness of our friendship started to confuse her. It was then that I knew the time was here and that I had to come out. It was a great relieve to be able to say for the first time: ‘Yes, I am gay’”.

Gerhard then relates a very sad story. He tells me that just before his friendship with Lelanie, he had developed a friendship with a man at work, Hein. Hein was very attractive, a professional cyclist and extremely clever. They become close friends for two years. Hein was a troubled man. He was divorced and his ex-wife left him for another woman, whom Hein subsequently also had a relationship with. Gerhard describes this as a very messy affair. Gerhard continues: “

“I think the situation confused both of us, as Hein obviously picked up that there was more than just a platonic friendship from my side. Hein openly confronted me one day at the office. This was the first time in his life that I was confronted in this way and this was a very emotional moment for me (this was before my friendship with Lelanie). I was so taken aback with Hein’s open confrontation that I denied having feelings for him.
However, I went back to my office, closed the door and called my mother and burst into tears. She told me that she had picked up on Hein’s concerns about our friendship. But not even during this conversation could I tell her about possibly being gay. She did not ask and I did not volunteer anything regarding my inner turmoil with the gay issue. My coming out to my parents was to wait for a couple of years still.”

Gerhard’s friendship with Hein was coldly terminated that very day in Hein’s office and it left him feeling very hurt and confused, as Gerhard also knew and had to admit that Hein was right. At this time, Gerhard intensified his inner fight against his being gay, resulting in a period of intense loneliness.

Looking back, Gerhard tells me that from his present vantage point he can see that the friendship was very one sided, with him giving everything and Hein not. Gerhard realises now that at a phase of Hein’s life he was a crutch for his friend, but that was only that and nothing more. Gerhard has no hard feelings towards Hein and tells me that he met him again one day in a shopping centre. Hein is now happily married with two children, running his own business.

He feels that it was that very confrontation that forced him to face himself and say to himself, “What is happening here?” He sees that confrontation as a catalyst for him to find himself and declare to the world who and what he was. True colours so to speak. However, this was a very trying, intense and emotional period for him.

At that time, Gerhard’s friend Johan from university also “came out” to Gerhard through a long email sent from Ireland where Johan now worked. Johan explained that he had immigrated to Ireland to look for a better life, that he met a male partner and that he was happy and comfortable in his newly found gay life style. Gerhard visited Johan a year or two later in Ireland and met his partner and their friends. This was quite liberating and things started to move for Gerhard towards acceptance. He wrote an email to Johan in which he confessed that he had feelings for his choir conductor at the time. This is the first “coming out” towards a friend (although not face to face as in the case with Lelanie).
Gerhard still did not come out to his parents for a long time, as he simply did not know how to. It was some time later after Gerhard’s mother had been diagnosed with cancer (asbestosis, from exposure to asbestos back in Kuruman), that he finally confessed to his parents that he was gay. It was preceded by his first sexual encounter with a guy in the choir, Corrie. The problem was that Corrie was married and although Gerhard knew this very well, he explains that he was just so very tired of the whole inner battle, but very flattered by Corrie’s advances. He “just went with the flow” and one Saturday morning while Corrie was visiting him, his first gay physical encounter happened. He was now 28 years old. The whole encounter felt very natural and good to him.

Their relationship only lasted for about six months, during which they had sex about three or four times. But they would talk on the telephone every day and saw each other weekly at the choir. They went for coffee and to restaurants and Corrie told Gerhard more and more how he felt comfortable with him and that he liked him very much. This was the setting in which Gerhard finally accepted and admitted the full implication of his being gay. Corrie ended the relationship with Gerhard one day by saying that he had asked God for forgiveness and that he did not want the relationship anymore, as he was unfaithful to his wife and kids. Gerhard explains that he felt betrayed but that he also knew all along that this would be the outcome. He found out later that Corrie also had affairs with other men while seeing Gerhard and after they were together, which made him very angry. At that time Gerhard left the choir and they completely broke off all contact.

This left Gerhard feeling very vulnerable. No sooner had he openly admitted to himself that he was gay that he was again alone, not knowing where to turn to. He tells me that a period of four years then followed where he did nothing but work and nurtured his friendship with Lelanie. He did not sing in the choir. He did nothing with his life.

He had a few platonic friendships and he also joined the gay church in Pretoria. He tells me that he felt safe there and that he had made some good friends. He describes the network as a safe place and a place where he could meet and talk to people who were like-minded and comfortable with their identity. Looking at it from his present perspective, he tells me that these people were very good to him, but that he cannot deny the fact that he sees
them as being also deceived spiritually and he feels that during that period he went backward spiritually. “But I still did not have any goals or aims for my life...it was like I just gave up to a shallow life of coffee houses and small talk.”

It was at the gay church, where Gerhard fell head over heels in love for the first time. He met Francois and was infatuated with him. But after two years, the relationship remained platonic as Francois was of the opinion that, if a relationship between men started of platonic, it would remain just that. Gerhard on the other hand was too scared to tell Francois of his feelings, worried that he would lose Francois in the process. He even went so far as to confess to a very close friend of Francois’s that he was in love with him. Gerhard tell me that he went to Langebaan with Francois to visit his mother. They had a lovely time, although the friendship remained platonic.

Reflecting back, Gerhard feels that the time with Francois and most probably the fact that he was in love with him, constituted a watershed period in his life, where he just knew that he had to tell his parents and get it all out in the open.

Gerhard tells me that the feeling he had for Francois now brought everything to a point of clarity – he accepted himself as gay and wanted to be known as that by his family. It was also the time when the issues came out in the Dutch Reformed Synod regarding the acceptance of gays in the church. Gerhard tells me that he had strongly argued these points at home with his parents. So when he went home one weekend he told them. It was very emotional, also for his sister who was staying at home at the time. His parents had a very strange reaction that he did not foresee. His father confessed that he had known all along. His mother then echoed that she also knew that Gerhard was gay. The topic was just never discussed between them.

“I was very relieved.... It was a weight off my chest. I just regret one thing and that is that I was quite blunt to my mother during the discussion, noting that there would not be any grandchildren from my side. I knew very well how she was looking forward to pampering grandchildren of her own. I regret this even more as my mother had already been sick with cancer for a while at the time.”
After that weekend Gerhard’s mother wrote him a letter telling him that he was still their son, and that he was still responsible for taking care of them when they were old, stating how much they still loved him. Gerhard’s mother passed away about two or three months later.

In response to my question whether Gerhard was glad that his mom knew his situation before she passed away, he answers in the affirmative without any hesitation and explains that he was glad that she knew who he authentically was. He elaborates that he is glad that they had come to know the full person that he now was, as well as acknowledging that he was an adult and not their baby anymore. He also feels that his parents were relieved that it was all out in the open and that the task now was to learn how to live and deal with the situation.

He relates a little private incident between him and his mom in hospital, when they joked about how attractive his mother’s doctor was. The “air between them” was definitely “clean”, and the discussions loving and beautiful.

With his mom passing away, the central pillar of the family fell away and he started noticing changes. Gerhard was sure then that his father would have been happier with him not being in a relationship, which was an echo of his mother’s opinion at the time (it still being considered un-Biblical). However, his dad encouraged Gerhard to live his life and to be happy with his own choices. Gerhard’s father went through a long and tough mourning process. He had loved his wife very much.

Gerhard’s brother was informed about the situation via the telephone after Gerhard’s mom instructed her younger son to call his brother “as there was something to be discussed”. It turned out that the news were not much of a surprise for his brother either, and with that the coming out to the family had been completed. Initially the entire family seemed neither shocked nor condemning of the situation. Gerhard keeps a bit of information for later in the interview, when he wants to elaborate of big hurts and acts of rejection, but he allures to
the fact that his sister-in-law was less accepting and that it was a source of great pain for him later on.

Regarding his own sister, who is married now and has a small baby boy, the situation is totally different. He is welcomed at their home and fulfils his role as uncle with love and joy.

While still in the gay church Gerhard met his current partner. He laughs and says that they met at Bible study. His partner was just recovering from a very broken relationship, and Gerhard was emerging from a state of confusion, but he says the two of them hit it off from the very beginning, agreeing that they would not play any emotional games with each other as some couples-to-be sometimes do.

An interesting aspect is that the two of them decided not to have a physical relationship for a period of six months, but to put God first, learn to pray together and get to know each other first before pursuing a physical relationship. Looking back he feels that it was a good decision, as they got to know each other on a much deeper level, although many gay friends saw this decision as old-fashioned and even extraordinary. They sealed their relationship physically at the end of that year during a special holiday, which they both jokingly called their honeymoon. They have been in a relationship for eight years now.

On the family front, however, things became very, very difficult. Gerhard says:

“With my mother gone, the family soon started to fall apart. My father simply did not have the emotional energy or tools to keep this from happening. I lost the close relationship with his siblings, me being gay and living a different lifestyle certainly not helping. I tried to bring the family together, driving long distances to visit everyone, listening to frequent complaints about other family members on the phone and praying for a reunion. I received a lot of resistance, especially from my sister-in-law. This was quite surprising as she had many gay friends at university. The situation just deteriorated and came to a point where I rarely saw and talked to my family members. I felt extremely isolated during these years.”
About two years into their relationship Gerhard and his partner jointly discovered new truths about the Bible and about God and they investigated the doctrine and the beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They became convinced that this was the Truth and became baptized members of the church, where they now both serve as deacons. Given the strong protestant belief in ‘Sola Scriptura’ of the SDA church, both Gerhard and his partner decided to put their sexuality in front of God and live in a non-sexual relationship as partners. He describes this as a new spiritual battle but also one in which he is discovering God’s love and provision in the most amazing ways.

He says that the challenge in a non-sexual relationship is to glue it together spiritually, socially and personally, continually trying to find ways to renew it. He feels that he and his relationship with his partner are maturing, and that they are building a life together not founded on or focusing on sex. “This is not always very easy,” he emphasises.

Gerhard explains the intricacies of living in a non-sexual relationship. He comments on a phenomenon which he observes in sexual relationships irrespective of whether they are gay or heterosexual in today’s life. If the relationship is too much focused on physical gratification and demands, the relationship falls apart if the sex is not working out. The challenge in his relationship is to be a good partner, while at the same time being your own person. He feels that the non-physical relationship brings its own challenges in that you need to find other ways of bonding and find meaning in the relationship.

Gerhard sings as a tenor in the Palissander Chamber Choir. He explains that his partner is very supportive and that he often goes with him to choir events and even toured with the choir on three occasions. Although his partner was not at all musical initially, he has developed a real love for choir and other types of classical music through Gerhard.

Gerhard says that he feels safe and also supported as his partner and he are in a similar situation with regard to the church they are now serving in, together with their religious convictions and beliefs. He tells me that they played open cards with the pastor before they were baptised. The response was that if they are celibate nothing stops them from
becoming full members of the SDA church. They both understand that this is church doctrine and does not come from a place of judgment and prejudice, but from a loving and earnest interpretation of what the Bible says.

That pastor left the church and with the arrival of a much younger and less experienced pastor, they were faced with a new challenge: they had both been nominated to serve as deacons in the church as well as other leadership functions and duties, and the new pastor might not be as accepting as the old pastor. They were confronted with a difficult decision: “To inform the new pastor or not.” They decided to pray about it and went to see the new pastor. His immediate response was that they could not serve as deacons under these circumstances. Gerhard relates that they both felt crushed, but that they also felt that they could not leave the church as it had the truth and they had become fond of their new brothers and sisters.

However, a year later and having also built a relationship with the new pastor, the time came for the special committee to nominate the new serving members for the following year. Gerhard’s partner was part of that committee and he tells me that his partner could hardly believe his ears when the pastor recommended both of them as deacons again, plus a number of other duties in church. Gerhard puts this down to the pastor getting to know them, doing his own soul searching, making trouble to visit them at home and realising that they were in fact living as they said they were.

They served faithfully for a year and were re-nominated for a second term, but this time things were a bit harder. Word got around that Gerhard and his partner were gay and living together. The opinion of some church members was that gays, or even those suspected of being gay, should not serve on the church board. This lead to several hard discussions with members of the congregation, even in resulting in two long-standing elders in the Church resigning from their positions.

“This was a very sad situation for me to see that people you considered friends and looked up to could turn on you so quickly without even trying to discuss the situation with you. But I decided in the end that this was their problem, not mine. It is still a sticky point and
the battle is not over yet. But we can already see the impact. A young gay guy recently started coming to Church service and he one day commented to my partner that he finds the congregation very accepting of gay people. But we knew that this was the result of a ‘fight’ that we had started a year before.”

He emphasises that it is so hard to remain loving towards those who condemn you. But God is faithful and has shown them both how many people in church are lovingly accepting them and supporting them.

Gerhard mentions that one of the church members asked him why he and his partner do not stand up in front of the whole congregation and give their testimony. His response was, he tells me, that he is simply not willing to expose himself in that way, and to people who do not have the beginnings of an understanding of the path a gay person has to travel, full of spiritual perils and pitfalls. “And for what purpose?” he asks. “Being a gay person comes with an extra load of trouble and weight. The worst of all is that you often are expected to defend yourself or explain yourself in a few sentences, when it has taken the gay person a lifetime of experiences to get to an understanding and a peace with a situation they cannot change, but have to learn to live with.”

He ends off laughing as he tells me about an attitude he has learnt to adopt over the years. He first spontaneously experienced it when he was invited to a birthday celebration of one of the ladies in his previous choir. Relationships had grown stale between him and some members and again Gerhard’s being gay - ‘possibly’ - had led to the members marginalising him. This specific lady was very much in love with Gerhard and he had to tell her that things would not happen the way she saw it. It was hard for her, but she had the nobility of character of still inviting him to her celebration. The rest of the circle of friends was of a different opinion. He relates how the group was merry and actively partaking in conversation when he arrived, a bit later that the rest of them. The group suddenly went quiet and grim in their outward condemnation and open demonstration of their non-acceptance of him being there. It was one of those uncomfortable and awkward situations.
He laughs heartily when he tells me of this loud and victorious inner voice and stance that almost took a hold of him at that moment. It sounded something like this..."If this is who you are and how you want to treat me...I am going to eat my cake and ‘F’ right off!!" This is very unusual for Gerhard as I had never heard him use strong language before. But the energy and victory in his voice tell of a long battle with the repeated pains of social rejection that had preceded that moment. He adds in a very humorous fashion that he liked the cake very much and could not for the life of him see any reason why he should let them spoil it for him.

6.1.2.4 Looking back

We approach the end of the series of interviews and I start asking Gerhard more general questions trying to tap into his own personal life lessons as a gay male in South Africa today. I ask him if he is experiencing a state of freedom after all that he has told me and after all the struggles on almost every level of his life that one can think of. He is pensive when he answers and tells me that, yes it is a place of freedom he has arrived at, but that the struggles are continuing internally sometimes - the spiritual struggle on how to live in harmony with himself and with God and to keep his lifestyle within the precepts and in accordance with the will and the Word of God.

I ask him if these struggles are sometimes triggered by events in the world and he immediately answers that they are normally social in nature. He explains that the social struggle is now fiercer than ever before and we discuss the reasons why, paradoxically, this should be so at exactly the time when Gerhard has reached a place of greater self-acceptance. He feels that now he is claiming his place in a much bolder way than ever before and now he is brushing shoulders with those elements in society who will not have it so.

He feels that most people in society just do not have any tools to deal with the gay issue, nor do they have a frame of reference to think properly about this (in their eyes) strange phenomenon. Gerhard points out that he distinguishes between two segments in society.
Those who try to approach and understand the issues that are part and parcel of gay reality – however unrefined and rudimentary – and those who point blank reject the very notion that these people have any right to a dignified life and will not entertain sharing thoughts, space of anything with them. They see gays as downright disgusting and are definitely on the list of the vile, and the unwanted.

He describes to me how interactions still today can send shockwaves through him, when he realises that such die hard sentiments co-exist with us in society. These elements will continue to deal with any gay person as a persona non grata in secular social circles and as anathema in religious circles.

I ask Gerhard to give me real life examples of such events in his life that could illustrate the ongoing and utter rejection by certain elements in society.

6.1.2.5  Examples of social slaps in the face

He begins by telling me of an incident when he one day went to the Wimpy for lunch and he noticed a couple there. He thought that he recognised them from university and was probably looking in their direction more often than usual, trying to jog his memory. Gerhard explains the shock and horror when he realised that they thought he was flirting with the man, who was also quite good looking. Gerhard remembers how the look of utter disgust on their faces hit home and he was reminded that respect and dignity for a gay person in society was certainly not a given. The fact that this incident left a mark and is still so vivid in his memory is evidence of the severity of it.

Another point that Gerhard mentions is the obvious link in main stream society’s minds between homosexuality and paedophilia. With a mixture of horror, shame and amazement he tells me the story of when he and his partner attended a church service at the Anglican Church in Grahamstown, in the old Mother Church. They were there on holiday and instead of just visiting the church building as a landmark and a place of architectural interest and
beauty, they decided to also attend a church service, although neither of them were Anglican.

Tea and chocolate cake were served after the mass and they got into a friendly discussion with a lady in her early fifties. During the conversation they did mention that they were from the Gay Reforming Church in Pretoria. Before they could say another word, the lady interrupted and said that she just needed to pledge the Blood of Christ on them, and that she does not understand why God keeps on throwing gays at her and that there was something that she most probably had to do or learn. She did however keep the rapport going between the three of them and continued by giving an example of a gay man who had crossed her path in a similar setting – it being the church – and she added that: ‘He was also a paedophile…’

Gerhard tries to explain the perplexity that he and his partner experienced at her words, and what is more, that she in all of this felt that firstly she was friendly towards them, secondly that she was tolerant and thirdly that she was doing the Lord’s will and was having a warm welcoming social chat with two men from Pretoria. Gerhard says that there are not words to describe the impact of her response to them. He recalls sitting in their rented car driving up the road towards Rhodes University, the next point of interest on their map. The nausea had removed the hunger they had felt before and decided to skip lunch. There was utter silence in the car and the silence was broken by Gerhard’s partner asking him: “So, how are you doing in the line of paedophilia these days my dear…?”

They laughed and related the story backwards and forwards to each other trying desperately to come to some place of understanding of where this lady and her frame of reference could have come from. Gerhard says that the whole afternoon and the days to follow were consumed by talking about the incident and trying to get to grips with it.

Gerhard feels that incidents like these are never infrequent in the life of a gay person and that you are never allowed to forget that you are not just here by God’s grace but by the grace of society as well.
The “obvious link” between paedophilia and being gay was thrown in his face once again when a handyman was working on the plot where Gerhard and his partner live. The man had brought his little son along to the plot to play while his dad was working. The dad was totally accepting by the look of things of the obvious two male owners of the plot and had done work for them on a number of occasions. Gerhard knew this as he and his partner would always consult together in the presence of the handyman regarding changes to be made to the house.

At one point Gerhard took a picture of the little boy sitting next to Gerhard’s dog as he felt that it was such a beautiful image of Boy and Dog. He showed it to the man the next day thinking that he would share it with him, given the beautiful “Kodak Moment” captured of his son. The handyman’s reaction was that he was very uncomfortable with people taking pictures of his son, as one never knows what they were going to do with it. Gerhard says it felt like a bucket of cold water in his face. He immediately deleted the picture off his phone.

But these kinds of onsl Attorney can also come from much closer circles as Gerhard learnt from his sister-in-law. He tells me that this was particularly hurtful as he had gotten to know his sister-in-law as part of the Alabama Student Group in Potchefstroom where a lot of the group’s members were gay and she had a lot of gay friends. He made the assumption that she was gay-friendly and open minded, but that was a huge mistake as he would learn later.

After the birth of her first son (Gerhard was excited about being the perfect uncle), she started keeping her child away from Gerhard and his partner. He confronted his father about this, saying that he felt that she thought he would do something to his little nephew. His father’s response was that it was not the case. However, he confirmed that the sister-in-law felt that Gerhard and his partner might influence the boy to grow up being gay himself.

Gerhard describes his feelings as shock, disbelief and utter hurt that penetrated him to his core. He can still not believe that educated people are capable of believing such things about gay people and put you in that box without question and without doubt on their side. He still feels sad as he had dreams of being a super uncle, knowing that he would never have kids of his own. Gerhard tells me that no matter how hard he tries to rationalise and
make excuses for his family and in particular his sister-in-law, he feels that he just cannot. He sees it as plainly malicious and cruel and he asks himself if he has ever forgiven them for that.

He explains to me that those incidents have ruined his spontaneous relationship with kids as these reactions by adults will always haunt him and be in the back of his mind. The boy is now seven years old and Gerhard tells me that he has seen his nephew and niece about three times over the last five years.

6.1.2.5  Slaps from the pulpit and from Christians

Gerhard tells me of the regular anti-gay sermons that would be machine gunned down at him (or at least if felt as if the words were intended only for him) from the pulpit before he joined the gay church, in the ‘BE YEA CURSED’ kind of manner and our conversation returns to the anti-gay sentiments that still prevail in our churches.

He remarks that absolute misinformation rules regarding gays and that no distinction is made between gays in active gay relationships and those who are abstinent given their personal religious convictions. And no consideration is given to gays who want to live close to God, whether they are sexually active or not. He also feels that church members are very vocal and insensitive when the topic arises. Even the word GAY is uttered by some with a face that shows absolute disgust and aversion. The havoc and anxiety that this creates in a gay believer is excruciating. The feelings of wanting to flee from your place of worship are so incompatible with the word “sanctuary”, which is used to describe the house of God, creating a sense of a peaceful and safe place. The image of God is so distorted by words like those, and the gay person feels not just like a sinner but like sin itself.

He gives a last example of an incident that happened in Parys one weekend. He and his partner were standing in line to pay for a few items they had purchased. In front of them were a lady and her daughter. Gerhard and his partner were asking themselves who the woman on the cover of a magazine was. It was Hannah Montana and somehow the lady in
line in front of them joined their conversation saying that all men should know who Hannah Montana was given the fact that she was almost a female idol. Gerhard’s partner jokingly remarked that he only had one idol and that was Gerhard. The woman had just paid for her stuff, picked up her shopping bags, looked at the two of them and said: “I will pray for you.”

Gerhard tries to make sense of this incident and the subtle spiritual violence that is still prevalent in society towards gays. He tells me that it is impossible to describe feelings that well up inside him when he thinks of these incidents. He tells me that this woman knew nothing about his life, his struggle with God, the hours on his knees and the impact of words like these on them, that they were sin personified and were in great need of prayer.

Gerhard also tells me that he has come to believe that the popular opinion in church is that being gay and being a Christian are mutually exclusive. There is a group of people who simply see you as an abomination and will go and gun for you and he feels that this is so because it takes the attention off of them.

Gerhard returns to the huge current hurt he is dealing with, and it is also church related. Although he and his partner played open cards with the pastor in their church before assuming their positions as deacons and explained to them that they were repentant and not engaged in a physical sexual relationship, two of the elders in the church resigned as a result and a third person is sending really hateful WhatsApp messages with the kind of wording that a gay Christian is not possible as no practicing gay can be saved. This message and image was taken from a very radical website where the followers believe that gays and Muslims should be killed. Gerhard is not able to understand why they did not engage him and his partner in conversation and tried to understand and or explain their position. They simply had a private meeting and took steps and resigned as elders.

He tells me that it is hugely hurtful to experience this degree of spiritual violence from people he thought were his brothers and sisters in Christ, who then deal with him in a manner that basically states that he and his partner are defiling the house of God and have no place or right serving there.
One of the final questions I ask Gerhard is whether he feels that heterosexual people understand gay people and his response is a resounding no. He feels that straight people only equate being gay with sexual relations with the same sex, but that it is infinitely more than that. He feels that non gay people also believe that it can be fixed and that you will be straight if you really want to be and pray earnestly enough for it. Religious people often feel that you are demon possessed and that there is a spirit inside you that must be exorcised or prayed over.

Gerhard feels that the point that they do not get, is that God is a loving Father who walks with you and who carries you and who loves you, no matter what your affliction or your sin. I ask Gerhard if he personally feels that gay sex is a sin in the eyes of God and he answers that he battles with that one but that he must embrace the Word of God in faith. He continues:

“I believe that God created man and woman for purposes of a family and mutual intimacy and love and in that sense the homosexual act is not God ordained. It is difficult as we are sexual creatures who long for intimacy with the ones we love, but that too is really not the end of the world. There are many more ways of expressing your love and intimacy with your loved one as just via the sexual. This is another point of isolation and alienation from other gays, as my partner and I represent a splinter minority of gays who do not believe that the sexual act between same sex partners is condoned by God. But it is very hard to practically live this out.”

I ask him if he believes there will ever be total social acceptance of gays in society. He does not, telling me that people do not take the time nor make the effort to engage and discuss the matter with gay people themselves. They take short cuts and use stereotypes to fill gaps where their understanding and thinking cannot reach. He gives the example of parents of gays who will time and again say that they have always known about gays and thought that they accepted them until their own children told them they were gay. Only then, Gerhard feels, do many of them read books, research and truly try to enter into the subjective reality of the gay person.
We also talk about another phenomenon which he terms pseudo acceptance of gays, but is much more on an absurd kind of entertainment level where the non-gay person, which are normally women, will adopt the stereotypical gay language and gestures when dealing with her gay friends. Gerhard feels that that is most probably worse that all of the above as it totally undermines the dignity and authenticity of the gay person.

In conclusion Gerhard explains to me that one finds peace, when one defines and lives by ones uniquely chosen values in life and stick to them.

He talks about wholesome values and activities for him such as singing in the choir and appreciating music, art and gardening. He warns against letting go of the values in your life that give your life meaning and running after the hedonistic life which is very prevalent in gay society, such as clubbing, sex, alcohol and drugs. This is regressing to a low level animalistic life. He elaborates on this and feels that a large percentage of gays fall victim to despair and in that they give up who they truly are and become loud hedonistic clones who lose themselves and the lives God gives each and every one of His creatures, His children.

He also lives by a credo which was instilled into him by his mother, namely, not to take what other people say too seriously. He laughs when he tells me that he read a quote the other day which sums up a good approach for any gay person. It says; “What other people think of you is none of your business!”

But over and above that is to find your grounding in God and to cling to Him.
6.1.3 Andre Muller

6.1.3.1 Early childhood

Andre was born on the 31st of May 1958 in Pretoria as the youngest of four siblings. There was a big gap between him and his eldest brother of about twenty years. There was a very strong bond between his mother and him and he feels he was the blue eyed boy. Although his parents were not divorced, they lived separately and he hardly ever saw his father.

He describes his childhood as carefree and good. But he did feel lonely at times as he practically grew up alone, given the fact that his siblings were so much older than him. He tells me that his mother made no secret of the fact that she hated men, and that that was one of her and her female friends’ favourite topics of conversation. Andre laughs and says that he would then always comfort his mother by telling her that he was different from other men and that he would marry her one day. He says he feels that that was kind of a prophetic. He feels that it had to do with the fact that his father was a womaniser, which had led to the separation. When Andre visited his father he remembers that there were always different women, who would spend the weekend with them. At home it was him, his sister and his mom. This was his reference to a family.

6.1.3.2 Very early sexual awakenings

Andre’s story is unique in two ways, namely that he was sexually experimenting from the early age of five and that it was ongoing throughout puberty and early adulthood. He hardly ever had any feelings of guilt and shame regarding that. He tells me with gusto how he and his little friend would put Milo powder into their mouths in the kitchen and then run to the bedroom, get under the bed and experiment orally on each other.

Andre laughs when I ask him if he had seen this anywhere as an example. He emphasises that it was purely instinctual. He had absolutely no concept of what ‘gay’ might be at that age and he subsequently also had no guilt concerning that. He explains that he and his
friend fit those things into their daily games and playing as they would anything else. It enjoyed neither more, nor less attention. It simply was and that was that.

This also happened with other boys the same age as him and the group of about four boys all were consensual about it, considering it to be quite normal. Nobody instigated it more than the others that could lead to only one culprit identified.

Andre says that he was beginning to cognitively be aware that he might be gay at the age of ten, while in primary school, when he realised that he liked his male friends a lot more than he did his female friends. Again it did not trouble him. He also did not associate with the concept of “Moffie” which he heard from his older brothers when they spent weekends at home from boarding school. He says he simply laughed at the jokes too and did not feel targeted in the least.

Andre was sent to boarding school at Kameelfontein at the age of ten, a year before his mother died. The reason for this was that she felt that her relationship with Andre was too strong and that he needed to be more in the company of boys and other men. Andre enjoyed that very much – also in a sexual way – as one of the older boys (one year older) would invite Andre to his bed at night. He was happy to oblige. It happened frequently and was not a secret; it happened in the dormitory which was shared with twenty other boys. Andre thought that it was simply part of boarding school tradition. Kameelfontein was a small “plaas” (farm) school with only about 500 children in total, with 100 staying in the boarding school. There were donkeys and they could even go to school barefoot. He enjoyed it tremendously.

Andre tells me that his being a minister today also has its roots in his boarding school days. His spiritual and his sexual awakening coincided beautifully. He grew up in a Christian home but his mom was not a church goer. That changed when he went to boarding school. He loved church service and he and his friends built a little church on the playground, where Andre would “preach” to them. He knew then already, at the age of ten, that he was going to be a pastor one day.
6.1.3.3 The death of his mother

Andre’s mother died in a vehicle accident en route to Kenhardt, sixty kilometres south of Upington in the Northern Cape Province. They were on a dirt road and hit a sand bank. She was not dead on impact but died the same day in the Kenhardt hospital. Andre was eleven years old. His mom was rushed off to the hospital and he was left on the scene, from where he was taken to a neighbouring farm. Andre remembers how difficult it was for him to wash his mother’s blood from his hands.

There in the bathroom Andre said to God that if He spared his mom he would become a “dominee” one day. She passed away later that same day but Andre still became a pastor. He realised that “we are not to put conditions to God. His loving ways are not our ways”.

Kenhardt was Andre’s mother’s place of birth and she was buried there. He tells me that it was difficult as the accident happened three days before Christmas, with the funeral a day before Christmas. Andre tells me that he was in standard five, at the end of the school year, and that he remembers showing little emotion at the death of his mother. A month later however, at high school boarding school – Afrikaans Hoër Seuns Skool – in the corridor between classes, he just had a total emotional outpouring of his sorrow. His reaction was so intense that the person trying to help him there in the corridor believed Andre to just have received news of his mother’s death.

It is also relevant to note that he was at this school because his mother had made arrangements for this before her death. His mourning period lasted for the first year at high school. He was supported at the time by very influential and financially powerful people (parents of friends) who frequently invited him to their homes. Andre noted that he then already received his training in dealing with the upper echelons of Afrikaans society in Pretoria. It was a training that would stand him in good stead for what was lying ahead for him.

Andre’s brother, being twenty years his senior, obtained custody of Andre via the Children’s Court. He explains that his brother did not want Andre to fall into the hands of his father. It
is also relevant to mention that Andre was the minister who buried his father years later. The relationship was however never developed and was limited to two visits a year. Andre refers to his father as his biological parent but not his “dad” or his “father”.

Andre tells me that at the age of eleven his idea of God was very real already and that he did not understand anything of a trinity or deep theology, but conceived of God in terms of a “grand father figure”. God was firstly the Creator and He was a loving being for him in his child-like mind.

6.1.3.5 A continued normal sexual development

Andre is remarkable in that he stands out amongst the research subjects as having had a very “normal” sexual development, albeit a “gay” sexual development.

He tells me that he became known as the official masseur for the first rugby team at school. It was common practice for the team members to come to his room for a therapeutic massage, and it stayed at that, he says, but laughs as he says there were a few exceptions. He tells me that it was a very prestigious school, as in those days all the cabinet ministers’ sons attended Afrikaans Seuns Hoër Skool. His high school years were from 1972 to 1976. André says he feels privileged to have mixed with very high society back then and that he was often invited to their homes. He mentions that some of his friends from back then are members of Parliament today. He does not want to mention their names. He does feel that it was an important part of his forming years and that it prepared him for later dealings with people the likes of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. At these meetings, he was not in perpetual awe of him as sometimes is the case, but could relate to them normally and cordially.

André goes on to describe himself as an artistic and a thinking person, analytical and certain that he was going to be a pastor one day.
Andre met the love of his life at that school while in Standard Six (Grade 8). His name was Matthys Cornelius, a name he hated, and wanted to be called MC only. Andre describes his love for MC in the most wonderful terms – a journey of love and sexual exploration that continued until MC died of leukaemia seventeen years later.

Andre was totally adopted into MC’s family and says he is not sure if they actually knew of the sexual relationship the two of them had; perhaps not during their high school years. But he says that they most probably hoped it was not the case. Whatever the case might have been, he never experienced any negativity from them at all.

MC and Andre’s relationship was not exclusive and both of them experimented with other boys and would compare stories and experiences. Andre tells me that theirs was a journey of discovery about who they were, but that they were always gravitating more and more towards each other.

It was in standard eight that Andre finally knew for certain that he was gay and that he was not merely going through a phase. This is looking at this period from the present perspective, although he tells me with a laugh that at the time he and MC defined themselves and concluded that they were “bisexual” and “not gay”. “Gay” was associated with being a “moffie” and they were not happy with that. In view of the fact that they did not have any sexual experience with girls, this definition of their sexual orientation was nothing but a comforting thought that would in time evaporate. The fact that they disassociated themselves from the term “gay” was also a defence mechanism as at that time, being gay was frowned upon, especially in an all-boys school. He recalls a boy in the school named Willem, who was very effeminate, earning himself the nickname of Willemiena. Andre and MC did not want to be like that, for them this was a “moffie”. They considered themselves “normal men who loved men and must thus be bisexual”.

MC was from a very affluent Afrikaans Waterkloof family, who “had farms all over the place”. Andre met prominent figures such as Magnus Malan and Mimi Coertze in MC’s home, which was quite “normal”. Andre jokes about the Afrikaans culture he grew up in and says that he only ever spoke English in “self-defence”.

161
6.1.3.6  More complicated student years

Andre tells me that they both studied at the University of Pretoria after school (“Tukkies”). Andre studied theology as he had always said he would, while MC studied law. During their student years they discovered the gay club called Athos in Pretoria.

As they already met in Standard 6, they had had no time to experiment in their newly found identity as gay men and with the clubbing scene now very new to them, jealousy and infidelity entered into their relationship. But their relationship survived those years. The bigger problem came when Andre started his final year of studies in theology and was becoming more and more aware of the fact that the Bible did not condone homosexuality. He started to distance himself from a sexual relationship with MC. But he was not always successful and if he again found himself giving in to MC’s demands, he felt horribly guilty.

Andre started believing at that time that God was going to use him as an example to gay people of how God had changed him and made him a “normal person”. While this was happening, he was also preaching this to MC. Later on, however, he also started accusing MC of being an agent of the devil and the temptation in his life. But MC stuck with him and Andre says that that was their saving grace. It was hurtful to MC and Andre was aware of that, but that was the path that their lives took. I asked Andre if he was then abstinent for a while and he laughs and say no, he was never abstinent and that he always yielded to MC’s calls, but would make him pay for it in his preaching afterwards.

6.1.3.7  Military service and trying out the heterosexual hat

Andre tells me that he then moved on in his final year to embrace the church doctrines and traditions of the Dutch Reformed Church. He explains that that is the final rounding off of studies in theology.

After university he had to complete his military service. Andre had a full Lieutenant rank as he also was a Chaplain. He remembers that the Chaplain General called them together; they were instructed to “look out for gay people”, who were in turn to be sent to or
reported to 1 Military Hospital’s Ward 22. These people were pictured as “in conflict with themselves and needed help”. Andre tells me that he had no idea at that time of the horrors of Ward 22 and Dr Aubrey Levine’s tyranny against gays.

Andre never reported a gay person. I asked him why he did not and he says in a very matter of fact way: “Well I could not see them do anything wrong!” He knew they were gay, but he did not report them. His common sense was overriding an instruction from the Chaplain General. This was happening during 1984 and 1985, coinciding with the years the “Aversion Project’ was being run at 1 Military Hospital in Voortrekkerhoogte.

Andre was stationed in the Caprivi area, on “The Border”, for the full two years of his military service. He tells me that there were teachers and medics as well who taught the local population and took care of them. He saw and identified gay people there, but befriended them rather than report them to the military authorities.

Through all of his MC remained Andre’s best friend and love, and Andre tells me that MC used to send him recorded cassettes which Andre could listen to while in the Caprivi. He even received MC’s mother as a visitor, made possible via the connections the family had to Minister Magnus Malan. She came bearing gifts and it was an awesome experience for Andre. When he left the border it was MC who picked him up at Waterkloof Airbase and they were inseparable for the entire time André was home in the Republic.

At the end of the military service the chaplains had to look for a congregation. Andre preached once at the Middelburg Dutch Reform congregation and he was immediately offered a post there. He accepted as it was the closest to MC that he could get. The congregation loved him, but immediately the questions started: “Dominee, when are you going to find yourself a wife?” Andre relates how a woman dying of cancer in her final moment still asked Andre the same question and it had an immense impact on him. “I could not believe that it would be so important to a woman on her death bed. I felt that I could not fulfil my duties as a pastor any longer without a wife next to me”, he explained.
He would visit MC at least once a week, but he would feel unclean and had to almost take a shower literally to cleanse himself of the sexual experiences with MC.

Andre then prayed about this for a long time and it was the first step towards him getting married to a beautiful woman. They courted, got engaged and were married after a year. It was a very short lived marriage – it lasted only three months before they got divorced. The reason again was MC and his undying love for Andre. Andre says that sexually all was possible with his wife, but it was “mechanical and not fulfilling” and MC was still his best friend and love. He emphasises that during this time he never betrayed his wife.

He tells of his ongoing friendship with MC and how they had an amazing rapport, in that they just needed to say one word and the other would understand. His wife felt excluded from this friendship. She became very jealous and set Andre an ultimatum: if he did not end the relationship with MC she was going to leave. Andre had to say farewell to his friend and never see him again. Andre says he just could not do that and defended himself by saying that MC was his best friend and she his wife and he should not have to choose.

I ask him whether he could see his wife’s point at the time. He did not initially, but she made him see it. I ask him if he loved her and hesitantly he says that he did; and more than that, he was infatuated with her beauty as she was an incredibly beautiful woman. But MC’s involvement was absolute and ongoing. Andre tells me that MC even drove the wedding car and was his best man at the wedding ceremony.

His wife made an immediate decision, walked to the bedroom and started packing her belongings and returned to her parents. This was the eve of the biggest spiritual battle for Andre.

6.1.3.8 The hearing and the expulsion from the Dutch Reformed Church

The very next morning an older pastor arrived at Andre’s house. Andre’s wife had told the family about the fact that Andre was having a relationship with a man. The pastor told
Andre that it was unacceptable and if he wanted to remain a pastor, he would have to appear in front of a committee of pastors of the region, during which his case would be heard and decided upon. Andre explains that while the elder pastor never used the word “gay” it was strongly implied and suggested. It was also implied that this “circle hearing” would be a long and drawn out process and that it would inevitably end up in Andre being suspended from his duties as pastor and a termination of his position as pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The pastor intended for Andre to choose a quicker way, which would easier for everybody involved – a simple letter of resignation.

The ultimate death blow was the fact that Andre was supposed to preach that Sunday and he was not allowed to. The older pastor took the sermon and chose Revelations 22 verses 10 to 13 which read as follows:

“Then he told me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Andre was asked to immediately vacate his residence, without any farewell and no goodbyes. Andre describes the incredible pain and his rage with God, Who he felt did not bring His part in their relationship. Blinded with sadness and rage Andre says that he became “almost like an atheist” for a while and collected all his Bibles and discarded them into a municipal dumpster.

He was contacted by the Dutch Reformed Church where he had served as a pastor and they demanded that he repay his study loan at once and wanted to know how an amount of R160 still owed to him was to be handled. Would Andre come and fetch it or would they need to send him a check?
6.1.3.9  More pain and a solemn promise

He called MC and told him what had happened. MC welcomed him and offered him a place to stay. Andre moved in with MC which was the start of “a most blissful two years with MC.” Andre says that his anger with God continued for about six months when it was again MC who persuaded Andre to return to God and to the church.

I ask Andre what he did in the line of work and earning an income since he was not allowed to practice what he had studied for. He obtained a position at the Department of Home Affairs, where he got involved in the rewriting of the Marriage Act, something that has served him well, as today marriage contracts form a core of his work.

One day the same older pastor arrived at his house and asked him: “Andre is there something you want to tell me?” Andre says he knew that the pastor wanted a confession that he was gay, but Andre was defiant and refused to give him the pleasure. The pastor insisted and asked the same question from different angles. He finally said to Andre that he should know that he would never again be able to serve as a pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church and the reason he gave was: “You have blood on your hands”. He elaborated by comparing Andre’s situation to that of King David, who was not allowed to build a temple for God, because he also had blood on his hands. Andre was devastated.

One day MC returned from gym with a rather big bruise on the back of his knee and his calf. He went to the doctor and it was diagnosed as acute Leukaemia. MC was given six months to live. Two weeks after the diagnosis, on the 23rd of August 1991, MC died. But on his deathbed he made Andre promise that he would start a church for gay people.

Andre reflects on MC’s last words to him and he tells me that he knows that this must have taken all the courage that he could muster, given the fact that while MC was in hospital he was visited by a hospital chaplain who tried to get MC to denounce his love and his relationship with Andre. The chaplain told MC that he knew very well that if he entered into
eternity like he was; that he would be condemned by God to hell, and that he should repent and denounce his relationship with Andre. MC was defiant and simply said that he loved God and knew that his love for Andre was not wrong in the eyes of God.

It would be a year before Andre delivered on his promise to his love and his friend. After MC’s death Andre resigned at Home Affairs as he saw a business opportunity registering births at hospitals. He tells me that it was then a very cumbersome process to get a birth registered. It was a huge success and he took his services to other hospitals all over Pretoria. That went very well and he decided to expand to Cape Town and had the same launched there. It was while he was there that he read big headlines in the newspaper about Hendrik Pretorius starting the first gay church in Pretoria.

Andre remembered his promise to MC and he contacted Hendrik Pretorius with the intention to partake in his ministry to gay people. After a while Andre knew that working with Hendrik would never be possible as he had New Age ideas that were not compatible with what Andre believed. Andre also could not identify with and get on with Hendrik, whom he describes as an angry young man, who wanted to fight with other churches. Andre did not want to fight with them but cooperate with the vision of integration with mainstream churches eventually.

Hendrik also loved the limelight and would invite interviews and TV coverage. Andre says that it was two years before the fall of apartheid and the anti-gay laws were still in full swing, so congregation members were nervous about being exposed. However, Hendrik still got TV crews to be present at services, despite the pleas of the members. “Anonymity was still the name of the game back then”, says Andre, “people often gave up false names at gay clubs to protect their identity”.

In a final newspaper article Hendrik Pretorius distanced himself from the gay community in the brashest of terms, stating that they could not be trusted and that there was no way that he could ever be a pastor in the gay community again. That was the end of the first gay church in South Africa.
6.1.3.10  A short history of the Reforming church

A year after MC died, Andre started the Reforming Church, and with that kept his promise to MC. Below is a short history starting with the failure of the first gay church in South Africa.

“Ds André refused to believe that the need for these people to worship together had ceased as well. This was confirmed when he consulted with former members. A new church was subsequently established in August 1992. Acknowledging Pretorius’ pioneering work, the new church adopted the name Reformerende Kerk/Reforming Church, emphasising reformation as an ongoing process.

Initially, the small group of believers had their worship meetings in a gay club. More than once they first had to clear the venue of reminders of the previous night’s revelry before starting the service.

One night, they unexpectedly arrived at locked doors. The club had closed down. They then moved to another club across the road. This one soon closed down as well. For two Sundays this group of believers held their worship service in the open air at Springbok Park.

Throughout all of this, Ds André unceasingly and resolutely made enquiries in order to find a suitable venue. His attempts were in vain. The request was turned down every time when he informed them that it was going to be used for ministering to gay Christians.

Almost at the end of his tether, Ds André finally turned to the former minister at the Andrew Murray Church. The Rev. Brian Cross merely replied: ‘I represent Christ. Christ would not have turned you away. Neither will I.’ The rest is history, as they say. Since early 1993 the congregation of the Reforming Church Pretoria has been meeting every Sunday and Tuesday night in the Andrew Murray Church, Bailey’s Muckleneuk,
Pretoria. The two congregations maintain and enjoy cordial relations.” (online at http://www.oulitnet.co.za/god/boshoff_muller.asp, retrieved on 10 December 2015.)

The dream MC had for Andre had come true. From then on Andre has truly become a gay icon in South African society and has contributed immensely to gay rights and making South Africa a better place for gay people in general. I ask Andre to elaborate on what have become his main areas of work for the gay community.

6.1.3.11 The Constitutional Court and Andre’s contribution to gay South African society

Andre feels that legalising gay marriage has been one of his greatest contributions to gay South African society. He tells me of the very first gay marriage that took place in South Africa, between Cecilia Bonthuis and Mare Fourie in 1994. He was the pastor and marriage counsellor. It was still unlawful at the time but they went ahead with it in any case. He married them and then took the marriage certificate to Home Affairs. It was immediately rejected.

He laughs when he tells me of the vigour and the energy of Marie Fourie and how she pushed for her love to her partner, Cecelia, to be recognised. A court battle ensued between Fourie and Home Affairs. There was at the time an organisation called the “Marriage Alliance”, which sided with the Department. Andre remembers how interesting it was that the Minister of Home Affairs was there in court, quoting from the Bible, as if he were a church minister, against the marriage of gay people. Andre describes the day the panel of judges ruled unanimously for the legalisation of gay marriage and the jubilation and celebration on the side of gay people and in the newspapers.

The conversation now moves to Bible texts on same-sex sex. We agree to use this term as Andre says there was in the Greek Bible no word for “gay” or “homosexual”. His work and his battle in the field of Bible translation have to do with what he believes to be a misconstrued condemnation of all same sex relationships and he differs on that. He says the Bible is explicitly pointing towards promiscuous sex and, more specifically, as were
practiced in pagan religions in the framework of fertility rites and temple prostitution. Nowhere, he says, are loving committed relationships between same sex partners condemned in the Bible.

In 2005, Andre had a public debate with Gerhard Kritzinger of the Bible Society in which Kritzinger agreed that there was a problem with the word gay, first used in 1876. Andre feels that there should be no need for a separate gay church but as long as gay members of other churches are not allowed in church, there is a real need for a congregation such as his as a sanctuary for gays seeking to worship in peace.

We briefly discuss the recent news headlines in South Africa stating that the Dutch Reformed Church was going to open their doors to gay members as well, and the retraction exactly one week later. Andre feels that it is again the societal draw back. The members of the churches became vocal and the idea was withdrawn by the synod.

Andre tells me about the MCC church in America, being the first official gay church in the world. They contacted him in 1997 and asked if there was any way that Rev. Troy Perry could meet and have an audience with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Rev. Perry thought that it would be possible for Andre to organise the meeting more easily as he was here in South Africa. It took Andre three months to get the meeting booked and he laughs when he recalls Desmond Tutu commenting to Rev. Perry how he should appreciate Andre as “he is a very persistent man”.

Andre tells me that the conversation amongst the three men was about the concept of the gay Christian, and the view of the Anglican Church of “love the sinner but hate the sin”, which is shared by most churches. Andre says that in other words, one can be gay but not have gay sex. He says that Desmond Tutu was very loving and kind in his words and that he felt the meeting was a success.

We then discuss what he feels it means to be gay and if it is only limited to same sex acts, to which he laughs and replies: “It most definitely is not. Being gay is a very different
orientation towards life, society and self-expression that can maybe be seen in terms of gender roles as being more in touch with your feminine side.”

In conclusion we discuss Andre’s hopes for the gay church. He sees the gay church as one that is able to dissolve and that all the members can go back to their own churches, where they may worship in peace and be accepted. Rejection he feels is the most painful thing that you can do to another person and he says that he feels it happens to gay people as they represent everything that mainstream society see and feel is unnatural.

6.1.4 Marius Oelschig

6.1.4.1 Early childhood

Marius was born on the 1st of April 1971 in Oudtshoorn. He was an only child. His father was in the military at a very high rank. Although he has no clear memory of the first years of his life, he tells me that at the age of four his mother decided to leave his father due to infidelity and Marius feels that, from what he could since then gather, it was not the only incident of his father cheating on his mother.

This happened while they were in Angola where his father was stationed as the South African Military Attaché. Marius’s feelings about his father are not very positive and he puts that down to the fact that his mother and he had to suffer a great deal financially while he was growing up due to the early separation. He tells me that he has no recollections of Angola and that his first memories are of him and his mother in a little flat back in South Africa. They lived in Kempton Park for the duration of his primary and high school years. He attended Norcam Park Primary as well as High School. He adds that his mother never bad-mouthed his dad, although she would tell Marius the truth when he asked questions later on in his life regarding his dad and the relationship his parents had before the separation.

For some reason Marius recalls his strong willed rebellion even in grade one. He would early in the day, if the fancy took him, pack his little school bag and leave school, walk home
and sit on the balcony of their home, playing with his cat until his mother returned from work. This happened on numerous occasions and he is not able to tell me why that happened, he simply says: “I no longer felt like sitting in class”. Fact of the matter is: Marius also did not feel any restraint by teachers or convention, stopping him from doing as he pleased.

One day he decided to go to his aunt’s house instead and that was a mistake, he tells me, as she promptly took him back to school. He never did that again. With his secret about truancy now out, family arrangements were soon made. His grandparents moved to Kempton Park and Marius and his mother moved in with them. Now granny was the one keeping a watchful eye on him. He enjoyed being taken care of by his grandparents. Friday afternoons he remembers getting into the car with his grandfather and driving off to their farm and spending the weekend there. “Happy times!”

This strong willed attitude, he says, has remained part of his personality until this very day. He chooses a direction and then he goes.

Marius describes his mother as a nervous wreck. He also tells me that from an early age he has always tried to keep anxiety provoking things away from her in a protective kind of way. He would try to smooth things over, defuse situations and encourage his mother to feel more secure and optimistic. These memories are particularly clustered around his high school years. She would worry about absolutely everything and he remembers her being often very despondent and very depressed. But she could at the same time endure an incredible amount of pressure, despite this predisposition. She used medication for her depression. He uses words such as “tense” and “intense” to describe her and he tells that she had a nervous twitch in her face and that she would chew the inside of her mouth until it bled. He laughs and makes light of the situation in his typical humorous way by saying that he does not think that she has slept since the early seventies. He adds that he finally managed to convince his mom to go and see a psychologist about two years ago, at the age of 68, and that it is actually now bearing positive results.
Marius makes an amazing remark: “I know my mother is still in love with my womanising father although they separated and never got back together after 1975.” His mother maybe dated once or twice in the entire period after their separation, but nothing came of it. She is still single to this day.

Regarding the period of financial stress, Marius tells me that he always had enough to eat and his school uniform was taken care of, but that was basically it. He can only remember four holidays away from home during his entire school going years. He can remember a trip to the Kruger Park with only his mom and a trip to Cape Town, which he laughs and says he hated, “because it was not Durban!” And then he can remember two trips to Durban with his aunt and cousins, which he enjoyed. His farther did continue supporting them financially, although at a minimum.

Marius tells me that I must understand and accept that he has always been gay and that he can remember finding other boys cute and attractive even in primary school. He does not ever recall having those feelings reciprocated in his early childhood, up to standard eight. He remembers a boy in the choir, the son of the conductor. They lived around the corner from Marius and he would often receive a lift with them to choir on a Friday afternoon. This boy would often visit Marius’s home and they would masturbate together, but without touching each other. He tells me that he enjoyed it, but he neither had a crush on the boy, nor was he ever anxious about being found out.

He does tell me of an interesting phenomenon though. While he and the boy were experimenting at Marius’s home, the same boy and his best friend at choir would make sarcastic and biting comments towards Marius at choir rehearsals. Today both of these boys are also gay, but they were trying to distance themselves from it in a social setting at the time.

Albert Elliott, a matric first team rugby player was Marius’s first real and official crush. He was the son of a single parent as well, in this case his father, and he was three years ahead of Marius in school. Marius tells me that his mom and Albert’s father met at a school function when Marius was in standard seven. The two single parents even went out on a
date once or twice some time later. One evening, Marius was in standard eight and Albert already first year military service, Albert visited Marius at home; they were alone while their parents were out for the evening and that was the first time he officially had a sexual experience with a man. He felt totally emotionally involved and infatuated. It did not develop into a relationship, although Albert continued to visit Marius. Marius remembers feeling quite sad that nothing had come of their relationship and tells me that just prior to this incident with Albert he came to a point where he could officially except and admit to himself that he was gay.

Apart from this incident, Marius describes his high school career as very normal. He would have a crush on some guys at school, but they ignored him and he kept very much to himself. He describes himself as skinny at the time and not sporty.

Sharing the news with his mom that he was gay was more of a problem for him as he did not know how she would react or handle such news, given her nervous disposition. This was even worse for him than what it was to come to grips personally with accepting his gay identity. He had no problems with accepting himself and who he was. But during the first year in the Air Force in 1989, he was home one evening, his mom cooking and he watching TV and he felt the urge to tell her. He tells me that the first thing she asked him was: “Have you sought help?” Marius says he lied to her; telling her that he had and that they had told him he was totally normal. He did this just to take the pressure of her in that she might have thought that she had done something wrong in his upbringing. He laughs while he tells me this and continues that she would have thought it was her fault that Iran and Iraq were at war, never mind her son being gay. There was not much more to say about his coming out to his mother, it was a done deal. His mother, however, has never really been “cool” with it. He says that with her father (Marius’s grandfather) being a Dutch Reformed, Afrikaans person and her wanting to always do the right think as a “WASP” – a White Anglo Saxon Protestant – she has never been at total peace with it. She never verbalises her denunciation of the whole “gay issue”, but Marius says he can read her like a book.

Marius’s father maintained a very low profile in his life, although he would always stay in touch with Marius and Marius always knew where his dad was. He would receive a postcard
for his birthday and for Christmas every year and even would visit his dad during a school holiday now and then, depending on where his father was based. Marius even visited his father on the border once. His father was head of intelligence and the parabats at the time. He describes his father as strikingly handsome and having the perfect physique, and he can almost understand why his mom never quite got over him. He also says that his dad spoke a number of languages, was well groomed and well mannered, but that he was fundamentally flawed because of his infidelity. Marius also added that his coming out was in no way problematic as he felt his father never featured in his life enough to constitute a problem. He came out to his father in 1996 when he met his partner, Rey, whom he still is with today, almost 20 years later.

I probe to find out why Marius feels he had the urge to come out during his first year of military service. He tells me that he thinks it had something to do with the fact that he then also went to the first gay club during a pass weekend from the Air Force. He describes the excitement of that and thinks that maybe it was then that it dawned on him that it was time to tell his mom.

Marius tells me that during that time he would at times have a crush on someone, but always maintained his distance. He gives the feeling of perhaps being guarded regarding his feelings, until 1992 when he went to this club with a best friend Hardus, also in the Air Force.

6.1.4.2 A very strong will

We have a great afternoon discussing his life and the most important events for him, but what becomes very evident is that Marius owns his freedom and he has no qualms about who he is. When he decides to do something, he pursues it with a will of iron and in a very unapologetic manner. He feels that life is there to be lived and to experience things. What is also very evident about Marius from his story is that he is totally comfortable with the fact that people make mistakes. “If and when I make a mistake, I admit it and try to correct it.” It is difficult to keep a time line with Marius as so many things did happen, but amongst
other things he went to live on a dairy kibbutz just outside of Nazareth in a little town called Afula for a year, travelled a lot and worked as a civilian air traffic controller.

He tells the hilarious story of a need for a car, which he asked his father to help him with. His father agreed, but made him sign a contract which stated that Marius would this time (the second round in the permanent force Air Force) not leave the Air Force and complete his career. Under duress Marius signed the contract. Two weeks later however, in 1996, he met his partner and fell in love, head over heels. Marius was now faced with this impossible situation: he has signed a contract with his father, binding him into a career in Saldanha Bay, while his heart was in Gauteng with his new love, Rey.

He describes the same attitude as in grade one, when he went home during school time, with the only difference that this is now twenty five years later. He again does not go to roll call, he does not collect his books and he stays in his room. He says to me that this was not real, and that he was going to fight to get what he wanted, which was ‘real’. What he wanted was to be an air traffic controller in Johannesburg at OR Tambo International Airport, near his lover. He had already made a pest of himself at OR Tambo wanting his old job back, but nobody responded to him. He stayed in his room in protest from that Monday until the Friday that week, when the phone rang. OR Tambo was offering him an interview. Marius tells me that in one day he had resigned, organised leave and arranged for a transfer to Waterkloof Airport to work his resignation period there. He had packed his car, cleared out at Saldanha Bay and at nine o’clock that night; he called Rey from Laingsburg in the Karoo, notifying him that he was on his way. He drove all night to Bloemfontein. Twenty years later they are still inseparable.

6.1.4.3 Marius reflects on his own personality

I ask Marius to reflect on the events of his life and how he has set for himself a number of goals and achieved them with great confidence, creating the impression that he is very strong willed and will “take no prisoners” in his pursuit of his goals. Surprisingly, he responds that in fact he is dreadfully scared of hurting other people and that if he could avoid that, he would definitely try. But he would not do that to his own detriment. He also
states again that he would be devastated if he knew that something he did actually hurt somebody.

He gives me the example of the time when he left the academy in Saldanha Bay. He was aware of the fact that he was breaking a contract with his dad and he was going to miss Daleen, a female colleague, but he says he felt trapped and he needed to live his own life.

Marius identifies a ten year cycle in his life when he needs big change; the first being when he left the academy in 1995, the second cycle ended in 2005 when he felt that he could not breathe anymore because of the mundane repetitiveness of his life. He packed up with his partner and his dogs and went off to Canada to live there. He did not like it there and they eventually returned to South Africa. But this was something he simply had to do. Marius says that he just needs a challenge and he likes change. He tells me that he cannot see himself stuck in his current job for much longer. This is surprising as an air traffic controller is a very prestigious position and very well paid, but there is a call, and an urgent call, for change.

6.1.4.4 The birth of a dream

I ask Marius how he became an air traffic controller. He had always been besotted with planes. He tells me that his mother still has recipe books from when they were living in Angola, in which Marius drew planes all over the recipes, even with propellers turning. His love for aeroplanes goes back since he can remember. He fantasised about travelling a lot and as a child they did not have the means to travel, this became the best thing imaginable in his inner world.

One evening while he was at high school (around the age of fourteen), there was a terrible storm. His mother called him to come and listen as the air traffic control frequency was breaking into her portable radio, interrupting a programme she was listening to. He laughs and says it must have been “Squad Cars” or “Tracy Dark”. What happened that evening as Marius was listening to the communication between the tower and the aircraft, he
describes as electrifying, and definitely the highlight of his life. He knew that he had to know more and he drank every moment in. Although what he was hearing did not make sense, he knew what he was hearing and he also knew that he wanted to have that in his life and do that – become an air traffic controller. There was no doubt in his mind and he describes:

“What attracted me was that it sounded so high level and important. I thought that only a very selected highly trained group of people could ever do this, and I wanted that for myself. It was an exhilarating rush that flooded my entire being.”

A few years later, Marius had the opportunity to visit the tower at Wonderboom with his mom and his cousin, who was also working as an air traffic controller. Right there and then he decided that nothing would stop him. Nothing else would do.

When the time came after school for National Service, Marius’s dad made sure that he was called up for the Air Force. One thing led to another and before he knew it he was signed up for air traffic control. He signed up for the permanent force.

Marius tells me that he never thought, “Geez, how am I going to do this”, but much rather thought: “well this is now going to happen”.

Marius achieved first position in his course, and loved all of it. It was a very unusual environment for a gay person, but he did not even think in these terms. He never asks permission to be, he just does what he feels is right. But he was at the same time aware of the differences, not playing Volleyball without his shirt with the guys, who imagined that they were Top Gun stars, in total testosterone frenzy. He did everything his own way, tried to fit in and not get into conflict with the guys. But he still remained who he was. He says it did not worry him in the least that he had two lives. He had a group of gay friends in his free time and a group of straight friends in the Air Force. The two did not mix and he was absolutely fine with it.
6.1.4.5 From Methodist to atheist

Marius tells me the story of how he became an atheist. He reflects that he was a good Christian until he was about thirty-five. So for the last nine years of his life he has started drifting away from religion and now can say with conviction that he is an atheist. He says: “My faith petered out rather than my coming to an epiphany. It was much rather a process of getting bad or disappointing answers from Christians and also discovering a mismatch between what people professed to believe and how they conducted their lives”. He does say however that it was far more difficult to come out as an atheist than what it was coming out as a gay person.

He shares an incident which he still vividly remembers today. At the age of about 8 he went to Sunday school and the teacher asked the children who of them loved their parents more than they loved God. Marius was the only one to put up his hand. The teacher was shocked and told him that the Bible says that if we love anyone more than we love God, we will go to hell. Marius tells me how shocked and worried he was as he says he definitely did not want to go to hell. He continues to explain to me that as an eight year old child, his mother was everything to him. He can still recall the impact that this had on him.

Greater erosion in his faith occurred while he had to attend the Anglican Church during his military service. There were not enough Methodists to arrange Sunday transport for the military guys so they went off to the Anglican Church. Marius says that the whole liturgy and church order was so filled with pomp and ceremony that it disenchanted him in his faith.

Then finally it dawned of him one day that this whole thing is a fable, a story to comfort people, just like the Greek Mythological figures are just a story, with no truth in them. He says that he did go through a period of soul searching about the role of prayer and the Holy Spirit, and that he just could not find any other reason to continue entertaining this thing called religion as a reality in his life. He adds that the experience, as he said the words; “I am an atheist” for the first time, was almost as electrifying as the day he heard the air traffic control on the radio.
He says that he lives by the motto that says: “Don’t be an asshole”. He laughs when he says this. He elaborates that it is a kind of humanism for him.

When I comment that he seems to be the only one who has very few problems with his gay identity and that he is the only atheist, we discuss whether there might be a link. He tells me how it annoys him that the Quran, and the Torah and the Bible all hate pigs and gays, and that these statements were most probably the first seeds that were planted many moons ago and grew into him finally becoming an atheist. He reasons with me and asks me how a loving God who created us would create some of us with such a fundamental flaw as to not be accepted? He tells me that he had a fling with a gay pastor once and that that goes beyond his comprehension. He laughs and says: “Being a gay Christian is the same as a chicken being pro-KFC!”

Marius tells me that he was not “going hard ball” into anything but just applies his mind to what happens around him. When he looks at the different races and the differences between the races, this for him is proof enough of evolution. So the need for believing in creation is just not there.

6.1.4.6 What makes a person gay?

I ask Marius what it is he believes makes a person gay. Is it the sex or is there more? He responds that the sex is a part of it. He mentions that he never in his entire life had an erotic dream that involved a woman, even when he sporadically dated girls at school. So your sexuality must involve subconscious dynamics that influence many other aspects of your life. He says it very bluntly that “your gayness is in your head and not in your pants”.

I ask him how he gets on with the gay sub-culture. He notes that it is impossible to answer as it is an individual thing, but that the masses “give him the creeps”. He says he hates the “bitches” and the “pretenders”. He prefers people who can reason, and who stand for something and argue a point in life. He says he simply likes adults and does not care if you are a “screaming queen”, as long as you have substance and backbone as a human being. He repeats that he does not like dim witted people.
Regarding the club scene he feels that it has never been his thing and he personally thinks it’s a bit lame. To spend your life as one big stretch from one party to the next as a lifestyle is utterly boring.

6.1.4.7 Marius talks about his twenty year relationship with Rey

We laugh a lot when Marius makes the very humorous remark that his relationship with his partner Rey is the best thing in his life. He adds that they are into this for the long haul and that the next stop is “Zimmer frames and wheelchairs”. He says he imagines the two of them wearing oxygen masks and painting on their oxygen tanks. And this sense of loyalty he has known since day one. He says that if they ever had to split up he will never be in a relationship again. He then says that what is astonishing to him is that his parents only managed seven years of marriage, but that he, as an absolute sinner in the religious sense, has managed twenty years.

Marius feels that he and his partner are completely different people and that while they at times bump heads, they complement each other where it matters. Marius feels that Rey is not a very sociable person but that he is, while Rey again is very analytical. He laughs because Rey is a financial analyst and “makes disgraceful amounts of money”. Rey is also a very good strategist and the planner, whereas Marius is impulsive. Marius says that his life was very erratic before he met Rey and now Rey has stabilised everything. He is drawing on Rey’s planning, foresight and preparation and is not a loose balloon going crazy anymore.

He also describes his partner as a “boerseun” from the Free State, Dutch Reformed and religious. He comes from a very religious family. Marius describes a very unusual relationship between a Christian and an atheist where the two stand up for each other. While Rey has been angry with Marius for mouthing off against religious people or religion in the past, when Rey felt it was not appropriate; Marius tells me that he has also heard Rey protecting Marius in telling a friend that Marius lives by a set of values that let many Christians look fake.
Marius tells me that he is not exactly the most reserved person and that he does not keep quiet when he feels there is something to say. But he is really also not one of those people who just speak to stir up a discussion and look for an argument.

6.1.4.8 Marius on future and death

I ask Marius to explain to me how he envisions his future and ask him if he would share with me how an atheist approaches his old age and end. He tells me that he wants to grow old in a place where he does not have to suffer physical pain. That place is not South Africa. The couple is planning to move abroad in about three years. It will not be Canada again as the dogs are miserable there (it’s too cold outside and they also do not want to spend all day indoors). Marius tells me that he is going nowhere without his dog. He feels a huge responsibility towards his dogs. He tells me that they, meaning himself and Rey, chose the dogs and they did not choose their owners. It is thus Marius and his partner’s responsibility to see that the animals are happy, fed, walked, cared for and loved.

I ask Marius how the anti-gay world persecution such as ISIS and Nazi-Germany and Uganda impact on him. He says that it annoys him that people are still so ignorant and intolerant, but he does not personally feel threatened by it. He does not see himself as a slogan screaming, gay pride parading, flag carrying gay person, although he does believe that gay people must have rights just as anyone else. But he does not see the need to lobby all the time. He can empathise with the Stone Wall history of gay rights in the USA and the other world events do affect him, but the gay subculture does not define him.

Ultimately Marius feels that if you are a good person, doing your job well, people will not bother about who you are. You just have to be a functioning member of society. He only remembers those guys back at the Air Force Academy who tried to “get into his face”, but he processed them in that he took it from whom it came and dismissed them and their intentions at an early level of perception and did not let them get at him.
Finally we talk about death and Marius tells me that he sees himself as a proponent of euthanasia as he does not want to suffer one day. He says that old age is life’s final insult and he will not be part of that. He tells how he could vomit when religious people dish up their little platitudes such as his partner’s sister’s comment when his own grandmother was suffering. She said that they should take heart as Jesus would not let the old lady suffer. Marius hates those naïve religious platitudes. He says that he has seen suffering and it is undignified. He sees himself as energy that cannot be destroyed. He wants to be planted under a thorn tree, he says with a laugh. He adds that what he likes about his belief system is that it is tangible.

6.1.5 Justice Edwin Cameron

Justice Edwin Cameron’s life story is well captured in his books “Justice – A Personal Account”.

Given the limited time that he has available for interviews as Judge in the South African Constitutional Court, I decided to focus on the interviews on the struggles he had both socially and in a religious sense.

The first interview on 22nd of March 20016 – Constitutional Court in Johannesburg

I start off the interview by asking Judge Cameron to comment on my other participant, Andre Carl van der Merwe’s comment on the legal status of gays in South Africa during the Apartheid Era. Andre Carl is the author of the monumental literary work in gay circles in South Africa and abroad entitled “Moffie”. Andre Carl expressed the opinion: “Never even in the darkest period of history in South African Apartheid era was it illegal to be black, however, it was illegal to be gay.”

The Judge reflects for a moment then he responds:

“Well - let us take this seriously. It makes a debatable point about the criminalisation of identity. It was never criminal to be gay; it was criminal to perform certain gay acts. In the same way that it was never criminal to be black but it was criminal to not have a pass to
enter certain job reserves, certain aspects of property, etc. So I would say the two are similar. He would be on much better ground to make that statement in Nigeria or Russia or in Iran, that it was criminal to be gay. Because in South Africa at the parliamentary inquiry in 1967 and 1968, many were openly gay. They had their own advocates like Dawid De Villiers. There were cabinet ministers who had gay children. And that’s why they did not make a more extensive legislative amendment in the 1969 amendment, which relates to “men at a party”, which I think I deal with in my book.”

The amendment that Justice Cameron refers to is:

“The Immorality Amendment Act, 1969 (Act No. 57 of 1969) amended the 1957 act to introduce or expand a number of offences. It prohibited the manufacturing or sale of any ‘article intended to be used to perform an unnatural sexual act’ (i.e. sex toys). Despite the fact that sex between men was already prohibited under the common law crime of sodomy, the 1969 act made it a statutory crime for a man to have sex with another male under the age of nineteen. It also introduced section 20A, the infamous ‘three men at a party’ clause, which prohibited any sexual activity between men at a party, where ‘party’ was defined as any occasion where more than two people were present.” (online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immorality_Act retrieved on 15 July 2015.)

Judge Cameron continues to say: “I don’t agree with the way in which André Carl puts it.” We discuss the point as André Carl describes it in his book that gays were to be “sniffed out” in the army in order for them to be sent to 1 Military Hospital for shock therapy. I argue that that is the way in which the man on the street understands justice and perhaps that is the way in which André Carl meant it when he says that it was illegal to be gay. Perhaps if just in the way that vigilantly heterosexual interpretation of the law was felt by gays in that era. As the law stood back then you could say you were gay, but you could not have a sex life.

The discussions move on to Dr Levine and the aversion project. He continues:

“Well, yes, it is well documented. I don’t know about Dr Levine but he is accused of degrading and damaging psychological and psychotherapeutic interventions. You know
there was a follow up in Canada and he was subsequently struck from the role of practitioners. So it’s all on record. There is a lot being written about it. I have not followed it at all, but I am fairly well aware of it.”

I argue that it is in this way that Andre Carl means “illegal” in that one has to be “shocked” out of being gay, to cure one of a disease as in the case of Dr Levine and many more 1 Military Hospital practitioners implicated by the Aversion Project.

“No, I appreciate his point, and I agree on his point, but I wouldn’t express it in the way he does. I think that the reaction to the gay identity or the LGBTI identity to the extent to which there is one, is more radical in the case of that sort of intervention than it is to be black. Black people are treated as subordinate, as inferior and not as good, as social outcasts and aliens, which in its own way has a deeply stigmatising effect, but they were never submitted to compulsory psychological intervention. So I recognise his point, and I take it as I said to you, but I wouldn’t express it in the way he did.”

We now embark on the first question in my interview, which is: what does it mean to the interviewee to be gay. I mention discussions which Gerhard had with members at his church where he is a deacon, who argued that if he was not having sex with men then he is not gay. Full stop.

Judges Cameron’s responds:

“They confine you to a sexual act – an enactment of the desire – and if you don’t enact the desire then you are not gay. That’s absurd! Completely absurd. Well not just absurd, it’s actually silly! The question is capable of so many different kinds of answers. I gave the definition in my inaugural lecture in 1993. I would say that it relates to sexual functioning, but that everything else follows from that. It relates to sexual functioning in a way that very early on you realise it’s shameful and stigmatised and unacceptable and that buries deep inside, I think, all LGBTI people a profound stigma, which even at the age of 63, with years of campaigning – 34 years of my life I’ve been campaigning for Gay and Lesbian equality and dignity – I ask myself, ‘Is it normal? Is there something wrong with us?’ Not
that I credit the question, but there is that inner voice that still asks that. So that stigma – there is a definitional social reaction to same sex desire – complicates the definition, but the essential definition is erotic attraction to people of your own sex, I would say. All other behavioural outflows are secondary. You find many gay people who have no interest in the classical stereotypical likes such as cooking, opera, interior design, etc, and yet they are also gay, and identify as gay. I think all the lifestyle things are entirely incidental.”

We now move into the area of spirituality and religion and I ask whether Judge Cameron is religious himself. He responds:

“No, I do not operate form a faith framework, I operate from a rationalist framework, but with respect for people from a faith framework. I would say I could fit the label atheist agnostic, simply because the questions are too complex. I was born Presbyterian (father) and Dutch Reform (mother). Where I am now is a result of my aversion to institutionalised religion and the cruel way in which the monotheistic religions have persecuted LGBTI people for thousands of years, many many thousands of years. That made me averse and sceptical. From the time of my own sexual awakening, this was about at the age of fourteen...So from that age on I would say that I became increasingly sceptical, because of the horrendous proscriptions, and the ritualistic abuse heaped on especially sodomy, and same sex relations. And I also think – I saw the condemnation of homosexuality as being linked together with a whole host of other irrational and illogical proscriptions and inhibitions, condemnations, cruelties in all the monotheistic religions. I saw that the mythologies and metaphysical or supernatural belief systems are not capable of claiming credulity or even respect in some of these cases.”

I ask him about his first experiences of rejection linked to his being gay or a suspicion that he was gay. His answers:

“It’s hard Mark; you know because I was much closeted until I came out, but when I came out, I came out with a bang. I came out very unapologetically, and very unflinchingly and very assertively. Since just before I turned thirty, I have been very assertive, very expressive and very open about it. I gave my first public speech in defence of gay and
lesbian equality, I think in June 1982, at a film festival at the President Hotel, and the movie was ‘Some like it hot’. Just to go back though, Mark, I will come back to your question, have you read a book called “The velvet rage?” written by a very insightful psychologist? But theory is that society is so deeply homophobic that many gay men, in fact all of us, grow up with an internal injury and that we combat it either by over-compensation in our careers or taking to drink or over-compensating with sex or a combination of these. But the book resonated with me very deeply. It’s a famous book; you can get it in the UNISA Library. You raise the same issues as does the book, in the approach you are taking and the way you are formulating your question. (Back to the question) So it’s hard for me to say, from the time I came out in 1982 when I was 29, that I’ve ever had an overt [-] because I’ve always been so bold and assertive. I’ve built an exterior to mask my gayness. I am a big tall person, I played rugby, I deliberately, as I say in this book [he is referring to his book “Justice a personal account”] cultivated certain gestures and suppressed others so that I would not appear to be anything other than masculine or ‘butch’ as we call it. So that persona by the end of my twenties was part of me. You know I couldn’t just dispense with it and become a queen! You know, so, and of course, it helps you!

It’s a bit like what some black people experience if they are seen in this very acrid and angry debate of being a ‘coconut’. It refers to black people who make themselves acceptable to white prejudices, by speaking the right language, by going to the right school and have the right values, ‘right’ each time in quotation marks. So I was like a gay ‘Coconut’. I was someone who was acceptable, I was doing human rights work, I had academic credentials, I was a very hard worker, I was a respected lawyer and together with all that I was also unflinchingly open about being gay. I took no prisoners, I made no excuses, I made no apologies, I didn’t ask for any concessions. I said, this is where I am. And it worked! I do not know if I lost precious connections or friends in the process. Who would know if I did? Look! There is one thing that I could say to you. I was in Bloemfontein for eight years, and it was quite a lonely time. I had friends. I was in a team of about twenty judges. And I felt socially excluded. I was invited out occasionally, but I knew that people were getting together, it was always couples. And I was not a part of it. I don’t think that people know what to do with a single gay man! It was just that nuance. I
can’t complain that they didn’t entertain me enough; they were always kind and friendly to me. I remember the first day I went to Bloemfontein; I remember in the tearoom, I spoke about being gay. I said: ‘you know someone was saying to me that there’s a gay club outside of Bloemfontein, called the ‘Haas Plaas’’. And everyone laughed. But I’d introduced the question of homosexuality to the Supreme Court of Appeal’s tearoom for the first time in 80 years. And also I said to them that I wanted to come to court in ‘drag’ before I leave! – I’ve never been in drag, but I expressed and articulated that to a number of colleagues in the tearoom. So I was very express, very determined, and very emphatic, very unflinching and very unapologetic. So I really don’t know if people rejected me. I always got a lot of work. I get a lot of speech requests, etc. But all being said, I feel that during my time in Bloemfontein, I feel I would have been invited out more if I had a wife.”

I ask him what type of advice he would give young people today, and he says it is the Harvey Milk advice, of COME OUT, COME OUT, and COME OUT!

“Well, it’s got to be contextualised. It is the Harvey Milk advice. Come out, to whoever you are with, wherever you are, to your friends, to your family, to your colleagues, to your beloveds – COME OUT. But you’ve got to contextualise it. You can’t come out in Nigeria, or Uganda. So I would say to people that our greatest peril is our invisibility. No-one is going to come into a room and just assume that you or I or my court clerk is gay or lesbian. So they think they can get away with it. They do not realise that we are in their families, their congregations and their communities and their work places, their own living rooms, their children, their parents. So every act of coming out is irreversibly and irreducibly a political act. And I encourage people to come out but it’s a personal decision, as the more we come out, the more we secure our place in this world. Each ‘coming out’ has an impact on 10 to 40 people, people who never knew someone who were gay.”

I discuss a shocking incident which I witnessed in Berlin once. On a float in the middle of Berlin for all to see were two men having sex. I was appalled by that and thought that gay people had lost all sense of dignity and self-respect. He sees it as: “Yes, a shocking act, but also a political act”.

188
“Yes, but I want to add a footnote to that. Part of the stigma of being gay, is also the why we have sex – and confronting it in that way is a political act. It is a political act which I do not necessarily agree with, but you’ve got to have respect for it as a political act. Live copulation between two gay men on a float is an astounding, even horrifying act, but it’s a political act. You’ve got to see that. The second thing that I want to say is that it reminds me of Steven Cohen, who was part of the Gay Pride Parade in 1996 or 1997. He had a huge banner and the banner read: Bring us your children - those we don’t fuck, we’ll eat!’ It was an equally shocking act, but of course it goes to the heart of this ludicrous notion that gay men or gay women want to pray on children. Of course there are gay predators, and there are Lesbian predators, but almost all the cases of sexual abuse are opposite sex. So Steven Cohen’s banner was a stunning political intervention, and one that I thought was profound. So I would put them in the same class. Still, if I were organising a Gay Pride Parade, I would say ‘come on guys, take it easy – No!’ I wouldn’t be able to deny the political objective and the political impact.”

I ask him to explain what he means, as I personally was horrified at these utterances and acts.

“Because it’s about ‘sex’ – Mark – it’s about ‘sex’. The thing that causes most shame in our world – and the source of all the stigma of HIV is because it is sexually transmitted. There is terrible silence, and there’s terrible silence about HIV. And so the proscription of the sex act, which is so rigid with the monotheistic religions, which has in turn been so rigid with LGBTI issues, is confronted in that way.”

I interject and ask if “rebellion” would not be a more suitable word. He replies:

“Yes! - It’s an act of rebellion, and act of disrespect for your sexual mores. Now – to take it further – think of sex workers. They are called the oldest profession in the world, but they are targeted. They are disrespected, they are stigmatised, and they are criminalised. Gays are no longer criminalised – but this court upheld a criminal prohibition by 6 to 5, in the Jordan case – 17 or 18 years ago. So what I am saying is that Puritan preoccupation with the sex act is at the source of many of the problems that we in the LGBTI community
in the world are experiencing. And also in the AIDS world. And there’s a way in which we have to unshackle the world from this little class mores about sex. I do not say you shouldn’t have sex in private. I say you should! Of course it’s got to be between adults. Of course it’s always got to be consensual. But that act on the float was a political act.”

My final question to Judge Cameron is about the astounding fact that after prisoners were liberated from Nazi concentration camps, the gays were not liberated, but sent back to prison. I ask him if there could be any legal grounding for that, seeing as the gay prisoners in jails would survive their sentence, while in the death damps they were up for wholesale slaughter. How could it be argued this way then even after World War II?

“It is no argument! – It’s no argument for the extremity of the opprobrium and the fatal consequences of being incarcerated in the concentration camps. No! Indeed I agree with you.”

The second interview on July the 8th at the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg

I start the interview with reference the book which he had recommended to me and which I have outlined under the heading “Shame-based-trauma”. It is a broad question as I ask Justice Cameron what role shame has played in the early part of his life, before he came out and before he became militant and an activist for gay rights.

“Mark, before answering I want to underscore something you said in your introduction. Not everyone feels this (the shame). It’s an internalised shame that we draw from the external world. The external world, for thousands of years - through the monotheistic religions - (were at the root of ) a tremendous amount of alienation, ostracism stigmatisation and shame. But not all gay people have that. I’ve got gay friends who have almost no issue about their gay identity. They are comfortable with their families, etc, so I think it varies from person to person. I also think it’s the same with internalised racial shame. That if you grow up in a society that humiliatingly regards your race or skin colour as inferior, sometimes a similar process occurs. Also not all black people. I certainly experienced it – I experienced from very early on two things. The one was that there was
something different about me, ...I was different from the other boys – I wasn’t comfortable with having a teddy that had to wear boys’ clothes...I didn’t stand or act or think like the other boys, so I was diverse. The second thing is that I knew there was something shameful about it. It was something that would embarrass my parents, you know. You got to be a little boy, you’ve got to be LIKE a boy.”

I interject my opinion that boys needed to be seen as “tough” which he agrees to saying:

“Exactly. One particular instance that I did not mention in my memoir - in the Justice Memoir, is that we used to race around a block – we were in a working class area of Pietermaritzburg and we were poor. My mother made my clothes and she had made me - I still remember as it was kind of velvety – she had made me a pair of shorts pants, which she had stitched at the crotch to create two legs and two leg openings. And I ran as fast as I could and I won! But the stitching came undone while I was running. So when I finished, all the neighbours were there and they laughed at me, and jeered almost, because they said: ha ha ha it looks as though you’re wearing a skirt. Now why would it be....I think girls experience something cognate, but not identical – I think the tomboy girl isn’t humiliated, because the tomboy girl is ascending the gender hierarchy. A sissy boy is descending the gender hierarchy and that’s the important thing. So it was demeaning, you know, for me to be wearing a ‘skirt’. You know... why should it be? And first of all – what inappropriate parenting - I remember my two parents, that sense of embarrassment - of course to go back to your introductory point, it depends on the receptivity of the subject. But I was very receptive. I felt a deep sense of shame and I knew I was different, it became ingrained later, I didn’t want to play in the same way with the other boys, although I had very good boy friends, especially at the children’s home in Queenstown”.

He mentions three or four names as well as the surnames of friends he had during that time.

“So I had a lot of male friendships, but a lot of my friendships, even at Queenstown ( and I arrived there - I’d not yet turned 7 and I was there 7, 8 , 9, 10 – and half into my 11th year, I was there for four and a half years), a lot of my friendships were more with sissy boys.
Now how at 7 do you know to search out (he mentions the names of two sissy boy friends)? We were little sissy boys in the hostel. Interestingly, when I met up with (he mentions the name of one of his friends at the time) who was a year older than me, we used to play ‘mommy’ together. And I wanted to be the mommy. Someone overheard us one day, and I remember the profound sense of shame when they said – ‘Oh, he’s calling him mommy!’ But I had asked my friend to call me mommy. Now the interesting thing – Mark – is that I met up with one of these friends of mine years later. He contacted me after I’d gained some national profile some twenty years ago. And the first thing I asked him was – (he’d invited me to lunch with his second wife and family) – I said, how’s (he mentions the other friend’s name)? He said, oh no I’m very sorry, (the other friend) passed away. I said, ‘I’m very sorry to hear that’ and there was this silence. I had not yet spoken out about my own HIV status, so it was before 1999. So I said: ‘When did he pass away?’- He said: ‘Oh he passed away ten years ago’. This was in the eighties, so I said: ‘I’m very, very sorry.’ I didn’t ask what he died of because it was clear that they were not willing to volunteer - you know – heart attack, car crash, cancer - whatever. And then I asked a second question; I said: ‘What did he do?’ Because I’d lost touch with him after our boyhood. He said: ‘Oh he was an air steward’. And that got me at a subsequent occasion to ask him if (their other friend) wasn’t gay. He said: ‘Yes he was’. And then I said to him: ‘But didn’t (our friend) die of AIDS?’ He said: ‘Yes he did’.

He pauses for a moment then he continues.

“I’m making a lot of points there about shame and about internalisation of it and about its projection. But I’m also making the point that, sure as cookies, both (he mentions the name of the friend who had died) and I were gay at the age of 7 and 6! So that’s my answer. I see you looking at your watch…”

I ask Judge Cameron about his friendship at that tender age of 6 and 7 and whether there was an intuitive sniffing out of the other “sissy boys”, as he calls them, and it being left at that; or was there a verbalisation of their being different in any way whatsoever?
“No, no, no, there was never any express verbalisation, it was just that – you wanted to play with little boys who wanted to play the way you wanted to play! I remember (he mentions the name of yet another friend from that time), and his affect was definitely gender ambivalent. I don’t think mine was, because I made an effort all my life to create myself into this ‘butch’ image. You know – ‘butch’ in quotation marks.”

He briefly reflects on what might have happened to those friends and concludes that there is no doubt in his mind whatsoever that they grew up as gay men.

Returning to my question he continues: “But no, I simply wanted to congregate with the other sissy boys. It wasn’t articulated in my mind.”

I ask the next question, which, given the status and position of Judge Cameron, I asked with reservation (given the fact that it is private, yet relevant to my research). I ask whether there was ever a crush or a yearning for a love affair of any nature while he was still at school.

He continues:

“It is very private, and no, there wasn’t a yearning, but I want to put something on the table, and that is that I think there is something called childhood eroticism – there’s no doubt about it, and I think that is precisely why I think trans-generational sex is such a terrible transgression and violation because you are intruding on something that is enormously delicate, unformed and still being developed. But I certainly remember – you know – sexually charged discussions in the children’s home. I don’t remember having prepubescent crushes, but pubescent crushes mostly on adult school masters and on older boys, but none of it articulated or enacted.”

I ask him about something he had mentioned during the first interview, namely that he had consciously adopt a more male persona.
“Deliberately yes! To avoid being called a sissy. The profound shame that women and men associate with sissy boys. It’s terribly damaging! Terribly, terribly damaging!”

I ask whether he had ever experienced such shaming by family members.

“I think, yes – I think my mom as well, and I mean, I do think I mentioned this in the memoir, during one of my temper tantrums I was dressed as a girl and thrown outside – my father took me outside and put me on the lawn so the neighbours could see! The ultimate humiliation! ‘You scream like a girl, we dress you as one’ – quite cruel I think actually! So yes, I think inside the family – yah. “

Upon my asking for clarity, whether he then adopted the “butch” persona in reaction to such incidents, he responds: “Yes – the behavioural closet!” (“closet” is the word used to define hiding of a gay identity – referring to be “in the closet”.)

He clarifies further by saying: “A behavioural disguise.” I ask if he despite the “behavioural disguise” continued to develop as a gay man or whether there was self-loathing of any form. He replies:

“No, I think there is, Mark, you know I’m sixty three and I’ve been a judge in this court, it’s now my eighth year – I’ve been a judge altogether twenty two years next month in September. The United States Supreme Court last June decided that same sex marriages have to be permitted in all the states. And I still have doubts! You know I think there are many ways the velvet rage, the shame, still impacts us. (He is referring to the book by Alan Downs – The Velvet Rage.) I remember vividly - I was a visiting fellow at a college in Oxford 2003, a pivot in my life – it was thirteen years ago. I had been invited as a guest at a head of college, to dine. It was a formal dinner and a very nice dinner and we had a very good interaction - it was a woman head. And I remember battling with myself, because she asked me about my life and then she asked me about my family, and I said I didn’t have a family and then was the crucial moment and I decided I was going to tell her. But by that stage I had been out of the closet for 20 years in 2003! But not with her!”
I interject by saying in my own experience there is always another door. He replies:

“Precisely – so now I make that point to young audiences that it never stops! So now I make, that was the pivotal point; that dinner at Summerville College at Oxford in the summer of 2003 was pivotal to me, because now I just make a point of it all the time. I make more of a point of it with visiting African Judges to say I’m gay – but it’s a constant struggle, because there’s part of me that night (in Oxford) that just wanted to be a respected judge and a clever researcher and visiting fellow, but didn’t also want to be a gay man, and saw the two as in antinomy. And there – I turned fifty that year – and I won’t go into it, but I think in profound ways your sense of self blame after sexual encounters as a gay man are also related to these profoundly rooted sense of shame. So you feel guilty or you fear condemnation – and I am here talking of consensual, private, adult sex pre-informed! Why would one feel a sense of anxiety? And I think (this is actually an observation made by an esteemed friend of mine), I think it goes back to that. I think we all still grapple with it. And I still sometimes wonder: is it really normal? I know it is! It’s a variant – a manifestation across all cultures, all historical times, all races and continents, but I ask. There’s a little voice at the back of my conscience still asking that question.”

I ask the judge respectfully to explain to me what would be condemning him if his belief system was not faith based, but drawing from a rational belief system. I ask him to imagine who that voice in his conscience could be, and what it might be saying? That he is shameful?

He replies:

“Yah – unworthy, unclean – I mean I’m guessing, because I haven’t analysed it or had it analysed. But yes, I think so – I think it is irrational, I think it is counter-rational; I think it is counter-evidentiary, counter empirical, but that’s why I came out in 1983. It was precisely for that; that I knew that through the silence and invisibility we collude with the shame. And you can still see it in Africa; I mean when I went to Kenia last week, it was a judges’ conference, but not about sexual orientation at all. I especially asked the Kenyan activists to convene a meeting on the Saturday night. [It was] A very moving occasion and then
fifty people arrive on a chilly Nairobi evening. And we spent the evening together, and you still see how invisibility and voicelessness are at the root of great affliction of gay and transgender people in Africa. The transgender people often suffer the most. I think, that’s why, at the judges seminar, in my keynote I said that ‘I’m a proudly gay man’. So Mark, that was my mission, that we collude, that silence and invisibility collude with this monstrous history or repression and persecution and violence and killing. That is our intellectual and emotional heritage. That is why we have to struggle against it. We have to identify it, we have to articulate it, and our struggle is to ... the struggle is twofold. The one is the political struggle, which in South Africa we’ve won – quote, unquote. And then ally to that is our social struggle – the community struggle. The second part of the twofold struggle is the one internally.”

I ask Judge Cameron, whether he is aware of his status in society, both gay and not gay, as a very high profile and respected one, and I add on “or is this in any way diminished in your inner private world, by your knowledge that you are gay?”

He ponders for a moment then replies:

“Let me say this, Mark, one is aware of it, but if you allow yourself to feast on it, it is very destructive – it’s a poison meal. I’m aware of it, Mark, but I don’t allow it to rest in my inner conscience, because then you would allow it to affect your integrity, your interaction with people. One has to hang on for dear life to your own self, rather than the public perceptions of it. And I’m aware of it, because people are generous, and I get accolades, and you get secular significations of honour and degrees and awards and things.”

I now direct the interview in the direction of love and intimacy, specifically to compare Judge Cameron’s response to the theory of Bradshaw (1988) who talks about the “social seeing eye”, which Bradshaw describes as the trigger for shame and the impulse that it initiates for “hiding”. Bradshaw also talks about our growing ability for “intimacy” as the “healing” from shame.
Judge Cameron gives me permission to say that he is happy and willing to disclose that he has been seeing someone since Easter of 2015, and he continues to respond to my question as follows:

“Ok, I take the point about the ‘seeing eye’. But I want to make a more complex answer, Mark. I have received profound love in my life. It hasn’t been the binary couple love, but I have received from my godchildren, who are many, from my law clerks, who are many, from the children’s homes with which I am involved, from my family and friends – so I have profoundly family and friendship, nurturing relationships. And those have done that [he is referring to my question about the “healing” properties of love form shame]. So I would affirm that healing bonded engagements make a big difference – I would agree with that! I would certainly agree with that.”

I take the focus of the interview to social violence, referring to Downs’s hierarchy of invalidation, where he lists “a threat to one’s physical well-being” as the extreme of invalidation, and I link that to the “Orlando Massacre”, which occurred only three weeks prior to the interview and thus fresh in everyone’s memories. I explain my own visit to the Vigil held in Pretoria for the victims of Orlando, saying that one thinks one is prepared for this, but when faced with the gruesome reality of the deeds, it winds one emotionally and spiritually, and there is this question of “why?”

I continue by stating that for me, it is not a case of coming out once and then you’re ok for the rest of your life, but that once involved in this struggle for a “place in the sun”, you must always be ready for the next battle. Judge Cameron interjects in agreement to what I am saying, by adding: “Or that you get gay marriage and then you are safe...” I make the remark that it is as if it follows us wherever we are and we are confronted with it again and again and again.

He responds: “I agree with that, both politically and personally – I agree with that. And I think that once the process of ‘coming out’ is fully realised, in a society, THEN the violence does stop. Then you know, that in every circle of friends, in every family, every household, every congregation, every workplace there are LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,
and Intersex) people. So partly because this shooter in Orlando didn’t know who the gay members of his family were, because in Muslim and orthodox Jewish and other repressive society we don’t self-identify as being gay so much, although there are same sex oriented people in those societies. He wouldn’t have known that there were gay people in his – he might himself have been gay. There is the reasonable debate about that.”

Next, I ask the Judge whether he has had any experience with anti-gay violence in his life, either personally or in his career as a judge. “I suppose I only want to make this point, Mark, that I think I have been relatively lucky. The behavioural disguise has helped me because I’ve never felt a physical threat.”

Next, the Judge explains how he sees the “coming out” as a protective (this in my understanding and interpretation of his comment) mechanism against overtly expressed anti-gay sentiments. He explains:

“With my ‘coming out’ at the end of 1982, without apology - I did not request approval from anyone, professionally or personally or within the family – [for me] means that you are ‘protected from’ though not ‘absolved from’ the homophobia that might be expressed behind your back. So I never in the 33 years ... I can’t remember. Maybe nuanced episodes, you know, when you take a partner to a judges’ dinner, if it were a heterosexual partner, I know everyone would have made a fuss. How is she? Are you still seeing her? Is there an engagement? No-one asks a word! You take a partner – especially in Bloemfontein – they are courteous, but there is a dead silence! So I mean there are nuances like that but nothing overtly homophobic.”

In his professional capacity he shares with me that he has seen a number of horrific gay murders: “I had a horrific, very anguishing gay murder, when I was a High Court Judge, two in fact – and during practice there were several gay cases that I was involved with involving murders of gay men. And then we have a case ahead of us now that will be decided on in September about the inheritance in unmarried gay couples.”
The interview comes to an end and my last question relates to Judge Cameron’s motivation in his live as a gay activist. I refer to the book “The Velvet Rage” which he recommended I read and I ask whether he was perhaps fuelled by the rage of perceived injustice. He responds:

“It’s fuelled by a number of things. The one is that I don’t want young people of pubescent years, of emerging orientational consciousness and realisation to feel the shame inhibition and fear that I did. That is a profound motivating factor! And when I see young people – when asked if there are any openly gay and lesbian people in schools and people put up their hands in township schools, suburban schools, and white schools, black schools! That gives me a profound feeling of joy! Because we worked for that!”

He continues with a second part to my question about the motivating factor for gay activism: “The second thing, to get more specific to your question. Yes, I do think so! I do think that like with black activism, that LGBTI activism properly and rightly and appropriately should be partly fuelled by the rage of the wrong and the injustices and the misconceptions and misrepresentations of history. I don’t see my rage as being in a sense destructive or fuelling a personal grudge.”

### 6.2 Conclusion

This chapter constitutes the ‘raw’ subjective material gained from in depth interviews with selected the research participants.

This was also the material that was analysed and synthesised in order to arrive at the ‘composite picture’ or pattern that emerged from the individual stories.
CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA THROUGH THE LENS OF LOGOTHERAPY

7.1 A qualitative and heuristic research approach

I need to return at this point to the starting point of my research idea as described in earlier sections of this thesis. I was lead to this research by a desire to find out and to compare if the experiences of other gay men in South Africa were the same as mine or whether my life had for other reasons taken a route of repeated social rejection and criticism.

As I also explained in earlier sections, I had chosen the heuristic method of research in that I had soaked myself in the stories of my research participants. I transcribed their interviews, listed the main crossroads in their lives, and listened to their recordings again and again, hearing inflections in their voices and sought out the meaning of what they were sharing with me.

Through this process the deeper meanings of these stories emerged and I perceive intuitively that while these men were individual and different in that they came from different walks of life – they had experienced very similar “dealings” with a society that was not welcoming to them specifically and directly as a result of their “gay” identity. For this reason and no other reason, they were treated differently, and had they not been gay, their lives would have looked very differently.

What was also striking was the similar yet unique ways in which they all finally responded – or to use Frankl’s language, “gave an answer” to the verdict which had been passed on them by society, namely that of individuals who were either sich, or an abomination or flawed or not valued.

Through this in-depth experiential process, the following main themes emerged in a set but fluid order.
7.2 The emerging themes

It became clear to me through the interviews that a process unfolded which spanned the entire lives of the participants up to the very present, in a very personal and unique way. There were however very unique and ‘gay’ specific societal factors that heavily influence the process.

The themes also constitute the focal core of the research and directly relate to the title of the paper, namely “A STUDY INTO THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH PROFILE GAY MEN IN SOUTH AFRICA – AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF LOGOTHERAPY”.

I needed to find out if there was a ‘gay specific’ developmental path in which most gay people share, or whether I was unique in my experiences. Although Frankl did not provide a detailed developmental theory the following points and processes are clearly discernible in his theory.

Human beings are endowed at birth with ‘spiritual capacity’ which is an open possibility, not yet actualised, but available from birth and in a process of ‘becoming’ via our experiences, choices, actions and attitudes.

We have not yet achieved anything and all is ahead of us. Frankl (1980) argues that biologically we are the product of our genetic inheritance from our parents, but spiritually we are our own life’s work. The human characteristics such as conscience, self-consciousness, and responsible behaviour are phenomena that emerge during the course of development. Frankl (1969) states that the person is to be seen as a ‘time-Gestalt’ and that only in maturity are we fully developed and will show mature manifestations of our ‘freedom of will’, our ‘search for meaning’ and our ‘value realisation’.

I will argue that earlier in the gay person’s life there is a massive social coercive factor that threatens to ‘burr’ and ‘stifle’ these uniquely human characteristics in the gay person, and that it is the inherent “will to meaning” and the ‘defiant power of the human spirit’ in the gay person, that brings him to a victorious ‘overcoming’. I will also offer an explanation for
the fact that so many gay people do fall victim to a life of excess, depression, addiction and being less than what they were meant to be in a following chapter.

In order to draw arguments from the real life stories of the participants, recorded in the interviews – the themes which emerged were clustered under the following headings. These are:

- A relatively short period of “innocence” in early childhood
- An emerging reality of being “different”
- Social rejection and shame and attempts to cope
- A spiritual battle and fear
- A personal “Stonewall” experience – the attitude of defiance
- Victory in defiance and a self-transcendent life

Before I go into a discussion about why I labelled the themes the way I did, I would like to pull apart (without much commenting or discussion) the coherent life stories as recorded in the participants’ stories, and cluster them together under the theme headings. In this way Sections 7.2.1 up to Section 7.3 are to be seen as part of the ‘raw material’ on which the discussion in Section 7.4 is based.

7.2.1 A relatively short period of “innocence” in early childhood

Andre Carl

Andre Carl remembers the black woman who raised him when his mom was ill, the beautiful mountains around Harrismith and being around the fires with black people. He describes that beautiful feeling of security, and the booming voices of the black males around the fire. He still today has recurring dreams of him flying over this beautiful landscape that is home and security for him (see Van der Merwe, 2006, Chapter 1).
Gerhard Pienaar

He describes his childhood as happy; part of a huge family, which hardly left space for more friends. His mom chose to stay at home despite the fact that she was a qualified pharmacist. She loved baking for her children’s birthdays – clown cakes, soccer field cakes and even an animal farm cake. She was a caring and hands on mom. It was also a creative home environment. Drawing and reading were encouraged and library cards were a must.

Both his mother and his grandmother were deeply religious and the children were expected to attend Sunday school and church weekly.

He was part a close knit family and also a protective and non-judgemental environment where people helped each other. Kuruman was predominantly a farming community. They lived in the same area as did two aunts and one uncle and there were thirteen cousins in total. Holidays, birthdays and Christmas were big and happy family affaires.

His early childhood was experienced by him as happy and normal and that the idea or even the understanding of homosexuality did not really feature. Whatever he did, created, dreamed, liked or dislikes – it was all normal to him and he saw nothing wrong with any of it.

Andre Muller

Andre Muller was born on the 31st of May 1958 in Pretoria. Given the big gap between him and his brother (about twenty years) he feels that he was the blue eyed boy of his mother. Although his parents never got divorced, they did live separately and he hardly ever saw his father.

There was a very strong bond between him and his mother. Andre describes his father as a womaniser, and sees ‘other’ women around his dad whenever he visited there. These visit were however infrequent.
His mother’s favourite topic was how she hated men! Andre’s response was always, that he was different and that one day he would marry his mom. But, he describes his childhood as good and carefree but also lonely at times.

Sexually Andre is very inquisitive and experiments with his little friend already from the age of five. The incident with the Milo and the oral experimentation is described in his interview. He sees these activities as absolutely normal, and he is free of guilt regarding them. He also emphasises that it was purely instinctual. He had absolutely no concept at the time of what ‘gay’ meant.

It was normal, and the sexual activities fit into their daily lives as parts of games - neither enjoying more, nor less attention than any of the other activities.

*Marius Oelschig*

Marius was born in Oudtshoorn on the 1st of April 1971. He is an only child. His father was then in the military and held a very high rank.

When he was only four years old his parents get separated. He does not remember much about this time at all. The reason they got divorced was that his father was unfaithful to his mom. Marius gathers that it was not just the one incident but one of many. All this happened while they lived in Angola, where his father was stationed as the South African Military Attaché.

Marius does not have much love for his father, given the fact that he and his mother suffered many hardships financially due to the early separation of the couple. He does not remember Angola, and his first memories are of him and his mom in a little flat in Kempton Park in South Africa. They lived in Kempton Park for the duration of his primary and High school years.

His mother never spoke badly about his father, but was open and honest to Marius, when he asked about his father.
Marius’s unusually strong will was evident from the start. In grade one he would at times have the inclination to go home, when it suited him, and spend the whole day on the balcony of their flat, playing with his cat. This fearless and strong willed attitude has stayed with him until today. When he chooses a direction that sits well with him, he pursues it with all he’s got.

His truancy leads to his grandparents moving in with them and he recalls liking having them around very much. Living under the watchful eye of his loving grandmother was a source of joy for him.

He has fond memories of Friday afternoons, when they would all get into the car and drive off to his grandfather’s farm, where they would spend the weekend. He describes the times with his grandparents as very happy.

He does remember financial stress though. His school uniform was taken care for and he had enough to eat, but that was basically it. He can only remember four holidays away from home during his entire school career.

**Judge Cameron**

Given the limited period of time I had to interview Judge Cameron, I did not focus on his childhood specifically. However a lot of relevant childhood experiences did emerge during the interviews and he gave me permission to add anything he had already published in his books “Justice – A Personal Account” and “Defiant Desire” which may expand on his story. What I have been able to glean is that he grew up in poverty. He is however not in a state of self-pity, but embraces what is there. There are people who are charitable and he learns deep lessons of gratitude and he is motivated from very young to make use of every opportunity to improve and to sharpen his intellect.

He spends some years in a children’s home in Queenstown. He also has his first encounters with the law in childhood. His father is in prison for car theft.
7.2.2 An emerging reality of being “different”

Andre Carl

At the same time he had to be honest with himself and couldn’t deny the fact that he was gay. Andre Carl explains that he knew he was gay since the very early age of six, but that during puberty things came to a head.

Andre Carl also realised that he had sexual thoughts about men as far back as he could remember. These happened even before he went to school.

He felt then that they were wrong or rather dangerous. He had not had any sexual experiences and no one had told him that this was wrong; he simply intuitively felt that they were dangerous. He says he just instinctively felt that these thoughts and fantasies were probably to be kept to himself.

Gerhard Pienaar

He enjoys playing air hostess with his cousin, but does not read anything into it. He loves playing with dolls, but much more as a stage director, allowing the dolls’ characters to emerge.

Towards grade 6 Gerhard is discouraged from playing with dolls and has his first social lesson in gender role assignment. He learns that “rugby” is a “good” boy thing but his sport career ended soon after that. He did not like the physical roughness of it.

During this period of his life, the name calling started. He was called a ‘sissy’ by other boys in school as well as some of his cousins. He did not know what to do about this situation, as he did not understand the implication of the accusations. He feels that perhaps ‘neither did they’.
But he did feel that he was perhaps starting to lack in self-confidence over a period of time and he was naturally a shy boy on top of that. He felt that he was seen as not ‘male’ and ‘rough’ enough, but there was certainly no link in his mind to being gay or even being thought of as gay. Gender presentation and non-conforming to these norms, and expectations were at the core of his first social battle.

It was not until grade 8 that Gerhard first had a conscious thought that he might be gay, as he became very much more aware of attractive and strong male physiques in his teachers and some of the older boys in high school. He sensed that this would not be accepted and tried to repress those thought and feelings with an accompanying feeling of ‘shame’.

**Andre Muller**

At the age of ten Andre feels he first though seriously that he might be gay. This realisation came to him in primary school, and the reason for this is that he found his male friends a lot more attractive than his female friends. The realisation did not trouble him. He does not associate with the word ‘moffie’ which he hears for the first time when older brothers visit him and his mom.

He had sexual experiences at the boarding school in Kameelfontein, where his mom sends him because she feels that he needs to have male influence in his life from other boys as well as male teachers, and have some distance from her – as she feels the bond between her and Andre is too strong.

He is invited into the bed of another school friend, and he obliges. It is not a secret it is open and there is no guilt or shame involved. He thinks that all boys do this – like a boarding school tradition.
Andre feels that his sexual awakening and his spiritual awakening coincide. Very much like with Andre Carl Van Der Merwe, but Andre feels not the slightest bit of guilt or inner conflict. His concept of God is not condemning.

He grows up in a Christian home but his mom was not a church goer. He loved church when he went to boarding school, and he and his friends built a little church on the playgrounds where Andre would preach to them.

What stands out in the story of Andre Muller is that he seems to have had a very “normal” – in the sense of a conflict free development. There seems to be harmony between his cognitive, his emotional, his sexual as well as his spiritual development and there is no shame or guilt involved at this early stage of his life. In standard eight Andre can confess to himself that he is not just going through a phase, but is “gay”. This ‘confession’ needs to be qualified, as discussed in Andre Muller’s section under Section 7.2.3.

This guilt and shame free reality is also reflected in Andre and MC’s relationship that lasted for seventeen years until MC dies of leukaemia.

Marius Oelschig

Marius asks me during the interview that I need to understand and accept, that looking back he has always been gay. He may only have been able to verbalise it later but he knows that he has always been gay.

He remembers finding other boys cute and attractive even in primary school. In standard eight (grade ten today) he engages in mutual masturbation with a fellow choir boy, but that there was no further interest from either side or there was also no feelings of guilt.

Marius makes an interesting observation regarding the same boy he had masturbated with. At choir the same boy and another boy who were both self-confessing gays later on in their
lives; would make biting and sarcastic comments towards him. They were trying to distance themselves from it, in a social setting at the time.

Marius has his first full on sexual experience with a young man three years his senior, when Marius was in standard eight (grade ten today). Marius was smitten with the young man and was sad that nothing developed from that. At this point Marius can verbalise and accept cognitively and emotionally that he is gay.

**Judge Cameron**

His own sexual awakening happened at about the age of fourteen. While he then knew he was gay, he explains that he was ‘much closeted’ until I came out at the age of twenty nine, which was about fifteen years later.

He says that the reason he was so ‘closeted’ was that he knew that homosexuality was so very stigmatised and unacceptable in society. At the age of seven he chooses ‘sissy boy’ friends at the Queenstown boarding school. They play ‘mommy’ together. And when they are overheard this becomes a scandal and they are laughed at.

Being different or being ‘sissy boys’ was never verbalised amongst them, but they wanted to play in their own ‘sissy boy’ way. It was not ‘articulated’ in my mind but spontaneous.

Looking back he marvels at the fact that these boys are today gay, surmising that we do know at a very early age that we are gay.

He describes one of his little friends back then as definitely being gender ambivalent. He already then knows to ‘cultivate’ a male image.

He also makes a point that he believes there is something called ‘childhood eroticism’, which he feels is something terribly delicate, unformed and still being developed.
He remembers sexually charged discussions in the children’s home. He remembers pubescent crushes on adult school masters and on other boys, but none of these articulated or enacted.

Due to the profound shame that both women and men associate with ‘sissy boys’ forced him to adopt a male image from early on in his life. He calls this shaming of young emerging gay people terribly damaging.

7.2.3 Social rejection and shame and attempts to cope

Andre Carl

The pain with which Andre Carl describes his experiences both in his family and at school and later on in his book “Moffie” which describe his time in the army is tangible.

He feels that his father is embarrassed and ashamed of him, and that he is constantly being compared to his brother and found to be “unworthy”.

His business venture with the pigs does not carry his father’s support. He is called a sissy. He screams for help but his mother does not hear. The books he reads condemn him.

His trusted teacher Miss Du Toit feels in the final instance that he is sick. His father constantly talks down to him and disagrees, marginalises and invalidates his son. His horrific experiences in the SADF gave rise to his book ‘Moffie’.

He feels that people in general protect themselves from re-experiencing or even remembering such experiences. He repeats that he does not delve into those memories of traumatic events and hardships suffered on the border but that he was himself astounded at just how intense these events were especially during the first year of his army service.
Gerhard Pienaar

Kind hearted, shy and very forgiving, Gerhard is an easy target in a homophobic environment. He suffers public humiliation at the hands of his cousins, who call him their ‘niggie’ and ‘sissy’. They publicly humiliate him by throwing an apple at him in the assembly hall, hitting him in the eye.

In a school stage production, Gerhard is cast into the role of an artistic boy who plays piano and guitar and who then is victimised as a ‘sissy’ and a ‘moffie’ and which he was excited to play, but his mom discourages this strongly.

His mother also discourages him in his desire to pursue dancing and fashion design. His friend Hein terminates a friendship with one conversation.

His closest friend Lelanie distances herself from Gerhard when the other friends are not comfortable with gays.

His sister-in-law keeps his little nephew from him, arguing that she does not want to expose him to the gay lifestyle Gerhard and his partner represent, for fear of him being influenced. The struggle with some people in his church once it came out that he was gay, even though he is abstinent.

The implied stance that being gay and Christian is mutually exclusive from members of his church whom he had grown fond of and very close to.

The numerous social incidents listed separately in his interview, such as ‘pledging the blood of Christ’ on him in an Anglican church that he visits, group casting gays with paedophiles to his face and offers to ‘pray’ for him from total stranger.
In standard eight Andre can confess to himself that he is not just going through a phase, but is “gay”. Andre and his partner MC distance themselves from the term ‘moffie’ as something unhealthy and not good. That was not who they were, so they must have been ‘bisexual’ they reasoned. Andre admits that in the face of the fact that there was never any sexual contact with girls that this idea evaporated in time. But at that time, they both needed the ‘comfort’ in their minds that they were not ‘moffies’.

There was an effeminate boy at school whom the boys called Willemiena, and Andre and MC could not associate with him. Andre confesses that their calling themselves bisexual was a defence against admitting totally and unapologetically that they were gay.

Already deeply wrapped up in a spiritual struggle with his gay identity Andre gets the instructions given to him as a chaplain in the SADF that gays must be identified and reported because they are sick, in conflict with themselves and in need of help. He never does report anyone.

After being found out that he was gay and what is more - a “married gay pastor”, Andre suffers a traumatic, abrupt and cruel termination of his vocation as a Dutch Reformed minister, and the shameful circumstances, as a “fraud” in a heterosexual marriage.

Andre was supposed to preach that Sunday bit was not allowed to. Instead another pastor does the sermon which Andre attends. The sermon is intended to publicly denounce and humiliate him in that it depicts him as “vile”, and the implication is that God is in agreement with the preacher’s sentiments.

Andre is asked to immediately vacate his residence, and he is required to pay back his entire study loan in a lump sum. There is no farewell or good bye.

Andre experiences vicarious abuse, when MC is visited in hospital by a pastor, while MC is dying and tries to get MC to renounce Andre as his lover and partner as he would otherwise go to hell if he died in sin.
Andre also receives real death threats when he started a church where gay people could worship.

He experiences open social resistance against equal rights regarding gay marriage ending in a Supreme Court battle.

*Marius Oelschig*

His mother’s response when he tells her that he is gay. His mother shows ongoing non-verbal condemnation of his gay lifestyle.

He is not clear on why he sporadically dated girls, but he did.

He is very unwelcome in the super mucho environment of the permanent force and he is targeted. He talks about the men in the Permanent Air Face trying to get into his face.

Marius is also unique in that he came to terms with the fact that society had an issue with gays and he would deal with that as he best knew how. He would have a group of gay friends and he would have a group of straight friends in the army. The two did not know each other, did not mix and he was absolutely fine with that. The problem was theirs – not his. It is important to point out here that although Marius did not take the social prejudice personally, he was still forced to respond to it in the way he did here.

*Judge Cameron*

He says that the reason he was so ‘closeted’ between realising he was gay at the age of fourteen until he came out at the age of twenty nine, was that he knew that homosexuality was so very stigmatised and unacceptable in society.

I have built an exterior to mask my gayness – I am a tall person – I played rugby and I deliberately ‘cultivated’ certain gestures and ‘oppressed’ others to make me appear
nothing other than ‘butch’ and masculine in the eyes of society; so that this persona, by the end of his twenties was part of him. He humorously states that then he could not just dispense with it all and become a ‘queen’.

He also states that ‘it helps you to appear masculine’.

He calls himself a gay ‘coconut’ referring to the term that black people use to describe other blacks who ‘make themselves acceptable’ to white prejudices, by speaking the right way or behaving in a certain way. In the same manner he feels that he had become a ‘gay coconut’.

He states that he had made himself acceptable to heterosexist prejudices, by speaking the heterosexist language.

In this vein he was acceptable, he had academic credentials, he was successful, he was doing human rights work, he was a hard worker and a responsible lawyer.

When he was in Bloemfontein for eight years, he felt socially excluded and lonely at times. Had he had a wife he feels things would have been different. He was on a team of twenty judges at the Supreme Court.

He feels that the judges in Bloemfontein were most probably at a loss and didn’t know how to deal with a single gay man.

He talks about shame as an internalised shame that we draw from the ‘external world’, and which causes a tremendous amount of alienation, ostracism, stigmatisation and shame. He compares that with internalised racial shame.

He says that he personally experienced this in his life, in two ways: first, there was something different about him.
He’s different from other boys – he is not comfortable with a teddy, who wears boys’
clothes, - he didn’t stand or act or think like the other boys. Two; I knew that there was
something shameful about this, and that it would embarrass his parents.

He describes how he was told that he had to be a boy and had to be ‘like’ a boy!

When they had a race his shorts’ stitches come undone. The neighbours and the parents
jeer and laugh, saying he was wearing a ‘skirt’. It was demeaning.

He describes the fact that in the patriarchal society, s sissy boy descends the gender
hierarchy, while a tomboy girl ascends the gender hierarchy.

In Queenstown at the hostel they play ‘mommy’ together. And when they are overheard
this becomes a scandal and they are laughed at.

During a temper tantrum he is dressed as a girl and put outside on the lawn for the
neighbours to see. He remembers this vividly saying that it was quite ‘cruel’.

He says that he had ‘cultivated’ a behavioural closet which he stayed in, and says that it
was NOT an identity closet. He was openly gay, but with ‘behavioural’ changes made.

Doubt still persists in his mind at times regarding gay being ‘wrong’ perhaps. He says that
the level of internalisation is there probably in all gays. He gives the Somerville incident at
Oxford as an example.

He says that there is always another ‘door’. You do not just come out and then everything
is cool, or you have gay marriage and then you are safe. Coming out is a lifelong process.

He also describes a sense of self blame after sexual encounters that is rooted in shame.
7.2.4 A spiritual battle and fear

Andre Carl

He explains that this period was worse than anything he subsequently had to go through, including the army and everything after that. Looking back, he feels that he had probably suffered a nervous breakdown during this time. Is was impossible for him to sleep peacefully at night and during these long nights, fraught with anxiety, he worried and imagined being condemned to hell, because he was evil and was demon possessed. He considered homosexuality to be more sinful that any other sin.

He feels that at this point of his life; the sexual awakening of puberty together with the previously mentioned spiritual awareness rendered his mind and his body a battleground of two conflicting and irreconcilable realities – his awakened carnal lust and his religious convictions were involved in a head-on collision.

Gerhard Pienaar

Gerhard comes from a religious home and is expected to attend church and Sunday school by his mom.

He decides to follow God already in primary school and became very actively involved in church activities. He reads religious books, trying to find a gay friendly ‘something’ in them, but finds nothing but condemnations.

He fights against his feelings and prays that God would take them away. Even in trying to raise the issue with his trusted friend Bossie, the Bible is used as a yardstick to condemn the gay orientation.

At cell group Oosterlig, anti-gay conversations make him feel very isolated and silenced, and in conflict with his religious beliefs. ‘Representing’ God, society highlights his unacceptability, in the eyes of God.
Being a deacon and office bearer in the Seventh Day Adventist Church brings conflict and divides between some.

**Andre Muller**

Andre feels that his sexual awakening and his spiritual awakening coincide. Very much like with Andre Carl Van Der Merwe, but Andre feels not the slightest bit of guilt or inner conflict.

His concept of God is not condemning.

He grows up in a Christian home but his mom was not a church goer. He loved church when he went to boarding school, and he and his friends built a little church on the playgrounds where Andre would preach to them.

Already at the age of ten Andre knows that he was going to be a pastor one day.

On the day of the car accident, hour before his mom dies; he makes a promise to God that if he spares his mother’s life, he would one day become a pastor. His mom did not recover, but he still became a pastor.

At the age of eleven Andre’s concept of God is already very real. He has no concept of the Trinity or anything along the lines of deep theology, but sees God as a loving father figure, and the Creator. He was a loving Being in Andre’s childlike mind.

During his later theological education, he starts internalising the biblical condemnation of homosexuality and he tries to distance himself from MC and their relationship. He fails every time and gives in to MC’s advances. He feels unclean and guilty after sex and needs to physically clean himself (takes a shower) after sexual encounters with MC.
He lashes out at MC describing him as an agent of the devil and the temptation in his life; in that he lures Andre into sin.

Andre sees himself as chosen by God to cure the gay community from this disease and that he was going to be their example.

In the same vein he meets a beautiful woman, courts her, gets engaged and marries her all in the matter of a year. MC is the driver of the wedding car.

After the humiliation and expulsion from the circle of Dutch Reformed Pastors Andre rages with God and for a time becomes almost an atheist.

He trashes his entire collection of Bibles in a municipal trash can. This rage continues for about six months, and for the next two years he has the most blissful time with MC. MC encourages him to return to church.

*Marius Oelschig*

Marius was a good Christian until he was thirty five years old. He describes his road to atheism a process of getting bad and disappointing answers from Christianity and a concurrent witnessing of the hypocrisy between what Christians professed to believe and how they actually conducted their lives.

Looking back Marius says that ‘coming out’ as an atheist is much more difficult that coming out as a gay person.

At the age of eight the Sunday school teacher asks the kids whether they loved God more than their parents. Marius’s response is “no”, he loves his mom more. It is explained to him that the bible says that if we love our parents more than God we will go to hell. At the tender age of eight he is shocked and worried by this, as he does not want to go the hell. He tells me of the impact that this had on him. At the age of eight, his mother was everything to him.
While in the military he had to visit the Anglican Church, due to numbers and the pomp and liturgy had an eroding effect of his view of the spiritual.

He says that the Torah, the Qur’an and the Bible hate pigs and gays, and that this fact most probably many moons ago planted the seeds for his rejecting religion and becoming an atheist today.

Marius struggles with a very profound question. “How can a loving God create us with a fundamental flaw, as to not be accepted?”

He also once had a fling with a gay pastor, which goes beyond his comprehension. A gay Christian to him is like a chicken being pro-KFC!

His feeling excluded from a spiritual reality and being condemned by it to the point that he turns his back on religion

*Judge Cameron*

He talks about his aversion against institutionalised religions and the ‘cruel’ way in which they have heaped abuse of LGBTI people, for thousands of years.

He talks about the horrendous proscription and the ritualistic abuse heaped on especially sodomy and same sex relations.

He sees the condemnation of homosexuality as linked together with a whole host of other irrational and illogical proscriptions, inhibitions, cruelties and condemnations in all the monotheistic religions.

He comes to the conclusion that mythologies and metaphysical or supernatural belief systems are not capable of claiming credulity or even respect in some of these cases.

For that reason he draws solely from a rationalistic perspective and orientation.
7.2.5 A personal “Stonewall” experience – the attitude of defiance

Andre Carl

Andre Carl emphasises that he in all honesty has no anger towards his father, although he had a lot of anger in the past. He feels that since ‘Moffie’ was published, and even during the process of writing the book, he stopped letting his father get to him. Andre Carl feels that, since the abuse he suffered from his father was mostly mental and emotional in nature, he had developed the skill to simply not allow his father to ‘push his buttons’.

Andre Carl laughs when he adds that his father harshly disciplined the children on table manners and he himself was mostly in the line of fire. He reminds me almost with a touch of glee, that he was the rebellious one and also the more disobedient one. There is a sense of defiance in his voice.

He feels that his father viewed him as inferior and that his father’s attitude towards his son impacted him to the extent that he lost all respect for his father.

Already at the young age of ten, he decided that he had had enough and that he was going to boarding school.

Gerhard Pienaar

Defiantly, Gerhard throws himself into his school work and cultural activities and wins the Dux Pupil Award in primary school, academic colours in High School and at University. He passes his degree with distinction.

He reaches the point of ‘enough’ with a condemning cell group at Oosterlig and joins the Reforming Gay Church in Pretoria, fully aware of the fact that it was known to be a controversial and hotly debated issue in religious circles and certainly frowned upon. He turns his back on the ‘friends’ he had in the Oosterlig cell group.
With a growing sense of self-confidence he cuts back dead wood again with his condemning heterosexual choir friends in that he “eats his cake and ‘F’s off”.
He finally comes out to his parents, and is glad that he did this saying that he wanted to be known for who he really was. A false or assumed identity would just not do anymore.

He defiantly stands his ground in the midst of a very conservative church environment, saying – Let God be my judge. He bears the initial shaming by conservative members of his current church, but stands victorious as he confronts them head on with confidence and with a faith in a non-condemning God, and articulated this eloquently. In his action he paves the way for a less judgemental reception of gays in the congregation. Word is out that gays can serve in the last bastion of condemnation, namely the church.

Andre Muller

In 1984 and 1985 Andre is defiant of the instruction given to him by the Chaplain General, to sniff out gays, who are described as sick and in need of help. Although Andre was not aware of the electric shock therapy and other atrocities being committed in Ward 22 of 1 Military hospital, his common sense overrides the instruction. He sees ‘nothing wrong’ with what these men are doing or with what they are.

Later on the border where he was places in the Caprivi – he befriends these gays instead of reporting them.

Andre is visited by the same old pastor who asked him for his letter of resignation. The old pastor tries from different angles to get a confession out of him about his being gay. The pastor rewords his questions, but Andre would not give him the pleasure.

In 1994, while it was still illegal an unprecedented, Andre marries the first lesbian couple in South Africa. It is a provocation and was headed for the constitutional court of South Africa. He takes the marriage documents to home affairs, and they are rejected. He is now playing the role of a gay activist.
He argues in a bible debate with Kritzinger the Bible verses which are supposed to condemn gay, and highlights that in the contexts used, they spoke out against pagan temple prostitution and that there was nothing against mutually respectful gay relationships.

**Marius Oelschig**

Marius does not allow himself to be excluded from the permanent Air Force as the law regarding homosexuals stipulated back then. He is defiant and he is pursuit of his dream career as an air traffic controller. He does not hesitate or give it a second thought.

He explains that he is not one to get on the band wagon and wave flags for the sake of gay rights. He is an individual and does not feel closely affiliated with the gay community. He feels he already has those rights by virtue of his being human. He will have none of a world that rejects him and simply claims his space in the sun. He does see the need for gay people to have rights, but he does not see the need to lobby all the time. He does empathise with the struggle that gay people have had especially in the US but he is strong on the point that the gay subculture does not define him.

He has the unusual ability to not subject himself to judgement by others, and owns the right to ‘self-regulate’ how he feels about himself and his choices.

In response to a question about how anti-gay world events impact him, he says he feels annoyed about the ignorance and the intolerance, but that he does not personally feel intimidated.

He intercepts attempts by people who try to ‘get into his face’, at an early detection stage of perception, and dismisses “them” AND their ‘intentions’. In this sense Marius might truly be a person who owns a ‘Teflon’ mind as mentioned by Downs in his internet lecture. The ability to not let negative things cling to you.

Marius’s response to the issue of gay prejudice is unique amongst the interview participants, in that his strongest rebellion against the prescribed norms of sexual conduct
and gender roles is his refusal to let those ideas affect him. He is not militant about gay laws or anti-gay laws, he is however unflinching about being himself, and having the right to be that. The fact that he is gay is almost secondary.

**Judge Cameron**

When he comes out at the age of twenty nine is unflinching, unapologetic, he makes no excuses, and he asks no one’s permission. He is what he is no questions asked.

He also encourages gay people to do that always and in all areas of their lives, barring situations that would endanger then of course.

He introduces the ‘gay’ reality and concept into the Supreme Court tearoom to a number of judges and tells them that he had heard of the ‘Haas Plaas’ which is a gay club outside of Bloemfontein.

He joking says that he intends to come to court in ‘drag’ before the end of his term there, also to a group of straight judges. He expresses this in an environment where it had never been heard before.

He is a proponent of the ‘Harvey Milk’ advice to ‘COME OUT - COME OUT - COME OUT!’ He says in his interactions with others that gays’ greatest peril is their invisibility that gays collude with shame when they are silent and invisible. No one will just come into a room and ‘think’ you are gay, you also have to ‘tell’ them. In this way they will realise that there are gays in every family, every congregation, every workplace, every community and every living room. They will realise that gay might be our children and even our parents. Every act of coming out is irreversibly and irreducible a political act, and he encourages people to come out, but it remains a personal decision.

He is very strong on attacking the prejudiced sexual mores of society, which are at the very heart of gay discrimination, i.e. the discussion about the gay float in Berlin and Steven Cohen’s banner in the gay parade in South Africa. It is a rebellion and an act of disrespect for heterosexist mores.
He links the sexual taboos and prejudiced heterosexual mores to the discrimination against people with HIV. He also links this to the discrimination of sex workers, who are the outcasts of society, again given the sexual prejudices of heterosexist society. He talks about unshackling the world from this little class mores about sex.

In Kenia he realises that voicelessness and invisibility collude with the monstrous history of violence, persecution and killing – and that THAT is our intellectual and emotional heritage, and that we must fight against this! We have to identify it, we have to articulate it and we have to politically and socially struggle against it firstly and secondly within ourselves. Finally he believes that if and when the process of coming out in a society is fully realised – THEN THE VIOLENCE STOPS.

Coming out is a protective mechanism against overtly expressed homophobia but it does not absolve you from it.

LGBTI activism properly and rightly and appropriately should be partly fuelled by the wrong and the injustice and the misconceptions and misinterpretations of history. He does not see his rage as fuelling a personal grudge, it is a just anger.

7.2.6 Victory in defiance and a self-transcendent life

Andre Carl

Andre Carl makes a very heartfelt statement: during the visit, his father stated that he felt that Andre Carl described the farther-son relationship accurately in the book. Andre Carl felt that this was an admission of guilt.

He responds with a resounding ‘NO!’ to my question on whether he regrets anything in his life. He feels that his book has helped a lot of people as he has come to learn through the numerous letters and mail he has received over the years... a life of no regrets.
Since then, Andre Carl has appeared on TV and on the radio for interviews, his book has become a prescribed book at UCT for two courses and it has been published in Canada and the USA. It is currently being translated into Italian.

He continues his reflection of this period in his life stating that writing his book has been the most rewarding thing he has ever done in his life and that he knows in his heart that his army experience happened to him in order to help other (self-transcendence and turning tragedy to triumph).

Andre Carl believes that God could take away his homosexuality if He so pleased and subsequently AC has made peace with his sexuality in this way, notwithstanding what society would say and their opinions on the matter.

When Andre Carl stood in the historic room at the Kasteel in Cape Town at the launch of his book ‘Moffie’, the author that he was born to be was celebrated. When he penned down his pain and humiliation, his observations and his thoughts and filled two suitcases of little diaries during those terrible years, he was working on a monumental work of literature, which so needed to be published. He has not suffered in vain. His book has helped countless South Africans come to terms with themselves, not just as gay people, but also as parents of gay children and educators. His work has been turned into a stage production and the script for a movie has been written.

Andre Carl is also a famous sculptor and has used his talents to fight the mindless slaughter of rhinos in South Africa with the beautiful outdoor artwork in Cape Town, which provoked the conscience of visitors who need to look through what seems to be a rifle telescope to see the masses of metal take on the shape of a beautifully created sculpture of a rhinoceros. The provocative message is that if we do not change our ways, then the last rhino seen by man will be through the telescope of a rifle.

Andre Carl has transcended his life of bitter pain and is adding to the world beautiful life sustaining lessons.
Gerhard Pienaar

Gerhard moves in diplomatic circles, touches people with music, reaches out a hand to the underprivileged and abundantly forgives a family that shunned him after the death of his mother – who was truly his only protector in this world – he does this with such a maturity of spirit that demands respect, even from those who only some decades ago engaged in his humiliation and his rejection.

Gerhard is as comfortable in the company of Ambassadors of countries, members of Parliament, and Ministers in his professional life as he is in church when he runs Sabbath School and sees himself as a child of God.

He enthusiastically does charity work for underprivileged children and lives for the choir he belongs to, nurturing and celebrating his talents. They (the choir) take the authentic African style chamber music to Europe on a two yearly basis and he tells me the audience response is electrifying.

He lives on a plot where he grows organic vegetables and lavender, constructs and builds fountains and dams, and he and his partner even have an animal sanctuary for rescued and abused animals. He does not live his life only for himself he says, but the beauty of life is in the giving.

He modestly admits that there is today recognition from the side of his family for the level he has risen to in his career in the diplomatic world and the company he shares professionally.

He concludes that the struggles of gay life will always be there, but that he can now face it from a more mature perspective and confidence in God as his Creator. He feels that one does not have to be a political activist, but in your day to day interaction with people, you can make life for gays that follow, just a little bit easier.
Andre Muller

Andre marries the first gay couple in South Africa he becomes for many gay citizens of this county a modern day David facing a social Goliath.

He knew that his actions would end up in the South African Supreme Court yet he forged on defiantly. He prayed and he continued his battle and he was victorious. The day the panel of judges ruled in favour of gay marriage there was jubilation in court. A gay milestone had been reached. It was a victory that made headlines all around the world. Who would have thought that this would ever be possible in a country where being gay was in the very recent past illegal and punishable by law?

He starts a gay congregation in Pretoria transmuting the excruciating pain he suffered when he was banished from the circle of Dutch Reformed Ministers with a sermon that said: ‘let those who are vile remain vile...’ - into a service for thousands of gay believers who for the first time found a place to worship and focus on their Creator, undisturbed by vicious tongues that take such pleasure in pointing out the evil in gay church goers.

On a personal note Andre feels that rejection is the most painful thing you can do to another person, and he says that this happens to gay people as they represent everything that mainstream society sees and feels is unnatural. In his ministry and in his efforts he would work towards counteracting that and instilling in them a feeling that they are God’s gay children.

Marius Oelschig

When Marius aced all his exams and was begrudgingly given a first in a course and a profession that was too male for gays in the permanent Air Force in South Africa and he resisted the temptation to capitulate, he set an example for his fellow gay citizens.

He declares some gay stereotypes null and void, especially those that would have it that all gay men are effeminate and need to find occupations what suit their perceived position in society.
He sets a real example in society of the ‘live and let live’ mentality.

Marius’s life is full and rich with meaning. He is also extremely successful financially and fully enjoys a life where most things are easily affordable. This is a far cry from the financial difficulties he suffered in their little flat in Kempton Park.

He is an animal lover and is verbal about people making responsible choices around animals, who cannot speak for themselves. He would not think of emigrating unless his animals can go with him.

Judge Cameron

Despite Judge Cameron’s national and international recognition he feels that one must not dwell on the public perception of who you are, but hang on to your own true self otherwise you lose integrity.

He feels that a highlight in his life was when he was appointed as Supreme Court Judge, but when he goes to black schools and there are kids who put up their hands and openly say that they are gay, he feels a sense of accomplishment, because they do not have to feel and live with the extreme humiliation, and shame that he had to. He feels that this is what he and other activists had worked for.

He agrees that love does heal shame. Love in the broader context does return to us a sense of dignity, worth and self-respect.

I don’t want children of pubescent years, of emerging orientational consciousness and realisation to feel the shame, humiliation, inhibition and fear that I did, that is a profound motivating factor for activism.
7.3 Gays talking about what it means to be gay

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects from the entire research has been the subjective experiences and definitions (more descriptions) these gay men gave on ‘being gay.’

They all indicated that they intuitively but also personally understood what ‘being gay’ means for them, but that it was almost illusive when they tried to put words to it. I prompted them all with the same obvious question: does being gay simply mean that they have sex with another male. They all denied that and some of them said that many heterosexual men can at times have sex with males, but that that does not make them gay. Andre Muller points out that it is a very different orientation towards life, society and self-expression. He feels also that in terms of gender roles, as being more in touch with the traditionally defined “feminine side”. There is in other words fluidity between the traditionally demarcated quadrants of masculine and feminine behaviour, interests and tendencies. It entails much more that a sexual act.

In prisons and in the Nazi Death Camps the practice of gay sex was rife and accepted. The same trend was cited in the hostels on South Africa’s gold mines.

Homosexual behaviour between two ‘normal’ (heterosexual) men is considered an emergency outlet, while the same thing between two gay men, who both feel deeply for one another, is something ‘filthy’ and repulsive.

The subjects all describe it as a way of “being” and a way of “relating” to society and the world. A heterosexual or homosexual orientation is thus not only confined to overt sexual acts and limited to that, but includes likes and dislikes, dreams, fantasies and choices, sympathies and sentiments. It regulates the comfortable and desired distance or closeness between the sexes. It involves caring behaviour and preference. It is about who gets a special place in your heart.
Gerhard’s rude awakening when he was confronted with the question from his friend whether he was gay is perhaps a good example of the fluid lines between friendship and love for the gay person. The hurt felt after the rejection is evident of the position his friend had been given in his heart. Gerhard tells me that he knew his friend was heterosexual and was not ever going to try and make sexual advances toward him, but just perhaps loved him in his heart.

Andre Carl guarded against showing his true and deeper feelings towards his Norwegian friends and was also eventually ‘found out’ and rejected. While the youths were experimenting and engaging in mutual masturbation all went well, but as soon as they sensed AC’s deeper feelings the rejection was immediate.

Marius says that being gay is in your head and not in your pants. He adds that in his entire life he has never had an erotic thought or dream about a woman, even when he sporadically dated girls at school. He adds that our sexuality must involve subconscious dynamics that influence many other aspects of your life.

André thinks that gay men are more refined and in their outlook may be more in touch with their feminine side. All of them feel that they would still be gay, even if they never had sex with a man again or ever had. It is for them in other words an inborn orientation far more than a sexual act.

They are aware of the fact that it is not the norm, but they do not experience it as perverse or wrong as it is accompanied by feelings of love, devotion and commitment to a partner. They are capable of great sacrifice and service to a male partner, no different from the heterosexual individual. They also experience their love as sacred and special and a force that comforts and carries them in good times and bad.

They also agree with the author of ‘The men with the pink triangle: the true life-and-death story of homosexuals in the Nazi death camps’ (Heger, 1980, p. 11) that it is ironic that lustful carnal sex between heterosexual males in prison, or between a gay man and a heterosexual male, is seen as a normal regulation of hormones in the absence of a female,
in the mind of a heterosexual male, but will be seen as disgusting if love and affection is added to it by the gay male.

There is also agreement amongst them that being gay does not mean being effeminate, while that is also not excluded. There are gay and heterosexual males who manifest a wide variety of behaviours that may often make the lines between the genders appear fluid. The phenomenon of bisexuality is a middle ground in other words.

It is also not true that all gays are artistic, have good taste and are refined. Even Andre admitted that there are some really rough necked gay people out there but that they are not the norm.

Judge Cameron places it in a nutshell:

“They confine you to a sexual act – an enactment of the desire and if you don’t enact the desire then you are not gay. That’s absurd! Completely absurd. Well not just absurd, it’s actually silly! The question is capable of so many different kinds of answers. I gave the definition in my inaugural lecture in 1993. I would say that it relates to sexual functioning, but that everything else follows from that. It relates to sexual functioning in a way that very early on you realise it’s shameful and stigmatised and unacceptable and that buries deep inside I think all LGBTI people carry a profound stigma, which even at the age of 63, with years of campaigning – 34 years of my life I’ve been campaigning – for Gay and Lesbian equality and dignity I ask myself, ‘Is it normal? Is there something wrong with us?’ not that I credit the question, but there is that inner voice that still asks that. So that stigma – there is a definitional social reaction to same sex desire, which complicates the definition, but the essential definition is erotic attraction to people of your own sex, I would say. All other behavioural outflows are secondary. You find many gay people who have no interest in the classical stereotypical likes such as cooking, opera, interior design etc., and yet they are also gay, and identify as gays - I think all the lifestyle things are entirely incidental.”
It might then be concluded that they all agree that in the final instance, being a gay male means that you would have the capacity to fall in love with another male and be in a committed caring relationship with him and be happy – and that this sexual latency would find expression in many subtle ways and would be visible to society in everyday behaviour, unless it was guarded and hidden, just like a heterosexual tendency would.

Being ‘found out’ as a gay male is more often than not in the getting to know the gay person. It is in the absence of a wife or a female partner that he is often found out. It is in his commitment and contentment with a male friend or male company that he is often discovered, or in the relaxed relationships with females that the suspicions are aroused, not always only in his effeminate behaviour.

Lastly it must be mentioned that heterosexism is experienced by all subjects as a most arrogant and dehumanising stance in society. What it entails is that heterosexual society often stands on the position that their orientation is the only ‘normal’ and acceptable way, and that all else is by necessity a perversion. Without any insight, experience or knowledge they become “experts” in homosexuality, wildly theorising about its origins, its processes and that it is a choice. There are beliefs that it can be cultivated and that it is learned behaviour and that it can thus be unlearnt. Religious people in some cases see it as an absence of the Holy Spirit, as sin personified and lack of faith. Evidence was given from the medical field that it might be seen as a sickness that can be corrected by therapy and electric shock.

7.4 A discussion of the findings through the lens of Logotherapy

In order to make sense of the findings, and also to do justice to the ‘title’ of my thesis, it is now important to return to the theoretical context and backdrop against which my findings are to be understood, namely ‘Viktor Frankl’s Logotherapy’.
We have seen that the two main players in Frankl’s Logotherapy is, firstly, ‘man’ with his primary and inherent ‘will to meaning’ and his ‘free will’ which Frankl sees as a spiritual faculty.

Secondly, it is the real life context which he finds himself in, that provides him with a context for ‘unconditional meaning’. It is the tension field between ‘man’ in relation to his private and public world, which is the area of ‘meaning’.

“It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful. An active life serves the purpose of giving man the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment affords him the opportunity to obtain fulfilment in experiencing beauty, art, or nature. But there is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but one possibility of high moral behaviour: namely, in man’s attitude to his existence, an existence restricted by external forces.” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 87-88.)

In order also to understand the detail of typical ‘gay’ social pathology, the theoretical frameworks of Downs (2012) and Bradshaw (1988), which I discuss in Sections 3.3 to Section 3.3.6, with particular reference to ‘internalised shame’, ‘shame based trauma’ and ‘toxic shame’ were drawn on. This was done to further elucidate Frankl’s concept of the ‘existential vacuum’ – Section 3.1.7 – and the reason so many gays might risk falling into a vacuous existence. This discussion is then primarily focused on the tension field between my gay interviewees and their struggle with a social environment that is toxic and shaming toward them.

In Chapter 2, the legal, social and religious homophobic history was looked at and in Chapter 8 the ongoing homophobic social environment which gays live in is discussed. Chapter 6 brings the private experiences of five gay men in South Africa ‘today’ under the spotlight.

The emerging themes of this research illuminated six ‘clusters’ of experiences that the participants had. What follows is a brief outline of the themes, which will be followed by a more detailed discussion.
The first cluster of experiences is labelled “A relatively short period of ‘innocence’ in early childhood”. During this period the participants relate a time of ‘innocence’ and a more carefree attitude towards self and the world. Aspects of life and experiences pertaining to ‘self’ are not evaluated very strongly according to ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. During this phase there is still no understanding of their being gay or ‘different’ or socially unacceptable. It is perhaps the time when they are emerging as authentic little individuals, interested in the world around them and still not preoccupied with a feeling of being flawed and feelings of shame. Knowledge of what “gay” is or that they themselves might be “gay” is not yet there. In that respect they are carefree and free and innocent still.

The second cluster of experiences, labelled “An emerging reality of being ‘different’”, is when the individual starts receiving social cues and reprimands about his being ‘different’ and that certain behaviours and interests are ‘unacceptable’ with regard to a socially prescribed gender role. This phase is normally in internal process which may or may not be experienced as anxiety provoking, depending on the social environment and the self-image of the individual.

Failure to ‘comply’ with coaching in socially prescribed gender roles and associated behaviours leads to the third cluster of experiences where “Social rejection and shame and attempts to cope” is demarcated. This leads to mounting anxiety in most cases and self-monitoring behaviour and corrective behaviours start manifesting, in an attempt to fit in. Significant others’ behaviours are also checked for acceptance or non-acceptance and embarrassment shown for the behaviour of the gay child. There is an increased loss of spontaneity and a diminishing of the carefree childlike or youthful attitude.

This normally coincides and runs concurrently with “A spiritual battle and fear”. The individual may at this point also feel unacceptable in the eyes of ‘God’ or whatever his religious persuasion is.

The ‘social’ and ‘spiritual’ battles that rage inside the gay person as well as the outcome and resolution of these battles are extremely important for the further development of the
individual. It might be argued that if the individual does not find the strength or the means to resolve this conflict, he might sink into the ‘existential vacuum’ and live a life dominated by ‘fear’ and ‘shame’.

Successful resolution leads to a ‘resolve’ to start the journey of accepting self ‘as is’ and face the world ‘as is’. I have labelled this behavioural cluster “A personal ‘Stonewall’ experience – the attitude of defiance” – as a symbol of the universal attitude of resistance and defiance and more importantly an attitude of claiming back “autonomy” that is a necessary prerequisite for not only a gay person to live a life of meaning and dignity, but for all individuals. Social sanctions and critique are resisted and own authentic (often long neglected) inclinations, ideas and passions are rediscovered, developed and celebrated.

With resistance and defiance and a resolve to fight for and secure a life that is worthy and dignified, the final cluster of experiences open up to the individual namely “Victory in defiance and a self-transcendent life”. The individual experiences a personal victory over and relief from a pained self-observation, fuelled by anxiety that he may disappoint, step out of line, lose social regard or affection or be seen as unacceptable. The ‘seeing eye’ as Bradshaw describes the source of shame loses its power over the individual as he starts tasting spiritual victory over it, and it is experienced as an inspiration to pursue higher planes of personal freedom and personal dignity.

Looking at Figure 3 creates the impression that the process that I have described is linear. It is not. In not one of the interviews was there evidence of a ‘linear’ and ‘once off’ pattern. There was however ample evidence of a recurring circular movement from ‘socio-spiritual’ struggles or injustices suffered to ‘resistance and or defiance’ and finally to ‘victory’.

I often saw a combination of ‘social’ and ‘spiritual’ struggles as they are often combined. I pay attention to this phenomenon later on in this section.

Studying this ‘circular motion’ more closely revealed that it was actually an upward spiral, toward greater autonomy, self-acceptance, social skills and authenticity.
Another discovery was that these gay men did not fight all their battles on one day, and they also have perhaps not ‘yet’ fought all their battles. It is an ongoing process with fresh challenges or onslaughts regularly into their lives.

**Figure 3: The six clusters of experience**

![Diagram of the six clusters of experience]

In a telephone conversation to Marius Oelschig after transcribing his interview and having worked on the clustering of his experiences, I asked him if he could give me a bit more information regarding the point in time when he finally had had “enough” and decided to walk his own path.
I chose Marius as his attitude throughout had always been the most crisp and concise. He seemed to have great ‘cognitive clarity’ when reviewing his life. He asked me to give him a few minutes and he would WhatsApp me his response. His answer was a watershed experience in my research.

“It came at different times with different people. With my close friends I was totally open from Std. 8 (grade 10). During my last two years of school I remember trying hard to ease my mother’s anxieties. That carried on through the first year of National Service. It was just after I signed on in the ‘staande mag’ (permanent force) that I told my mom. And that was that. I had no more time for her anxieties. She still has them to this day but it’s never discussed. In 1991 I became a civilian A.T.C (air traffic controller.) Worked in Bloem (Bloemfontein) tower at first and only one friend and colleague knew. (He mentions his name). Wonderful man. Was big mates with him and his wife. He came out three years ago. In fact he came to see Palissander (the choir in which Marius sang bass) at St. George’s in CT when we were there (on tour). Early 1992 I started at Jan Smuts. Made friends with an oke called (name). A sister (meaning that the man was gay). We ended up being roomies. Anyway, someone gave him shit at work and he took a stand. He came out with a bang. Put the fucker on his place and then proceeded to say that they should leave me alone as well as I am also a queen (he adds an emoticon with the face laughing and tears running down the cheeks). So I was dragged out kicking and screaming but I didn’t mind .It’s never been a problem at work. I only broke the news to my dad when I met Rey (his partner). So that was in 1996. The religious thing – as I say I’ve always been sceptical. I must have raised my eyebrows so hard in church over the years the roof must have rattled. But I always went through the motions and was observant of all the protocols. Until 2011, when I read Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens (two militant atheist writers). It was like the clouds parted and I thought ‘HA! So THAT’S what I’ve been thinking all these years but never actually formulated the arguments in my own head consciously’. Anyway, never looked back. Onward and upward. Fluit fluit my storie is uit. Soos ek. (The last sentence is a way of ending a children’s story by saying with a whistle that the story has ended.)”
Although it was my intention to study gays who break through to the dimension of meaning and not those who succumb to the social onslaughts, it also became clear to me that in their cases (those who succumb to the negative social forces) there is also a spiral, but a downward spiral into the abyss experiences which Frankl talks about describing the existential vacuum.

“In contradiction to the peak experiences so aptly described by Maslow, one could conceive of the existential vacuum as an ‘abyss-experience.’” (Frankl, 1988, p. 83.)

At this point I want to focus the discussion on the understanding of the moment of ‘surrender’, which, I want to argue, is at the core of those gay people’s lives who break through to the spiritual dimension of their lives and follow the upward trend to victory.

Frankl describes his tenacious efforts to hold onto a manuscript of a scientific book which he had written and had in the inside of his pocket. Approaching an older prisoner he inquired:

“SS men appeared and spread out blankets into which we had to throw all our possessions, all our watches and jewellery. There were still naïve prisoners among us who asked, to the amusement of the more seasoned ones who were there as helpers, if they could not keep a wedding ring, a medal or a good-luck piece. No one could yet grasp the fact that everything would be taken away. I tried to take one of the old prisoners into my confidence. Approaching him furtively, I pointed to the roll of paper in the inner pocket of my coat and said, "Look, this is the manuscript of a scientific book. I know what you will say; that I should be grateful to escape with my life, that that should be all I can expect of fate. But I cannot help myself. I must keep this manuscript at all costs; it contains my life’s work. Do you understand that?" Yes, he was beginning to understand. A grin spread slowly over his face, first piteous, then more amused, mocking, insulting, until he bellowed one word at me in answer to my question, a word that was ever present in the vocabulary of the camp inmates: "Shit!" At that moment I saw the plain truth and did what marked the culminating point of the first phase of my psychological reaction: I struck out my whole former life.” (Frankl, 2011, pp. 11-12.)
I believe that every gay person must at one point go through a similar experience of ‘striking out his whole former life’. Here the ‘existential’ quality of Logotherapy comes to the fore. If one is to experience meaning in life, if one is to hear and be attuned to the minute by minute ‘demand quality’ of life, one must be fully, attentively and unapologetically in the ‘present’. Present without any distractions, is what is required. One cannot be entertaining life at arm’s length, through a layer of distortions, denial, rationalisations and fantasies. Nor can one’s self-concept, one’s self-perception be cloaked in these naive and fanciful notions and beliefs.

The gay person on his way to a life of meaning and victory must be able to accept himself, and he must see the homophobic world around him for what it is. This can be a very rude awakening. But (as we see in Section 3.2) according to Shantall (2002, p. 48), outlining the essential points in the process of suffering; we see that suffering itself can be the vehicle through which the gay man arrives at that point of total surrender to the moment of truth, about himself and about the world he lives in. Just as Frankl had to ‘strike out his entire previous life’ and start anew. Shantall (2002, p. 48) demarcates the following phases of triumphant suffering:

- Suffering is experienced as having a confrontational nature;
- It fixes us to the immediate moment, we feel cornered;
- We feel called to responsibility;
- We are presented with the reality of choice;
- We feel compelled to do something about the situation, and that which is threatened becomes precious to us and present themselves to us as tasks, as we move towards the preservation and intense appreciation of them, and
- our actions towards the preservation and realisation of these values become self-sustaining actions, and our lives take on a much deeper spiritual content and meaning.

It is through this hostile homophobic social environment that gays are cornered and an account is demanded of us. It is as if life is shouting at us: “Who are you?” If we do break
through to the dimension of meaning, these ‘tasks’ mentioned in point number four, might very well be the first step towards the wrenching back from a hostile homophobic world, the dignity we are denied.

Unless we take up our position again in the driver seats of our own lives we remain like ‘understudies’ in a huge big cultural drama, where heterosexism is the theme. As Judge Cameron says in his interview; “So Mark, that was my mission, that we collude, that silence and invisibility collude with this monstrous history or repression and persecution and violence and killing”.

The ‘intellectual and emotional’ heritage we as a gay subculture are left with is dire and it is bleak.

I discovered also that these experiences were not unique to me (as was my question at the outset), but that the men I interviewed and whose lives I studied and tried to understand and get closely involved in, all had similar “in type” – though unique “in content” – experiences. What I found over and above that, during wider reading in the research process, was that different gay men, in different cultures and in different times all experience the same social onslaught as I discovered in my research with South African men.

I would like to present two examples of gay writers and thinkers, to substantiate my point. A gay writer, Jim Grimsley (2001, p. 232), writes in “Out in the South” a short story called “Myth and reality: The Story of Gay People in the South”.

He searches for a unique understanding of gay people in the south of the USA and at the end stumbles back into a universal understanding of all gay people as he sees them:

“We have this much in common with gay people everywhere, that for us our families are our first battle ground. We must survive our families to become ourselves, to realise that we are gay, even though or families never want us to be gay. But for us in the South the family is a field where craziness grows like weeds.“
We have the church in common too, all of us, even those who never attended a service or sang a hymn...Most of all we have the church that tells us sex is nasty, never to be discussed except in its nastiness. For gay people this is the hardest part of all: because we can only identify ourselves as ourselves through what we desire, and we learn, from the first moment of life in the South, that that desire is a deadly evil thing.” (Grimley, 2001, p. 232.)

Also in the same book, Dews (2001, p. 236) describes the relationship he has with the South which is his home. “Many southern queers, myself included, simultaneously hate, and love the South. We feel split between a desperate need to flee yet an equally urgent desire, once we are away, to return to it as well. In my case I love the South abstractly, but I find it difficult to tolerate in reality”.

Returning to the gay men I interviewed, we see that they shared a yearning to be part of their families, their societies and their cultures, but given the conditional acceptance they receive, it leads to inner conflict and struggle. It can be argued that part of this struggle, albeit only initially; entails adopting non-authentic concepts to appease the heterosexist social demand. Gerhard and Marius had girlfriends and Andre Muller was even married for three months. Judge Cameron describes how he altered his behaviour and in his own words became a ‘gay coconut’.

The spiritual struggle is also intense and we see how two of the participants reject a religion, which they feel is forever condemning them and is irrational and cannot be trusted. In the cases of Gerhard, Andre and Andre Carl, Frankl’s claim that “if religion is to survive, it has to be profoundly personalized” is proven beyond doubt. Andre sees his current church as a haven for gays who suffer in mainstream churches because they are condemned and ostracised. Gerhard stands his ground as an office bearer in his church despite voices who want him removed, and he feels that he is paving the way for others to find a safe place in mainstream churches. Andre Carl deepens his relationship with God in a special and personal way.
Whether religious or agnostic or atheist; each of the participants came to their own and authentic breakthrough of true morality and justice; the experience of meaning in their lives in goodness, truth, beauty and, above all, love. It is not just sex as in the existential vacuum discussed in Chapter 9, but an expression of love. It is also not a stigmatised, sick or dirty ‘sex’, but a physical relation, sanctified by love.

“Love is as primary a phenomenon as sex. Normally, sex is a mode of expression for love. Sex is justified, even sanctified, as soon as, but only as long as, it is a vehicle of love. Thus love is not understood as a mere side-effect of sex; rather, sex is a way of expressing the experience of that ultimate togetherness which is called love.” (Frankl, 2011, p. 90.)

The devotion that these men have towards their partners is tangible. It is as if love to them is not a given but something precious to treasure. Bradshaw talks about the healing power of love from toxic shame. While the social eye that causes the shame-based person to hide, it is the loving eye that heals him (Bradshaw, 1988).

But what is even more riveting in the stories of these men is that they themselves struggled through to a victory that is tangible and visible.

“Any analysis, however, even when it refrains from including the noölogical dimension in its therapeutic process, tries to make the patient aware of what he actually longs for in the depth of his being. Logotherapy deviates from psychoanalysis insofar as it considers man a being whose main concern consists in fulfilling a meaning, rather than in the mere gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts, or in merely reconciling the conflicting claims of id, ego and superego, or in the mere adaptation and adjustment to society and environment.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 125.)

Looking at the statements of Frankl above, it can be seen that it was the very ‘rejection’ of societal norms that was the saving grace of these men. Free from internalised shame and prescriptions that were contrary to their nature, they were able to reach out to the world and find that which was there for them, each and every one of them.
In that newly found freedom, they were inspired to free others from the societal shackles. Andre Carl’s books have brought healing to many thousands of people in this country and abroad. The many languages his book has been translated into, and even the screen production for a movie has been discussed. His stage productions have influences many people. His artistic talent is utilised to speak out for gay rights, which are basic human rights, and also against rhino pouching in beautiful works of art on the Cape Town Waterfront.

Thanks to Andre Muller many gay people can now worship in peace. He was disobedient and married the first lesbian couple in South Africa. He transformed his pain into a service for others.

Judge Cameron has been an avid fighter for gay rights ever since he first came out at the age of 29 at the President Hotel at a movie premier. He did not stop there but was a co-author of the Constitution of South Africa, the only Constitution worldwide to include sexual orientation on its list of basic human rights. It is because of this Constitution that gays in South Africa could enjoy protection from homophobic hate mongers in September 2016 in the form of Baptist preacher Steven Anderson (refer to https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/09/13/hate-group-leader-steven-anderson-banned-entering-south-africa, retrieved on 27 September 2016).

Gerhard applies his talents in singing and brings tears to audiences both locally and abroad. He refuses to have his religion taken from him by people, mere mortals, and instead stands firm in his church, living his faith and claiming his rightful place in the body of Christ.

Marius sets an example to all those who know him as a go-getter and a fearless gay man accepting no discrimination and demonstrating how to deflect them.

The inner struggles of these men can only partially and empathetically be understood. But one thing is for sure as we see below: they stood up against a total onslaught from a hostile and homophobic society and they endured the tension inside that was telling them that what society had to say about them, had nothing to do with reality. That it was ignorant,
misconstrued and uneducated prejudice. In the final analysis they had the spiritual strength to defiantly look away from their accusers and look towards what life had in store for them.

“To be sure, man’s search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one’s life.” (Frankl, 2011, p. 84.)

The men all treasure their lives and the place they have in society. They cherish the fact that others can benefit from what they have gone through. They have survived the onslaught and are becoming stronger and more skilled in their dealing with their own lives and with society. They are empowered and set an example for LGBTI society. Vigilant and alert they engage in discussions and inform those who are desperate and isolated, still hiding in shame.

Gerhard mentioned that it is so much easier for him now to be open about his sexual orientation, by simply immediately talking about his ‘partner’. He feels that keeping it neutral, the person may have the choice to ask ‘male’ or ‘female’, but they seldom do. However, by speaking out, he is projecting confidence and not shame or anxiety, and that already sets the stage for an equal footing. He says:

“I came to a point in my life where I had to decide: are you going to keep on doing what carries the approval of the people around you, especially your family and colleagues, or are you going to start to live an authentic life. It’s a hard habit to break, trying to get people’s approval all the time. But meeting my partner started a process in me where I can look the world straight in the eyes and say: ‘this is me, think of it what you want, I am not ashamed anymore.’”
So, recapping and passing review of the experiential clusters in these gay men’s lives, show the following:

- An authentic early childhood lived without any distraction and in ignorance of prescribed gender roles;
- “Times of stumbling”, where the young gay person or child starts doubting his worth due to recurring social criticism and reprimand with specific reference to his gender role. The seed of thought that he might be gay is starting to germinate;
- He now understands the attackers’ motivations as being provoked by his gay identity. While he is still not skilled in defending himself, the initial phase can be very traumatic;
- “Am I rejected even by my Creator?” is essentially the question that haunts the young gay person in his spiritual battle. In prayer and contemplation, searching the scriptures, he seeks comfort;
- This is the point of “enough”. The gay man learns to say “no!” and “stop!” Starting to discern the injustice of the accusation and the innocence of his motivation, the resistance in him starts to rise and a just anger ignites.
- “This is me; I am what I am”, is the theme of this cluster of experiences. It is a breaking through to the realisation that each human being has the right to a self-chosen path in life; that he has the right to make authentic decisions and write his life story in accordance with his authentic desires, talents, interests, skills and abilities.
- “Let’s see if I can help you”, is the beautiful and humane aftermath of heroic suffering when the victor encounters with great empathy sufferers entangled in situations he knows so well.

These clusters of experiences form the foundation of the gay reality in a non-gay society. The socio-spiritual struggles, versus the resistance and victory processes, are ongoing and dynamic. They form an upward spiral in which the gay person breaks through to ever new insights about self and society and becomes more skilled in navigating the hostile homophobic environment. Inspired by his victories and motivated by his frustration, he
transcends his own reality, reaching out a helping hand to others in similar situations. These experiential clusters, however, only form the basic level of the findings in this thesis.

On a deeper level, the breakthrough to a realistic “self-perception” leads to feelings of injustice, given the onslaught on the gay person’s identity. Looking back on his life, he may remember the initial innocence of his childhood. What follows is a rage whether articulated or not and gives birth to his first authentic resistance. It is also perhaps an energised, healing anger carrying the gay person into making ground breaking first decisions, which are not geared towards pleasing and appeasing society, but in pursuit of a freely chosen goal. It is a liberating feeling and in many cases the first authentic choice. First authentically chosen paths lead to discovery of new values. In this reciprocal interchange with freely chosen goals, meaning enters the gay person’s life. He starts growing and in the growth process finds even more reason to resist the pressure to conform into something inauthentic.

On an even deeper level, breaking through to what Frankl calls the “spiritual dimension of being” (discussed in Section 3.1.1), the gay man, like all other people, starts applying and living his spiritual capacities. He learns to flex and use and regulate the spiritual capacity such as “attention”, “expectation” and “attitude”.

Lucas (2000, p. 180) states:

“...Expectation, attitude and attention, are noetic acts which represent the reasoning of persons in the world in which they live. Expectation refers to that which pours in from the world to the person. Attitude refers to that which emits from the person into the world. Attention refers to that part of the world which ‘belongs’ to the person, because the person in noetically ‘with it’.”

Expectation is in a way the influence and power of the world on us. Only if we understand the dynamics of these spiritual faculties and the “spiritual” mastery these men have attained, will we really be able to talk about a unique spiritual development of a gay man in a homophobic world. Fact remains that when they finally break through to the dimension of meaning through an authentic choice urged by their conscience, the newly found values
serve as a stabilising noetic anchor in a sea of psychic emotional turmoil. It gives them something to hold onto. It adds dimensions of safety and security to their lives. For the first time, they experience a lesser need for external validation, which in turn gives their own inner worlds a sense of cohesion and gravity. In time they become stable forces in society to be reckoned with.

In this respect, the breakthrough to meaning might be what Downs (2012) describes as the process of learning to self-validate. Stimulated by initial victories, the gay man seeks to broaden his inner world of meaning and concurrently with that broadens his social realm of impact and influence.

To recap, the gay man now learns to direct and focus his attention to that which is meaningful to him, while simultaneously learning to ignore “the old social accusing enemy”. In this way, perhaps the most illuminating discovery in the entire thesis was the intuitive and spontaneous way in which the participants mastered and applied the Logotherapeutic technique of “dereflexion”. Dereflexion is a technique used to help the sufferer overcome senseless worrying (called “hyper-reflection” in Logotherapy). Dereflexion in the final analysis constitutes two sign posts; the first which reads “Stop!” to senseless worrying and the second, which reads “This way to meaning”.

“…hyper-intention as well as hyper-reflection have to be counteracted by Dereflexion. Dereflexion, however, ultimately is not possible except by the patient’s orientation toward his specific vocation and mission in life. It is not the neurotic’s self-concern, whether pity or contempt, which breaks the circle formation; the cue to cure is self-transcendence!” (Frankl, 2011, pp. 103-104.)

In conversations with all of the participants, the realisation and the acceptance of a world which was not welcoming to gays had become clear and evident. This coincided with the realisation that a life worth living would need to be taken back and rescued and that freedom of choice and personal freedom had to be rediscovered and celebrated in defiance. Andre, for example, fought back in that he started his own church. Judge Cameron tirelessly used his skills and legal expertise to fight and campaign for gay rights. Marius pursued his
dream despite the fact that gays were not allowed to join the permanent air force. He is known for “not letting people get into his face!” Andre Carl resists his father’s critique. He resists the attempts by the SADF to break him and fights back in his literary work.

Gerhard walks out on friendships that were no longer serving him and which turned into relations of critique and condemnation. While it is painful, he refuses to wear the label they’re offering. In a similar fashion he comes out to his parents and the reason that he gives is that there was a need to be known by his true identity. His reason was not circumstantial but driven by a true need to be known for his authentic self. Gerhard is his own best friend in times of trouble at work or at church in that his motto is: “I go to church, I do my duty, I am friendly to those around me and I let the judgement be on them, not me! I’m not losing sleep because they have a problem. The problem is not mine.”

A quick glance at these examples indicates the actions and strategies of survivors in enemy territory. This seems to be main theme in the lives of triumphant and successful gay men.

Given the spiral upward motion identified in these men’s lives between onslaught, resistance and victory, it is impossible to pinpoint a specific watershed moment in any of their lives. Looking at section 7.2.5 provides attitudes of defiance and resistance in their lives at various points in time and in various situations. As mentioned before; - given the ongoing nature of “the social beast”, there will soon be more incidents to add. The same applies for victories and transcendence. Seasoned and schooled in the tough school of attitudinal values, the sweetest rewards for these men, to quote Frankl, are the highest and noblest meanings, namely those found in the right attitude towards life.

Gratitude for what they have comes easily; as they know the high price they had to pay for it. Forced to grow from an early age, they may reach levels of maturity that can dwarf their perpetrators. Not only did they face individuals who opposed them, but legal systems that deny them their rights and social structures that refuse them service. It is ironic and paradoxical that those who wish then ill luck on every corner were the very ones who propelled them into victory.
What became also evident was the participants’ natural ability to spontaneous use “self-distancing” techniques and humour. The unique character of healthy gay humour must involve the making-light-of both the condemning and ignorant society as well as the stereotypes they hold about gays. For a non-gay person, gay humour might often seem as self-devaluing in that they could in a specific moment refer to themselves by using the stereotypical label. I experienced such a moment while at Constitution Hill, sitting vis-à-vis Judge Cameron, who not only personifies authority, dignity and self-respect, but above all a razor sharp intellect. In the midst of the interview, while discussing behavioural modification in order to fit into a homophobic society, he used a stereotypical label, “queen”, to refer to himself: “I deliberately, as I say in this book cultivated certain gestures and suppressed others so that I would not appear to be anything other than masculine or ‘butch’ as we call it. So that persona by the end of my twenties was part of me. You know I couldn’t just dispense with it and become a queen!”

The fact of the matter is that he could have used any other word, but the impact in that situation between two gay people conveyed many layers of understanding and was simultaneously very humorous. Similarly, his reference to the “haas plaas” or threatening to come to the Supreme Court in drag are very humorous given the classical associations of seriousness, power and prestige associated with his office. It was at once also a subtle affirmation of our (his and mine) common heritage as citizens in a homophobic society. The ability to laugh is a uniquely human capacity and affords the spiritual being a welcome reprieve and frees up spiritual energy.

Gay people have learnt to laugh at the idea of senseless worrying and ‘fixing’ of their lives to adapt, as they have paid a high price for what they have achieved emotionally, spiritually and personally.

“Humor was another of the soul’s weapons in the fight for self-preservation. It is well known that humour, more than anything else in the human make-up, can afford an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds. The attempt to develop a sense of humor and to see things in a humorous light is some kind of a trick learned while mastering the art of living”. (Frankl, 1984, p. 63.)
I remember once a lesbian girl who was very nervous about coming out to her mom, who was very conservative and not worldly, saying that if she had to tell her mom that she was lesbian, her mom would most probably correct her, by saying: “But no dear, you know you are Australian!”

Gay humour has however two sides. It also has a bitter vengeful and angry side, which Downs describes in his book and which I mention in Chapter 9.

In discussions with gay people, such incidences of typically gay humour are often found. I believe it is a self-curative mechanism available to humans in their spiritual life, to defuse the intensity of situations and free up energy to tackle a situation with renewed vigour.

7.4.1 Survivor responsibility – a discussion on “freedom” and lessons learnt

It might sound dramatic to talk about ‘survival’. Who knows how many gay men and women did not physically survive the battle against a society that would not have them. Frankl (1984, p. 112) points out that humans who have suffered much often have a kind of attitude of ‘licentiousness’ after liberation, to live greedily and selfishly.

Many gays who lived through the times of ‘oppression’ in South Africa are noticing a change in attitude in the younger generations of gays. Much like amongst the black people of the apartheid generations who bemoan the post-apartheid generations of black youths, complaining that they do not use their freedom responsibly, the same is noticed in gay circles [my own observation and was shared by many of my generation in discussions].

This is a very difficult debate; as it is a debate about ‘morals’ and about ‘liberty’ no one can argue that he has a monopoly on morality and can thus ‘dictate’ to another how he is to live his life. All we need to do is to remember our own suffering under the moral codex of the Afrikaner Apartheid System in the form of the notorious “Immorality Act”. The questions are difficult and deep. What is the way of the moral gay man? When is a gay person immoral?
Questions that the previous generation gays are grappling with are: How do we deal with our freedom? How do we address racism and addictions and sexual promiscuity amongst our own ranks? How do we formulate a new morality or is what we are seeing today a new morality?

“A human being is not one thing among others; things determine each other, but man is ultimately self-determining. What he becomes - within the limits of endowment and environment - he has made out of himself. In the concentration camps, for example, in this living laboratory and on this testing ground, we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man has both potentialities within himself; which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions. Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord’s Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 157.)

The thoughts and reflections I would like to formulate under this section were provoked by comments and attitudes expressed by the five participants.

Andre Carl once made a comment. He said: “You can’t fight for gay rights if you are a racist!” Marius’ statements regarding his life lessons were: “Leave people alone and let them get on with their lives. And just don’t be an asshole”.

Gerhard talks about the injustice of people imposing their world views on gays without going to the trouble to understand, to get to know him, and to come to an intelligent and informed opinion. He says: “Who do you think you are imposing your moral norms and standards on me if you do not even try to get to know me?”

Judge Cameron’s and my discussion on overt sexuality during the German Pride Parade, his comments on Cohen’s banner during the Johannesburg Pride Parade, as well as his minority vote on sex workers in his capacity as a Judge (all discussed in his interview Section 6) stopped me in my tracks. Andre’s Muller general attitude to not fight with mainstream
churches, but to co-exist peacefully was another issue I had to battle with. He also faces the problem of promiscuity viewed from the lens of the Christian faith and encourages monogamy in his congregation.

In the heuristic process, I was really challenged to make sense of what these diverse opinions regarding life lessons or morality might mean. Moustakas (1990, p. 13) talks about the “incubation period” of the heuristic process and in this phase of the research, it took me a long time to ‘hear’ the harmony amongst these seemingly disparate comments made by the five participants. I feel that perhaps my work at the time regarding the sexual excesses in the gay existential vacuum had clouded my ability to hear what these men were saying. My expectation was that they would come forth with a moralistic ideal to be taught to the world regarding “oppression” and “liberation from oppression” with our morals intact. This was however not the case; not one of them even suggested some moral codex. I was at a loss.

Logotherapy teaches that provoking the client’s will to meaning may imply focusing and discussing times of meaning in the client’s life and in the process awakening and revitalising the client’s will to meaning. I can clearly remember in my early years of studying Logotherapy, one particular discussion with Dr Teria Shantall where I was grappling with exactly this point, namely, how to ensure that I am not prescriptive in therapy with clients and how to ensure that I help ‘birth’ the authentic potential meaning of a client. Dr Shantall’s wise comment has remained a life lesson in my career as a Logotherapist. She said: "Mark, you must guard against becoming ‘prescriptive’ about ‘not being prescriptive’.” I think that in the same vein I might have been looking for an emerging ‘theory’ when I looked at the responses my participants gave me.

Only after recalling another profound statement which happened during a brief discussion with the Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, did the insight come. I was at the time living in Austria and working as a flight attendant at Austrian Airlines. Mr Wiesenthal was on a flight between Vienna and Zurich as a VIP passenger, whom I was in charge of. I had the opportunity to discuss his work and his life experiences. One question I asked him was what
his message to the world would be after all he had seen and had suffered under Nazi oppression. His answer was: “Ich wuerde den Hass verbieten”. [I would forbid hatred.]

Searching into myself and drawing all the files that could possibly relate to and bring illumination, I at once realised that while I was looking for a ‘theory’, these men were pointing towards an ‘attitude’ and not a theory. So the life lessons and the conclusions that they had come to was not going to be a new moral codex to force onto people, but a new attitude of tolerance and of liberal spaces in society to be safely occupied by a diverse society.

Looking at the statements of these men through this new lens was illuminating and it underlined Frankl’s discussion regarding the difference between super-ego and conscience. Super-ego is the result of internalised, socially constructed morals and ideas that are not necessarily authentically endorsed by the conscience of the individual, but serve as prefabricated and ready-to-use “superegotistic pseudomorality” (Frankl, 1988, p. 65).

If we compare Frankl’s reasoning; with the oppression and hatred manifest in ideologies and moral systems imposed by political groups throughout history, we start to glimpse the dangers of moralising too strongly and too narrowly in society.

How then are we to understand the Anita Bryants (discussed fully under Section 7.4.3), the Hitlers, the Immorality Acts, the Paul Pots, the Stalins and the Westboro Baptist Communities of this world? Do they not have any right of existence or a voice in this world? Are we to live licentious, care-free lives? Where is the balance?

Frankl’s argument is that “superegotistic pseudomorality” can never lead to an authentic life, but that living by conscience is what is called for. A quote from Frankl will serve as backdrop to this argument:

“The etiology of the existential vacuum seems to me to be a consequence of the following facts. First, in contrast to the animal, no drives and instincts tell man what he must do. Second, in contrast to former times, no conventions, traditions and values tell him what he should do; and often he does not even know what he basically wishes to do. Instead he
wishes to do what other people do (conformism), or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).” (Frankl, 1988, p. 83.)

These two social toxins are at the root of every inhumane system of oppression and ideology, leading to even genocide (Dozier, 2002, pp. 1-2).

What the participants were saying was that space should be made for diversity and I came to the surprising realisation that Frankl agreed with this point fully. He argued that:

“True conscience has nothing to do with what I would term ‘superegrotistic pseudomorality’. Nor can it be dismissed as a conditioning process. Conscience is a definitely human phenomenon. But we must add that it is ‘just’ a human phenomenon. It is subject to the human condition in that it is stamped by the finiteness of man. For he is not only guided by the search for meaning, he is sometimes mislead by it as well. Unless he is a perfectionist, he will also accept his fallibility of conscience.” (Frankl, 1988, p. 65.)

So Frankl argues that man is indeed free and responsible, but his freedom is not omnipotent, nor is his wisdom omniscient. And this holds for both his cognition and his conscience. Frankl is famous for his quoting Emile Du Bois-Reymond’s “Ignoramus et ignorabimus” – we do not and we shall never know (Frankl, 1988, p. 65).

But if man is not to contradict his own humanness, he has to be obedient to his conscience unconditionally, even though he is aware of the possibility of error. Frankl is of the opinion that the possibility of error does not dispense with the necessity of trial (Frankl, 1988, p. 66).

From this, Frankl’s amazingly ‘tolerant’ and ‘neutral’ stance flows. He argues that the realisation that one’s conscience can err and that another person’s conscience can be correct must lead to ‘humility and modesty’ and hence to an attitude of tolerance. This must not be understood as ‘indifferentism’. Being tolerant does not mean I share another person’s belief, but it does mean that I acknowledge another’s right to believe and obey his own conscience.
When Frankl was challenged on just how far he would go with this argument of tolerance, by asking if he would apply that also to Hitler, he answered in the affirmative (Frankl, 1988, p. 66) by saying: “Because I am convinced that Hitler would never have become what he did unless he had suppressed within himself the voice of conscience.”

So what are the lessons that we can draw from all these facts? It seems that legislation should be written to both protect its citizens from harm and provide ample space for individual differences. Legislating against the nature of gay people because they constitute a minority and a deviation from the heterosexual norm, and moralising about how they live their lives, can easily turn into dictatorial and oppressive moral systems.

Within the gay subculture, these lessons also apply. How do we understand and deal with diversity within our subculture? Hedonism and conservatism, sexual promiscuity and monogamy or even abstinence co-exist within the gay subculture. Are gay people who live a monogamous life or an abstinent life to moralise and reject others with a more liberal attitude or is there another way?

Logotherapy’s answer is that we should never impose value on another person. We can never claim to have the answers for another person (Frankl, 1988, p. 67). Does this mean however that Logotherapy has no solution to the problems of sexual excess and addiction within the gay subculture; and that it amounts to absolute neutralism and licentiousness? Freedom comes with responsibility.

“Freedom, however, is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibleness. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibleness. That is why I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 155.)

Anybody who argues this has not heard Frankl’s discussion on the importance of following conscience and end with his famous maxim:
“This emphasis on responsibleness is reflected in the categorical imperative of logotherapy, which is: ‘Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!’ It seems to me that there is nothing which would stimulate a man’s sense of responsibleness more than this maxim, which invites him to imagine first that the present is past and, second, that the past may yet be changed and amended. Such a precept confronts him with life’s finiteness as well as the finality of what he makes out of both his life and himself. Logotherapy tries to make the patient fully aware of his own responsibleness; therefore, it must leave to him the option for what, to what, or to whom he understands himself to be responsible. That is why a logotherapist is the least tempted of all psychotherapists to impose value judgments on his patients, for he will never permit the patient to pass to the doctor the responsibility of judging. It is, therefore, up to the patient to decide whether he should interpret his life task as being responsible to society or to his own conscience. There are people, however, who do not interpret their own lives merely in terms of a task assigned to them but also in terms of the taskmaster who has assigned it to them. Logotherapy is neither teaching nor preaching. It is as far removed from logical reasoning as it is from moral exhortation. To put it figuratively, the role played by a logotherapist is that of an eye specialist rather than that of a painter. A painter tries to convey to us a picture of the world as he sees it; an ophthalmologist tries to enable us to see the world as it really is. The logotherapist’s role consists of widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of potential meaning becomes conscious and visible to him. By declaring that man is responsible and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic "the self-transcendence of human existence." (Frankl, 1984, pp. 131-132.)

In the final analysis, it might be argued that the responsibility of gays who survived the oppressive regime entails speaking out for diversity and tolerance, fighting for real acceptance, but also not moralising and judging those in our subculture that are choking and sinking in the abyss of the existential vacuum. It also means leading by example.
“The opportunities for collective psychotherapy were naturally limited in camp. The right example was more effective than words could ever be. A senior block warden who did not side with the authorities had, by his just and encouraging behavior, a thousand opportunities to exert a far-reaching moral influence on those under his jurisdiction. The immediate influence of behavior is always more effective than that of words.” (Frankl, 1984, p. 100.)

There are many who bemoan the state of existence in the fast track of gay excessive lifestyle as is discussed under Section 9. When we encounter those who complain or seek change we must afford help. Not by actively ‘medicalising and pathologising’ their choices and their life style, but by offering an alternative.

Logotherapy’s basic claim is that meaning is a cure to empty living and brings about spiritual health and resilience. Frankl makes this claim and says that the reason for his statement is not moralistic, but empirical in the broadest sense of the word. We need only turn to the man on the street’s actual experience of meanings and value and turn that into scientific language which we call “phenomenology”. On the phenomenological level, ‘meaning’ is experienced as dignifying and life giving (Frankl, 1988, p. 69).

He also sees it as the task of Logotherapy to retranslate what we learn in phenomenology into plain language for those choking on meaninglessness (Frankl, 1988, p. 69). We are to find out what these people’s challenges, dreams and aspirations are. We have to find out to whom they feel responsible and in a non-judgemental way, we need to reignite their will to meaning and offer a helping hand back into a dignified life of responsibility and meaning. Frankl strongly states that it is the responsibility of education, in a time of crumbling traditions and values, to not only teach and transmit knowledge, but to refine man’s capacity to ‘find’ and seek out those personal meanings in life. (Frankl, 1988, p.85)

To use Alan Down’s words: to ‘help them find their passion’ in life and to chase their passion as if it were the last bus of the evening.
7.4.2 A discussion on the “re-humanisation” of the gay subculture

A discussion worth having is then also what impact these five men have had and continue to have on heterosexual society. We have already discussed in the section above, what they mean to the gay subculture as examples and as figures of hope and inspiration. But I would like to suggest that they also impact the heterosexual society.

Gerhard’s profession is a fairy tale to many people. He meets with powerful people in government (cabinet ministers, mayors and ambassadors of countries) and he handles multi-million Rand projects in development aid to the country. He travels to Europe on missions and forms part of task teams and delegations regularly. He has contact with the ‘who’s who’ of South African politics as well as people from government of the European country that employed him. He is religious and he is an office bearer in his church.

Judge Edwin Cameron is the very image of prestige, power and authority as a Constitutional Court Judge, author of many books and world class social thinker, critic and intellectual.

Marius is seen as an A-class Air Traffic Controller. He completed as first in his training course. When he performs his duties, he holds the lives of thousands of passengers in his hands.

Andre Muller is has been a pastor of a church for many years, has married many couples and is called on whenever churches have discussions on gay issues. He is a haven and a source of hope not just for the gay community but for parents of gay children.

Andre Carl, is a world class author (his book having been translated into many languages), sought after speaker and architect and has already gained much prestige and fame with his sculptures and art work. Through correspondence with fans, he could provide advice and guidance to many confused gay young people and their parents.

But these men are also all ‘gay’. Through their excellence and professionalism and also the real power they wield in their areas of influence, they demand respect from a society that
would previously have ignored them or pushed them aside. Changing society’s perceptions of gays through excellence and professionalism is another way of impacting the world and bringing about change.

If heterosexual people’s children are taught by excellent gay teachers, if their lives are saved by gay surgeons and doctors, if their aged are cared for by gay carers and their companies are rescued by gay financial gurus, then heterosexual society will be forced to see the essence of the gay community, namely a diverse and often excellent group in society. I feel that the men that I worked with in this thesis represent a much needed social force in the gay community.

Perhaps the time for political shock tactics are passé. Now that the main legal battles are won, the social battle calls for wisdom. The discussion is ongoing in gay circles. Perhaps it is time now for rebranding of the gay subculture.

The sexual revolution in the 60s will be remembered by women burning their bras, but those political acts are today historical facts and perhaps they were successful at the time to bring misogynist and chauvinist patriarchal society to new insights about women’s rights. But women’s rights movements have taken on a new face and reached mature levels today. In a discussion with the participants on the pros and cons of ‘overt eroticism’ of the gay image in society they responded as follows.

Andre Muller feels that by continuing to send out the eroticised message, we are sending out the ‘wrong’ message. As a pastor, he feels that the Creator had His gay children in mind at creation as well. He encourages gays to live in monogamous relationships and discourages promiscuity. Very much like Frankl, he believes that love sanctifies sex. Gerhard feels that the bare chested, muscle men on floats are sending out the message that gays are all sex crazed and have one thing in mind, sex. He says:

“I cannot speak for all, but this does not help those of us that are trying to reach out to those around us in a natural, authentic way. I realise that events such as Gay Pride probably have a place. When it started in the 90s in South Africa, it was a protest for gay
acceptance and affirmation. Now people call it a celebration. But how do we celebrate? By dressing funny (and it often is funny), getting drunk and sleep around? Does this not confirm then what people think of us? I once saw a Pride march in Johannesburg. I could not attend as I had another appointment, but driving past Rosebank I got stopped as the tail-end of the march was passing by. A person in a car next to me suddenly screamed at the parade: ‘I hope you die of AIDS you faggots’. Was it uncalled for? Yes. Did it show his utter unacceptance of fellow human beings? Of course. But did the march not contribute to his already stereo-typed, narrow-minded way of thinking? This makes it really difficult if you want to show that God loves you as a gay child, if you do not portray Biblical values.”

Judge Cameron is eloquent in his response in that he sees the political significance of such shock tactics, but in his personal opinion he would discourage overt sexual acts if he were to organise a gay parade. He is for consensual and private sexual relationships.

Andre Carl expresses his concern about the aggressive way many gays are living their sexuality in public (as highlighted in Chapter 6).

Marius elaborates on the topic and says that people can do as they please. “But why many people insist on parading around in their underwear is beyond me! That being said; if I had the body I might be tempted.” He does not see it as eroticism, but rather gay boys and men showing off that they are better than “the average run of the mill hetero”. But he says it’s not his scene. “Not sure what it does for the cause but to make lesser mortals jealous and stalkers randy”.

Asked if he can identify with a gay cause, he replies: “There is a cause, but I don’t identify with the Western public face of it. Airy, fairy liberals with coloured hair and piercings and a proclivity for being offended by everything. I’m a conservative at heart and just want people to get along and leave each other alone to their lives. That being said, if the Social Justice Warriors are successful in saving the lives of gay men in the Middle East by being obnoxious then I support them”.
He concludes that:

“If you’re a deadbeat, you must take what society dishes out. If you’re a champ you deserve the rewards. It doesn’t matter who or what you are. It’s a civil rights issue, just as the ongoing race issue around the globe is. No pre judging. People must be given an equal opportunity to fit into and contribute to society. What you choose to do will determine how society will view you.”

If we put together the opinions and attitudes of these men, it may be surmised that there is a need for a positive gay voice, and a positive gay image in society. The overt sexual image often associated with the entire gay subculture (as will be discussed in Chapter 9 more fully), is firstly perhaps not true in its entirety and, secondly, it is perhaps in need of self-critical review, at least by some groupings within gay subculture. It can perhaps also be surmised that a re-humanisation ‘also’ of gay sexuality is needed; that it finds its beauty and dignity and self-respect again in the ‘private’ realms of inter human relationships. This discussion seems to reflect the sentiments of the participants in this study.

Critics argue that such sentiments are fuelled by shame internalised, and that this would chase gays off into shameful hiding, obscurity and oblivion again. A counter argument may be that it is the need for dignity and not shame that is at the foundation of this argument. Perhaps now that gays in South Africa, as the only nation on earth with full gay rights as part of its Constitution, have more than any other nation a reason to wear our orientation with pride and dignity.

It can perhaps also be argued that gays in outrageous clothing or barely any clothing at all, in public and in groups, only have the courage to make a public protest statement in groups with overly emotionalised reactions instead of spiritual responses. Perhaps the call is for the individual gay person – professional or non-professional – to be vocal and open about his orientation. Not in an artificial and forced manner, but whenever the opportunity arises in day to day social interaction. It is the most natural thing for heterosexuals to mention their families and their relationships. Claiming and owning who we are in a confident, unaffected
way can be the most disarming attitude against persisting gay prejudice. This might be the most subtle, but most powerful next step in gay-activism.

7.4.3 Why are Christians so cruel?

Looking at the experiences of all of my participants, we see a hostile face of the Christian religion, which claims to be a religion of love.

Why then do so many gay people turn their backs on religion? Why do these gay people give as an explanation; the discrepancy between what Christians believe and how they behave (as Marius angrily asked)?

Why then do gay people find no credulity in a faith based orientation if it is forever condemning gay people, as Judge Cameron argued?

Why is a man of faith such as Andre Muller, ridiculed, exposed as vile and rendered unfit to serve in the church?

Why is Gerhard’s position in his church questioned? Why is it seen as unfit for an abstinent gay man to serve God and his congregation as an office bearer?

Why are young gay men like Andre Carl made to believe that they are ‘evil’ in the eyes of God?

These questions are the real life experiences of all five of my research participants. They have all experienced the cruellest of cruel namely ‘spiritual violence’ hurled at them from the pulpit and from amongst the pews.

American gays and lesbians faced a particularly cruel religious attack in 1977. It was a vicious religious hate campaign run by Anita Bryant.
As an eighteen year old she had been Miss Oklahoma and as a nineteen year old she was second runner up to the Miss America Beauty pageant. She was also a staunch Southern Baptist. She had a singing voice and was drawn to a career in entertainment and gospel singing. Moving to Miami she met her husband Richard Shack who promoted her career and by the 1970 she was a familiar voice and face all over the USA and was earning five hundred thousand Dollar a year and lived in a mansion in Biscayne Bay (Faderman, 2015, pp. 329).

The Dade County Commission, where she was living was in the process of adding a “gay” extension to their anti-discrimination ordinance to afford also gays and lesbians the right to a life free of discrimination on grounds of housing and jobs. She wrote a letter to the commissioners in which she stated: “As a concerned mother of four children ages - 13 to 8 years - I am most definitely against this ordinance amendment, because you would be discriminating against my children’s rights to growing up in a healthy decent community” (Faderman, 2015, pp. 331).

Within a short time she and members of her church started the “Protect our Children” campaign, heaping profanity on gays and stereotyping them as child molesters, and at a speech in the county courthouse to about four hundred churchy people she says that she was opposed to the amendment because “Homosexuals will recruit our children. They will use money, drugs, alcohol, any means to get what they want, and that the Commissioners have absolutely no right to impose these homosexuals on the citizenry. Enough is enough. Now it is the time to realize the rights of the overwhelming number of Dade County constituents.” (Faderman, 2015, pp. 333.)

Bryant wrote a book in which she warned her readers that gays would populate hell as unrepentant sinners who are even proud of themselves. She was famous for saying that “Gays can’t reproduce, so they have to recruit!” “Do you know how God punished homosexuality?” she asked reporters. “A Southern California town passed an ordinance for them, and now California is having the worst drought in history.” (Faderman, 2015, pp. 338.)
Running huge full page newspaper ads for the demonising of gays and lesbians, her efforts were rewarded and gay rights were taken away again. Ultra-rights and fundamentalists were driving around with bumper stickers that read “Kill a queer for Christ” (Faderman, 2015, pp. 339).

Trying to replicate Anita Bryant’s success in Dade County Florida, Briggs – a son of a minister and self-proclaimed born again Christian - tried to get gay teachers out of their jobs in California. He had his eye on governorship in California and was going to sacrifice gay rights to advance his political career (Faderman, 2015, pp. 366-367).

During the weeks running up to the ‘vote’ in California for or against the amendment called “Proposition 6”, the campaigning was running hot on both sides of the dispute. Religious congregations were inviting gay people to ‘debate’ with them on the issue. At one such a meeting, a lesbian Amber Hollibaugh was invited as a guest speaker to Redding California, where Pastor Blue ran the Shasta Bible College, had a Cristian Radio station and was also the local pastor. During the meeting a member of the congregation asked the pastor what they were supposed to do with these homosexuals. “Do you think homosexuals should be imprisoned if they’re that unsafe?” Smiling, and continuing to smile, the pastor answered: “Well let me put it this way. Hitler was right about the homosexuals. I think we should find a humane way to kill them.” (Faderman 2015: p374.)

The attitude that gay people must have adopted towards ‘religion’, ‘religious people’, and ‘society’ in that kind of political environment can only be speculated over. The fact that these events were taking place in the late 1970s, which is very recent, gives one an idea of what the ‘emotional and intellectual heritage’ is that Judge Cameron talks about. The fact that most gays who were alive then are still alive today must not be forgotten. How did gays process the fact that a debate was in process where ‘having them killed humanely’ was a public suggestion?

What man is capable of when his conscience is seared is frightening. And what man is capable of when he is following a ‘delusion’; and believing that that delusion is the authentic
‘Word of God’ is dangerous. These examples are at the root of why so many gay people are not part of any church today.

The questions my participants wrestle with boil down to: “Where is this God of love?” “Does His Love manifest in our humiliation and suffering and in our exclusion from His Grace and Love?”

“Christianity in its true form is a religion of love”, claims Dr Timothy Jennings (MD, DFAPA), in a seminar titled: “God and your church”, but the problem of this widespread hostility and refusal to accept gays into the church lies in the ‘spiritual maturity’ of their persecutors (Jennings, 2013, retrieved 3 April 2016).

Dr Jennings represents a very small minority of pro-gay voices out there and his is of particular interest as he is coming not just from a psychiatric viewpoint but also from a religious one. His CV is impressive but also unique in many ways as his areas of expertise are a combination of Christian and Psychiatric positions.

He is a Board certified Christian Psychiatrist, has a Master’s degree in Psycho-pharmacology, is a lecturer, international speaker and author of multiple books. He was also voted one of America’s top psychiatrists by the Consumers’ Research Council of America in 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014. He is a distinguished fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, President of the Tennessee Psychiatric Association, President Elect of the Southern Psychiatric Association and President and founder of the “Come and Reason Ministries”, a not-for-profit Christian Ministry.

Dr Jennings gives eloquent reasons why gays are subjects of ‘spiritual violence’ in their churches, and places the focus on the spiritual and moral maturity of those who persecute gays, but not only gays in the church. He calls this “the seven levels of moral decision making”. He builds on Lawrence Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development theory (see McLeod, online at http://www.simplypsychology.org/kohlberg.html, retrieved on 14 August 2016), but expands it into a Level 7.
Dr Jennings proposes the following adaptation for a Christian understanding of moral maturity and moral operations:

- **Level one: reward and punishment.** Right is determined by whoever holds the power to rule by threat of punishment or hope of reward. Implication for gays: gays are clearly outnumbered by heterosexuals in society and are at their mercy.

- **Level two: marketplace exchange.** Right or wrong is determined by an equitable agreement between two parties, also known as ‘*quid pro quo*’: I’ll do something for you if you do something for me. At this level, vengeance is a moral duty. Implication for gays: If gays do not bring their part in upholding the moral fibre of society they must be punished.

- **Level three: social conformity.** Right is determined by community consensus. Implication for gays: gays are outnumbered. Whatever the majority rule decides is the fate of the gay person.

- **Level four: law and order.** Right is determined by a codified system of rules; impartial judges, imposed punishments and respect for authority. Implication for gays: laws are made by the majority, and if it is unfriendly and hostile to gays, then they must suffer.

- **Level five: love for others.** Right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others; realising people have value in how they are, irrespective of rules. Implication for gays: gays may benefit from such a level of moral maturity, if they are the object of affection.

- **Level six: principle based living.** Right is ‘understanding’ the design principles and protocols on which life is constructed to operate and intelligently choosing to live in harmony with them. Right is not doing something because a rule says so, but because it is understood to actually work this way. A Biblical example is provided in that Jesus was living out God’s Character of Love in all He did. It is understood that what God said is right, “because it is the way things actually are”, not because He said so! A God of truth is understood at this level, not God being a dictator. Implication for gays: gays will benefit from this as they are part of creation and of humanity, which must be the recipient of love and respect.
• **Level seven: Understanding Friend of God.** Those at this level not only have love for God and others (level 5), not only understand God’s design protocols of life (Level 6), but also understand God’s purposes and intelligently choose to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:15: "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (New American Standard Bible, 2007, p. 524.)

People operating at Level 7 understand the truth about God’s character of love, his nature and design of life, the origin of evil, the nature of sin, the weapons of Satan, the original purpose for the creation of humanity, the fall of humanity into sin, God’s working through human history, the purpose of the cross, and the ultimate cleansing of the universe from sin. Jesus operated at this level, as will those who are ready for translation when Jesus comes again. The implications for gays are that, for believers operating at Level 7, gays are treated no differently from any other human being. Gay people are accepted and loved as people, who, just as everyone else, carry defects of a fallen world. But the effects of a fallen world do not render gays as ‘sin’ in themselves, but affected by sin like all humans.

It is interesting to recall at this point President Netanyahu’s public address after the Orlando Massacre, saying that Jews believe that all humans are made in the image of God (see section 2.1.3).

What is also interesting to mention here is that the attacker was believed to be an ISIS terrorist and that the attack was seen as an act acceptable to an extremist version of Islam.

In Section 8.3 Dozier (a researcher and writer on ‘hatred’) feels that the tremendous emotional commitment made to these deeply held and cherished belief systems leave adherents vulnerable to interpreting differences as threats to their survival. Many of the most savage conflicts have involved quarrels over religious, political, and cultural belief systems (Dozier, 2002, pp. 11-12). In this case it is the extremist Islamic view on gays that was seen to cause the attack on the Pulse Club in Orlando.
It could be argued that the strong rejection of gays in Christianity is similarly fuelled by fear that gays would pollute, dilute and infect the sanctified space of believers and the church. They might also believe that they are under an obligation to purge the church from gays to avoid punishment from God or to attain some sort of reward.

Jennings (2013, retrieved 3 April 2016) emphasises that Levels 1 to 4 require no thinking. In this sense, moral judgements are externally imposed on Levels 1 to 4 and do not involve at any point a spiritual content of the one who passes judgement. Reflecting on this point, the thoughts of two women immediately came to mind. The one being Dr Shantall, my mentor and tutor in Logotherapy over more than a decade, who used to say: “at the core of the human spirit is the ability to think, to look at something, to evaluate it, to embrace or push it away or to impact and change it”.

The second woman, Hannah Arendt, is a political theorist and great thinker of her time. She was send to Jerusalem to report on the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann. The difficulty she experienced and the frustration she felt listening to the responses of Eichmann led her to the following conclusion, namely that it had become a typical Nazi plea that they personally never harmed anybody, but that they were just following orders.

Jennings categorises this Nazi obedience as a Level 1 morality given that fact that they could have been executed for refusing to carry out orders. Like Shantall, Arendt (1964, n.a.) concludes that: “In Eichmann’s refusal to think, he immediately became incapable of moral judgement.” Eichmann viewed himself as a robot following orders, mindlessly obedient without any emotions. It is this observation that led Hannah Arendt to state that the greatest of evils are committed by nobodies (desktop bureaucrats). She was shocked at the mediocrity of the man Adolf Eichmann when compared to his horrific deeds. From this observation and from reflection on her experiences at the trial in Jerusalem she wrote her book entitled “The banality of evil”. Reflecting on this fact makes one realise just how immoral Levels 1 to 4 morality can be. Not being able to access the spiritual capacity of the person who passes judgement, is a terrifying realisation. As no level of compassion, empathy or mercy can ever be expected from such people.
Gerhard relates his bewilderment and shock when church people, whom you believed were your ‘spiritual family’ turn on you when they find out you are gay. Andre Muller experienced the same in maybe a more extreme form.

Dozier argues that irrational and rational can become very confused:

“The brain’s capacity for mixing the rational with the irrational makes the conquest of hate urgently important and exceptionally challenging. Some analysts of human behaviour overlook the delusional capacity of the human mind and the power of belief systems to create emotions and values that contradict and override the objective conditions for survival. He continues to point out that such belief systems proliferate in social systems and he adds that where hate pervades a belief system, there is no end to the atrocities, an individual, group or society can perpetuate.” (Dozier, 2002, p.13.)

Statements were made such as: “When gays enter the church, people leave”. The irony is that one of the main tenets of Christianity is to love thy enemy.

Levels 5 to 7 fall into what Frankl would call “the uniquely human spiritual domain”. Entering this spiritual domain of the human being immediately puts one in touch with his ability to think, with his conscience, with his capacity for empathy, his creativity and his reason. It is also interesting to note that Frankl emphasised that intellectual ability is not a prerequisite for experiencing meaning. It would seem according to Jennings that Level 5 is an infantile or naïve or childlike caring for another person and that Level 6 requires greater intellectual insight and understanding of principles and values, well formulated.

Level 7 implies what Frankl talked about as the will to ultimate meaning, which implies a well-formulated conceptualisation of the trans-human dimension and the human spirit as an open system in relation to the trans-human, having an impact right back to the very meaning of the moment of everyday living. Such people act in the minutest detail in accordance with their conceptualisation and understanding of the trans-human dimension. What is also interesting is to point to the moral level of operation of Frankl himself:
“Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife’s image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise. A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way - an honourable way - in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfilment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, "The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory." (Frankl, 1984, p. 56.)

7.4.4 Gays, epigenetics, religion and society

The “nature versus nurture” argument is a very prevalent discussion when the topic of homosexuality is addressed. Jennings (2013, retrieved 3 April 2016) attacks the Christian attitude towards gays, in that they refer to gays as an ‘abomination’ by comparing being gay to other ‘deviations’ from God’s design principles.

He redefines sin as a deviation from the original plan of God for creation and how it operates. He argues from the Bible which states in Romans 8:22-23: “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.” (New American Standard Bible, 2007, p. 549.)
He then argues from the perspective of the science of genetics and epigenetics that many people suffer from genetic defects and frames it as a result of “the world groaning under the impact of sin”, as in the Biblical sense. His argument is that also the human gene pool is affected.

Moving the argument into the realm of sexual variations and defects, he uses the South African athlete Castor Semenya as an example. She won a gold medal at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin and silver in the 2012 London Olympic Games, both in the 800 metres. She was stripped of the medal after a medical examination proved that she had a genetic disorder called AIS (Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome). This defect was formerly called testicular feminisation.

A brief outline of the condition is given as follows: the normal healthy male has an XY chromosome, while the female has an XX chromosome. While the embryo is developing the Y chromosome codes for testicles and produces antimullerian hormone. Foetuses start out female in orientation, but antimullerian hormone prevents the upper two thirds of the vagina from developing. Testosterone causes the end organs to masculinise and the brain to masculinise. In AIS the receptor gene that ‘sees’ testosterone is defect. Therefore, the genitalia do not masculinise and neither does the brain masculinise. This XY (genetically male) individual is born as a girl child. Governments around the world recognise the right of this individual to marry men.

Similarly, Dr Jennings argues that many heterosexual people suffer from ‘infertility’ despite the Biblical command to be fruitful and to multiply. Genesis 1:22 states: “And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’.” (New American Standard Bible, 2007, p. 1.) One would not dream of calling a heterosexual person who has a biological defect rendering him or her ‘infertile’, an abomination.

Dr Jennings continues to discuss “chimeras”, who are the result of two separate fertilised ova in the uterus that, for some reason, merge and become two separate genetic individuals
in one. The merged individual has only one set or structure of all the physical organs, but these are from two different DNA strains. He discusses the case of Lydia Fairchild in 2002. Mrs Fairchild had to fight for child support from her estranged boyfriend after they separated. The state ordered DNA testing (which is standard before child support is ordered). Her DNA, however, did not match her children’s. Her boyfriend’s DNA matched the children’s though with 99.99%. She was arrested and taken to court, where she hysterically defended herself, pleading that the children were hers and her boyfriends. She was pregnant at the time of the law suit and the court decided that observers would be present at birth to check the DNA of her newly born baby. The baby’s DNA did not match hers either. She was charged with fraud in terms of getting a child support grant and it was speculated that she had stolen fertilised eggs and had them implanted.

A professor at Harvard University then suggested that separate DNA tests be done on her hair, her blood and her uterus. The DNA from her hair and from her blood did not match her baby’s, but her uterus was a complete match. All charges against her were dropped. Scientific insight had changed the way Lydia Fairbanks was viewed. In essence, her brain was hers, but her reproductive organs happened to those of her sister (Jennings, 2013, retrieved 3 April 2016).

Jennings argues that there are male-female merged chimeras. He asks a provocative question: whom should these individuals marry? The issue is not black and white. It opens up the whole debate on what is our sex and what is our gender. Marius says so clearly that your gay orientation is “not in your pants but in your head”. All the other participants argue along the same lines (see Section 7.3).

According to the Intersex society there are multiple intersex conditions. These include, according to Jennings (2013, retrieved 3 April 2016): 5 Alpha reductase deficiency, AIS, Aphallia, Clitoromegaly, Congenital adrenal hyperplasia, Hypospadias, Kallmann Syndrome, Klinefelter Syndrome, Micropenis, Ovo-testes, Progestin induced virilisation, Swayer Syndrome, Turner Syndrome, Cryptorchidism, 17-beta-hydroxisteroid dehydrogenase deficiency and Mosaicism (XX/XY XXX/XX, XXXY/XX).
The popular argument from Christians is that God created us male or female; God did not create Adam and Steve! Under the guise of a divinely condoned argument they commit spiritual violence. Just like Lydia Fairbanks did not know how to convince the court that those were in fact her children, the five men in this thesis cannot explain etiologically why they are attracted to the “wrong sex”, but can phenomenologically describe what it is like. The religio-genetic discussion opens up many unanswered questions. The question of sin as a wilful transgression of the law is now in question. Christians are very familiar with the definition of sin. 1 John 3:4 in the Christian Bible reads: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.” (Holy Bible, New King James Version, 1982, p. 1483.)

Research in epigenetics is opening up new understandings into the genetic origin of homosexuality. This has great impact on the way gays are viewed by society and especially by religious people. More importantly, it has a big impact on how gays view and understand their own reality.

Homosexuality consistently runs at 1% to 3% in nature (Jennings, 2013, retrieved 3 April 2016). That is in human as well as animal population, which is consistent with the random variation in biology. But in Sodom, 100% of the men turned out to demand the visitors to sexually abuse them (see Genesis 19). As a pastor, Dr Jennings argues that what we are looking at in Sodom was not what we are looking at today in homosexuality. The sexual practices in Sodom were not a result of homosexual tendencies, but artificially adopted sexual practices in line with pagan rituals and practices. This is also the argument of Andre Muller and many gay Christians, who reject any form of violence in their sexual practices.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 says: “Look, this was the inequity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.” “Failure to love was the sin of Sodom”, Jennings argues, and concludes that the true Sodomites in the case of Matthew Shepard (elaborated on in Chapter 8), for example, was not he, but were the Christians of the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansa who picketed the murdered gay man’s funeral with
slogans reading, ‘God hates fags!’, ‘Aids kills fags dead!’ and ‘Matthew Sheppard rots in hell!’.

By looking at his line of thought and reasoning, Jennings argues that one must strike into the ignorance of the society who persecutes gays and also other groupings of people, ‘cognitive dissonance’ by reasoning with them and opening them up to new insights which will disallow old immature beliefs to survive.

Anita Bryant’s hate campaign against gays in which she broadcast her ignorance to the world that gays can be recruited, proves incorrect and spiritually cruel towards not only religious gays but all gays, in the face of new discoveries made in the line of epigenetics and sexuality.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the ‘emerging themes’ which arose from the analysis and synthesis of the individual interviews, and resulted in the description of the ‘composite pictures’ that arose as a result of identifying the themes.

A process unfolded that was universal in nature for all the participants, however very unique in content for each of the participants.

Attention was also paid to relevant questions such as “how is gay liberation to be handled?”, “What does it mean to be gay?”, “questions surrounding religion and being gay”, “genetics” and also the “possibility of a collective call to the gay society in South Africa”.

CHAPTER 8: THE HOSTILE SOCIAL CONTEXT AS THE BACKDROP AGAINST WHICH TO UNDERSTAND THE GAY EXPERIENCE

Although the social context in which gays find themselves is a secondary aspect of this paper, it is still a very important consideration, especially as the research focus is to view and understand the five gay men through the lens of Logotherapy. Frankl argues that we are questioned by life and in our answering, via the promptings of our conscience, we experience meaning. The real life context is thus of fundamental and profound importance in Logotherapy. It is from this real life context, not just the natural environment, but also the societal and cultural environment, that our cues for meaning come. As already discussed in Section 3.1.5, there are three basic avenues to meaning: the creative avenue, the experiential avenue and the attitudinal avenue.

A quote from Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning” (Frankl, 2011, p. 62) will serve to illuminate what role life plays in eliciting meaningful responses from us:

“Whenever there was an opportunity for it, one had to give them a why - an aim - for their lives, in order to strengthen them to bear the terrible how of their existence. Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, ‘I have nothing to expect from life anymore.’ What sort of answer can one give to that? What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life - daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment. Thus it is impossible to define
the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. ‘Life’ does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life’s tasks are also very real and concrete. They form man’s destiny, which is different and unique for each individual. No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a man finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action. At other times it is more advantageous for him to make use of an opportunity for contemplation and to realize assets in this way.”

The fundamental tenets of Logotherapy, which are at play here, are “the will to meaning”, which every individual carries inside himself, in relation to a “questioning real life context”. In Logotherapy, it is referred to as the “demand quality” of life. We have already seen in section 7.2 how, once the will to meaning had dawned on these men, the power to resist, and to turn a life of condemnation, into a life of triumph, emerged strongly and defiantly.

Nevertheless it is the purpose of this section to highlight and to recap on the hostility and the toxicity of the social environment for gay men in particular. I want to try and illuminate why the social, cultural environment is particularly hostile for meaning searching gays to navigate through, and that the pitfalls are many and the challenges plentiful. It is after all also fact, that many gay men succumb to the onslaughts from society and its hostility towards gays. I will explore this further in Chapter 9.

I also want to point out that with modern day mobility, and with the immediacy of the internet, and social media, with photos, recordings and clips sent over the networks in seconds - it is very difficult to limit our focus to the psychological, social and cultural impact on gays only here in South Africa. South African gays travel, have often lived in many other countries and have friends abroad, with whom thy chat, Skype and are in regular contact with. CNN and other news channels deliver the “world out there” into our living rooms, into our daily lives, into our conversations and into our awareness. For this reason, I will focus on the South African context, but will not limit listed research findings to the purely South African context.
A quote from Nel (2005, p. 247) shows that it is very likely for an openly gay person to experience hostility in the world today: “Internationally, research (Eliason, 1996:191; Schippers, 1997:202) indicates that the vast majority of openly lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) persons have experienced some form of victimisation, such as verbal abuse, threats, being chased or followed, or being spat on.”

Nel (2005, p. 250) also adds to my argument that gay attacks and gay murders in any part of the world impact the international gay community and do not remain isolated and local – in his citing De Swardt (2003, pp. 1–2), who states: “the disproportionately violent slaying of nine male sex workers during a so-called armed robbery in 2003 at Sizzlers, a Cape Town-based gay massage parlour, also sent shock waves through not only LGBTI circles, but also society at large and even internationally among LGBTI communities, as Cape Town is a favourite travel destination for international visitors who have grown to know it as the “gay capital” of South Africa. While disdain for sex workers may have been at play, the incident was widely interpreted as indicative of high levels of homo-prejudice.”

Breen & Nel (2013, p. 246) also confirm what my participants argue, namely that ‘an attack on a gay person on the other side of the world feels like an attack on us’. They state: “Hate crimes are treated differently in many counties, not because of their prevalence, but because of the severity of the emotional and psychological impact of such crimes, that potentially extend beyond the individual victim to the group to which the individual belongs, as well as to the broader community or society at large (APA, 2009; Harris, 2004; Laws of New York, 2000; Nel, 2007; OSCE, 2009).”

Why are and have gays always been the target of such social persecution and hatred? The research participants in my study all are in a sense saddened by this fact, but they all see it as a reality which cannot be denied. “Derefection” (discussed in section 7.2.6) is not denial. Marius has perhaps learnt to let it run off him “like water off a duck’s back”, and Andre and Gerhard may seem a lot more disturbed and unsettled by the fact, but the fact that they are in a targeted social camp is a reality to them all.
This is a fact, not just in South Africa, but all over the world. Even in the countries with the most liberal human rights, the social obstacles are still evident. Gays are challenged by their societies; there is no denying that.

While the research participants find beauty and sustenance in their relationships with family and friends, and in their love relationships, they are aware of the paradoxical – that what they find most beautiful in their lives is exactly what society finds most vile and repulsive. Why is this and how does this happen?

I embarked on discussions with my research subjects on why they felt gays have always been hated and persecuted even amongst other groups who themselves are victims of persecution. Many arguments and opinions were considered, but the one point that continued to pop up was that gays are not ‘normal’ in their sexual inclination. The men I interviewed all agreed that indeed it is not the norm, and there is no denying that fact. If we consider that there are various things in society that would also not constitute the ‘norm’, such as various forms of disabilities and that those deviations from the ‘norm’ do not provoke such rejection and hatred, we needed to find a deeper truth.

It was discussed in depth and it was thought that perhaps if we approached the matter based on the viewpoints of another smaller segment of society who are open and friendly to gays, we might find answers.

Gerhard’s mother loved him and wanted protect him and so did Marius’s mom. But both of them wished that they could have their sons be ‘normal’. Gerhard’s mother did not want to be exposed initially to his male partner and Marius says that his mother is still not comfortable with who he is. Andre Carl felt the excruciating pain of knowing that his father was ‘embarrassed’ by him and called him a ‘sissy’ in a feeble attempt perhaps to provoke a more masculine response from him. His mother knew about this and did not do very much to stand up to her husband. Andre Carl finally confided in Miss Du Toit, and he describes this as one of the saddest moments in our interview; that she accepted him and sought help for him at the same time. He says it was excruciating to find safety with another human being, only for it to be taken away again. Judge Cameron was ridiculed as a child, thrown
out onto the lawn, for neighbours to see him in a dress. This was his father’s attempt to purge him of his “sissy boy” ways.

The message is clear, that non-gay people who truly do accept gay people are very rare, and it was hypothesised that because of this non-acceptance, there are most probably more gay people who do not accept themselves than there are heterosexuals who accept gays. Internalised shame was discussed in Section 3.3.

The eye of the storm was then discovered as the homosexual act itself. Judge Cameron’s comment on this is strong and poignant:

“Because it’s about ‘sex’ – Mark – it’s about ‘sex’. The thing that causes most shame in our world – and the source of all the stigma of HIV is because it is sexually transmitted. There is terrible silence, and there’s terrible silence about HIV. And so the proscription of the sex act, which is so rigid with the monotheistic religions, which has in turn been so rigid with LGBTI issues, is confronted in that way.” [He is referring here to political protest acts, which confront the prejudice of society.]

Gay haters hate that gay people misappropriate their sexuality and see it as dirty, subversive and vile. When gays are physically attacked, there is often a brutalisation or even mutilation of their private parts as seen in the extract elsewhere in this paper. Lesbians are often victims of corrective rape and men of the pink triangle during Nazi oppression were forced to have sex with women in the camp brothels (Heger, 1980, p. 100). The tragedy and the brutal honesty about gay hatred is then ultimately that it pivots on homosexuality itself – the sex act itself, unnatural and abnormal.

Rejection or acceptance are two extremes in a response to the gay phenomenon and are two positions on a fluid continuum. Opinions about gays, and attitudes towards gays, are not fixed in non-gay circles, it would seem. An observation was made during my research by a participant who said that who is your friend in a private setting, may not necessarily be your friend when the individual is with a group of friends who are not gay tolerant. This might be due to a similar motivation as peer pressure in hate crimes as Nel (2005, p. 251)
points out: “To show prowess or masculinity, or prove heterosexuality, the perpetrator may take up a challenge posed by friends to, for instance, vandalise the personal belongings of someone known to be gay or someone of another race.”

Given the choice to stay loyal to a gay friend, or to side with a heterosexual group of peers, might be at the heart of this disappointing phenomenon.

It is often commented in public discussions and in the media that ‘things for gay people in general are looking up’ and that there is a growing acceptance of gays in general in South Africa. I want to argue that to a certain degree this is true, especially with regard to post-1994 legislation and the change in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which is inclusive of the rights of gay people. It is certainly a far cry from the situation for gays in the Apartheid Era, when gay clubs were regularly raided, and tear gas used on patrons who were in no way resisting [personal experience].

The fact is that gays now have the luxury of privacy, legal rights, the right to get married, can read gay publications and enjoy a greater degree of stability in their lives. But the fact is also that negativity can and does still exclude them in many instances from jobs, friendships, respect, careers, love and care and services available to heterosexuals. There is greater freedom of expression and greater visibility than ever before but the social battle is a slow and a difficult one to fight. Nel (2005, p. 247) also cites Eliason (1996, p. 191) and Schippers (1997, p. 201), who found that both in the Netherlands and in the United States there were indications that anti-gay hate crime in fact increases as lesbian and gay communities become more visible. If we also consider the news reports following the Orlando Massacre at the Pulse gay club, that the event was triggered by the killer seeing two gay men kiss in public.

Nel (2005, p. 247) also cites Eliason (1996, p. 191) who found that “gay bashing” – a hate crime that physically violates someone solely based on perceived sexual orientation – is said to affect about 20% of LGB persons residing in the United States in their lifetime.
Nel (2005, p. 248) furthermore cites Polders & Wells (2004, p. 6), who in a study report disconcertingly high prevalence of anti-gay hate crime in Gauteng – more males than females reported having being victims of anti-gay hate crime during their schooling. White males, closely followed by black females, were found to be most often exposed to experiences of verbal abuse and negative jokes at school perpetrated mostly by fellow scholars.

Below I want to attempt to identify, analyse and outline the ‘social beast’ that gay people have to face in an ongoing battle. It is ultimately a battle for the very dignity of the gay person.

What keeps gays from meeting and befriending non-gay people in many instances is a phenomenon called “social distance”. The concept of social distance (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1989, pp. 768-769) is an old and well researched measure of closeness or distance that various social groups would prefer between or amongst them. Although Bogardus and Westie’s research dates back to 1959, the evidence of the accuracy and timeless value added to understanding social behaviour was clearly seen in the interviews with my research subjects.

My research participant, Gerhard, tells of the immediate termination of the relationship between him and his friend, Hein, after the ‘confrontation’ in the office. We should remember that the key question and information which Hein based his decision on was the question whether Gerhard was gay (Section 6.1.2.3). We can reflect upon the deeper reason why Hein terminated the friendship there and then, but I want to suggest that the degree of social distance which Hein needed, given his understanding of gays (based most probably on stereotypes and the sad experience with his ex-wife) did not allow for a continuation of their friendship.

Gerhard tells us that he was flustered and shocked and that he denied the fact that he was gay – and that there had been no inappropriate behaviour in the form of advances made to Hein or anything that would have necessitated a termination of the friendship. The
understanding that Hein had at the time of a gay male was enough for him to withdraw and terminate the friendship.

We can assume that his understanding was based on a stereotype of the gay person he had in his mind. Nel (2005, p. 252) cites Harris, (2004, p. 26), who considered this “crimes of ignorance” saying that much discrimination against gays, is perpetuated through prejudice, stereotypes, assumptions and misinformation.

While Harris may have a point in that much discrimination against gays is in fact based of misinformation, the dynamics are however very potent and geared towards maintaining the anti-gay sentiments of society. Stereotypes create social distance, which in turn sustains the ignorance and misinformation about gay people.

Nel and Breen (2013, p. 249) describe the anti-gay dynamics in society as follows: Labelling/stereotyping – Prejudgement – Discrimination – Victimisation – Perception – Categorisation – Labelling/Stereotyping. It is arguable that the entire process outlined here lead to social distance and in turn maintains the status quo for gays in society.

Gerhard explained to me that he was sad, angry and bewildered all at the same time after his heterosexual colleague and friend abruptly terminated their friendship. Nel (2005, p. 249) cites (Theunick, Hook & Franchi, 2002, p. 131,) who found that:

“The tendency is to regard visible, physical injury more seriously than the invisible or psychological damage done by behaviours motivated by hate, bias and discrimination. Similarly, the impact of an incident of hate-based victimisation is generally considered in isolation. However, recognition of societal or systemic victimisation (daily and ongoing exposure to hate incidents or victimisation) is in fact also vital. For instance, in this regard the damaging effects of growing up in a racist society or of being gay in heterosexual contexts must be properly recognised. Sexual minority status increases the risk for stress related to “chronic daily hassles” (including hearing anti-gay jokes and being on constant guard) and to more serious negative life events, especially gay-related ones. These can
include loss of employment, home and custody of children, and anti-gay violence and discrimination due to sexual orientation.”

Nel (2005, p. 252) also points to another type of blindness:

“Basic identity theory teaches us that those in dominant social categories rarely see their own position or recognise their identity with reference to privilege or power. In the traditional worldview the beliefs, values, norms, standards and expectations of the ‘reasonable man’ as described in South African law, or the ‘generic human’ (i.e. a white, heterosexual male who is resourced, able-bodied and Christian) are considered superior and/or more valid, and thus dominant, and for the greater good of society, they may be imposed on inferior ‘others’. Governments, the military, medical and psychiatric services, schools, businesses, mass media, legal system and religious teachings may all reinforce heterosexist, patriarchal and/or racist attitudes, values and behaviours. Also, hate speech and hate-motivated violence may be partly encouraged or legitimised by a climate in which the dissemination of ideas of the perpetuation of violence appears to be allowed or tolerated.”

What I want to point out here, is the fact that most of my research participants expressed a loathing for the “arrogant way”, in which heterosexuals became “experts” and “authorities” on gay matters, the Bible, normality and life, the moment conversations centred on homosexuality. More often than not, their knowledge was based on stereotypes and the widespread notion that gays have a “choice” in their sexual orientation, and if they really wanted to they could change. It is hard to believe that such notions still exist in the non-gay community. It could be argued that this adds to the shame many gay people already harbour at their core, in that it exacerbates their feelings of being flawed and too weak to change. Andre Carl, for example, tells his moving story of spending hours on his knees praying to God to make him heterosexual.

Nel and Breen (2013, p. 240) define hate crimes as “violence that is motivated in part or wholly by the victim’s identity – also known as bias-motivated violence”. They also mention
the extreme damage which hate crimes inflict on the victim, because it is an attack on who
they are – their identity – which they are unable to change.

It is perhaps this “expecting the impossible – or else” position of mainstream heterosexual
society towards gays, that is at the heart of the gay “rage” that Downs talks about in his
book.

The list of stereotypes provided in Wikipedia is so long and so unflattering, but the most
disconcerting fact according to one of my participants is that the entire list is often ascribed
to every gay person on the planet. Meyer, Moore & Viljoen (1997 .p. 771) give the following
definition of stereotypes: “A stereotype is in its simplest, an unqualified generalization about
a person, matter, situation, idea, group of people, community or society.”

How then do these stereotypes operate in our social cognitions and making sense of groups
of people around us?

“Like other cognitive frameworks or schemas, stereotypes exert strong effects on the ways
in which we process social information. For example, information relevant to a particular
stereotype is process more quickly than information unrelated to it (Dovidio, Evans,
&Tyler, 1986). Similarly, stereotypes lead the persons holding them to pay attention to
specific types of information- usually information consistent with the stereotypes.
Alternatively, if information inconsistent with the stereotype does manage to enter the
consciousness, we may refute it, perhaps by recalling facts and information that are
consistent with the stereotype. Stereotypes also determine what we remember – usually,
again, information that is consistent with these frameworks. In this way the ‘facts’ or
‘knowledge’ about these groups become self-confirming and very resistant to change.”
(Baron & Byrne, 1994, p. 231.)

We can only speculate as to what caused Hein to terminate his friendship with Gerhard, but
it would have had to be something that threatened or appalled him.
8.1 Typical gay stereotypes

Sections 8.1.1 to 8.1.5 below are extracts from Wikipedia on the most popular gay stereotypes (online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_stereotypes, retrieved on 6 August 2015).

8.1.1 Gay men

“Homosexual men are often equated interchangeably with heterosexual women by the heterocentric mainstream and are frequently stereotyped as being effeminate, despite the fact that gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation are widely accepted to be distinct from each other. The "flaming queen" is a characterization that melds flamboyance and effeminacy, remaining a gay male stock character in Hollywood. Theatre, specifically Broadway musicals, are a component of another stereotype, the “show queen”, generalizing that gay men listen to show tunes, are involved with the performing arts, and are theatrical, overly dramatic, and campy. The bear subculture of the LGBT (Lesbian – Gay – Bisexual and Transgender) community is composed of generally large, hairy men, referred to as bears. They embrace their hyper masculine image, and some will shun more effeminate gay men, such as twinks.”

8.1.2 Appearance and mannerisms

“Gay men are often associated with a lisp or a feminine speaking tone. Fashion, effeminacy, and homosexuality have long been seen as stereotypes. They are often based on the visibility of the reciprocal relationship between gay men and fashion. Designers, including Dolce & Gabbana, have made use of homoerotic imagery in their advertising. Some commentators argue this encourages the stereotype that most gay men enjoy shopping. A limp wrist is also a mannerism associated with gay men. Recent research has suggested that ‘gaydar’ (gay radar) is an alternate label for using stereotypes, especially those related to appearance and mannerisms, to infer orientation.”
8.1.3 Sex and relationships

“Research also suggests that lesbians may be slightly more likely than gay men to be in steady relationships. In terms of unprotected sex, a 2007 study cited two large population surveys as showing that ‘the majority of gay men had similar numbers of unprotected sexual partners annually as straight men and women’.

Another persistent stereotype associated with the male homosexual community is partying. Before the Stonewall riots in 1969, most LGBT people were extremely private and closeted, and house parties, bars, and taverns became some of the few places where they could meet, socialize, and feel safe. The riots represented the start of the modern LGBT social movement and acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, which has steadily increased since. Festive and party-like social occasions remain at the core of organizing and fundraising in the LGBT community. In cities where there are large populations of LGBT people, benefits and bar fundraisers are still common and alcohol companies invest heavily in LGBT-oriented marketing. Ushered in by underground gay clubs and disc jockeys, the disco era kept the ‘partying’ aspect vibrant and ushered in the more hard core circuit party movement, hedonistic life style and associated with party and play. The relationship between gay men and female heterosexual ‘fag hags’ has become highly stereotypical. The accepted behaviours in this type of relationship can predominantly include physical affections (such as kissing and touching), as in the sitcom ‘Will & Grace’.”

8.1.4 Sex and drugs

“The term ‘party and play’ (PNP) is used to refer to a subculture of gay men who use recreational drugs and have sex together, either one-on-one or in groups. The drug of choice is typically methamphetamine, known as crystal or tina in the gay community. Other ‘party drugs’ such as MDMA and GHB are less associated with this term. While PNP probably has its genesis in the distinct subculture of methamphetamine users, and is most associated with its use, it has become somewhat generalized to include partying with other drugs thought to enhance sexual experiences, especially MDMA,
GHB, and cocaine. A report from the National HIV Prevention Conference (a collaborative effort by the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and other governmental and non-governmental organizations) describes PNP as ‘sexual behaviour under the influence of crystal meth or other 'party' drugs.’ It has been referred to as both an ‘epidemic’ and a ‘plague’ in the gay community. British researchers report that up to 20% of gay men from central London gyms have tried methamphetamine, the drug most associated with PNP, despite methamphetamine use being relatively unknown in the UK outside the PNP subculture.”

8.1.5 Paedophilia and predation

“It is a common stereotype that gay men are sexual predators or paedophiles. The former perception can lead to a knee-jerk reaction that created the ‘gay panic defence’, usually in straight men, who fear being hit on by gay men, and can be either a cause or an expression of homophobia. The perception that a greater proportion of gay than straight men are paedophiles is one contributing factor of discrimination against gay teachers, despite the stark contrast to statistical figures, which have generally revealed that upwards of 80–90% of male paedophiles are heterosexual and usually married with children of their own, and research on child sexual abuse shows that most instances of child sexual abuse (one cited percentage being over 90%) are perpetrated by heterosexual males having non-consensual sexual intercourse with underage females. Research has consistently indicated that a significant minority of child sex abuse perpetrators are female (5%-20%), but other research has indicated that almost 40% of child sexual abuse against boys, and 6% of abuse against girls, is committed by women.”

With a read through the above popular list of stereotypes held by society about gay men, it is no wonder that the social distance is being kept and that prejudice is rife.

Prejudice is thus a negative attitude held towards the members of some group, based solely on their membership in that group, according to Baron & Byrne (1994, p. 218).
The root of the word is to ‘pre judge’. Normally we make our judgement on evidence in front of us. When we are ‘prejudiced’, we do so without the evidence. This is indeed a sad situation, as the accused and the judged have no way of defending or explaining themselves. The preferred distance from the person that the prejudice is held against does not allow for an altering of the beliefs based on new evidence and so the self-sustaining nature of the beast is now in action.

Hein did not ask any further questions once he came to believe that Gerhard was gay and did not give Gerhard a chance to explain or divulge information. Whatever it was that Hein believed to be true at that point, regarding gay people made him place permanent distance between himself and Gerhard. The friendship was over.

It is a good example of the pain gay people must often suffer. Gerhard tells me that he was left feeling very low and very lonely after this.

Discrimination is then prejudice in action when the attitude based on a stereotype, comes to behaviour that is harmful or negative for the recipient of that behaviour. Discrimination can be simple avoidance of the person or group discriminated against, or exclusion from jobs, social events, educational opportunities or even neighbourhoods. In most extreme cases of discrimination it can lead to overt forms of aggression against its targets.

There is also more subtle discrimination such as heaping excessive amounts of praise on even minimal achievements, with the implication that not much can be expected of that person (Baron & Byrne, 1994, p. 220-221). An example would be if praise is lavished on a gay male for being able to change a car tyre or do something that solidly belongs inside the heterosexual male gender role. Such an expression is not praise, but in fact it expresses surprise at the ability of the gay person to do something he was not initially credited with.
8.2 The perpetrators

The term “perpetrator” is used very widely in this research as it denotes those people in the interview subjects’ lives who made their lives difficult on grounds of them knowing or suspecting that they were gay, in the sense that they showed either attitudinally, or physically, that the presence or behaviour or nature of the gay subjects were unwanted, unacceptable or unnatural and in need of change or cure.

In discussions we tried to categorise the characteristics of the perpetrators and find reasons for why they might be doing what they are doing, based on the subjects’ subjective and personal experience.

The categories below are a product of the reflection by the research subjects and their sense and understanding of the motives that people have for non-acceptance of gays. It was agreed that a rough, but consistent, categorisation of the motivation for non-acceptance would be, ‘ignorance’, ‘fear of own gay tendencies’, ‘pseudo acceptance’ as well as outright ‘gay hatred’.

8.2.1 Ignorance

What stood out during discussions with the subjects was the fact that gay people are initially as incapable of explaining the phenomenon of being gay, as anyone else is of explaining their own private sexual orientation; be it a heterosexual, a bisexual or a gay orientation. It is simply experienced as a “subjectively normal”.

It was theorised amongst my subjects that the average heterosexual person does not ever have to question his or her sexuality and hence accept it as normal, and it is left at that. The gay person phenomenologically also experience their orientation as normal for them as they do not know anything else, but learn very soon that some of their feelings and yearnings and attractions and sense of beauty and aesthetics, the way they express themselves are frowned upon by society and deemed ill-suited for them as males. Intuitively they start to
hide of suppress certain aspects of themselves they previously felt and acted upon spontaneously.

An interesting discussion took place when I asked them: “Are you are still gay if you manage not to have a sexual relationship with a male?” The findings were discussed in Section 7.3.

They discussed dreams, intentions, choices of friends, bosom buddies, how they view peers, aesthetics, occupations, justice, beauty and nature and in all that they feel that the elemental gay aspect could not be extracted, but that it was in essence part of who they are and that it would change their personalities completely if they were not gay.

This was an illuminating part of my research as a gay person myself, as I had also never ventured that far into descriptions of the gay reality and had to confess to myself as well that the above mentioned finding is the closest we could get to the truth about what it means to be gay. Our sexuality permeates all aspects of our being.

So what then are the ignorant beliefs of the non-gay world and can they be blamed for their ignorance? What follows is the essence of our discussions and represents the subjective opinions of the five men I interviewed:

- Some are fuelled in their hatred and rejection of gays by an interpretation and understanding of religion and of God and feel they are called upon and justified in punishing gays in whatever way deemed fit. Amongst fanatics it is seen as a service to God to punish, kill, imprison and defile and reject gays on all levels of society. ISIS is an example of such ignorance.
- Others are fuelled by a socially entrenched value system and understanding of the normality of gender roles and gender stereotypes. Males or females who do not adhere to the societal gender roles are seen as freaks of nature.
- Some reject gays on the basis of fear of identification with the group by association. These might even have a “live and let live” attitude towards gays, but would not like to be thought of as gay or even gay friendly as it may lead to them being ostracised.
• It was felt that some parents, especially fathers, are fuelled by shame for having such weak and effeminate offspring.
• Another reason was theorised, that the rejection is fuelled by the disgust in an imagining of the gay sexual act.
• Yet another possible reason was discussed, namely that individuals with low self-esteem often act aggressively and violently towards gays to get the approval of a group.
• There might also be a fear that gays would make sexual advances towards non gays and children. The stereotype of the gay paedophile is deeply entrenched.

8.2.2 Fear of own gay tendencies

The case of “Dr Shock” (Dr Aubrey Levin) discussed in Section 2.2.3, is a prime example of individuals who fear their own gay tendencies so much that they compensate for inner unaccepted yearnings by punishing the very objects of their desire. Dr Levin tormented and tortured gay men in the SADF during the Apartheid Government with his electric shock and aversion therapies, aimed at curing gays from their sickness. Today he is a convicted gay sex offender in Canada.

8.2.3 Pseudo acceptance

This phenomenon was discussed in detail and it came up in the interviews as well and was experienced by the gay research subjects as particularly painful and tantamount to the ultimate betrayal of their trust. It was termed “pseudo acceptance” and is subtle sometimes, but has a disillusioning aftermath. It was discussed with reference to real life examples, but it boils down to conditional acceptance.

For example, parents of gay children would often grant conditional acceptance by saying that the gay child may continue to visit the home, but the partner must please never be brought along. There are numerous variations of this, such as welcoming the gay child only if the brother is not home or, if the partner is brought along, the expectation is that the gay
couple sleep in different beds and rooms and that no affection between the partners be shown during the visit.

The men I interviewed all agreed that many of these conditions would have been a given from their side out of respect for their parents, but when it is set up as a precondition, it hurts and becomes an obstacle. They do not see this as acceptance but as being ‘tolerated’ or, in worse cases, ‘endured’. They also reported not feeling welcome or at ease at home, in certain social settings and even in their own skin, because of such a looming judgement hanging over them. They start hyper reflecting anew on their own behaviour which they feel leads to unauthentic social interaction in such social settings, even when they had already reached a level of full self-acceptance. It was said that it is as if the old awkwardness returns.

What is often experienced as an insult is the imitation of stereotypical gay mannerisms and behaviour commonly referred to as ‘flapping’ or ‘camp behaviour’. This type of behaviour is often seen as a token of acceptance and ‘being so cool with the whole gay issue’, when it is imitated by heterosexual friends and acquaintances. My subjects feel that it is a mockery and insult to their dignity to have stereotypical behaviour acted out towards them. Because acceptance is so scares, they often let it go, but feel that they are always reminded of their differences and not truly accepted. They also feel that they resent being made the ‘entertainment’ of social gatherings.

An even more subtle discrimination often experienced in closer relationships with heterosexual people and experienced as painful, is when there is a disagreement on a topic that has absolutely no reference to sexual orientation, but is levelled in the final instance as the reason the gay person does not agree or understand. One of my subjects made me laugh when he said: “Being gay is not a mental handicap, it is a sexual orientation!”
8.3 Gay hatred

None of the research participant reported being the victim of overt gay hatred accept perhaps Andre Carl while he was in the SADF (South African Defence Force). During our discussions, the topic of outright gay hatred was so hotly debated that I felt a deeper look at the topic was justified.

The ground-breaking work of Rush W. Dozier, JR. in his research into the nature of hatred in human beings, entitled “Why we hate”, casts some light onto the phenomenon of gay hatred:

“Hate is the nuclear weapon of the mind. Its detonation can blow apart the social order and plunge nations into war and genocide. It shatters relationships, leading people who once loved each other into bitterness, violence, even murder. Blasts of hate sweep away civility and tolerance, spurring individuals to commit acts of savagery and pitting group against group in combat that can grow vicious and deadly... These unspeakable acts go by many different names: oppression, torture, genocide – and terrorism.” (Dozier, 2002, p. 1.)

Gays around the world gathered at vigils in June 2016, aghast at the mindless horror of the Orlando massacre in the gay club, Pulse, which left 49 people dead and almost the same number injured. The questions that occupied the gay community were: why do they hate us so much and what can we do to prevent this from happening again?

Dozier’s research paints a bleak picture, and he approaches the phenomenon of hate via the social route, the impact of belief systems, as well as the neuroanatomical route. He describes the role of the amygdala, a structure in the limbic system of the brain, which functions as a trip wire for violence and rage. The amygdala, a pair of grape sized structures situated about two centimetres beneath the temple is linked to the sensory system and constantly scans the information flowing through them for any sign of threat or pain, whether physical or mental (Dozier, 2002, p. 6).
Playing a major role in emotions such as hate, anger, fear, joy even on a preconscious level, it is capable of producing almost instantaneous responses before we even realise what is happening. The role of the amygdala is well documented for its role in rare diseases such as intermittent explosive disorder and episodic dyscontrol. Stimulation of these brain areas has caused patients to violently attack people and feel extreme remorse and confusion afterwards for their lack of control (Dozier, 2002, p. 7). Another interesting link from the amygdala is the one to the speech centre of the brain and is the area of extensive research in the rare disease called Tourette’s syndrome. It is theorised that this may be the reason that outbursts of hatred is often accompanied by a flood of obscenities.

While these facts are interesting, the most illuminating aspect (also the most unsettling) is the apparent link between “meaning” and “hatred”. It must be understood that Dozier does not refer to “meaning” in the same way that Frankl does in Logotherapy. For Dozier, meaning is any “belief system”. This is clearly not the case in Logotherapy where the distinction is clearly made between “meaning” and “beliefs”:

“*Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are ‘nothing but defence mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations’. But as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my ‘defence mechanisms’, nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my ‘reaction formations’. Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values!’*” (Frankl, 2011, p. 80-81.)

Limiting beliefs, on the other hand, can stem from the psychological and not the spiritual aspect of man. Thus it can be a logical (however limited) opinion or conclusion, arrived at through pent up frustration, anger, fear etc. It could be outright dangerous for society. In everyday language we talk about “jumping to conclusions”. This is sadly also a phenomenon in social perception – that we take shortcuts in order to draw conclusions from social settings and this also from groups of people in society. As discussed at the outset of this chapter, the premature conclusion that a minority group be undesirable may preclude the
individual from further investigation into that group, where initial opinions may be negated.
The dynamics of social distance were discussed.

For purposes of clarity, I will refer to what Dozier’s calls “meaning systems” as “belief systems”. He argues that “belief systems”, rather than instincts, are of overwhelming importance to our species and that our limbic system has a powerful tendency to blindly interpret any “belief system” which we identify with deeply as enhancing our survival. He feels that the tremendous emotional commitment we make to these systems leave us vulnerable to interpreting differences in beliefs as threats to our survival. Many of the most savage conflicts have involved quarrels over religious, political, and cultural belief systems (Dozier, 2002, pp. 11-12).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the fear that dominated the Apartheid Government was that unsavoury elements would water down and destroy Afrikaner cultural values and were seen as things to root out and fight.

The brain’s capacity for mixing the rational with the irrational makes the conquest of hate urgently important and exceptionally challenging. Some analysts of human behaviour overlook the delusional capacity of the human mind and the power of belief systems to create emotions and values that contradict and override the objective conditions for survival. He continues to point out that such belief systems proliferate in social systems and he adds that where hate pervades a belief system, there is no end to the atrocities, an individual, group or society can perpetuate (Dozier, 2002, p.13). He makes reference to suicide bombers and mass shootings in public places, in other words acts of terrorism. He also points out that hatred can pervert our human natural sympathy for others. When we bitterly hate someone, their joy becomes our pain, and their pain becomes our joy (Dozier, 2002, p. 31).

The glimmer of hope, as Dozier argues, is that if belief systems have the power over the human mind such as to drive it to kill, it must also have the power to reshape and bring about tolerance and acceptance for diversity in society.
The question that is facing the gay sub-culture worldwide and not just in South Africa is and remains: How do we as gay people present or reinvent ourselves so as to become part of, and valued in society? How will we gain a space that says we are worthy of life, of respect and of dignity?

Dozier (2002, pp. 31-36) mentions ten strategies that he considers relevant to prevent and eliminate hate. These are:

- Be specific regarding the identification of the source of anger, pain or threat;
- Develop an “us-us” orientation that wold require a person to be empathetic towards others;
- Communicate the specific reasons that you feel angry or threatened can help to dissipate negative emotions;
- Seek to negotiate constructively to resolve anger and conflict;
- Educate yourself and others as an enormous amount of hatred and prejudice comes from ignorance;
- Try to cooperate with others in mutual beneficial ways;
- Try to put things into perspective rather than to overreact;
- Make every effort to avoid a sense of being trapped through clear communication and negotiation;
- Seek opportunities to immerse yourself in a positive way with the source of your hate, and
- Seek justice, not revenge.

The tragedy is that the ten strategies or steps which he mentions are to be used in tandem, but every single one of them would require the involvement and willingness of the person, group, or society that is hate driven to gradually break down the walls that separate them from their objects of hate. The one exception is perhaps education. These findings are not immediately reassuring to gays who are the objects of hatred in many parts of the world still today.
Research done by Nel suggests that hate crime legislation in post-apartheid South Africa is necessary as a deterrent for violence on gays.

“Given its recent history, it may very well serve post-apartheid South Africa and the African continent well to follow the international example and to prioritise anti-hate crime legislation and the special measures required to give effect to hate crime as a reporting and sentencing category.” (Nel, 2005, p. 255.)

8.4 Conclusion

Aspects and dynamics of a society, which is continually hostile towards gays, were discussed and a brief summary of firmly held anti-gay stereotypes was included.

A section was included, where the research participants offered their subjective understanding of the make-up of the perpetrators.

A discussion on the nature of ‘gay-hatred’ was included.
CHAPTER 9: WHEN GAYS GO ASTRAY

It is important to read this section of the thesis against the theoretical backdrop of Frankl’s “Existential Vacuum” as discussed in Chapter 3.

9.1 The Gay Existential vacuum

Frankl’s Logotherapy pivots on the premise that man is primarily geared towards meaning in his life:

“According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a will to meaning in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could also term it, the will to pleasure) on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centered...This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning.” (Frankl, 1975, p. 120.)

However, if the individual or a subculture finds itself in a society where frustration of meaning, or toxic false beliefs about ‘self’, block meaning from presenting itself to the individual, or prevents, or discourages the individual from reaching out to it, he could soon find himself alienated and divorced from his own life. He will enter into a vacuous state of existence, not living, becoming and growing, but surviving in his place of hiding from a society that persecutes him. This could happen with the individual is too busy tending to more urgent matters within the self and he finds himself hyper reflecting and hyper intending (fixing) on ailments and mistakes society is constantly reminding him of.

It was also emphasised in Chapter 3 in section 3.3 that the ‘action urge’ of shame is to hide (Downs, 2012, p. 11). With his spirit withdrawn from the real world, the danger of plummeting into the existential vacuum is imminent. Human existence is authentically intentional and in relation to something or someone. Take this away from man and you take away the essence of his existence.
Frankl (1975, p. 94) states that: “The prisoner who had lost faith in the future - his future - was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.”

This statement of Frankl resonates very strongly with Bradshaw and Downs’s concepts of “internalised shame”. To repeat Bradshaw’s statement discussed in section 3.3.4: “Shame is the missing link to self-acceptance and to have shame as an identity is the belief that one is flawed and that one is defective as a human being. Once shame is transformed into an identity it becomes toxic and dehumanising.” (Bradshaw, retrieved on 17 July 2016.)

Because the gay person would have to engage his life, and ‘show up’ so to speak in his life, including the social aspect of it, he is going to be challenged in the areas of confidence and stability. If he is however suffering a toxic shame the endurance to resist and push through (as Downs explains in Section 3.3.6) and endure the increased ‘noetic tension’ that meaning implies might lack. Downs also talks about the tendency to want to run back into hiding.

Bradshaw believes that toxic shame has a social genesis and that we become shame-based through a process of social conditioning. The gay person lives under the radar, tries to avoid further pain and tries out false identities to hide these flaws. Bradshaw also offers a compelling argument and reason why gays might not be able to maintain relationships:

“People who have shame internalised and as an identity would suspect other people who show an interest and a like in them, as ‘having bad social intuition’ and if the situation continues, they might reject the source of admiration, and perhaps even love.” (Bradshaw, retrieved on 17 July 2016.)

In section 3.3.1, I listed the typical questions which Downs (2012) has been faced with in his years of therapy with gays:

- How do I find a lasting sense of purpose in my life?
- Why am I never really satisfied?
• When will I finally be content with my accomplishments?
• Why do I eventually get dissatisfied with almost all of my relationships?
• How do I find the courage to eventually be my own person?
• Why am I so sensitive to criticism?
• Will I ever find lasting joy and passion?

Downs’s questions are a near perfect match to the experience of the “existential vacuum” as described by Frankl, as a life of stumbling from one pleasure to the next, unplanned and directionless. Efforts are directed at securing the little bit of fun and happiness that is there to be reaped, but with a great sense of insecurity. Adding to that the subconscious knowledge that one is a member of a ‘hated’ or at best ‘unwelcome’ group of society does not make for a healthy self-image.

In this state we are thrown back on our instincts and drives and live on the “animalistic level”:

“At the beginning of human history, man lost some of the basic animal instincts in which an animal's behaviour is imbedded and by which it is secured. Such security, like Paradise, is closed to man forever; man has to make choices. In addition to this, however, man has suffered another loss in his more recent development inasmuch as the traditions which buttressed his behaviour are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).” (Frankl, 1975, p. 127.)

Frankl points out another sad phenomenon in the above mentioned quotation, namely that in this miserable state of being, divorced of meaning and desperate for some fulfilment, man falls firstly into the pleasure trap and secondly into the ‘conformist’ trap. If we keep in mind Frankl’s understanding that, through ‘meaning’ we ‘become’ who we are supposed to be, the opposite also becomes illuminatingly clear: through continued ‘lack of meaning’ we deteriorate into mindless followers of the masses.
Gays may follow the trend in gay subculture in a very insecure and existentially vacuous way, copying through sexual excesses, alcoholism, and drug abuse, and chase money and power in a way to compensate for an agonising inner sense of shame.

Frankl (1984, p. 129-130) states:

“Such widespread phenomena as depression, aggression and addiction are not understandable unless we recognize the existential vacuum underlying them. Moreover, there are various masks and guises under which the existential vacuum appears...In other cases, the place of frustrated will to meaning is taken by the will to pleasure. That is why existential frustration often eventuates in sexual compensation. We can observe in such cases that the sexual libido becomes rampant in the existential vacuum. An analogous event occurs in neurotic cases. There are certain types of feedback mechanisms and vicious circle formations which I will touch upon later. One can observe again and again, however, that this symptomatology has invaded an existential vacuum wherein it then continues to flourish. In such patients, what we have to deal with is not a noögenic neurosis. However, we will never succeed in having the patient overcome his condition if we have not supplemented the psychotherapeutic treatment with logotherapy. For by filling the existential vacuum, the patient will be prevented from suffering further relapses. Therefore, logotherapy is indicated not only in noögenic cases, as pointed out above, but also in psychogenic cases, and sometimes even the somatogenic (pseudo-) neuroses. Viewed in this light, a statement once made by Magda B. Arnold is justified: ‘Every therapy must in some way, no matter how restricted, also be Logotherapy’.”

In the above statement we see that “rampant sexual behaviour” is a signifier for Frankl of the existential vacuum, in other words a frustration of the will to meaning. The reason is seen as a desperate attempt at compensating for a spiritual meaning in life with a sensual pleasure in life. This sexual pleasure seeking can take on addictive proportions as is depicted in gay literature such as Larry Kramer’s ‘Faggots’ (original publication in 1978), which has become one of the best-selling novels about gay life ever written according to book critics.
During our interview (Section 6.1.1.5), Andre Carl talks with pity about the aggressive sexual promiscuity, shameless and open in the gyms and public places in Cape Town. He makes specific reference to the cruel using and abusing of people by people, the planet and how it is being abused. In addition, there is the explosion in drug addiction and HIV in South Africa. But importantly, he expresses concern for the ever more and in-your-face addiction to sex and material possessions, as well as the aggressiveness of the gay community in Cape Town that he observes. He states that he sees this aggressive sexual behaviour “as evidence of emptiness and of an inner void”.

During the interview with Judge Cameron, the discussion also explored the subject of ‘shameless’ public gay sex. He states: “It is a political act which I do not necessarily agree with but you’ve got to have respect for it as a political act. Live copulation between two gay men on a float is an astounding, even horrifying act, but it’s a political act.” (See Section 6.1.5.) In this context, our discussion touched on my opinion that the point is that gays have been associated with overt and excessive sexual behaviour ever since ‘gays’ as a subculture gained visibility and entered full force into the political arena.

With the sudden appearance of AIDS in the media in the early 80s in the United States of America, the promiscuity of gay men became more public. Michael Gottlieb reported to the Centres for Disease Control’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report that between October 1980 and May 1981, there had been five cases of previously healthy young men in Los Angeles hospitals, whose biopsies had confirmed a rare illness, pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, which, he wrote, had been seen only in severely immunosuppressed patients. During the month that followed twenty six homosexual men had been diagnosed with Kapisi’s sarcoma, a rare cancer that shows up as skin lesions. The New York Times, which published an article of the appearance of a sudden “gay cancer”, reported on the promiscuity of these men, emphasising that these men had had “as many as ten sexual encounters each night, up to four times a week” (Faderman, 2015, p. 415). The Times revised the figures upward a year later. Many of the infected men had had “sex with fifteen or twenty deliberately anonymous men’ per night on a typical visit to a gay bathhouse”. 
Despite the throng of sexual experiences, the gay man remains lonely and unfulfilled, and now to add to the label “moral menace”, gays had earned themselves another label, namely that of “public health menace” according to Faderman (2015, p. 416).

This was in the early 1980s, but if we look at Andre Carl’s observations, the mindless promiscuous sex in many gay circles continues.

Perhaps it can be argued that the ‘anonymity’ that gay sex addicts crave is to be understood in terms of the ‘action urge’ of shame to ‘hide’ and ‘to not be known’, as discussed in terms of Downs’ theory in Section 3.3.2. And perhaps the lack of meaning and increasing noetic restlessness is the dynamic that perpetuates the addiction in the sense of promiscuity and sheer number of sexual encounters (as seen in Section 3.1.6), which in turn worsens the sense of shame. In this sense the dynamics of shame within a void of meaning, manifesting as a sexual addiction, might explain the staggering extremes of gay sexual promiscuity, described in gay literature such as Kramer’s “Faggots”.

Browning (1994, p. 99) describes the anonymity of sex in the gay subculture as follows.

“*Where was the affecting?* he wondered. *Where was the interaction of mind and body that creates a meaningful sexual experience?* It was as if these people, who had been made so separate from society by virtue of their sexuality, were now making their sexuality utterly separate from themselves. *Their bodies were tools through which they could experience physical sensation. The complete focus on the physical aspect of sex meant constantly devising new, more extreme sexual acts, because the experience relied on heightened sensory rather than emotional stimulation.*”

Browning points here towards a heightened sensory (physical) stimulation rather than an emotional stimulation. Frankl goes beyond that in that he says that sex needs to have a spiritual aspect in order to be human.

“*Ever more patients complain of what they call an ‘inner void,’ and that is what I have termed this condition the ‘existential vacuum.’* In contradiction to the peak experiences
so aptly described by Maslow, one could conceive of the existential vacuum as an ‘abyss-experience’” (Frankl, 1988, p. 83).

It can only be surmised that many gays continue to live in an ‘abyss-experience’ given the mountain of social prejudice, discrimination and hatred - already discussed - they have to deal with on an ongoing basis. Whether gays live in South Africa in the twenty first century or whether they lived or died under the Nazi regime, or are being hunted down and killed by Isis in Iraq or Afghanistan makes no real difference. The gay person has a picture of a world that not just locally but internationally is either unsafe or unwelcoming for gay people. Newspaper articles are still often filled with either more incidents of persecution or more stories of parents seeking help from experts for their problematic gay child. The world is telling the gay person that he is a problem; that he is sick, and that adaptation is needed to accommodate the problem. Despite the high AIDS awareness of today, the quality (meaning) of their lives does not seem to act as a brake in their tampering with their lives and risking their health in promiscuous sexual behaviour.

My own observations in the gay subculture amongst people who are openly promiscuous are that many have pervasive negative self-images and it is as if these negative images define them as worthless. They manifest a cynical, hopeless or angry protest against a world that is forever accusing them and condemning them. In some cases, the diagnosis with the HIV/AIDS virus just fuels their anger.

This anger and rage is another manifestation, according to Frankl, of the existential vacuum. Downs (2012, p. 33) casts light on the ‘rage’ of gay men and women who live under a condemning society. He describes the many faces of gay rage: “Rage is the experience of intense anger that results from his failure to achieve authentic validation. Since authentic validation can only occur in the context of one’s true authentic self, he finds himself in incapable of achieving that which will bring him lasting contentment.” This rage pushes others away and the vicious cycle continues.
Gays are also known for their ‘bitchy’ and ‘biting’ humour. They are often referred to as ‘bitter queens’ and are the experts in writing commentaries on the latest fashion *faux pas* of a celebrity (Downs, 2012, p.36).

Then, the speed and intensity with which gay anger is often ignited is another sign of gay rage. They seem hypersensitive to invalidation of the slightest degree. Downs (2012, p. 36) calls this the “crash and lash syndrome”. The ‘crash’ is when anger replaces all rationality, while ‘lash’ refers to the situation when, seconds later, a person lashes out in furious attack. As supervisors, gays may set unrealistically high standards and may be intolerant of mistakes. This ‘making amends’ for a deep seated shame, by playing the ‘perfectionist’ makes them unbearable to work with.

Finally, Downs (2012, p. 38) describes the targets of rages as twofold: first, those around us, and second, ourselves, as it manifests in self-loathing and depression. Depressed gay people flock to counsellors in doubt and confusion. The roots of depression often lie in the inauthentic self. If the authentic self is abandoned, then the authentic self can also not be sustained by a flow of meaning. It retreats into hiding or masquerades as inauthentic other personas, thus making the authentic flow of validation and meaning impossible. The result of this sad phenomenon is depression (Downs, 2012, p. 83).

Just a brief look at most gay publications and movies, or a brief visit to gay clubs, events and social venues, will reveal an aggressively eroticised and hedonistic orientation. Sexual promiscuity, gay prostitution, alcohol and social drug use are at the order of the day. The sexual promiscuity continues despite the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the prevalence which is extremely high in South Africa at present. False OTT (over the top) personas are donned and loud and excessive parties, events and weddings are seen as achievements; it gives temporary relief from an aching core of shame and self-loathing.
9.2 When there is nothing ‘gay’ anymore about being gay

In the above section, the existential vacuum as described by Frankl was seen to fit large sections of the gay community like a glove. It is a bleak picture indeed and I feel that every effort should be channelled into ‘healing’ a society that has suffered so much oppression and has internalised so much of the despise and shame that has been heaped on them. How can gay people, in this reality, blossom and prosper?

The very aim of this paper was also then to illustrate and substantiate the defiant and strong human spirit that does emerge from gays who have transcended all this and make their lives count, not just for themselves, but also for others. These are homosexual men who do not complain, but transcend and transmute their suffering into a service for others – their spirits alive, healthy and vibrant.

Frankl discusses that fulfilment in life is to be found in actualising values according to the dictates of the conscience. In fact, it is imperative to recognize each opportunity to actualise those values: “The requirement that values be actualized... becomes a concrete demand for every single hour and a personal summons for every single person.” (Frankl, 1986, p. 105.)

A meaningful life is a busy, active one, where the human does not long for an idle existence on a beach where his every need is met. Man must be very alert to meaning in each moment as it can initially be a very illusive thing and at times it even requires effort and courage:

“At one time we are called upon, as it were, to enrich the world by our actions, another time to enrich ourselves by our experiences. Sometimes the demands of the hour may be fulfilled by an act, at another time by our surrendering to the glory of an experience. Man can be ‘obligated’ to experience joy. In this sense, a person sitting in a streetcar who has the opportunity to watch a wonderful sunset or to breathe in the rich scent of flowering acacias, and who instead goes on reading his newspaper, could at such a moment be accused of being negligent towards his obligations.” (Frankl, 1986, p. 45.)
How is it then possible to bring meaning and joy back to the lives of these individuals? In this section I want to attempt to compare and argue that Downs and Frankl speak a similar language when they talk about the aim of life. For Frankl it is ‘meaning’ and for Downs it is ‘finding your passion’. Where ‘meaning is the primary goal of human existence, Downs (2012, p. 156) talks about ‘passion’ as: “a complex and multifaceted code that is implanted into each of us. Breaking that code, for all but a few of us becomes a lifelong endeavour. During our early years, it can seem elusive and obscure – so much so that we abandon the pursuit and rest in a complacent and cynical belief that passion simply does not exist for us”.

However, for both these theorists, in the pursuit of meaningful experiences and tasks, the outcome is ‘joy’!

“Joy, however, may make life meaningful only if it itself has meaning. Its meaning cannot lie with itself...For joy is always directed towards an object...joy is an intentional emotion – in contrast to mere pleasure which... [is a] conditional emotion... a person remains in the conditional state of pleasure... without reaching out to the realm of objects ... only when the emotions work in terms of values can the individual feel pure ‘joy’... joy cannot be purposed as a goal.” (Frankl, 1986, p. 40.)

The concept of “joy” has special significance for Frankl as it is a positive emotion which is not an end in itself but rather the outcome of meaningful pursuits: “Joy”, for Frankl belongs in the spiritual dimension and is values-based, while “pleasure” would be in the somatic and mental dimensions. Joy cannot be pursued by hedonism, which pursues transitory states of pleasure which rapidly dissipate.

Downs (2012, p. 156) feels that passion is there for each of us, but that growing up in toxic shame, we are ill equipped to decipher the code of passion. He claims that it is indeed for many men a difficult task (from the position of internalised shame), yet he continues that this difficulty is no proof of its non-existence. He defines passion as “the repeated experience of joy in doing something”. He states that real passion becomes available to the gay man only when he conquered the toxic shame of his early years.
As with Frankl’s concept of “creative values”, Downs describes it as follows:

“When we discover passion, it is usually because an activity seems to produce joy every time we perform it. The activity produces a surprising and sufficient amount of joy, again and again. Passion is a meta-emotion – an emotion which is felt only after observing other emotions over time. Passion is present when you observe that the same activity consistently brings you joy.” (Downs, 2012, p. 156.)

In Logotherapy, we are trained to look out for logo-hints that the client may drop. In the same vein, Downs (2012, p. 157) argues as follows: “Joy on the other hand is quick and fleeting and may fly past us and go unnoticed”. Frankl says the voice of conscience is a whisper. To repeat Downs as quoted from his online lecture in Section 3.3.6: “As the only positive emotion, “joy” is the “voice of God! – It is that part of our emotional system that guides us to where we are meant to be in our lives”. (Downs, retrieved on 14 July 2016.)

Frankl talks about taking a step through meaning towards becoming that which we are supposed to be, growing in our human and authentic stature.

I want to argue though that Downs’s theory of meaning falls short in that it does not see the amazing opportunity in ‘suffering’: to find the highest and the noblest of meanings, as Frankl often called it. Given the fact that gay lives are so very rich in suffering, Logotherapy is the ideal lens through which to study and understand gays who overcome and transcend to lives of victory and service.

“Once the meaning of suffering had been revealed to us, we refused to minimize or alleviate the camp’s tortures by ignoring them or harbouring false illusions and entertaining artificial optimism. Suffering had become a task on which we did not want to turn our backs. We had realized its hidden opportunities for achievement, the opportunities which caused the poet Rilke to write, ‘Wie viel ist aufzuleiden!’ (How much suffering is there to get through!) Rilke spoke of ‘getting through suffering’ as others would talk of ‘getting through work’. There was plenty of suffering for us to get through.
Therefore, it was necessary to face up to the full amount of suffering, trying to keep moments of weakness and furtive tears to a minimum. But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 99-100.)

It is this rich and amazing insight which Frankl had; in the depths of degradation and suffering – there in the concentration camps – that still bears a lesson to gays today who are still in some places ‘despised’, ‘wished dead’, and ‘a group of people over whose ill luck our enemies rejoice’ (be it the AIDS pandemic that hit our subculture so hard, or Baptists rejoicing and celebrating the Massacre at the Pulse Club in Orlando, or the murder of Matthew Shepard). It is to suffering that we owe an awakening sometimes that can so starkly bring us into the meaning of the moment, as to cast off all forms of denial and fantastic and frivolous alterations of reality that the voice of conscience comes through, not as a whisper, but as thunder!

Suffering can be the strongest road sign to meaning of all. It is this insight that arms us with a new attitude. An attitude that forbids us from wallowing in self-pity, and causes us to seeks privacy to cry tears of frustration with dignity in our hearts. Like Frankl and others in the camps, ‘Jews and Gays alike’, we can today also not afford to harbour…. *false illusions and artificial optimisms about our foes or families*…… and those elements in society who continue to refuse us a place in society. We must at times stand up and resist.

We have seen in this study what these men have achieved just; by leaving their places of hiding and facing their personal realities, warts and all. Through the many moments of courage that the five men in this study have shown, we can all learn and we can cast off the shame that we have been cloaked with and transform it into dignity. We can ensure that we have a place in the world where we can call home.
9.3 Conclusion

The concept of the ‘existential vacuum’ as described by Frankl’s Logotherapy was applied as a conceptual framework for the understanding of a vast part of gay society and inferences were drawn with respect to ‘addictions’ (both behavioural and substance addictions), ‘depression’ and ‘aggression’.

Finally, it was theorised that the manifestation of a vast existential vacuum in gay society constitutes a ‘call for help’ and it was also theorised about how this call might be answered.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

As mentioned at the outset of this thesis under point 1.4 it was important to take a broader angle on the topic of ‘how’ the subjects broke through to meaning and gained optimal functioning in a self-transcendent life. These conclusions were the primary focus of the study, but would not be clearly understood without the secondary discussions which then also were looked at. For purposes of clarity and logic the findings below are clustered under their own headings. It is important to mention that the conclusions listed under point 10.2 form the primary findings and that other findings are secondary and supportive of the primary findings.

10.1 Social contextual findings

- The South African society was found to be a homophobic social backdrop from where homosexual men constantly received toxic messages, negative reinforcement about their worthlessness and shame, not only from society but also religious institutions, their families and a legal system that made no safe provision for them until 1996.

- It was confirmed by all the participants that violence against gays internationally have an impact on them and they expressed real concern for the well-being of gays elsewhere in the world.

10.2 Primary findings regarding spiritual development of gays in accordance with the Logotherapeutic context

- The original research question which lead to this study, was confirmed. Indeed, all the research participants suffered some form of social rejection, discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion or disadvantage as a direct result of their gay identity or a suspicion that they might be gay. The findings in the literary research also confirmed that gays all over the world suffer the same fate, ranging from ‘name calling’, ‘physical abuse’, ‘family rejection’, ‘exclusion from social opportunities’,
rape’, ‘murder’ and ‘dehumanising’. In South Africa, this fact remains despite the liberal Constitution that holds non-discrimination against people on grounds of sexual orientation.

- Studying the life stories of these men and analysing the findings of this thesis, it was established that the men interviewed all attained a high level of spiritual maturity in their lives. In response to a homophobic society and the many forms of intense suffering they endured in the form of rejection, humiliation, restrictions, exclusion, marginalisation, being ignored and hated, it can truly be said that their victories were a defiant response to a condemning society.

- The spiritual development of these men was investigated and described as a spiral upward and ongoing dynamic between the social/spiritual conflict with society, followed by conscious evaluation of the matter and defiance and resistance against unjust, ignorant and harmful onslaughts, followed by victory and even self-transcendence. During this ongoing process, the men became socially more skilled and spiritually more robust.

- Frankl’s notion of the ‘attitudinal values’ being of the highest and noblest kind were identified in the acts of service and self-transcendence these men accomplished in making life for other gay people easier.

- Instead of becoming passive victims to this social process of conditioning, internalising and believing its lies, and instead of becoming only emotionally reactive to this onslaught, these men broke through to the spiritual core of their beings. At arm’s length and through the spiritual capacity to self-distancing, they evaluated their lives. Hearing the voice of conscience, and with their spiritual eyes, seeing the gross injustice they were made to suffer, they started a path of defiance and a heroic life of resistance and reclaiming what was denied them.
• Through an ongoing social battle they became optimally skilled in learning to curb negative emotions by putting a distance between them and their emotions, and learnt to even laugh at themselves and at the world that was still trying to make them less than what they were.

• This was achieved by becoming skilled in the regulation of the spiritual capacities of ‘attention’ and ‘attitude’ and ‘expectation’. It was illustrated how they had learnt to ‘ignore’ negativity and focus on what was dear to them. The technique of ‘de-reflection’ was identified as playing a major role in their social interactions.

• The theories of Bradshaw and Downs were very relevant and make intuitive sense. The ‘shame-based-trauma’ and the ‘toxic shame’ these theorists deal with in their work with specific application to the gay community was confirmed in the interviews with the men. It might be a good area of research for future to investigate factors such as ‘age of exposure to shame’, whether the shaming agents were the ‘family themselves’ or whether the family formed a ‘protective buffer’ and level of ‘sensitivity’ on the part of the gay person. As far as inferences can be drawn from these five men, it would seem that sound family circles do form an initial protective buffer from social shaming.

• Although not the focus of the research, Frankl’s theory of the ‘existential vacuum’, together with Bradshaw and Downs’s theories on ‘internalised shame’, seem to give a sound theoretical basis for the phenomenon of sexual addiction, the excess and the anonymous nature of it. It was suggested that the excessive sexual addiction might be driven by a frustration of meaning, and that the ‘shame based trauma’ might be at the foundation of the tendency to engage in anonymous sexual activities.

• It was illustrated that the subjects live a life filled with meaning, gratitude, service and joy and that they have retained a sensitivity of spirit for the suffering of others.
• It was seen that being gay and being a God fearing gay person, are not mutually exclusive. This last finding flies in the face of a most treasured socio-religious prejudice and myth.

• With regard to early sexual development in the participants, there is total agreement that what they later on in their lives came to understand as their “gay identity” and “sexual orientation”, was already present in childhood in elemental form. It was a “feeling of being different” from other boys, which they had no name for at that stage. The insight that they were also gay then is a retrospective insight from a present vantage point of maturity. This ‘early presence’, as well as the fact that the gay tendencies were resistant to attempts to ‘change’ it, or ‘pray it away’ or ‘try to be heterosexual’ point towards a genetic explanation. All participants say that ‘choice’ had no part in this.

• All participants indicated that they are weary of collective social moralising, all having had first-hand experience of oppression of a social-moral codex they could not adhere to. They argue for a much more liberal and inclusive legislation that does not only protect its citizens, but also leaves room for individual expression and the survival of personal dignity.

### 10.3 Legal findings

• Legal rights and developments in South Africa seem promising with anti-gay hate crime legislation in progress.

• The successful banning of a Baptist Pastor Steven Anderson, who claims that gays should all be put to death by their governments, was an indication of the level of political power gay organisations have attained; also on an international level. The banning of this hate monger was a joint effort between South African, British and Botswana gay movements. He is now banned in all three these countries and was deported from Botswana.
10.4 Peripheral issues related to this study

- It was theorised amongst the participants that ‘gay sexual orientation’ has a very early development – that it is not a conditioning process. This was discussed in the light of epigenetics and gene expression as in the studies by Jennings and the masculinisation of the brain and the role of testosterone.

- The paradoxical phenomenon in the Christian milieu was discussed, namely that gays can often not seek refuge in their churches and in their faith and with their fellow believers, as it is exactly here where discrimination and prejudice are often strongest. This strong condemnation of gays was discussed in terms of moral maturity levels of Kronberg adapted by Jennings. It was theorised that the strong condemnation of the religious community of gays might be fear-based and have its roots in a pragmatic externalised legal approach to religion, as opposed to an assimilated mature internalised moral development.

- A look at the perpetrators revealed that they are in all echelons of society and in almost every area of the gay person’s live. They are often the very agents of socialisation, who should teach gay people ‘trust’ in the world in their own abilities and in God, but fail to do so.

10.5 Afterword

On this last day before submitting my thesis – and reading through the work of the last years – I am compelled to stop and reflect on how my life has been changed by the lives of the many people I met during my research, and the many people I read about in the literature.

Very soon in my research I became aware of one fact, that it might look as if the heterosexual community are portrayed as the ‘enemy’. This is a mistake! – It is a mistake I would like to rectify right here!
Frankl said that in this world, there are only two groups of people: the group of the decent and the group of the indecent. They are represented on every echelon of society and they are present in every grouping, race, ethnicity, religion and gender and they are also present in the gay community.

The gay men I interviewed belong to the group of the decent and in their own lives they all received glimmers of light that guided them on their difficult paths. The light emitting from the hearts and the souls of the decent. They were black, Asian, white, heterosexual. They were also either ‘for’ or ‘opposed’ or totally ‘neutral’ to the issues gay people have to face in their lives. Yes - I include those who ‘oppose’ gay people, as it is a core characteristic of decent people who disagree; that the “process” and also the “outcome” of a disagreement will reflect their decency and will leave the gay person feeling disagreed with, but not dehumanised.

We live in a diverse world and disagreements will always be. But it is my hope and it is my prayer as a Christian gay man; that God will grant us all the power to ‘think’ deeply, and hear the voice of conscience when we decide on how we treat and how we disagree with people who fall outside of our system of values. I hope that there will be enough decent people who speak out and illuminate the darkness of ignorance and of intolerance in the world today.

In conclusion I want to quote one of Frankl’s most famous warnings to the world which reads:

“Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of – and since Hiroshima, we know what is at stake".
List of references


