

**JUGGLING THE INTERSECTION OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN
THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: INDIAN LESBIANS' EXPERIENCES OF THEIR COMING OUT PROCESS**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that JUGGLING THE INTERSECTION OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: INDIAN LESBIANS' EXPERIENCES OF THEIR COMING OUT PROCESS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing. APA7 style was used.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that this work has not been previously submitted, fully or partially, before another committee for any other degree at any institution.



28/02/2021

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ABSTRACT

Indian lesbians in South Africa, are colonised through race and religion, overpowered by patriarchy and socio-economic circumstance, and forbidden by society to express their sexuality due to the stigma. Sexuality should be seen as fluid, and homosexuality should be understood as a non-pathological variation of sexuality (Ventriglio, Kalra & Bhugra, 2018).

This study focuses on ascertaining how Indian lesbians experience and navigate their coming out processes in the South African context. This includes investigating the dynamic challenges and choices that Indian lesbians and analysing strategies and resources that participants use to juggle or manage the intersection of multiple identities in the coming out process. We also examine the significance of disclosure processes and the perceived impact on their public, social, and private lives.

The use of social constructionism is appropriate for the exploration of Indian lesbians' coming out process as it describes a development of jointly created understandings. This is important as we examined the construction of identity in amalgamating lesbian, Indian and South African identities.

A qualitative research strategy with an emphasis on narrative biographies was employed.

Snowball sampling was the most effective method in obtaining five participants for this research study. Participants were chosen according to Race (Indian), Ethnicity/Nationality (South African) Sex (Female), Age (older than 18 years) and sexuality (lesbian).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and university ethical guidelines, online audio and video interviews were conducted and transcribed by the author.

Thematic analysis was used to sift through the rich data. Theories have been applied to the themes that emerged to substantiate and clarify the information received.

The Cass Model is a popular model that is encountered in many of the academic texts researched for this dissertation. Whilst it is a classic model, it tends to pathologise gay and lesbian identities. In order to provide a more holistic, integrated approach other theories were also discussed.

Permitting oneself to exist and have personal preferences, freedoms, choices, and expressions, as opposed to adhering to social regulations that are instituted through norms and laws

is difficult. And for a person from multiple marginalised groups, even more so. Thus, if you are born with oppositional social constraints or forces, life may become more difficult for the marginalised individual. Oppressive and inscriptive social narratives may have diminished one's uniqueness or individuality thereby lowering one's self-esteem, increasing their stress levels, and leaving one with an unconfident and confused identity (Davies & Thate, 2017).

The resistance to change in certain cultures reveals a closed system. This closed system allows little information exchange and results in a redundant thinking society that is stifling the growth of people within the system.

While progress within communities is stagnant, individuals are trying their best to develop a strong sense of self with the little support they have.

Keywords: Apartheid, Cass Model, coming out, identity, Indian, social constructionism, lesbian, LGBT, narrative biographies, qualitative, sexuality, South African.

ABSTRAK

Indiese lesbiërs in Suid-Afrika word gekoloniseer deur ras en godsdiens, oorheers deur patriargie en sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede, en word deur die samelewing verbied om hul seksualiteit uit te druk weens die stigma. Seksualiteit moet as vloeibaar gesien word, en homoseksualiteit moet verstaan word as 'n nie-patologiese variasie van seksualiteit (Ventriglio, Kalra & Bhugra, 2018).

Hierdie studie fokus daarop om vas te stel hoe Indiese lesbiërs hul uitkomprosesse in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks ervaar en bestuur. Dit sluit in die ondersoek na die dinamiese uitdagings en keuses wat Indiese lesbiërs het, en die ontleding van strategieë en hulpbronne wat deelnemers gebruik om sin te maak van en die verweefdheid van verskeie identiteite te bestuur tydens die uitkomproses. Ons ondersoek ook die belangrikheid van openbaarmakingsprosesse en die vermeende impak op hul openbare, sosiale en private lewens.

Die gebruik van sosiale konstruksionisme is gepas vir die verkenning van Indiese lesbiërs se uitkomprosesse, aangesien dit 'n ontwikkeling van gesamentlik geskepte begrip beskryf. Dit is belangrik omdat ons die konstruksie van identiteit in die samesmelting van lesbiese, Indiese en Suid-Afrikaanse identiteite ondersoek het.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingstrategie is toegepas met narratiewe biografieë. Sneeubalsteekproefneming was die mees effektiewe metode om vyf deelnemers vir hierdie navorsingstudie te bekom. Deelnemers is gekies volgens ras (Indiër), etnisiteit / nasionaliteit (Suid-Afrikaanse) geslag (vroulik), ouderdom (ouer as 18 jaar) en seksualiteit (lesbies).

As gevolg van die COVID-19-pandemie en universiteitsetiese riglyne is aanlyn-klank- en video-onderhoude gevoer en getranskribeer deur die outeur.

Tematiese analise is gebruik om die omvangryke data te ondersoek. Teorieë is toegepas op die temas wat na vore gekom het om die inligting wat ontvang is te staaf en te verduidelik.

Die Cass-Model is 'n gewilde model wat aangetref word in baie van die akademiese tekste wat vir hierdie proefskrif nagevors is. Alhoewel dit 'n klassieke model is, is dit geneig om gay en lesbiese

identiteite te patologiseer. Ten einde 'n meer holistiese, geïntegreerde benadering te bied, is ander teorieë ook bespreek.

Om jouself te laat bestaan en persoonlike voorkeure, vryhede, keuses en uitdrukkings te hê, in teenstelling met die nakoming van sosiale regulasies wat deur norme en wette ingestel word, is moeilik, veral vir 'n persoon afkomstig uit veelvuldige gemarginaliseerde groepe. As jy dus gebore word onderhewig aan sosiale opposisie-bepenkings of teenwigte, kan die lewe vir die gemarginaliseerde individu nog moeiliker word. Onderdrukkende en inskriptiewe sosiale vertellings kan die uniekheid of individualiteit van jou menswees verminder, waardeur jou selfbeeld verlaag, stresvlakke verhoog en jy met 'n selfvertwyfelende en verwarde identiteit gelaat word (Davies & Thate, 2017).

Die weerstand teen verandering in sekere kulture openbaar 'n geslote stelsel. Hierdie geslote stelsel beperk die uitruil van inligting en dra by tot 'n samelewing met ingeperkte denke wat die groei van mense binne die stelsel strem.

Terwyl vooruitgang binne diesulke gemeenskappe stilstaan, probeer individue hul bes om 'n ingeligte gevoel van self te ontwikkel met die min ondersteuning wat hulle het.

Sleutelwoorde: Apartheid, Cass-Model, uit te kom, identiteit, Indiër, sosiale konstruksionisme, lesbies, LGBT, narratiewe biografieë, kwalitatief, seksualiteit, Suid-Afrikaans.

KAKARETŠO

Basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe, ba Makula-Afrika-Borwa ba thupile ke se morafe, sedumedi seo se sentšwego ke bopatrareka le boemo ba ekonomi le gore ba thibela ke sechaba gore ba kgone go ntsha maikutlo a bona ma mabapi le gore ba ratana le mang. Gore motho o ratana le mang, monna goba mosadi ga ra swanele go ba lebelela ka leihlo le lengwe, goba la lehloyo (Ventriglio, Kalra & Bhugra, 2018).

Palo ye e lebelela gore basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe, ba Makhula ba hlakana le mathata a fe mo Afrika-Borwa. Palo ye e lebelela le gore basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe, ba makhula ha ba botsa batho goba malapa le bagwera ba bona le seemo sa bona le gore tla be ba kwa ka tsela ye fe.

Go ya ka setlwaedi sechabeng mo mapi le taba ye bohlokwa ke gore basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe ba makula ba hlalose goba ba botše batho ba bangwe ka seemo sa bana gore go be le kwešišano magareng ga batho ba Afrika-Borwa.

Go be go na le dinyakišišo gomme dinyakišišo tše di bontsha gore “snowball sampling” e be e le tsela ye kaone ya go kgetha batho ba go lekana le batho ba ba hlano go dira di nyakišišo tše. Batho ba ba kgethilego go ya ka se morafe wa makula, gore ba tšwa Afrika- Borwa, gore ka basadi , gore ba feta mengwaga ye 18 le gore ke basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe.

Ka lebaka la bolwetše ba Covid-19 le ditaelo tša di unibesithi tša go fapana, go be go šomišwa theknolotši goba di kopano tsa “Zoom” go dira dinyakišišo tše. Go be go šomišwa mekgwa ya go fapana ya go nyakišiša go lebelela taba ye.

Ye nngwe ya dinyakišišo ba re ke “Cass Model” yeo e tlwaelegilego, e le ge e le seemo sa banna ba go ratana le banna ba bangwe le basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe.

Batho ba swanetše go dumelelwa go phela ka mokgwa wa maleba, ka ntle le go theeletša seo batho ba bangwe ba se bolelago. Ka go realo, motho o kgona go ba le go itshepa le go tlogela go inyatša (Davies & Thate, 2017).

Setšo ga se fetoge se gana batho ba tswela pele ka go dira setšo go ya ka tlwaelo ya bona. Ge tšwelo pele e se gona mo sechabeng batho bah o leka go itšoša bjang gore ba kgone go phela.

Mantšo a bohlokwa: Kgethologanyo, Cass Model, Go Tšwelela, Semelo, Bokula, Boipopo ba setšhaba, Basadi ba go rata basadi, LGBTI, Semelo ka go dinonwane, Kgokgo, Popego ya tlhago ya motho, Afrika Borwa.

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KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are important in understanding its context in relation to this research study.

According to Shields (2008, p. 301), *intersectionality* is “the mutually constitutive relations among social identities.” Thus, no singular element of the individual is considered in isolation. This is a fundamental aspect of this research in that a single individual is made up of the sum of their parts, namely race, class, sexuality and gender which converge giving context and meaning to their existence.

The terms *lesbian* and *gay* have been used interchangeably within this paper. Within the scope of this study the term lesbian and gay were used interchangeability. This was done for two reasons, the first is the term gay has largely taken on the colloquial meaning of referring to homosexual persons regardless of sex or gender and no longer exclusively refers to men who have primary sexual, affectional, and relational ties to individuals of the same sex. The second reason related to the interchangeable use of the two terms is the comfort of research participants who used the term gay in referencing their own sexuality as it has less syllables than the word lesbian, due to linguistic ease. Furthermore, the acronym of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual) will be used to describe the gay community. In some texts, this acronym can be supplemented with other letters of the alphabet as, especially over the past decade or two, language linked to queer culture and identity has changed significantly. Brown in Lötter (2010, p. 4) defines lesbians as being women who have “primary sexual, affectional and relational ties to individuals of the same sex.” These terms are often subject to interpretation based on individual context and culture as highlighted in Sandfort and Dodge (2009).

P. Dave (2011, p 6) states that, “*coming out* is a developmental process through which gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals recognize their sexual orientation and tie this knowledge into their social and personal lives by disclosing their sexual orientation to others.” This developmental process is not characterised by developmental age or biological markers but by internal and external social processes. Coming out involves an identity transformation process whereby a homosexual individual

explores his/her sexuality in a predominantly heterosexual environment. The experience of this process is important when trying to understand how lesbian identity is constructed and how, if at all, it changes over time. Whilst there has been research into the coming out process for black and white lesbians in the South Africa context, there is little research regarding the coming out process for Indian lesbians in South Africa (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002, p. 24).

The term *subaltern* was conceptually derived by an Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci while working in India. He stated that certain groups of people were excluded from making important decisions giving them power and rather taught the right way of living by their colonisers. For the purposes of this paper, the term subaltern will apply to Indian sexual minorities, as in South Africa, they were colonised, segregated, had their voices silenced and were excluded from decisions made in mainstream society (Ludden, 2002).

According to Ademiluka (2018, p. 339), "*patriarchy* is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property." This culture is upheld through the ongoing socialisation processes, and this is expressed through values, attitudes, customs, and expectations of society (Ademiluka, 2018). This will be used in discussing Indian family dynamics.

There are numerous definitions of *culture* however culture is at its essence is, "shared assumptions, [intermeshed] beliefs and values that the people of a geographical area acquire over generations." It is these generations that reinforce what is appropriate behaviour and create social institutions and value systems that maintain cultural continuity (Sinha & Kumar, 2004, p. 89). In the context of this paper, this definition applies to LGBT culture, Indian culture, and South African culture. Within the LGBT community the word "Pride" is an integral cultural concept that embodies solidarity, collectivity and identity as well as resistance to discrimination and violence (PRIDE Values, 2021). According to Sinha and Kumar (2004, p. 90), Indian culture is very complex as it dates back to at least five thousand years. "Immigrations, invasions, colonial rule and modernisation [as experienced in the South Africa context] have brought with them streams of alien influences," with only parts of it being

integrated into Indian culture. Therefore, Indian culture in South Africa is influenced by all these aspects including tradition, values and beliefs brought abroad from India. Because it is made up of so many different cultures and religions, South Africa is known as the rainbow nation. All these people share the common bond of calling South Africa home, and their lives contribute to the country's legacy, identity, and culture. The phrase 'cultural heritage' is used to define the elements that contribute to a population's or community's sense of self-identity (South African History Online, 2011b).

Race describes the distinctive visible physical features of a large group of people that are typically associated with a large geographic population and the Merriam Webster online dictionary describes race as "a family, tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock" (Takezawa, Smedley & Wade, 2020; Merriam Webster, 2017). The target group of interview participants will be of Indian descent who live in South Africa. Race will form a key component of this study as it seeks to illuminate the experiences of a particular group of people from an Indian perspective.

Sex and *gender* are concepts that many people often confuse. Sex involves the biological or genetic aspects of an individual such as male or female, whereas gender "refers to the roles and expectations attributed to men and women in a given society, roles which change over time, place, and life stage" (Phillips, 2005, p.1). These include roles such as being masculine or feminine in relation to this study.

Ethnicity, also often interchanged with nationality, encompasses groups of people, that have "a sense of origin-based groupness. [They] share a common connotation of ancestry or 'community of descent'." For the purposes of this study, ethnicity will refer to people of South African descent (Morning, 2015, p. 18).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, Indian lesbians are colonized by race and creed, overwhelmed by patriarchy and socio-economic conditions, and prohibited by society to express their sexuality because of the stigma (Moonsammy, 2009). It is for this reason that we explore the South Africa culture, Indian culture, and LGBT culture in society, which make up part and package of our research participants identity makeup.

Culture

In trying to understand what culture is, Phillips Stevens, Jr., a professor in anthropology, states that, “culture is the capacity for symbolic thinking and communication, which is revealed through knowledge, beliefs, behaviour, and products” (Stevens, 2015, p. 1). He further believes that there are many different cultural systems in society and information from these systems need to be compared to arrive at a generalised statement of humankind. Therefore, culture cannot be understood without examining its interconnections with other systems, which corresponds to systemic thinking in psychology. When looking at these interconnections, it is postulated that “what is considered ‘sexual’ has very different ranges of meaning across cultures” especially where sexuality is associated with social status and is seen as a biological function (Stevens, 2015).

Indians and Early Colonisation in South Africa

South Africa has been a constantly changing country, decolonising itself for many years. Colonisation, began with the permanent settlement of the Dutch and subsequent British colonial expansion (Oliver & Oliver, 2017). Indians first arrived as slaves in South Africa during the Dutch Colonial Era in 1684. The British then brought Indians into South Africa as indentured labours to work on tea fields, coal mines and predominantly on sugar cane plantations from 1860. This was to make use of Indians as cheaper labour than Africans and this fuelled the tensions between the races even though it was a “key factor that helped forge a common South Africa ‘Indian’ identity (which) was the political struggles waged against Indians and other black groups in the country” (Beall, 1990; South

African History Online, 2011c). The entwinement and evolution of the South African and Indian cultures begin here. More importantly, the characteristics of participants in our study, namely, Indian women, also played a pertinent role during this period of indenture, 1860 to 1911. According to Beall (1990, p. 146), “women [were] exploited and particularly exploited under indentured labour system by virtue of being the “weaker sex” vulnerable to overwork and physical abuse by male capitalists and Indian men”. We will refer to this era again, in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Indians and Apartheid in South Africa

The demise of the apartheid system (a system that entrenched racial segregation) is a bold step that South Africa has taken towards decolonisation. It is an ongoing process that includes the juggling and liberating of identities – and is comparable to a drawn-out metamorphosis. South African History Online (2011a) state that “South African Indians retain a sense of cultural and social connection to India, and a concept of primary local and secondary ancestral identity is prevalent among people of Indian descent” therefore, in my opinion, despite the colonisation and then end of apartheid, there still is a patriarchal Indian society which is silent about the subjugation of Indian women as well as issues of sexuality. While households (private spaces) encourage the traditional roles of women, in public spaces, women are portrayed as independent career women and who come from a progressive community in Indian culture (Ademiluka 2018; Cislighi et al., 2020, Condorelli, 2015, Johnson, 2005; Pandian, 2020; Rangayan, 2015; Ventriglio, Kalra & Bhugra, 2018).

The Progression of Sexuality in Other Parts of The World, Concurrent to Indians Coming to South Africa

It may be pertinent to also understand that during this period of intense colonisation in South Africa, sexuality in its different forms and definitions, were being explored in other areas of the world. Western colonisation by the British also meant western influence, therefore, homosexuality would be seen as unnatural and was enforced under their sodomy laws in India and South Africa. This included forbidding sexual relations between foreigners and natives, interracial intimacy to same-sex relations (Carolin, 2017).

Sigmund Freud (1905), the founder of psychoanalysis, was on another continent being intrigued by sexuality and developed his theory on the psychosexual stages of development. This westernised view pathologised sexuality but has since become the most popular theory of human sexuality in psychology. He postulated that personality developed through a set of different stages in childhood and that if the child experienced frustration during any of these stages, then, it would manifest in adulthood as neurosis. Hence, being heterosexual meant having undergone a normal development, but being homosexual was due to abnormalities during the stages of psychosexual stages of development.

Other subsequent sexuality theories to Freud (1905) include moving to pathologising sexuality less. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) feminist and existentialist theorist promoted the idea that in order to understand human existence, the experiences of the individual would be of paramount importance. In this way, the construction and fortification of one's sexuality is largely based on one's unique life experiences. She challenged the woman versus man context and biological or physiological characteristics that were stereotyped into the LGBT community.

In the 1950s the Kinsey's Scale was put forward and is still seen as a simplistic way of explaining sexuality in the psychoeducation of individuals. It is a scale that people used to describe a person's sexual orientation based on their sexual experiences to demonstrate that sexuality is not categorised as a binary between homosexual or heterosexual, but rather is explained on a continuum. While sexuality was seen as being on a spectrum, this did not cater to all sexual identities.

Other variables then began being factored into theories in the 1980s. The contribution of writers such as bell hooks (1981) who focus on the intersection of race, sexuality, capitalism, and power, are also paramount in exploring the self. This is important as we too discuss these variables in this study because they stimulate discussion to influence the development and reinforcement of one's identity in agreement to Jung (1982, p. 34), describing the importance of sexuality as "the widespread discussion of the sexual question [that] has brought the extraordinary importance of sexuality in all its psychic ramification to the forefront of our social consciousness."

Most recently, contemporary debates about sexual identity typically bring into question the naturalisation of heterosexuality and heteronormativity in our society. This is particularly seen in the works of Judith Butler (2011) who discusses notions of gender as a performance, something which is put on. This may be a point of contention in suggesting that one's identity is staged or an act, hence one's juggling of masks and being seemingly deceptive or camouflaged. The juggling of masks or identities in this paper, is not deceptive, rather a means of survival and being socially accepted.

As the researcher, I think that forty years later, different sexualities have been imploding or in-fighting within their communities but not expanding or normalising into mainstream society. Those sexualities that are swimming upstream, seem to be pushed back against by culture with structural violence, silence and hate crime.

In this respect, this journey to freedom stimulates questions and revelations of what identities are stereotypically and legally permitted to be. This refers to permitting oneself to be in relation to the individual's personal preferences, freedoms, choices, and expressions, as opposed to adhering to social regulations that are instituted through norms and laws. In discussing sexuality within different cultures and linking it to more theory in later chapters, we try to understand the makeup of our identity. From my perspective, it also seems to question in what way our identities are socially or culturally accepted, even though one's uniqueness or individuality may have been taken away by oppressive and inscriptive social narratives (Davies & Thate, 2017). This study focuses on sexual identity and questions surrounding what constitutes acceptable ways for people to express a sense of who they are as sexual beings within different cultures.

Problem Statement

What is the problem? This begins with the lack of academic literature to stimulate discourse for Indian lesbians that require psychosocial support. It is also aggravated by a deafening silence in the Indian community as well as the power of patriarchy in the subjugation of women in general society which is engrained in culture.

The process of coming out for lesbians is often represented as complex and charged with intersecting oppressions that forbid the open expression of their sexual orientation. South African literature on lesbians' points to the various ways in which stigma operates alongside secrecy to overshadow the experiences and lives of South African lesbians (Smuts, 2011). In as much as lesbians, in general, have been liberally referred to in South African literature, no particular attention has been given to Indian lesbians and their unique set of circumstances. The identities of Indian lesbians in South African scholarship on coming out, constitutes a subalternisation of Indian lesbian experiences which is an area that requires further research and insight. Suntosh Pillai, a clinical psychologist, corroborates this by stating that, "There are almost no studies that focus in on Indians' experiences of being LGBTI; and when they do, the nuances are missed in terms of race, culture, religion and geography" (Indian Spice, 2017, p. 1).

Moodley (2011, p. 34), a journalist for the Sunday Times newspaper stated that, "Indian lesbians may be a small minority in South Africa, but the prejudice and issues they face are profound." The article further quotes Pravesh Hurdheen Singh, a teacher, Hindu social activist, and volunteer at the Gay Fraternity of South Africa stating that "there is a general tendency among Indian communities is to never address lesbian lifestyles" and "rather just say that she's single, or they just won't talk about it." South African Indian lesbians are often shamed into silence by their families who hide behind the prescriptions of culture and religion to promote antiquated ideas and views on homosexuality. The persecution of Indian lesbians happens often through the suppression of their interpretations of sexuality, effectively stifling their identities. The phenomenon of coming out raises issues of power and agency regarding the extent to which lesbians have the freedom to make their sexual identities public in all areas of their lives (Rangayan, 2015).

Coming out should instead be understood "in terms of a matrix of power, and that the extent to which lesbians can tap into this power, and gain agency, is dependent on each woman's intersecting multiple identities", of gender, sexuality, race, religion, and socio-economic position (Smuts, 2011, p. 39). And with power comes patriarchy or *vice versa*, where key aspects of it involve, control, obsession,

and the oppression of women. Johnson (2005, p. 5) states that, “a society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege (unearned advantage that is available to members of a social category while being systematically denied to others) by being male dominated, male identified and male centred.” Johnson (2005, p. 19), is also of the opinion that even through silence, women are made to “accept and adapt to their oppressed position” by undermining themselves and all women are born into this society and can only choose how to participate in it. In Moodley’s (2011) article, Dr Chan is an Indian lesbian, part-time research officer and sexual health coordinator at the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre and works in predominantly Indian township areas such as Phoenix, Verulam, Chatsworth, and the Durban Central area. She states that conservative and religious views are why homosexuality is not accepted. Ashika Maharaj in that same article, works at the Gay and Lesbian Network in Pietermaritzburg, states that her family know of her sexuality, but it is kept quiet as Indian lesbians are too scared to seek help and struggle with their sexuality on their own.

Hence, the problem is that Indian lesbians in South Africa, are colonised through race and religion, overpowered by patriarchy and socio-economic circumstance, and forbidden by society to express their sexuality due to the stigma. Sexuality should be seen as being fluid, and that homosexuality is a non-pathological variation of sexuality (Ventriglio, Kalra & Bhugra, 2018).

Aims and Objectives

We live in an age where the sovereignty of individuals is acknowledged and legally protected. When sexual identity comes into question, the primary aim is to explore, describe and understand the emotional state and psychological process of coming out for Indian lesbians in South Africa. The psychological impact and manifestation of the coming out process is integral in providing future support for other Indian lesbians. This will provide a platform for constructive discourse around a traditionally taboo subject.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Investigate the dynamics and challenges and choices that confront Indian lesbians in the South African context during the coming out process.

- Analyse strategies and resources that participants use to juggle or manage the intersection of multiple identities in the coming out process.
- Examine the significance of disclosure processes and the perceived impact on their public, social, and private lives.

Research Question

Through the colonisation, and indeed the subalternisation of Indian lesbians in South Africa, the odds seem stacked against them in a myriad of ways, and their coming out can be particularly complicated. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the research question is as follows:

- How do Indian lesbians experience and navigate the coming out process in the South African context?

Theoretical Framework

In 1934, a French philosopher, Bachelard, stated that “Nothing proceeds from itself. Nothing is given. All is constructed” (Mastin, 2008, p. 1). Thus, although reality is presented by society as constant and a fixed certainty, this assumption is challenged by Constructionist theory. Constructionists believe that “there is no truth ‘out there’, only a narrative that changes continuously” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). As such, the narrative surrounding Indian lesbians within the South African context will be explored.

The use of social constructionism is appropriate for the exploration of Indian lesbians’ coming out process as it describes a development of jointly created understandings. This is important as we are examining the construction of identity in amalgamating lesbian, Indian and South African identities.

Mastin (2008, p. 1) states that, “knowledge is ‘constructed’ in that it is contingent on convention, human perception and social experience.” This also encompasses the idea of the ecosystemic approach. A fundamental aspect of social construction is that meaning is not individually, but collectively constructed. It involves social and cultural concepts that influence our interpretation and meaning of the world.

If the task of qualitative research is described as “as negotiating ways of understanding” (Bohan, 1996, p. 117), a social constructionist approach is suitable for this research project as it has previously been used in research projects that focus on a small number of women’s experiences (Smith, 1997).

Social constructionists rely heavily on discourse as the primary medium for research activity which then aligns with the proposed research methodology. Focus is placed on the meaning of words; thus, experiences and interviews are the primary research tools. This process includes conversation, observation, and interpretation which corresponds with the current research. The primary focus of the research within this paradigm is in the way that participants construct the meaning of their own everyday realities. When in an interview environment, researchers are participants in co-construction of the reality brought forward (Daly, 2007).

Social constructionism acknowledges that knowledge is created and interpreted. It does not rely on absolute unchangeable facts. It refutes the perception that knowledge exists “waiting to be discovered” (Whitley & Kite, 2013, p. 536). It must be acknowledged that theories are often interpreted in such a way as to fit into the dominant theories of the time and that data interpretation may lend itself to potential bias (Whitley & Kite, 2013). Hence the discussion of several theories and their critique. They are in chronological order, summarised into a combined approach to show the differences and similarities over time.

Social constructionism is not a single, cohesive, unified theoretical framework, but forms part of the larger postmodernist theoretical discourse and includes various subcategories. One such subcategory is that of ‘material feminists’ which are social constructionist feminists (Beasley, 2005, p. 99). Typically, social constructionists stress the importance of the discussion of dominance and power relations rather than identity categories (Beasley, 2005).

Social constructionism is described as a “meta theory”, as it incorporates elements of essentialism (where inherent characteristics are of importance) (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 156). Gergen (1992) in Kitzinger (1995, p. 145) further recognises that “Science” is not neutral but, an embodiment

of the cultural norms and ideologies of its context. Therefore, the discussion of theories presented in this paper, are “scientific theories [that] reflect the societies in which the scientists live” (Whitley & Kite, 2013, p. 536).

Social constructionism typically rejects the notion of “the pre-existing inner core to the self” (Beasley, 2005, p. 23). “It challenges the eternal, universal or natural status of gender and sexuality” (Beasley, 2005, p. 137). Essentialism and the social constructionist theory are often in a problematic relationship with gay and lesbian liberation discourse. This is because science as a construct is abandoned when science pathologies homosexual people but is embraced when science is used to explain homosexuality as a natural phenomenon caused by chemical processes (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 151).

According to Sheila Jeffreys in Kitzinger (1995), the term lesbian as a category is traced to the emergence of the first-wave feminist movement. This socially constructed label was employed to pathologise women who challenged the patriarchal order. Social constructionism promotes the view that categories are not in fact, “natural products” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 145). It recognises categories of identity but rejects the “essentialist tendencies in them” and that those sexual identities are informed by “historical forms of sexual identities and their links to wider social and material processes” (Beasley, 2005, p. 125).

Social constructionist theorists such as Diane Richardson, acknowledge the limitations placed on the body. These ‘biological parameters’ are acknowledged, but not fixed in a determinist sense. This is linked to the abovementioned critique of “essentialist tendencies” of certain categories (Beasley, 2005, p. 141). In my opinion, this is corroborated by the gender stereotype that women are weaker physically, emotionally, and economically.

Social constructionism emphasizes that identity is created by the effects of power (Beasley, 2005). Thus, it focuses less on “what people are” but is more focused on “what people do together, with the generation of social relations and processes in specific, historical cultural settings” (Beasley, 2005, p. 99). This theoretical framework is particularly applicable to this research question because

gender identities are as significant to the investigation as other cultural considerations. Social constructionism recognises that sexuality varies from culture to culture through historical periods (Beasley, 2005). This applies to the proposed research as the variations in experiences between Indian lesbians in South Africa, as a group and as individuals, will be explored.

Social constructionism acknowledges that language is not a neutral representation of reality but is a construction. In this way, the language which is used to create reality is also used to attempt to understand it (Whitley & Kite, 2013). "The meaning of events is not intrinsic to the events themselves but is constructed, imposed upon phenomena, by the sociohistorical and political surround in which they occur," something that is of paramount importance in the South African context (Bohan, 1996, p. 227).

Social constructionists recognise that there are differences between constructions of masculinity and femininity that are dependent upon social and ethnic groups. If sex and gender are not merely created by cultural context, but are also, performed (in reference to Judith Butler) within the culture that created them, an exploration of the cultural context of the focus area is as important as issues surrounding sex and gender. Thus, social constructionism recognises that homosexual acts have vastly different meanings as determined by the social context. As such, even though the acts themselves are the same - namely the stimulation of genitals, the social implications are vastly different (Kitzinger, 1995). Time and time again individuals in the LGBT community have echoed the sentiment that they have felt upset that their sexual preference has been sexualised.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one introduces my study and includes a background of the South African, Indian, and LGBT cultures linked together with a bit of theory. It describes why this study is being undertaken, its aims, objectives, the theoretical framework as well as key concepts in the paper.

Chapter two is centred on the literature review. We will explore the complexities of one's private and public identity as well as gender (female), race (Indian), ethnicity (South African) and

violence, socio-economic class, LGBT sexuality, and religion in relation to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and spirituality. We also examine several theories and their critics.

Chapter three outlines the study's research method focusing on design, data collection and sampling techniques and explain the data analysis and interpretation processes to be followed and ethical considerations.

Chapter four aims to discuss different theories that have progressed through the years that are pertinent to the coming out process.

Chapter five focuses on the participants that were interviewed for the study as well as individual themes that arose from their interviews.

Chapter six discusses the results in terms of the data's main overarching themes, the literature review of intersecting identities, and inspect which theories and parts of theories apply most, to the results.

Chapter seven concludes the dissertation, by discussing its limitations and recommendations regarding further research.

Conclusion

The experiences surrounding the coming out process is an enduring and continuous journey. With factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexuality, intermingled with oppression, segregation, suppression, exclusion, colonialization, patriarchy, and silence, it becomes a complicated concoction to navigate and negotiate in one's public and private space.

It is for this reason that this study aims to find out how South African Indian lesbians navigate and negotiate their coming out process. This will be done from a Social Constructionist perspective by exploring, describing, and understanding the challenges and choices that confront them and their psychological processes. This study will also analyse strategies and resources that South African Indian lesbians use to manage their intersecting identities as well as examining the significance of disclosure processes and the perceived impact on their public, social, and private lives.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

This chapter discusses different theoretical approaches to manoeuvring one's identity. We commence by critiquing a variety of theories over time, in chronological order, to show the linear development of theoretical approaches to sexuality and to gauge any significance in them. A summarised combined approach is also proposed for future studies and development. Later, in the paper, we compare which theory or parts of theories that can be applied to the case studies and are currently most applicable.

Theoretical approaches are analysed to gain insight into the strategies that the individual may use in juggling their identities and navigating their coming out process. The following theoretical approaches are discussed:

- Cass's (1979) Identity Model
- Tajfel's (1979) Social Identity Theory
- Troiden's (1989) Model of Sexual Identity Development
- Queer Theory (1990)
- D'Augelli's (1994) Homosexual Lifespan Development Model
- Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model
- Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory

Cass's (1979) Identity Model

According to Smuts (2011, p. 24) coming out encompasses "an identity transformation process whereby a homosexual individual explores his/her sexuality in a predominantly heterosexual environment. The experience of this process is important when trying to understand how lesbian identity is constructed and how it changes over time." Smuts (2011), in her article, draws attention to the way in which the coming out process in South Africa has been studied, and in so doing makes a theoretical contribution by adding to Cass's Model, in order to provide a more wide-ranging and subtle account of the process (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002, p. 24). Ritter and Terndrup (2002, p. 24) describe the coming out process in Cass's Model in the following six stages:

- Stage 1: Identity Confusion
- Stage 2: Identity Comparison
- Stage 3: Identity Tolerance
- Stage 4: Identity Acceptance
- Stage 5: Identity Pride
- Stage 6: Identity Synthesis

The first stage, identity confusion is exactly as the name specifies. The individual experiences confusion over their identity once they become aware of their sexual feelings for individuals who are of the same sex as them. These individuals also tend to isolate themselves.

During the second stage, identity comparison, the conflicted individual begins to rationalise their feelings, by researching whether they fall into the bisexual or homosexual category. This includes questioning whether this is a temporary phase. By comparing themselves to others they often feel alone and a sense of non-belonging.

Identity tolerance is the third stage of the model where the individual allows themselves to mingle with the LGBT community to curb their feelings of isolation. Positive experiences with the community can lead the individual to have a more approving sense of self and greater assurance towards a homosexual identity.

Stage four, identity acceptance involves individuals making friends and having a more positive outlook towards the LGBT community. This marks the beginning of accepting a homosexual self-image. Here individuals also implement coping strategies of distancing themselves from friends or relatives that could be disapproving or homophobic and pretend to be heterosexual in certain environments. According to Morgan and Wieringa (2005) in Smuts (2011, p. 27), "coping strategies, such as secrecy and pretending, both isolate and protect lesbians. They may even decide to come out to select individuals close to them.

Identity Pride is stage five, it portrays the individual as an angry homosexual activist. This is due to the individual "develop(ing) an awareness of the enormous incongruity that exists between the

person's increasingly positive concept of self as lesbian or gay and an awareness of society's rejection of this orientation." The individual often devalues heteronormative institutions and immerses themselves in the literature and art of the LGBT community.

During stage six, the identity synthesis phase, the individual may display extreme anger at heterosexual individuals but also acknowledges that some heterosexual people are "supportive and can be trusted" (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002, p. 24). The individual gains a sense of pride for their community and has a less divided outlook between the heterosexual and LGBT communities. Their gay identity becomes an "integral and integrated aspect of the individual's complete personality structure."

The Cass Model posits that the more a lesbian's identity is healthily integrated, the better they resist the effect of stigma (Wells & Hansen, 2003).

Criticisms of this model include the following: The interpersonal congruency perspective states that the Cass Model involves the individual striving for congruence in the development of their identity. Cass (1979) in Cox and Gallois (1996) suggests three ways to achieve this. The individual can change their perceptions of themselves, the perceptions of others are changed/devalued or the individual changes their actual behaviour which in this case, cannot be (Wells & Hansen, 2003).

According to Ritter and Terndrup (2002), the use of this model has been revised, as it seemed to pathologise the development of lesbian identity as it posits it against a heteronormative context. In this context, sexuality is seen as fixed, definite, and determinate; and homosexuality is a pathological irregularity.

Smuts (2011) states that Cass's Model is limited because the model takes into consideration personal and social isolation in the early stages of the development process as hindrances to the disclosure of one's sexual identity. It also excludes stigmatisation in all stages of the model's process, as another factor that can dissuade lesbians from coming out. The model is also criticised for not taking into consideration multiple intersecting identities and claiming that they do not have any effect on Cass's stages, but participants mentioned having different experiences in the different stages of the

coming out process when exploring the intersectionality of identities in the South African context (Smuts, 2011).

Cox and Gallois (1996) criticise Cass's Model for only focusing on identity as a self-labelling process and little attention to cognitive aspects of identity. It is for this reason that Cass suggests four issues that need to be further explored as "having a clear definition of identity and its relationship to self-concept, the structure of identity, changes that occur as identity develops, and internal and external factors affecting such changes" (Cox & Gallois, 1996, p. 3).

Although theoretical models have been developed surrounding the coming-out process (such as the Cass Identity Model) there is not a single, cohesive, "optimum" process that should be followed, however, this model can be beneficial in tracking the emotional state of individuals during its different stages.

This model may seem outdated and focuses on a more linear progression of development. Often stages in real life are less clearly defined and not strictly adhered to. It is also not unusual for these various stages to be revisited or never be visited by the individual throughout their lifetime. Furthermore, this theory focuses more on the individual and less on societal context.

Tajfel's (1979) Social Identity Theory

From the social interaction perspective, there are two types of forces at play in the stabilisation of the LGBT lifestyle. The first is the pull of the LGBT subculture and the other force is the prevention from leaving the subculture. This approach takes into consideration the individual but does not stigmatise the whole social group (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Social categorisation is done so that people can be distinguished by their differences and so that their behaviours can be predicted. Individuals will need to self-categorise or self-label themselves to gain membership to a particular group. Everyone has multiple identities and being part of the majority groups will likely increase a person's self-esteem. If one is part of a minority group, "(such as a female, homosexual, Asian), the development of self-esteem may be more difficult, because of negative reactions" between one group to another (Cox & Gallois, 1996, p. 11).

Social self-esteem is comparing social groups while individual self-esteem is comparing oneself with other individuals. In comparisons, people choose dimensions that are more favourable than others. This can be viewed as one group trying to better another or making a downward comparison to assert power over the other and maintain the overall status quo. An example of this is when heterosexual people compare themselves to gay people and use the characteristic of reproduction where they claim they can reproduce, and gay people cannot. Here, sexuality is reduced to biology and reproduction is used as a biological marker as a justification for superiority. Thus, the majority favoured groups “attain more prestige, power, and status compared to other groups, such as females and homosexuals” (Cox & Gallois, 1996, p. 12). At a macro level, the social identity theory is then seen as being about groups in conflict and thus we learn about the history of the different groups in conflict together with stereotypes.

Subordinate groups make use of strategies to improve and uphold a positive identity. Making use of four social mobility strategies, allow an individual to enter a dominant group by capitulating and passing which contains evading the stigma as well as covering and blending which involves managing the stigma. Social change strategies allow an individual “to identify with a subordinate group and simultaneously attain a positive identity, particularly when the group is highly stigmatized” (Cox & Gallois, 1996, p. 15). Three of these social change strategies, collectively, are called social creativity. This is when the members within the group cognitively restructure the intergroup relationship. They find new positive characteristics on which to compare the groups, they redefine the value attached to the existing characteristics to enhance the self-esteem of the group, or they choose a new characteristic that is more favourable than the current stigmatised one. The fourth strategy called social competition, creates an actual change in the current situation between the groups. This strategy involves both groups accepting the changed status quo through, for example, social protests, psychoeducation and petitioning for laws to be changed. Social change strategies yield a less negative identity than social mobility strategies. With regards to the selection of identity enhancement strategies, two dimensions are considered, namely, social dependence and social solidarity. When the

individual is highly dependent on their association with a particular group, their self-esteem becomes congruent with how prestigious the group is. Solidarity involves the benefits and satisfaction the individual receives by being associated with a group. The higher a feeling of solidarity with a group, the more likely it is to become a foundation for social identity. The social identity theory, therefore, requires important exploration of the categorisation and comparison processes to attain a positive identity (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Criticisms of this model involve the following: According to Meyer (2013), he states that social psychological theories allow one to understand intergroup relations and their impact on an individual. The social environment provides people with meaning and organisation in their environments therefore intergroup relations are important for the development of a sense of self and belonging as well as their well-being. Meyer (2013, p. 4) reiterates this by stating that, "Social identity and self-categorisation theories posit that the process of categorisation (e.g., a distinction among social groups) triggers important intergroup processes (e.g., competition and discrimination) and provides an anchor for group and self-definition."

While an internal process is occurring, concurrently, the person is also being influenced by the interaction between them and their environments. It is also of utmost importance that individuals who are part of sexual and ethnic "minorities, are at high risk for compromised emotional well-being," due to many factors that include experiences of minority stress, oppression, and victimisation. A person may be perceived as incongruent in changing between their different identities in different situations and often do this because they are forced to (Kennedy & Dalla, 2014, p. 468). The concept of minorities at a high risk for compromised emotional well-being is discussed by P5 in Chapter 5: Research Findings.

It has been contended that there is a scarce amount of knowledge that can adequately explain the relationship between social contexts as well as multiple sociocultural contexts and ethnic and sexual identity. This is one criticism of the developmental stage models. While social contexts and

culture are important, another pertinent factor to consider, are the characteristics of the person over time (Kennedy & Dalla, 2014).

Cox and Gallois (1996) state that the social identity theory explains individual behaviour as a product of wider social forces. Hence this theory speaks to social categorisation, social self-esteem, self-labelling, and strategies that kinetically move the individual to and from groups. However, if one does not magnetically move towards groups of prestige, it diminishes their self-esteem. Over time, this may be detrimental to one's self confidence, not only to the individual but to groups or communities of individuals. This theory is well explained, and it seems that the approach can be vastly used across many spectrums.

Troiden's (1989) Model of Sexual Identity Development

Kaminski (2000, p. 89), stated that Troiden's (1989) early-stage model on identity formation proposed a four-stage model describing how gay men and lesbians solidified their sexual identities.

- Sensitisation
- Identity Confusion
- Identity assumption
- Commitment

These stages involved viewing oneself as feeling different and engaging in behaviour incongruent to a heteronormative society. The individual would then experience anxiety and doubt their sexuality but then identify positively with the gay and lesbian community thereby becoming comfortable enough to reveal their gay or lesbian identity to others (Kaminski, 2000).

Criticisms of this model involve the following: Troiden's model elaborates on some of these issues and states that one's identity is given as part of a social category and according to the particular social situation, the relevant identity is activated or becomes prominent while the other identities become dormant or recede. Weinberg in Cox and Gallois (1996, p. 5) states that the tunnel vision of the stage models does not consider "the possibility of multiple paths to multiple identities, starting at multiple points." Moreover, these models ignore that one's identity can change throughout the

lifecycle as well as having steps in the process being, “merged or glossed over, bypassed or realised simultaneously” (Cox and Gallois, 1996, p. 5).

Bilodeau and Renn (2005) critic that early-stage models only account for the reconstructed Westernised view of culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Recently, however, the research explores LGBT identities and their connection to class and oppression.

Queer Theory (1990)

Callis (2009, p. 214), states that “Queer can be, and is, used in multiple different ways, in academia, and in Western culture,” but most of the time it is used derogatorily in relation to being gay. It is also used to describe something that is not ordinary or something that is not quite right. Through the late 1980s and early 1990s, queer was used as an inclusive term and identity category for non-heterosexual/ fluid individuals instead of using the acronym LGBT. Queer was also associated with so-called provocative and defiant activist groups. During the 1990s, the Queer theory emerged, and it focussed on the categorisation and construction of gender and sexual identities. Some of the key theorists that promoted the theory were, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich, and Diana Fuss, who were followers of the French post-structuralist, Michael Foucault’s work (Callis, 2009). Foucault believed that the individual was created “through and by discourse, which itself was created by systems of knowledge power” (Callis, 2009, p. 221). These systems of knowledge power had to be dissected to find out who was speaking and from what position and viewpoints they were departing as well as the institutions they were representing. Through this analysis, Foucault found out how sexual acts were medicalised and stigmatised. Theorists of the queer theory oppose binary social constructs that create and uphold categories. These categories then only exist in relation to each other and are seen as floored which will be explained below. While there is acknowledgement of sexual fluidity, Queer theorists further question the “unity, stability, viability and political utility of sexual identities” (Callis, 2009, p. 215) as identities are constantly being re-created for social and or cultural control and gain which gave rise to queer politics and movements in the 1980s and 1990s.

Craven (2011, p. 8), states that “the term queer is occasionally used colloquially in South Africa it is not embraced formally or used in a political sense” and that groups would rather make use of the acronym of LGBT or use the term lesbian and gay in order to privilege lesbians due to the marginalisation of women within the community as well as in society. Jagose (2009) was also of the opinion that the term lesbian and gay cannot be interchangeable for the representation of sexual minorities but is unsure as to whether the term queer can be all-inclusive.

Criticisms of this model include the following: According to Callis (2009, p. 216), this theory has been criticised by many in that it “ignores issues such as race and class, [thereby] elevating sexuality as the only important facet to identity” and in deconstructing binaries, new binaries are formed, such as queer versus normal identities. The theory also implies that heterosexual individuals are in a dominant normative position and that queer individuals aspire to that status, or that queer individuals outright consciously resist integration of any kind. Queer theorists have been also said to ignore the importance of previous research in the area by stating it was not well researched or “laboured under the delusion of identity politics” and ignoring sexualities such as bisexuality which are outside binary identities and often put in a third misfit category thereby privileging certain sexualities (Callis, 2009, p.217). This reverts to the idea of the 19th century notion that because bisexuality was not medicalised or placed into a species category, there was no truth in bisexuality, and it does not legitimately exist.

Judith Butler mentions bisexuality in her book called Gender Trouble and states that gender identities cannot be understood separately as they are in relation to others, as “intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (Callis, 2009, p. 229). She uses the example of the assumption that to be a man, is to be masculine and heterosexual, but through cultural matrixes, certain identities cannot make sense or exist. Hence it can be difficult to understand a woman who is feminine or masculine and lesbian, thus gender becomes a trouble and a performance that is done throughout one’s life. To be lesbian is an aberration of the normal mode of being feminine and creates gender

trouble. Butler, like Foucault, states that it is “fabricat(ed), manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. Gender is thus not a stable attribute of identity, but something that must be constantly revealed and restated” (Callis, 2009, p. 227).

In 1990, Teresa de Lauretis, an Italian author, and Distinguished Professor Emerita of the History of Consciousness at the University of California wanted to highlight, “the built-in complacencies of lesbian and gay studies” using queer theory (Jagose, 2009, p. 157). These complexities include the delineation between gender and sexuality, resistance to acculturation and reinforcing certain aspects that tended to universalise lesbian and gay studies without taking into consideration race, class, “ethnic culture as well as generational, geographical and socio-political location” (Jagose, 2009, p. 158). Three years later, de Lauretis gave up on making use of the queer theory as it could not address intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. The theory further disappointed de Lauretis as the binaries it wanted to counter, were reproduced. It was seen as being an outdated theory, but, if as it is proposed one’s identity could be viewed as being in a constant state of becoming, and the term queer being indefinable, then the theory could evolve. According to Jagose (2009, p. 163), Judith Butler states, “it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes.” Butler also states that if the foundations of feminism are not stable, then it ends its effectiveness as a social force, hence she wanted feminism to represent individuals beyond its stereotypes of “white, middle-class, heterosexual women” so as to be inclusive which is not in opposition to feminist aims and values (Jagose, 2009, p. 163). Jagose (2009) states that the relations between feminist and lesbian/gay and queer theories allow for the interchange of information which is more important than splitting the theories apart. Hence, both theories, feminist and or queer theories are “a broad and heterogeneous project of social critique that works itself out across provisional, contingent and non-unitary grounds, unconstrained by any predefined field of inquiry and unanchored to the perspective of any specifiable demographic population” (Jagose, 2009, p. 172). Furthermore, “the system of sexual oppression cuts across other modes of social inequality,

sorting out individuals and groups according to its own intrinsic dynamics. It is not reducible to, or understandable in terms of, class, race, ethnicity, or gender” (Jagose, 2009, p. 164). Craven (2011) concurs by stating that “identities are always multiple or at best composites with literally an infinite number of ways in which identity components (e.g., sexual orientation, race, class, nationality, gender, age, able-ness) can intersect or combine,” therefore, an identity which is constructed and presented as singular, is illogical. This does make one confusingly wonder about the SOGIESC (Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics) and LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual, and Ally community) acronyms and whether one is trying to label oneself/their identity to understand their sexuality or is this segregating gay culture, creating infighting and tempering the message of equality which we want to get across.

D’Augelli’s (1994) Homosexual Lifespan Development Model

Apart from Cass’s Model on identity, Bilodeau and Renn (2005, p. 28) state that D’Augelli’s (1994) model has “the potential to represent a wider range of experiences than the theories relating to specific racial, ethnic, or gender groups.” According to Bilodeau and Renn (2005, p. 28-29), this model is not ordered in stages and are as follows:

- Exiting heterosexuality
- Developing a personal LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) identity
- Developing an LGB social identity
- Becoming an LGB offspring
- Developing an LGB intimacy status
- Entering an LGB community

Criticisms of this model involve the following: According to Bilodeau and Renn, (2005, p. 32), the model does not subscribe to “genderism,” the male and female binary construction, but favours a more fluid notion of gender identity. This, however, can be negated, due to the model departing from the premise that everyone is born heterosexual and exits into another realm.

Furthermore, Bacchetta (1999) in Mahn and Watt (2014, p. 225) state that Western identity categories and terminology are rejected and are found in Western culture hence, the models that are provided, are not “transnationally viable.”

Meyer’s (2003) Minority Stress Model

What is unique about this study involving Indian lesbians is that they are a minority within a minority, an Asian tribe in Africa who existed under British imperialism, colonial rule, and the apartheid regime. The question then arises, how do we amalgamate years of South African history, ancient Indian culture together with contemporary gay culture in psychological discourse? When considered individually, each category namely race, gender and sexuality, are substantially recognised categories of oppression. Each of these categories and the stresses associated with them can give rise to minority stress which is a model that “describes stress processes, including the experience of prejudiced events, expectations of rejection, hiding and concealing, internalized homophobia, and ameliorative coping processes” (Meyer, 2013, p. 3).

The relational cultural theory complements the minority stress model by connecting “psychological distress (to) the context of relational and cultural disconnections” (Mereish & Poteat, 2015, p. 426). An individual who therefore experiences feelings of shame can become withdrawn and avoid society/relations which in turn results in loneliness. Wells and Hansen (2003) state that the psychological consequences of stigma affect lesbians through the internalisation of shame and hindering the development and integration of their identity. Their research sample included “317 highly educated, mid-life, mostly European-American self-identified lesbians” (Wells & Hansen, 2003, p. 93). The study yielded results that if levels of shame decreased, then levels of lesbian identity integration increased. Furthermore, high levels of secure attachment were associated with decreased levels of shame, whereas higher levels of shame corresponded with high levels of fearful, preoccupation and dismissing attachment.

The minority stress model postulates that several intertwined factors can contribute to positive or negative mental health. Circumstances in the environment in terms of socio-economic

status are as important as general stressors. Meyer (2013) further states that an individual's minority status such as sexual orientation, race/ethnicity or gender is also significant, but errs in going on further to discuss minority identity which in itself is the same factor. However, he may have wanted to highlight "identity interruptions" a concept that describes incompatibility with one's self-identity and causes high levels of distress (Meyer, 2013, p. 7). Distal and proximal minority stress processes such as discrimination or violence and expectations of rejection, concealment, and internalised homophobia respectively, contribute to elevated stress levels. Mitigating factors that can lower levels of distress include the level of integration of the individual's different identities and the emotional impact related to the prominent identity a person is affiliated to. Since identity structures are fluid during one's lifetime, the prominent identity will shift with the social context. Healthy individual coping strategies in overcoming negative self-evaluation as well as social support by the community can additionally benefit in reducing levels of minority stress, however, this can be hindered if an individual uses much energy in concealing or refusing to disclose their identity hence being unable to gain formal or informal support (Meyer, 2013).

According to Meyer (2013), he too agrees that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are at high risk and high prevalence for excess mental anguish and disorders. He deems it important to investigate these stress factors to alleviate the distress on mental health. An environment that includes stigma, discrimination and prejudice tends to exacerbate an already stressful social environment and delineate stigmatised minority groups, hence the term minority stress. This can be seen as excess stress that individuals from stigmatised social categories are subjected to because of their position.

Minority stress is seen as unique as people who are stigmatised have to use more effort to adapt than non-stigmatised people. Furthermore, it is chronic/stable as well as socially based, as it underlies social and cultural processes and structures (Meyer, 2013). Minority stress can be applied to Indian lesbians as they are from three apparent marginalised groups such as being, female, Indian and lesbian but to what extent, this needs to be explored.

Criticisms of this model include the following: The minority stress model has been criticised for tunnelling their vision on the negative experiences rather than unique coping strategies and social support structures available to minority individuals (Diamond, 2003). Hence there needs to be more consideration of negative and positive aspects of minority group membership (Savin-Williams, 2008). A concern of Mays and Cochran (2001) is that the model had not been tested enough as there have been too few studies examining heightened rates of prejudice, health disparities and related prejudice in individuals who are part of minority groups. Furthermore, Pascoe and Richman (2009), state that most of the studies done on the model are correlational and may establish links but fail in demonstrating causality. Moreover, Meyer (2003), postulates that the minority stress model is too much of a general theory applied as a blanket approach without taking into consideration different types of minority groups and different stressors that they undergo including different strategies that they may make use of and their health disparities (Pascoe & Richman, 2009).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory

Badruddoja (2008) states that the identity models do not fully address identity development therefore a model should be developed to create additional legitimate categories. Sophie (1986) in Cox and Gallois (1996) also state that predominant social conditions are important to consider when theories or models are formed. They need to remain current as well as having the ability to change with time.

Ethnic minority lesbians who have a strong ethnic identity, are more open about their sexual orientation with their family and community, thus are more satisfied with their social support. However, with some individuals, religious and family contexts can be the cause of stress and can, at later stages in their life, be a source of support. Kennedy and Dalla (2014, p. 469) also state that there is a "shortage of empirical literature focused on ethnic minority non-heterosexuals." They further stated that while developmental stage models focused on the individual, their study followed Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) which explored the individual's microsystem (friends), mesosystem (religious organisations), exosystem (family relations with the ethnic

community), macrosystem (cultural attitudes or laws) and their chronosystem (across time). Kennedy and Dalla (2014) concluded that individuals in the ethnic and sexual minority groups undergo oppression in many forms from many sources and individuals are unique, hence they undergo varying degrees of identity consolidation. Participants with a higher degree of identity integration were older, more educated, disclosed their sexual orientation in various contexts, knew their rights as a minority group and were involved in ethnic and gay communities.

Internal and External Processes in Relation to Erikson's Theory of Psychological Stages of Development

Role acculturation begins in the womb. Once people find out they are going to be parents, the first of many discussions family and friends have, surround what sex the parents desire and the colours they are going to paint their nursery. The current popular events that people also partake in are gender reveal parties and baby showers at work. This is done before the baby is born, thus compartmentalising them in a binary box from colours to clothes. Once the baby is born, they are further initiated into their gender roles through having their clothes and toys bought for them. During their subsequent stages of development, they begin to assert their independence in choosing things such as clothes and toys for themselves. This can be a tricky area for parents when their child chooses toys and clothes that do not seem gender appropriate to them. If the child does not gain some autonomy, they may become doubtful over their abilities, which in turn can lower their self-esteem and will-power. Over-controlling parents may foster guilt in children aged approximately between three to six years old if they lose their ability to strive for goals purposely and confidently (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998).

Kaufman (1996) in Wells and Hansen (2003), stated that shame is experienced during childhood which can be correlated with Erikson's stage of autonomy versus shame and initiative versus guilt stages of development (David, 2014). This is especially true when the child is ignored. He additionally states that if this experience occurs often, becomes an unhealthy attachment style, or is traumatic, then the child will internalise this feeling and associate it with distress and therefore shame

will occur. This becomes a core block on which one's identity is built. One's identity is then further compounded by judgmental parents, friends and society which may contribute to the individual developing negative stereotypes relating to sexuality before they develop their own. The message being reinforced is that being gay is shameful and a flaw. Having insecure and dismissing attachment styles (feeling insecure and being dismissed) correspond negatively with shame, whereas fearful and preoccupied attachment styles correspond positively with shame (Wells & Hansen, 2003). Children are also looking to measure up against their peers and become competent individuals in different areas of their lives such as school, sports, social activities, and family life. They may feel confused if they feel different or not normal to their peers. The identity versus role confusion stage during adolescence is important in finding a sense of belonging and developing a sense of self. Adolescents explore different roles and ideas and are influenced by parents, peers, and society. Those that have an external locus of control will tend to have a weaker sense of self and experience role confusion. While, identity management, begins from the time we are conceived, it becomes less dormant and an active participant in daily life during this stage as well as those stages that follow (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998).

An adult has to also develop and maintain healthy intimate relationships or face being isolated. Therefore, a positive self-concept is important to facilitate the development and maintenance of relationships, especially in the LGBT community. But if the subsequent stages have not been adequately processed, then the individual will experience this stage as problematic. Individuals who struggle with their identity during the generativity versus stagnation stage are often influenced by social constraints such as conservatism in history or culture. If LGBT individuals are comfortable with their sexuality, then they may contribute to society by psycho-educating them about LGBT issues. During late adulthood, individuals struggle with feelings of integrity versus despair. Those individuals that reflect on their lives with many regrets, may face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair. During most stages, one has to juggle internal versus external processes (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998).

In exploring gender identity models earlier in the paper, the research has visual compiled, ethnic minorities, social conditions and identity integration in Table 1 which also shows an overview of the gender identity processes that run concurrently.

The first designated column belongs to the Chronosystem, a term representing the dimension of time in Bronfenbrenner's Theory. This is import as developmental milestones co-inside with identity processes and they constantly influence each other throughout one's lifespan. Erikson's Theory on Psychosocial Development (1963) describes the milestones an individual experiences across their approximate lifespan, these milestones are impacted by internal and external identity processes, hence the management of one's identity posited in the third column, and societal pressures, in the last column, influence each other as laid out in Table 1.

Table 1

Overview of the gender identity processes that run internally and externally.

CHRONOSYSTEM	GENDER IDENTITY PROCESSES		
	Developmental Models	Gender Identity Models	Systems Models
Womb	Acculturation	Identity Management (Juggling multiple identities)	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrosystem (Family, Peers, School, Church, Health Services, Neighbours, Social Services, Industry, Mass Media, Local Politics, Culture, Religious Organisations)
Birth – 12 months	Trust vs. Mistrust		
1 – 2 years	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt		
3-6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt		
6-12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority		
12-18 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion		
20s-40s	Intimacy vs. Isolation		
40s-60s	Generativity vs. Stagnation		
60s-end	Integrity vs. Despair		

Conclusion

This chapter explored theoretical approaches in trying to ascertain an explanation for the formation and maintenance of one's identity during one's lifetime. These approaches ranged from 1979 to 2003 and are namely, Cass's (1979) Gay and Lesbian Identity Development Model, Tajfel's

(1979) Social Identity Theory, Troiden's (1989) Model on Sexual Identity Development, the Queer Theory (1990), D'Augelli's (1994) Homosexual Lifespan Development Model, Meyer's (2003) Minority Stress Model.

The Cass Model together with a variety of other models was discussed in-depth. The reason for this is to emphasize the progression and evolution of models / theories strengths and weaknesses. This illustrates that there is no comprehensive LGBT Model that describes the coming out process and the development of said individuals but, there are certain key aspects in each model that can be used to explain the coming out process to varying degrees. This is illustrated in the later thematic sections where key terms were discussed in relation to participants experiences.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

In trying to understand the coming out process for Indian lesbians in South Africa, one must take into consideration multiple variables that can affect their coming out process in different or similar ways. Therefore, it is important to discuss these aspects to gain an understanding of how they interplay within one's life.

This chapter discusses different intersecting variables that play important roles.

The development and maintenance of one's identity is another area that needs to be investigated. It can be difficult if an individual belongs to a minority group as many characteristics of an individual intersect and influence one another. It is proposed that different identities flourish in different contexts and at different times, hence they alternate according to priority.

The term subaltern was conceptually derived by an Italian Marxist follower, Antonio Gramsci while studying what he called cultural hegemony (popular history) in India. He postulated that different social groups were excluded and displaced from socio-economic institutions of society in order to deny their political voices (Ludden, 2002). Gramsci explained that when one group tried to colonise another group, such as the colonised Indians, they did not try to understand the practices of the systems in place or the culture and automatically assumed that they needed to be introduced to the "right way of living". This is what he termed being the "native subaltern" (Ludden, 2002, p.100). But Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is a feminist scholar, "cautioned over the broad application of the term subaltern as it was not just a classy word for the oppressed" because there are different definitions of those who are oppressed (Deivasigamani, 2018, p. 4). One could view the working class as oppressed, but could sexual minorities also be viewed as such?

For the purposes of this dissertation, these characteristics include persons over the age of 18, whose gender is female, individuals who are South African in ethnicity, Indian in race, and who identify as lesbian. We also consider socio-economic circumstances as well as religious influence such as Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism on one's identity. These three religions were selected as they are the three most common religions practiced by Indians in South Africa. P. Pratap Kumar (2016) Emeritus

Professor, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal has categorized the South African Indian population according to these three religions as they are the most dominant amongst the diaspora and constitute approximately the following percentages in each category 41.3% of South African Indians are Hindu, 24.6% Muslim and 24.4% Christian.

The Intersection of Gender, Race, Ethnicity/Nationality, Class, Sexuality and Religion

Many variables or characteristics form the identity of an individual. It is important to look at these variables holistically and their influence on each other in different contexts. It is difficult to separate these identities as they are intertwined with each other.

Identity

Identity is an intrinsic component of the psychological composition of the individual and is described as “a psychological concept of self-definition” (Chan, 1997, p. 244). Although identity is often understood to exist in fixed terms, it more accurately exists in a state of flux with several identities existing within the same cohesive individual. These identities may include the professional self, the racial self, the ethnic self, and the sexual self (Chan, 1997). According to Chan (1997), this could be due to the “primacy effect” whereby if the individual labels themselves according to their sexual identity, it may become more prominent than their racial/ethnic identity which gives them the benefit of being part of group cohesion and having a sense of belonging. The interplay, cohesion and development of these identities are according to Clark (1996, p 27), largely influenced by the individuals’ “temperament, internal desires, material circumstances and cultural representations.” It is important to recognise that sexual identity often becomes the primary identity marker in an individual to the detriment of the other identities (Chan, 1997).

Conflict is created when multiple identities are in conflict, such as one’s identity as a lesbian and their religious identity. These identities can sometimes infuse to create a new identity (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Rasheed, Rasheed, and Marley (2010, p. 5) stated that there is the importance of an individual’s “lived experience within the context of social worlds.” This follows from the sociological

perspective in that the family unit is an “interactional, communicative, and meaning-generating network that is critical in the formation of self” (Rasheed, Rasheed & Marley, 2010, p. 16).

According to Dasso (2015, p. 3), coming out can result in what is termed as ‘social death’ which is where people are not accepted as being at an equal status to humans. Family members’ reactions to coming out are a significant part of a person’s decision to come out and substantially impact how, why, and when a person reveals their sexual identity.

Kennedy and Dalla (2014) concur and state that it is important to have healthy intimate relationships to develop a coherent identity, but social stressors make it difficult to develop one’s identity if they are part of a minority group. Additionally, there can be intersecting minority identities in which each identity has themes of acceptance, invisibility and fear that negatively influence the identity consolidation process. Consolidating one’s identity is a lifelong process. It changes with time as the individual matures and moves into and out of different spaces which may require a different minority identity in each environment.

The Public and Private Self.

Cass draws a correlation between a lesbian’s public and private self and an individual’s development of an integrated identity (Wells & Hansen, 2003).

As with many Asian cultures, the Indian community maintains the distinction between a public self and a private self which are important components of identity construction. The public self is “that which conforms to gendered and familial role expectations and seeks to avoid actions that would bring shame not only upon oneself but also upon one’s family” (Chan, 1997, p. 244). The importance of the family within the construction of Indian identity cannot be overstated. The family is defined from a sociological position as “the interactional, communicative, and meaning-generating network that is critical in the formation of self” (Rasheed, Rasheed, & Marley, 2010, p 16). As part of this separation between the public and private self, the sexual identity is designated to the realm of the private (Chan, 1997).

Apart from having a social identity, the individual also has a personal identity which is a combination of behaviour, traits and values that characterise themselves. People seek a positive identity which results in a high self-esteem. This is done through social comparisons.

Individuals would strategically assess the space and decide which identity (public or private), to bring to the forefront. This shows that identities are always in flux and are “complicated by various power contexts” hence they separate different activity domains to avoid conflict (Smuts, 2011, p. 24). Juggling and maintaining these identities in a “dominant patriarchal heterosexual community” puts an individual under much emotional distress with time and energy entangled in lies (Smuts, 2011, p. 25).

Clark (1996, p. 28) states that Anne Lister, the first notably modern lesbian, had a public self in which she was a “genteel heiress” and a private self where she viewed herself as “a renegade at heart.” She tried to recreate her identity by forming a coherent identity, but she experienced tension and contradiction between her identity and behaviour. Luckily for Ms Lister, this era was fascinated with masquerade balls hence they were able to create multiple selves during these gatherings. This repertoire was restricted for heterosexual men, less restricted for women, and even more so for lesbians. According to Clark (1996), Ms Lister wanted to integrate her sexuality with other parts of her life and that she wanted to create her own sense of lesbian self, but she was conflicted in reconciling her Anglican Christian beliefs with her sexual identity. Hence, she stated that concealment was the necessary thing to do for a lesbian to survive in a world she views as being hostile. Ms Lister was described as masculine, but she stated that she did not want to be a man, but rather “to enjoy male privilege” (Clark, 1996, p. 49). It is thus evident that Ms Lister was conflicted in trying to combine her public and private self in a patriarchal and heteronormative society.

Three themes stood out in Badruddoja’s (2008) study. Participants felt that their sexuality was under surveillance and constricted. They were seen as a peripheral part of the family and that different contexts had different meanings for them, and they, therefore, had to change their behaviour accordingly. This is a coherent reflection of the public versus private self. The public self is adjusted to

the context and the private self is even more suppressed by their family and known only to themselves.

Gender

Szymanski and Chung (2002, p. 117) state that in a “women-devaluing society,” women are taught that sexual desire is indecorous and women desiring women is forbidden. These damaging effects of socialisation associated with traditional or cultural sex-role attitudes for female individuals could lead to internalised sexism as well as internalised homophobia. Maria Lugones (2008, p. 8) also states that:

“Women are defined in relation to men, the norm. Women are those who do not have a penis; who do not have power; those who cannot participate in the public arena. [The] emergence of women as an identifiable category, defined by their anatomy and subordinated to men in all situations, resulted, in part from the imposition [of] the colonial state. For females, colonization was a twofold process of racial [interiorization] and gender subordination. The creation of ‘women’ as a category was one of the very first accomplishments of the colonial state.”

Bhattacharya (2014) states that “heteronormativity” is deeply ingrained in society. It only allows sexuality to flow directly from the individual's “medically assigned sex,” namely masculinity from being male and femininity from being female. This position is problematic as it would be difficult to assign a masculine or feminine sexuality to an intersexed individual. According to Bilodeau and Renn (2005, p. 32), biological sex assignment does not necessarily give rise to an individual's gender identity, but it is created and influenced by social interactions and “institutionalised power inequalities.” Furthermore, to be socio-culturally accepted, this “heteronormative project must culminate in legally approved marriage, leading to (re)production, thus being able to gain full support from social institutions, including the state” (Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 106-107). This then reinforces the deviant typecast of homosexuals and they are then “pushed to the margins that make one vulnerable to

diverse oppressive structures” such as being triple marginalised for being born Indian, female, and lesbian in a heteronormative and patriarchal society.

Badruddoja (2008, p. 157) states that “ethnic authenticity is sexualised and gendered.” Heterosexuality is seen as the embodiment of cultural purity while LGBT identities are portrayed as being promiscuous and inauthentic. Women, however, exist on multiple axes and they do not fit neatly into binary boxes or “categories unless forced to do so by imposition of normative orders” (Badruddoja, 2008, p. 159). In Badruddoja’s (2008) study, a participant stated that through silence, her parents and she maintained the idealised notions of a heteronormative society. This participant, like Ms Lister, mentioned earlier in the text, conflicted with her racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious background.

Race

The Merriam Webster online dictionary describes race as “a family, tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock.” The target group of interview participants will be of Indian descent who live in South Africa. Race will form a key component of this study as it seeks to illuminate the experiences of a particular group of people from an Indian perspective (Merriam Webster, 2017).

According to Aspinall (2003, p. 91), ‘Asian’ is the term used to “describe either person with origins in the Indian subcontinent or those originating from continental Asia.” South Asian people are therefore considered to be from the Southern parts of Asia, from countries such as India Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

Feminist theorists propose that colonised women of colour did not receive the same status as their white bourgeois counterparts. One of the criticisms of broad feminist theory is that it has largely been written by white feminists, which may have a limited perspective or insight into the issues that are exasperated by race (Lugones, 2008).

Seidman, Fischer and Meeks (2007, p. xii), state that a woman’s sexuality is “shaped by social forces and circumstances, by factors such as economic independence, social values, peers or family culture.” If this is so, then the restrictive nature of Indian culture condemning homosexuality can

become a challenging and pertinent aspect in the coming out process of Indian lesbians who have been marginalised three-fold because of their race, gender, and sexuality.

Due to the lack of acceptance within the typically rigid family structure, Indian lesbians are unable to explore their sexuality in a safe and supported environment that their heterosexual counterparts enjoy (Seidman, Fischer & Meeks, 2007).

A participant, in Badruddoja's (2008, p. 173) study stated that she felt alienated by the LGBT community as "dominant discourse in the queer community is based around white people" and that "white women in lesbian spaces." By South Asian women engaging in discourse and coming out into these spaces, they are rallying more social support as well as opposing racism on many fronts.

According to Kennedy and Dalla (2014, p. 466), "a healthy racial identity required progress through stages from psychologically damaging (e.g., beliefs of racial inferiority) to psychologically beneficial (e.g., self-acceptance, culturally affirming, racial transcendence)." While this is true, it suggests that one needs to progress through stages in a sequential/linear manner and this may not be the case as individuals experience each stage at different times in their life in a random manner.

Director of the documentary film, *Breaking Free* (2015), Sridhar Rangayan, stated that. "Lesbians, they were the worst victims. A conservative patriarchal family system did not allow them freedom to choose their partners. They had to marry, raise families. For many same-sex loving women, the only escape route was suicide" (Rangayan, 2015).

As part of the establishment of Indian national identity, the concept of Indian womanhood and femininity was largely reimagined by the Indian Nationalist movement in post-colonial India. Women were seen as upholding "aspects of femininity that projected positive and strong moral qualities, which in turn demanded that the 'modern' woman endorse the traditional images and roles, [but] in participat(ing) in the decolonisation movements, she, in turn, questioned the social and political roles of women," which were antiquated (Steinwand, 1997, p. 11). Culture is an integral part of having a sense of belonging, without that, isolation can be very daunting. While isolation can be protective, it may leave an individual in a negative space without a reason to exist (Steinwand, 1997).

Gallor and Fassinger, (2010), state that Asian culture puts importance on maintaining harmony in social groups, and further claim that previous research shows that there are high levels of homophobia in ethnic minority communities as they are more religious and traditional in their views and practices. Hence, social, and personal identities are constantly being created and negotiated to give these identities meaning. Theories and models have been criticised that they have been based on single social identities and that individuals with multiple identities become unseen within social groups (Gallor & Fassinger, 2010).

P. Dave (2011, p. 8) states that, “sex and sexuality are not openly discussed in Indian society, it is taboo to do so,” despite there being “a number of sexual expressions in Indian scriptures, arts and life histories” (Ghosh, 2015, p. 53). This is possibly due to the conservatism that is associated with Indians, resulting in individuals being silenced and having difficulty in revealing their sexuality to “societies and communities.” Mahatma K Gandhi based his principles of satyagraha on non-violence, tolerance, and universal human rights. Taking this background of human rights advocated by Gandhi, it would be assumed that Indian communities would display higher levels of empathy, tolerance, and understanding of other minority groups and oppressed peoples such as lesbian Indians. This view is reinforced by one of the participants in P. Dave’s (2011, p. 26) study, who states:

I wish more Indians would actually take that step up and accept who they are rather than deny it or hide it by going out with and marrying people who they are not going to be happy with. In the same breath I wish Indian families were also more accepting cause it takes two to tango... I do think Indians are ignorant towards homosexuality.

(P. Dave, 2011, p. 9).

There is developing evidence of Indian lineages for same-sex desire as well as a variety of terminology for lesbianism in the Indian culture dating back to the sixth century BC. According to Mahn and Watt (2014, p. 228), the “collision between conservative Indian nationalism and the transnational reality of Indian life and culture” and influence of the media, more specifically the globalisation of Bollywood, a Western term for Indian cinema (Villarejo, 2014), has led to non-heteronormativity. The

release of the Indian film, "Fire" in 1996, brought to the forefront discussions on the diaspora of identity, sexuality, nationalism, religion, and globalisation. This, however, caused an eruption of violence in India. According to N. Dave (2011, p. 652-653), the film was suspended, and right-wing Hindu spokespeople were concerned with "the obvious incommensurability of the film with "Indian culture" and of lesbians with the national history of India" and that a "theme like lesbianism does not fit in the Indian atmosphere." They further stated that "explicit lesbianism" in the media was "a direct attack on what Hindu culture stands for." However, lesbian activists criticised the film for depicting lesbianism because of "household confinement and heterosexual neglect." This is often the explanation given as to why someone is gay, that there has to be a problem for them to be this way.

In the South Indian context, "mothers and daughters are revered as goddesses as they uphold heteronormative and patriarchal values as part of Indian nationalism and the portrait of an ideal family is put above that of sexual experience. Hence the notion endorsed by many South Asians is that "a woman who steps outside of her family's protective regulation is vulnerable to violation" (Mahn & Watt, 2014, p. 228). This puts Indian lesbians at a greater risk of violence especially if the Hindu right-wing creates pathologizing portraits, insisting "that homosexuals did not exist in India" as recently as 2010 (Villarejo, 2014, p. 211). This view is much like the views in nineteenth-century England, whereas an English landowner, diarist, mountaineer, and traveller from Yorkshire, Anne Lister stated that people could not conceive same-sex sexual desire, but instead regarded these relationships as "passionate friendship" and that "no such notion existed in their culture" as well as giving lesbians an "identity of being biological different rather than criminally deviant." Furthermore, individuals whose desires clashed with their cultural role were more likely to "forge a single sense of self" (Clark, 1996, p. 23-24).

Indian culture includes subjective beliefs that unmarried women are an economic burden, that they are less valued than men and that women cannot continue the family name. It encourages the preferential treatment of male relatives. The role of the Indian woman is confined to that of the domestic realm, with their primary functions being associated with domestic duties, procreation, and

child-rearing. A lesbian Indian's sexuality does not exist to produce children in the socially sanctioned manner and is therefore deemed deviant. She is the antithesis of the socially constructed notion of Indian culture. She is the literal and figurative embodiment of deviance in that she will not perform the socially sanctioned activities of the heterosexual norm such as getting married and producing heirs (preferably male heirs). Thus, she internalises the stigmatisation, being an outcast, and her societal status plummets (Graziano, 2004).

The construction of the Indian Lesbian Identity as pathological has long been created, maintained, and reimagined through structures such as language. This is evident in previous research seeking to find the causes of homosexuality, the treatment thereof, and appropriate diagnosis. Furthermore, behaviour therapy such as hormone treatment, clitoridectomy, and other conversion therapies have been widely utilised (Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs, 2010). According to Bhattacharya (2014, p. 110), silence is another form of structural violence in Indian culture. Family members try to hush up their daughter's non-normative sexual preference and/or gender identity, fearing social stigma and shame. They may also resort to mental and/or physical violence to control their so-called unruly daughters or cure them of the disease of homosexuality as well as not recognising their gender and/or sexual orientation; blackmailing them in the name of family honour and wellbeing; separating them from their same-sex partners; taking them to doctors; forcing them into heterosexual marriage against their will; keeping them under house arrest for several months; beating them up; or forcing them to undergo corrective rape by their own siblings (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Islam (1998) in Badruddoja (2008) states that South Asian women are automatically categorised as being heterosexual due to their aesthetical look, in wearing traditional clothes as well as having long hair and childbearing hips which as opposed to white androgyny. If Indian women did identify as being lesbian, then they too were categorised as being femme due to the stereotype of "Asian women [being] passive, dependent, quiet, sensitive, and gentle" (Badruddoja, 2008, p. 162).

The intricacies of how Indian lesbian identity is moulded and presented within various social spaces in South Africa today should be explored. Smuts (2011) states that in understanding and

conceptualising the coming out process, we should recognise the intersectionality of identities in different social spaces. Smuts (2011, p. 23) raises the question with regards to how “lesbian identities are formed over time and argues that the different stages of identity development are influenced by the individual’s other overlapping identities, as well as certain spaces which either permit or prohibit the disclosure of one’s sexual identity.” Her research was qualitative with semi-structured interviews and included black and white lesbians. It encouraged dialogue surrounding the experiences of lesbians in Johannesburg, South Africa and she recorded the development of their identity.

Issues regarding race, ethnicity, and social class form an integral part of academic discourse. These issues are of particular importance when exploring the experiences of Indian lesbians within the South African context. Historically within the South African context gay and lesbian rights have been “initially a White struggle. However, since the late 1980’s Black people have been drawn into the fray in increasing numbers” (Greene, 1997, p. 113). This position acknowledges the contribution of two groups but does not acknowledge the position of members of the Indian homosexual community, especially Indian lesbians.

Race is the primary classification of people according to colonialism. Intrinsic to the notion of race is the differentiation between superiority and inferiority. Although not the focus of this research this is also echoed in the separation of people according to class. This division by class follows a Eurocentric model. “European”, “Indian” and “African” identities are racial identities. The arrival of Indians to South Africa as indentured labourers is an example of the application of “capitalism as the structural articulation of all historically known forms of control of labor or exploitation, slavery, servitude” (Lugones, 2008, p. 3). Indian indentured labourers are an expression of the intersection of colonialism, capitalism, and race.

Ethnicity/Nationality

An individual’s ethnic identity is linked to their sociocultural/historical context. It is also important that we explore the effects of racism, acculturation, and the history of discrimination on ethnic minority groups. It may be difficult, but it is pertinent to explore multiple sources of identity as

well as multiple sources of oppression that may impact ethnic minority individuals. Social support can play an important role in reducing the stigma surrounding LGBT individuals.

Even though legislation exists protecting the rights of minority groups, it does not automatically translate into daily living due to society's slow transformation and resistance to change (Smuts, 2011).

Dr Renu Modi, faculty member and former director of the Centre for African Studies at Mumbai University, stated that South Africa has the largest presence of Indian communities on the African continent (Modi & Taylor, 2017, p. 911). Thus, the South African Indian population still maintains cultural, spiritual, and social sentiment with India. Issues surrounding the relationship between gender, nationalism and nostalgia are intrinsically intertwined when examining the construction of identity. Nostalgia for the motherland of India, by the South African Indian Community, is significant as "Nostalgia also imprints the history of engenderment. Gender differences are established and re-established through processes of identification. Just as national identity appeals to nostalgic idealisations of the past, so too does gender identity" (Steinwand, 1997, p. 11).

Similar attitudes, opinions, and practices that occur in India are mirrored within the South African Indian diaspora. Since homosexuality was recriminalised in India, the world's largest democracy, one would conclude that Indian lesbians on both continents find themselves in a precarious legal and social position (Choudhury, 2016). Although South African Indian lesbians are granted legal protection, practicality is still bound to the social stigma of deviance, criminality, and perversion created within India. Although Indian lesbians seem to be technically free, they are emotionally guarded and fearful of reprisal. Lesbians who come out often experience forced or coerced marriages while closeted lesbians often experience anxiety when issues surrounding dating men, children, or heterosexual marriage are discussed (Van Dyk, 2010).

There is a diminutive amount of literature on the minority of Indian lesbians of South African descent, as homosexuality is viewed as secret, and secrets are acceptable. Thus, the avoidance of discussing behaviour that is perceived to be deviant is acceptable as well (Madhavan, 2013). P. Dave

(2011) conducted a narrative analytical study on the experiences of Indian gay and lesbian individuals to identify themes and made use of the Cass Homosexual Identity Formation Model (1979) as applied to the South African context. Out of the nine participants, from the study, only three were lesbian despite the researcher's attempt to have a balanced sample. This supports the premise of Cock (2003) in Smuts (2011, p. 26), that Indian "lesbians choose to keep their sexual identities secret." This premise was also substantiated by Baird (2010, p. 34) who authored a community report on same-sex sexuality in the North-west province and stated that "Indian women felt strongly about the need for secrecy in their communities." Furthermore, P. Dave (2011, p. 12) stated that "it was very difficult to find Indian lesbian individuals" and it was identified as an area that needed further study. Baird (2010, p. 22) also stated that in his study, since there were so few Indian and Coloured people that took part, they were group under the "Other" category. Unfortunately, the experiences of Indian lesbians are not given much attention in the coming out process due to a lack of participants willing to come forward. A presumption can be made that the lack of research target participants, is not that they do not exist, but that they are reluctant to come forth and engage with other parties regarding a topic that is perceived as taboo within their particular context. Blyth in Greene (1997, p. 107) "recommends that the experiences of black lesbians be researched and documented to create a more accurate context for understanding sexual orientation." This too can be said for Indian lesbians. Statistically, the South African Indian community is a minority group and, Indian lesbians who have been underrepresented in psychological research are a marginal group within this minority.

According to Klugman (2003, p. 226), the Freedom Charter (1955) states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it" and it was this phrase that gave rise to the term "inclusive citizenship" in the 1980s. Klugman (2008, p. 218), further stated that due to a concept called "inclusive citizenship" women and sexual minorities were able to gain rights. From this concept, arose the term sexual citizenship which allows an individual to belong to a group of people that adds to inclusivity. During the transition into the post-apartheid era, much traction has been given to inclusivity in the law, but society's view has not been able to change in conjunction with it. South Africa is known for its "rainbow

nation,” and the inclusivity of people from different backgrounds. Unfortunately, the energy surrounding this concept has dissipated. Political emphasis has been placed on race rather than the nation as a whole and areas of class and poverty and other minority groups have since been left in the lurch (Klugman, 2008).

Violence.

Craven (2011) states that apartheid played a key role in the construction of a community that had an unequal distribution of power and privilege and where some had the ability to create and define the community. The history of the LGBT community in South Africa was documented from as back as the 1650s where Sodomy was seen as a criminal offence and then documented under the “Immorality Act a piece of legislation known most commonly for its prohibition of inter-racial sexual activity” (Craven, 2011, p. 2). This being so, there were very few social safe spaces for the LGBT community to interact therefore Pride parades became important conferences. Parades that were held in townships were mostly attended by one racial group and those held in urban areas had more of a mixed group of people in relation to race, class, and gender. These spaces were also places of conflict surrounding the needs and wants of the different groups within the LGBT community, not excluding Pride parades around the world.

In South Africa, the legal position created by the constitution does not allow for discrimination based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation, however many lesbians are still being discriminated against both overtly and covertly at work and in social environments. In 1993, when the Interim Constitution was put in place, a drag queen who was interviewed at the Pride parade in Johannesburg stated that, “Darling, it means sweet mother fuckall. You can rape me, rob me – what am I going to do when you attack me? Wave the constitution in your face? I’m just a nobody, a Black queen.... But you know what, ever since I heard of the Constitution, I feel free inside” (Greene, 1997, p. 98). Issues surrounding body politics as violence and the denial of identity as a form of violence is integral to the examination of identity. As such, issues surrounding identity cannot merely be addressed by the

“demand to get over yourself. The demand to overcome radically the constructive constraints by which cultural viability is achieved would be its own form of violence” (Butler, 2011, p. 79).

According to Nel and Judge (2008), literature signposts that homophobia is rife in South Africa. Many South Africans are victims of violence and crime, but more so LGBT individuals because of their sexual orientation and perception that they are immoral and defiant. They further propose three areas that are linked to homophobic victimisation. These include, “higher levels of ‘outness,’ integration into lesbian and gay communities and challenging patriarchal gender roles” (Nel and Judge, 2008, p. 19).

A comparison between the South African context can be made where lesbianism is said to be un-African. Additionally, this Western singularity is seen as brought upon a colonised country. South Africa is also known for its culture of violence due to oppression. Swarr and Nagar (2004) in Smuts (2011, p. 26) state that, “the stigmatisation of lesbians often manifests in the form of hate crimes, and the literature shows that a fear of hate crimes is one of the biggest concerns for lesbians in South Africa today.” Corrective rape, a phenomenon where typically a heterosexual man or men rape a woman in order to correct or cure lesbians of their deviant behaviour is commonly associated with this practice. Cock (2003) in Smuts (2011, p. 26) describes this as “there is a particularly vicious edge to some lesbian attacks in this country. It is particularly for this reason that many lesbians choose to keep their sexual identities secret.”

“A ‘hate crime’ is an act which constitutes a criminal offence that is motivated in part or whole by prejudice or hatred regarding a victim’s identity. They are crimes committed against individuals because of prejudice the perpetrator holds against an entire group of people but is directed at an available victim to ascertain dominance over this group” (Open Society Foundation for South Africa NPC, 2008). The perpetrators want to send a message to the victims and their affiliated group, that their deviant, “abnormal” behaviour must be changed. Research suggests that homophobic hate crime increases proportionately to the visibility of the LGBT community (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Internationally, race-based hate crimes are the most prevalent. Racism was a tool used by mostly white people to subjugate black people in the hierarchal community system, hence, people of

colour were most at risk of being victimised. Anything other than normal was seen as being different and identity markers such as ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation perpetuated difference. Judge in Nel and Judge (2008, p. 22) states that religion and culture often contribute to homophobic speech as it is stated that “Homosexuality is unAfrican” and “homosexuality is a sin” which is used to justify hate crime and generates “fear and repression.”

In 2003 it was found that 62% of these “survivors of hate victimisation did not report their experience to the police and that approximately 33% of the respondents experienced the police as ‘not interested’ in assisting them when they had reported discrimination” (Breen & Nel, 2014). Consequently, this leads to secondary victimization of the victim. The community as a collective unit can also be seen as indirect victims of this hate crime phenomenon which is directly aimed towards minority groups. It is therefore important to take a systemic view in investigating the psychological and social consequences of hate crimes in South Africa.

According to Nel, van Wyk and Mbatha (2013, p. 8), “International studies on hate crime have shown that victims suffer consistently higher levels of psychological distress. Loss of faith in the system that has failed them, numbed general emotional expression and stress symptoms that are chronic, all have a potentially negative effect on the victim’s personal well-being.”

Studies propose that during the beginning stages of ethnic identity development, the individual can experience lowered levels of mental well-being should there be negative relations between ethnic identity and depression, therefore vice versa, a strongly developed ethnic identity buffers depressive symptoms. It was further investigated and deduced that “ethnic identity was consistently and positively linked with self-esteem and well-being. Also, there exists a variation in non-heterosexual identity” and it resonated with females especial, due to their fluidity in sexual behaviour and the labelling of themselves (Kennedy & Dalla, 2014, p. 466).

South Africa has a complex history with issues surrounding both sexuality and race. Although lesbianism has not been criminalised in South Africa, it does not negate the experience of oppression experienced by the homosexual community nor, Indian lesbians. In 1969 The House of Assembly in

the South African Parliament commissioned a report on homosexuality in South Africa. The term homosexual in this report refers exclusively to white males. Black gay men, white lesbians, and black lesbians are only briefly referred to. No reference is made to Indian lesbians. This omission is indicative of the invisibility largely experienced by Indian lesbians as well as the polarisation across racial lines. The report portrays lesbians as “evil women because they do not produce children.” This is portrayed in the dominant culture that promotes heterosexual values and the heterosexual family unit (Greene, 1997, p. 94).

Smuts (2011) concurs that many lives of local lesbians in South Africa are dominated by secrecy. They hide their sexual orientation when it conflicts with a heterosexist society and look for safe spaces to be themselves. Hence, “the private self is never seen by anyone other than an individual’s most intimate family and friends (in some cases, women may choose never to reveal their private selves to anyone)” (Chan, 1997, p. 244). Public discussion and psychoeducation around sexual orientation may pave a way for lesbians to be more forthcoming with coming out but South Africa is seen as having homophobia entrenched at different levels of society and not promoting conversation around LGBT issues. Lesbians are therefore stigmatised and this manifests in hate crimes in public spaces.

Wells and Polders in Smuts (2011, p. 27) state that in South Africa, “black lesbians frequently experience hate crimes in public spaces ‘such as main roads, taxi ranks, bus stops, parks, and railway stations’, whereas white lesbians most frequently experience hate crimes within the workplace, the home and in pubs/clubs.” Hence lesbians are further victimised economically and culturally as well.

Secondary victimisation may also occur when reporting incidents of corrective rape and this in turn also indirect discrimination. In 2003 it was found that 62% of these “survivors of hate victimisation did not report their experience to the police and that approximately 33% of the respondents experienced the police as ‘not interested’ in assisting them when they had reported discrimination” (Breen & Nel, 2014). This lack of assistance is an example of the structural violence that many lesbians who are unable to “pass” as heterosexual or who are openly homosexual,

experience. Structural violence may be further exasperated by low income, employment status, levels of educational status, and high levels of physical violence.

Institutional violence is seen as when institutions are biased towards one group, hence victimising another, for example, more institutions are seen to subscribe to a hetero-patriarchal regime and do not cater to groups of people who are in contradiction with this perspective. Hence revealing one's gender identity can be detrimental due to alternative gender identities seen as eroding the social fabric. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge of non-normative gender identities in institutions contributes to institutional violence.

In research conducted by the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) supports the view that black lesbians, mainly in townships, are more likely targets of rape as "they are seen to challenge patriarchal gender norms." Gauteng, township-dwelling, black lesbians have been correctively raped in order to redirect their deviant behaviour, and the higher the visibility LGBT people are, for example, people who adopt gender roles associated with the opposite sex, the more they are violently targeted, through assault, murder, corrective rape, and malicious damage to property amongst others. They are viewed as challenging patriarchy and are chastised "through discrimination - as a form of social control." This then causes the individual to be selective between their safety and identity thus not allowing them to be fully themselves in society (Nel & Judge, 2008, p. 26).

Circumstantial literature suggests that gender, class, and race influence "the nature and experience of homophobic discrimination" and that other intersecting identities/variables also need to be taken into consideration in the South African context (Nel & Judge, 2008, p. 27).

A considerable area of focus for Women of Colour feminists has been the exploration of the intersection of violence, race, gender, class, sexuality, and the violence that is often directed towards women of colour. This comprehensive term also encompasses the position of South African Indian lesbians. The subjugation of women by men of the same race is particularly thought-provoking within the South African context given the history of racial and ethnic subjugation as perpetuated by the

systematically oppressive apartheid system. Thus, within the South African context, those who purport to represent the liberation struggle also are either indifferent to the plight of those suffering gender and sexual-based oppression or, are part of the perpetuation of such oppression (Lugones, 2008).

According to Anibal Quijano in Lugones (2008, p. 2) all power, including colonial, racial, and sexual, is related to the domination of “the four basic areas of human existence: sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity.” This power is inherently Eurocentric and capitalist. This power is seen in the subjugation of non-white women in particular.

Class

Nel and Judge (2008, p. 23), state that “Violence is not experienced equally across class, race, and gender” as black lesbians from the poor socio-economic status are more vulnerable to “gender-based crimes, such as rape, domestic violence, and child abuse.” Research also indicates that lesbians face two times as much violence as heterosexual women do.

During the nineteenth century, in England, Anne Lister stated that due to her material circumstances, she was able to pursue her lesbian desires and her money allowed her to be a spinster, educate herself and travel abroad. She was part of the upper class and engaged in libertine behaviour, but she had to conceal it at the same time because of her position in society.

According to Swarr and Nagar (2004, p. 492), “development theorists often view homosexuality as an identity of the privileged,” those who do not struggle daily, and feminist theories as not considering “struggles with resources, livelihoods, and socio-political empowerment.” These two approaches do not take into consideration one’s class and marginalises and makes invisible, those lesbians who are poor. Research has postulated that there are no poor lesbians because poor people are consumed by their daily struggles and that it is not considered “relevant to the issue of women’s socio-political empowerment in the Third World” (Swarr & Nagar, 2004, p. 494). The assumption is that lesbian pleasure and desire is put forth as being more important than economic needs. This assumption is flawed in that sexuality is part of historical and geographical contexts such as apartheid

in South Africa and should therefore be seen in conjunction with socioeconomic factors. The literature on lesbians has not been adequately researched with regards to political violence and struggle for resources, thus not giving these women a voice in which to articulate their sexuality and opportunities to challenge views and thereby creating discourse. The intersection between one's different identities cannot be viewed in isolation or in part conjoined, but rather in relation to each other to expose tensions and affiliations. These "differences intersect with "interlocking relationships between the rules, resources, practices, and power through which social inequalities of gender, caste, and class are played out in different institutions in [a given] context" (Swarr & Nagar, 2004, p. 496).

According to Swarr and Nagar (2004), gender identities are shaped by being masculine or feminine in geographical specific contexts. Soweto in South Africa, a rural, black township was formed during apartheid segregating racial groups. Here, studies were conducted with lesbians who described themselves as "butch" (masculine) and "femme" (feminine) and they reportedly, assert their masculinity to "claim masculine privileges," in order for "lesbians to achieve social power in the face of impoverishment, violence, and the racism of apartheid and colonialism" (Swarr & Nagar, 2004, p. 505). In this context, that of impoverishment, violence, and racism, some lesbian women adopt a masculine persona to allow themselves to achieve social power as men typically hold positions of socioeconomic power in households. While this might contribute to evoking gender trouble, these individuals would rather assert their masculinity to gain power rather than being vulnerable and feminine (Swarr & Nagar, 2004). Therefore, gender identity is impacted enormously by the resources available to the LGBT community.

According to Swarr and Nagar (2004), religion also played a large role in the lives of lesbian participants in Soweto. Unlike many other religious spaces that promoted homophobia, the Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church in Soweto provided a safe space where people could exchange information, network with each other, and rally emotional support during apartheid. Here, they can reconcile their sexual identity with their religious identity. The church is inclusive of members of the LGBT Community. Besides the benefits afforded such as a feeling of community and inclusivity,

regrettably being visibly gay often makes individuals targets of homophobia. This refers to gay individuals engaging in public displays of affection. Suicide is prevalent within the community with members either having suicidal thoughts and idealisations or attempting suicide. "Suicide is increasingly common in Soweto and results, at least in part, from the despair wreaked by the racist economic policies of the apartheid government" (Swarr & Nagar, 2004, p. 512). The stress and emotional toll it takes on them is intense.

The issue of class and socio-economic issues is prevalent in Soweto. The study also concluded that violence and homophobic harassment was directly related to poverty. Unemployment also caused participants in Soweto to become economically dependent on one's family for everyday survival and therefore lack independence and privacy. Issues of class, geographic location, and language often confront black lesbians in Johannesburg. The organisation, Sistahs Kopianang, a black lesbian organization, is confronted with these issues as Sowetan lesbians are unable to participate due to a lack of economic resources to attain transport, communication boundaries as the meetings are in English. The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality is also a community-based organization. The major criticism levied against this organization is that it is unable to address the needs of the community on a practical level. Complex issues surrounding poverty and violence may not be adequately addressed (Swarr & Nagar, 2004).

Complex social issues and identities are unable to be examined without looking at the multifaceted issues surrounding practical daily issues such as suitable accommodation, employment, and personal safety. Despite having to adapt to the challenges of daily lives, the black lesbians in these communities are often "actively involved in the construction of viable identities and communities (including sexual ones) for themselves, their daughters, and other women like themselves." The construction of the identity of a black Sowetan lesbian is intrinsically interconnected between the concepts of race, class, and socio-political location (Swarr & Nagar, 2004, p. 512).

In the example of Indian lesbians Geeta and Manju from Chitrakoot, the socio-economic limitations of class are expressed in their inability to access private space. The notion of space, a

private space in which to experience intimacy, public space in which lesbians can experience freedom from threats of violence, and community spaces are of vital importance to both individuals and the community as a whole. Unfortunately, spaces such as the HUMCC in Soweto are not exclusively lesbian and may become sites of harassment, intimidation, and prejudice. Individuals who are not exclusively lesbian and maybe beleaguered by racism and sexism. Typically, gay, and lesbian organizations do not dedicate resources to the poor and economically vulnerable members of the communities that they serve. Furthermore, where social issues intersect such as women's rights (in general) issues of particular concern to lesbians may be relegated. Even though homophobia is gaining attention, gay and lesbian organisations direct few resources to the needs of the poor (Swarr & Nagar, 2004).

Geography and class are key components of the access to "the LGBT revolution" in India with those who can access the benefits largely belonging to the middle-class urban areas of India (Hunt, 2011, p. 320). Vanita (2009) reports that if women have economic resources and social support, then they may be able to live an independent life but consistently they are harassed by the community and the police even though the law permits their relationship. During the past thirty years, there have been reports in the Indian newspapers that there have been same-sex marriages with joint suicides in urban and rural areas. The demographics of these women were mostly Hindu, non-English speaking young women in low-income groups. It is important to note that these women were not associated with any gay movement and did not have an understanding of the terms "gay" and "lesbian" hence it is supposed that it was their traditional understanding of love (Vanita, 2009).

Sexuality

The terms lesbian and gay have been used interchangeably within this paper. Brown in Lötter (2010, p. 4) defines lesbians as being women who have "primary sexual, affectional and relational ties to individuals of the same sex." These terms are often subject to interpretation based on individual context and culture as highlighted in Sandfort and Dodge (2009).

P. Dave (2011, p. 6) states that, "coming out is a developmental process through which gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals recognize their sexual orientation and tie this knowledge into their

social and personal lives by disclosing their sexual orientation to others.” This developmental process is not characterised by developmental age or biological markers but by internal and external social processes. Coming out involves an identity transformation process whereby a homosexual individual explores his/her sexuality in a predominantly heterosexual environment. The experience of this process is important when trying to understand how lesbian identity is constructed and how, if at all, it changes over time. The manner in which the coming out process for lesbians in the South African context has been studied is as significant as to why it has been studied (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002, p. 24).

According to Tate (2012), he states that people tend to provide a tentative definition of the term lesbian, but keeping that in mind, Mahn and Watt (2014) postulate that the South Asian community, including contemporary critics, often make use of the term queer instead of lesbian to encompass all aspects of non-heteronormativity. In doing so, a rejection of the term lesbian, can, however, translate into the rejection of individuals who label themselves as lesbian. According to Badruddoja (2008, p. 183), the term queer used to be slang for homosexual and a term for homophobic abuse, but recently it has become a term to “a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications that describe a nascent theoretical model which developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies.” However, this term has lately become inclusive, and not limiting people in terms of having them labelling themselves into binary boxes. A participant in Badruddoja’s (2008) study stated that she felt the term queer encompassed so many people, much like the term South Asian and that there was strength in those numbers. Badruddoja (2008, p. 180) states that her participants, “shape their sexual identity and develop complex narratives of authentic selves by refocusing their sense of self and identity in multiple ways. The narratives are certainly race-, class-, and gender-specific negotiations of a transnational experience of crafting a gender-queer identity.” While some individuals may think that these participants are abandoning their culture, they are just redefining their self and “highlighting their own visibility” (Badruddoja, 2008, p. 181).

It is often assumed that the gay community is one homogenous group in which the commonality of homosexuality surpasses any other differences or prejudices that may exist. This misconception is based upon the premise that homosexuality is although a common denominator does not automatically eradicate the phenomenon of other prejudices and competition (Greene, 1997, p. 119). Unfortunately, one aspect of individual identity is often negated as; “Being gay provides no safe haven among other gays if one is not white. Being black among other blacks provides no immunity from abuse if one is gay” (Greene, 1997, p. 119).

According to Groves (1985), confusion surrounding one’s sexuality elicits crisis in an individual. They are often left with the choice of societal abuse versus a self-alienating life which is sometimes accompanied by the feeling of denial of their sexuality. The transition from one identity to another involves the loss and grieving of one identity and the embracing of a new identity. Their fears may relate to giving up the benefits of being associated with the dominant group (a patriarchal system) as well as the self-perception of who one has been.

Therefore, it is important to empower communities by creating safe environments and providing emotional support to LGBT individuals. Networking with organisations and institutions such as police, the medical and education sectors, also creates awareness and mobilises support for the LGBT community (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Lesbians are constantly negotiating their identity and it is shaped by how comfortable they feel about themselves and the support structures available (Smuts, 2011). They find it difficult to find social support, South Asian lesbians more so, and feelings of isolation may exacerbate their predicament. Development of a supportive social network and finding positive lesbian role models will contribute to developing a positive self-identity (Groves, 1985).

According to Mereish and Poteat (2015, p. 425), sexual minority groups such as lesbians “are at an increased risk for poorer mental and physical health outcomes than heterosexuals” and this often relates to minority stressors such as discrimination. Their study focused on the influence of proximal (internalised homophobia, concealment of sexual orientation) and distal (discrimination,

rejection, and victimisation) stressors on psychological and physical distress for sexual minorities. Mediating factors included feelings of shame and poor relationships with peers and the LGBT community. We can refer to the minority stress model in the section on theoretical approaches for a more comprehensive outlook.

Coming out is about differentiation, it is about the formation and crystallisation of identity, sexual identity, not just orientation (Seidman, Fischer & Meeks, 2007).

McLean (2008) stated that lesbian identity does not allow for fluidity of sexuality or inclusion. This discrimination within the LGBT community must be investigated. Lesbians tend to draw boundaries between what it is to be an authentic or fake lesbian. Therefore, this reinforces the fixed nature of lesbian identities and disallows any undue influence. A sexual identity gives one a sense of belonging towards a category that they can comfortably commit to and express themselves in. This rigidity prescribes that a person be restricted to labels, whereby a lesbian can be described as femme or butch and nothing in between even though some may describe their sexuality as flexible and changing over a person's lifespan. Labelling oneself as a true lesbian does create stability but also marginalise others. According to McLean (2008), female participants in his study showed different levels of sexual fluidity and that they did not feel comfortable expressing this in lesbian contexts. A person can come across as being incongruent due to their internal processes. The pressure to be an authentic lesbian, by definition, in behaviour and appearance causes many women to surrender their lesbian identity.

Disclosure and social and psychological well-being are important aspects of identity integration. Kennedy and Dalla (2014, p. 469) state that various studies in America indicate that "African-American and Latina lesbians required more time to self-identify, [as well as being reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation] outside their family, than White lesbians. Latina lesbians also experienced more depressive symptoms and lower levels of psychological well-being than White lesbians."

Gay and lesbian people have worked on attaining legal rights in many countries, but a change in society's attitude does not seem to be echoed. Despite leaps in the political realm with the introduction of the non-discriminatory clause against sexual orientation in the South African Constitution of 1996, we have yet to make progress in the cultural and societal areas of sexual orientation, especially in Indian communities where homosexuality is largely seen as a Western phenomenon. Hence, many gay and lesbian people suffer discrimination and violence, something that Judith Butler calls people living in a “pervasive sense of their own unreality” which can be detrimental to one's life (Bauer & Mahn, 2014, p. 206).

Religion

In moments of despair, strength, and personal development, many people look to religion or spirituality. We discuss the influence of religion, namely, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism on one's identity development. The absence thereof is also important.

Christianity.

Christianity has typically followed an approach of shaming both sexuality and sex. Traditionally LGBT individuals are typically portrayed as “other, sinful and disordered” (Rohr, 2017, p. 1). Individual churches have vastly different approaches and opinions of homosexuality. The Episcopal Church (Anglican) welcomes and blesses homosexual unions.

Historically within the South African context within the context of the Afrikaans-cum-Christian background, this environment has proved to be a fertile environment in which “discriminatory narratives” can thrive (Otto, 2003, p. 17). The current perspective of the majority of Christian churches within the South African context views homophobia as unacceptable. Although claiming to support the legal and Constitutional position of homosexuals within society, many are yet to accept homosexuality (Otto, 2003). According to Otto (2003, p. 59), the position of the Dutch Reformed Church in October 2002 in the synod held in Pretoria on homosexuality was as follows:

- Based on the scripture that homosexual deeds must be condemned as sinful

- A message of support for those homosexuals who do not enact their details, and encouragement that they remain actively involved in the church
- A request towards members of the church to not engage in judgmental attitudes.

As a minority group, homosexual people have traditionally lived-in obscurity. Christian religious tradition has historically condemned same-sex relationships. According to Otto (2003, p. 4), religion has contributed to the historical “medical-historical” descriptions of homosexuality as “abnormal/deviant, and as sinful and wrong.” The Bible text of Leviticus 18:22 has been used frequently as a denunciation of the homosexual lifestyle. Discourse within religious studies has contributed to homophobia within the South African context. Religion is one of the aspects which forms identities. According to Constructivism “We do not discover reality, we invent it” (Otto, 2003, p. 14). As such, there is no static stable sexual identity. An eternal truth but rather many truths that change over time. Homosexuality is largely considered abnormal and is a socially constructed aspect of the individual. Negative discourses are perpetuated within social structures such as religious structures. The early Christian church did not oppose homosexuality but, within the Christian context, the state persecution of homosexual individuals became prevalent after the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity. Theology, religion, churches, and religious societies have played a considerable role in the problematising of homosexuality and the creation of it as a “condition.” The “traditional position of the churches on homosexuality has been, in the words of our theologian participant, ‘that it is taboo, it is a sin, you will go to hell, you are a pervert, you are against God’s creation, and Jesus can heal you’ [and another participant stated that they were told] “all the churches, as far as I know, discourage openness about homosexuality. It is proposed that gays are welcome in the church if they are prepared to confess to their sin and if they withhold from practising homosexuality.” Another quote often used to discourage homosexuality is from 1 Corinthians 6:9: & 10 “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Nor homosexuals, nor sodomites...will inherit the kingdom of God” (Otto, 2003, p. 51). According to Otto (2003, p.52), any religious document is a text and, as such is subject to interpretation. Typically, the “handbooks of all

the 'great' religions of our world" have, as divine texts been incorporeal and static. The Christian faith is not a cohesive and coherent church but, rather a multitude of conflicting ideas and ideologies. Paul Germans and Steve de Grunchy, in *Aliens in the Household of God*, propose that the Bible does not, in fact, condemn homosexuality. André Muller, the pastor of the Reforming Church in Pretoria, specifically sites the importance of language in creating meaning in Christian Religious texts. He proposed that in "Afrikaans translations of the Bible, an impression is created that God judges gay people without any qualification" (Otto, 2003, p. 56). The position of the homosexual as a sinner and homosexuality as a sin is fixed, unchanging, and certain. Religious groups have largely interpreted the Bible from a heterosexist position. This is particularly noticeable in the Reformed/Protestant Christian tradition. Christian religious institutions largely view homosexuality as a form of deviance in which homosexuals should "exercise self-restraint, but should preferably convert to Jesus, where healing can begin" (Otto, 2003, p. 56). When exploring the English legal system – which had an immense impact on both the Indian and South African legal systems the statement by former Director of Public Prosecutions Lord Desart is applicable in exploring the criminality of lesbianism. Upon commenting in 1885 on the Criminal Amendment Act and the inclusion of lesbianism as a statutory offence, he remarked that "You are going to tell the world that there is such an offence, to bring it to the notice of women who have never heard of it, never thought of it, never dreamt of it. I think it is great mischief" (Otto, 2003, p. 83). According to De Grunchy and Lewis in *Ethics that exclude: The role of ethics committees in lesbian and gay health research in South Africa*, "Our task is, therefore, to listen to the voices of those who are silent and silenced in the Bible. If the Bible was not written by slaves, women or gays and lesbians, then it is the contemporary task of theology to take that experience, that life, that story, as a crucial source for reflection" (Otto, 2003, p. 129). This quote highlights a key component of all texts of both the creation and creator of discourse and power relations within culture. Those in power create a world that validates and maintains the social structure that supports their power. Those who are on the margins of society and the mechanism that creates power often have a nominal impact if any in these processes (Otto, 2003).

A lesbian participant who was previously a minister's wife described the role of Christianity and homophobia as "strengthened by the messages that we get from the church...you know, the church is guilty and should be held accountable...we can lay it at the door of the church" (Otto, 2003, p. 56). "Christianity often follows the approach of "hate the sin, love the sinner" (Otto, 2003, p. 57). There is also a persistent myth that homosexuality is associated with the white, wealthy population.

In 1991 in a statement of the official United Methodist Policy by Paul Mickey, the position of the organisation was described as follows, "Although we do not condone the practices of homosexuality and consider the practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we confirm that God's grace is available to all." The Church of England has moved from a position of "heterosexism to one where same-sex relationships are respected as a choice." The position of the Roman Catholic Church has remained largely unchanged and condemned as it amongst other things holds "no possibility for the transmission of new life" (Otto, 2003, p. 59). This is associated with other Roman Catholic Church teachings that promote the idea that sex serves the purpose of procreation. It is important to explore broader cultural and religious contexts as; similar effects may occur in other cultural traditions and contexts. Condemnation of homosexuality is not limited to religious circles but includes Philosopher Emmanuel Kant who denounced it as universally wrong as it leads to the end of humanity. This is the same reason that is used by some religious organizations, that homosexuality is inherently wrong as it does not result in procreation.

In *Atheists: A Ground-breaking Study of America's Nonbelievers* by Hunsberger and Altemeyer the study found that generations who were preceded by authoritarian parents were characteristically submissive. The subsequent generations followed "the examples of parents' hostility, aggression, and prejudice toward homosexuals or others who are considered 'radicals'" (Otto, 2003, p. 60). This same phenomenon was seen across Jewish, Islamic, and Hindu religious groups. These attitudes were similar to those seen in fundamentalist Christian communities.

Historically, Islam does not engage with any tendency towards homosexual behaviour. Furthermore, there are claims that as the inclination towards homosexuality is not discussed by

classical Islamic texts, it does not exist. Terblanche (2009, p. 36-37), describes how after the destruction of Sodom and Gomora that homosexuality was forgotten. The denial of the existence of homosexuality is so extensive that it is described as “non-existent” during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed. Terblanche (2009) states that the intersection of Islam and Homosexuality is largely based on the premise that homosexuality is at best a medical condition. This is similar to previous classifications of homosexuality as a form of deviant behaviour in earlier versions of the Diagnostic Statistic Manuals and the American Psychological Association. Terblanche (2009, p. 26) however, details how that The Prophet Mohammed “explained to his companions in no ambiguous terms that *liwāt* (homosexuality) is a great sin that they need to abstain from.” Homosexuality is further described as an act of “ignorant nations” and a “refusal to change” (Terblanche, 2009, p. 33).

Islam.

The individual’s predisposition to homosexuality as either genetic or due to hormonal imbalances has become part of global discourse. Terblanche (2009, p. 10), describes homosexuality as “an indecent immoral detested lifestyle that contradicts the origin and procreation of human life and destroys the social fabric of the community. The classical sources of Islam consider homosexuality as a hideous crime that is not open to any other interpretation or discourse.” This definition is jarring in its condemnation. The Islamic ruling pertaining to homosexuality is referred to as *liwat*. Homosexuality is described as a “detested topic to discuss [that] threatens the chastity and morality of the society because it contradicts the procreation and existence of human life” (Terblanche, 2009, p. 14). Statements of this nature relegate homosexuality to the position of taboo, diminishing opportunities for positive engagement and discourse analysis. Furthermore, the “severity” of the impact of society is so harshly described “as threatening the very existence of human life” (Terblanche, 2009, p. 14).

Some families in the Western Cape do not condone their LGBT relative’s behaviour and terminate contact with them. Homosexuality is seen as an individual’s preference, but they are not permitted to express or act upon it. As recently as 2006, in Cape Town, members of the Muslim community were encouraged to sever ties with family members whom they suspected of being

homosexual. This occurred largely in response to a presentation by Muhsin Hendricks at the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) in Geneva. The presentation sought to re-examine homosexuality within the context of Islam based on three key elements; an inaccurate understanding of homosexuality, a call for scholars to re-examine classical texts about homosexuality and, to reconceptualise the definition of homosexuality as formed in the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. In November 2007 members of the Cape Town Muslim Community, expressed outrage at the documentary "A Jihad for Love" which was screened at the Gay and Lesbian film festival in Cape Town. Muhsin Hendricks and the Director of the film Parvez Sharma appeared on a Muslim Community radio station, The Voice of Cape Town. The two discussed the difficulty often experienced by individuals in reconciling their homosexual identity and religious beliefs. The appearance on The Voice of Cape Town and screening of "A Jihad for Love" resulted in the convening of an emergency meeting of the Muslim Judicial Council in Athlone, Cape Town where homosexuality was once again condemned. One of the significant arguments raised by both Muhsin Hendricks and the Muslim Judicial Council relates to the issue of male rape without consent as opposed to sodomy. Issues relating the lesbians, in particular, are largely ignored and remain overlooked when homosexuality is examined in terms of male rape and consent (Terblanche, 2009, p. 15-16).

The Muslim Judicial Council has stated that "The MJC condemns the popularization of the practice and undue exposure given to proponents of the homosexual and lesbian lifestyle." Although an unfavourable position, this public condemnation at least acknowledges the existence of lesbianism (Terblanche, 2009, p. 43). In response to this disapproval, Muhsin Hendricks stated the Muslim Judicial Council was "inciting hatred and violence against the lesbian and gay community; We feel that the MJC's statement is inciting hatred and violence and violates the rights of the lesbian and gay community to practice their right to sexual expression and choice of belief" (Terblanche, 2009, p. 44).

A considerable amount of scholarly and judicial effort is directed towards a suitable punishment for homosexuality in Islam. The "sin" of homosexuality is not a private, individual matter

but is seen as a sin upon the whole community and family. Thus, community and family intervention are required in order to remedy it (Terblanche, 2009).

According to Kligerman (2007), the Qur'an is totally against homosexuality, and Western influence has contributed to the stigma in the Muslim world. "Homosexuals in the Qur'an are referred to as *qum Lut* (Lot's people) referring to the prophet Lut who preached against homosexuality in the cities of Sodom and Gomorra" (Kligerman, 2007, p. 53). There are various quotes in the Qur'an that deter homosexuality and it states that the purpose of sex is procreation. Two quotes that stand out by The Prophet Muhammed are, "Doomed by God is who does what Lot's people did [i.e., homosexuality]" and "No man should look at the private parts of another man, and no woman should look at the private parts of another woman, and no two men sleep [in bed] under one cover, and no two women sleep under one cover" (Kligerman, 2007, p. 54). Shari'a Islamic law deems homosexuality as a sin, but also a crime whereby punishment is at the discretion of the relevant authority. The individual is however encouraged to repent privately instead of revealing the transgression. Muslim countries do not condone homosexuality and in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, punishment is death. In other countries, one can serve from three years to life imprisonment for being homosexual. Many LGBT individuals from places such as Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul, seek asylum in western countries due to the infringement of their human rights.

The views of homosexuality in Islam can be regionally based as in Morocco, homosexuality carries less stigmatisation. During medieval times, it was also acceptable to remedy *ubnah*, passive homosexuality (looking effeminate) by partaking in sexual activity with servants. It was viewed as "a natural, genetic phenomenon" (Kligerman (2007, p. 56). In Turkey, Egypt, and Maghreb, men who engage in sexual activity with other men are seen as being hyper-sexual and are proud to assert their dominance. Homosexual rape was also used to humiliate political opponents and as a tool of repression. "Emergency homosexuality" was used to describe same-sex relations before marriage because boys and girls are separated until marriage according to Islamic tradition. "In the pre-colonial Muslim world, which includes Arabs, Persians, Turks, Berbers, Black Africans, and Indians, sex between

two males was quite common, but those who engaged in such behaviour did not define themselves as gay” (Kligerman, 2007, p. 59). According to Kligerman (2007), Muslims are concerned with upholding the appearance of family, and many homosexual Muslim men end up marrying heterosexual Muslim women to keep up with society’s norms. “Sultan Mehmet Fatif Ottoman conqueror of Constantinople and Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi, who invaded India from Afghanistan, are important historical figures who were known to be gay” (Kligerman, 2007, p. 56). Westerners labelled them as bisexual as they had many wives, children but this was in keeping with Shari’a law by conforming to the heterosexual appearance in their public life. LGBT individuals are not accepted into religious or educator positions as they cannot be seen as role models and are unmarried, hence they are in conflict with their religion of nature which promotes marriage and the family systems.

Muslims see homosexuality as a by-product of Westernisation. American gays convert to Islam thinking that this religion will be more tolerant, but this is not true. Gay sex tourists from the west, who visit African countries are seen as wealthy and entitled to more privileges than heterosexual people which festers resentment towards the LGBT community. When these tourists visit Arab countries, Arabs may engage in sexual activity as a form of asserting power over the “imperial aggressor” and channel their hostility and rage into this activity (Kligerman, 2007, p. 60). With the many problems that the Muslim world experience, including the rise of extremists, protecting a minority group is not on the agenda as a priority (Kligerman, 2007).

Hinduism.

The use of the term lesbian may be problematic in the context of Hindu Indian society as it is an English term and, inadvertently through the use of English terminology, the subtleties and nuances of other languages may be lost or unintendedly negated. In Sanskrit, the term *swayamvara sakhi* exists which means “self-chosen female friend” (Creémier, 2014, p. 35). This is the closest term similar to the modern construction of the term lesbian.

Three key notable periods are recognised in pre-colonial Indian culture. These include the Vedic, Yogic and Mughal periods. Hindu religious mythology that arose during the Vedic period is not

merely storytelling but, is an integral part of the daily lives of contemporary Hindus. Two fundamental texts that arose during the pre-modern period include the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Although all three periods promote a marked patriarchal social structure, the Yogic period is synonymous with the suppression of all forms of sexuality. Sexuality was an obstacle to the attainment of enlightenment. Something to overcome (Creémier, 2014, p. 34).

In Hinduism, many of the Gods are seen as having both genders and of being genderless. Growing up, many stories and different versions of stories are shared among Hindus. Patron God of transgender people in the South, worship Lord Aravan/Iravan. He sacrificed his life to God Kali to win the Kurushetra war in the Mahabaratha, and in turn, he asked to be married before he died. No woman wanted to be married for one day, so Lord Krishna changed his avatar into a woman and slept with Iravan. The Hindu God Kama, much, like the Greek God Eros who induces divine madness, induces an awakening of dormant attachments from an individual's former birth. Lord Shiva was struck with his bow and Shiva falls in love with and marries Parvati who was a reincarnation of his dead first wife, Sati. "Here Shiva represents Hindu ascetic tradition that must conform to social dharma and the universal force of desire which the Kama represents" (Vanita, 2009, p. 55). Shiva is said to have amalgamated with his wife and hence has both sexes. In the Kritivasa Ramayana, there is a story of two queens who conceived a child together to ensure the line of the King of the Sun Dynasty, Maharaja Dilipa. Lord Shiva told them to make love together and he would bless them with a son. The child named Bhagiratha later became King and is believed to have brought the river Ganges down to Earth. There are also Hindu LGBT references to the third sex about Hijras' (a term for eunuchs, intersex, and transgender people), and Kotis' (effeminate male who takes on a female gender role in same-sex relationships) and the Kama Sutra yet debates around homosexuality in Hinduism are awry.

The traditional Hindu roles particularly concerning marriage are still relevant today. These are in addition to class and caste. "The importance of the rural population of India highlights that progress made in the urban cosmopolitan sphere do not make up homogenous change at the national level" (Creémier, 2014, p. 41).

Lesbian issues have been largely disregarded by the broader feminist movements in India as they are a “white feminist” phenomenon (Creémier, 2014, p. 33). This is in addition to the broader dismissal of the existence of Indian lesbianism in its entirety.

Religion is a fundamental aspect of human identity, however; religious positions can be ambiguous. There is a strong relationship in India between politics, culture, and religion. ‘Traditional’ Hindu religion has been used to promote a non-homosexual platform by conservatives (Hunt, 2011). Although not entirely invisible male homosexuality was still considerably more conspicuous than lesbianism in pre-Colonial India. The concept of India as a cohesive whole is problematic and, is a remnant of colonialism. India is a diverse country with linguistic nuances, tribal differences, caste, and geographic differences.

Diasporic Indian communities, such as the South African Indian community, traditionally are more conservative in their outlook on contentious social issues such as lesbianism and seek to distinguish themselves to surrounding communities by “tending to reinforce boundaries with other communities by clinging to their cultural origins” (Hunt, 2011, p. 321).

Vanita (2009, p. 48) stated that she and co-author, Saleem Kidwai in their book, *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* concluded that, “same-sex desire and even sexual activity had been represented and discussed in Indian works of literature for two millennia, often in a non-judgmental and even celebratory manner; but a new virulent form of modern homophobia developed in India during the colonial period,” specifically during the revolt in Lucknow, India in 1857. The first same-sex female marriage recorded, was in 1987 between two policewomen. Their families expressed disapproval towards them at first but later accepted their relationship (Vanita, 2009).

Vanita (2009) conducted research on same-sex marriages among low-income, non-English speaking women and related suicides in India over the last thirty years. Most of the participants had Hindu weddings and they were not involved with the LGBT community. She further stated that ancient and modern texts “on traditional Hindu ideas about love (as the product of attachments formed in former lives), rebirth (attachments persist from one birth to another) and marriage (which is supposed

to outlast one lifetime) can be used to legitimize socially disapproved unions, both cross-sex and same-sex” (Vanita, 2009, p. 47). This, however, is not the views of right-wing Hindus and they believe homosexuality is due to Westernisation. Same-sex marriages were supposedly taking place in small villages in rural areas long before the formation of LGBT communities was formed and families either accepted these unions or were vehemently against them which resulted in separation, the involvement of police, or suicide. The divide of role models such as teachers and priests on the topic does not make it any easier (Vanita, 2009). In the documentary, *Breaking Free* (2015), Baba Ramdev, a well-known Hindu yoga guru, stated, “according to all religions, homosexuality is unnatural” and Mufti Iftikhar Ahmed, the president of a leading Islamic group, Jamial Ulema-I-Karnaraka stated, “when human beings can differentiate right from wrong, why should humans run after such things?” (referring to homosexuality).

Right-wing Hindu organisations also protest around cross-sex dating and romance, including Valentine's Day, and attack couples that celebrate it. Therefore, homophobia is seen as one of many issues surrounding sensual love outside marriage and they view it as existing due to globalisation and “Western neo-imperialist and market forces that commercialised sex” (Vanita, 2009, p. 50).

According to Hunt (2011, p. 321), in 2009 Britain the Hindu Council UK stated that Hinduism “does not condemn gay people.” In May 2009, “a Tamil priest who conducted South Africa’s first known same-sex wedding” by had to retire and go into hiding after conducting the first gay Hindu wedding. South Africa’s “Hindu Mahasabha president Ashwin Trikamjee insisted that ‘The Hindu wedding ceremony is between a male and a female – that is what the scripture says” and “the South African Tamil Federation president Mickey Chetty affirmed, we do not sanction such a union or the actions of the priest who sanctified it” (Hunt, 2011, p. 321). The Director of the tribal and research centre in Bhubaneswar stated that same-sex marriage is new to society and that tribal tradition is against it (Vanita, 2009, p. 52). These views contrasted with other important people below.

Srinivasa Raghavachariar, a Sanskrit scholar and priest of a major temple in South India stated that “the sex may change but the soul remains the same in subsequent incarnations, hence the power

of love impels these souls to seek one another” and another priest stated that “Marriage is the union of spirits, and the spirit is not male or female” (Vanita, 2009, p. 56). However not all priests agree and state that secondary texts to the sacred book are a condemnation of homosexuality, and those priests who condone same-sex marriages state that “general rules and general laws are always overruled by a local situation.” We also worship many Gods who has many interpretations on life hence there are many authorities that result in the divide of priests and not forgetting political influence as well (Vanita, 2009). As Mahant Ram Puri of the Juna Akhara sect has concurred and said, ‘We do not have a rule book in Hinduism, we have a hundred million authorities.’ These “hundred million authorities” lead to as many interpretations and applications of Hinduism and lesbianism (Hunt, 2011, p. 323).

There are two important categories in Hindu scriptures. Shruti, divinely revealed scriptures and the Vedas and Agamas, which deal with human spirituality and the nature of the ultimate Divine Being. The second is, smriti, secondary scriptures (the lesser category of sacred literature), which often deal with law, orthodoxy, and societal duties and those that are remembered by ordinary human beings. In the debate around homosexuality, right-wing Hindus use the smriti literature (Shekar, 2016).

According to Deepa Mehta, “Traditional Hindu morality rests on the fulfilment of one’s Dharma (duty/morals), among other things. The mention of homosexual sex in the Kama Sutra is proof that homosexuality is one of the countless variations of Dharma, as the Kama Sutra is a sacred book, “Homosexuality is part of the ‘Third Nature’, the neuter gender which does not engage in procreation, and that corresponds to Brahma (creator), there a person born homosexual that does not fulfil his/her ‘third sex’ function sings against his/her Dharma” (Hunt, 2011, p. 322).

There are about twelve forms of marriage in ancient and medieval Hindu scriptures, two of the most known are, arranged marriage and marriage through love and attraction. Hindu sacred texts debate the status of this love-marriage as it requires mutual consent, no witnesses, no officiant, no parental consent but some say that Hindu texts insist that everyone’s duty is to marry and procreate. Hence, these people state that it is their social dharma (duty/morals) to intervene (Vanita, 2009).

Individual and social Dharma have been in conflict and is inseparable from samsara (rebirth). In the eleventh century, a Sanskrit story between two men translated to, “Affection [that arises] in the heart without a cause speaks of love [persisting] from a former birth” (Vanita, 2009, p. 55). This may be why parents allow cross-class and cross-caste marriages as it is presumed that most have been together in a past life (Vanita, 2009).

According to Vanita (2009, p. 53), the Hindu left-wing has reacted to the right-wing criticism that helped lesbians widespread. There have been many lesbians married in temples in India and Nepal and they have used Hindu vocabulary, beliefs, and teachings to legitimise their marriage. “Among these doctrines are Hindu ideas of ‘love marriage’, Hindu notions of the transient, fluid nature of gender (and of caste, class, species) in the perspective of the doctrine of rebirth, as well as the belief that attachments persist from one lifetime to the next.”

Joint suicide is also linked to same-sex love in India. Suicide is also seen as a crime in India. Joint suicide has been sensationalised and romanticised like that of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. More so in India, it is associated with the ancient Hindu tradition of Sati, whereby star-crossed lovers will be reborn in their next lives with each other. Couples have even requested joint funerary rites and some families have complied with the request whilst most have renounced Sati (Vanita, 2009, p. 51).

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church or Islamic leaders in India, the Hindu community does not have a central, single religious authority. This is both a help and a hindrance to the position of homosexual Hindus as it allows for rigorous discourse and debate but, also does not provide a position that is either in favour or not in favour with homosexual Hindus (Hunt, 2011). While media has helped in publicising the plight of Hindu lesbians, it has also caught the attention of Hindu right-winged groups (Vanita, 2009).

Mental Health, Religion/Spirituality of LGBT Individuals.

Wood and Conley (2014) state that spirituality and religion are two different concepts, where spirituality focuses on an individual’s subjective experiences and religion in more of a communal and

institutionalised aspect. In this section, spirituality is used as an alternative to religion and is discussed concurrently in terms of mental health.

According to Boscoc-Huffman, Hoffman, Hoffman, Peterson, Knight and Galaska (2008), religious and spiritual beliefs can be a protective factor in the psychological health of LGBT individuals but contrary to that are individuals who are coerced into conversion therapy and religious counselling that decreases their identification with their sexual self or sexual orientation. They further stated that the primary challenge for most LGBT individuals is “overcoming negative beliefs and official statements espoused by many religious groups and organisations.” These statements can be hurtful enough to contribute to suicidal ideation and “can have profound implications for the psychological, spiritual and interpersonal health of LGBT individuals” (Boscoc-Huffman et al., 2008, p. 1-2). Gibbs and Goldbach (2015, p. 473-4) state that “a strong correlation exists between the level of religiosity and homosexuality,” “internalised homophobia has been associated with negative health outcomes” and that a relationship exists between “religious and LGBT identity conflict and depression and suicide.”

Wood and Conley (2014) postulate that LGBT individuals can experience religious or spiritual (R/S) abuse. Johnson and van Vonderen, (1991) in Wood and Conley (2014, p. 96) define R/S abuse as “mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support, or greater spiritual empowerment with the result of weakening, undermining, or decreasing that person’s spiritual empowerment.” It is further emphasised that individuals in leadership positions can use r/s abuse to produce conformity in communities. Types of r/s abuse include leadership representing God, spiritual bullying, acceptance via performance, spiritual neglect, expanding external and internal tension and the manifestation of internal states as well as sexual microaggressions such as micro assaults (overt forms of discrimination), microinsults (insults that are subtle and may go unnoticed) and microinvalidations (invalidating part of their identity) (Wood & Conley, 2014).

Leadership representing God abuse is when leaders denounce the LGBT community and in turn, they think their God, therefore, denounces them whereas spiritual bullying involves actively harassing individuals to conform to the bully’s view. Acceptance via performance allows for the

individual to perform or act in desirable ways because they fear retribution and spiritual neglect is neglecting individuals when they are in emotional or physical pain. After all, it originates from their “sins.” When an individual cannot express their individuality because they have a stronger affiliation to their group identity, it relates to expanding external or internal training and a manifestation of internal states is when individuals’ manifest symptoms such as “stress, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation in relation to their religious experiences” (Wood & Conley, 2014).

Due to r/s abuse, individuals also experience r/s struggles. Divine struggles relate to when individuals question their God, Intrapsychic struggles focus inward, and an individual begins having personal doubts about their r/s beliefs and interpersonal struggles include having negative interactions with individuals in a religious setting. These struggles make it difficult for the individual to simultaneously integrate their identity, hence they need to redefine their r/s identity. If they are unable to reconcile their identities, compartmentalisation of these identities will lead to more distress. Should the individual reject, abandon or conceal their sexual identity, sometimes through reparative or conversion therapy, it can exacerbate detrimental mental health issues. This too is true if individuals were to reject their r/s identity. More research is needed to explore the rejection of r/s identity and its relation to the reduction of religious Americans (Wood & Conley, 2014).

The study by Boscoc-Huffman et al., (2008, p. 2) focused on “the impact of common religious statements on the psychological, spiritual and religious health of LGBT individuals.” 281 participants, 150 female, 121 male and ten, gender unstipulated, participants took an online survey which included the Religious Impact on Sexual Identity Scale (RISIS). Findings yielded significant correlations between an individual's religious beliefs and their impact on psychological health.

They hoped that their research would contribute to sensitising religious organisations and people about the impact of religious statements that they view as being unhelpful to LGBT individuals. The study also provides information to health care professionals working with religious LGBT individuals. Therapists who neglect to explore the influence of religion on LGBT individuals may be limiting therapy with the individual from a holistic point of view. This research topic stimulates

constructive conversation surrounding opposing views regarding religion and the LGBT community (Boscoc-Huffman et al., 2008).

A cross-sectional study conducted by Gibbs and Goldbach (2015, p. 483) had a sample size of 2949 participants. The purpose of their study was to:

- To determine if religious and LGBT identity conflict indicators are associated with suicidality.
- Whether internalised homophobia mediates this relationship, and
- To determine if religious upbringing is associated with suicidality.

They explored the relationship between religious and LGBT identity conflict and suicidality. Three main areas of concern were looked at, namely, suicidality, internalised homophobia, and indicators of religious and sexual orientation identity conflict which includes, reports of conflict, anti-homosexual parental religious beliefs, and leaving the religion of origin due to conflict (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015).

Forty-two percent of the individuals experienced conflict between their religious and sexual identities and left their religion. Thirty-three percent of the individuals in the sample had suicidal thoughts in the last month, fifteen percent of those individuals had chronic thoughts of suicidality and three percent of the sample size attempted suicide during the previous year. Internalised homophobia was found to be significantly associated with suicide attempts in the past year (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015).

Results indicated a significant relationship between leaving one's religion and suicidal thoughts. While leaving one's religion to gain more self-acceptance, this decreases indirect thoughts of suicide due to lowered internalised homophobia but increases direct thoughts of suicide. Furthermore, individuals who were brought up religiously and were experiencing religious conflict were most at risk of considering suicide. Hence the study "indicated that identity conflict that comes from dissonance felt between religious beliefs and LGBT identity was associated with a higher risk of suicide" (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015, p. 483).

According to McGeorge, Carlson and Toomey (2014), there exists a link between religiosity and homophobia among clinicians in that these professionals may experience conflict between their religious beliefs and their ethical obligation to provide services to LGBT clients. As with research contributions from Boscoe-Huffman et al. (2008), McGeorge et al. (2014, p. 498), states that it is important that therapists develop competence in exploring the intersection of spirituality, religion, and sexuality in avoiding the “tendency to dichotomise these important aspects.” Bowers, Minichiello, and Plummer (2010), state that it is unethical to hold spiritual or religious beliefs that are against LGBT clients and should therefore engage in “self of the therapist work” to develop positive beliefs surrounding LGBT individuals. McGeorge et al. (2014), states that this does not need a therapist to change their religion but embrace aspects that are found in all religions such as, love, compassion, and care of others. By doing so, therapists can be positive resources in the therapy process.

In the study by McGeorge et al. (2014, p. 502), three hundred and forty-one participants, two hundred and thirty-nine doctoral and eighty-seven master’s therapists, provided “insight into the relationship between the education students receive related to integrating spirituality and/or religion in therapy and their beliefs and practices related to working with LGBT clients.” Results revealed that individuals are more likely to seek out help in integrative LGBT programs that assimilate religion and spirituality in therapy. The more training student therapists received; the less likely therapists were to embrace reparative/conversion therapy. This study also emphasises the aspect of not imposing a therapist's religious or spiritual beliefs onto clients as well as respecting the client's beliefs.

Conclusion

We addressed many aspects of intersection in an individual’s identity, including the public and private self. The female gender in a heteronormative and patriarchal society as well-being Indian in race was investigated. The context of being ethnically South African was also discussed in relation to violence such as hate crime and corrective rape. Class has a vital role to play in the LGBT community and religious and/spiritual aspects are of much importance in the psychological wellbeing of individuals.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The type of research strategy that suits this topic the most, is a qualitative strategy with an emphasis on narrative biographies. Narrative biographical designs assume that the person's life can be best explained from their own perspective and through their own subjective experience of life which interrelates to both their social and cultural world (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). Therefore, the research participants will be invited to share anecdotal information about their experiences of their "coming out" process as an Indian lesbian in South Africa and, contributing to the LGBT discourse.

Qualitative research or data analysis and interpretation will be used to describe and analyse the research participant's experience of the "coming out" process. Qualitative study is a method of investigation that has certain common characteristics, such as a qualitative approach, a focus on individual interactions and ongoing interaction with people in their culture, a high degree of participation of researchers, and the creation of descriptive or narrative data. The purpose of qualitative research is to study and understand a particular topic and to understand the participants' experiences within that phenomenon (Ivankova, Creswell & Clark, 2007; Munhall, 2001). Qualitative research is seen as interdisciplinary and multi-method, which includes perspectives of participants and researcher, takes into consideration context and process research as well as flexibility and the use of theories (Struwig & Stead, 2001). This research methodology will be most effective as the individual's unique experience in context will be explored. Social constructionism correlates well with this qualitative study due to society's perception and experiences of the South African Indian Lesbians. This theoretical approach is also influenced by the social constructivist approach where an individualistic view is included. Cognisance will be paid to the role of the researcher in shaping how "realities are brought forward by participants" through what topics are chosen, what questions are asked, and the responses given (Daly, 2007, p. 33).

Data Collection Techniques

Unisa's Covid-19 position statement on research ethics, at Alert Level 3 states that postgraduate students may not do "research that requires physical human participant interactions nearby, e.g., face-to-face interviews, focus groups, or human sample collection" hence, online audio and video interviews were done (Meyiwa, 2020, p. 3).

A semi-structured questionnaire was used which included short and open-ended questions. Positive and negative significant events/milestones were included to gain a better understanding of participants unique context holistically as well as variables that influenced their journey to coming out. I conducted all the interviews to gain as much rich, descriptive data as possible.

The information sheet together with the consent form was emailed to the participants. They completed the consent forms and returned them to me prior to the interviews.

The duration of the interviews was mostly done in two-to-four-hour sessions. A considerable amount of effort was focused on explaining all the ethical considerations such as confidentiality to make sure that the participant had a comprehensive understanding of their role and, how the information collected will be used.

Interviews were supposed to be conducted in a private office and at a convenient time and place for both researcher and participant, but due to COVID-19 circumstances, Zoom and WhatsApp audio and/ video interviews were done.

Sampling Techniques

The main sampling technique that was considered is purposeful sampling. This means that participants were chosen according to a criterion that served its purpose from the study. Snowball sampling was also considered due to the sparse availability of participants targeted. This included research participants referring or recruiting other participants for the study amongst their acquaintances. Snowball sampling was most effective as participants were extremely difficult to find but once I had interviewed two people, they referred other participants to me. The sample size was a minimum of four participants or more until saturation was achieved. I managed to interview five

participants. Participants were chosen according to a criterion that serves its purpose from the study.

This study included the following groups:

- Race: Classified as an Indian individual
- Ethnicity: Born and grew up in South Africa
- Sex: Female participants
- Age: Individuals over the age of 18 years old
- Sexuality: Individuals who identify exclusively as lesbian will be targeted.

This excluded the following groups:

- Races: African, White, Coloured, or other individuals
- Ethnicity: Individuals who were not born in South Africa as well as expatriates or others.
- Sex: Transgendered individuals identifying as lesbian and male individuals or others.
- Age: Participants below the age of 18 years old
- Sexuality: Heterosexual individuals and queer men or others.
- Vulnerable individuals

Participants based in Gauteng were only considered at first, but due to a lack of forthcoming participants, other provinces were included. This can be considered as a limitation of the study, but it is important to collect data until saturation is achieved.

Data was collected via online/telephonic interviews via WhatsApp and Zoom platforms.

Gatekeepers involved in this study were LGBT friendly organisations. This included contacting people such as Anthony Waldhausen, the founder and director of the Gay and Lesbian Network based in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, and Kim Lithgrow at Same Love Toti in Amanzimtoti, Durban, KwaZulu Natal. Prominent individuals working in this sector were also approached, these included Prof Juan Nel.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The author manually transcribed the interview recordings and kept strict records of each participant's contributions to the research process. A thematic analysis was most appropriate to sift through the rich data. Different parts of different theories were applied to themes that emerged to substantiate and clarify the information received. This also showed that there is no one theory that accommodates everyone's coming out process.

According to Gibbs (2010), coding is seen as "linking chunks of data(text) as representations of the same phenomena" and Alan Bryman's four stages of qualitative analysis was the proposed route to be followed when sifting through the data. The first stage is reading the text, what it is about, major themes, unusual issues, and grouping cases into categories. During the second stage, we need to read the text again and mark the text in margins, labelling themes and highlighting keywords. Thirdly, coding the text systematically begins. This is where we label the paragraphs and eliminate, group, or combine different themes. In the fourth and final stage, we relate general theoretical ideas to the text by adding our interpretation of the themes, looking at interconnections, and relating the themes to the research question and its significance for respondents. Gibbs (2010) also states that Grounded Theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis, template analysis as well as framework analysis are all types of thematic analysis. When applied codes to data which are in the form of sentences, paragraphs and allow these coded passages to overlap. Themes can be about, acts, such as brief events and activities that are of longer duration in a setting that people involved. Meanings are also important in finding out what directs participant's actions by clarifying what concepts they use to understand their world and what meaning or significance it has for them. Participation is another theme with regards to people's involvement or their adaptation to a setting. The setting can be the entire context of the events under study as well as relationships between people that can be considered simultaneously (Gibbs, 2010).

The process that was followed included:

1. Transcribing interviews

2. Reading through all transcriptions.
3. Using different colours, highlighted different sections in each participant's transcript using the questionnaire as a guideline.
4. Correlated all same colours across all transcripts on another document differentiating which participant said what.
5. Scanned for individual themes and overarching themes.
6. Integrated themes with theory.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality and anonymity are important when undertaking research as the individuals should be protected from exposure to victimisation. Section 14 of the Constitution enshrines the individual's right to privacy and this Constitutional protection should be vigorously protected. Research participants were engaged in a professional yet empathetic position. The perils of oversensitising participants to potential harm can become a source of harm and steps and to minimise any harm after participation should be taken. Responsible research practices are also constitutionally mandated in Chapter 2 Section 12 (2) which addresses issues concerning bodily, psychological integrity, and informed consent (The Constitution of South African, 1996, p. 6).

The participant as a person was respected and treated as a unique human being. To avoid harm to participants both mentally and physically they provided their informed consent and any concerns raised by the participants were addressed. The researcher explained the various roles and responsibilities to the participants. Participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study. It is important to note that should a participant elect to leave the study debriefing and or counselling will be made available to them. Participants were provided with accurate and adequate information throughout the process. The participants were made aware that there will be a publication or release of the findings, but their personal information shall remain private unless they express permission and consent is given.

According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa, Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 Of 1974) Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners Registered Under the Health Professions Act, 1974, Chapter 10 deals with the research and publication ethical issues will be applied.

Participants may find that re-living their life events during interviews, may cause mental distress. Psychological risks may be experienced during participation in the research and/or afterwards as a result of participating in the research. These risks include anxiety, stress, fear, confusion, embarrassment, depression, guilt, shock, loss of self-esteem, and/or altered behaviour.

Should the need arise, participants were provided with information for psychological services. The document labelled as "Assistance Information" attached, is also a list of potential service providers that can provide help to participants willing to seek free or paid assistance.

Risks or threats to reliability or validity include the researcher, the subjects participating in the project, the situation or social context, and the method of data collection and analysis. Researcher bias and researcher incompetency can influence the constancy of the data considerably. This risk is decreased by making the researcher aware of the possibility of introducing bias at different stages of the research process. During the data collection and analysis period, regular check-ins with the researcher's supervisor was beneficial in being aware of research bias. Subject bias may occur when they want to position themselves in a better light or vice versa (Brink, 1995). According to Brink increasing the validity of responses can be done:

- Making sure informants are very clear on the nature of the research.
- Building a trust relationship with the subject
- Interviewing the same informant on several occasions
- Keeping accurate and detailed field notes
- Showing field notes to a second outside researcher who is competent in assessing the responses of participants.

This list was strictly adhered to by providing participants information on the research study, answering any questions they had, transcribing their interviews, having someone check the themes that emanated from the research.

The participant has the right to insist that their name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about their involvement in this research study. Their answers were given a pseudonym and they were referred to in this way in the data, any future publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Their answers were reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research was done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, supervising lecturers, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Participants' anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles, and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants are not identifiable in such a report. It must be noted that it is impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity – however every possible measure has been taken to safeguard the participants privacy.

Hard copies of participant answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be password protected as well as being stored on a password-protected computer or drive. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Should information be destroyed, hard copies will be shredded, and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software program.

According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017, p. 1) a researcher is deemed as trustworthy if they can illustrate that their data analysis has being “conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible” and this has been delineated in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH FINDINGS

Five research participants were interviewed for this study. Due to the COVID-19 infection and university ethical guidelines, online audio and video interviews were conducted. These participants met the research criteria. Participants will be referred to as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 respectively, to ensure anonymity for purposes of this study. A brief participant description is provided, and then individual themes will be discussed.

Table 2

Participant information summary.

	Age	Religion	Region	Industry	Current Relationship Status	Initially Coming Out	Family	Interview
P1	40s	Muslim	Gauteng	IT - position of authority	Partnered - 7 years - Interracial relationship	20s - to family, after university	Father, mother and 1 sister	2 x 2 hour Zoom (Video)
P2	30s	Christian	Gauteng	IT - position of authority	Married - 10 years - Interracial relationship	Teens - to friend in high school and later to family whilst working	Father (deceased), mother, 1 sister, wife and 1 daughter	1 x 3 hour Zoom (video)
P3	60s	Muslim	Gauteng	Law & Education - position of authority	Partnered - 16 years - Interracial relationship	Teens - girlfriend in high school and to brother.	Father (deceased), mother, 5 sisters and 1 brother	1 x 1 hour WhatsApp (audio) 1 x 1hour Zoom (video)
P4	30s	Muslim	Gauteng	IT & Education - position of authority	Partnered - 9 years	Has never come out.	Father (deceased), mother and 2 sisters	1 x 2 hour Zoom (video & audio)
P5	20s	Hindu	KwaZulu Natal	Law - entry level position	Single	Teens - to friend in school, then was forced to come out to family whilst at university.	Father (deceased), mother, 2 sisters and 1 brother	1 x 3 hour Zoom (video)

Participant 1

P1 is in her 40s and resides in Gauteng and grew up in a middle-class family in Johannesburg South. She works within the Information Technology (IT) field and is in a position of authority. Her family were businesspeople and owned and operated businesses within the Johannesburg CBD. While

she was growing up P1 would assist her family in the business. She had a sheltered upbringing to due segregation laws such as the Group Areas Act and had nominal exposure to people of other races and gay people. She placed considerable emphasis on her education and saw it as a means to attain independence. She has been involved with the PRIDE movement for many years and advocates widely for LGBTIQ rights and education. She was born into an orthodox Muslim family and still identifies as Muslim. P1 came out to her family in her 20s, soon after completing her studies. She has a mother, father, and younger sister. Their reaction to her sexuality has evolved considerably through the years. Although homophobic P1's sister was there to assist her materially and practically when she endured a difficult breakup in her 30's. After experiencing an armed robbery in her home P1's family, and in particular her father was adamant that she return to the family home as her safety was of paramount importance. He assured her that as an adult the family would not interfere in her choices. P1 describes herself as neither masculine nor feminine but gender neutral. P1 further describes herself as an assertive, confident, and independent individual. She states that "I have a strong sense of confidence, and I became very comfortable in myself". She now lives with her partner of approximately 7 years with whom she is in an interracial relationship. Race has not been a point of contention in their relationship.

The following 4 themes were identified through the interview process for P1:

- Theme 1: Living Life: "... innately who I am, has always been."
- Theme 2: Indianness & Religion – Lifting the carpet?
- Theme 3: Race, Riots and Rainbows
- Theme 4: Advocacy & Understanding LGBT

Theme 1: Living Life: "... innately who I am, has always been."

Theme 1 was named Living Life: "... innately who I am, has always been" because during the interview Participant 1 repeatedly stated that "she is who she is" meaning that she has embraced all aspects of herself including her sexuality and that she is self-assured and secure in her sense of self.

“I kind of created a space where I could actually transition to a more comfortable version of me...I started accepting what I like. If I like short hair, I cut my hair...I started creating my own identity in terms of how I felt, what I wanted.”

P1 is very comfortable in expressing who she is in her authentic self. She is not apologetic about her identity and is largely the author of her own identity “I've come to like; I don't give a fuck what you think.” P1 describes herself as having always been extroverted, confident and strong from childhood. This stood her in good stead in being resilient to the negativity she has experienced as an Indian lesbian in South Africa. She is viewed as being congruent in juggling her public and private self in different contexts.

Theme 2: Indianness & Religion – Lifting the carpet?

Theme 2 was based upon P1's references to “sweeping things under the carpet.” This idiom refers to the practice of hiding something from public view that the is deemed to be potentially damaging to someone's reputation. P1 frequently used this idiom to describe how her family would not discuss her sexual orientation within the family constellation nor outside. According to P1 the refusal to acknowledge something that is uncomfortable or to confront it is common within the Indian community. The inclusion of the word carpet is also an indirect reference to P1's religion as Muslims use a prayer mat or carpet called a sajjāda or namazlık. Furthermore, P1 refers to domesticity and cleanliness as part of the indoctrination process of what is considered appropriate gender roles within her community. A carpet – as a common household item is an example of this.

P1 grew up in a sheltered Indian community during the apartheid era. She had very limited exposure to the world outside of her immediate community and little to no knowledge of different world views and experiences. She mentioned that despite all the different religions within the community, you were first and foremost Indian. “It was a fruit salad...everyone celebrated everything.” Growing up as an Indian girl in the community you are also “indoctrinated” into your gender role in doing household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and acting like a girl. She describes the expectation that you are required to study, get married, have children, and run a household. When

coming out to her family at first, she stated that her mother did not understand her lifestyle, a term that is used in the Muslim community for being gay. Her dad was quiet, and her sister was homophobic. She stated that as with everything in the Indian community, that was not dealt with... “it was swept under the carpet,” because if people were to know, then, “What would people say?” This is a common phrase used in the Indian community. P1 also stated that she found solace in religion during her coming out process but the more her religion “denounced” her lifestyle, the more she withdrew. She tried to find support in a religious Muslim group that sought to bridge the gap between religion and sexuality but found it was too superficial for her. This is an example of a social change strategy called social creativity as discussed in Chapter 2: Theoretical Approaches under Tajfel’s (1979) Social Identity Theory. Currently, she observes certain traditions and believes that Islam is a religion that promotes nonjudgement, “Islam also teaches you one thing and that teaches you not to be judgmental.”

Theme 3: Race, Riots and Rainbows

The title for this theme was based upon P1’s experience of racism within the LBGTIQ+ community. In 2012 the Gay Pride parade was disrupted by black protesters demanding racial change and ethnic diversity within the Pride board of directors. This was an incident of public violence and nearly resulted in a riot thus the inclusion of the word riots in the theme. Rainbow was included in the title of this theme as the rainbow is an internationally recognised symbol of Gay Pride.

P1 has had negative incidents such as a white, male, heterosexual shopper calling her a “fat Indian lesbian” and a black lesbian stating that “for a black person, you think more like a white person” and that she “should sort herself out.” She stated that when she was called a “fat Indian lesbian,” it was not so much that she was gay but found that people specifically found fault with her race.

She was also refused funding at work where a more senior employee (male, heterosexual and Indian and Muslim) in the company told her that she should look at her lifestyle and why would she ask him (knowing fully that he would decline) her funding request. A colleague also sarcastically remarked that she looked “handsome and just needed a tie.” This was a jab directed at her sexuality

(knowing that she was lesbian but did not want to be viewed as wanting to be a man as she was comfortable in her body). She has called attention to the positive impact that having other gay and lesbian people in higher positions within the professional environment has had on her. It was important to have her “clan” so that she did not feel victimised by people overriding her decisions just because she was gay.

She also recalled a demonstration at one of the Pride parades where a black activist group disrupted a “lily-white” looking parade and demanded answers of why there were no black people on the Pride committee and why was the parade not being taken into the townships. The demonstration turned into a violent protest and people were hurt in the commotion. She stated that she was embarrassed and shocked by the behaviour of activists, academics, and her community. The meaning behind the Pride parade was lost and it was turned into a negative racial incident that was broadcast internationally. When people then think of South Africa, the emphasis is on corrective rape, homophobia, and discrimination. This is the legacy of apartheid.

Theme 4: Advocacy & Understanding LGBT

The title for this theme was selected as P1 has a strong commitment to advocating for the rights of the LGBT community and as education as a tool for acceptance and understanding of the community. A comprehensive discussion of this is elaborated within the theme.

P1 is actively involved in the LGBT community. She states that more investment needs to be done in the education and empowerment sector of the LGBT community. Through this, P1 believes that negative aspects can be addressed but more importantly positive aspects of LGBT in South Africa with awareness both domestically and internationally. The community should not be used for superficial corporate social development and money-making purposes, but genuinely finance the cause of the community and foster well-being. She also states that there needs to be more tolerance within the LGBT community as there is much infighting. There is also a need for individuals to identify themselves on the LGBT spectrum by trying to be inclusive and adding acronyms, pronouns, and colours in the LGBT community but, they need to understand that if people within the community

have difficulty understanding these terms, it may be more difficult for people outside the community to understand this information. “Everyone needs a place [], we are differentiating ourselves to create a label to understand ourselves.” She advocates for a position of acceptance and understanding. She is also of the view that terms such as queer had a previous negative connotation but has since been re-appropriated by the younger generation and has a positive meaning within that context. She cautions that the younger generation should also not use terms carelessly and they often label themselves as something that they are not. This could be due to social media sensitisation.

Participant 2

P2 is in her 30s and lives in Gauteng. She has been married to her partner for 10 years and they have one daughter. P2 describes herself as a tomboyish lesbian. She is employed in the IT field. She was born into a devout Christian family and was forced to come out to her family in high school. Her family constellation includes her wife, her daughter, her mother, her sister, and her father who is deceased. She is in an interracial relationship and there have been no concerns in their marriage regarding race and she sees their shared religious beliefs as a positive contribution to their relationship. P2 made no mention of apartheid, race or the Group Areas Act in terms of her background but frequently mentions the role that her faith has had on her as a comfort. P2’s father was physically violent towards her mother, and she stabbed him during a domestic dispute protecting her mother. Although her father is now deceased P2 is proud that her wife was never exposed to his violent behaviour even though she met him on many occasions. P2 takes considerable pride in her daughter who is an Indian white mixed-race child. She describes her daughter as so beautiful that she has done baby modelling for advertisements and is proud that the money that has been obtained has been placed aside for her education.

The following 4 themes were identified through the interview process for P2:

- Theme 1: The Protector
- Theme 2: Violence All Round
- Theme 3: Institutional Transformation

- Theme 4: Anger, Grief & Loss

Theme 1: The Protector

P2 identifies strongly with the role of a protector. This theme discusses this role that she has assigned herself. She protected her mother from domestic violence from her father and malicious community gossip. She protected herself in her relationship when she asked her sister for help when her previous girlfriend assaulted her. She has protected herself from the views of other people and protected her wife from “seeing that side of me, that side of my family.” She has also always been in a role of responsibility and had to take care of religious and cultural rituals when her father died from a heart attack.

Theme 2: Violence All Round

P2 has experienced, witnessed, and participated in physical violence within her family as a child and young adult and in her previous romantic relationships. Growing up, lived in a hostile environment because her father was an alcoholic and was physically abusive to her mother. Physical violence also featured in her stabbing her father to defend her mother in a domestic dispute as well as a previous romantic relationship. Unfortunately, South Africa has a high prevalence of domestic violence which is no less in Indian households however the intrinsic relationship between violence within the Indian community is described as “Violence was endemic in the experience of indenture. Sometimes it turned inwards. Women were often on the receiving end” (Desai and Vahed, 2010, p.5).

Theme 3: Institutional Transformation

P2 found support for herself in friends, her family (mother and sister) as well as her faith. She advocates for institutional transformation. She believes that there should be a support network of resources available to lesbians who have been rendered homeless due to their sexuality. She advocates for practical solutions such as accommodation, financial assistance, and access to other support services. She thinks that “It comes down to the support structure or a safe place that people can go to because they would obviously be a lot of backlash for anyone coming out for them to know that, listen, you can pick up the phone and speak to someone who can relate to what you're going

through and tell you, listen as bad as it sounds your life doesn't have to end now, it does get better.” She is also of the opinion that “teaching, like the community that it's okay to be different and it's okay to just let your children be happy regardless of what or who that happiness might be with,” is difficult as, “I feel like they're very set in their ways.”

Theme 4: Anger, Grief & Loss

This theme relates to the emotions that P2 experienced during the relationship she had with her father. P2 states that her relationship with her father has always been strained. When he died, she couldn't cry because “growing up in an abusive home, every time it happened in my mind, I wished this man was dead, I swear to God, I wished he had just had alcohol poisoning and dropped down and died.” She had lost her father many times and when he finally died and felt numb. She stated that her father “always wanted a son” and paradoxically assumed the duties of a son whilst conducting funeral rites.

Participant 3

P3 is in her 60s and resides in Gauteng. She is in a domestic partnership and is cohabiting with her partner of 16 years. She was born into a Muslim family and states that she is more spiritual than religious. She is in a high-ranking position in the field of Education and Law. As a child and adolescent P3 had limited exposure to gay people. She knew from approximately age 10 that there was something different about her. She looked for information at the local library about homosexuality which was all negative. By age 13 she had made up her own mind about homosexuality and that it was not wrong or sinful despite the literature she had found saying otherwise. P3 came out in high school to her then-girlfriend and her older brother. P3's brother has been very supportive of her and she of him. P3 stresses the importance of having studied at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and how Cape Town was seen as a similar destination city for the gay community in South Africa as San Francisco is in the United States of America. P3 encountered challenges in accessing higher education as both a woman and as a person of colour. She stresses that this was even more restrictive as an Indian woman from a conservative culture. Although she has never directly come out to her family, they are hospitable to

her partner. P3 describes herself as neither feminine nor masculine. Due to time limitations P3 was not able to avail herself as much to interviews but was able to provide incredibly valuable context and information to the research project.

One theme was identified from the information obtained from P3:

- Theme 1: Past Discrimination Lingers

Theme 1: Past Discrimination Lingers

Participant 3 grew up during a particularly tubulous period during apartheid during the 1970s. She states that during her time people “it was very risky to come out and people didn't even name themselves necessarily, [] unless they were confident.” Participant 3 describes the layers of oppression namely race, class, sexuality, and gender within the apartheid context as “is a lot to work through. And a lot to break down a lot too. So, people really struggled in my time.” Participant 3 describes being gay during her time as “terrible” and observes that the position of Indian lesbians in South Africa is now considerably better than in other places. Participant 3 stated that “I figured that out very quickly during apartheid that just because someone is gay doesn't mean that they are progressive a lot of abusers were gay.” This is similar to the contemporary experiences of P1.

P3 had very limited time available but still provided valuable information, especially in regards to the Apartheid era.

Participant 4

P4 is in her 30s and lives in Gauteng. She is divorced and currently resides with her partner of 9 years. She was born into a Muslim family but is agnostic as she does not practice any religion. She works in the E-learning. P4 is the second born of three daughters and her father passed away when she was 10 years old. She was close to her father. She has never come out to her family and denies questions about her sexuality despite her younger sister having caught her being physically intimate with a girl. Her sister uses this as emotional ammunition during arguments. P4 has experienced extreme pressure to confirm to heterosexual expectations from how she dressed as an adolescent to dating boys. P4 also has a history of enmeshed relationships where she has had a girlfriend and a

boyfriend who then dated each other after her relationships with them had ended. P4 show insight into her past romantic relationships. She had experienced deep betrayal and is open about her sexuality to a very small, select group of friends. Her partner who is also an Indian Muslim is inconspicuous about their relationship and mindful of community gossip.

The three themes identified for P4 are:

- Theme 1: Disconnect and Denial
- Theme 2: Betrayal
- Theme 3: Community Gossip

Theme 1: Disconnect and Denial

P4 is disconnected from her religion as she doesn't agree with substantial amounts of religious philosophy, especially the acceptance of gay people: "I think for me, look, to be honest with you, there's a lot that I don't agree with, in my religion. So, it wasn't really a conflict thing for me. I think for me, it was just like, you need to accept people, but then God is telling you, you can only accept these people." P4 also showed disconnection in her previous relationship and was both physically and emotionally distant from people. Examples include her fiancé in Dubai who would visit approximately 3 times a year. In another relationship, her girlfriend relocated to the United Kingdom and after declaring her love to her "just went rogue. I stopped speaking to her completely. [] went off the grid." Her mother also forbade her from seeing her group of friends. She also created emotional distance between her and her friends by not disclosing the nature of her long-term romantic relationship. She has also physically distanced herself by stating "nobody stays where I am, there's no one I know." Her mother and sister have repeatedly asked her about the rumours concerning her current relationship which she denies.

Theme 2: Betrayal

P4 has been betrayed on numerous occasions in her intimate relationships. She was betrayed by a former fiancé who threatened to disclosure her sexual orientation on social media; "he obviously threatened that he was going to like tell everybody." She was then betrayed by the woman she had

romantic feelings towards who befriended her former fiancé. P4 felt betrayed by her family who pushed her to reconcile with her husband after they had separated three times in one year. She was later betrayed by her ex-husband who non-consensually disclosed her sexuality to her to her family. Her ex-husband used her sexuality as an excuse for the failure of their relationship. He then befriended a woman with whom she was romantically involved and started a relationship with her “we eventually got divorced, he actually befriended her. And then they started dating. It was so messed up.”

Theme 3: Community Gossip

P4 like all the other participants interviewed has an aversion to community gossip. She describes gossip with the Indian community as “Indian communities are so small, everybody just talks and, you know, everybody knows everything that happens with everyone.” P4 and her current partner are cautious in not arousing suspicions and state that “we were quite careful in that sense. And like if my mum heard and she's like, you know, people are speaking.” P4 is particularly concerned about the victimisation of her mother in particular, as being held responsible for her sexuality, “If I have to tell her it would be like, what would her family say? That's like her biggest thing. It's almost like she's a failure in their eyes because they, you know, they gave us such a hard time.”

Participant 5

P5 is in her 20s and lives in KZN. She is single and was born into a conservative Hindu family. Her family are well known in their local community and assisted with the building of a Hindu Temple in the community. Her father is deceased and died when she was a child. She voluntarily disclosed her sexuality to her best friend in High School and was then forced to disclose her sexuality to her family while working and studying law. She has two older sisters, a brother, and a mother. After her sexuality was exposed to her family P5 was taken to numerous priests and religious figures by her mother in an attempt to turn her into a heterosexual. These priests and religious figures performed prayers and blessings in an attempt to remedy her. P5 suffered financial and psychological trauma when her sexuality was involuntarily exposed to her family. She feared for her life, had to vacate the family

home for several months and has not fully reconciled with her siblings. Despite numerous obstacles she has showed resilience and perseverance in her personal and professional life.

The three themes identified for P5 are as follows.

- Theme 1: A Series of Unfortunate Events
- Theme 2: Institutional Transformation
- Theme 3: The Cost of Coming Out

Theme 1: A Series of Unfortunate Events

A Series of Unfortunate Events refers to the 2017 television series and series of books of the same name. This television and book series is used in an analogy with reference to the experiences of P5. P5 refers to herself as an orphan in her interview and A Series of Unfortunate Events explores the experiences of siblings who are suddenly and tragically orphaned. Thematically, A Series of Unfortunate Events explores family dynamics, substitute parents, alienation, and family secrets. These are all highlighted in P5's interview.

P5's father died when she was 14 years old. Her older siblings intervened and filled the emotional and material needs that arose due to this loss. When she came out her immediate family and extended family excluded her entirely from the discussions and exiled her for six months to stay with her maternal aunt. P5 felt like she had lost her family as her brother and sister were ready to kill her. "We were literally at Westville, like just passing the Westville offramp and they turn around the vehicle and took me back to Phoenix, to my aunt's house." P5 has had financial difficulties particularly with regards to funding her tertiary education. It has had to be postponed at various times. P5 has had unsuccessful relationships and has attempted suicide. P5 describes the impact of finance on her previous relationship as "financially it was very hard and that was one of our issues." P5's previous girlfriend developed a cancerous brain tumour and subsequently left her. P5 is proud that she has always stood her ground and has shown resilience in completing her studies, purchasing her own motor vehicle and "my mother saw I was independent and strong, carving out a space for myself."

Theme 2: Institutional Transformation

As someone who has not received the appropriate assistance in vulnerable moments whether they be academic or psychosocial, P5 is a strong proponent of providing adequate resources both material and emotional to those in need. P5 describes one particular with a helpline as follows: "They gave me, they called me, and they gave me like 30 minutes. And once the two minutes of the call was done, they were like sorry we need to go." P5 aspires to one day be in a position to be an example within her community. In terms of material support, P5 is practical in her approach to organize "like something where, you know, like, a flat or build like some sort of complex or something. So, when people shun these lesbians out, they have somewhere to go to not where they feel like orphans or where they feel burdens, but something where they can, you know, I don't know, stay at, find a job, or have like systems where, you know, there's like a company built and you can have them work there. Right. Uh, have them earn something and then come back and pay, you know, their rent and those things." This level of support is an example of the fourth strategy of Tajfel's (1979) Social Identity Theory and is also discussed by P2 and P5.

Theme 3: The Cost of Coming Out

P5 describes herself as "the abandoned one." P5 used the phrase outcast several times to describe her current status within the family constellation. She has also been saddened by apparent favouritism shown to her brother and cousins "my family bought him a car. I don't get that. I wasn't like gifted things like my family, like my sister or whatever, she would go overseas, go to India, buy stuff. My cousins would get everything. I wouldn't get anything. I've always been an outcast in that way." She describes her feelings "I was broken at the fact that, well, firstly, I was heartbroken." P5 describes her suicide attempts as "I tried to hang myself, that failed. I tried to slit my wrists. I tried to take tablets that kind of worked." She attempted suicide during 2011 when she first came out and again in 2020 when she went through a dark period in her life.

Conclusion

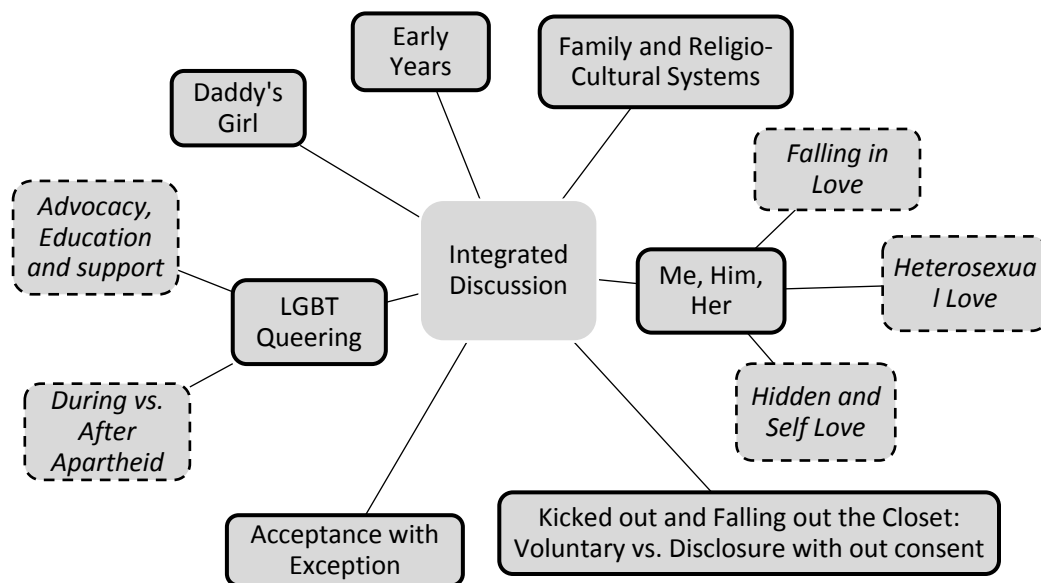
In this chapter individual themes were discussed in each of the five participants context. This was elaborated upon by using information relayed by the participants themselves. Each participant was introduced and thereafter, individual themes were discussed. Cautionary protocols were also implemented due the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER 6 – INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

In this chapter, overarching themes amongst participants will be discussed. This will allow for an examination of a larger context of participant experiences in each theme as well as the integration of different theories.

Chart 1

Themes and subthemes.



Daddy's Girl

The term Daddy's Girl is a multi-layered colloquialism that refers to the relationship between a female child and her father. For the purposes of this research the term daughter shall be used instead of girl as all the participants are adult females and not children. There are various connotations to this term depending on the context in which it is used. The term may mean that the daughter and her father are exceptionally emotionally connected, it may mean that the female child is given financial support and assistance by her father and is spoiled. However, at its core the term refers to emotional intimacy between the father and daughter and this is what is explored in this section of the research. Some of the participants experienced violent and abusive relationships with their fathers, some experienced distant and aloof relationships and some experienced relationships that have evolved more positively over time.

P1's father largely remained neutral during her coming out process. She described her relationship with her father as "a typical Indian father." His initial attitude to her sexual disclosure was largely not acknowledging or addressing the issue. His role and attitude have however evolved according to P1's needs as after having a home invasion he invited her to return to the family home to create a safe space for her, "come back home, we're not going to ask you too many questions and we're not really going to get involved in your life because you old enough to do what you want to do, but you can't live there now, you at risk."

P2 had a tumultuous relationship with her father, "Nobody told my father because my father and I didn't have the best relationship because of his abusive side." She stated that he was a violent alcoholic and she had to defend her mother on several occasions, including stabbing her father. He was emotionally dead to her before he was physically dead to her. She also states that "I think, for my father, he was probably hoping for a son, and he got me, so I didn't really fit the role."

P3's father died when she was in her 40's. She stated that "it was a great relief because it made lifestyle choices, like living on my own, living with my partner easier."

P4's father died when she was 10 years old. She had a very close relationship with her father and "I stepped up and I kind of felt like I needed to be the strong one in the family. So, I used to do all the, changing the light bulbs and sorting the stuff out. I think because when he would do stuff, I was always with him, you know, so I always learned what he did and then I would try it out and, you know, so like they always used to laugh and say, he would say to me, you're the son I never had that he always wanted because I was that kid for him, you know?" This description is similar to that described by P2 within the family dynamic.

P5's father died when she was 14 and she didn't have an intimate relationship with him as he was busy with commercial activities. Upon his death, her older sister stepped into the role of provider for her. "When my dad passed away, I was 14, but I'd never missed my father because of her [sister]."

The Pew Research Centre in America is an unbiased organisation that carries out surveys, population studies, media content analysis, and other observational social science research. It

acquires information from the public, to enlighten society on certain trends and issues. A survey done in 2013, states that 67% of lesbians came out to their mothers as opposed to the 45% of lesbians that have come out to their fathers. The reasons given by participants on why they did not come out to their parents are that it was not important, or the subject never came up and that they felt their parents were not “accepting or understanding of this, or they worried about how it would affect their relationship with their parent” (Pew Research Centre, 2013, p. 49).

One wonders if the father in each of the five participants lives is an obstacle to the coming out process. While it seems that mothers bear the brunt of the community gossips, insults and questions about their child’s perceived behaviour or sexuality. It is perhaps an indication of the overt, covert, or imagined violence that Indian women experience under patriarchy. For Indians in South Africa, this can be traced back to the period of Indian indenture. Desai and Vahed (2010, p.6) state that “There was tension between the new identities and possibilities that the act of migration opened up for women, and the desire of men to assert traditional patriarchal roles” (Desai and Vahed, 2010, p.6).

Early Years

In this section the developmental years of the participants are discussed.

During adolescence, P1 describes having no sexual feelings towards boys and compared to other teenage girls considered herself to be a late bloomer. Growing up P1 labelled herself as curious. She remembers going to the hairdresser with her mother on a Saturday and being assisted by a gay man. She was fascinated by him and asked him “‘how do you know if you're different?’ and he said to me, and I'll never forget, he said to me, ‘you know, maybe you are different.’” P1 also recalled an incident during high school when two girls were caught kissing. The community responded by gossiping and P1 paid little attention to it. P2 was very involved with her Church and activities surrounding the Church such as choir. Growing up, she used to be involved with the Church as an escape from an abusive home life. She dated boys but did not engage in physical relationships with them. By the age of 10 years old P3 knew she was “different” and around age thirteen, through reading books and materials she could find she had made up her “own mind about what sin was.” This was

during the 1970s where she was not allowed to play with children of different races because of the segregation laws. She was very politically conscious and progressive in this regard. However, P4 had feelings for girls but did not understand what it was and why hence she “just brushed it off.” P4 describes “I grew up a tomboy, even like when I was younger in primary school [] I was very close to my boy cousins.” P5 noticed the difference between her and her female cousins at an early age: “I was always confused. I mean, my female cousins one was like carrying a handbag when she was like 10 years old. I was busy climbing trees or sweep down the pine trees or building go-carts and those things.” During high school P5 was not sure of her feelings and was not really attracted to boys she did however develop feelings for a girl as states that “for some odd reason instead of like charming her or giving flowers or buying a chocolate, I would stand on the hill and throw stones at her at school.”

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre in America, in 2013, reveals that 38% of lesbians felt that they were different between the ages 10 to fourteen years old. This correlates with participants feelings during this stage of their lives, as well as in relation to Erik Erikson’s stage five of adolescence, identity versus role confusion dilemmas during human development. Fifty-three percent of lesbians noted that they came out after twenty years or older (Pew Research Centre, 2013; Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998).

Growing up P1’s mother would determine her wardrobe and allowed her to wear clothes that P1 preferred but on special occasions, her mother would “she would always say, you know, like we are going [out] but you have to wear this and she would take out this dress... or something even more hideous.” As a child P4 expressed that she would frequently fight with her mother about the way she was dressed. She hated wearing dresses and that she needed to be “dressed a certain way, look a certain way.” She also stated, “I did not understand what that [being lesbian] was or, you know, why I felt like I needed to dress a certain way.” The confusion and conflict of what P4 was experiencing about her sexuality internally are demonstrated in the conflict with her mother about the dresses. She stated that her father was more relaxed about her sense of dressing and would tell her mother to leave her to wear what she wanted. Her father’s, as well as society’s tolerance, was what theorist, Erik

Erikson would call a “psychosocial moratorium” which is the tolerance of one’s rebellious nature during one’s identity versus role confusion stage (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998, p.53). This can extend into adulthood for those like P4. She stated that it “killed” her mother because she “wouldn’t dress the way she wanted her to.” She went from having long hair and wearing heels to having short hair and wearing jeans and sneakers. P5 describes herself as being “very tomboyish... very handsome, short haircut.” In terms of wardrobe, she was able to “carry the butch and femme look, I didn’t care.” As discussed in the theoretical framework in terms of the work of Judith Butler and social constructionism, both sex and gender are performed. P1 and P4 describe how as children they would frequently fight with their mothers about the way they were dressed. Their mothers placing pressure on them to dress a certain way is an example of the performance of a gender role.

Family and Religio-Race Cultural Systems

This title relates to each participant’s upbringing in a religio-race cultural system. The research scope identifies Indian, South African lesbian woman as the research group but does not specify their religious group. This allows for a more inclusive examination of the similarities and differences experienced.

According to P1 “You know our religion is not just our culture and traditions, because we all Indians it doesn’t matter if you Tamil, Hindu, Muslim, Christian we all share that very same commonality around traditions and culture, and that already makes homosexuality taboo. Then you add the different religions [] so not only did you have a race group that had prejudices built into it you also had religion within that race group that added to the prejudices.” P1 states that because talking about heterosexual sex or sex in general was taboo, it was unfathomable that Indian parents were going to broach the subject of sexuality with their children. P4 stated that the extent of her sexual education at home was limited to her mother telling her to not come home pregnant.

P1 states that “For some reason, parents feel like they have to answer to the entire community or explain themselves. Also, I think Indians are more reserved.” P2 feels that there is more pressure on Indian lesbians to conform to the heterosexual norm as they feel that their parents assume

responsibility for their adult children regardless of their age. According to P2, Indian parents are boastful about the perceived achievements of their children. This include having a husband and kids hence "it's more pressure from the community and as a child, you never want to disappoint your parents. you never, and it's seen as somewhat of a shameful thing." When P3 was asked if she was put under societal pressure to confirm she responded, "We all were."

According to P4 "Indian communities are so small, everybody just talks and, you know, everybody knows everything that happens with everyone." P2 found that the hardest part about coming out was moving in with her ex-girlfriend and the gossip that her mother had to endure "[] the entire church then found out about it. But nobody had the guts to come and ask me about it. Everybody sort of came down hard on my mother and asked her, but as a pastor's daughter, how can she allow me to live like that? So, my mother kept telling me about it and I told her, just tell people to pick up the phone and ask me. And just tell people that you raise your children to a point and further than that you can't be responsible for their decisions. Nobody can hold you accountable for my choices." P3 like P2 had to provide her mother with an answer to the question of why she is not married. P4 like P2 also experienced gossip-mongering as when she got divorced her mother-in-law told everyone she was a lesbian. Growing up P4's mother was harshly judged by her own family for bringing up her children without a father. P4 is concerned that if she had to come out to her mother "what would her family say? That's like her biggest thing. It's almost like she's a failure in their eyes because they, you know, they gave us such a hard time." P4 emphasises that the biggest question in an Indian community is "what would people think?" P4 states that although she did not have a good relationship with her mother growing up, she could not subject her to that. P4 says that as she grows older, she avoids drawing attention to herself and avoids places where there are large groups of Indian people. P5 states that when she came out the Indian community was particularly harsh on her family, "people do rub it in, to be honest society itself do rub it in". This was especially true as her family had built a temple in their community. Similarly, to P2, P5 stated that people spoke to her elders, namely her sisters, but never asked her questions regarding her sexuality. She states that in Indian society

many people try and meddle in other people's business. P5 reports that being gay in the Indian community is not easy and that "You've got to worry about family. You've got to worry about manipulation in family, manipulation out there."

P1 stated that when she was done studying and had a good job and a paid-up car, "could push the boundaries because I could afford to actually just if you threw me out, I could live." She was also not going to end up on the streets or in a shelter, "because they were always too worried about what people would say." P3 made a deliberate and conscious decision to place herself in a financial position that would mitigate the negative risk to her coming out. She focused on professional development and financial independence. "So, I utilised that strategy and it was actually an active plan of mine that if I want to live the life I wanted to live, I will have to secure for myself a roof over my head I had to secure for myself financial independence so that I would never get kicked out of anyone's house." P1 says, "It's how we are. It is what it is, how we are as a community. The carpet is there."

P1 states that she has not denounced her religion and that there is no perfect Muslim. During P1's realisation process she sought comfort through prayer but distanced herself when she started drinking and battled with understanding and accepting her sexuality in the context of religion. She stated, "As a Muslim, we will have nothing to do with a gay person, even if it's our own child, we will disown you." She also withdrew the more people told her that being gay was wrong and that they would denounce her. This is similar to Sheila Jeffrets in Kritzinger (1995) that describes how labels pathologise women who challenge patriarchal. This is echoed in P1's experience. This corresponds to P2's experience who found comfort in her faith while coming out but did not find comfort in people of the same religious community. P1 is of the opinion that she knows she is a Muslim, does not need to practice and there are some cultural and religious practices that she does maintain such as a Halaal kitchen and observance of Ramadan. P1 tried to find support in a gay Muslim organisation that advertised that it bridged the gap between religion and sexuality, she was however disappointed and did not return. She describes her reconciliation with religion as follows; "I don't believe that God's

going to punish me for being true to my authentic self. I think it would be the greatest sin if I had to follow the norm.”

P2 grew up in the church “and is strong in her faith. I do not need to go to church to know where I stand with my Lord.” She has never had to question her sexuality and her faith as she believes that God would not make her fall in love with the wrong person. Having a strongly religious family background P2 states that she has needed to be selective about choosing her battles with pastors as they are more well versed in the Bible than she. In her first lesbian relationship, she needed to do extensive research and information gathering to help her girlfriend reconcile herself with her lesbian identity.

P4 didn’t experience much conflict between her sexuality and religion. Similarly, to P2, she states that God would not tell you to accept certain people and reject others. She believes that religion is manmade, and that religion is used as an instrument of control. She further states that “you are what you are, no religion can dictate that to you.”

P5 states that she experienced a lot of conflict regarding religion as she has been to all kinds of priests, gurus, been blessed and had philosophical conversations with them. This stemmed from an attempt by her mother to “pray away the gay.” She has explored many religions and states that she was born a Tamil but is interested in other religions such as Islam and Catholicism. She has found peace in the non-judgmental aspects of religion.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many dogmatic stereotypical views of how one is to be, behave or act. Participants have regulated their public, private, and social lives according to the context they find themselves in. In the Indian community their public self is largely influenced by “what will people think” and “the shame they would bring upon their family.” Within the study, participants felt similar to the participants in Badruddoga’s study (2008) whereby they felt that their sexuality was under surveillance and limited. They were seen as an insignificant part of their family and different contexts had different meanings for them hence, they had to adjust their behaviour respectively. This is a good example of public versus private self where the public self has to be adjusted to the context

and the private self is suppressed by their Indian families and known only to themselves. Participants dominant identity comes to the forefront for them to assert themselves and control their situation. A person may be perceived as incongruent in changing between their different identities in different situations and often do so because they are forced to.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) also mentioned in Chapter two, explores the individual's microsystem (friends), mesosystem (religious organisations), exosystem (family relations with the ethnic community), macrosystem (cultural attitudes or laws) and their chronosystem (across time). This is of relevance as the individual introduces new information into its system, and from that point, it radiates outwards, influencing all the systems mentioned. These systems then have to accommodate this new information through their own regulatory processes (Kennedy & Dalla, 2014).

Me, Him, Her

Me, Him, Her is a popular culture reference to the 2015 film Directed by Max Landis. It is a play on words as and is used as a literary device in this research as both the film and the research paper explore issues surrounding the coming out process. The title was not directly derived from the participants but was inferred as a thematic concern of coming out through the interview process. This section involves exploring the participant's romantic relationships with other men and women. It also includes how participants had to protect or hide their love as well as loving themselves enough and having the confidence to be in lesbian relationships despite discrimination.

Falling in Love

In this section the participants varying realizations and that they are gay, and their early romantic experiences are discussed. P1 differentiates between her realization process and actualisation process. She describes her first lesbian experience as; "I dated this guy and, we went through a patch and we broke up and a month later I met a woman and, I was gobsmacked. I literally like, okay, so this is what life has been steering you towards. I never looked back from it. I think once you go through it, if you never had it, if I never had that first experience, I could easily have gotten

married and carried on with life, not knowing better. But once you have had that experience, it's a paramount shift in terms of how you see life again." P1 was only able to reconcile her feelings about what she was told to expect from romantic love after she had her first lesbian experience. P1 "fell out of the closet" as she accidentally blurted out her sexuality during an argument. P4 was also told what to do "I was so lost at that time in my life that I just kind of did what I thought needed to be done."

P2 first fell in love with a girl from a conservative Christian family of pastors. She describes her first "encounter" with a woman as "it felt like a my "aha" moment, where all the pieces sort of fell into place and in my heart, I knew that was why I could never actually fully give myself to a guy. It was definitely a turning point in my journey to finding myself. And yes, completely comfortable." P2 was "kicked out the closet" as her relationship with her then-girlfriend had been discovered and, the girlfriend's family were coming to her house to discuss the matter with her family. P2 first called her sister and told her that she was pregnant, and then told her that she was in fact joking and was in a lesbian relationship, she told her sister that she "just wanted to let you know. I have a girlfriend, but I also just wanted to show you it could have been worse." P2 asked her sister to come out to her mother on her behalf and her sister refused. She describes herself as being in a panicked state and was wondering what she was going to do when she got home. She then called her mother and told her the same thing that she had said to her sister. Her mother laughed off the alleged pregnancy and then asked her what the true reason for her call was, as it was the middle of the day and must be serious. Her mother had no opposition to her coming out. The mother and sister did not tell her father because they did not have a good relationship with each other.

P3's states that she had a girlfriend in high school and that she was more serious about their relationship. Nothing happened after high school as her girlfriend got married, had a child, and got divorced. Just after high school P3 came out to her elder brother and she described it as being "a huge relief" and that they "supported each other in young adulthood." She says she "came out to my family very indirectly, through just having a relationship with my partner."

P4 met her girlfriend through mutual friends. They began flirting and “felt an attraction there.” She was still dating her boyfriend and then got engaged to him. Unfortunately, this girl relocated overseas and P4 broke up with her fiancé who was from Dubai. She then met her husband whom she divorced a year later. P1 met her current partner through the Pride organization and P4 met her current partner through work. P4 described her relationship as having chemistry and that she was sexually attracted to her girlfriend.

P5’s earliest involvement was a “huge thing for me.” But unfortunately, her love was not reciprocated as her first girlfriend was straight. Subsequently, she has numerous intense involvements.

Healthy interpersonal relationships are crucial for the formation of a cohesive identity, but social stressors make it difficult to establish one's identity if one is a member of a minority group (Kennedy and Dalla, 2014).

Heterosexual Love

In this segment the varying degrees of heterosexual romantic involvement of the Participants is discussed. This covers a broad spectrum from no heterosexual romantic involvement, platonic relationships, casual dating to engagement and marriage.

After leaving school P1 conformed to the heterosexual expectations of her community. She stated that she “... met someone and I dated him because you know this is what's normal. This is what they tell you is what you need to do.”

P2 dated men throughout high school and University but did not engage in physical intimacy with them, “Look throughout school I dated guys, [] throughout university, I still dated men still nothing physical happened. I don't know for what reason I could never bring myself to do it. In retrospect, it makes sense now, so how I actually, I don't know, started dating a woman. I only started dating women because somebody told me, listen, men keep breaking your heart so why don't you try dating a woman?”

After school P3 was engaged as this was the societal expectation at that time – go to school, get married have kids. P3 ended the engagement as she could not follow through.

P4 had relationships with men and the only heterosexual male partner that she has was her husband.

Troiden states that “One cannot assume an identity or commit to it as it is engrained.” This correlates with P5’s notion that our sexuality is entrenched in our DNA. D’Augelli’s model departs from the premise that everyone is born heterosexual. P1 and P5 seem to commit to their identities being natural rather than being nurtured. If this is so, D’Augelli’s model does not correlate with P1 and P5’s experiences as they believe that they were born lesbians.

Hidden Love and Self Love

P1 has a very integrated public and private self and says that she is the same person regardless of the context in which she is, “I am, how I've always been [], I'm Participant 1, I'm A, B and C and D yeah.” She also does numerous public appearances both on television and in the newspaper on behalf of LGBT advocacy. P2 states that she is “1000 percent confident in her sexuality” and that her childhood and past experiences have contributed to her developing resilience. These experiences have helped her to define her boundaries, “what I won't stand for and what I won't settle for.” P3 is confident in the totality of her identity and does not find the need to disclose it in different contexts. Like P3, P4 seems to have two different public and private selves. In their private spaces, at home, their sexual identity seems to be more prominent than in public spaces. P5 describes herself as extroverted when she was younger but is now more introverted. P5 is more introverted in her private life preferring to spend time writing poetry, whilst she assumes a more extroverted persona in the public and professional sphere. This can be associated with Judith Butler's notion of gender as a performance in that she performs an extroverted persona in the public sphere (Butler 2011).

According to P1 “at the end of the day, I’m not surprised we’re going to battle with coming out, with acceptance, we are still I think for many years to come going to have a very large, closeted community. I think there is a lot more Indian gay and lesbian, they're a lot more LGBT identifying

people in the Indian community than we ever really know.” This opinion is echoed by P3 who feels that “the Indian community hasn't moved and are very set in their ways; they haven't moved progressively too much towards accepting people from the LGBT community.” Furthermore, P3 describes the context for most Indian women “is that they're very closely held by their parents. They don't allow them to do a lot of things. That's the cultural norm. [] they can't go out on their own or that they do go out then parents always want to know who they are going with, what they're doing and so forth. And that there is no privacy especially if you are sharing a room.” P4 concurs with P1, and P3 in that Indian parents are resistant to change. P2 speaks about a friend who is also an Indian Lesbian who despite being an adult woman is forbidden from socialising, and with other women in particular. This is something similar that happened to P4, after she ended her engagement, she was forbidden from seeing her friends by her mother, that included her girlfriend at that time whom she was forced to sneak around to see. P4 only recently came out to her close friends. P4 has allowed her authentic self to be seen by a small, trusted group of friends and is gradually breaking down her façade to the outer world.

P1 stated that Indian lesbians are scared of rejection “because we grow up in such close-knit family settings that there are co-dependencies [] when you decided oh now I'm different, I don't know how these people are going to react, let me keep quiet about it because if I don't keep quiet about it, I might lose them altogether. No, I'm comfortable living two lives.” She describes a common phenomenon that occurs in the Indian community, which is living two lives. This is when an Indian person leaves their hometown and relocates to another city so they can live their authentic life and when they go back to their hometown, they pretend that they are too busy working to have romantic entanglements. P2 believes the reluctance of Indian lesbians to come out is due to them not wanting to “bring shame upon the family or want to even be disowned. That's what a lot of people I think are scared of is like being disowned.” When P4 had to move back home after her divorce she was afraid of being disowned but, decided to accept the risk and address it if it became a problem.

P2 spent significant amounts of time with her boyfriend/gay best friend. As both families were not aware that either of them was gay both families assumed that they would “both end up together.” Early during her career P2 had not disclosed her sexuality at work and would pretend that her girlfriend was her boyfriend when she received flowers at work. Since she has been married, she put up photos of her family on her desk and, people have been very supportive

P2 does not go out to straight clubs as, she is often mistaken for a boy and this leads to unnecessary altercations “because I feel like a tomboyish or masculine or whatever, I constantly get mistaken for a guy or, if you have to accidentally bump into someone, it immediately starts a fight. Whereas in a, in a gay club, geez if I'm walking past you and I spill my drink on you, suddenly someone is hugging me and telling me no, it's okay.” P2 and her wife are very conscious that not all public spaces are accepting of them and navigate them with caution. P2 specifically states that she and her wife do not show affection towards each other if there is a group of men walking behind them and is cognisant that as an Indian woman in predominantly white areas she is already subject to attention “And also because we're interracial, I know, for example, like I'm not gonna walk in Pretoria holding my wife's hand [] I would already get looks as an Indian female now I'm holding a white woman's hand. I'm not going to do that.”

P3 and her gay brother have never come out to their family as they would have difficulty understanding and accepting their lifestyles. Having lived through the persecution of gay people during the apartheid era P3 still has a living memory of this oppression. P3 describes the methods used by gay and lesbian people to carve out a safe space for themselves both physically and metaphorically during the apartheid era. These activities included crossing the border into Swaziland or going to places that fell outside of the jurisdiction of apartheid South Africa such as Sun City and Mafikeng. Here, gay, and lesbian people were able to engage in relationship and obtain gay-friendly books and magazines.

P4 states that moving away from her mother and moving out of the house was beneficial for their relationship as her mother did not have to “see me all the time and what I look like, and you

know, what I do and things, she doesn't always have a comment to say or doesn't have anything to say about that." She tries to see her mother at least once a week and have a meal together. P4 states that her partner cannot come out to her own parents as she comes from a very conservative Muslim household with her mother being a Muslim priest. P4 also states that as she matures, she tends to avoid large groups of Indian people as they can be very judgemental.

P5 had to physically avoid going home after being outed as her brother and sister wanted to kill her. She had to stay away for 6 months. She then moved further away during her university years to continue her studies. She eventually moved to Johannesburg for six years for work purposes. During one of her more recent long-term relationships, she distanced herself from her partner and began talking to other people.

In terms of relationships, the participant seems to always be triangulated into a system, where there is societal pressure or unknown (public versus private) forces at play.

Kicked Out the Closet and Falling Out the Closet: Voluntary Disclosure versus Disclosure Without Consent

Disclosure in terms of being kicked or falling out of the closet is part of identity integration. In order for an individual to effectively integrate their identity, they need to come out on their own terms. The ramifications of not doing so attempts to rush the individual to reconcile their identity which results in elevated stress levels and serious mental distress. According to Boscoc-Huffman et al (2008) religious and spiritual beliefs can be a protective factor. This is evident in most of the participants finding solace in their faith. Meyer's model speaks to elevated stress levels. Distal and Proximal minority stress process such as discrimination, violence, expectations of rejection and concealment of their identities have served to elevate their stress levels (Meyer, 2013). P5 is an example of an individual who has not had adequate formal or informal support structures to mitigate the stressors in her life. This has contributed to attempting suicide on several occasions.

Coming out is a defining moment in one's life as a lesbian. This involves aspects of acceptance, rejection, support, and the reinforcement or tearing down of one's confidence in their identity.

Homosexuality has only been discussed openly in P1's family household on two occasions. The first occasion was during an argument with her mother P1 came out to her entire nuclear family, "it was just in the heat of the moment I was like, 'I am gay! Deal with it! Why can't you accept it? What is wrong with you? Why can't you see?'" and I just, I literally went completely neurotic, and she looked at me and walked away." The second instance was when her sister insensitively compared being gay to bestiality.

P2 first came out in high school to her boyfriend of six years. When she came out to him, he revealed that he was also gay.

P3 had a relationship in high school with another girl. Soon after school, her brother came out to her, and she in return came out to him. She has however never come out directly to her family.

P4 never really "came out" to her girlfriend, they flirted and fooled around. She was first outed by her husband who phoned her parental home and told her family that they were getting divorced because P4 was a lesbian. P4's family met with her husband's family, and they tried to counsel them to get back together the relationship was however irreparable. P4 said that they did not divorce because she was a lesbian but because of other recurring issues in the relationship. If asked about her sexuality P4 has always denied her homosexuality. At some stage P4's younger sister caught her kissing a girl and still uses this as ammunition during sibling confrontations. P4's initial reaction to her husband outing her was that of feeling scared and afraid but then she felt relief because it was "out there now."

During high school P5 jokingly disclosed her sexual orientation to her mother. Her mother shrugged it off saying "don't talk like that." She stated that her mother did not handle this well and said that "She didn't handle that well, you know, Indian parents, they panic." Her mother panicked and took her to numerous religious institutions for prayers and blessings. P5 was also "kicked out the closet" by her ex-girlfriend as she revealed on Facebook that her ex-girlfriend was no longer in a relationship with her and was dating someone else. Her ex-girl-friends family read this post and phoned her parental house where they informed P5's brother that she was a lesbian and made other

allegations surrounding her sexual conduct. P5 was not at the familial home at that time. As her brother and sister wanted to kill her, she had to seek shelter and support from extended family members for six months.

P1 has had predominantly positive responses from her employers and co-workers regarding her sexuality. Two negative instances stand out for her, once when a Male Muslim colleague remarked that she was looking handsome and that she just needed a tie. She retorted that “to sleep with a woman I don't need a tie. I may need a tongue, but not a tie.” Her second negative experience at work was when her supervisor instructed her to approach a Muslim male Executive for Gay Pride Sponsorship, he responded by saying “how do you, as a Muslim, forget about your lifestyle...why would you come and ask me? I don't have time.” She then told him, “Thanks, but I'm just ticking a box. Yeah. I didn't expect you to even fucking entertain this conversation.” P1 stated that fortunately in her professional environment there are numerous gay people in positions of authority who are willing to provide support. P2 has positive experiences of people at work accepting her sexuality. “I don't have to put up a facade or I don't have to pretend to be something I'm not and I told them how rare that is to be able to work with people that you don't have to pretend to be something you're not.” Her work colleagues also threw her a baby shower when her wife was pregnant. She stated that she was “quite floored by the gesture,” “I still got all emotional and ended up shedding a few tears.” P3 has not found it important to disclose her sexuality to her colleagues, as those who are close to her are already aware of it. P4 did not feel comfortable in coming out in her previous jobs but, in her most recent job she found comfort in coming out as she “knew like there were no Muslims that I knew in my little, you know, in my little group at work.” P5 was candid about her sexuality at work.

Acceptance with Exception

When participants have come out, some significant people in their lives, feel that they still love the participant but that their sexuality is a behaviour that can be excluded. Hence, they are accepted with the exception (denial) of their sexuality.

P1s stated that her father handled her coming better “He was like, it’s not actually my argument, I’m just going to carry on watching TV and I don’t have to address it”. She described her sister as; “as homophobic as my sister was then, she came through (after P1’s ex-girlfriend had left her and cleared out the house) like no listen. Let’s go shopping. Let’s see what you need. You can’t live like this.”

The second occasion when homosexuality was openly discussed in P1’s family household was when her sister compared being gay to bestiality. P1’s father stood up for P1 and reprimanded her sister and said “Do you know what? It’s not the same. What you trying to logically say and the reality of what is happening is two very different things. There’s no such thing as xenophobia when addressing the fact that the countries are going through moral decay. History is being eroded in Europe because people cannot respect where they end up. And, uh, try and then compare, uh, homophobia, your homophobic thoughts to bestiality and justify it. Just keep quiet and go to your room.” P1’s mother has also become more accepting in that she wishes that P1’s sister would give birth to twins so that P1 and her partner would be able to raise the child as their own. This to P1 is an ultimate form of validation. P1’s mother sends food for her and her partner and invites them over for lunch. This is seen as an indirect gesture of acceptance within the Indian cultural context. P2’s in-laws did not accept her and her partner’s marriage for the first two years but one day invited them over for lunch “they still told us that they don’t agree with the way we did things, but they would like for us to move forward as a family.” P2’s parents were always cordial with her wife “my mother was always fine with her [] every time my mother sends food for us,” and “when my father was alive and my wife was around, he would greet her, ask how she is, and then he would just walk away, [] he would never say anything bad to her or to me about us.” She also stated that her father never made a scene when her wife was around. This is how they demonstrated that they accepted P2’s wife into the family.

P1 describes the challenges around acceptance, and she emphasises that being gay is not a choice: “I cannot change what am, and I always say this, you know if being gay is a choice I’m like, who would choose such a difficult path in life? You’d have to be a fucking crazy person. Who would choose

to have the sexuality questioned? Who would choose to have their families rejected them? Who would choose to not have the ability to be open and honest about who they are without fear of prejudice, you know? Who would choose to be shunned by their closest family and friends because of lack of understanding, lack of empathy [and] lack of education?"

P2 retold a discussion she had with her mother regarding what to tell people when they had questions about her sexuality "tell them that I'm grown, and I make my own decisions. You might not support it, but you support me." P2 said after coming out "Like nobody asked me about it or anything afterwards, my mother would occasionally say, listen, I'm praying for you to find a man, I'm praying for you to find a good husband or something like that."

P3 in respect of acceptance her brother has been supportive especially during young adulthood. Her family has indirectly accepted her partner by having family gatherings at her house. P3 states that her gay brother is also closeted with their family but, she understands this as her mother and some of her sisters would find it extremely difficult in accepting him because he is the only son and is expected to follow through with the behaviour of an Indian man in a patriarchal Indian community.

P4 states that recently she and her partner have established a friendship with another lesbian couple. It has "felt good to have people who could understand you, where you could feel comfortable, and they could actually understand when you see certain things in a relationship." As part of accepting P4's relationship, her mother would prepare and send food for her partner and her partner's mother. P4's mother referred to her partner's mother "as her mother-in-law." P4 referred to this colloquially as a "Freudian Slip" in that it revealed her mother's perception of her relationship with her partner as equal to that of a married couple. Stage four: Identity acceptance of the Cass model is particularly applicable to P4 who describes hiding her sexuality from her family and disclosing her sexuality to a small select group of people.

Whilst residing with her partner in Johannesburg P5's mother would come from Kwa-Zulu Natal and visit her. Here her mother was able to see that P5 was capable and able to make her own

way in life. P5 has believes there is a strong correlation between acceptance by her family and community despite her sexual orientation if she is able to demonstrate that she is successful in her career and confident in her bearing. P5 struggles with acceptance with her siblings especially her sisters as they took Baiocco et al states “that negative parental reactions are connected to poor family functioning and strong beliefs in traditional values. Path analysis results identified that negative reaction to coming out mediates the effect between a more rigid family functioning and internalized sexual stigma” (Baiocco et al., 2015, 1490). The Cass Model states that in regard to identity acceptance, they allow a small, select amount of people into their confidence. They use coping strategies such as secrecy, pretending, isolation or withdrawal to protect themselves. This is a theme that is echoed in all the participants’ interviews. This selection process is connected to Dasso’s (2015) position on coming out that states that sometimes people experience what is “social death”. This is where people are not accepted as being at an equal status to humans. This is particularly evident in P5’s situation whereby she felt disregarded and demeaned by everyone around her. She feels principally heartbroken and abandoned by her siblings.

LGBT Queering

This section involves taking a closer looking into being queer during and post-apartheid as well as issues surrounding advocacy, education, acceptance, and support in the LGBT community.

During Apartheid versus After Apartheid

P1 is in an interracial relationship in which she and her partner have navigated the various cultural, religious, and racial differences they have encountered skilfully. Post-apartheid P1 describes her relationship with an Afrikaans white female as being, “something very new to South Africa and, we didn't know how to really deal with each other.” P2 is also in an interracial relationship. She and her wife are cautious about public displays of affection, particularly in what they perceive to be more conservative areas. She is of the opinion that being in an interracial relationship is more dangerous than being in a lesbian relationship. P2 experienced a similar phenomenon to P1 (“is black but thinks like a white person”) in that P2 is told that she is brown on the outside and white on the inside. She

believes that her Christian faith makes it easier to interact with her wife's family but, her wife has had to adjust to some practices and specifically Indian customs such as those that take place at funerals and family gatherings. P2 states that Indian lesbians coming out process is perceived to be more difficult than in another race as "a lot of it comes down to pressure from society."

P1 states that the Group Areas Act sheltered her from the outside world as she lived in a traditional Indian community. All religions were encompassed under the umbrella of "being Indian". Here the community placed strong emphasis on family and conservative values. P4 states that she feels like "there's a lot of tension and oppression and things like that in India. And that's why, I mean, gay and lesbian, that movement is going to take so much longer for it to be okay."

P1 stated that "I think Indians are as a community in South Africa have been that community that has managed to hang onto aeons worth of tradition [] but mentally, they are still orthodox." P1 described how there was criticism levied at a South African Pride event that became violent where a group of white lesbians clashed with a group of black lesbians. This was under the leadership of what was described as a "lily-white" Gay Pride Board. During a Gay Pride planning meeting, P1 stated that a black lesbian told her that "for someone that is so black looking must stop thinking like the white person. And it was the first (clears throat), that was the first time I experienced such negative racism in reverse. I understood liberation and ran away from the, from the SAPs dogs, you know, very much limited by the Group Areas Act. So, now in my fifties to be called out for racism, I was confused. And that was at that moment that I realized, and I made a decision, for myself, that race, I've got no place in the LGBTQ plus initialism. So, I got up, when I get upset, I am not in control of myself. So, I got up and was like, you know what? Fuck this. Fuck you. Fuck this racism. "

P1 stated that in her experience Pretoria was particularly racist and that it was more acceptable to be in a homosexual relationship than an interracial relationship. P1 experienced a racial slur of being called a fat Indian lesbian when she challenged someone for skipping their place in the line. P1 states that she is comfortable in her sexuality to calmly handle the situations of that nature and that people who are not comfortable in their sexuality can become derailed by these remarks.

These sentiments are echoed by P2. P5 is of the opinion that she experienced discrimination by not being taken seriously at a police station when she and her partner opened a criminal case. She had to assert her professional public self in a private situation. Wood and Conley (2014) state that LGBT individuals are subject to micro assaults, micro insults and microinvalidations. An example of overt discrimination was when P1 was subject to racial slurs at a shopping mall. P1 also was subject to a microinsult when her male colleague subtly insulted her. P5 was subject to microinvalidation when her mother said she must not talk like that after disclosing her attraction to other women. These aspects clearly indicate Kennedy and Dalla's (2014) aim of highlighting the plight of psychological health within the LGBT community.

P3 came of age during the apartheid era. She believes that the position of Indian lesbians has improved significantly from this period. "To be an Indian lesbian in South Africa compared to other, far better places. I think there's a generational difference so I can say in my time it was terrible." P3 like P1 makes specific reference to the Group Areas Act and the impact it had on shaping the lives of Indian people as a subaltern, and as a whole within South Africa. She specifically lists a poorer quality of education, fewer opportunities, fewer resources, and the physical and mental restriction of individuals by conservative culture.

P5 is the only participant to have been born in post-apartheid South Africa. This is evident in her references to social media. She is the only participant to refer to social media as part of her coming out process, romantic relationships and is the only participant to not refer to apartheid.

It is important to provide a historical overview of the Gay Pride marches in South Africa. The first Pride march was held in 1990. The purpose of this march was to create visibility surrounding gay and lesbian rights as well as be included in the draft set of Constitutional guidelines that was produced by the African National Congress in 1988. The march was politicised as the participants and organisers wanted to "situate gay and lesbian issues within the broader struggle" (Craven, 2011, p. 37). The theme of the march that year was "unity in the community." Even though homosexuality was criminalised the march in 1991 themed "march for equality" took place. In 1992 the theme was

“marching for our rights.” And in 1993 the march took place in Cape Town. This was highlighted by Judge Edwin Cameron’s speech concerning discrimination. In 1994 there was a shift towards gender transformation within the community and a large number of lesbians were appointed to the organization and Pride began the process of moving from a predominantly white male organization. Recent Pride parades have highlighted the racial inclusion aspect of Pride.

According to Queer Theory, it states that queer used to be a term that was derogatorily used and was associated with defiant activist groups. This is echoed by Whitley & Kite (2013) that acknowledges that language is not neutral but is constructed. Thus, the meaning of the word queer differs. During the 80s and 90s, it was reclaimed as part of being more inclusive (Callis, 2009). This seems true of late. Callis (2009) further states that queer political movements are developing because people wish to exercise social and cultural control over all identities that are being reconstructed. All the participants experienced identity confusion within the Cass Model. It is also proposed that identity confusion may play a larger role in the individuals lives as there are more identities to choose from (Ritter and Terndrup, 2002). Jagose (2009) stated that the term gay and lesbian cannot be used interchangeably, but I have done so in this study as participants stated if they had to reveal their sexuality, they would say gay, but if people needed more elaboration, then they would say lesbian. They feel the term gay has been appropriated and that it no longer applies exclusively to homosexual males.

Kennedy and Dalla (2014) also declare a healthy racial identity required progress through stages from psychologically damaging (e.g., beliefs of racial inferiority) to psychologically beneficial (e.g., self-acceptance, culturally affirming, racial transcendence).” This healthy sense of identity promotes resilience in the participants.

Advocacy, Education and Support

P1 believes that more funding needs to be directed towards LGBT education particularly in Africa, “there's no focus on developing and enhancing and empowering and education from an LGBT perspective. Because if that, if we could get that aspect in play, you find that the atrocities might lessen

because people understand better.” P1 thinks that positive aspects of LGBT need to be highlighted through events such as Pride “The only way Africa would get any form of recognition is if we elevated the Pride parade, Pride recognition globally, Um, because when people think about LGBT in Africa, they think about anti-gay laws, they think about criminalization, they think about persecution, they think about corrective rape. There's nothing positive that comes up when you think about LGBTQ in an African context right?”

P2 and her partner have only become more active in the LGBTI community since their marriage. They have also imported books that are educational and same-sex friendly to educate their daughter. P2 believes in institutional transformation through education and awareness. She states that this is “because a lot of people just get kicked out and have nowhere to go and nobody to phone and don't even know where to start and sleep on the street because they just don't know what to do.” She advocates “for a sort of like a network kind of thing, where everybody's got someone that they can like solidly depend on” in every province. P5 is also a proponent for instructional transformation. This stems from her experience. She stated that when she was in a dark place and was having a mental breakdown, she had no one there for her. She is extraordinarily disappointed with the traditional support organizations; “when people shun these lesbians out, they have somewhere to go to not where they feel like orphans or where they feel burdens, but something where they can, you know, I don't know, stay at, find a job or have like systems.” P5 advocates for the use of WhatsApp based support systems as they are easily accessible, cost-effective and do not have time constraints furthermore they are often discrete.

In P2's life, there have been three significant incidents regarding institutional transformation. The first was when touring a hospital with her then-pregnant wife when they pointed out to the nurse that their tour was not inclusive as they referred to “mommies and daddies' areas” and not more neutral terms. The hospital amended its approach once this was brought to their attention. The second incident was with Home Affairs when P2 and her wife were pleasantly surprised that race was no longer included on their child's birth certificate, and that Home Affairs made provision for Parent

A and Parent B on their documentation instead of mother and father. The third incident was when after attending a school tour and confirming that their chosen Christian based school for their child was inclusive towards gay and lesbian families, that the school sent them updated forms that indicated Parent A and Parent B instead of mother and father. They found the school was helpful and open to their suggestions.

P3 states that contemporary Indian lesbians hypothetically have an easier time coming out today due to the resources available to them such as the internet, support groups and significant protection under the law. P3 advocates for the direction of support services to schools and the inclusion of LGBT topics into the school curriculum not only as a standalone topic but in the inclusion of other subject areas. P4 states that educating children is good but “You can’t change 50 years of someone being indoctrinated with that (referring to heteronormativity).” P3 promotes the idea of making person-to-person support available as well as material that can be privately studied, but “not necessarily sitting at home and reading through a pamphlet or an article and having, to hide it under the bed.” Unfortunately, P4 did not have access to any gay literature. She would discuss her sexuality with her partner and if need be, search the internet for further information. Growing up P4 would have liked to be able to understand what she was feeling and what was happening to her. She stated that during the time she was at school sexuality was never talked about. The extent of her education surrounding LGBT matters was that if you were gay, you would get AIDS and die. P5’s experience at school was different from the other participants. She stated that there is a section on LGBT, but no one seems to practise them. She says that the education system is failing in this regard.

P1 speaks about the LGBT acronym and its various additions. She states that the acronym is getting longer because the people want to “self-identify with the rainbow community.” They want to “be known in a very rigid manner [and] exhibitionist in terms of self-validation.” She states that when people enforce their identity the message is sometimes lost in meaning. She uses the word queer as an example of change as historically the term derogatory but has been appropriate by the younger generation. P1 is also of the opinion that the youth of today use LGBT terms very loosely and this is

because they don't understand what they are saying. This is why the youth needs education. P4 compares the subcategories under the LGBT umbrella to different religious sects and denominations under the broader category of Christianity.

P2 similarly thinks that more people are starting to self-identify with the LGBTI community and that and because there are so many different categories the message may get lost in translation. Furthermore, she states "if we are this confused about how many different groups we are, how are straight people supposed to take us seriously?" Recently P4 recalls someone asking her "What are you?" she responded by saying "I'm me, you know, why do I have to be something?" P5 is of the opinion that the concept of nurture pertains to "fake gays" whereas "nature" is associated with true gays. She is of the opinion that being gay is biologically determined as is "in one's DNA." This model is applicable to the social constructionism meta theory discussed by Gergen (1992) in Kritzing (1995) in the Theoretical Framework.

P3 states that she finds it difficult understanding the younger generation labels, but she still views it in a positive light as it encourages tolerance. She states that it is a new language: "the sort of equivalent of WhatsApp kind of language where you have all these short handles for everything." P3 argues that there is a difference between "political movements and political labels versus personal labels." This contrasts with Judith Butler (2011) who states that the personal is political. P3 explains that a gay movement examines sexual identity but, in the South African context due to the legacy of apartheid when race is added it becomes a political movement. She states that an example of race in movements would be when racial problems arose in the Pride march. She stated that the committee had an all-white leadership and questions were raised as to why Pride was not taken to the townships. P3 states that if the gay movement in South Africa is inclusive of both sexuality and race there is safety in numbers. During apartheid in South Africa, in keeping with global trends, the political emphasis was directed towards achieving racial equality and then gender equality. P5 states that bringing attention to different identities in the LGBT community makes things complicated and "while we respect everyone's individuality people are becoming overzealous with labels."

Tajfel's Social Identity Theory speaks to social categorisation. Most of the participants did not want to be socially categorized as they often stated, "I am who I am." Self-labelling, individual or group categorisation are not suited to everyone. Some of the participants did make use of Tajfel's social mobility strategies with an emphasis on passing and blending to manage the stigma they were faced with. It is evident in the younger generations that social categorisation is making a resurgence beneath the umbrella of the LGBT community. The fourth strategy called social competition, creates an actual change in the current situation between the groups. This strategy involves both groups accepting the changed status quo through, for example, social protests, psychoeducation and petitioning for laws to be changed. An example of this is PRIDE which is discussed by P1 during the participants interviews in Chapter five – Research Findings. A further example of this are P2 and P5 who discuss psychoeducation and support services in Chapter five – Research Findings. This correlates with Chans (1997) "primacy effect" whereby an individual labels themselves according to their sexuality which may become more prominent than their racial or ethnic identity, which gives them the benefit of being part of group cohesion and having a sense of belonging. P1 states that one's racial /ethnic identity is more prominent than one's sexual identity within the Indian community. Social versus individual self-esteem is evident in the Pride marches where race has once again appeared as a focal point for the LGBT community. The individual's self-esteem is uplifted by associating oneself with that racial group. Pride marches are also a strategy that relates to social competition which allows for groups to accept the changed status quo of the LGBT community by social protests, psychoeducation and petitioning for laws to be changed. The Indian and South African communities, however, have been stagnant in embracing change. Participants have however exhibited social solidarity towards the LGBT community, especially in wanting to be involved in LGBT projects and as part of Cass's Model, Identity Pride is exhibited in their affiliation to the LGBT community (Ritter and Terndrup, 2002).

Conclusion

All the models should be applied as an integrated approach in order to create a holistic understanding of the experience of the participants. The participants are very self-aware and have

forged their own identities within complex environments and the resources that each of them has available. In anticipation of confrontation or hostility participants have created a strong external persona to deal with these situations when they arise. The juggling of their intersecting identities allows them the “freedom” to appropriately react in situations within the boundaries of their dominant identity.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

In South Africa, Indian lesbians are intrinsically connected within the legacy of the colonial paradigm by race and religion, dominated by patriarchy and socio-economic pressures, and discouraged by society from expressing their sexuality. Thus, the research has explored the emotional state and psychological process of coming out for Indian lesbians in South Africa.

Social constructionism was used to merge the individual's and community's construct of living with multiple identities in society.

Many challenges give rise to different choices that have to be made in the coming out process. Some coping strategies employed can be destructive or constructive in supporting the individual, but the lack of adequate resources seems to be a considerable impediment.

Disclosure processes are turning points in the individual's life and society should acknowledge that it is the individual's right to disclose their sexuality or not. It is the individual's life journey that leads up that turning point and it is unique and their outcomes may differ significantly.

So, how do Indian lesbians experience and navigate the coming out process in the South African context? South African Indian lesbians, in my study, found it difficult to express their sexuality, especially, to their families, for fear of being shunned or disappointing them. They worry about community, gossip-mongering and the pressure placed on their parents. In order to mitigate these risks, they cautiously navigated the coming out process by evaluating each individual(s) in different communities and its contexts before coming out. The influence of apartheid has also played a large role in the coming out process in the South African context.

In providing adequate future support for South African Indian lesbians that fosters a healthy and harmonious environment that is conducive to inclusivity, we need to take cognisance of point of view and the implications of our thoughts, actions and words have on them. Therefore, I hope that this study will provide a forum for meaningful debate around a matter that has historically been contentious.

Summary of Findings

Most participants had lost their fathers at a very young age. These participants had a stark contrast in their relationships with their fathers. They either were very close or estranged. The women in their family assumed responsibility for them and the household. Participants early years were marred by much confusion as they could not understand why they were different and had unexpected feelings for other girls. Participants who were inquisitive about their sexuality, used books, subconsciously approached gay-friendly people, and did internet searches to find answers.

The Indian community is portrayed as being judgemental, meddling, gossipers who are “set in their ways” and there is little hope for positive change towards progressive thinking about the LGBT community. Participants found solace within their religion and spiritualities. They managed to reconcile their sexuality with their beliefs and focused on the positive aspects of their faith.

Participants found their first same sexual experiences as turning points in their lives. It was explained as if as they had awoken from slumber and could finally identify with the feeling that they were supposed to have in their heterosexual relationships. Some participants had heterosexual relationships because they were indoctrinated as part of their heteronormative development process. When participants were in their early same-sex relationships, they had to often hide their affection and relationships from their family and communities as it was deemed shameful. This also caused participants to withdraw from their family and communities by physically and emotionally distancing their private selves.

Most participants were not ready to come out to their families and community, hence their journey thus far has been challenging. They have had to deal with their internal and external processes abruptly, navigating their feelings, establishing their identity, and dealing with feelings of being unsure with regards to their family and communities.

Participants family and friends have compartmentalised the participant and their sexuality to support the participant and not their decisions. This does not make sense as any one identity of an

individual cannot be negated. There is also no decision or choice to be made when it pertains to one's sexuality.

An interesting part of the research was the feedback provided by the participant about details of how colonisation, apartheid and post-apartheid influenced the LGBT community. Apartheid has left a legacy of politicising the LGBT movement and race has been of much contention within the LGBT community, recent years. In moving forward in society, the most important aspects to take note of for progression is educating all as well as advocacy and support for the LGBT community.

Limitations and Strengths

It is important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of a research study in terms of understanding the research in context as well as its credibility (Ioannidis, 2007).

No singular identity can define a person as they are made up of multiple identities. This topic was very broad, and I could have chosen one aspect of the identity of the research study to focus on but instead of selected the intersection of multiple identities. This has allowed for the analysis of the individual as "The whole is different from the sum of its parts" (Sternberg, 2001, p. 18).

Data collection and analysis was time and labour intensive as the information that was gathered was considerable. A substantial amount of time was spent on interviewing participants, transcribing the data, and analysing themes within the text. Patterns can be hard to locate and can be subjectively interpreted however the researcher was competent to do the interviews. Researcher bias has been an important consideration as the researcher is vested in this topic. The data collected is from a small group of people and thus, this sample size cannot be universally applied. Finding participants that met all the research criteria was extremely difficult, but after interviewing Participant one, she referred other participants she knew that fit the criteria within her network. Unfortunately, as the research participants are acquainted with each other, and I would not be able to control their interaction and communication especially during the data collection period.

Most of the participants were interviewed for studies before, hence if the same participants are interviewed consistently there may be a multiplication of similar information. Most of the theories

that were considered are traditional, linear, un-inclusive and too vague when applied to the research topic. The topics that were discussed in the research were more detailed rather than wide as a more comprehensive and throughout understanding can be presented.

Costs were kept to a minimum as all the work was done by the researcher. Travel was kept to a minimum in line with the changing COVID-19 restrictions. A more personal rapport was not able to be established as face-to-face interviews were impractical if not impossible. The online medium provided a surprisingly beneficial platform as the individual time constraints of both the participants and researcher were able to be accommodated. Furthermore, the online medium provides video and sound recording options.

The data analysis process was highly credible as its integrity was augmented by conducting the interviews ethically, methods of analysis were described in a step-by-step process and making use of a semi-structured interview ensured consistency in the interviews.

Future researchers considering this subject matter can consider a comparative study of participants born during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa to gain a better understanding of participant's experiences before and after such dramatic social and political change.

Conclusion

This research has only touched on the rich tapestry of dialogue and discourse that is available within research group. This is an area of study that requires extensive research to provide an adequate platform and for individuals to tell their stories. The Indian Lesbian community in South Africa is a diverse and valuable community who deserve recognition, protection, and support as do all other groups.

No one universal theory is best when applied to the research topic. Such a layered and diverse research group require a layered and diverse research approach as opposed to a one size-fits all approach. Some theoretical approaches are beneficial in some respects but fall short in other areas thus, extensive theoretical approached have been applied, examined, and interrogated.

Each level of Bronfenbrenner's system is intrinsically intertwined. No one system is more challenging than the other and no system is separate from the other. To understand the macro the micro must be examined. A disturbance in one system creates a disturbance in the other, similarly quietude and stability in one creates the same in the other. In the context of this research support, acceptance and understanding of the individual micro level creates and reinforces support, acceptance and understanding at the macro level.

The coming out process for Indian lesbians has been met with varying levels of resistance in trying to get family and communities to understand the psychological toll it has on one. Conservative communities that are not open to change, exacerbate the issue by encouraging discrimination over generations and the individual has to be resilient in having to conceal or revealing their sexuality.

We can however not look at our racial/ethnic and sexual identity in isolation. We also, cannot call ourselves a Rainbow Nation and use it as a blanket term to hold all types of discrimination. Each of the fourteen types of discrimination in our constitution needs to be dealt with uniquely and given the attention it deserves.

It is also important to note that the progress we have made in the South African community thus far is commendable and there is definitely a pot of gold at the end of our rainbow.

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Table 1

Overview of the gender identity processes that run internally and externally.

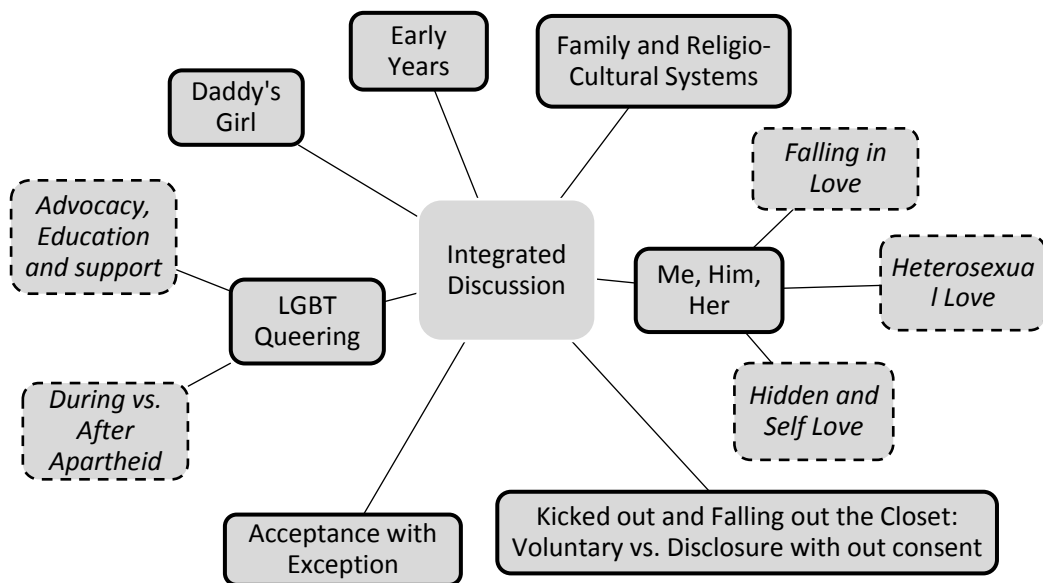
CHRONOSYSTEM	GENDER IDENTITY PROCESSES		
	Developmental Models	Gender Identity Models	Systems Models
Womb	Acculturation	Identity Management (Juggling multiple identities)	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrosystem (Family, Peers, School, Church, Health Services, Neighbours, Social Services, Industry, Mass Media, Local Politics, Culture, Religious Organisations)
Birth – 12 months	Trust vs. Mistrust		
1 – 2 years	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt		
3-6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt		
6-12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority		
12-18 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion		
20s-40s	Intimacy vs. Isolation		
40s-60s	Generativity vs. Stagnation		
60s-end	Integrity vs. Despair		

Table 2*Participant information summary.*

	Age	Religion	Region	Industry	Current Relationship Status	Initially Coming Out	Family	Interview
P1	40s	Muslim	Gauteng	IT - position of authority	Partnered - 7 years - Interracial relationship	20s - to family, after university	Father, mother and 1 sister	2 x 2 hour Zoom (Video)
P2	30s	Christian	Gauteng	IT - position of authority	Married - 10 years - Interracial relationship	Teens - to friend in high school and later to family whilst working	Father (deceased), mother, 1 sister, wife and 1 daughter	1 x 3 hour Zoom (video)
P3	60s	Muslim	Gauteng	Law & Education - position of authority	Partnered - 16 years - Interracial relationship	Teens - girlfriend in high school and to brother.	Father (deceased), mother, 5 sisters and 1 brother	1 x 1 hour WhatsApp (audio) 1 x 1 hour Zoom (video)
P4	30s	Muslim	Gauteng	IT & Education - position of authority	Partnered - 9 years	Has never come out.	Father (deceased), mother and 2 sisters	1 x 2 hour Zoom (video & audio)
P5	20s	Hindu	KwaZulu Natal	Law - entry level position	Single	Teens - to friend in school, then was forced to come out to family whilst at university.	Father (deceased), mother, 2 sisters and 1 brother	1 x 3 hour Zoom (video)

Chart 1

Themes and subthemes.



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

NHREC Reg. No.: Rec – 240816-052
CREC Ref. No.: 2020-PsycREC-42929652

11 January 2021

Title: Juggling the Intersection of multiple Identities in the South African context: Indian lesbians' experiences of their coming out process

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Arthi Sukhdeo and I am doing research with Mr DJ Kruger (Lecturer) and Prof Juan Nel (Professor), in the Department of Psychology towards a Master's in Clinical Psychology degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled Juggling the Intersection of multiple Identities in the South African context: Indian lesbians' experiences of their coming out process.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to describe and understand the feelings of Indian lesbians in their "coming out" process as well as how their intersecting multiple identities such as gender, sexuality, race, religion and socio-economic position, influence this process. The objectives of the study are to:

- Investigate the dynamics and challenges and choices that confront Indian lesbians in the South African context during the coming out process
- Analyse strategies and resources that participants use to manage the intersection of multiple identities in the coming out process
- Examine the significance of disclosure processes and the perceived impact on their public, social and private lives



WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participants are chosen according to a criterion that serves its purpose from the study. South African, Indian, female participants, over the age of 18 years, who identify exclusively as lesbian will be targeted. Snowball sampling will also be considered due to the sparse availability of participants targeted. The sample size will be a minimum of 4 participants or more, until saturation is achieved.

Participants are chosen according to a criterion that serves its purpose from the study. This study includes the following groups:

- Race: Classified as an Indian individual
- Ethnicity: Born and grew up in South Africa
- Sex: Female participants
- Age: Individuals over the age of 18 years old
- Sexuality: Individuals who identify exclusively as lesbian will be targeted.

This excludes the following groups:

- Races: African, White, Coloured or Other individuals
- Ethnicity: Individuals who were not born in South Africa as well as expatriates or other.
- Sex: Transgendered individuals identifying as lesbian and male individuals or other.
- Age: Participants below the age of 18 years old
- Sexuality: Heterosexual individuals and queer men or other.
- Vulnerable individuals

Participants based anywhere in South Africa will be considered.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Video and telephonic interviews would be done which will include open-ended questions related to the study and this will involve taking comprehensive field notes. I will be conducting all the interviews so as to gain as much rich, descriptive data as possible. The duration of the interviews will be done in two to three-hour sessions. Participant observation is vital but due to COVID-19 regulations, telephonic and video interviews will suffice, and this includes the transcribing the interviews in its context. A considerable amount of effort will be focused toward explaining all the ethical considerations such as confidentiality to make sure that the participant has a comprehensive understanding of their role and, how the information collected will be used. We will then progress go through the semi-structured interview schedule to make sure that all areas of my research questions have been answered.



CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

When sexual identity becomes a question, the primary aim is to explore, describe and understand the emotional state and psychological process of coming out for Indian lesbian in South Africa. The psychological impact and manifestation of the "coming out" is integral in providing future support for other Indian lesbians. This will provide a platform for constructive discourse around a traditionally taboo subject.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participants may find that re-living their life events during interviews, may cause mental distress. Psychological risks may be experienced during participation in the research and/or afterwards as a result of participating in the research. These risks include anxiety, stress, fear, confusion, embarrassment, depression, guilt, shock, loss of self-esteem, and/or altered behavior.

Should the need arise, participants will be referred to the UNISA psychotherapy clinic as well as Lifeline, SADAG and OUT Well-being for free psychological services. The document labelled as "Assistance Information" attached, is also a list of potential service providers that can provide help to participants willing to seek free or paid assistance.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The participant has the right to insist that their name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about their involvement in this research study. Their answers will be given a pseudonym and they will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such



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as conference proceedings. Their answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, supervising lecturers and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Participants anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of their answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be password protected as well as being stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Should information be destroyed, hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

This study is voluntary and any costs incurred by the participant (such as driving to and from interview venues) will be for their own account, therefore, no payment and or any incentives will be dealt for participating in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committees and the relevant registration and reference numbers are indicated at the beginning of the document.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Arthi Sukhdeo on 079 519 8288 or arthi_sukhdeo@yahoo.com. The findings will also be accessible on the Unisa library repository website. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Arthi Sukhdeo on 079 519 8288 or arthi_sukhdeo@yahoo.com.



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Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Mr DJ Kruger on krugedj@unisa.ac.za. Contact the research ethics chairperson of the Psychology committee, Prof. I Ferns on [fernsl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:fernsi@unisa.ac.za) if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.



MISS ARTHI SUKHDEO



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....



ASSISTANCE INFORMATION

South African Depression & Anxiety Group – SADAG - (0800) 12 13 14

Lifeline South Africa - (0861) 322 322

Department of Social Development Substance Abuse Line 24hr helpline - (0800) 12 13 14

Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa - 0861 HELPAA (435 722)

SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence - 08611 REHAB (73422)

People Opposed to Woman Abuse (Powa) - (083) 765 1235

Stop Women Abuse - 0 (800) 150 150

Gender-based Violence Line - (0800) 012 322

Gay Lesbian Support - South Africa - 0860 33 33 31

OUT Well-being - Telephone: 012 430 3272 / 066 190 5812





COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

10 March 2020

Dear Arthi Sukhdeo

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # : 2020-
PscREC-42929652

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 10 March
2020 to 30 July 2023).

Researcher(s): Arthi Sukhdeo

Supervisor(s): Mr D. J. Kruger & Prof. J. A. Nel

**Managing the intersection of multiple identities in the South African context:
Indian lesbians' experiences of their coming out process**

Qualification Applied: Master's Degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa Department of Psychology College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *Medium risk application* was *reviewed and expedited* by Department of Psychology College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on the **(10 March 2020)** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Psychology Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (30 June 2023). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 2020-PsyREC-42929652 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature :



Prof I. Ferns
Ethics Chair: Psychology
Email: fernsi@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature :



Prof K. Masemola
Executive Dean : CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2296



SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SHEET

- *Thank participant for their informed consent.*
 - *The purpose of this research is to understand the coming out process for Indian lesbians in South Africa.*
 - *I am taking into consideration six variables, namely, Sexuality (lesbian), Gender (female), Race (Indian), Ethnicity (South African), Class and Religion (Hinduism, Islam and Christianity).*
 - *Please elaborate on each of these topics in your answers as much as possible.*
-
- How old are you?
 - Where were you born?
 - Where is your current place of residence?
 - When relocated & why?
 - What is your marital status?
 - Are you cohabiting with your partner?
 - What is your highest educational level?
 - What is your current employment or profession?
 - What nationality / ethnicity are you? South African.
 - What religion are you?
 - Which gender do you identify with? Lesbian.
 - What sexual identity do you identify with? Masculine / Feminine / Neither?
 - How confident do you feel in your lesbian identity?
 - Tell me about your coming out experience or journey
 - Age
 - To whom
 - Everyone's reaction
 - How you felt
 - Are you out to everyone?



- Tell me about growing up:
 - How many family members? Brothers and sisters? Ages?
- Did you feel different in school?
 - primary school
 - high school
 - university
 - work
- How does your community (friends, family, religious institutes, work colleagues) treat you as an Indian lesbian?
- How has been in a lesbian relationship affected your life?
- What race partners have you had?
- Within your current intimate relationships how important is your Indian identity
- Do you think your experience as an Indian lesbian is different to other lesbians of other races?
- What are your experiences about being an Indian lesbian in South Africa?
- How has religion impacted your sexual identity?
- Do you think your position would be different if you were indigent as opposed to wealthy?
- What support of any have you received during your coming out process?
- What support do you think there should be in place specifically for Indian lesbians?
- As an Indian lesbian in South Africa, what do you wish people had done to make you feel that it's ok to be lesbian?
- Are you involved in the LGBT community?
- What is your opinion of the word queer?

