HOMOSEXUAL MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PATERNAL RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE SEXUAL IDENTITY FORMATION PERIOD

by

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MINI-DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MAGISTER ARTIUM
(CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY)

FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

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June 2018

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Acknowledgements

"Nobody is superior, nobody is inferior, but nobody is equal either. People are simply unique, incomparable, you are you, I am I."

~ Osho

This research would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and motivation of many people. I would like to thank:

My research supervisor, Dr Anja Botha, for her patience and willingness to walk this dissertation journey with me. She consistently allowed this research to be my own work, but steered me in the right direction whenever she thought I needed it.

My co-supervisor, Dr Lindi Nel, who provided me with constructive feedback and clarifications that enabled me to excel on an academic level.

The seven participants who were willing to take part in this study. Thank you for your willingness to share your stories with me.

My parents, for your love and support throughout my many years of studying. Without you, my desire to become more of who I am would not have been possible.

My partner, who unceasingly supported me throughout the process. He made sure I stayed focussed and dedicated, although it was not always easy. I want to thank him for continuing to believe in me.

My many friends and colleagues, for never giving up encouraging me. You kept me going in difficult times.

Hettie Human, for her dedicated and committed assistance in the language editing of this document, but more importantly, her consistent support and encouragement.

In memory of my father,

André van der Merwe

1951 – 2015.

A man who always gave me unconditional love, support, and acceptance.

Abstract

In this study, homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity development period were explored. An array of published articles explored and attempted to understand the development of homosexual identities. To this day, dissimilar attitudes, conflicting opinions, and ambivalent beliefs about homosexual individuals continues globally. Little research has been done on the experiences homosexual men had with their fathers during their sexual identity formation period. This study is based on Vivienne Cass's model of homosexual identity development. Cass hypothesises that homosexual men progress through six phases during their homosexual identity formation period: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. A multiple case study design was employed, and seven participants were recruited using purposive, homogeneous sampling. An individual semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant, during which they had the opportunity to reflect on their paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period. The data was analysed by using thematic analysis, by reconstructing their experiences into main and subthemes. From the data analysis, five main themes emerged: a) a developmental progression in homosexual identity formation; b) the role of paternal relationship in homosexual identity formation; c) discrepancies between anticipated and actual paternal responses within the process of disclosure; d) acceptance of homosexuality by both father and son, and e) stigma, prejudice, and discrimination influence the process of paternal disclosure. This research study aimed to fill the gap in the literature about father-son relationships during homosexual identity development. The findings can contribute to a growing body of literature on the applicability of Cass's model of homosexual identity development for a South African population. The insights gained from the research findings emphasise the importance of inter- and intrapersonal conflicts during homosexual identity development, focussing specifically on the need for paternal support, understanding, and acceptance after homosexual identity disclosure.

Keywords: homosexual men, sexual identity formation, father-son relationship, disclosure, acceptance of homosexuality

Abstrak

In hierdie studie is homoseksuele mans se ervarings van vaderlike verhoudings tydens die tydperk van seksuele-identiteitsvorming ondersoek. ‘n Verskeidenheid gepubliseerde artikels het die ontwikkeling van homoseksuele identiteite ondersoek en probeer verstaan. Tot vandag bestaan daar egter wêreldwyd uiteenlopende houdings, teenstrydige menings en ambivalente oortuigings oor homoseksuele individue. Beperkte navorsing bestaan oor die ervarings wat homoseksuele mans met hul vaders gehad het tydens hul seksuele identiteitsvorming. Hierdie studie is gebaseer op Vivienne Cass se model van homoseksuele-identiteitsontwikkeling. Cass hipotetiseer dat homoseksuele mans deur ses fases gaan tydens hul homoseksuele identiteitsvorming. Die ses fases is identiteitsverwarring, identiteitsvergelyking, identiteitsverdraagsaamheid, identiteitsaanvaarding, identiteitstrots en identiteitsintese. 'n Meervoudigegevallestudie-ontwerp is gebruik, en sewe deelnemers is gewerf deur doelgerigte, homogene steekproefneming. 'n Individuele, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud is met elke deelnemer gevoer, waartydens hulle die geleentheid gegun is om na te dink oor hul vaderlike verhoudings tydens die tydperk van hul seksuele identitieitsvorming. Die data is met behulp van tematiese analise ontleed, en die deelnemers se ervarings is in hoof- en subtemas vervat. Uit die dataontleding het vyf hooftemas ontstaan: a) ‘n ontwikkelingsprogressie in die vorming van homoseksuele identiteit; b) die rol van vaderlike verhouding in homoseksuele identiteitsvorming; c) proses van bekendmaking, met verskille tussen verwagte en werklike vaderlike reaksies; d) aanvaarding van homoseksualiteit deur beide vader en seun, en e) stigma, vooroordeel en diskriminasie beïnvloed die proses van die bekendmaking aan vaders. Hierdie navorsingstudie het probeer om die gaping in die literatuur oor vader-seunverhoudings tydens homoseksuele identiteitsontwikkeling te vul; en die bevindinge kan ook bydra tot die groeiende versameling literatuur oor die toepaslikheid van Cass se model van homoseksuele identiteitsontwikkeling op 'n Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking. Die insig verkry uit die navorsingsbevindings beklemtoon die belangrikheid van inter- en intrapersoonlike konflikte tydens ontwikkeling van ‘n homoseksuele identiteit, spesifiek met betrekking tot die behoefte aan vaderlike ondersteuning, begrip en aanvaarding na bekendmaking van homoseksuele identiteit.

Sleutelwoorde: homoseksuele mans, seksuele-identiteitsvorming, vader-seun verhouding, bekendmaking, aanvaarding van homoseksualiteit

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CHAPTER 1: General Orientation to the Study

The objective of this chapter is to orient the reader to this research study. The chapter has a twofold purpose; first, to briefly explain the research context and clinical relevance, definitions and terms related to this research topic, rationale, aim, and questions and, second, to offer an overview of the research design and methodology. The chapter concludes by providing a delineation of the chapters in this study.

1.1 Research Context and Clinical Relevance

Homosexuality is widely accepted as a sexual identity in Europe, though not in African countries (Morris, 2014). A nationally representative study conducted in 2007 indicated that 88% of the South African population believed that it is almost always wrong for two adults of the same sex to have an intimate sexual relationship (Roberts & Reddy, 2008). A more recent study, by Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Struwig, and Gordon (2016), found that 72% of the South African population consider homosexuality to be unacceptable, despite South Africa being the first and, to date, only, African country to legalise same-sex marriage, in 2006 (Kohut, 2013). The South African public seems to continue holding stigmatised views about homosexuality, and disapprove of same-sex marriages (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Drescher, 2015; McCormick, 2015).

Mohr and Fassinger (2000) conceptualise sexual identity development as the process whereby individuals recognise their sexual attraction and integrate this newly found awareness into their self-identity. According to Sutherland et al. (2016), homosexuality manifests in three areas, that is, sexual/romantic attraction to an individual of the same sex, sexual behaviour, and sexual identity. Cass's (1979) theory states that homosexual identity formation progresses through six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Homosexual youth could find the formation of a positive sexual identity challenging due to social stigma, homonegativity, and marginalisation (Mohr & Kendra, 2011).

Even though the stages of adolescence and young adulthood are characterised by increasing autonomy from parents (Arnett, 2000), research findings indicate that parental acceptance remains a critical protective resource for homosexual youth during identity formation (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Bregman, Malik, Page, Makynen, & Lindahl, 2013; Davis, 2013). One of the most significant problems that homosexual youth face, therefore, is parental rejection (Savin-Williams, 2006). Lithgow and Du Preez (2012) indicate that 26% of South African gay youth were forced to leave home because of conflict with their families over their sexual identity. Given the important role of the family, in general, and fathers, specifically, in promoting well-being in youth, it is concerning that homosexual individuals experience intense familial rejection (Erich, Tittsworth, Dykes, & Cabuses, 2008; Jadwin-Cakmak, Pingel, Harper, & Bauermeister, 2015; Keown & Palmer, 2014; Wilson, Zeng, & Blackburn, 2011). Cases of bodily harm inflicted by loved ones after disclosure have been reported (Machado, 2015). Also, Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, and Sanchez (2009) found that sexual minority youth who experience high levels of family rejection have poorer mental health outcomes than those who are not rejected by their families.

The decision to disclose one's sexual identity to one's father could be particularly challenging (Wilson et al., 2011), due to homophobia and negative stereotypes. Homosexual individuals dread paternal disclosure due to past antigay talk and homophobic comments by their fathers during their childhood and adolescent years (Jadwin-Cakmak et al., 2015). Homosexual men also find that fathers continue making antigay statements in an effort to change their sons toward heterosexuality.

Table 1 offers a list of definitions that might be useful for the reader to understand certain concepts, different sexual identities, and general terminology as explained and used in this research study.

Table 1

Definitions and terms related to this research topic

Gay	Men who have intimate, romantic, or sexual feelings/relationships with other men. In addition, it is an umbrella term for members of a sexual minority group (Moser, 2016).
Gender	Gender refers to socially constructed systems that classify individuals regarding roles, activities, behaviour, and attributes that are appropriate for men or women (American Psychiatric Association, 2008). Gender refers to specific qualities and classifications ascribed to the masculinity and femininity of men or women, and influences the manner in which individuals interact, act, and feel about themselves (American Psychological Association, 2012). Facets of gender might differ from one culture to another (American Psychological Association, 2015a).
Gender expression	The presentation, including clothing, accessories and physical appearance, and behaviours of an individual that communicate aspects of a specific gender or role (Moser, 2016). Gender expression may or may not imitate gender identity (American Psychological Association, 2015b).
Gender identity	An individual's sense of him/herself as male, female, or something different. It is an internal, psychological, and deeply felt sense of self and is not automatically visible to other people (American Psychiatric Association, 2008; Moser, 2016).
Gender role	The masculine or feminine behaviours or acts of an individual. It relates to norms set by society and cultures about the way people should behave according to their sex (American Psychological Association, 2012; Mustanski, 2013).

Gender non-conformity	Exhibiting traits that are opposite to an individual's biological sex. For example, men that appear and behave in a feminine manner are gender non-conforming (American Psychological Association, 2015a).
Gender-normative	Traits, acts, attributes, and behaviours that are compatible with the expectations of a culture/society for a specific sex (University of California, 2013).
Heterosexism	The assumption that everyone is heterosexual until confirmed otherwise. In addition, those who are not heterosexual, are either inferior or misrepresentations of heterosexuals (Moser, 2016). This leads to marginalisation and discrimination against individuals who do not fall into the heterosexual norm (American Psychological Association, 2012).
Heterosexual/straight	Romantic, sexual, and intimate feelings for or relationships with individual(s) of a sex that differs from your own (Reams, 2017).
Homophobia	Previously termed homoprejudice (American Psychiatric Association, 2008), homophobia refers to hostility towards or an unreasonable fear of individuals with same-sex sexuality (University of California, 2013). Homophobia reinforces the assumption of heterosexual superiority (University of Dallas, 2016). In some cases, homophobia triggers feelings or questions about homosexuality within one's self, which elicits intolerance towards homosexual individuals (American Psychological Association, 2015b).
Homosexual	Individuals who are primarily attracted in a sexual, romantic and/or emotional way to people of a sex that is the same as their own (University of California, 2013).
LGB/LGBT/LGBTI/ LGBTQQIAAP+	Abbreviations referring to individuals who share experiences of exclusion, victimisation, marginalisation and discrimination in a heterosexist society (Counseling Center, 2015). As the diversity and complexity of sexual

	preferences and sexual orientations evolved, so did the abbreviation. These days, the abbreviation that is used is LGBTQQIAAP+ (BBC, 2016) and scholars believe that it is not yet satiated (University of Surrey, 2016). It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, allies, asexual, pansexual, and +, to allow space for individuals who do not fit into one of the above categories.
Sex/biological sex	A medical term labelling a combination of chromosomes, gonads, external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, secondary sex characteristics, hormonal balances, and genetics that are associated with male, female, and intersex (the latter refers to atypical combinations of male and female characteristics) (American Psychiatric Association, 2008).
Sexual behaviour	What people actually do (University of California, 2013). Sexual orientation should not to be confused with sexual behaviour, as the former represents self-concept and feelings of individuals and not physical acts, which are described by the latter (Moser, 2016). Sexual orientation is not necessarily expressed through sexual behaviour (Mustanski, 2013).
Sexual identity/ sexual orientation identity	The way an individual defines own personal sexuality, regardless of sexual behaviour, sexual stimuli, or sexual fantasies (Reams, 2017). Generally, sexual identity refers to the manner in which an individual expresses an identity as a sexual being. This extends to the importance an individual has (or does not have) in life regarding sexual behaviour (University of California, 2013), the way personal sexuality is expressed (Mustanski, 2013), and preferences regarding a sexual partner (Moser, 2016). Sexual identity focusses more on the gender of a sexual partner, and not sex (Reams, 2017). Individuals can refuse

	to identify themselves with a sex, or choose to identify themselves with the gender to which they are attracted (University of California, 2013).
Sexual interest	Sexual interest refers to interests that aggravate sexual arousal in individuals (Mustanski, 2013). This describes what an individual wants to do, regardless of engaging in such interests or not.
Sexual minority	People who belong to a group that is different in some sense, or which does not form part of the mainstream (American Psychological Association, 2015a). Sexual minority refers to individuals who share experiences of exclusion, victimisation, marginalisation, and discrimination in a heterosexist society (Moser, 2016).
Sexual orientation	The intimate personal connections that meet deeply felt needs for intimacy, love, and attachment (American Psychological Association, 2012). It is a lasting romantic, sexual, affectional, or emotional attraction to others, together with a sense of social and personal identity based on those attractions. Terms describing sexual orientation can include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, allies, asexual, and pansexual (University of Surrey, 2016). Sexual orientation can be stable or fluid, as it exists along a continuum of attractions (Reams, 2017).
“To be in the closet”	The informal term used to describe an individual choice not to come out/disclose their sexual identity (University of California, 2013).

1.2 Research Rationale, Aim, and Questions

This study attempted to develop a greater awareness and understanding of father-son relationships during the period of homosexual identity development. The researcher made use of Cass’s (1979) stage model approach to describe the process and development of a homosexual identity. This approach enables the

inclusion of corresponding theories of human development and is, thus, a more complex way of understanding the person (Harvard Mental Health Letter, 2006). The aim of the current study is to discover and describe men's experiences of their father-son relationships during the period of homosexual identity formation.

1.3 Overview of the Research Design and Methods

This study was of a qualitative nature (Maree, 2011) and made use of a multiple case study design (Yin, 2014) in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period. Purposive, homogeneous sampling (Nishishiba, Jones, & Kraner, 2014) was utilised to recruit seven participants who were willing to provide a detailed description of their paternal relationships. They had to be men who had disclosed their homosexual identity to their fathers during the adolescent or emerging adulthood years; they had to currently be in the stage of early adulthood (between the ages of 25 to 40 years) (Arnett, 2015); they had to be able to express themselves effectively in either Afrikaans or English; and should not currently be in treatment for a psychological disorder. Data collection proceeded by using an individual semi-structured interview (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The data was analysed by making use of Clarke and Braun's (2013) process of thematic analysis.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Research Committee of the Department of Psychology, as well as the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State. The researcher considered ethical principles, namely, autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (Allan, 2011), whereby participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, participants were not disadvantaged in any way if they decided not to participate in the study, nor did the participants in the study benefit financially from their participation. The confidentiality of participants was ensured by using pseudonyms during data analysis, discussion and report writing (Maree, 2011). Given the sensitive nature of the research, it was important for the researcher to have strategies in place to mitigate any adverse emotional events associated with the study. Any participants displaying signs of emotional distress were provided with the contact details of registered student psychologists who could provide therapy

free of charge, or a referral to a private psychologist in their area (in the case of private patients), or to the nearest psychiatric clinic in their area (in the case of state patients).

1.4 Delineation of Chapters

The chapters of this research study can be delineated in the following way:

Chapter 1: This chapter consists of a synopsis of the research project and includes the context of the research, the rationale and aim of the study, and the research questions that guided this study. Furthermore, the research design and methodology used in this study were discussed in brief. Finally, the chapter provided information about the sampling procedures, the criteria for selecting the participants, and the ethical principles considered.

Chapter 2: The researcher will explore various paradigms that explain the development of a sexual identity, focussing specifically on models that describe homosexual identity development. Thereafter, an in-depth theoretical explanation and critique of Vivienne Cass's six stages of homosexual identity development will be provided.

Chapter 3: This chapter will provide a literature review about the nature of paternal relationships in the course of identity development. Factors highlighting and influencing sons' decisions to disclose their homosexual identity, including topics such as inter- and intrapersonal conflicts, paternal views regarding homosexuality, and sons' anticipated reactions/responses, will receive attention. This chapter will conclude with the benefits and difficulties of disclosing homosexual identity, and parental adjustment to their sons' disclosure.

Chapter 4: A comprehensive discussion of the process followed to conduct this research study will be provided. The research aim, question, and design will be described, followed by the criteria that were considered for participation in this study. The sampling method, data collection, and data analysis will also be described. The researcher will also elaborate on the process applied to ensure rigour and

trustworthiness, and conclude this chapter by explaining the ethical principles that were considered.

Chapter 5: The findings of this research study will be presented in this chapter. Verbatim quotations from individual interviews will be presented to support the five main themes and their subthemes, which emerged from the qualitative data.

Chapter 6: The identified themes and subthemes presented in Chapter 5 will be discussed in relation to literature about men's experiences during homosexual identity formation.

Chapter 7: The last chapter will present the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research in this field of study will be provided in the final section of this chapter.

1.5 Chapter Summary

The objective of this chapter was to orient the reader to this research study. The research context and clinical relevance, rationale, aim, and questions were provided. A concise discussion of the research design and methodology was offered. The chapter concluded with a delineation of the chapters to follow and suggested definitions and terms related to this research topic. In the next chapter, the phases and processes of homosexual identity development will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: Homosexual Identity Development

Identity development has been researched for more than 50 years (Suárez-Orozco, 2015) by numerous disciplines, including politics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology (Kohut, 2013). Prominent psychological theorists, including Erikson (1950), Marcia (1966), and Arnett (2000), have studied the formation of identity as a developmental task during adolescence and/or emerging adulthood. Erikson's (1959) conceptualisation of identity formation during the adolescent years initiated a myriad of research studies on identity (Arnett, 2000; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Eliason, 1996; Calzo, Antonucci, Mays, & Cochran, 2011; Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Mayer, Garofalo, & Makadon, 2014; White & Stephenson, 2014).

An important part of identity formation is the process of developing ones' sexual identity (Bellavance, 2014; Calzo et al., 2011, Kar, Choudhury, & Singh, 2015), during which individuals search for answers to questions about who they are sexually (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Troiden, 1979). Although there are commonalities between heterosexual and homosexual identity development models (Eliason & Schope, 2007; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014), different paradigms exist to explain sexual identity development (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2011; Toomey, Anhalt, & Shramko, 2016). The current study will use Vivienne Cass's model of homosexual identity development (Cass, 1979) as the theoretical framework to describe the process of homosexual identity development.

Erikson proposes that three dimensions are involved in the formation of a healthy identity, namely, a persons' ego identity, personal identity, and social identity (Erikson, 1959). Ego identity concerns important, basic, integrated, and private beliefs about the self that remain consistent over time (Erikson, 1968). Individuals form their ego identity on the basis of past events, interactions with people, narrative stories, and the history of their lives (Erikson, 1959). The second identity, personal identity, is related to goals, motivations, and beliefs, and is embodied in cultural positions and roles, such as political associations and gender roles (Sokol, 2009). Thirdly, social identity includes a person's connection with other groups or

communities. These groups could include gender, country of origin, ethnic background, and sexual orientation (Erikson, 1959), and provide individuals with protection, a place of belonging, and acceptance (Greene & Britton, 2012). Should an individual progress in all these three dimensions, a healthy identity is likely to develop (Calzo et al., 2011; Craig & Dunn, 2010; Erikson, 1959; Jones, Vaterlaus, Jackson, & Morrill, 2014).

Erikson did not specify the chronological ages at which identity develops, though he considered adolescence as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, during which it is expected of an individual to form a secure identity (Erikson, 1959; 1968). Social and economic changes that characterise industrialised societies cause adolescents to experience a prolonged period of discovery and exploration regarding identity (Arnett, 2004). Arnett proposes a stage of "emerging adulthood", which lasts from the age of 18, to 25. It is evident from his proposed milestones during this phase that Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood (2000) focusses mainly on heterosexual identity development (Jones et al., 2014). These milestones describe the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and include leaving home, completing education, entering the labour force, getting married, and having children (Arnett, 2015; Craig & Dunn, 2010). All emerging adults experience the same emotions and feelings, despite the possibility that there are different adulthood milestones in the development of heterosexual and homosexual identities (Eliason & Schope, 2007; Mayer et al., 2014; Setterson & Ray, 2011).

Parallel with research about identity formation during adolescence or emerging adulthood, literature investigates sexual identity as a developmental process (Bellavance, 2014; Berzonsky, Cieciuch, Duriez, & Soenens, 2011; Brammer, 2012; Hoffman, 2004; Kar et al., 2015; Ott, 2010).

2.1 Sexual Identity as a Developmental Process

Sexual identity formation is a fundamental landmark during adolescence, and is initiated by the beginning of puberty (Kar et al., 2015). Major transitional changes occur cognitively, emotionally, and physically (Hutson, 2010; Kroger et al., 2010). On a cognitive level, adolescents develop subjective, complex thinking, and abstract reasoning (Ott, 2010). On an emotional level, adolescents spend more time on

interaction with their peers, form deeper social relationships, and become more autonomous in relation to their parents (Calzo et al., 2011). On a physical level, primary and secondary sex characteristics develop, they are more aware of their body image, are sexually curious, and have an increased need to find answers to who they are sexually (Erikson, 1959; Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Troiden, 1979).

As part of identity formation, sexual identity formation is a process during which individuals search for ways to express themselves sexually (Erikson, 1959; Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Troiden, 1979). According to Mohr and Fassinger (2000) sexual identity develops during a time when individuals recognise their sexual and romantic attraction to a desired sex. In other words, sexual identity refers to the manner in which individuals express themselves sexually (American Psychological Association, 2012; Toomey et al., 2016). Factors such as temperament, personality, parenting style, arousal, attraction, behaviour, environment, attitudes towards sexuality, affection to a specific sex, and peer and cultural influences are attributing factors that determine sexual identity development (Bellavance, 2014; Mayer et al., 2014; Ott, 2010). Other dynamic aspects, such as moral values, religion, social class, ethnicity, and ethical, political, racial, and legal factors also play a significant role in the expression of one's sexual identity (Bellavance, 2014; Brammer, 2012; Kar et al., 2015; Hoffman, 2011). Sexual identity is a direction of a metacognitive system that is internalised by each individual (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia, 2002). In other words, it is a process of becoming aware of all the different dimensions of the self, integrating the psychic structure and distinguishing between the social world and the inner self (Worthington et al., 2002). During the meaning making of sexual identity development, a combination of beliefs, cultural expectations and traditions, an individual's personal values, and previous social scripts are considered (Berzonsky et al., 2011; Galupo, Davis, Grynkiewicz, & Mitchell, 2014). In summary, sexual identity is the individualised pattern of sexual fantasies, desire, and arousal in response to social and cultural expectations and norms (Bellavance, 2014; Brammer, 2012; Kar et al., 2015). Thus, the process of sexual identity development, irrespective of sexual orientation, conceptualises individuals' sexual identity, sexual value system, and sexuality, in a holistic manner (Arnett, 2015; Brammer, 2012; Ott, 2010). Debates between opposing paradigms, such as nature versus nurture and essentialism versus social constructionism, are

ongoing (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014; Minten & McDonald, 1984; Rosario et al., 2011; Toomey et al., 2016).

2.1.1 Paradigms that explain the development of sexual identity.

Natural and essentialist paradigms consider gender and sexual identities to be concrete and grounded on genetic predispositions or early experiences that created a fixed identity (Eliason & Schope, 2007). The implication is that sexual identity development is a linear process, during which individuals should pass through one stage or phase in order to progress to the next (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1979).

In contrast with this stage-model approach, nurture and social paradigms claim that sexual identity is dependent on social events, previous experiences, context, and time (Greene & Britton, 2012). For example, social stigma and childhood interactions play a role in identity development (Calzo et al., 2011; Diamond, 2013; Jones et al., 2014). According to this nurture/social/historical paradigm, identities are inconstant, alterable, and flexible (Eliason & Schope, 2007; Greene & Britton, 2012; Rosario et al., 2011). Recent findings suggest that these two perspectives should be integrated, and that individuals pass through different identity formation stages, each of which is influenced by the cultural and social environment of each individual (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014; Martos, Nezhad, & Meyer, 2015; Mayer et al., 2014).

2.1.2 Homosexual identity development models

Table 2 offers an overview of the stages of homosexual identity development proposed by each of the theorists mentioned in the following section.

Table 2

Chronological overview of prominent theorists' stage models for homosexual identity development

Theorist	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Plummer (1975)	Sensitisation	Significance	Coming out	Stabilisation		
Troiden (1979)	Sensitisation	Confusion	Assumption	Commitment		
Cass (1979)	Confusion	Comparison	Tolerance	Acceptance	Pride	Synthesis
Coleman (1982)	Pre-coming out	Coming out	Exploration	First relationship	Integration	
Minten & McDonald (1984)	Egocentric	Sociocentric	Universalistic			
Fassinger & Miller (1996)	Awareness	Exploration	Deepening/ Commitment	Internalisation /Synthesis		

Stage-model approaches aim to provide structure to the identity formation process of homosexual individuals (Eliason & Schope, 2007; Galupo et al., 2014). From Table 2 it is clear that the various theories have common features, for instance, most theories start with individuals becoming aware that they differ from other people regarding sexuality. This awareness is followed by questions and concerns regarding homosexuality in general, and whether homosexuality really applies to the individual. Then, the individual starts exploring, searching for answers, and weighing alternatives, until realising that being homosexual is possible. A new process starts, which involves a search for information, connecting with other homosexual individuals, and starting to accept themselves. Finally, individuals synthesise, integrate, and commit to their newfound homosexual identity.

It is unlikely that a single, comprehensive theory could consider all the components of nature, nurture, essentialism, and social paradigms. Therefore, the researcher decided to use Vivienne Cass's stage model of homosexual identity development as the theoretical framework of this study (Cass, 1979). This model was the first to offer empirical research on homosexual identity formation (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005) and it was used as a theoretical framework by recent studies (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Diamond, 2013; Galupo et al., 2014). To date, Cass's model is the

most cited theory in research on homosexual identity formation (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014).

2.2 Cass's Model of Homosexual Identity Development

Cass (1979) suggests six stages that individuals have to negotiate in order to establish an integrated homosexual identity. Figure 1 provides an overview of Cass's model, and the figure is followed by a theoretical discussion of the model.

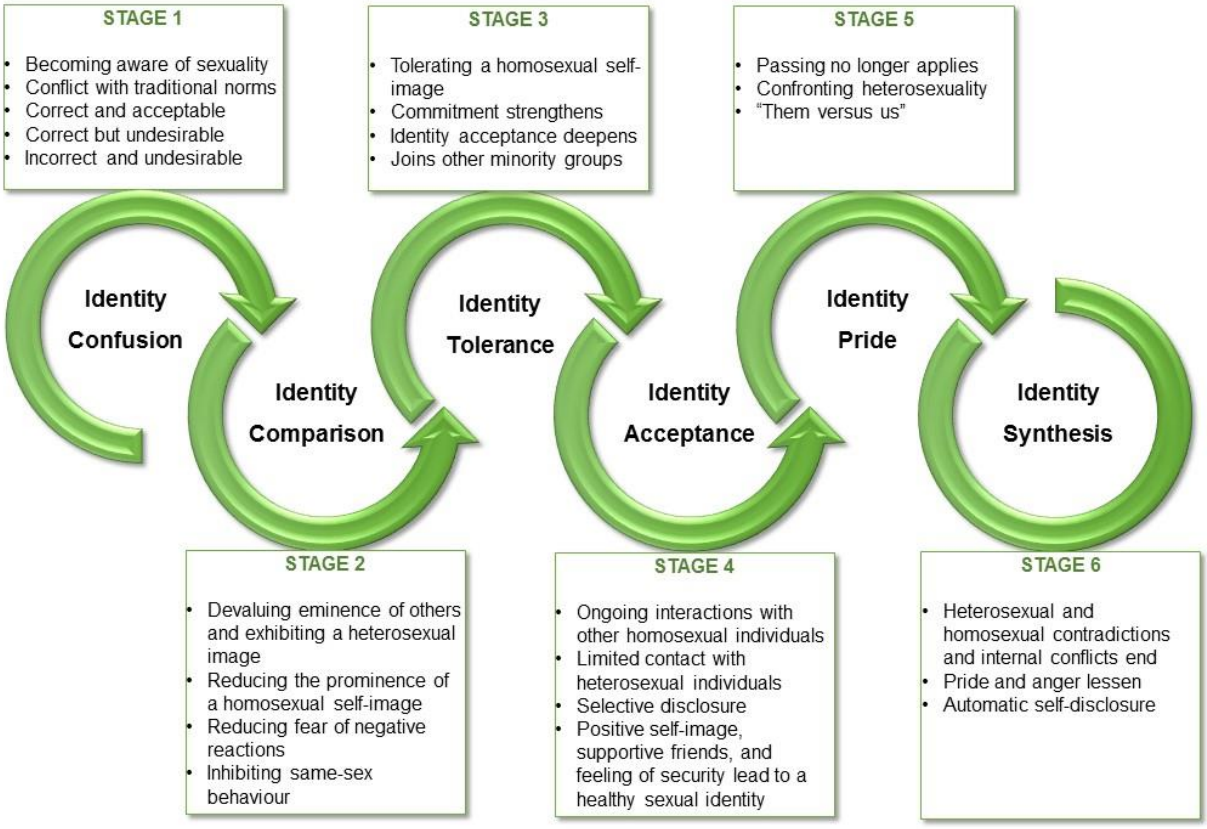

Figure 1. Cass's model of homosexual identity development

2.2.1 Stage 1: Identity confusion.

The process of homosexual identity formation starts when individuals become consciously aware of the possibility that homosexuality applies indirectly or directly to them (Cass, 1984a). Individuals who are attracted to their own sex start personalising information about homosexuality and experience conflict with the traditional norm of heterosexuality. This conflict leads to emotional tension, including anxiety, self-doubt, and confusion (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Cass, 1990).

Despite experiencing many unpleasant reactions, individuals attracted to their own sex privately start labelling their feelings, fantasies, and thoughts as conceivably homosexual (Cass, 1979). However, they are continually expressing non-homosexual images of themselves and hold on to the belief that others identify them as such (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). To relieve the contrasting feelings that homosexual individuals experience, Cass (1979) identifies three ways individuals categorise themselves during the stage of identity confusion, that is, correct and acceptable, correct but undesirable, and incorrect and undesirable.

Correct and acceptable refers to individuals who believe homosexuality is an acceptable definition of the self and they start to question a heterosexual identity (Cass, 1984a). Individuals with this view adopt strategies of seeking information that answers their questions, which enables them to move on to the next stage of identity development (Cass, 1984b). Another category, called correct but undesirable, describes individuals who acknowledge their feelings about homosexuality, but discard the possibility of committing to a romantic same-sex relationship in the future (Cass, 1990). Individuals holding this view adopt strategies of sexual inhibition (Cass, 1996). For example, this group of individuals limit their exposure to homosexual material, deny any personal significance, and constrain sensual or romantic behaviour with same-sex partners (Cass, 1984b). In extreme cases, these individuals develop hypersexual relationships with the opposite sex, become celibate, or search for a cure for their homosexuality (Cass, 1984a). The last category, incorrect and undesirable, refers to individuals who see their self-definition of homosexuality as improper, detrimental, and unacceptable (Cass, 1979). They adopt a strategy of personal innocence, find excuses, or reframe their previous homosexual experiences/interactions (Cass, 1984a; Degges-White, Rice, & Myers, 2000).

The internal conflict homosexual individuals experience due to the traditional norm of heterosexuality is the core characteristic of the identity confusion stage (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). Individuals deny the likelihood of homosexuality and explore strategies to hide the possibility that they may be homosexual (Cass, 1984a). Some manage to portray the heterosexual role by using denial as a defence

mechanism and avoiding provocative situations (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Information about homosexuality can reduce confusion and promote the development of a healthy homosexual identity (Eliason, 1996; Galupo et al., 2014; Harper, Serrano, Bruce, & Bauermeister, 2016). Internal affective and cognitive conflicts act as catalysts to motivate the individual to progress toward the next sexual identity formation stage (Cass, 1984a; Greene & Britton, 2012).

2.2.2 Stage 2: Identity comparison.

The second stage of Cass's model of homosexual identity formation begins when individuals start comparing their same-sex attractions to heterosexual attractions and realise they are not heterosexual after all (Cass, 1979). This realisation leads to a significant decline in identity confusion and, consequently, enables individuals to take the first step to committing to a homosexual self-image (Cass, 1979, 1990). In contrast, individuals who decisively isolate themselves from social interactions experience exaggerated feelings of alienation, to the point that they disapprove of homosexuality in general (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Despite the feelings of alienation, the desire to belong to a community/society/subgroup/family develops and intensifies as time passes (Cass, 1984a).

At this stage, homosexual individuals experience a sense of grief about losing their heterosexual status (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). The processes of establishing a homosexual identity and "losing" a heterosexual identity run parallel (Cass, 1979). The individual's preferred path is determined by self-image and the anticipated perception of being homosexual (Cass, 1984a). Cass (1984b) identifies four trajectories for reducing the ambivalent feelings experienced during this stage. Figure 2 provides an overview of Stage 2: Identity comparison, and the figure is followed by a theoretical discussion of this stage.

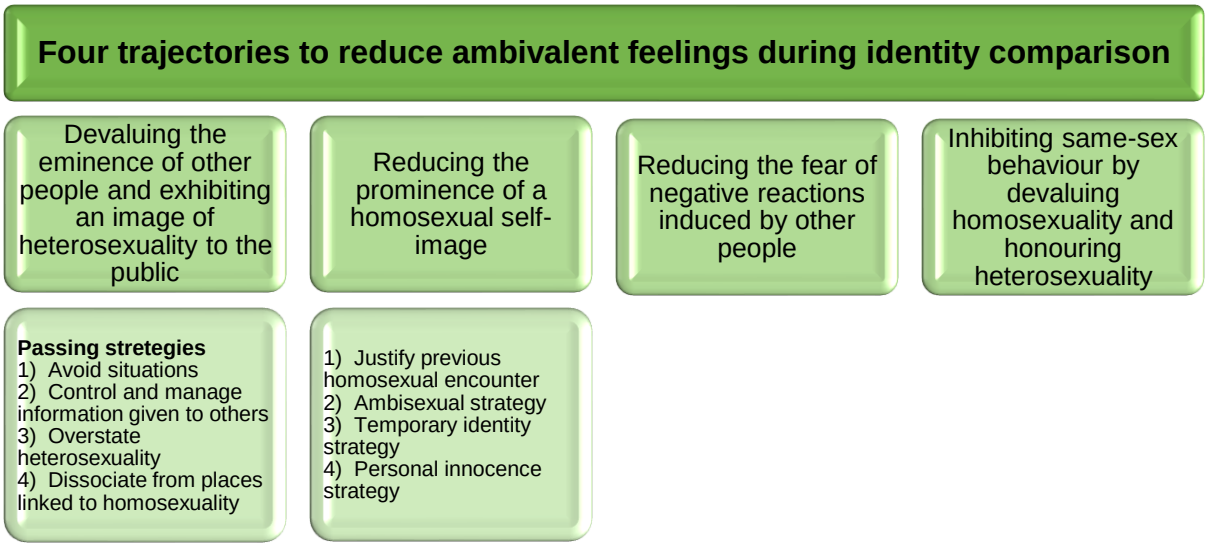

Figure 2. Overview of Stage 2: Identity comparison

2.2.2.1 Devaluing the eminence of other people and exhibiting an image of heterosexuality to the public.

Homosexual individuals believe that sexual diversity enables them to react confidently and they devalue the perceived superiority of other (heterosexual) individuals (Cass, 1979). In the first place, individuals who had a sense of otherness based on their thoughts, fantasies, and feelings about same-sex individuals, tend to validate and identify with their same-sex attractions (Cass, 1990). This process of identification and validation guides individuals to reach out to other minority groups, from whom they feel association and acceptance (Cass, 1979). Also, some individuals who are aware of their conflicting feelings, tend to display noncompliant approaches toward heterosexual socialisation (Cass, 1979), for example, some resist the traditional norm that marriages are only for heterosexual individuals (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Lastly, others, who are aware of their differences, exclusivity, and uniqueness accept these in a positive manner (Cass, 1979).

Despite devaluing the eminence of heterosexual individuals, homosexual persons continue to present themselves with a heterosexual image in public spaces. This heterosexual presentation to society is called passing (Cass, 1984a). The passing strategy (Cass, 1979) can be defined as continuing previous (heterosexual) patterns of behaviour, attire, and mannerisms. This strategy allows homosexual

individuals to “pass” through the heterosexual radar, and, by doing so, reduce or eliminate homophobic comments or actions (Cass, 1984b). Successful passing offers additional time for the homosexual individual to establish a healthy sexual identity (Cass, 1990).

Cass (1979) identifies four passing techniques that homosexual individuals use. First, they avoid situations that have the potential to expose their homosexuality, such as social gatherings where they are expected to be accompanied by an individual of the opposite sex (Cass, 1984b). Second, they control and manage the information they present to others, for example, by wearing straight-looking clothing styles, or clothes that are not stereotypically linked to the homosexual stigma (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Third, some intentionally overstate and flaunt the heterosexual image, or even claim to be celibate (Cass, 1979). Fourth, they detach, dissociate, and distance themselves from behaviours and places that are associated with homosexuality (Cass, 1996; Robertson, 2014).

2.2.2.2 Reducing the prominence of a homosexual self-image.

There are strategies that homosexual individuals apply to discard their homosexual identity (Cass, 1996). In the first place, individuals might have had a previous homosexual encounter, but provide reasons to justify their experience. For example, they claim it was a once-off incident or part of exploring themselves sexually (Cass, 1984a). Some follow an ambisexual strategy, where they indicate their attraction and orientation to either men or women (Cass, 1979). These individuals acknowledge their perception and personal likelihood of heterosexual behaviour, but discard opposite-sex relationships. This strategy reduces feelings of estrangement and increases acceptance and identification with other (heterosexual) individuals (Cass, 1996). Others follow a temporary identity strategy, indicating previous homosexual experiences as a temporary phase during their identity development (Cass, 1979). This strategy opens the possibility of identifying or behaving as a heterosexual individual in the future (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Lastly, they can adhere to a personal innocence strategy, and view their homosexual experience negatively (Cass, 1979). These individuals do realise their erotic attractions to the same sex, but claim to be innocent and not accountable for their past (Cass, 1979).

2.2.2.3 Reducing the fear of negative reactions induced by other people.

Individuals who are attracted to their own sex often anticipate strong negative comments or reactions from other people (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Greene & Britton, 2012; Iudici & Verdecchia, 2015). Studies report experiences of negative remarks, prejudice, homophobia, and even physical assaults, to name a few (Cass, 1996; Jones et al., 2014; Juster et al., 2015; Kroger et al., 2010; Zoeterman & Wright, 2014). These negative reactions came from peers, religious groups, families, work colleagues, and other community members. To prevent these reactions, homosexual individuals implement strategies to inhibit or conceal their sexual attractions or activities (Cass, 1984a). Fear of disapproval often motivates individuals to move to a different city, leaving their family and communities behind, in order to progress with their homosexual identity formation (Greene & Britton, 2012; Harper, Brodsky, & Bruce, 2012). Some seek professional help and/or psychotherapy, hoping to repress their sexual impulses towards same-sex individuals (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Cass, 1984a; Juster et al., 2015), which might limit homoerotic attractions, and, subsequently, suppress all kinds of sexual feelings and arousal (Cass, 1990).

2.2.2.4 Inhibiting same-sex behaviour by devaluing homosexuality and honouring heterosexuality.

As individuals feel progressively more separate from family members, peers, and other communities, they desire to change their behaviours, self-image, and same-sex attractions (Cass, 1979). Limiting self-perception and self-expression mostly leads to identity foreclosure (Marcia, 2010), that is, committing to expectations or norms without exploring other possibilities on your own (Marcia, 2014). As a result, a negative sexual identity is established, because individuals adopt an identity that is not true to themselves (Marcia, 2010; Robertson, 2014; White & Stephenson, 2014). Self-hatred, feelings of guilt, and self-humiliation intensify when individuals try to inhibit their sexual attraction to the same sex (Cass, 1990).

Several outcomes are possible during the identity comparison stage of homosexual identity formation, for example, foreclosure of identity, failure to explore homosexuality (or even the possibility of bisexuality), or that attractions toward

same-sex individuals are temporary (Kroger et al., 2010). Even for those individuals who accepted the probability of homosexuality, ambivalent feelings continue to exist (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Cass, 1984a).

2.2.3 Stage 3: Identity tolerance.

During this stage, individuals admit to the probability of being homosexual (Cass, 1979). They start to tolerate (not fully accept) a homosexual self-image (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). The confusion about their non-heterosexual identities lessens as their level of commitment strengthens. They start to acknowledge social, sexual, and emotional needs (Cass, 1984a). Despite discrepancies between their homosexual self-view and the views of other people, their acceptance of a homosexual identity deepens (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Cass (1990) found that homosexual individuals continue to experience feelings of alienation, but counteract these feelings by joining or becoming part of other minority groups. Their acceptance by a group reduces their feelings of isolation, doubt, and possible rejection by other individuals (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Cass, 1996). Furthermore, positive feelings, feelings of belonging, and constructive experiences increase as homosexual individuals become more involved in the homosexual community (Cass, 1990). Identification with other homosexual communities has shown to have numerous benefits, such as an increase in self-esteem, a more positive self-view, formation of new friendships, even meeting potential partners and role models, development of better homosexual identity management skills, and greater acceptance (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Cass, 1996; Cox & Gallois, 1996; Jones et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 2014; Subhi et al., 2011).

2.2.4 Stage 4: Identity acceptance.

Additional and ongoing interactions with other homosexual individuals form the basis of the fourth stage of sexual identity formation (Cass, 1979). These interactions allow homosexual individuals to normalise, validate, and accept their homosexual identity (Cass, 1984a). The newly formed friendships and acceptance from minority group members strongly influence the remaining stages of identity formation (Cass, 1996; Eliason & Schope, 2007; Kroger et al., 2010). Some individuals embrace their opinions and attitudes about homosexuality and expect society to validate their sexual identity (Jones et al., 2014). Others see their same-

sex attraction as private and believe it does not concern anybody else (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Cass, 1979).

During the identity acceptance stage, passing becomes routine, with homosexual individuals not labelling or classifying themselves in a homosexual lifestyle (Cass, 1979). By maintaining the passing strategy, possible negative confrontation, homophobic reactions, or rejection by heterosexual individuals are reduced (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). However, continuing to use passing as a heterosexual image strategy, in most cases, leads to identity foreclosure (Cass, 1984a; Marcia, 2014). Besides, limited contact with heterosexual individuals tends to reduce the feeling of alienation caused by them (White & Stephenson, 2014). Coupled with limited contact with heterosexual people, homosexual individuals selectively disclose their identity to those they expect will not judge, humiliate, or reject homosexuality (Cass, 1984a; Jones et al., 2014). Although these strategies enable individuals to control or reduce their inner conflicts, progress in establishing a healthy identity is restricted (Cass, 1984a).

Nonetheless, homosexual individuals who hold a positive self-image, socialise with supportive friends, and feel secure in their homosexual identity, are in the process of forming a healthy sexual identity (Cass, 1984a; Eliason & Schope, 2007; Subhi et al., 2011). At this stage, some homosexual individuals may become offensive and rebellious about prejudiced attitudes, discrimination, and heterosexist comments about their sexuality (Cass, 1979). Consequently, even those individuals who used the passing strategy, now angrily reject surreptitious heterosexual behaviour (Cass, 1984a; Brandon-Friedman, 2015). As a result, homosexual individuals start displaying anger toward heterosexist, homophobic, or prejudiced people, which ultimately leads to homosexual identity pride (Cass, 1979).

2.2.5 Stage 5: Identity pride.

The fifth stage of Cass's theory about identity development emerges when homosexual individuals experience incongruence between heterosexual depreciation and their own progress towards accepting their own homosexual identity (Cass, 1979; Zoeterman & Wright, 2014). The strategy of passing no longer applies, as their pugnaciousness commonly leads to confrontation with heterosexual individuals

(Cass, 1990). Consequently, disclosure is embraced as a coping reaction to confront the ambivalent feelings between anger and pride (Cass, 1984a). Homosexual individuals incorporate strategies that criticise the dominance of heterosexuality and even exaggerate the significance of homosexuality (Cass, 1984a; Rosario et al., 2011). For this reason, homosexual men start preferring their new homosexual identities above their alleged heterosexual self-image, and ensure that others know about their sexual identity. Furthermore, the acceptance and sense of belonging experienced by other minority group members add to the homosexual identity disclosure process of homosexual individuals (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014).

Cass (1979) found two positive outcomes when individuals disclose their identity. Firstly, a single self-concept is consolidated and converged. Secondly, the more people know about one's homosexuality, the more likely it is for a homosexual individual to reinforce and reflect this self-image (Cass, 1979). Brandon-Friedman (2015) explains that, although self-disclosure can be positive, the expectation of others' responses often determines the final stage of identity formation. For example, when individuals react negatively or offensively, the belief of "them versus us" is reinvigorated. In such cases, homosexual individuals may disregard their sexual identities, especially when they are overly ashamed or fearful of rejection (Crocetti et al., 2008; Greene & Britton, 2012; Iudici & Verdecchia, 2015).

2.2.6 Stage 6: Identity synthesis.

During the final stage of identity formation, Cass (1979) explains, the viewpoint of "them versus us" changes. Previous heterosexual and homosexual contradictions and internal conflicts end, while feelings of pride and anger become less overpowering. Consequently, homosexual individuals stop focusing on the sexual identity of other individuals, as they become more comfortable with their own homosexual identity (Cass, 1984a; Subhi et al., 2011). It is important to note that homosexual individuals place their trust in sympathetic, understanding, and compassionate heterosexuals; while homophobic, heterosexist, prejudiced, and offensive heterosexuals are devalued (Cass, 1990). As a result, prior feelings of alienation start to diminish (Brandon-Friedman, 2015) and an integrated sexual identity follows. In other words, private and public homosexual characteristics are

synthesised (Cass, 1990). Equally important, the feeling of security found after the identity has been integrated, enables automatic self-disclosure in the future (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). The stage of identity synthesis is established when homosexual individuals are at peace with themselves (Cass, 1996) and are able to advance to the next distinguishing task of adulthood development.

2.3 Critique of Cass's Model

Stage models capture a general sequence of development, but the linear nature thereof is argued to be too simplistic to adequately describe the variety of different life experiences of an individual (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001; Toomey et al., 2016). Location, age, ethnicity, race, gender, and economic status are influential factors, of which the influence is often overlooked during individual sexual identity development (Eliason & Schope, 2007; Herek, 2016; Robertson, 2014).

One limitation of linear stage models is that they constrict a holistic view of identity development (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014), for example, the Cass model only considers homosexual identity development, without considering other influential factors (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Cass's model (1979) does not reflect the influence that diversity between cultural, ethnic, social, and race constructs have on sexual identity development (Adamczyk & Cheng, 2015; Bregman et al., 2013; Crocetti et al., 2008; Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992; Schope, 2004). Another limitation of Cass's homosexual identity development model is that it does not address the fluidity of sexual identity, as identities change over time as individuals gain more awareness and new experiences (Diamond, 2013). Furthermore, the model does not identify differences between men and women during sexual identity development (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). Horowitz and Newcomb (2002) found that homosexual males and females do not progress through every stage in an analogous way, or even in the same sequential manner. Despite the criticisms mentioned, the focus of this study is only on a homogeneous group of men, and therefore, Cass's model is an appropriate model to use in this research study.

In modern society, individuals are exposed to a vast amount of media presentations, information, television shows, social networks, and images about different sexual identities (Crowson & Goulding, 2013; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014).

These exposure can influence the identity development processes of individuals. For example, Harper et al. (2016) found that the internet is used to facilitate the process for individuals who are establishing a sexual identity. This is confirmed by Ceglarek and Ward (2016), who indicate that homosexual individuals use social networking sites for identity development, and that the results of the development indicate a positive correlation with their mental health, due to the support they receive on the internet.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Regardless of whether identity development involves a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual identity (to name a few), it is important to note that not all individuals will progress through the stages of this linear model. Some might skip certain stages, while others might pause at certain phases (Toomey et al., 2016). For example, the passing strategy of Cass (1979) cannot be overgeneralised to all men and women who are going through homosexual identity formation (Brandon-Friedman, 2015). Even identity stability is questioned, as Eliason and Schope (2007) indicate that identities are always fragmented, tentative, and figments of imagination, and individuals are always aiming to find order in the chaos of identity possibilities.

CHAPTER 3: The Role of the Paternal Relationship in Men's Decision to Disclose Their Homosexuality

Relationships are a means to fulfil the human need to belong, to feel loved, and to form part of a dynamic system (Berzon, 1988; Conger & Little, 2010). Regardless of whether a parental relationship is positive or negative, it has a lasting effect on an individual's well-being (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Cheng, Wu, & Adamczyk, 2016; Dick, 2004; Figueira & Ouakinin, 2010; Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Peterson, 1968; Takeuchi, Miyaoka, Tomoda, Liu & Kitamura, 2010; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Health outcomes, such as mortality risk, health behaviour, mental health, and physical health, have been associated with the quality of relationships (Bregman et al., 2013; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Furthermore, future peer, work, and romantic relationships are formed and shaped by the type of interconnections people have with important others in their lives (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; D'Augelli, 2006; Dwairy, 2010; Kuyper, 2015). One of the relationships that has the potential to be significant in an individual's life, is the paternal relationship.

Interaction between father and son has a life-long effect on sons' development (Keown & Palmer, 2014; Lucassen et al., 2011; McCord, McCord, & Thurber, 1962; Pleck, 2010; Zhang, Zhao, Ju, & Ma, 2014). Parents play an important role in creating safe spaces for their sons to become autonomous and develop a positive self-concept, by providing room for exploration, and guiding them to establish their sexual identity (Bregman et al., 2013; Conley, 2011; Dubeau, Coutu, & Lavigueur, 2013; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Jones et al., 2014; Keown & Palmer, 2014; Rah & Parke, 2008). Recent studies also examined the influences that might have an impact on the paternal responses/reactions before, during, and after their sons' disclosure of a homosexual identity (Baiocco et al., 2015; Machado, 2015).

The disclosing process itself poses significant challenges for homosexual individuals, due to interpersonal and intrapersonal concerns, religious beliefs, and heteronormative societal norms, to name a few (Cassar & Sultana, 2016; Chester et al., 2016; Dahl & Galliher, 2012; Naidoo & Mabaso, 2014). These factors have an influence on homosexual mens' decision to disclose their sexual identity

(McCormick, 2015; Moradi et al., 2010; Ream & Rodrigues, 2014; Ryan, Legate, & Weinstein, 2015). In addition to the above concerns, fear of parental rejection is a significant factor preventing men from disclosing their homosexual identity (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Cheng et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2009).

There is contradictory evidence in the literature about paternal rejection or approval of their sons' homosexuality (Dahl & Galliher, 2012; McCormick, 2015; Willoughby, Malik, & Lindahl, 2006). Although homosexuality might not always be accepted, homosexual men report higher prevalence of self-acceptance and identity integration within larger systems when their homosexuality was supported by family members (Meyer & Frost, 2013; Pleck, 2010). Simultaneously, more advantages, such as general well-being, acceptance, security, and identity integration are reported when homosexual men disclosed their identity to family and society members, as opposed to concealing their homosexual identity (Provence, Rochlen, Chester, & Smith, 2014; Ream & Rodrigues, 2014; Ryan et al., 2015).

3.1 The Nature of Paternal Relationships in the Process of Identity Development

The quality of familial relationships can range between the polarities, of potentially allowing a child to grow and flourish, on the one hand, or being detrimental, dysfunctional, damaging, or even abusive, on the other hand (Dick, 2004; Didericksen & Berge, 2015; Dwairy & Achoui, 2010; Erich et al., 2008; Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Pallini, Baiocco, Schneider, & Madigan, 2014). Ample research has been done on the role that family plays during childhood development (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Choi, 2010; Didericksen & Berge, 2015; Dwairy, 2010; Pallini et al., 2014; Peterson, 1968; Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013; Spjeldnes & Choi, 2008; Takeuchi et al., 2010), however, the basis of any relationship between fathers and sons starts with a secure attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1982).

Both Ainsworth (1967) and Bowlby (1969) define attachment as an intense and long-lasting emotional bond that is ingrained between parents and their children, to protect infants from danger or harm. An individual's very first relationship is dynamically shaped through attachment with primary caregivers (Ainsworth et al.

1978; Lucassen et al., 2011; Melinder, Baugerud, Ovenstad, & Goodman, 2013; Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013). Attachment figures exert influence on children's decision-making, trust, autonomy, exploration, personality formation, self-confidence, and self-esteem throughout the life of the child (Bowlby, 1982; Bogaerts, Vanheule, & Declercq, 2005; Pallini et al., 2014; Takeuchi et al., 2010). In contrast to the historical belief that mothers are the primary caregivers and attachment figures (Ainsworth, 1967; Bowlby, 1969; Nimkoff, 1942), recent research also studied fathers acting as primary attachment figures (Jore, Green, Adams, & Carnes, 2016; Pallini et al., 2014). For example, it is claimed that fathers can fulfil the role of the primary caregiver and attachment figure just as well in the absence of mothers (Jore et al., 2016; Lucassen et al., 2011; Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013; Pallini et al., 2014). A secure attachment between father and son is essential to establish a healthy relationship (Melinder et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011).

A secure attachment has two useful purposes; it creates a safe haven and offers a secure base (Van Petegem, Beyers, Brenning, & Vansteenkiste, 2013). Firstly, a safe haven delivers space for children to seek and receive the support needed to cope during stressful events (Bowlby, 1982; Van Petegem et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). Secondly, a secure base allows sufficient autonomy for children to explore and discover themselves and their world, whilst they know the family is available if needed (Melinder et al., 2013; Pallini et al., 2014). Father sensitivity, physical contact, attention, paternal motivation, availability, nurturance, moral or ethical guidance, economic support, and cultural orientation are factors that play a crucial part in father-son attachment (Bernstein, 1997; Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Jore et al., 2016; Lucassen et al., 2011; Lung & Shu, 2007; Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2013; Takeuchi et al., 2010; Van Petegem et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). Although a secure attachment is desirable, not all children are raised in families that provide a safe haven or a secure base (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Roisman, Haltigan, Haydon, & Booth-LaForce, 2014). Absent fathers, unavailability, pretentiousness, a lack of guidance, and affectation might generate an insecure attachment (Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Jore et al., 2016; Van Petegem et al., 2013). Poorly formed father-son attachments impact children's emotional, financial, social, spiritual, cultural, mental, and behavioural functioning (Melinder et al., 2013; Patel & Mavungu, 2016; Van Petegem et al., 2013). Unfavourable

attachments lead to an anxious, even fearful or avoidant father-son relationships (Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Pallini et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2011).

Avoidance results in uneasiness regarding closeness, or a fear of intimacy, and anxiety leads to a fear of abandonment and rejection (Jore et al., 2016; Melinder et al., 2013). Roisman et al. (2014) show that little paternal support advance insecure adult romantic relationships in sons. Likewise, research found that insecure attachments contribute to children engaging in short-term relationships and a higher number of extra-dyadic affairs in adult relationships (Jore et al., 2016; Pallini et al., 2014; Roisman et al., 2014). One explanation for the two phenomena listed above might be that children experience insecure paternal relationships as distrust, and associate it with feelings of abandonment (Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013), or it might be that children grow up with an image that personal relationships are untrustworthy, hurtful, and unpredictable (Pallini et al., 2014; Patel & Mavungu, 2016). These reasons, among others, adversely influence their perception of what a functional adult relationship should involve (Casselman & McKenzie, 2015).

Overly controlling parents tend to have similar outcomes: higher levels of anxiety/depression, fear of future intimacy, abandonment, and rejection might be experienced by the children (Dwairy, 2010; Jore et al., 2016; Melinder et al., 2013; Roisman et al., 2014). Overregulation of paternal control can be disadvantageous for the development of a secure bond between fathers and sons (Brussoni & Olsen, 2011; Dwairy & Achoui, 2010; Liu & Chang, 2016). For instance, a detrimental father-son relationship is more likely to follow when fathers overpower their sons' thoughts, feelings or beliefs, smother independence, or try to rule the sons' daily actions (Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Didericksen & Berge, 2015; Liu & Chang, 2016). Often, fathers reinforce control by resolving disobedience with strict measures (Dwairy, 2010; Horn & Wong, 2014), which can increase stress, self-doubt, and mental problems in sons (Keown & Palmer, 2014; Liu & Chang, 2016; Lucassen et al., 2011; Pleck, 2010; Reeb & Conger, 2009). Moreover, children who are raised in an overly controlled environment feel an inability to make their own life choices and experience a sense of helplessness in certain settings (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Bogaerts et al., 2005; Bregman et al., 2013). Sometimes, sons' autonomy is

sacrificed in favour of paternal control and this results in an unreliable father-son relationship (Bregman et al., 2013; Davis, 2013).

As with attachment and paternal control, literature shows that the quality of the father-son relationship is characterised by the amount of autonomy experienced by the son (Ryan et al., 2015), which also has a direct effect on his physical and mental well-being (Herbert & Dahlquist, 2008; Ryan et al., 2015; Van Petegem et al., 2013). Paternal acceptance remains a critical protective resource for sons during identity formation, especially if a son's identity differs from heteronormative expectations (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Bregman et al., 2013; Davis, 2013). Therefore, one of the most significant challenges that homosexual youth face is parental rejection (Erich et al., 2008; Jadwin-Cakmak et al., 2015; Keown & Palmer, 2014; Savin-Williams, 2005).

3.2 Factors that Influence the Decision to Disclose

It can be extremely difficult for homosexual men to disclose their sexual identity, due to interpersonal, intrapersonal, and intergenerational conflicts (Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Baruch-Dominguez, Infante-Xibille, & Saloma-Zuñiga, 2016; Bregman et al., 2013; Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016; McDermott, Schwartz, Lindley, & Proietti, 2014; Willoughby et al., 2006). Homosexual individuals experience inner conflicts, such as internalised homophobia (McDermott et al., 2014), heterophobia (Haldeman, 2006), and conflicting personal religious beliefs (Lauricella, Phillips, & Dubow, 2017). Although interpersonal conflicts exist, homosexual men simultaneously struggle with external conflicts, such as heteronormativity, stigma, prejudice, and homophobia (Iudici & Verdecchia, 2015; Moradi et al., 2010; Saewyc, 2011). The extent to which fathers interpret homosexuality is shaped by the same heteronormative beliefs, these beliefs influence the way in which they react to their sons' homosexual identity disclosure (Jadwin-Cakmak et al., 2015; Odenweller, Rittenour, Myers, & Brann, 2013; Pleck, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014).

Disclosure, or "coming out", is the process whereby men acknowledge, appreciate, and accept their own homosexuality and confirm their sexual identity to others (Jadwin-Cakmak et al., 2015; McCormick, 2015; Pew Research Center,

2016). Coming out occurs through self-disclosure or by means of being “outed” by others (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016). Self-disclosure increases control, empowers the individual, and gives a sense of ownership when a decision has been made to disclose one’s homosexual identity (Bregman et al., 2013; Rossi, 2010). Individuals who were outed report both positive and negative experiences. Some asked to be outed to avoid reactions to the disclosure (Machado, 2015), while others considered being outed as an act of betrayal (Jadwin-Cakmak et al., 2015). Being outed before feeling ready to disclose, being unprepared, or in a difficult environment might have detrimental consequences for both the individual being outed, and his intrapersonal relationships (Goodrich, 2009; Willoughby et al., 2006; McCormick, 2015; Rossi, 2010). Social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and similar applications, increases the possibility of being outed, due to the ease of sharing photos/videos/events (Chester et al., 2016; Mustanski, Lyons, & Garcia, 2011; Owens, 2017). Nonetheless, numerous interpersonal adjustments were found to take place before, during, and after the coming out process (Hays, Craigen, Knight, Healey, & Sikes, 2011; Takeuchi et al., 2010).

3.2.1 Interpersonal conflicts.

Many homosexual individuals experience internalised homophobia, which is a phenomenon describing the destructive feelings that homosexual individuals hold about their “dissimilarity in sexuality” compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Moradi et al., 2010). Internalised homophobia manifests in a sense of devaluation, oppression, homoprejudice, and homonegativity towards oneself (Greene & Britton, 2012; McDermott et al., 2014; Moradi et al., 2010; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Sometimes, those who experience internalised homophobia develop self-disgust and self-denial, and are more likely to hide their sexual identity (Pitoňák & Spilková, 2016). In addition, uncertainty, shame, wanting-to-change, and getting rid of their homosexual identity are frequently reported (Balsam et al., 2011; Bregman et al., 2013; Chester et al., 2016; Frost, 2011). Uncomfortable feelings, such as inferiority, shame, dissimilarity, and strangeness, experienced by homosexual men in the presence of heterosexual individuals, are part of a phenomenon called heterophobia (Haldeman, 2006).

Heterophobia is a pattern of behaviours and feelings that is expressed toward heterosexual men, which might include anxiety, avoidance, and a devaluation of heterosexuality in general (Haldeman, 2006). This phenomenon is likely to occur due to past negative experiences with heterosexual men (Moradi et al., 2010; Provence et al., 2014). Heterophobia, also known as heteronegativity (Ryan et al., 2015), is described by homosexual men as pervasive feelings that started early in their lives due to the fear of physical violence, rejection, humiliation, and homophobic attacks, to name a few (Chester et al., 2016; Haldeman, 2006; McCormick, 2015).

Due to the potential risks of coming out, individuals often conceal their homosexuality in an effort to reduce/eliminate social prejudice, stigma, rejection, and discrimination (Ryan et al., 2015). Concealment creates a shield against the anticipated or actual costs of disclosing (Machado, 2015; Sattler, Wagner, & Christiansen, 2016). The outcome is dual-sided: it either protects individuals against societal intimidation, or it perpetuates feelings of guilt and shame (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016; Herek, 2016; Ryan et al., 2015; Sattler et al., 2016). Whenever they have to conceal their identity, homosexual men report a decrease in their satisfaction with life, lower self-esteem, and an increase in negative affects toward self and others (Hay & Ashman, 2003; Moradi et al., 2010). Concealment occurs as a result of negative societal/religious/parental views and beliefs (Chester et al., 2016; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). In addition to interpersonal stressors homosexual men face, they also experience intrapersonal stressors, such as prejudice, discrimination, homophobia, stereotyping, and stigma (Ahmed, Andersson, & Hammarstedt, 2016; Baiocco et al., 2015; Cassar & Sultana, 2016; Chester et al., 2016; Herek, 2016; Kite & Bryant-Lees, 2016; Sabbadini, 2015).

3.2.2 Intrapersonal conflicts.

Discrimination is anti-homosexual behaviours directed toward a homosexual individual, through rejection, verbal assaults, and acts of physical violence (Machado, 2015; Ryan et al., 2015; Sattler et al., 2016), while stigma is the devaluation of an individuals' homosexual identity, considering a specific cultural milieu or social context (Ryan et al., 2015). Condescending societal views and interaction play a direct or indirect part in the process of homosexual identity disclosure (Ahmed et al., 2016; Frost, 2011; Greene & Britton, 2012; Herek, 2016;

Kite & Bryant-Lees, 2016; Pitoňák & Spilková, 2016). Discrimination, abuse, rejection, or harassment are direct influences, whereas homophobic stereotyping and stigma are indirect influences (Ryan et al., 2015). Consequently, it is not uncommon for homosexual men to anticipate (and experience) rejection, humiliation, and negative reactions by society (Bos, Sandfort, De Bruyn, & Hakvoort, 2008; Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Erich et al., 2008; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009; Machado, 2015; Pitts, Smith, Mitchell, & Patel, 2006).

Chester et al. (2016) indicates that homosexual men are exposed to danger if they disclose their sexuality, as they are the primary targets of hate crimes, sexual prejudice, and homophobic violence (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016; Herek, 2016; Stacey, 2011; Valentova, 2016). Increased rates of suicidality, social isolation, lower self-worth, and depression were found among homosexual men due to the direct/indirect influences of a heteronormative society (Burton, 2015; Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016; Moradi et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2015). The manner in which men embody or express their homosexuality is influenced by personal, familial, political, cultural, religious, and societal values, norms, or beliefs (Cassar & Sultana, 2016; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Herek, 2016; Lauricella et al., 2017). Considering the possible impact society has on homosexual men in general, it is exceptionally important to realise that the establishment, shaping and creation of paternal views or beliefs are based on the same heteronormative perspectives (Conley, 2011; Iudici & Verdecchia, 2015; Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Koenig, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014).

3.2.3 Paternal views prior disclosure.

The decision to disclose one's homosexual identity to one's father could be especially challenging, due to past antigay talk, homophobic remarks and discrimination, and religious beliefs and negative stigma fathers held during their sons' upbringing (Balsam et al., 2011; Bregman et al., 2013; Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013). Paternal beliefs about homosexuality are formed through the traditional heterosexual norms according to which most fathers were raised (Horn & Wong, 2014; Levant, 2011). Paternal backgrounds influence their statements, as their upbringing differed from that of younger generations (Kuyper, Fernee, & Keuzenkamp, 2016), where contact with homosexual individuals is more common

(D'Augelli, Grossman, Starks, & Sinclair, 2010). Certain fathers might believe that they lack knowledge about homosexuality, and consequently they find it difficult to discuss homosexual identity formation with their sons (Horn & Wong, 2014). Others feel uncomfortable with the topic, or that it is not suitable for discussion (Kirkman, Rosenthal, & Feldman, 2001; McDermott et al., 2014). Fathers' upbringing was influenced by social norms and their parents' expectations, however, likewise it is important for fathers to realise that their sons' self-perceptions and self-worth are based on sons' paternal perceptions (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016).

Another influential factor that often surfaces in the literature about father-son relationships before disclosure, is familial views regarding religion and homosexuality (Lauricella et al., 2017; Reams, 2017). Paternal endorsement of certain scriptures about homosexuality, church sermons that devalue homosexuality, and the adverse views of certain church members about homosexuality have an influence on how homosexual sons interpret paternal views (Jacobs, Miller, Wickramaratne, Gameroff, & Weissman, 2012; Lauricella et al., 2017; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2005). Rigid familial religious views often compel homosexual sons to repress their homosexuality (Naidoo & Mabaso, 2014).

Etengoff and Daiute (2015) found that homosexual men are frequently involved in activities such as religious gatherings, church ceremonies, and support systems; they do this with the aim of ignoring their homosexual attractions in the beginning of their homosexual identity formation. However, as homosexual identity formation progresses, individuals increasingly accept themselves, and start rejecting people who hold negative religious views about homosexuality (Lauricella et al., 2017; Reams, 2017). Homosexual individuals start questioning religious dogma, and find ways to detach themselves from the stereotypical views religion holds (Herek, 2016). Although some homosexual men continue trying to end homosexual urges through various means, including prayer (Lauricella et al., 2017), others find ways to reunite and reconcile their childhood religion with their homosexual identity (Chester et al., 2016; Reams, 2017).

Paternal views have an influence on individuals who want to disclose their homosexual identity (Baiocco et al., 2015; Roisman et al., 2014). Literature reports

that a positive bond between fathers and their sons is a protective barrier against adverse responses after disclosure (Porter & King, 2015; Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett, & Saltzburg, 2009). Allen and Mitchell (2015) found that homosexual men often experience more physical violence, emotional neglect, and hostile costs from fathers with whom sons had a poorly-formed father-son relationship prior to disclosure. Thus, a solid father-son relationship foundation is recommended if sons are to disclose their homosexuality to their fathers (Baiocco et al., 2015; Conley, 2011; Dwairy, 2010). A healthy father-son relationship might decrease adverse consequences after disclosure (Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010).

3.2.4 Paternal reactions/responses to disclosure.

Despite progressive attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality in general, evidence suggests that parents' initial reactions to their homosexual sons' disclosure are generally negative (Glick & Golden, 2010; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Machado, 2015; Valentova, 2016). Parents admit that their negative reactions were mostly due to a lack of knowledge at the time of disclosure (Cassar & Sultana, 2016).

Research has found certain factors that might predict negative paternal reactions (Baiocco et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2015). Poor family resources (Baiocco et al., 2015) and functioning (Ryan et al., 2015), poor coping skills, lack of adaptability, communication difficulties, and lower resilience in the family predict an increase in negative reactions to a son's coming out (D'Augelli, 2006; Valentova, 2016). Enmeshed boundaries between family members can restrict individual choices and growth to a point where any declaration of differentness or independence is regarded as deceitful towards the other family members (Bregman et al., 2013; Roisman et al., 2014). Disclosure, therefore, is seen as a betrayal of the values, norms, and expectations of the rigid family members (Ryan et al., 2015). Families with low flexibility levels and strong boundaries tend to react more negatively to a son's disclosure (Bregman et al., 2013). Furthermore, lower levels of parental education seem to influence the reaction to homosexuality (Savin-Williams, 2001).

Generally, negative reactions from older parents are expected, as they might have limited exposure to homosexuality and strongly cling to heteronormativity, in

contrast to younger generations, whose likelihood of contact and exposure to homosexuality and diversity is higher (Baiocco et al., 2015). Not only are the ages of parents considered to influence negative responses, so too does the age at which sons disclose their homosexuality (D'Augelli, 2006). For example, the younger sons are when coming out, the greater the impact it has on parents (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016). When sons come out at a young age, parents hold the belief that they can still do something to change their sons' homosexuality (Berzonsky et al., 2011; Conley, 2011; Savin-Williams, 2006). Qualitative studies indicate that fathers experience ambivalent emotions and feelings about raising homosexual sons (Conley, 2011; Hill & Menvielle, 2009; Phillips & Ancis, 2008). Some believe the way they disciplined their sons caused their sons to "become" homosexual (Phillips & Ancis, 2008), while others believe their paternal involvement should have protected their sons against homosexuality – their argument is that lack of involvement should have led to homosexuality instead (Hill & Menvielle, 2009).

A range of emotions are experienced by fathers following disclosure, including anger, sadness, embarrassment, shock, disappointment, shame, guilt, and worry, to name a few (Goodrich, 2009; Ryan et al., 2015; Savin-Williams, 2005; Valentova, 2016). Parents reported a sense of mourning for the loss of their ideological dreams of heterosexual sons and future gatherings, including marriage, special gatherings, and the possibility of grandchildren (Baiocco et al., 2015; Cassar & Sultana, 2016).

Often, fathers attempt to conceal their sons' homosexuality (Trussell, 2017), and fear judgement from society, church, or friends about their parenting styles, skills, and "failed roles" (Baiocco et al., 2015; Goodrich, 2009). Certain fathers believe that they were unsuccessful in passing on their own masculine upbringing, which questioned the transference of gender roles, to their homosexual sons, and fathers try to determine specific moments where their education failed their sons (Conley, 2011; Glick & Golden, 2010; Machado, 2015; Phillips & Ancis, 2008, Trussell, 2017; Valentova, 2016).

Instability, anxiety, and fear occur in homosexual sons when their fathers reject their disclosure (Naidoo & Mabaso, 2014). In most cases, disclosed individuals reported initial homophobia from their fathers (and other members of society, church,

or co-workers) (Chester et al., 2016). Some homosexual men report estrangement, physical abuse, and parental rejection, whilst others were even expelled from home (Machado, 2015). Consequently, homosexual sons' greatest fear, that of losing family support, became true (Dwairy, 2010; Greene & Britton, 2012), leading to negative consequences that might include depression (Burton, 2015), a negative homosexual identity (Ryan et al., 2009; Willoughby, Doty, & Malik, 2008), substance abuse (Kendler et al., 2003; Swendsena & Merikangas, 2000), and, in extreme cases, suicide (Holtman, Shelmerdine, London, & Flisher, 2011; Ryan et al. 2009).

3.2.5 Paternal confrontations and adjustments.

After their sons' disclosure, parents experience the same emotions, doubts, struggles, and uncertainties that a homosexual individual is confronted with (Savin-Williams, 2006). The family also has to make adjustments to family identity; it is expected of them to disclose to other family members, the public, friends, or co-workers (Machado, 2015). Leisure activities, various communities, religious involvement, and other family dynamics are influenced by their sons' homosexual identity disclosure (Baiocco et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., 2012; Trussell, 2017). Adjusting to the "new" identity occurs in three phases, that involve early, middle, and later phases of family modification (Phillips & Ancis, 2008). However, the authors acknowledge that this process is not necessary linear and new challenges emerge as parents are confronted with new issues.

During the early phase, parents are challenged by emotional responses, including anxiety, confusion, denial, fear, and anger, to name a few (Ream & Rodrigues, 2014). Fathers find it difficult to discuss their son's homosexual identity with other family members, for fear of rejection (D'Augelli, 2006; Horn & Wong, 2014; Valentova, 2016).

The middle phase of adjustment is characterised by cognitive and behavioural modifications (Phillips & Ancis, 2008). During this phase, parents seek information about homosexuality, try to find support, and become increasingly aware of the homophobic society (Bregman et al., 2013). They also encounter stigma and prejudice from others (Phillips & Ancis, 2008). Social networks or support groups for fathers of homosexual sons are seen as an essential and crucial part of

understanding homosexuality in general (McDermott et al., 2014; Valentova, 2016). Goodrich and Gilbride (2010) found that family functioning increases when fathers belong to a group or social network supportive of homosexuality (Conley, 2011; McDermott et al., 2014). It was established that fathers of homosexual sons benefitted from activities involving expressive writing, psychotherapy, and interactions with supportive social groups (Horn & Wong, 2014; Phillips & Ancis, 2008). In addition, fathers with a positive support network have increased awareness of the stigma of homosexuality (Horn & Wong, 2014), compared to fathers without a support network (Conley, 2011; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010). These support structures enable fathers to display greater concern about their homosexual children's emotions and psychological well-being (Bregman et al., 2013).

Fathers who had had previous interactions with multiple identities, including different races, ethnicities, and intersections of sexual identities, seem to find it easier to accept homosexuality (Horn & Wong, 2014; Huang et al., 2010). As a result, fathers develop an empathic understanding of the intersecting oppressions of homophobia (Balsam et al., 2011; Herek, 2016; O'Neil, 2012). They also realise that their homosexual sons are resilient, as the sons found ways of dealing with adverse commentary, homophobia, prejudice, and discrimination (Huang et al., 2010; Moradi et al., 2010; Saewyc, 2011). Furthermore, fathers with homosexual friends or acquaintances tend to seek more information and support from them in order to understand paths and processes of homosexual acceptance (Wright & Perry, 2006). Fathers reach out to these people in order to improve the relationship between themselves and their homosexual sons (Conley, 2011; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Horn & Wong, 2014). Furthermore, fathers with a securely formed support system find it easier to accept their sons' homosexuality, whilst assisting their sons with any incongruities experienced by biased people (Herek, 2016; Willoughby et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). An increased acceptance of homosexuality occurs when fathers engage in discussions about homophobia, discrimination, harassment, and stigma with acquaintances (Poteat et al., 2011).

The later phase of family adjustment is thought to include challenges regarding religious or moral beliefs (Phillips & Ancis, 2008). Acceptance, support, and guidance of their homosexual son is the key outcome during this adjustment

phase (Phillips & Ancis, 2008). Ream and Rodrigues (2014) identified some coping mechanisms that are used by parents to develop a different approach to their religious or moral beliefs, for instance, by reinterpreting religious scriptures about homosexuality (McDermott et al., 2014), to critique religious heterosexism (Etengoff & Daiute, 2015; Harbaugh & Lindsey, 2015), and to focus more on spiritual values, such as commitment, love, and nonjudgment (Dahl & Galliher, 2012). These and other ways of adjustment were found to include the major themes of effective accommodation and adjustment to homosexual views in their religious context. A healthy integration of the early, middle, and later phases of adjustment leads to acceptance of their homosexual sons (Phillips & Ancis, 2008).

3.2.6 Paternal relationships after disclosure.

One the most influential factors relating to paternal acceptance is the relationship between fathers and sons before disclosure (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Bregman et al., 2013; Pew Research Centre, 2016). Fathers who hold a secure father-son attachment and flexible paternal views about sexuality, responded more positively to their sons' disclosing process (Pallini et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2011). D'Augelli et al. (2010) found that fathers who accept their homosexual sons' identity are among those who believe that they cannot control that their sons were born homosexual (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Horn & Wong, 2014). Furthermore, fathers who express their incongruent feelings about their homosexual sons are more successful in accepting their sons' identity (Bregman et al., 2013; Phillips & Ancis, 2008).

In contrast to the results of Goodrich (2009) and Conley (2011), which indicate that father-son relationships are likely to deteriorate after disclosure as fathers' heterosexual dreams of becoming grandparents fall apart, research suggests that the majority of fathers eventually accept and tolerate their sons' homosexual identity (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016). As time passes, fathers experience a great deal of fear and worry about their homosexual sons' well-being (Horn & Wong, 2014). Physical safety in relation to homophobic violence (Conley, 2011), discrimination in various domains, such as at their workplaces and in social situations (Drydakis, 2009; Frost, 2011; Herek, 2016), and general environmental circumstances (Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007) are major concerns for fathers.

Also, the hostile climate faced by homosexual minorities enable fathers to react with certainty when their disclosed sons are confronted with homophobic violence, discrimination, prejudice, or other adverse effects caused by others (Badgett et al., 2007; Drydakis, 2009; Herek, 2016; Pitoňák & Spilková, 2016; Poteat et al., 2011). What is interesting is that homosexual sons have higher levels of confidence in their sexual identities, and experience less internalised homophobia, when fathers support and understand their homosexuality (Bregman et al., 2013; D'Augelli et al., 2010; Horn & Wong, 2014; Kirkman et al., 2001).

3.3 Advantages/Disadvantages of Disclosure

An obvious statement is that both positive and negative consequences are possible following disclosure. According to Cass (1979), disclosure is, in most cases, preceded by the fear of rejection; however, she also found that disclosure leads to feelings of authenticity, trueness, and a sense of congruence between social and personal selves (Provence et al., 2014).

Naidoo and Mabaso (2014) found that concealment of one's homosexual identity often increases stress in individuals, although there is a decrease in risk of abuse and victimisation. Sattler et al. (2016) support the concept of decreased risk; however, they found that concealment is associated more with negative outcomes, including fewer job promotions, lower life satisfaction, and increased mental illness. Suicidality, substance abuse, and depression were positively related to identity concealment (Burton, 2015; Lo & Cheng, 2012; Sattler et al., 2016). In addition to the outcomes mentioned above, lower levels of social engagement, withdrawal, poor family interaction, lack of support, and decreased satisfaction in relationships, in general, were found in individuals who chose not to disclose their homosexuality (Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). However, one cannot assume the outcomes of disclosure are only positive, as family rejection, prejudices, discrimination, and even cyberbullying are often reported in the literature (Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016; Conley, 2011; Machado, 2015, Owens, 2017). An interesting finding by Ryan et al. (2015) is that non-disclosed homosexual men are more likely to take part in open relationships, promiscuous activities, and casual sexual behaviours.

In contrast to all the negative outcomes, many positive conclusions, such as relief, increased self-esteem, and comfort discussing one's romantic attractions were also found (Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Charbonnier & Graziani, 2016). Coming out is a process that continues throughout life, as homosexual individuals need to disclose their identity whenever they change jobs or towns, or meet new people (Greene & Britton, 2012; Savin-Williams, 2006; Zoeterman & Wright, 2014). Disclosure has a positive and marginal effect on physical and mental well-being (Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Zoeterman & Wright, 2014), as homosexual individuals, after disclosure, experience less internalised homophobia (Greene & Britton, 2012), their fear of being outed is diminished (Harper et al., 2016; Trahan & Goodrich, 2015), and stress about their identity secrecy is eliminated (Owens, 2017; Sattler et al., 2016).

When a homosexual individual is accepted by others, positive outcomes are likely to follow (Naidoo & Mabaso, 2014), especially when safety and acceptance occurs at home (Provence et al., 2014). Family support offers security and protection for homosexual individuals, allowing them to explore, become autonomous, and to prosper in various life domains, including work, religion, and same-sex relationships (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Jore et al., 2016; Trahan & Goodrich, 2015). Not only do disclosed individuals have increased opportunities for stable, long-lasting relationships (Jones et al., 2014), they also assert that friends and family members are more approving of their homosexuality (Roisman et al., 2014). Overall, the benefits of disclosure and acceptance outweigh any shortcoming that a non-disclosed individual might experience (Bregman et al., 2013; Kroger et al., 2010; McCormick, 2015; Pleck, 2010; Poteat et al., 2011).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the importance of father-son relationships before, during, and after homosexual disclosure (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Kroger et al., 2010; McDermott et al., 2014). Research indicates that a strong paternal attachment between father and son acts as a protective factor for sons to disclose their homosexuality (Bernstein, 1997; Jore et al., 2016; Lucassen et al., 2011; Pallini et al., 2014). Unhealthy paternal control, lower education levels, and lack of knowledge are factors that determine the way fathers react to their sons' disclosure (Baiocco et al., 2015; Bregman et al., 2013; D'Augelli et al., 2010; Machado, 2015). Regardless

of the above-mentioned stressors, the benefits of being accepted by family members and society, in general, outweigh the possible adverse responses that might be experienced by homosexual individuals (Greene & Britton, 2012; Harbaugh & Lindsey, 2015; McCormick, 2015). Being disclosed ultimately leads to identity integration and self-acceptance, and promotes individual functioning, well-being, and interaction between self and society (Cass, 1979; Jones et al., 2014; Poteat et al., 2011; Ream & Rodrigues, 2014).

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the methodological procedures that were employed in this study. The aim and research question, an outline of the research design, and the research approach that was used, will be addressed. Furthermore, the sampling procedures and participants, as well as the data collection and analysis, will be discussed. Finally, the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study will be described.

4.1 Research Aim and Question

The objective of this study was to explore and describe men's experiences of their relationships with their fathers during their homosexual identity development. The question that guided the research study was formulated as follows:

What are men's experiences of the paternal relationship during homosexual identity development?

4.2 Research Design

The current research topic is embedded in the interpretive paradigm, which lends itself to a qualitative research approach (Maree, 2011). Qualitative research is primarily concerned with exploring, understanding, and describing the meanings and connotations that individuals assign to their experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Silverman, 2011). The nature of qualitative research enabled the researcher to explore the relationship dynamics between the participants and their fathers during their homosexual identity development.

Case studies are the favoured strategy for finding answers to "why" and "how" questions (Yin, 2014). It enabled the researcher to classify or collect information about sensitive, unique, or even extreme cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Watts, 2014). A multiple case study design is advantageous, as it delivers results that support the nature of the research topic (Zucker, 2009). Evidence from multiple case studies are more compelling and convincing, as the responses of the participants are personal reflections that intend to discover, capture and comprehend the lived experience of individuals (Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2014). In this research study, homosexual men

expressed the views on/experiences of their paternal relationship during the time of establishing their homosexual identity.

4.3 Criteria Considered

The following inclusion criteria for participation applied: (a) men who were in the stage of early adulthood (between the ages of 25 and 40 years) (Arnett, 2000), when it is expected that individuals establish their identity (Kroger, 2007; Saewyc, 2011); (b) men who had disclosed their homosexual identity to their fathers during adolescence or emerging adulthood (ages 13 to 28 years) (Jones et al., 2014; Saewyc, 2011); and (c) participants were expected to have the ability to express themselves effectively in either Afrikaans or English. Individuals who are currently receiving treatment for mental disorders were excluded from the participant group.

4.4 Sampling Method

Purposive, homogeneous sampling (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) was utilised to recruit participants who were able to offer a detailed representation of their paternal relationships during their homosexual identity development phase. Purposive sampling was advantageous for this study because it enabled the researcher to identify and select participants who comply with the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The researcher approached acquaintances to identify possible participants who met the criteria of the study. Acquaintances provided the researcher with contact details of potential participants. The prospective participants were contacted via text messages to ensure that they met the research criteria. Thereafter, email addresses were obtained from the qualifying participants, who received the informed consent document (Appendix B).

4.5 Data Collection

Data was collected through one semi-structured, in-depth interview (Howitt & Cramer, 2011) with each participant. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to ensure that data were collected about the same, relevant topics (Patton, 2014). The semi-structured interview questions enabled the researcher to obtain information about the relationship dynamics and experiences the participants

had had with their fathers during their sexual identity formation. Specific follow-up questions were based on the participants' responses and, consequently, differed from one participant to another. This permitted the researcher to direct questions to obtain more information about a specific incident or event (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The semi-structured interview schedule is available as Appendix C.

In-depth interviews are intimate and subjective encounters, during which open-ended questions are used to elicit detailed stories (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Yin, 2014). This interview method is the most commonly used interviewing method in qualitative studies, as it permits researchers to submerge themselves in the social and personal matters of the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

In-depth interviews have several benefits when research is directed to topics that are of a personal or sensitive nature. One of the benefits of this interview method is that researchers use open-ended and innovative in-depth techniques of studying context-specific information (Patton, 2014). Also, perspectives on, perceptions of, and feelings about a topic are explored with each participant (Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Patton, 2014; Silverman, 2011). Another benefit is the possibility it offers to reflect on and converse about opinions about a topic. It also enables a researcher to make a more truthful interpretation of participants' experiences (Patton, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). In other words, in-depth interviews give the researcher and participant flexibility, and enable them to share opportunities and explore avenues that arise during the interview process (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

A suitable time slot was scheduled to conduct a 55 to 75-minute interview with each participant. The interviews were conducted at places that were convenient for the participants. Two venues were available to the researcher, namely, an office at the Department of Psychology at the University of the Free State, and an office at the Cardiology Department at Universitas Hospital. Two of the interviews were conducted over the internet using the software application, Skype. Before the interview commenced, the researcher verbally recited the inclusion criteria to each participant. With the aim of establishing a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participant, the researcher discussed the process of data

collection, the subsequent verbatim transcription of the data, and the place were data would be stored. The participants were informed that all the data would be kept confidentially and safely on a password-protected computer that only the researcher could access.

Using Skype, a free internet-based communication service, as a method of obtaining data for research purposes has benefits and limitations (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Technical obstacles, including access to a computer with the specific software, and slow internet speed, might cause complications during an interview. The amount of body language and reaction responses could be limited in a web-cam view. Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown (2016) confirm this shortcoming, but indicate that Skype makes it possible for the interviewer to observe facial expressions, which is not the case with telephonic interviews. Despite the reported limitations of using Skype, financial constraints, physical mobility, and geographical dispersion made Skype the most suitable medium for collecting data (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Skype offers researchers an innovative method for obtaining data from all over the world, and offers the possibility of (video/audio) recording the interview (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). Furthermore, interviews via Skype give participants autonomy to end the interview at any moment, enabling them to ‘‘disconnect’’ from uncomfortable or sensitive topics. Should the participant leave the online conversation, no money or resources were lost (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). According to Lo Iacono et al. (2016), when using Skype as a method for data acquisition, both the interviewer and participant are in safe settings, making it easier to engage and discuss topics that are sensitive or uncomfortable.

During the interview, the researcher continuously worked to establish rapport and trust. The trustful relationship between the researcher and participant ensured a safe space for the participants to share (sensitive) information about the nature of the study. A total of 7 interviews were conducted and each interview lasted between 55 and 75 minutes. Four of the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans. The Afrikaans excerpts with English translations are available as Appendix D. Throughout each interview, the researcher focussed on obtaining relevant, rich, and comprehensive data about men’s experiences and relationships with their fathers during their homosexual identity development.

4.6 Research Participants

Table 3 summarises background information, such as the ages, qualifications and interests of participants, and whether they were in romantic homosexual relationships on the day of the interview. The participants were allocated a number to guarantee anonymity of the participants.

Table 3

Background information on research participants

Participants	**P 1**	**P 2**	**P 3**	**P 4**	**P 5**	**P 6**	**P 7**
Age	29	28	29	32	25	36	37
Highest qualification	Master's degree	Grade 12 (4^{th} year student)	Diploma	Honours degree	Degree	Master's degree	Degree
Interests	Exercise Sports Social inter-action	Exercise Gaming Nature	Movies Art Internet	Exercise TV Nature	Movies TV series	Sports Art Nature	Camping Nature Movies
Relationship	Involved for 2 years	Single	Single	Involved for 13 years	Single	Single	Single

4.7 Data Analysis

The transcriptions of the interviews were analysed by making use of thematic analysis (Watts, 2014). Thematic analysis is a methodological tool used to analyse the content of interviews by focussing exclusively on each individual's experiences (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis is widely used and is considered to be an accessible and theoretically flexible methodology for analysing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rich and detailed information within the data enables the researcher to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes in the interviews (Charmaz, 2000). Therefore, thematic analysis, independent of specific theories or epistemological characteristics, was the best methodological tool to use to obtain

information of a sensitive nature on homosexual men's experiences of the paternal relationship during their homosexual identity development.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose six phases during thematic analysis: Firstly, researchers need to familiarise themselves with the data by reading and rereading the transcriptions. This is a vital step for establishing a first-person perspective, by ensuring that the expressions and opinions of the participants are completely understood from their point of view (Schreier, 2012; Willig, 2013). Furthermore, a first-person stance enabled the researchers to distance himself from the retrieved data, and prevent external and personal knowledge from contaminating the data that were obtained (Watts, 2014; Willig, 2013). The second phase enables the researcher to generate initial codes for the transcribed data. During the third phase, the researcher starts linking the themes that have been identified with particular codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Fourthly, the researcher reviews and refines the themes, narrowing them down or expanding on certain prominent themes. In the fifth place, the researcher defines and names the themes, and identifies subthemes within each global theme. Only then does the researcher start writing up findings and results of the data obtained (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.8 Rigour and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was evaluated to assess the rigor, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and credibility of the qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Pitney, 2004). Four criteria are proposed by Guba and Lincoln (2005) to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008) accentuate that enough detail must be provided in the write-up for readers to evaluate the credibility and validity of the qualitative study.

4.8.1 Credibility.

Credibility relates the research findings to the truth and reality of events and experiences as related by participants within the context of the study (Mertens, 2010). Qualitative scholars prefer the term, credibility, to internal validity (Schreier, 2012; Watts, 2014; Willig, 2013). Babbie and Mouton (2010) propose that credibility could be enhanced through corresponding with participants to compare the extracted

themes with their personal experiences. Three important constructs promote credibility of qualitative research, namely, consistency, theoretical triangulation, and auditability (Anney, 2014; Mertens, 2010; Willig, 2013).

4.8.1.1 Consistency.

Consistency between the participants' reality and the presentation of this reality increase the credibility of a study (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2007; Schreier, 2012). The researcher followed the sequence of the steps of the thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), and checked that the codes allocated to the transcriptions were relevant and consistent with the other participants' information.

4.8.1.2 Triangulation.

The primary focus of triangulation is to cross-check the data that were collected and to ensure that the findings are comprehensive and precise enough to obtain an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Mertens, 2010). Recording the interviews enabled immediate access to the information obtained throughout the data-gathering process. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to check and re-check the facts at later stages. In this particular study, the researcher used triangulation, by providing the participant with the semi-structured interview questions had been answered, with an opportunity to confirm the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the information. Directly after the interviews the participants had the opportunity to remove, clarify or add information. The researcher reflected unclear statements to verify his understanding of a participant's experiences and meanings. During the process, the researcher remained objective, and avoided considering previous knowledge of homosexual identity development or the relationship dynamics between fathers and their sons. Furthermore, the researcher reinforced triangulation by comparing the reports of men's experiences of paternal relationships during the identity development phase to what the literature reports in this regard.

4.8.1.3 Auditability.

Auditability refers to detailed investigation of the inquiry process and findings (Willig, 2013). Thus, all the research choices made and actions taken, and the specifications on how the data were collected and analysed, were recorded (Anney,

2014). The researcher ensured that all documents used or gathered during the research process were stored safely for rechecking later. Documents, including all communication with participants (e.g. text messages, emails, interview recordings, telephone calls, and Skype interviews), are stored safely by the researcher on a personal, password-protected computer, to which only he has access.

4.8.2 Transferability.

Quantitative research methods use the term generalisability, as the term links with external validity (Anney, 2014). Generalisability means that the results recorded by a quantitative study can be transferred to a greater population, thus, the extent to which the results obtained from a study can be generalised to other situations, groups, or environments (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative studies are more concerned about the depth of information than the breadth of data (Schreier, 2012). In other words, qualitative researchers are less concerned about generalisability and, instead, aim to establish transferability (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

Transferability describes the relatedness between outcomes and appropriateness of a study in relation to similar studies under similar circumstances (Mertens, 2010). The researcher ensured transferability by offering insight into the context, time, and place of the study (Willig, 2013). An explanation of the context for this particular study is given. The researcher adhered to and applied the following requirements, as stipulated by Anney (2014) for transferability of qualitative research. The number of participants who took part was mentioned. Furthermore, the researcher outlined the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participant selection. The methods used to collect the data were described. Additionally, the length of each interview was documented, as was the location of the interviews and the time slots they took place. The procedures used to accumulate the data and the questions asked during the interviews were explicitly chosen and designed by the researcher to inspire conversations related to the participants' experiences (Anney, 2014). This allowed and encouraged the participants to express their experiences of paternal relationships during the homosexual identity formation period. The emphasis of obtaining the data was focussed on deep, rich, and detailed information (Watts, 2014). Such descriptions offer a clear image of the context that is being

studied and enables the readers to conclude whether the outcomes are related and relevant, and whether they can be applied (or transferred) to alternative contexts or environments (Creswell, 2013).

4.8.3 Dependability.

Dependability in qualitative research is established when future scholars repeat or replicate a study (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2013). The term reliability is used in quantitative research (Mertens, 2010). Dependability is enhanced when the researcher aims to be attentive, accurate, and consistent during the conceptualisation, interpretation, and reporting of the results (Watts, 2014).

The researcher adhered to the guidelines provided by Patton (2014) by offering detailed descriptions of all methodology and research decisions in this study. These guidelines were provided to make replication (Willig, 2013) of this study possible by other academics in the future. Furthermore, continuously keeping detailed records of all the decisions made, communication, and interaction between the researcher and participants, increased the dependability of this research.

4.8.4 Confirmability.

Confirmability postulates the degree to which findings become visible from the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Ryan et al. (2007) state that confirmability will be promoted if the researcher's supervisor and co-supervisor assist with external audits. The role of the supervisor and co-supervisor is to validate and verify the findings of the data. To ensure confirmability, Patton (2014) proposes steps to safeguard researchers from possible self-opinions and enacted characteristics. To reduce the effect of researcher bias, triangulation and auditability are suggested throughout the research study (Creswell, 2013; Watts, 2014). The study's findings are the direct result of the experiences and opinions of the participants.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Department of Psychology and the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State, on 11 May 2016. The ethical clearance document is shown as Appendix A.

The researcher provided potential participants with an informed consent document (Appendix B) based on the guidelines provided by Ryan et al. (2007). An informed consent document is an agreement of trust between the researcher and the participant (Patton, 2014). This document sets out the purpose of the study, methods to be used during the data collection, the intended use of the data, and the possible risks of participating in the research project.

Qualitative research lends itself to an approach that requires sharing of subjective and sensitive information (Schreier, 2012). For example, the researcher recorded and transcribed the experiences and viewpoints that the participants shared. Subsequently, specific ethical guidelines protected both the participant and the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Ethical principles that were considered include autonomy, non-maleficence to participants, and confidentiality of all information related to the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

The ethical principle of autonomy, whereby participants are free to decide for themselves to participate or withdraw from the study at any given moment (Willig, 2013), was warranted and implemented in the consent document. By adhering to the autonomy principle, the researcher allowed the participants to decide freely whether they were willing to participate in the study. To do so, the participants had to complete the informed consent document before interviews were conducted. Also, the consent document was recited before the interview and the participants gave verbal confirmation that they wished to continue with the interview. As part of the autonomy principle, the participants agreed to the recording of the interview for later transcription and analysis of the data.

The researcher and the participants were aware of potential risks that might arise during the interview process (as specified in the informed consent document, Appendix B). It was of the utmost importance that the researcher adhered to the non-maleficence principle (Creswell, 2013), or “to do no harm”, as it is seen as the foundation of professional ethical conduct (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). This ethical principle includes avoiding deliberately reacting unfavourably or disrespectfully to the opinions and content participants share (Merriam, 2009). Given

the sensitive nature of the research topic, it was essential to have strategies in place to mitigate any adverse emotional events associated with the study. The researcher was able to provide contact details of three psychological services, including registered student psychologists, a referral to a private psychologist in their area, or a referral to the nearest psychiatric clinic, should the participants experience a need to debrief on conclusion of the interview. Although the participants were informed about the services, none of the participants made use of the resources.

Confidentiality, that is, the responsibility to guarantee the safety of the material and data obtained, is crucial in qualitative research (Patton, 2014). The participant should be convinced that no identifying material will be accessible to any individual, other than the individuals who are directly involved in the research project (Patton, 2014). At the same time, it refers to the inability of readers to connect the information given to a specific participant (Willig, 2013). Correspondingly, this ethical principle provides the participants with the opportunity to freely disclose personal and sensitive information (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The researcher took full responsibility for ensuring complete confidentiality of any information given by the participants. To increase confidentiality, the interviews were conducted by the researcher himself. Moreover, the researcher saved and password-protected all the audio recordings on his personal computer, to which only he has access. Pseudonyms were used during data analysis, discussion and report writing, to prevent the identification of participants (Maree, 2011; Silverman, 2011).

4.10 Chapter Summary

An overview of the qualitative research methodology of a study that addressed a research question relating to men's experiences of their paternal relationship during homosexual identity development was provided in this chapter. A multiple case study design was implemented. Participants were obtained by means of purposive sampling, and a semi-structured individual interview with each participant was used to collect data. Rigour during the study was ensured by adhering to principles of confirmability, including triangulation and auditability. Given the sensitive nature of the topic being studied, the ethical principles of autonomy, confidentiality, and non-maleficence were essential and assured. The potential risks of participating in the study were thoroughly discussed and each participant gave

written and verbal consent to continue with participation in the study. The data was analysed by means of thematic analysis; the findings will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Research Findings

The themes that emerged from the individual interviews will be presented in Chapter 5. The accounts provided by the participants were systematically coded for statements that the researcher believed most accurately conveyed the sexual identity development of homosexual men and their experiences of their paternal relationships. The data was thematically analysed by making use of the six stages recommended by Clarke and Braun (2013) and described in Chapter 4. These themes will be presented in the sections that follow, in which direct quotations will be used to promote the credibility of the results. Ellipses indicate were information was omitted, and additional information that was not part of the original quote, but which the researcher included to heighten understanding, are enclosed in square brackets. The results are void of any identifiable information of participants. Participant quotations are distinguished exclusively through the use of numbers, i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2. The Afrikaans excerpts of Participants 1, 3, 6, and 7, with English translations, are available as Appendix D. Figure 3 provides an overview of the main themes and subthemes that emerged from this research study.

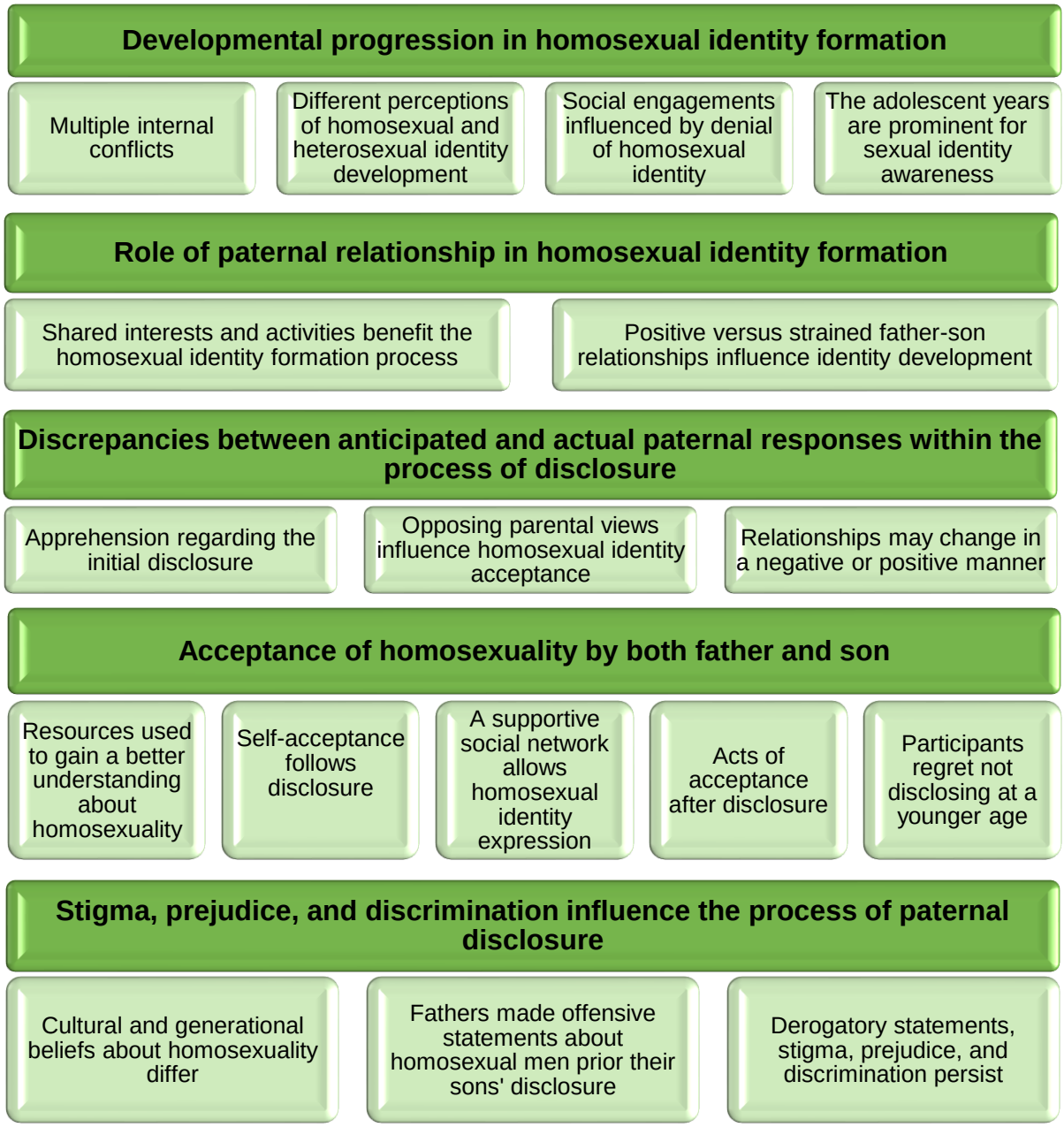

Figure 3. Overview of the main themes and subthemes found in this research study

5.1 Developmental Progression in Homosexual Identity Formation

Four subthemes that hold relevance for the homosexual identity formation period emerged from the data. The subthemes underline the developmental process that men need to progress through in to establish their homosexual sexual identities.

5.1.1 Multiple internal conflicts.

Participants expressed feeling anxious about their place in society as homosexual men. They reported feeling scrutinised by individuals who are not part of the homosexual community. They frequently described having difficulty expressing their affection toward their partner openly in public, and envying the greater freedom heterosexual couples have. Participant 2 narrated his experiences as follows:

> Maybe I've got my own form of homophobia. You first have to make peace with it [homosexuality] before you can actually start developing an identity… I often see straight people showing each other affection… and I get so jealous of them… you still too nervous here in [name of city where participant lives] to hold your boyfriend's hand while waiting to go to the movies or to just openly speak about your partner. I mean you have to come out every time you meet somebody new.

The repetitive disclosure to new people in different settings caused significant distress in the participants. Participant 6 described the place where he tried to hide his identity:

> You're on your own and you struggle with it by yourself… I had conflict in myself… it felt to me like this could not be me [referring to being homosexual]… you never stop searching for a place where you can be yourself… it caused me a lot of internal anxiety. It was part of a process to reach a point where you have to make peace with it.

Internal conflict also arises due to experiences of prejudice from close family members. Participants reflected that their identity as homosexual males was also negatively evaluated by some family members who held certain religious convictions regarding homosexuality and who condemned such a sexual orientation. Participant 4 described his experience: "I grew up in quite a Christian family, so it was all these looks… sort of looked down upon and comments passed about gay people in the streets and everything." The participants experienced prejudice from others, which compromised participants' belief in God. This created ambivalence in some participants, who wanted to maintain their faith, but felt that their sexual identity did not align with their faith. Participant 2 indicated that he was never truly able to resolve the perceived contradiction he felt regarding his religion and his homosexuality:

> For a long time, I felt, especially when it came to God, that I've always believed and known Him… but there was this thick pane of glass between myself and Him. I didn't believe I could be who I am and still have God, I had to choose. I can't have my family and my marriage and my life and still 100% be a believer. For 10 years religion centred on this one aspect about myself, I never actually got to connect to all the other spiritual benefits that come with it.

Participant 6 described how supportive behaviour from the broader religious community assisted him with the struggle between his homosexuality and his religious beliefs: "In a Christian area, which is also an important component in homosexuality... definitely plays a big role… it will also have a big influence on homosexual people, in terms of, they might have fewer issues… because there's more acceptance regarding this matter." Participant 4 reflected on how his fears about the consequences of being both homosexual and a Christian was set at ease by the views of his religious mother:

> I thought what if the church is right and I'm going to go to hell and I was questioning her [my mother] on that and said, well, "what if I'm going to go to hell", and she turned around to me and she says: "It doesn't matter what the church says, I know that you never chose to be this way, God wouldn't punish you for it…". That was, wow, from a super religious person like herself, it meant a lot.

The majority of participants were aggravated by internal struggles and their inability to express their homosexuality in public. These conflicts were provoked by inflexible religious beliefs and stereotypical heteronormative views.

5.1.2 Different perceptions of homosexual and heterosexual identity development.

Some participants reported feeling inferior to their counterparts, based on preconceived ideas of what homosexual males are like. They spoke of how societal views of masculinity limited their participation in typical male sports. This limitation prevented Participant 2 from excelling in sports he would otherwise probably have been good at:

> Like sports, for example, I found that I'm actually a very athletic person, but… because I was gay I thought I could never be. I completely denied myself that, because I already had an inferiority complex compared to straight guys. I think our process is skewed. I do believe that there is a different identifying process for us. Gay people are reminded of their orientation almost constantly… they [heterosexual men] are not as aware of their identities as we are, they don't compare their identities as much as we do. For a long time, I considered myself weaker than other guys [heterosexual men].

The participants also indicated that they were frequently reminded of their sexual orientation by other men, and that they were different from the norm. Participant 4 described his view about heteronormativity and how social expectations hindered him from expressing his true self.

> I think heterosexual people have it far easier... Boys are raised to be straight boys, if you are straight, it's easy to just fit into that role, but if you gay, it seems like you have to define who you are and challenge all those things that were forced upon you growing up, that you must like sports, and you must like cars, and you must like blue.

Generally, participants expressed feeling that homosexual men often find themselves under the magnifying glass when it comes to sexual development and what society expects from them as a sexual subgroup.

5.1.3 Social engagements influenced by denial of homosexual identity.

Most of the participants denied their homosexual identity in order to be accepted by their peers and family members. Participant 6 described his experience thus:

> But I had to fit in, so you do that kind of cover-up thing... And here you sit with this homosexual thing in yourself and you cannot cover up with a guy. You are on your own. I never drew attention as a homosexual person during high school.

Many participants expressed being constantly busy comparing themselves to their heterosexual peers. Participant 6 continued to reflect on his experience:

> I blended, I played rugby, I was good at athletics, I did gymnastics. I do not come over as a typical homosexual, I look quite normal between others... It was a thing I kept next to me... I continued with my kind of “straight” life... so I just got a girl.

They also emphasised the frequent questions from family members and friends during their high school years about why they were not in relationships. Participant 2 confers his experience thus:

> But I was very aware of being different, from a young age, because I had so many brothers to compare myself to. I mean, I always had a girlfriend. I could walk up to any girl and ask her out, because her opinion didn’t matter, rejection didn’t matter, if she said yes, then great, I’ve got a cover, if not, then hey, who’s that one next to you. For me it wasn’t about the attraction, it was about a cover, so I didn’t really need to like who I was dating.

Most participants conveyed that they experienced some degree of rejection or exclusion after they became aware of their homosexual identity. Participant 1 relayed his experience as follows:

> That small voice in the back of your mind... “What will the people say?” I bundled most of it up and kept it to myself... I think there are a few obstacles when one goes out. All your friends have girlfriends and then you are peppered with questions… “Where? Who? Go talk to that one.” So, I think that was an obstacle for me… just to tell them, “okay, I am not interested”.

The majority of the participants indicated that they withdrew from social events to avoid conflict. Participant 1 explained how his family and friends noticed his withdrawal:

> Before [disclosing my homosexual identity], I was much more reserved. You know, some of my friends also came to me and asked me, “What’s wrong?” I talk and socialise less. So, it definitely played a role… I sat at home and felt sorry for myself.

Most participants deliberately kept their social engagement to a minimum, whilst trying to figure out and find their homosexual identity. Participant 6 expressed his frustration in this regard:

> In a sense, I think it made me a very lonely person. Because you can take friendships only up to a certain level. As I grew older I remember feeling more trapped in myself... All those things mean that you can't relax when operating between people. It takes tremendous energy, so sometimes you have to withdraw… You are afraid for this feeling you have for a man. So, you withdraw from this thing. You force yourself to be alone.

Most participants affirmed that they realised that their concealment of their homosexual identity was a coping mechanism to avoid embarrassment. They also expressed feeling alone at certain times and in certain situations, because they need to pretend to be someone they are not in reality. Participants acknowledged that they tried to keep their homosexual identity a secret and avoided talking to anyone about it.

5.1.4 The adolescent years are prominent for sexual identity awareness.

Participants reported becoming aware of their homosexual identity during the adolescent years. They also referred to this period in their sexual identity development as particularly challenging. Participant 2 stated: "It was obviously difficult hitting puberty, then it became a whole different thing, it wasn't just about identity, but now you're actually getting crushes on people." Puberty was reflected upon by the majority of the participants as a period of novel emotions, desires, and feelings. Some participants were ashamed of being sexually attracted to their male friends. Participant 1, who became aware of his sexual orientation in high school, states: "Yes, I probably knew at school, but never admitted it… I was actually aware of it since standard seven, eight [Grade 9/10]." Participant 7, who had become aware of his sexuality earlier, reported that, in spite of being aware of his sexual identity, he was forced, at the time, to live according to societal norms for young males: "I think I knew of it since primary school days... As a teenager you realise what you like and what not, but then you are pressured to like things people expect you to like."

Participants generally affirmed that the adolescent years were challenging, because of increased feelings for other boys. Puberty was explained to be extremely difficult due to emotional and physical attraction towards the same gender.

5.2 Role of Paternal Relationship in Homosexual Identity Formation

Various considerations related to the father-son relationship influenced the homosexual identity development of participants. This theme presents two subthemes that hold significance between the quality of father-son relationships and the establishment of a homosexual identity. Whether participants experienced positive or negative relations with their fathers, their accounts all reported the lasting effect it had on the way they viewed themselves later in life.

5.2.1 Shared interests and activities benefit the homosexual identity formation process.

Some of the participants in this study narrated their involvement in bonding activities with their fathers throughout their developmental years. Such activities helped to maintain a good father-son relationship, even after disclosure of participants' homosexual identity. As Participant 1 indicated: "We did things together, like going to watch rugby. We still do it… We eat out and so on. Nothing has really changed since I came out [disclosed my homosexuality]. It's as if we are closer now." Participant 6 described intimate moments he shared with his father:

> I had a very good relationship with my father throughout my primary school years. I remember particular things I did with him… when, as a child, he carried me on his shoulders and we walked in the veld… or when we sat together in the *bakkie* [pickup truck] for hours, and just talked.

Participant 3 expressed how the support he received from his father at a karate event made him believe that he was just as good as the other boys, despite having a different sexual identity:

> It is not just about homosexuality. It about everything. I did karate… And there was some kind of step-up, because you go for example from green to brown belt… and then they held me back…he [my father] knew how hard I had worked and how much

> I wanted it. He simply went to them and said: “No, this is not happening today. Forget it, I will make a scene if you do this.”

Participants stated that their relationships with their fathers in terms of shared everyday interests impacted significantly on how they viewed themselves as homosexual men later in life.

5.2.2 Positive versus strained father-son relationships influence identity development.

The accounts given by participants regarding their relationships with their fathers were mixed. Participants, in reflecting on good relationships, expressed positive feelings about themselves. Participant 5 stated: “He [my father] appreciated me for who I am, he never gave me a hard time... he just said something like, he’s very proud of me and he’s always loved me for who I am.”

Participants who interpreted more tense relationships with their fathers also spoke more negatively about themselves in general. Participant 2 described his father as: “[My father was] an absolute asshole. We never had a good relationship. From childhood. There was never any time for me.” Participant 2 indicated that his relationship with his father was strained before he disclosed his homosexuality, and that his sexual orientation reinforced feelings of rejection:

> I had a strained relationship before I came out, for different reasons… he’s actually always been selfish, he’s always been a liar. I’ve got big daddy issues, I’m very bitter towards him, he’s the first person to compare me to my peers, why haven’t you finished school yet, why haven’t you got this yet, why haven’t you got that yet… I can go to my dad and tell him, look I really want a relationship with you but… he’ll be defensive immediately.

Some participants indicated that their fathers were unsupportive and unable to truly accept their homosexual identity. Participants reported increasingly isolating themselves, because they felt incapable of meeting their fathers’ expectations. Participant 6 noted the lasting distance this created in his relationship with his father:

> If your relationship with your father is not good… I think you then start to collect a lot of things to create an identity for yourself… I realised my father had a great need for me, but that I could not produce… because now I have all of these things inside of me…and I realised I had a good father. He has everything he needs to have, but I just can't handle all that. So, you withdraw from this thing. You make yourself alone and he does not understand it. He seeks your attention, and you can't give it.

The quality of the relationships participants had with their fathers significantly influenced whether they felt comfortable with their homosexuality later in life.

5.3 Discrepancies between Anticipated and Actual Paternal Responses within the Process of Disclosure

Three subthemes were identified to describe the discrepancies between expected and actual paternal responses. The subthemes' descriptions highlight intense fear of parental rejection.

5.3.1 Apprehension regarding the initial disclosure.

All the participants assumed that their parents would disapprove and refuse to accept or support their homosexual identity. They were anxious and fearful about the possibility of losing some relatives. Participant 2 reflected on his thought process before he disclosed his homosexual identity: "At that point I was ready to lose everybody you know. I didn't care if he was going to disown me or not, I was actually prepared for it." Similar thoughts were shared by Participant 7:

> I actually thought I would have to look for other places to stay. That was my fear. He [my father] went as white as a sheet and just sat down. He literally did not say or do anything. He never argued, he never fought against it. He basically accepted it, although I know they don't like it... he never stood in my way... he never asked questions, and, actually, I appreciate that.

A general believe was shared by the participants that they had to search for alternative accommodation. Participant 4 believed that he would be disowned and described his views as follows:

> I was expecting him to disown me and kick me out of the house, instead, he was the one who was most, he amazed me the most with his reaction. I hid away from him because I really thought he was gonna kick me out… I had my stuff ready to leave, I thought I was going to be disowned.

Participant 4 continued explaining his experiences during disclosure and described that his father's response was different from what he had expected:

> He [my father] was a bit tearful and he told me that…as long as you find one person in this world who makes you happy, then I'm happy, and that was it. He was a lot calmer than I expected, his reaction surprised me completely in that he was disappointed I think is the right word, disappointed, but accepting.

Participant 6 indicated a similar response from his father and that he was stunned by his father's reaction to him declaring that he was homosexual:

> My mom was okay with it right from the start. She said to me, if that is the case, then she has the most beautiful *moffie* [derogatory statement similar to queer/faggot] in [name of city where participant lives]. …My dad got very quiet, but he was not rattled or anything. He just asked me if I was sure. He just wants me to be happy... I think it was the most important thing for him. It was a big thing for him, but, yes, there was no extreme behaviour, or rejection, or wanting to disown me, or nothing.

All the participants claimed that their fathers' responses had been unexpectedly positive, which contradicted their own underlying fear of rejection or disapproval. It gratified them that their fathers only wanted them to be sure about their homosexual identity and to find happiness, regardless of their sexual identity.

5.3.2 Opposing parental views influence homosexual identity acceptance.

Some of the participants described that their parents held conflicting beliefs about homosexuality. Participant 2 experienced it as follows: "I realised that my mom was concerned, although acted out, probably could have been done better, it was still coming from love. My dad, it's about shame and embarrassment… he does look at it as a taint on me." Disclosure of the men's homosexuality lead to an array of negative

reactions within the family system. Participant 3 reported his dad had to stand up against his mother after he disclosed his homosexuality:

> My father's reaction was: “Choose now...” He basically told her [my mother] that, in a way, one of two things could happen. “Either you lose a child, or you pull yourself together. The choice is yours.” ...after a very long conversation [between my parents, my dad told me] …if things don’t work out with my mother, then he’ll find me a place and then that’s that. If she says “go”, he will take care of me.

The participants indicated that their parents realised that they cannot influence their homosexual identity. They mentioned instances when parents were united, and said they would rather have a happy homosexual son, than one who rejects them, or withdraws or isolates himself from them. Participant 1 describes such a scenario:

> My dad said, it's fine, he does not have a problem with it, just as long as I am happy. “It's not about us. This is your choice.” He just comforted my mother and said: “It is okay, you did not lose a child”.

Some participants believed that their homosexual identity had been accepted by their parents; however, the majority of them believed their parents were unable to approve and support their homosexual identity fully. Participant 2 expressed his disbelief in this regard:

> Like I said, he’s got conditional acceptance and conditional support, but I don’t actually think he believes that I could have a normal life, I don’t think my dad believes that. He’ll say stuff like, if I keep the lifestyle that I’ve chosen I’ll never be happy.

It was evident that parents do not favour homosexuality in general. Participant 7 narrated his experience in this regard:

> If there is a gay conversation on the radio, I see that she [my mother] pulls a face. Or if there is a gay scene in a movie or whatever, then I see how she turns away. So, yes. She accepts it for my sake, although I know she's not 100% behind it.

Most participants in this study indicated that they believed their parents accepted their homosexual identity. They also noted that their parents displayed ambiguous responses and reactions about their homosexuality for some time after disclosure.

5.3.3 Relationships may change in a negative or positive manner.

There were changes in family relationships after the sons disclosed their homosexual identity to their parents and siblings. Participant 2 explained one such incident: “My little brother was scared to go to the mall with me, because he was scared people would think he’s my boyfriend, um, that was hard, because my little brother and I were very close.”

Participants had difficulty speaking openly about their partners in family settings and expressed their need to share their relationships with family members. Some parents asked their sons not to share that part of their lives with them. Participant 3 narrated the change in his relationship with his mother as follows:

> I used to be incredibly close to my mother and then it happened [I disclosed my homosexual identity] and now it's [our relationship] just gone. I really feel I can’t tell her anything anymore. And, suddenly, the person I got along with the worst, accepted me. It would be nice to have a relationship with my mother, where I could say to her, "Listen, this happened… that happened..." as with all the other things... She also went on and told me, "You are my child and it will never change, but I don’t want to know about that part of your life. Do what you want to do, but don’t talk about it, and I don’t want to see you with someone".

Parental ideations about the family name, heritage, and generational beliefs contrasted with their hopes of having grandchildren. Participant 2 expressed being shocked by his father’s perspective:

> He still told me, just, okay, fine, be this, but just find a girl, tell her we will look after her for the rest of her life, get her pregnant and give me a grandchild, you never have to have anything to do with her or the child, I just want a biological grandchild from you, because you are my oldest son… He was being dead serious. It gave me the big idea of what my dad thinks of me… He still pressures me about it.

As with many things in life, time was the healing factor that some familial strain was eased. The relationships between fathers and sons often increased in closeness and intensity. The majority of participants reported an improved father-son relationship after disclosure. Participant 7 articulated his experience thus:

> As my father grew older, he started to get easier, and we actually started to talk more... if it might be because I came out [disclosed my homosexual identity] and was honest, I don't know. But he became easier over time.

Participant 2 explained how the younger generation of his family were raised to be aware and had grater insight into different sexual identities:

> Things were better, because I wasn't carrying this big, dark thing. I was more patient, I was in a better place and so our relationship got better… My family is now very tolerant. All my siblings are fine with my orientation, very accepting… I mean, even the kids in my family are being raised to be aware.

Negative changes in family relations occurred after the participants disclosed their homosexual identities. Furthermore, discussions about family heritage and grandchildren caused significant stress within the family, resulting in family arguments or passive-aggressive behaviour.

5.4 Acceptance of Homosexuality by both Father and Son

This theme highlights the necessity of accepting homosexuality for both parties and their general functioning. Five subthemes describe the difference in the processes of the two parties to accept homosexuality. Changes occurred in the way the parties interacted and presented themselves towards others.

5.4.1 Resources used to gain a better understanding of homosexuality.

Most participants and parents made use of the internet and social media platforms to obtain information about homosexuality. Most participants motivated their use of social media to get in touch with homosexual men who had experienced similar identity dilemmas. Participant 4 reflected on his inconclusive homosexual identity:

> It wasn't this clear realisation that I was gay, it was this suspicion that I was gay and looking to speak to people who might be going through what I was going through… and the internet seemed like the safest place to do that, all anonymous and safe.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, allowed both parents and participants to discuss their concerns with individuals online. Participant 2 expressed his experiences in this regard as follows:

> I've brought a lot of material back… and it's actually been very good for both my mom and I. The first gay people I ever spoke to was in a social network group… I've met some wonderful people through social networking… we know everything about each other; our families speak to each other over Facebook… He [homosexual friend met through social media] was definitely there for me, even if it was from a distance, he was a very important part of that first year.

Most of the participants made use of social media to explore, understand, and to find meaning in their homosexual identity developmental process. Social media was a frequently used tool that offered answers to numerous questions held by both parents and participants.

5.4.2 Self-acceptance follows disclosure.

All participants indicated that they could only start integrating their homosexual identity after disclosing it to their family members and friends. Participant 6 described his experience thus: "Look, disclosing your homosexual identity to your parents immediately lifts a burden from your shoulders. The relief is immediate. It is as if you can breathe. You no longer live a lie." Participants also shared the feeling that carrying this secret made it difficult to reach out to other people. Participant 1 affirms that his interaction with others was more spontaneous, as he could be himself and no longer had to hide behind a mask:

> I think it was much more of a struggle with myself than it was for someone else... I have made peace with it now and I will tell someone now. I do not have a problem with it... I'm very comfortable with myself now. I can go to anyone and talk to them. It's not a problem for me anymore. I gained confidence.

Participants reported instances of wanting to make a statement after having announced their homosexual identity. They also shared feelings about making an impression on society, specifically towards heterosexual men. Participant 2 explained his process thus:

> One thing I experienced in my first year of coming out is, I was extremely flamboyant, unnecessarily so, I think I tried so hard to be what I was that I actually ended up being what I'm not… In the beginning I was very passionate, I was a Lady Gaga gay, like I said, very flamboyant, but realising my own way I was being offensive, I was looking to be poked at. Now, I take it in my stride… I didn't have to live up to the gay stereotype and I didn't have to try and impress the straight people, there can be this in-between, you know, and then I realised that sexuality is a spectrum, it's not just A, B or C. There are different degrees of it, which is why you go from straight to all the way to transgender; it's all the same, a rainbow, yeah.

The way in which the homosexual men presented and expressed themselves to others changed after they realised that sexual identity is not inflexible. As cited above, the participants reported greater self-acceptance and increased courage to speak to others about their homosexual identity after disclosure.

5.4.3 A supportive social network allows homosexual identity expression.

Most of the participants indicated that it was easier to accept their homosexual identity when they were in a romantic relationship. Participant 1 expressed his experience thus: "Friends, certainly, faith, and also, at the moment, my partner. When I met him… I accepted myself more." Participant 4 elaborated and mentioned: "A good support structure, I suppose. The fact that I've had a steady partner for all these years, somebody to talk to when things got hard, someone who could relate to what I was going through".

Participants shared opinions on the way society tried to make them fit into boxes similar to society's heteronormative beliefs and behaviour. Most of them agreed that

they had to impersonate someone other than their true selves. Participant 7 provided his perceived battle with this double life as follows:

> It was difficult. I basically led two lives…You have two groups of friends: your straight friends and your gay friends…and your family fell under your straight friends. In their presence you portrayed one life, and the moment you get a chance, you go out and be yourself in a different place… that is still a kind of double life… I also think, because of this, I can say that I still have a split life, where you have to pretend the whole time to be something, or to be something better, between inverted commas, in front of other people, opposed to who you really are in your personal life. If it hadn't been for the partner I had at the time, I do not think I would have ever came out [disclosed my homosexual identity]… I don't know if I would have been able to deal with it if it wasn't for him.

A distinction was made between friends who accepted participants' homosexual identity completely, and other persons, among whom they had to pretend to be someone else.

5.4.4 Acts of acceptance after disclosure.

All the participants were able to recall scenarios and situations when they felt accepted by their family members. Parents gradually made peace with their sons' homosexual identities and displayed certain acts that represented approval. As Participant 3 stated:

> Afterwards, I don't know... we are fine with each other now and actually have a much better relationship with each other. I visited them last night and my dad bought me red wine because he knew I was coming over, it's that type of thing.

Participants also indicated that family members asked forgiveness for previous, shameful and degrading actions. Participant 2 explained it in this manner:

> So, both him and my older brother had this moment where they broke down and they said they were so sorry, they had had no idea what they were doing at the time, they should have been there for me and, yeah, but we've made peace with it.

Most participants claimed that their parents accepted their life partners and continued to be involved in their relationships. Participant 1 reported his feeling of acknowledgement and acceptance after family members showed their approval:

> When they [parents] met [my partner] it was a bit awkward, but we've been living together for a while now and they are calm. Invite us for meals and "send love and regards to [my partner]." …my dad called me aside one day and apologised because he is like this... or, he is not like me, but it was great that he said the things he said, that he did it.

Some participants indicated that their parental relationships progressively improved after they disclosed their homosexual identity. Most family members eventually displayed compassion after the participants' disclosure.

5.4.5 Participants regret not disclosing at a younger age.

The majority of participants wished they had disclosed their homosexual identity to their parents at an earlier stage. If they disclosed at an earlier stage, they would have stopped hiding behind a mask. Participant 2 reported feeling depressed as his social live deteriorated, and that his world became smaller.

> With regard to my orientation, I would have come out earlier. I was very depressed carrying it for a long time and, again, like I said, I would have faced fewer issues and been less vulnerable if I wasn't carrying it by myself. I would have definitely come out earlier.

The longing to have disclosed at an earlier stage is confirmed by Participant 4:

> I just regret that it never happened sooner, that's all… I struggled with it throughout my whole high school career, I just wish now I could have realised who I was much sooner, that would have made life a lot easier.

The participants believe that disclosing earlier would have made a big difference to their high school careers regarding their quality of life and interaction with peers.

5.5 Stigma, Prejudice, and Discrimination Influence the Process of Paternal Disclosure

The last theme of this study highlights the ongoing stigma, prejudice, and negativity towards homosexual men. Participants mostly considered their fathers to have been intolerant about the homosexual community, and reported significant use of derogatory terms by their fathers to describe homosexual men.

5.5.1 Cultural and generational beliefs about homosexuality differ.

Participants gave varying reflections on cultural acceptance of homosexual males. Participant 7 perceived it as follows: "I assume some cultural groups try to accept it, and you get your liberal groups that are mostly okay with it, but the majority, I feel, try to accept it, but they can't actually accept it". In particular, participants reflected on the views held by older South Africans. They reported that, when the older generation were young, homosexuality was considered taboo. Participant 3 recalled the fear and distrust society had towards homosexual men in the past:

> I feel it is a thing that is accepted now. When we were growing up it was not at all. I mean there were always remarks… it wasn't right... I mean, if you think of the time they [previous generation of South Africans] grew up…You can just imagine what would happen if one of them [a homosexual man] had announced they were gay. Literally been locked up. Also. I don't think it was communicated to them. It didn't exist... And if it did, you hid it so far away.

Participants indicated feeling hopeful about change and acceptance about homosexual men by a new generation of South Africans. Participant 7 stated: "The children of today have a completely different attitude about it compared to what it was like in my days". This corresponds with the hope voiced by Participant 1: "I think South Africa still has a long way to go. But I think we will get there…the younger generation, and my friends too, are a little more accepting".

Some participants depicted certain cultural groups as increasingly more open-minded about sexual identity that deviates from the heterosexual norm.

5.5.2 Fathers made offensive statements about homosexual men prior their sons' disclosure.

Some participants recalled how their fathers had made derogatory comments about homosexual men before becoming aware of their sons' homosexual identity. Participant 1 expressed feeling his family was naïve and unaware of the damaging effect these comments could have, even although they were not directed at him openly: "I heard them [family] say a few times, maybe they didn't know it wasn't right to say things like that, but they would say about a friend, 'Oh, that friend is feminine or whatever". Participant 2 reflected that his father remained prejudiced towards homosexual men and used offensive language to describe them, even though suspecting his own son's homosexual identity:

> My dad is, actually, was, very homophobic… *Moffie* [a belittling term commonly used in South Africa to describe a homosexual man] used to be used as a derogatory term and, because I was sensitive, I was often called that, but I don't think that they [family] really knew that I was, it was just the term used to insult me.

Other participants recalled their fathers becoming more sensitive, less judgemental, and more accommodating towards homosexual men after their disclosure. Participant 4 explained it as being a reciprocal process involving patience and respect from both father and son regarding each other's views about sexuality:

> He [my father] said "don't be such a…" he started to say "faggot," but stopped himself mid-sentence. That was the one only negative time. It shouldn't have started down that road in the first place, but at least he stopped himself.

The participants indicated that certain offensive terms for homosexual males formed part of the discourse commonly used by their fathers and within their families in general.

5.5.3 Derogatory statements, stigma, prejudice, and discrimination persist.

Participants explained that they became accustomed to derogatory statements being made towards them and becoming more robust against the

prejudice and stigma surrounding homosexuality. Some participants explained having become hardened, because they had experienced bullying from heterosexual peers early on. Participant 4 recalled: “I remember, in Grade 9, some guys cornered me and were like really giving me a hard time. I had a bit of a breakdown, I went home and cried for days.” A similar experience was narrated by Participant 6: “Once you half open your eyes and you realise who and what you are, there is opposition. There is rejection and a lot of factors that influence your humanity.” Feelings of rejection and mistreatment was expressed by Participant 2 in his description of injustices that are often perpetuated against homosexual men:

> So, the vast majority of people don’t have a problem with us, but nobody actually comes to our side when somebody tries to lynch us, you know. You go to the police and you report abuse and they don’t take you seriously. You go to work and your partner died and they don’t offer you the same sympathy, or if your relationship doesn’t work out there’s sort of this mentality of, well, it was bound to happen.

Discriminatory treatment, stigma, and prejudice had formed part of the participants’ lives from an early age and, especially, once their homosexual identity became apparent to others. They explained that they had learned to adjust to prejudice and stigmatised views of general society.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the themes and subthemes that resulted from the thematic analysis. All the participants indicated that they experienced challenges during the time of homosexual identity formation and doubted paternal acceptance and support during this process. The themes mentioned will be integrated with literature in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion of Findings

This chapter will interpret the main and subthemes identified in Chapter 5 as they relate to existing literature and research. The researcher will identify and express differences from and similarities with current findings in relation to existing research that is relevant to homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period. Another important aim of this chapter is to consider Cass's model of homosexual identity development (Cass, 1979) in relation to the process depicted by the participants of this study.

6.1 Developmental Progression in Homosexual Identity Formation

All the participants in this study remember becoming aware of the possibility of them being homosexual. They described the process of homosexual identity development as challenging and conflicting. This finding is in line with Cass's theory of homosexual identity development (Cass, 1979), in which Cass considers identity confusion as the first stage of this process, when individuals become aware of the possibility of being homosexual. According to Brandon-Friedman (2015), men tend to recall conflicts they experienced during this stage, including self-doubt, anxiety, and emotional tension, to name a few.

All the participants agreed that they became aware of their sexuality during the adolescent years. They described this time as being challenging, because of attractions to, desires for, and fantasies about other boys. Although some of the participants were relatively young when they realised their different sexual identity, all of them had to hide their feelings and desires from peers at some point during their adolescent years. Sexual identity formation is initiated by the onset of puberty (Kar et al., 2015) and is a fundamental landmark during the adolescent years (Erikson, 1959). Puberty is described as the phase during which adolescents become more aware of their body image and are sexually curios (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). More specifically, the results reported by Brandon-Friedman (2015), show that adolescents have an increased need to express who they are sexually. These findings are similar to Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity development.

All the participants in this study recalled a time when they constantly compared themselves with their heterosexual peers and, from the participants' perspective, the development of their sexual identity was considerably more complex than the process heterosexual males went through. A reason for this comparison is possibly that homosexual individuals experience internal conflict due to the traditional norm of heterosexuality (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014) – this is the core characteristic of the identity confusion stage proposed by Cass (1996). The participants reported feeling increasingly uncomfortable during social events, not only because they had to hide their secret sexual identity, but also to circumvent questions and accusations. This resulted in isolation and withdrawal from friends and family members. Despite the feelings of alienation identified by Cass (1984a), the desire to belong to a community/society/family develops and intensifies over time. The participants started to manipulate their environment and fear that someone might suspect their homosexuality. They expressed feelings of uncertainty about themselves, they considered the possibility that they might be rejected, and were afraid of disappointing others. To avoid exposure and humiliation, the participants used various techniques to hide their homosexual identity from others. This finding is similar to the finding of Brandon-Friedman (2015), showing that homosexual men continually express non-homosexual images of themselves, and believe that others would identify them as such. Also, it was determined that homosexual men continue "passing" (Cass, 1979) a heterosexual image in public spaces. Maintaining this image includes that they continue previous (heterosexual) patterns of behaviour, attire, and mannerisms. Also, they "pass" through the heterosexual radar, and, by doing so, reduce or eliminate homophobic comments or actions (Cass, 1984b). Most of the participants admitted to having had opposite-gender relationships in an attempt to avoid redundant questions, accusations, or confrontations. This finding is consistent with Cass's (1984a) passing techniques. The participants experienced the continued disclosure as anxiety provoking, because fear of rejection persists with every new person they disclose to. Similar findings were reported by Greene and Britton (2012), confirming that disclosure is nearly always a stressful experience and that the coming out process continues throughout homosexual individuals' lives.

All participants in this research study experienced internal conflicts between their homosexuality and their religious beliefs. Conflict relating to internal acceptance

possibly manifests due to prejudice originating from religious communities and family members with strong religious beliefs about sexuality (Dahl & Galliher, 2012). Naidoo and Mabaso (2014), similarly, conclude that rigid familial religious views often compel homosexual men to repress their sexuality. However, those who succeed in resolving internal conflicts between their homosexuality and religion receive support and acceptance from significant others. Similar results were mentioned in a study by Lauricella et al. (2017), showing that recognition and approval by important others decreases internal conflicts these men might have and increases the likelihood of becoming part of a religious community.

6.2 Role of Paternal Relationship in Homosexual Identity Formation

In this study, participants emphasised the significance of sharing interests and activities with their fathers, and that doing so benefitted their homosexual identity developmental process. Interests shared by participants and their fathers, expressed as bonding experiences, significantly enhanced sons' self-acceptance and self-worth. Lamb and Lewis (2011) propose that paternal interaction affects sons' development in several ways, such as facilitating the development of self-worth and self-esteem. Ample research explains that fathers' sensitivity, physical contact, attention, and availability, among other factors, influence father-son relationships (Casselman & McKenzie, 2015; Jore et al., 2016; Takeuchi et al., 2010; Van Petegem et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). Shared paternal interests and activities create an environment in which the participants feel safe to explore, ask questions, and discover who they are. Also, Pleck (2010) found that fathers play a crucial role in creating an environment in which sons are able to develop a positive sexual identity.

A viewpoint shared by the participants of this study is that both positive and negative paternal relationships had a lasting effect on the way they viewed themselves later in life. The same observation was made by Didericksen and Berge (2015), who acknowledge that fathers play an important role in children's self-perceptions. Participants who experienced superficial or strained father-son relationships typically reported feeling inferior, rejected, and having self-doubt. This, in turn, negatively affected their behaviour, causing the participants to withdraw from their fathers. Many researchers state that detrimental, dysfunctional and abusive parental relationships lead children to isolate themselves from family members or

friends (Herbert & Dahlquist, 2008; Ryan et al., 2015; Van Petegem et al., 2013). Interfamilial isolation and withdrawal can be ascribed to poorly formed attachments between parents and children (Allen & Mitchell, 2015; Melinder et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2011). On the other hand, accepting and supportive paternal relationships encouraged the participants to view themselves more positively. It lead to them perceiving their paternal relationships as positive and recalled their fathers as giving them a sense of genuine and lasting acceptance as young boys. A secure attachment between father and son is essential for establishing a healthy relationship (Melinder et al., 2013). Attachment figures influence children's decision-making, autonomy, personality formation, and self-esteem, to name a few traits, throughout the children's lives (Bowlby, 1982; Bogaerts et al., 2005; Pallini et al., 2014; Takeuchi et al., 2010). Most of the participants believe that the unconditional love and acceptance they had received from their fathers had boosted their self-esteem and had influenced their views about themselves as homosexual men in a heteronormative society.

6.3 Discrepancies between Anticipated and Actual Paternal Responses within the Process of Disclosure

All participants feared parental rejection and expected negative outcomes, such as being disowned, having to find alternative accommodation, or being excluded by their family. According to Cass (1979), disclosure is, in most cases, preceded by a fear of rejection. Jadwin-Cakmak et al. (2015) also found that parental rejection is one of the most significant challenges facing homosexual men. All the participants disclosed their sexual identity to their parents, regardless of their anticipated fears and negative assumptions of what may happen after disclosure. Provence et al. (2014) explained that disclosure creates feelings of authenticity and sincerity within personal selves and, therefore, individuals have an increasing need to disclose their sexual identity.

Participants reported conflicting reactions from their parents and, sometimes, disclosure lead to alienation from the parent they had expected would accept them. Contrary evidence was found in the literature about parental views (McCormick, 2015) and parental rejection or approval of their sons' homosexuality (Conley, 2011; Machado, 2015). However, it is clear that certain familial traits and relationship

dynamics tend to influence the way parents react to their sons' disclosure. For example, Baiocco et al. (2015) found that poor family resources, communication difficulties, and lack of adaptability are related to more adverse reactions to disclosure. Also, Bregman et al. (2013) determined that families with low flexibility levels and strong boundaries tend to react more negatively to homosexuality. Valentova (2016), similarly, observed that poor coping skills, lower resilience, and enmeshed boundaries between family members influence parental views about homosexuality in general. Thus, multiple factors could influence parental views and reactions to their sons' homosexual identity disclosure. This is possibly due to parents' own conflicting emotions and their processes of meaning making about their sons being homosexual (Baiocco et al., 2015).

Among the reactions reported were that parents rejected their sons, isolated themselves, and even blamed themselves for their sons' homosexual identity. According to the participants, their parents believed they were the cause of their sons being homosexual, and parents tried to find ways or methods to prove this belief. This finding is consistent with research by Phillips and Ancis (2008), who found that parents believe that the way they educated and disciplined their sons caused their sons' homosexuality. Hill and Menvielle (2009) found that parents try to rationalise their sons' homosexuality based on the parents' lack of involvement during childhood. Machado (2015) concludes that fathers tend to believe that they had failed to pass on their own heteronormative upbringing, and they try to identify specific moments that could have led to their sons' homosexual identity.

Participants reported feeling judged by family members for the fact that they would be unable to have grandchildren in the future. Even greater expectations in this regard were placed on participants who were either the only child or the only male offspring of the family. This finding is consistent with Cassar and Sultana's (2016) research, which reports that parents experience a sense of mourning for the loss of their ideological dreams of heterosexual sons, including their sons' marriages, special gatherings, and the possibility of grandchildren. In contrast to the results of Goodrich and Gilbride (2010), which indicate that father-son relationships are likely to deteriorate after disclosure as fathers' heterosexual dreams of becoming

grandparents fall apart, research by Charbonnier and Graziani (2016) suggests that the majority of fathers eventually accept and tolerate their sons' homosexual identity.

Participants reported that, although their parents accepted their homosexual identity, they still experience certain restrictions in their relationships and concluded that some parents accepted their homosexuality provisionally. This finding is supported by Conley (2011), who states that fathers experience ambivalent emotions and feelings about raising homosexual sons. Hill and Menvielle (2009) also found that parents are likely to accept their sons' homosexual identity, but that parents nevertheless continue believing that their sons were not raised to be homosexual. This belief increases resistance to acceptance of their sons' identity, and parents retain the belief that they can somehow convert their sons to heterosexuality. In contrast, fathers who accept their homosexual sons' identity mostly believe that they cannot control their sons' sexuality (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), or that their sons were born homosexual (Horn & Wong, 2014).

All the participants realised that other people needed time to accept their homosexuality and that participants cannot force people to accept them. Even though most participants were accepted by their family members, some families never discussed homosexuality, or denied that their sons were in romantic relationships. However, most participants affirmed that their connection and ability to share their homosexual lifestyle with family members improved over time. Literature shows that, after their sons' disclosure, parents experienced the same emotions, doubts, and uncertainties that confront homosexual individuals (Conley, 2011; Machado, 2015; Savin-Williams, 2006). The family also has to make adjustments to family identity; for example, it is expected of them to disclose to other family members, friends, or co-workers (Machado, 2015). Leisure activities, various communities, religious involvement, and family dynamics are influenced by their sons' disclosure (Baiocco et al., 2015; Jacobs et al., 2012; Trussell, 2017). In this study, most participants noted that their family relationships gradually became stronger as participants continued to accept their own homosexual identity and assisted their parents through the family identity changes.

6.4 Acceptance of Homosexuality by both Father and Son

Both parties made use of various material in attempts to grasp and comprehend the process of homosexuality. Resources, including books/articles, acquaintances, and various social media platforms were used by both parents and their sons during the process of homosexual identity development. The participants reported that, once they realised that it was possible that they were homosexual, they felt doubtful and uncertain. In order to understand and formulate these undefined feelings, participants mostly explored the internet for information and resources. Supportive and accurate information about homosexuality would have positive results (Mustanski et al., 2011) and promote the development of a healthy homosexual identity (Harper et al., 2016). Although the internet was foreseen by the participants to be a safe space to receive information and guidance, Owens (2017) found that using the internet also poses threats, such as being outed, which could be caused by the ease by which photos/videos/events can be shared. However, Chester et al. (2016) established that individuals who reach out to people on social media platforms gain cyber acquaintances who offer support, provide answers, and give clarity regarding uncertainties. Although the contact was not in person, parents and sons indicated that their cyber friends were a source of strength and support during their meaning-making processes about homosexual identities. Similar results were found by Mustanski et al. (2011).

Participants realised that they had time to unravel and accept their homosexual identity, and they emphasised the important role they played in helping their parents to understand this alternative sexual identity. They mentioned that disclosure to their family members was the hardest step to take towards accepting their own homosexual identity. This finding is supported by international (Baiocco, et al., 2015; Cheng et al., 2016; Chester, et al., 2016; Trahan & Goodrich, 2015) and national (Lithgow & Du Preez, 2012; McCormick, 2015; Naidoo & Mabaso, 2014) studies. The majority of participants cited that it was only after parental disclosure that they were able to develop their sense of self and start shaping and expressing their homosexual identity. They confirmed that, after familial disclosure, they felt proud of their homosexual identity and made efforts to express their newly formed identity to others. Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity development explains

this notion of pride, and that men typically embrace their homosexuality by criticising the dominance of heterosexuality -- even exaggerating the significance of homosexuality (Cass, 1984a; Rosario et al., 2011). For this reason, homosexual men start preferring their new homosexual identities above their alleged heterosexual self-image, ensuring that others know about their sexual identity (Cass, 1990). Participants' statements often referred to the way they showed people that they were proud of their homosexual identity; they did this by portraying manners and characteristics that indicated their homosexuality.

Every participant indicated that intrapersonal support was crucial during their homosexual identity development. They indicated that support from religious communities, friends, and other minority-group members served as support structures. Some participants mentioned that being involved in a homosexual relationship provided the most support during the time of disclosure. These experiences are in line with Cass's (1996) findings; Cass acknowledges that homosexual individuals become part of other minority groups, and as a result, are accepted. Belonging to a group reduces their feelings of isolation, doubt, and possible rejection by other individuals (Brandon-Friedman, 2015) and provide individuals with protection (Greene & Britton, 2012). More specifically, Pleck (2010) found that homosexual men report higher prevalence of self-acceptance and identity integration when their homosexual identity is supported by family members.

The participants believed that disclosure at an earlier stage could have led to experiences that were less negative, and could have increased support from family members. Furthermore, they believed that their reasons for and feelings about rejection would have been different if they had disclosed earlier. However, it is not certain that this would be the case, as Conley (2011) indicates that an individual's age at disclosure plays an important part in familial acceptance/rejection. For example, the younger individuals are when they disclose their homosexuality, the more likely it is that parents will believe they can still change their sons' homosexuality (Greene & Britton, 2012). Consequently, less support (Conley, 2011) and an increase in negative experiences by parents are reported after disclosure at a young age (Ream & Rodrigues, 2014).

6.5 Stigma, Prejudice, and Discrimination Influence the Process of Paternal Disclosure

Participants characterised the majority of South African cultures as holding negative prejudices, generally, towards homosexual males. They indicated that this was true, particularly, of older South Africans, who are members of a generation that holds strong discriminatory beliefs about homosexual men. This seems to be a common trend in the global literature on views of the older generation (Cheng et al., 2016; Kuyper et al., 2016; Levant, 2011). A possible reason for the generational difference is explained by Horn and Wong (2014), namely, that paternal beliefs about homosexuality are based on the traditional heteronormative views according to which the parents had been raised. Other reasons might be that fathers had had limited contact with homosexual individuals (D'Augelli et al., 2010), or that homosexuality was never discussed or had not been approved by the older generation (Lithgow & Du Preez, 2012). According to Baiocco et al. (2015) negative reactions by older parents are expected, due to reasons similar to those mentioned above. Despite the beliefs of members of older generations, the participants expressed being hopeful that a younger generation will be more accepting and open-minded about different sexual identities that diverge from heterosexuality. Most of the participants mentioned that people are, generally, more aware of different sexual identities today, compared to the traditional idea that only opposite-gender relationships exist. This finding is in accordance with the notion that younger generations are likely to have more contact with and exposure to homosexuality and diversity, resulting in greater acceptance of homosexual identity (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, the participants expected that it would be some time before society adjusts fully to the idea of homosexual relationships.

The majority of participants specified that it had been difficult for their fathers, initially, to come to terms with their sons' chosen sexual identity. Ample research findings confirm the difficulties fathers experience in the process of accepting their sons' homosexuality (Conley, 2011; Goodrich & Gilbride, 2010; Horn & Wong, 2014; Machado, 2015; Ryan et al., 2015; Trahan & Goodrich, 2015). An interesting statement by the participants is that the quality of their paternal relationship prior disclosure paralleled their fathers' desire to maintain a relationship with them after disclosure. This finding is supported by the viewpoint that fathers who hold a secure

father-son attachment (Allen & Mitchell, 2015) and flexible views about different sexualities (Wilson et al., 2011), accept their sons' homosexuality and continue to work on a positive father-son relationship. However, the contrary was also mentioned: Participants indicated that a poor paternal relationship prior disclosure persisted after disclosure. This finding is in line with literature that explains that fathers rejected homosexuality, and this lead to antigay talk, homophobic remarks, discrimination, and negative stigma (Balsam et al., 2011; Bregman et al., 2013) and, ultimately, a poor father-son relationship (Pinel-Jacquemin & Gaudron, 2013).

Although participants expressed how they managed the stigma associated with homosexuality, they still reported feeling angry and victimised by society's actions towards and views about them. This is in accordance with reports of continuous discrimination against homosexual individuals in the workplace (Kuyper, 2015), stigma related to same-sex relationships (Frost, 2011), hate crimes (Stacey, 2011), and unceasing resistance to accepting homosexuality by certain religious groups (Lauricella et al., 2017). Generally, most participants experienced most South African cultures as conservative and prejudiced towards homosexual men.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the main and subthemes identified in Chapter 5 and related them to existing literature and research. Findings that contradict existing literature about homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period were highlighted and, simultaneously, the researcher identified findings similar to that of existing research. An interesting finding was that the participants' recollections of their sexual identity development resembles the phases identified by Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity development. Also, a non-linear process was reported, as some participants skipped certain stages or returned to previous stages at a later phase. These results correspond with Cass's (1979) perspective that homosexual identity development might be cyclic, instead of a linear process. Thus, the expressions offered by this study's participants represent applicability in relation to national and international studies about the process and conflicts experienced during homosexual identity formation (Brandon-Friedman, 2015; Bregman et al., 2013; Horn & Wong, 2014; Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). The

chapter to follow will provide a conclusion to this study, focusses on the limitations and strengths of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Limited research exists on the experiences homosexual men had with their fathers during their sexual identity formation period. This research study aimed to fill the gap in the literature about father-son relationships during homosexual identity development; the findings can contribute to the growing body of literature on the applicability of Cass's (1979) theory of homosexual identity development on a South African population. This chapter will provide the prominent findings, followed by limitations pertaining to this research study. Recommendations for further research will also be discussed, and concluding remarks will be made.

7.1 Summary of Prominent Findings

A developmental progression is evident in the process of homosexual identity formation. The participants identified milestones during their homosexual identity development. The milestones paralleled to the phases of Cass's (1979) theory of homosexual identity development. Descriptions given by the participants entail becoming aware of the possibility of being homosexual, followed by a period of comparing themselves to their heterosexual counterparts. Similar to the theory of Cass (1979), the participants started hiding their homosexual identity from others, resulting in withdrawal and isolation from friends and family members. According to the participants, they were only able to disclose their sexual identity to significant others after receiving support from religious communities, friends, and other minority-group members. Remarkably, some participants found being involved in a homosexual relationship provided the most support during the time of disclosure.

It is evident that paternal relationships play a role in homosexual identity formation. The participants emphasised that shared activities and interactions led to greater support and understanding from their fathers. Furthermore, positive paternal relationships were reported to comfort their homosexual identity developmental process and, simultaneously, enhanced the participants' self-acceptance and self-worth. Also, unconditional love and acceptance received from their fathers boosted their self-esteem and positively influenced their functioning in a heteronormative society. Nevertheless, the contrary was also reported, as negative paternal relationships had a destructive effect on the way the participants viewed themselves

and their process of sexual identity development. Like it was found by existing research, it became evident that superficial or strained father-son relationships typically lead to feelings of inferiority and possible rejection. Another observation by all the participants was that the quality of their paternal relationship prior to disclosure paralleled their relationship after disclosure. It was reported that a poor paternal relationship prior disclosure persisted after disclosure, and similar results were found in existing literature.

Regardless of having a positive or negative paternal relationship, all the participants feared the possibility of familial rejection. Discrepancies between anticipated and actual paternal responses within the process of disclosure exist. Most participants expected negative outcomes, such as being disowned or excluded from family interaction. Fathers and mothers had opposite or different views about their sons being homosexual, which resulted in rejection, isolation between family members, and, in extreme cases, parents blaming themselves for their sons' homosexuality. Furthermore, the majority of participants reported that they felt judged by family members for the fact that the family member was unlikely to have grandchildren in the future.

Acceptance of homosexuality by both father and son happen over time. The process of acceptance is influenced by numerous factors, such as the amount of knowledge fathers have about homosexuality. Research shows that fathers who had previous interactions with or have acquaintances who are homosexual tend to accept their homosexual sons more easily. An observation made in this study shows that social media platforms were very helpful for both the men and their fathers to understand and accept a homosexual identity. The participants found that they were only able to develop a sense of self and express their homosexual identity after parental disclosure.

Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination influence the process of paternal disclosure. A possible reason proposed by existing literature is that members of an older generation maintain strong discriminatory beliefs about homosexual men. Generally, most participants experienced South African cultures as conservative and prejudiced. According to the participants, societal anger, homophobia, and

victimisation continue to exist. It is, therefore, possible that men experience extreme difficulty to effect paternal disclosure, due to their fathers' strong heteronormative beliefs.

7.2 Limitations of this Research

This study has several limitations that need to be taken into consideration in interpreting the findings. First, the participant group was small, therefore, the findings cannot be generalised beyond the context of this research. However, the themes that were identified highlight the significance of homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period. The findings expand on existing literature about paternal relationships during their sons' homosexual identity development.

Second, the interpretations of the themes might have been shaped by the researcher's own personal beliefs, feelings, and values. The researcher's own sexual identity and experiences in relation of homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period could have played a role in interpreting and understanding of the data obtained. However, the supervisors' feedback was used throughout the process of data analysis to enhance credibility.

Third, the majority of the interviews were conducted in the participants' home language, Afrikaans, and, therefore, the quotations that were used in the dissertation had to be translated. Although the researcher thoughtfully considered the correct depiction of the data, the possibility exists that the full extent of the participants' experiences are not represented.

Fourth, the researcher is a novice at conducting individual interviews, and although precautions were taken to enhance his interview skills, it is possible that opportunities for exploration, clarification, and gathering of in-depth and richer information were missed due to inexperience.

7.3 Future Research and Recommendations

Various recommendations can be considered for future studies based on the research limitations mentioned above and the findings of this study. It is recommended that future research is needed to explore different views and opinions regarding homosexual identities within the multicultural South African context. Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity development could be tested further on a diverse South African population. Replicating this study from a different ethnic or cultural background perspective could provide a more accurate view of homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period. Future research on parent-child relationships and family interactions, in general, is necessary, but even more so for households raising a homosexual child.

In light of concerns regarding the different cultures, ethnic groups, and languages in the South African population, future studies should endeavour, to the degree possible, to conduct individual interviews in the home languages of their participants and to take their religious orientations into consideration. This will provide an opportunity for comparative research across different South African communities. Prospective results can then be integrated to increase the depth of understanding regarding the experiences of homosexual South African men and their paternal relationships. Subsequently, collateral data from the parents themselves, siblings, and significant others may provide an in-depth understanding of homosexual identity development. Thus, members of all ages, cultures, religions, and ethnic groups can be assisted by providing psychoeducation and creating support groups. In turn, parents and the community at large would be able to apprehend the difficulties, fears, and hesitations homosexual men deal with. Based on the research findings of this study, greater focus on experiences of intrapersonal relationships of other minority groups could also be explored.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter was devoted to providing an overview of the central research findings, the limitations of concern, and recommendations for future studies related to this research topic. The aim of this study was to explore homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during their sexual identity formation period. A qualitative multiple case study approach was used to gain deeper understanding and

to obtain richer data about individuals' experiences relating to the research topic. By reflecting on the experiences of father-son relationships during homosexual identity development, the results may inform intervention procedures aimed at enabling fathers to assist their sons in the process of forming a homosexual identity. Furthermore, the findings may promote awareness of positive identity development of homosexual youth and add to the growing body of literature about views and beliefs held about homosexuality in general. It is believed that this research created an understanding of the process, difficulties, and complications involved in homosexual identity development. Finally, fathers should realise that they play a crucial role during their sons' homosexual identity development. It is hoped that this study will encourage further research on the subject.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter

Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms: English and Afrikaans

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Schedule: English and Afrikaans

Appendix D: Original Afrikaans Excerpt and English Translations

Appendix E: Interview between Researcher (R) and Participant 2 (P2)

Appendix F: Interview between Researcher (R) and Participant 4 (P4)

Appendix G: Turnitin Report

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
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Faculty of the Humanites

11-May-2016

Dear **Mr Van Der Merwe**

Ethics Clearance: **Homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Jaco Van Der Merwe**

Department: **Psychology (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of the Humanities. I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Research Ethics Committee of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2016/0106**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours Sincerely

Prof. Robert Peacock
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of the Humanities

Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms: English and Afrikaans

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bothaa@ufs.ac.za

July 2016

Informed Consent

Dear participant,

I would like to invite you to take part in this research project:

Homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period

This study is about the experiences homosexual men had around disclosing their sexual orientation to their fathers. In addition, the researchers aim to explore the relationship dynamics between father and son during the identity formation period.

We would like you to participate in this study because you are a male that (a) disclosed your homosexual identity to your father during adolescence or emerging adulthood; (b) is in the stage of early adulthood (between the ages of 25 to 40 years); and (c) is able to effectively express yourself in either Afrikaans or English. An individual who is currently receiving treatment for a mental disorder will be excluded from the participant group.

The reason we are conducting this research is an attempt to develop a greater awareness and understanding of father-son relationships during the homosexual identity formation period. The results may guide intervention processes aimed at enabling fathers to assist their sons in the process of homosexual identity development and acceptance. In addition, the findings may promote awareness of the process of positive identity development of homosexual youth.

There are potential emotional risks involved should you agree to take part in this study, as you will be asked to talk about the relationship dynamics you have experienced with your father before, during, and after your homosexual orientation disclosure. However, a large part of the study will focus on the resources you have used to

successfully deal with possible challenges experienced. If you require debriefing or feel the need for individual therapy after the interview, you can make use of the following services:
1) The University of the Free State, Department of Psychology for therapeutic intervention. The contact person is Dr J. Jordaan (+27(0)51 401 2890);
2) The Unit for Professional Training and Services in the Behavioural Sciences. The contact person is Sandra Viljoen (+27(0)51 401 2775).

The following measures will be taken in consideration to protect your confidentiality and privacy: Informed consent forms will be kept in a securely locked cabinet at the University of the Free State, Department of Psychology, which only the researchers will have access to. Your privacy will be protected by not prying into any details that are not directly relevant to the research topic. Confidentiality will be protected very stringently by (a) assigning a pseudonym and by (b) carefully selecting possible quotes that will be used in the final dissertation in terms of preventing any specific identifying details given during the interview. In addition, interviews will be conducted in a private room in the psychology department (or your place of preference) which is quiet and free from distractions. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. The recordings will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer during the transcription process. Your transcription will also be password-protected and only the researchers will have access to the interview. Once the dissertation has been accepted and approved, your transcription and interview recording will be destroyed.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this research. Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage. Should you withdraw from the study, your information will not be included in the study, and it will be destroyed immediately.

If you experience concern or discomfort at any stage during the research process, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor, Dr Anja Botha, directly (contact details provided above).

Yours sincerely,

_____ _____

Jaco van der Merwe Date

Please fill out and return this page to the researcher. Keep the informed consent letter for future reference.

Study: **Homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period**

Researcher: **Jaco van der Merwe**

Name and Surname: _____

Age: _____

Contact number: _____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the research is about, why I am participating, and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from the interview, subjected to the stipulations indicated in the informed consent letter.
- I disclosed my homosexual identity to my father during adolescence or emerging adulthood.
- I am in the stage of early adulthood (between the ages of 25 to 40 years).
- I am able to effectively express myself in either Afrikaans or English.
- I am not currently receiving any form of treatment for a mental disorder.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Navorser:

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Julie 2016

Ingeligte Toestemming

Beste deelnemer,

Ek wil jou graag uitnooi om deel te neem aan die volgende navorsingsprojek:

Homoseksuele mans se ervarings van vaderlike verhoudings tydens die tydperk van seksuele identiteitsvorming

Hierdie studie handel oor die ervarings wat homoseksuele mans gehad het gedurende die bekendmakingsproses van hul seksuele oriëntasie aan hul vaders. Verder, beoog die navorser om die verhoudingsdinamika tussen vader en seun te ondersoek tydens die identiteitsvormingsperiode.

Ons wil graag hê jy moet deelneem aan hierdie studie omdat jy (a) jou homoseksuele identiteit aan jou vader bekend gemaak het tydens jou tiener- of ontluikende volwassenheidsjare; (b) in die stadium van jong-volwassenheid is (tussen die ouderdom van 25 tot 40 jaar) en; (c) jy jouself effektief kan uitdruk in Engels of Afrikaans. `n Individu wat tans behandeling vir `n geestesversteuring ontvang sal uitgesluit word van die deelnemersgroep.

Die rede agter die uitvoering van die navorsing is om bewustheid en begrip van vader-seun verhoudinge te ondersoek tydens homoseksuele identiteitsvorming. Die resultate kan intervensieprosesse uitlig wat gerig kan word om vaders te ondersteun tydens hul seun se homoseksuele identiteitsontwikkeling- en aanvaarding. Daarbenewens, kan die resultate bewustheid oor die proses van positiewe homoseksuele identiteitsontwikkeling onder jeug bevorder.

Daar is potensiële emosionele risiko's as deelnemer van die studie, aangesien daar van jou verwag gaan word om oor jou ervaringe en verhoudingsdinamika met jou vader te praat voor, tydens en na jou bekendmaking van jou homoseksuele oriëntasie.

Neem egter kennis dat die fokus grotendeels oor die hulpbronne wat jy tot jou beskikking gehad en gebruik het teen moontlike uitdagings tydens die erkenningsperiode. Indien jy berading benodig na die afloop van die onderhoud, kan jy enige tyd van die volgende dienste gebruik maak:

1) Die Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Departement Sielkunde vir terapeutiese intervensie. Die kontakpersoon is Dr J Jordaan (+27 (0)51 401 2890);

2) Die Eenheid vir Professionele Opleiding en Dienslewering in die Gedragswetenskappe. Die kontakpersoon is Sandra Viljoen (+27 (0)51 401 2775).

Die volgende stappe word geneem om jou konfidensialiteit en privaatheid te beskerm: Ingeligte toestemmingsvorms sal in ‘n geslote kabinet by die Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Departement Sielkunde gehou word waartoe slegs die navorsers toegang het. As deelnemer word jou privaatheid beskerm deur geen inligting te verkry wat nie direkte toepassing het op die navorsing nie. Konfidensialiteit sal baie streng beskerm word deur (a) gebruik te maak van skuilname en (b) dat geen identifiseerbare aanhalings gebruik sal word wat tydens die onderhoude deurgegee is nie. Onderhoude sal plaasvind in ‘n stil, private vertrek in die sielkunde departement van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat (of jou plek van keuse). Onderhoude sal opgeneem word en daarna getranskribeer word. Die opnames sal op ‘n private rekenaar met ‘n veilige wagwoord gehou word gedurende die transkripsie proses. Transkripsies sal ook deur ‘n wagwoord beskerm word en slegs die navorsers sal toegang hê tot hierdie inligting. Sodra die skripsie aanvaar en goedgekeur is sal die getranskribeerde onderhoud en inligting vernietig word.

Ek waardeer jou deelname in hierdie studie opreg. Neem asseblief kennis dat jou deelname vrywillig is en dat jy op enige stadium gedurende die studie kan onttrek. In die geval word enige inligting wat jy deurgegee het onmiddellik vernietig.

As jy enige bekommernis of ongemak tydens die navorsingsproses ervaar, kan jy my of my navorsing supervisor gerus direk kontak in verband met enige vrae (kontaknommers is bo aan die vorm gelys).

Die uwe,

_____ _____

Jaco van der Merwe Datum

Vul asseblief hierdie gedeelte in en besorg terug aan die navorser. Hou gerus die ingeligte toestemmingsdokument vir toekomstige doeleindes.

Studie: **Homoseksuele mans se ervarings van vaderlike verhoudings tydens die tydperk van seksuele identiteitsvorming.**

Navorser: **Jaco van der Merwe**

Naam en van: _____

Ouderdom: _____

Kontaknommer: _____

- Ek gee my vrywillige en ingeligte toestemming om deel te neem aan die bogenoemde navorsingsprojek.
- Ek verstaan waaroor die studie gaan, wat van my verwag gaan word, en wat die risiko's en nagevolge mag wees van my deelname.
- Ek gee die navorser toestemming om gebruik te maak van die data wat ek weergee tydens my deelname (soos uiteengesit in die ingeligte toestemmingsbrief).
- Ek het my homoseksuele identiteit aan my vader bekend gemaak tydens my tiener of ontluikende volwassenheidsjare.
- Ek is in die tydperk van jong-volwassenheid (tussen die ouderdom van 25 tot 40 jaar).
- Ek kan myself effektief uitdruk in Engels of Afrikaans.
- Ek ontvang geen behandeling vir `n geestesversteuring nie.

Handtekening: _____ Datum: _____

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Schedule: English and Afrikaans

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Homosexual men's experiences of paternal relationships during the sexual identity formation period

Build rapport between researcher and participant

- Are you originally from Bloemfontein?
  - (If not: Where are you from?)
- What is your highest qualification? Describe your experience during your training?
- Tell me more about your current job? How long are you working there? Any positive experience that you will always remember?
- What activities are you doing in your leisure time? Do you have any hobbies?
- Do you have any siblings?
  - (If so: Tell me more about them? Where do you fit in the birth order? Describe your relationship with them?)
- Are you currently in a stable relationship?
  - (If so: How long have you been together? Where did you meet?)
  - (If not: Any particular reason you are single?)

Exploring the individual's sexual identity formation

- Can you tell me about your views regarding homosexuality?
- What is your view about homosexuality in South Africa?
- How would you describe your journey in establishing a homosexual identity?
- Which experiences did you have during this journey?
- Tell me more about the obstacles / setbacks you have experienced in your journey, if any?
- How have you dealt with the challenges you faced?
- How did this journey affect your life?
- Looking back, what would you say has helped you the most to deal with difficulties and challenges, if any?
- Do you think there is a difference in the identity formation process of a heterosexual and homosexual individual? If so, how would you describe it?

Exploring the individual's relationship with his father

- Tell me about your father.
- How do you view your relationship with your father?
- Can you share the process of disclosure to your father?
- How did you experience disclosing your sexual orientation to your father?
- How would you describe your father's reaction the day you disclosed your homosexuality?
- Can you tell me how your relationship is different before and after disclosure?
- In which ways did your father support your homosexual identity, if any?
- Retrospectively, is there anything that you would have done differently?
- How do you make sense of everything you told me? What meaning does it have for you as a person?

Homoseksuele mans se ervarings van vaderlike verhoudings tydens die tydperk van seksuele identiteitsvorming

Skep verhoudingsband tussen navorser en deelnemer

- Is jy oorspronklik van Bloemfontein?
  - (Indien nie: Waar kom jy vandaan?)
- Wat is jou hoogste kwalifikasie? Beskryf jou ervaring gedurende jou opleiding?
- Vertel my van jou huidige werk? Hoe lank werk jy al daar? Watter positiewe ervaring sal jy altyd onthou van jou huidige werk?)
- Watter aktiwiteite doen jy in jou vrye tyd? Het jy enige stokperdjies?
- Het jy enige broers of susters?
  - (Indien wel: Vertel my meer oor hulle? Waar pas jy in die geboortevolgorde? Hoe sal jy jou verhouding met hulle beskryf?)
- Is jy op die oomblik in `n standvastige verhouding?
  - (Indien wel: Hoe lank is julle al saam? Waar het julle mekaar ontmoet?)
  - (Indien nie: Enige spesifieke rede waarom jy enkellopend is?)

Verkenning van individu se seksuele identiteitsvorming

- Kan jy my vertel oor jou siening van homoseksualiteit?
- Wat is jou mening oor homoseksualiteit in Suid-Afrika?
- Hoe sou jy jou proses beskryf in die vestiging van 'n homoseksuele identiteit?
- Watter ervarings het jy ervaar gedurende die proses?
- Vertel my meer oor die struikelblokke / terugslae wat jy ervaar het gedurende die proses, indien enige?
- Hoe het jy die uitdagings gedurende die proses hanteer?
- Hoe het die proses jou lewe beïnvloed?
- As jy terugkyk, wat sal jy sê het jou die meeste gehelp wat probleme en uitdagings aanbetref, indien enige?
- Dink jy daar is 'n verskil tussen 'n heteroseksuele en homoseksuele individu se identiteitsvorming? Indien wel, hoe sal jy dit beskryf?

Verkenning van individu se verhouding met sy pa

- Vertel my oor jou pa.
- Hoe sien jy jou verhouding met jou pa?
- Kan jy die proses van bekendmaking aan jou pa beskryf?
- Hoe het jy die bekendmaking van jou seksuele oriëntasie aan jou pa ervaar?
- Beskryf jou pa se reaksie die dag toe jy jou homoseksualiteit openbaar het?
- Vertel my hoe jou verhouding met jou pa was voor en na jy jou homoseksualiteit bekend gemaak het?
- Op watter maniere het jou pa jou gedurende jou homoseksuele identiteitsvorming ondersteun, indien enige?
- As jy terugdink, is daar enigiets wat jy anders sou doen?
- Hoe maak dit wat jy my vertel het sin vir jou? Watter betekenis het dit vir jou as persoon?

Data removed to maintain confidentiality.

Appendix G: Turnitin Report

Turnitin similarity: **9%**

The Turnitin similarity report can be requested from the research supervisor:

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