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“Totally Unacceptable”: Representations of homosexuality in South African public discourse.

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ABSTRACT

The 1996 Constitution of South Africa is ranked as one of the most liberal and democratic constitutions in the world. The right to freedom of sexual orientation, equality and the freedom of association amongst other rights is in its Bill of Rights and are thus inherently assured and protected in post- apartheid, democratic South Africa. However, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community continue to face discrimination and prejudice despite this newly established constitutional order.

The present study is interested in how, in the light of the equality clause in the South African constitution, homosexuality is represented and constructed in the South African media. The thesis examines representations of homosexuality between the years 1999-2013 in articles collected from the *Independent Online* media site which incorporates 30 newspapers. The approach focuses on the topics, overall news report schemata, local meanings, style and rhetoric of the news reports. The results of the study show that negative attitudes towards homosexuality are framed in three main ways: homosexuality is represented as ‘unAfrican’; ‘ungodly’ and ‘unnatural’. I argue that rather than extreme forms of violence (such as ‘corrective rape’ and murder) directed against LGBT citizens being interpreted as the aberrant behaviour of a few, these need to be understood in the context of the circulation of the above justificatory narratives.

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ACRONYMS

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AFER	African Ecclesial Review
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
CRC	Constitutional Review Committee
DA	Democratic Alliance
FEW	Forum for Empowerment of Women
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IOL	Independent Online
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
NHTL	National House of Traditional Leaders
POWA	People Opposing Women Abuse
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes Survey

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Introduction

Thirty-eight out of Africa's fifty three countries have laws that ban same-sex relations and more are opposed to it. Homosexuals have historically been victims of discriminatory laws and prejudices in South Africa. Legislation prior to 1994 denied lesbians and gay men their basic human rights and reduced them to social outcasts and criminals (Gevisser & Cameron 1994). Criminalisation and legal sanctions typified life for homosexuals under apartheid. Post-apartheid, in contrast, brought constitutional reform and facilitated the protection of rights, including the protection of the rights of homosexuals.

Both the 1994 interim Constitution and the 1996 Constitution were the first in the world to explicitly ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The Civil Union Act of 2006 placed South Africa as the fifth country in the world (after The Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and Spain) to legalize marriage between members of the same sex. Despite the Constitutional guarantee to equality and non-discrimination regardless of sexual orientation, Human Rights Watch (2011) notes however that South Africa's existing laws and policies on sexual orientation have failed to protect lesbians and gays from discrimination and that there is a threat of violence that dominates the lives of homosexuals particularly in the poorer non-urban areas and townships. The townships are rife with cases of 'corrective rape' aimed at 'curing' lesbians of their lesbianism, violence, discrimination and abuse targeted at black lesbians in particular (see Msibi 2011; Sanger 2010).

Progress has been made towards improving the social status of homosexuals in South Africa. The equality clause in the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights (1996) is the first to expressly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Decriminalisation through law reform since the mid-1990s enabled lesbians and gay men to claim their citizenship as equal South Africans. The courts have also played a part in changing legislation that formerly discriminated against the homosexual community. The courts and civic organisations have played a significant role in ensuring that homosexuals are treated equally to heterosexual citizens.

Far-reaching judgements in respect of employment opportunities, medical aid (*Langemaat v Min of Safety and Security 1998*), sodomy, custody of children, (*Min of Home Affairs v*

Fourie 2005), adoption, insurance, immigration and inheritance have benefited lesbians and gays (*National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (1999)*). In November 2006 government signed into effect the Civil Unions Act which brought about legal recognition of gay marriages, positioning the country as the first to do so in Africa and the fifth to do so internationally. The courts have also played an instrumental role towards the adoption of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000). Hence it can be noted that the state, supported by the courts, has played a significant role in promoting the equality and non-discrimination provided for by South Africa's constitution.

Post-apartheid South Africa has allowed for the growth of gay and lesbian political activism and organisations, the emergence of regular social events such as pride marches and film festivals, and significant coverage in print and electronic media on homosexuality. Civil society organisations have also influenced policy change and have played a significant role in raising awareness of discrimination through public discussions.

Despite constitutional protection, the reality on the ground has been different to the aspirations of a rainbow nation that favours equality. Research to assess public attitudes towards homosexuality has been conducted by a number of scholars and organisations in South Africa (Brown 2012; Smuts 2011; Gunkel 2009, 2007; Muholi 2004). A study by OUT (2004) revealed that only half of their respondents felt that the new constitution had indeed led to a positive change in the attitudes to homosexuality held by many citizens. In the same study, about 80% continued to see themselves faced with the same societal prejudice of being 'abnormal'. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the other hand found out that 78% of all respondents considered homosexuality as 'totally unacceptable'. It is worth noting that the vast majority of those 78% was made up of black South Africans and that this opinion survey was conducted in the poorest regions of South Africa (Wells, Helene and Polders 2004; Rule 2004).

Human Rights Watch (2011) notes that at least 31 lesbians have been murdered in South Africa in the past decade. Of the 46 lesbian women who participated from Johannesburg townships, 41% had been raped, 9% had survived rape, 37% had been assaulted, and 17% had been verbally abused. Actual figures are likely to be far higher due to fear of re-victimisation in the reporting process. Most of the victims of these homophobic attacks

meet the assailants in the streets and are constantly taunted, threatened and humiliated. Thus it can be noted that even though the law clearly prohibits such discrimination, black lesbians in particular as members of the homosexual community remain victim to discrimination.

Thesis Outline

The first chapter, following this introduction will provide a review of the literature that is relevant to the thesis.

Chapter two discusses the research methods and techniques employed in the study. The chapter provides a brief discussion of discourse analysis before describing in greater detail the methods, procedures and techniques used to analyse how homosexuality is constructed and represented in South African public media discourse.

Chapters three, four and five provide the results of the study. These show how homosexuality has been framed in the media as ‘unAfrican’; ‘ungodly’ and ‘unnatural’. These chapters provide an analysis of actors, quotations, headlines and other discursive properties of media discourse.

The final chapter, chapter six, provides an overall synthesis of the thesis, drawing together theory and evidence in offering overall conclusions which address the main objective of the thesis. It does so by providing a discussion of ‘corrective rape’ – which is seen as a bid to ‘cure’ sexual orientations constructed as ‘deviant’. The thesis concludes that the framing of homosexuality as ‘unAfrican’; ‘ungodly’ and ‘unnatural’ creates a legitimating climate for violence.

CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

A number of theories have been formulated that try to explain how individuals and society react to homosexual relations. Attitudes towards homosexuality, as scholars such as Weeks (1986) and Plummer (1995) point out, are not universal. They vary over time and place. Each culture labels different practices as appropriate or inappropriate, moral or immoral, healthy or perverted (Weeks 1986:26). Social relations in all their diversity (even within a single culture) significantly shape the human experience, organization and perception of sexuality. Weeks argues that a variety of forces have shaped 'modern sexuality', namely kinship and family systems, economic and social changes, changing forms of social regulation (both formal and informal), the 'political moment' (moments of moral crisis), and cultures of resistance (Weeks 1986). Sexuality is thus not an independent category, objectively definable in every cultural and historical context. Weeks (1986) therefore notes that categories and concepts employed in different cultures (such as sexuality, love and desire) are thus not objective, universal notions, but represent sociocultural attempts to organize human experience.

Foucault (1980) argued that sexuality in society is linked with the exercise of power in the sense that those who wield power are in a position to control, influence and regulate sexual identities and formations. Msibi (2011) notes that in many societies around the world, sexuality continues to be highly controlled and heavily policed as can be seen by the manner in which homosexuals have been treated in countries such as Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe to mention just but a few (see also Gunkel 2010; Tamale 2011). Such control is still present in the manner in which homosexuality continues to be closeted and silenced in these contexts. Most African countries continue to oppress those who engage in same-sex relations: “by maintaining a tight grip on certain activities, and silencing the voices of those individuals and groups that engage in them, the patriarchal state makes it extremely difficult for these individuals to organise and fight for their human rights” (Tamale 2007:18).

Criminalisation and legal sanctions typified life for homosexuals under apartheid. Post-apartheid, in contrast, brought constitutional reform and facilitated the protection of rights.

However, as is the case with same-sex relations elsewhere in Africa the (at times violent and literal, at times discursive) silencing of same-sex sexualities continues to be a feature of life in South Africa seeming to reflect a disjuncture between widely held social norms and the formal legal and constitution rights of citizens.

Sexuality is shaped by a variety of social forces, and the law may be viewed as one facet of a more complex set of social relations which influences identity formation. Erving Goffman (1959), in his labelling theory, argued that there exists within a particular context a general consensus about what constitutes socially acceptable behaviour. When individuals stray away from these established norms they are labelled as deviants and as a result, they face the negative consequences of deviant behaviour such as name calling or physical abuse. Longstanding cultural myths and stereotypes as Herek (1991) points out, depict lesbians and gay men as immoral, criminal, sick and drastically different from what most members of society would consider 'normal'. Lesbians and gay people have in many different contexts been labelled 'deviant' (van Klinken & Gunda 2012).

Martha Nussbaum (2004) has argued that human feelings and emotions play a significant role in shaping the manner in which society reacts towards sexuality. Nussbaum (2004) gives an account of how disgust shapes society's thinking and its influence on law making. She introduces the idea of disgust which sometimes serves as the primary or sole reason for making some acts illegal. Nussbaum explains that most of the political rhetoric around denying equal rights to gays is rooted in the language of disgust. Homosexual relations are viewed as morally debased, disgusting and threatening to contaminate the rest of 'us'.

Disgust has featured prominently in the justification historically of negative attitudes towards homosexuals. Devlin, Kass, Miller and Kahan use the idea of the disgust of the 'reasonable man' to identify acts that may be (or should be) legally regulated, whether or not they actually occasion disgust in any person who is really present when the act itself is committed (cited in Nussbaum 2004). Arguing against the legalisation of homosexual practices, Patrick Devlin (1959) famously argued that, for society to survive, it needs an 'established morality' that is broadly shared. For Devlin, the loosening of moral bonds signals the risk of social disintegration. Therefore society is justified in taking necessary steps to preserve and maintain its morals in order for it to survive.

Western scholars have done the bulk of work on sexualities in Africa and most of the published work on sexualities comes from South Africa (Tamale 2011). Historical and anthropological studies (Epprecht 1998; 2001, 2004, 2008; Moodie 1991) all point to major distortions and exclusions of truth about African same-sex relations by historians. Amory (1997) argues that there has been a reluctance to partake in research on homosexuality in Africa mainly because there has been a recurring mantra that states that there is no homosexuality in Africa.

Homosexuality in Africa has been framed as a borrowed phenomenon and in some instances is viewed as an imposition of western norms onto African society. President, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe in a 1995 speech infamously described lesbians and gays as worse than pigs and dogs (Dunton & Palmberg 1996:36). He has also declared homosexuality ‘as an abomination, a rottenness of culture’ imposed upon Africans by Britain’s ‘gay government’ (Gunkel 2010:25). Namibia’s Home Affairs Minister in 2000 urged new police recruits to arrest on sight gays and lesbians while Sam Nujoma the then President publicly stated that homosexuality was ‘one of the two top enemies of the national government’ (Epprecht 2004:5). Nigeria’s former president, Olusegan Obasanjo, declared homosexuality as ‘un-Biblical, unnatural and definitely un-African’ (Gunkel 2010:25). Other African leaders in countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, Swaziland as well as leading church officials have declared homosexuals a social threat (Epprecht 2004:4). Several studies have documented the claim that homosexuality is un-African in many African states (see Gunkel 2010; Msibi 2011; Moffet 2006; Msibi 2011). It is in this context that sexual orientation has become a reason for both political and personal persecution in different African countries and this is another reason why research on homosexuality in the African context has been very minimal. In countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi and Zimbabwe, social and religious structures openly condemn homosexuality as ‘unacceptable’ and promote homophobia (Msibi 2011; Tamale 2011; Ratele; 2009).

South Africa is sometimes treated as an exception on the African continent with regard to attitudes to gay and lesbian rights. However, as the present thesis shows, in South Africa homosexuality is similarly characterised as a Western import and non-existent in pre-colonial Africa (see for example Croucher 2002; Gevisser 1994; Gunkel 2010; Vincent 2009).

An analysis of the literature on homosexuality in South Africa suggests that from the start of the 1990's to the end of apartheid in 1994, the body of work available tended to focus more on the emergence and proliferation of gay rights organisations and their contribution to the inclusion of gay rights within the new constitution (see Gevisser 1994 and Muholi 2004; Mills 1988). A different literature on homosexuality has recently begun to emerge (Murray 1998; Amory 1997; Msibi 2011; Gunkel 2010). According to Amory (1997:6) research on gays and lesbians in African studies has been accentuated by a number of factors that include feminist theory on gender and sexuality in Africa, changes in women's status across the African context and the emergence of a greater acknowledgement of lesbian identities in post-colonial Africa. The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies in its 2009 annual report notes that LGBT studies have rapidly increased over the past 20 years due to an expansion of Women's and Gender Studies in which the acknowledgement of gender and sexuality as separate categories of analysis has emerged.

While a great deal of research exists on violence against women and children in South Africa, most of these studies focus broadly on gender based violence without paying particular attention to violence against lesbians. Exceptions are contributions by Muholi 2004; Hassim 2002; and Bennet 1999. A body of work on comparisons between the equality clause guaranteeing the rights of lesbian and gay people and the reality on the ground in terms of tolerance and acceptance of these rights also exists (see for example Cock 2003; Croucher 2002; Tahmindjis 2005; Louw 2008; Reddy 2001; Gevisser 1994). This research forms part of the on-going discussion of the disparities between the envisaged constitutional protection and equality in stark contrast to the homophobia and intolerance that continues to affect black South African lesbians in particular.

Jean Brundit has from the 1990's documented particularly the life of white lesbians in Cape Town who in stark contrast to the black lesbian community in the same city appear to enjoy an accepting and safe environment compared to black citizens of the same sexual orientation. In March 2010 the then Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana, stormed out of an art exhibition at Constitutional Hill claiming that photographs of black lesbian couples by Zanele Muholi were 'going against nation building' (Gunkel 2010). Muholi's (2004) photographic work on black lesbians raises awareness on issues that are currently affecting South Africa such as corrective rape, HIV/AIDS, gender and discrimination on the basis of sexual

identities. As Gunkel (2009) notes, Muholi's visual collection of black lesbians seems to suggest that despite constitutional protection of the lesbian and gay community, South Africa is still divided along cultural and political lines. This is evidenced in the feedback she gets from her exhibitions whereby she receives openly homophobic comments, expressions of anger, disgust and personal threats to discourage her from working in the field of lesbianism with others suggesting that her footage is a disgrace to the black community thus suggesting the un-Africanness of homosexuality and the need to preserve the claimed cultural norms of black sexuality.

A study conducted by South African Social Attitudes Survey in 2008 showed that prejudiced views on same-sex relations appear closely related to education, with more highly educated people being more tolerant. The study by SASAS which stretched over a five year period (2003-2008) revealed that those who matriculated or possess a tertiary qualification demonstrate more liberal views, especially compared to citizens that either have no formal schooling or only a primary level education. However, a study by Marlene Arndt (2006) on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men showed that even though the South African government has played a significant role in ensuring equality by including a clause that protects lesbians from discrimination; negative attitudes continue to exist even within university communities. The study also revealed that religion and gender relations have a significant part to play in advocating for intolerance towards same sex relationships (Arndt 2006).

Violence against gay and lesbian citizens in South Africa occurs in a wider context of gender based violence. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), a non-governmental organisation notes that statistics on rape in South Africa show that approximately 85% are gang rapes. Although these statistics do not differentiate between rape of straight women or lesbians a point to note from this high rate of gang rapes is that it suggests a form of collective action by men in society who need to assert their masculinity and dominance over women by controlling their bodies through sex as has been argued by Connell (1995 -- see also Gunkel 2010; Tamale 2011). As Gunkel (2010) argues, gang rape by a group of men does not only suggest reinforcement of dominant masculine requirements of control over women's bodies and sexuality but it also suggests the reification of heterosexuality enacted in forms of homosociality (see also Sedgwick 1985; Maddison 2000; Storr 2003, Smith 2009).

Sedgwick (1985) defines homo-sociality as social bonds between people of the same sex. This definition as she argues has been used to describe relationships between men in order to develop a theory of masculinity. Maddison (2000) further suggests that these relationships between men are by nature homophobic as there already exists a clear cut exclusion of any form of sexual contact and it is within these relationships that gender roles within a society are reinforced. A body of work on the role male homo-sociality plays in society has shown that homo-social structures and enactments enforce gender inequality (Storr 2003; Maddison 2000; Sedgwick 1985; De Lauretis 1991).

In these homo-social relationships, women play a minor role and are regarded as objects of desire which need to be controlled and competed for by men. Women are used as symbols to signify heterosexuality and in the same process, manifesting and reinforcing the position of men in society as dominant and in control of women. In order to enforce and maintain gender norms within society, dominant roles are associated with masculinity and subordinated positions are ascribed to women and by implication to men who are feminised.

Homosexuality is a major threat to a gender order constructed around the binary poles of masculinity and femininity premised on a biological determinist account of sexuality that maps sexual desire neatly onto biological bodies constructed as 'natural'. Hence males who engage in homosexual relations disturb the natural order of homo-sociality that entails their dominance and heterosexuality as the norm. On the other hand, women who engage in lesbian relationships are a threat to the masculine ideology of the exclusive male right to control and have access to the sexuality of women. Namaste (1996) further explores the relationship between gender subversion and gay-bashing. Her findings reveal that men and women who assume signifiers of the opposite gender, for example through dress and speech are at greater risk of discrimination and gay-bashing. As is discussed in more detail in the chapter entitled 'Unnatural', to overtly display gender performances that appear out of synch with the biological body is viewed as a form of deviance inviting punishment in the form of assault, gang rape, corrective rape, abuse, and even murder in order to re-establish the 'natural' binary order of masculine men and feminine women and 'opposite' sex desire as 'normal' and 'natural'. Homophobic violence is, hence, formulated in relation to the subversion of norms, particularly norms around masculinity.

Although discussed in separate chapters here, the framing of homosexuality as ‘unnatural’ and ‘unAfrican’ are in reality closely intertwined. Swarrs’ (2003) work on lesbianism in India and South Africa reveals that cultural values and norms are often used as a justification for homophobia. Growing up in a socio-cultural context defined by deeply rooted patriarchal structures and heteronormativity makes it difficult for lesbians to come out and be tolerated (see also Reddy 2001; Smuts 2011; Gunkel 2010). Alternative sexual desires that do not subscribe to the patriarchal and heterosexual norm, are daily confronted with rejection and discrimination. Same sex female relations are perceived as particularly threatening to the male dominated heterosexual gender order (Ratele 2009) which explains why lesbians are a particular target of stigmatisation, criminalisation, assaults, murder and ‘corrective rape’ (Connell 1995; Human Rights Watch 2009). Zanele Muholi’s (2009) work “Mapping Our Histories: A Visual History of Black Lesbians in Post-Apartheid South Africa” describes the complexities of coming out and proclaiming publicly one’s identity as a lesbian in present day South Africa. Muholi argues that being a lesbian and acknowledging one’s sexual orientation as a young black South African lesbian is difficult. She argues that young lesbians face the problem of having no role models (lesbians) to guide them through the process of acknowledging their sexual orientation.

Sex education in South Africa focuses on teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS without paying particular attention to sexual orientation rights which makes it harder for young lesbians to gain acknowledgement and acceptance (Posel 2004). Research indicates that the process of acknowledging and eventually coming out as a black lesbian is extremely difficult and dangerous in South Africa (see for example Kwesi & Webster 1997; Smuts 2011).

In a qualitative study of the experience of being a black lesbian in South Africa, Kwesi and Webster (1997) revealed that despite the law being there to protect their rights, lesbians continuously face the threat of discrimination even within the workplace. The Labour Relations Act (1995) explicitly states that employees may not be discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual orientation. However, participants in the study noted that it is risky to proclaim one’s sexual orientation as a lesbian because of the threat of violence, harassment and even dismissal. Furthermore, very little if any effort has been made by employers around the country to educate and raise awareness of the diversity of sexual orientation that exists

among employees of each company so as to create a conducive workplace that accommodates all workers equally without discrimination.

Nor are those social institutions charged with protecting and supporting citizens that are the victims of prejudice and discrimination themselves necessarily free of prejudice. Research shows that criminal justice officials (i.e. the police) and the healthcare sector play a significant role in facilitating secondary and further victimisation of lesbians that turn to them for support after falling victim to homophobia. Eliason (1996) notes that lesbians have been taunted and ridiculed by police officials when reporting incidences of “corrective rape” and assault thus showing that there is also a need to educate the police sector so as to change the manner in which they relate to the victims of homophobia that they should be protecting and supporting instead of exposing them to further prejudice.

There is thus a need for both the state and civic organisations to raise more public awareness of the equality clause in the constitution by paying particular attention to sexual orientation. This may be achieved by the use of the media to spread the message of equality and to adopt a critical stance towards dominant frames circulating in society that serve to justify homophobia. However, as the present study will show, rather than doing so, the mainstream media in South Africa has acted as a major vehicle for the voicing of these very frames and thus the perpetuation of a climate of justification for discrimination, prejudice and ultimately violence against black lesbian citizens in particular.

CHAPTER TWO: Research Methods and Techniques Employed in the Study

The study is situated within the broad field of critical discourse analysis influenced in particular by Teun Van Dijk's (1985; 1988; 1991) work on discourses of race in news reporting. To this end newspaper reports are treated as forms of discourse and not only as a means of conveying communication or a narration of current events.

Discourse analysis has grown out of an interest in language as a social tool, and in the role language plays in creating and negotiating meaning. From the 1950's onwards, scholars, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, historians and communication theorists began to realise the importance of language as productive implying that language was seen to give meaning to social reality and was seen to achieve social objectives (Willig 2008).

The study is influenced by several strands of thinking in discourse analysis. Discursive psychology (see for example Edwards 1992) is concerned with discourse practises: analysing how people make use of language in order to achieve interpersonal objectives and social interaction (for example justifying an action, disclaiming undesirable social identities). Foucauldian discourse analysis on the other hand is interested in the role language plays in the construction of social and psychological life by focusing on the discursive resources circulating in peoples lived worlds and the manner in which discourse influences power relations, subjectivity and selfhood (Willig 2008:95).

In discourse analysis the focus of investigation is on language itself and how objects and events are fashioned through language, as opposed to language being merely descriptive of objects and events (Willig 2008). As Willig further notes, discourse analysis can be referred to as a way of reading a text in order to understand the significance of the text i.e. (what the text is doing) rather than simply going through a text to get the meaning of it (i.e. what the text is saying).

Questions of power are of utmost importance in discourse analysis since power and ideologies may have an influence on each of the contextual levels of production, consumption

and understanding of discourse (Titscher et al 2000: 151, cited in Richardson 2007:29). Gramsci (1971) noted that power may be intricately linked to laws, norms, social practices and a general way of doing things in certain cultural contexts in what he refers to as hegemony. Examples of such hegemonic forms of power include racism, gender inequality and sexism. Critical discourse analysis aims at analysing and critiquing social power and dominance and how it is represented and reproduced in discourse: in the news and in everyday forms of text and talk that appear 'normal' and acceptable (see Richardson 2007; Van Dijk 1993). Critical discourse analysis is therefore concerned with power abuse and the perpetuation of social inequality and injustice.

Van Dijk (2008) defines social power as the control exercised by a group/institution over the actions/way of thinking of another group in such a manner that influences their way of thinking, attitudes and behaviour in the interests of the dominant group. This power may be supported by laws, rules, social norms and cultural activities that have become deeply entrenched such that these practices have become 'normalised' over a long period of time (see also Gramsci 1971). As such, access to, and influence over, public discourse is essential for knowledge dissemination and ideological control. This control is a way of (re)producing dominance and hegemony and can be achieved in a variety of ways as Van Dijk (1998) notes. For him, this entails factors such as personal and social knowledge, opinions, beliefs, norms, practices, attitudes and past experiences that play a significant role in shaping the manner that one thinks (Van Dijk 1998:11). In the same light Neslar et al (1993) note, people generally accept beliefs, ideas and knowledge through discourse from sources they regard as credible, reliable and trustworthy enough such as media, scholars, experts, professionals or from members who occupy hierarchical positions of power and influence within society.

This control and influence can be contrasted with the relative unavailability to the recipients of counter discourses, alternative sources of knowledge and beliefs to challenge the dominant discourses they have been regularly exposed to (Van Dijk 1988). It is its ability to reproduce and maintain social power and hegemony and its capability to produce social inequality that is a central reason for social researchers interested in the perpetuation of discrimination to focus on discourse.

Teun Van Dijk's work on racist discourse in the media is a prominent example. Norman Fairclough has employed discourse analysis to understand issues relating to global capitalism,

democracy and the spread of market practices (1995a; 1995b; 1998; 2000). A variety of studies have highlighted the role of discourse in perpetuating gender inequality (see for example Talbot, 1992; Clark and Zyngier, 1998; Thorborrow, 1998). Robert de Beaugrande's discourse work is concerned with ecological injustice.

There are many types of critical discourse analysis that emerge within different analytical and theoretical frameworks. Critical discourse analysis is a theory and method of analysing the ways in which individuals and institutions use language to convey meaning, messages and ideology (Richardson 2007:1). In particular, critical discourse analysis tends to focus on social problems (in this case homosexuality and homophobia), 'politics and the role that discourse plays in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination' (Van Dijk 2001:96). As a method critical discourse analysis involves 'identifying a problem affecting society, then choosing the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible and those who have the means and resources to solve such problems' (Van Dijk 1996 cited in Wodak 2001:1).

Richardson (2007) suggests that society and culture are related to discourse. Social practice in different cultures and ethnicities are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served. In turn society and culture are influenced by discourse through the manner in which language use reproduces and shapes the manner in which society and culture are formed.

The sourcing and construction of news material is usually linked to the actions and opinions of the powerful or dominant in society. Drawing from Gee (1999) who suggests that language is used to contribute to the (re)production of social life, the aim of critical discourse analysis is to then focus on these social practices and social relationships. By so doing, it focuses primarily on relationships of dominance, discrimination, prejudice and disempowerment with the aim of exposing, interrupting and changing the social practices it critically investigates (Titscher et al. 2000:147, Blommaert 2000). Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality (Van Dijk 1993). Critical discourse analysts focus on the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice (Van Dijk, 1993).

Employing chiefly a thematic discursive approach, the study presents the results of an investigation of mainstream English language South African newspaper portrayals of homosexuality in the democratic era. The study focused on the subjects, topics, overall news reports, meanings and ideologies, style and rhetoric of the news reports in the gathered corpus of material.

The *IOL* (Independent Online) is a South African online news brand incorporating 30 national and regional newspapers. The IOL stable is part of *Independent News & Media (INM)*, whose newspapers include most of South Africa's best-known titles including: *Business Report, Tonight, IOL Travel, IOL Technology, Personal Finance, Cape Times, Cape Argus, Daily Voice, Daily News, Isolezwe, Post, Pretoria News, The Independent on Saturday, The Mercury, The Star, The Sunday Independent, Sunday Tribune, GQ Magazine, Classifieds, IOL Property.*

An April 2012 *IOL* search for the phrase 'same sex marriage' between 1997 (when the site began) and the present produced 945 results. The term 'lesbian' produced 1990 results. Employing discourse analytic tools from James Paul Gee (2011), Meyers (1994) and Van Dijk (1991) this corpus of articles was analysed to examine the discursive structures and rhetorical strategies employed in the representation of lesbians and gay people in these articles.

The approach in the study is to analyse how language is not only a tool of communication, but a social practice that is related to other social dynamics of discrimination and intolerance. The method employed is one of micro-level analysis of news discourse, focusing on newspaper structures such as headlines; news actors; sources and quotations; style and rhetoric. As Janks (1997) notes, all social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests served. The study treats newspaper reporting as one of the social institutions in which discourses of sexuality, and the subjectivities constituted within them, are re/produced. Thus, the discourses and subjectivities media make available are seen to provide a resource that South Africans may draw on in their understandings of marginalized sexualities as well as in the negotiation of their own sexual identities.

Analysis of occasions on which key South African newspapers mentioned the terms 'lesbian' and 'homosexuality' was conducted to identify what the hegemonic constructions of homosexuality are in South African public media discourses, how the idea of homosexuality is predominantly represented, whether there have been shifts in these portrayals over time in the democratic era and what can be learnt about prevailing social views and constructions of the idea of lesbianism and homosexuality in South Africa.

In a study of news reporting, as Van Dijk's work shows, it is important for the analysis to take into account characteristic features of the genre as well as more general categories of analysis that are common across a variety of texts. In news reports of particular significance are headlines which frame the meaning of a story and the actors who are prominently quoted in stories – as well as those who are absent. These are genre specific features such as headlines, to which the present analysis was particularly attentive.

Newspaper headlines have many important textual and cognitive functions (Van Dijk 1991). Headlines are usually a brief sentence printed on the top of an article and their main function is to summarise what is regarded as the most important information of the news report. The information they provide assists the reader in interpreting the overall meaning of the news event or the main topic before the whole text is read.

More often than not, headlines are incomplete sentences which provide a brief insight into what the news report is about – or at least what the sub editor believes it to be about. It is this brief piece of information that appeals to the mental models human beings have about a certain event that helps them in recollecting what they already know about the topic and thus at the same time this helps them in understanding and relating to what the newspaper event is about. As Van Dijk (1991) notes, the incompleteness of newspaper headlines may serve an important ideological function in situations where for example responsibility for an action has to be obscured. Since headlines are a subjective expression of what the newspaper house views as the most important information about a news event, and this may influence the understanding of an event by the readers. As such, the choice of words to be used in the headline may serve that function of concealing/presenting an ideological position. Headlines therefore are an important component of a discourse analysis of any corpus of print news media texts.

Given the economy of expression demanded of headlines by the news media form it is particularly important to pay close attention to the choice of individual words in every headline in the corpus. Words define an event within a certain perspective. The choice of one word over another may influence how a news event is interpreted. The selection of words may vary as a result of the opinions, the social situation, group membership, or culture of the writer. For example, the use of the more derogatory word “moffie” instead of “homosexual” signals the different underlying opinions about the people being referred to. Hence a newspaper may make a choice between these two variants (and many others) to refer to the same person or group member, and this choice is to a larger extent influenced by socially shared opinions, attitudes, and ideologies (Chilton 1988; Geis 1987; Kress 1985).

In print media analysis along with headlines, the actors in news stories are also significant. Possible biases in the coverage of same sex relationships may not only reside in the selection and prominence of news actors, but also in the ways they are presented as speakers who give their interpretation of, and opinions about news events. Quotations serve many functions in news reporting, among these – they add credibility to a news event; they express the opinions of important news actors and make a story more newsworthy. Van Dijk (1991:152) notes that quotations allow for the insertion of subjective interpretations, or opinions about current news events, without breaking the rule that requires the separation of facts from opinions. This implies that opinion statements and quotations from news actors become facts in their own right and this on the other hand may allow journalists and media houses to insert their own subjective opinions and ideologies under the guise of this communicative strategy.

In the present study quotation patterns in the corpus under investigation are highlighted. The analysis pays close attention to who is speaking, how often and how prominently, and about what. This is important because subjects and topics in the media are closely related to the news actors selected for citation. Also important is whether these actors appear as individuals, or groups. Particular attention will be placed to what the actors talk about (i.e. subjects and topics) and in what frequency they talk or are quoted on these subjects and topics.

Meanings and Ideologies

The objective of critical discourse analysis paying close attention to such features of a text as words, actors, headlines and so on is to surface the implied ideological positioning of these choices which may appear to the consumer of media as natural or inevitable. Van Dijk (1998) defines ideology as forms of social cognition shared by social groups. He argues that the social representations and practices of group members including their discourse serve as the means of ideological production, reproduction and challenge (Van Dijk 1998). Ideologies are formed, changed and reproduced largely through socially situated discourse and communication (Van Dijk 1998). Ideologies may serve the function of maintaining or re/producing domination as well as to discipline any form of deviance from accepted social norms (Van Dijk 1998). For example a common feature of ways of talking about homosexuality in public discourse is a distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ which serves as the basis for discrimination because it relates to unspoken assumptions about what ‘we’ are like and who ‘they’ are.

Ideologies are understood not so much as personal beliefs but as norms or ideas that are shared by the whole social group. They play an important role in creating a distinction between “them” and “us” (see for example Van Dijk 1991). Discourse analysts are therefore particularly interested in the function that a text plays in suggesting where the boundary between the insider and outsider group lies. In the way in which a text is framed, without explicitly saying so, the reader is frequently invited to be included in the warm circle of ‘us’ who are not like ‘them’. Closely related to this demarcation is the slippage from ‘us’/ ‘them’ constructions into ‘normal’ / ‘abnormal’ suppositions. Membership in the ‘in’ group involves not only such membership markers as ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, race, appearance, and so on but also actions – what do ‘we’ do?; social status - what position we have in society; norms and values – what ‘we’ consider good/bad; resources – what is it that we possess and what are we willing to protect?

Denial of prejudice

Discourse analysts are interested in semantic tools such as presuppositions, disclaimers and euphemisms which are used to conceal controversial claims or opinions which are an expression of an underlying ideology of prejudice (Van Dijk, 1991). In mainstream newspapers these devices serve the function of assisting the newspaper to imply controversial or debatable claims without having to state them overtly. In a country where homophobia, prejudice, discrimination and hate speech against lesbians is illegal under the new constitution, such a strategy of positive self-presentation is essential in order not to appear to be overtly homophobic. As will be illustrated later in the study, denial of homophobia while expressing homophobic views is used as a strategy of positive self-presentation. This may be seen for instance in the use of the word ‘but’ after the denial of being homophobic which is then followed by a negative statement about the subjects - homosexuals. Van Dijk (1991) refers to such denials as ‘disclaimers’ which have the strategic function of being able to say something negative about a particular group without running the risk of being publically regarded as prejudiced. As such quite biased and intolerant articles may therefore strategically avoid the impression that they are homophobic. Denials of being homophobic, therefore, are a common strategy that can be identified in the corpus of material that forms the basis of the present study.

The strategy of disclaiming often goes hand-in-hand with positive self-presentation. In this strategy, homophobic denial goes along with a proclaimed positive self-identity in statements like ‘We respect gay rights, but...’; ‘Everybody is welcome at the church irrespective of their background or creed, however ...’; ‘Although we support the right of every citizen to freely exist in the city without fear of discrimination, we however..’ This has the effect of claiming a positive identity of being tolerant, welcoming, and respectful while at the same perpetuating a negative impression of the subjects they speak or write about and expressing views that are in reality intolerant, disrespectful and unwelcoming.

Presuppositions

Presuppositions mark linguistically statements that are meant to be taken for granted, reflecting implicit assumptions about the world that the reader or listener is expected to share (see Seuren 1985; Van Dijk 1991). Presuppositions are an often used strategic means to

conceal controversial claims and are less easy to challenge by a reader who is not critical. They are also an expression of an underlying ideology, in this case of intolerance and prejudice. Seuren (1985) argues that presuppositions convey information that is supposed to be known and shared by the writer and reader and which therefore does not necessarily have to be explicitly stated. To write something as if it is general knowledge is a powerful persuasive device. In reporting about homophobic utterances, it was noted that presuppositions generally focused on negative properties of ‘them’ (lesbians/gay men/same sex couples) and positive properties of ‘us’ – heterosexuals. Presuppositions are a powerful tool in the implicit assertion of debatable propositions. Their analysis gives us the platform to examine the tacit assumptions of journalists and media bodies as well as the underlying ideological framework that influences their reporting on gay and lesbian affairs.

Perspective

Perspective pays attention to the point of view from which the news events and actions in the article are being described. Questions are asked such as does the speaker/writer sympathise with, support or vilify the actors/events that are being reported on. Are the actors themselves allowed to speak or give their perspective or is the report written exclusively ‘about’ these actors?

‘Figured Worlds’

James Paul Gee (2011:168) suggests that when we communicate, we do not use words just based on their definitions or their ‘general’ meanings but rather based, as well, on stories, theories, or models in our minds about what is ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ – what he calls ‘figured worlds’ -- and this varies by their context, social and cultural groups. Hence in homophobic discourse, it is typical for the proponent of prejudice to assume that heterosexuality is ‘normal’ and therefore homosexuality is abnormal. Therefore Gee (2011:171) advises us that for any communication, it is important to ask what typical stories or figured worlds the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting listeners to assume. What

participants, activities, ways of interacting, forms of language, people, objects, environments, and institutions, as well as values, are in these figured worlds?

Using these key devices of discourse analysis I go on, in what follows, to examine exemplar texts in the corpus grouped into the three main themes justifying homophobia: the construction of homosexuality as ‘unAfrican’, ‘ungodly’ and ‘unnatural’.

CHAPTER 3: 'UnAfrican'

The claim that homosexuality is un-African is a claim that homosexual practices conflict with African values, and that such practices are not characteristic of African culture. Underlying the assertion of 'un-Africanness' is a moral and political view that African societies need to immunise themselves against Western ideas and influences – and homosexuality is constructed as being among these. Scholars like Mokhobo (1989) have held the belief that homosexuality is non-existent in Africa prior to the advent of colonialism. Well documented cases of homosexuality for instance in single sex mine hostels in South Africa, and mummy-baby relations in townships and township schools (see for example Epprecht 1998; Moodie 1998; Gevisser 1994; Spurlin 2006) are seen by these scholars as perverted effects of colonisation. In contrast, historians of Africa have argued that homosexuality on the continent long predated the colonial era but that it was in fact the advent of Christianity in Africa that declared already existent same-sex relations unnatural, illegal and forbidden (Hoad 2004; Phillips 2004; Tamale 2011; Swidler 1993). In this argument therefore it is not homosexuality but homophobia and the suppression of homosexuality that is an effect of colonialism. Scholars like De Vos (1996), Parrinder (1980), Riddinger (1995) and Swidler (1993) argue that Christian norms inculcated as a result of colonisation played a crucial role in influencing social constructions of African sexualities. They therefore argue that the enforcement of heterosexuality as the only legal and 'normal' form of sexuality and the associated construction of homophobia as deviance should be regarded as a Western or foreign imposition of a conception of sexuality on Africa that is derived from Christian mores.

Kendall (1996); Murray and Roscoe (1998) and Epprecht (2004) have discussed extensively the common myths about the absence of homosexuality on the African continent by providing evidence of same sex relations in close to fifty African societies. Phillips (2004) concurs that same sex relations were present long before settler rule and that it was imperialism and Christianity that resulted in same sex relations coming to be regarded as 'unnatural' by introducing new values, Western constructs of sexuality and laws based on Christian morality, which resulted in criminalising homosexuality (Phillips 2004:162).

Kendall (1996) further argues that while same sex relations have always been present in Africa as is the case anywhere else in the world, it is the identity of "gay" or "lesbian" that

was not present. Homophobia was introduced by colonial rule together with draconian laws prohibiting same sex relationships in many colonised states (Kendall 1996). As Walker (1990) notes, British imperialism disrupted pre-existing social relations and perceptions of gender roles in indigenous South African cultural communities. A new system of cultural law was introduced which further reinforced the position of male authority over women (Robinson, 1996, Ratele 2001).

In contrast to the post-apartheid South African constitution which includes the right to sexual orientation, some of South Africa's neighbouring countries have chosen to openly deny homosexual rights to their citizens. In many instances these states publicly justify their intolerance for same sex relationships on cultural grounds (see for example Gunkel 2010; Tamale 2011). But Gunkel (2010) notes that the idea that homosexuality is unAfrican has also permeated into South Africa and it is an opinion shared by a significant portion of the population. The systematic accusations by several African leaders over the years have fuelled these perceptions and South Africans are likewise divided in their tolerance of same sex relations. Gunkel (2010:25) notes that despite constitutional guarantees for gay and lesbian rights in South Africa, organised religious leaders, politicians and nationalist leaders continually feed homophobic discourse in the name of tradition and culture (see also Gevisser 1994).

In 2006 for instance, South Africa's then Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, told a gathering attending Heritage Day celebrations in KwaZulu-Natal that: 'When I was growing up, *ungqingli* (a gay man) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out' only to conclude by saying 'Same-sex marriage is a disgrace to the nation and to God' (Sokupa *et al.*, 2006: 4). More recently the National House of Traditional Leaders in conjunction with The Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa, submitted a proposal to the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) of the National Assembly to amend section 9 of the Constitution and the removal of a clause from the Constitution which protects people on the grounds of sexual orientation (Mambaonline 2012). The Congress's argument once again went to issues of morality and culture.

Many South Africans share these sentiments. In a letter that appeared in a Johannesburg newspaper, the writer commended President Mugabe of Zimbabwe for his homophobic attitude as

... he espouses and cherishes our traditions and customs. Homosexuality is an aberration to all thinking Africans and indeed to most of civilized mankind. Homosexuals are regarded as an abominable species, which must be punished and locked up, even in the United Kingdom' (*The Star*, 21 August 1995).

In the above quotation, Mugabe is framed as a champion of African norms. The speaker goes on to make a distinction of 'them' and 'us' which Van Dijk (1991) reminds us of as a typical feature of homophobic discourse by framing those that support homosexuality as mentally unstable. In the same sentence again, the use of the word 'aberration' further provides this homophobic distinction as in the speaker's lived world – all 'thinking Africans' are supposed to follow a certain course to which he appraises Mugabe for upholding. It can also be noted again that his stance is not only confined to Africans only but to all mankind evidenced by his suggestion to arrest those that are in the United Kingdom as well (an area considered the source of homosexual behaviour). By making use of Gee's (2011) figured world tool it is noted that for the speaker, homosexuality is framed as going not only against his indigenous African norms but against every civilisation and what in his figured world is regarded as appropriate by all human kind.

The author of the letter ended by saying, 'Viva Robert Mugabe . . . who defends our continent from satanists, sodomists, and faggots'. By praising Mugabe for defending the continent, the author's comments can be linked to the decolonisation project that aims to signify independence from norms associated with Western influences and a purported return to the values of indigenous cultural African societies. It can also be noted in the author's final remarks that he supposedly frames those that engage in homosexual acts as enemies not just of humans but of God through the use of the word 'satanists' which invites the reader to assume that Africa's stance towards homosexuality is not a prejudice but rather is related to religious mores which justify intolerance for homosexual activities.

Unlike other African states where homophobia has been overtly supported by politicians and self-styled traditionalists, the situation is different in South Africa as homophobia is practiced in contradiction of the law. It is worth noting however that similar arguments to other African countries denouncing homosexuality have also been used in South Africa and have played a significant role in influencing public opinion particularly towards lesbianism (see for example Gunkel 2010). A study by Roberts and Reddy (2008) revealed that approximately eighty percent of the participants interviewed between the years 2003-2007 (a time when the proposed Civil Union Bill was also under public scrutiny) expressed their discontent with constitutional protections for homosexuals, arguing that sex between two women was “always wrong” based on morality, culture and religion.

Harper (2002) argues that during colonial rule and eventually through apartheid, hegemonic male identities had an influence in almost all spheres of life be it social, political, cultural and even in personal matters such as intimacy and sexuality and this to a greater extent led to a situation that left females across all races in a position of inferiority in South Africa. Apartheid ushered in segregation and therefore defined new systems of race and gender inequalities. The introduction of legislation such as the Immorality Act of 1927 that barred inter-racial sex, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 that made it illegal for inter race marriages and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 further policed sexuality on racial lines. Thorenson (2008:680) argues that the purpose of banning sexual relationships between blacks and whites during apartheid was to protect the heterosexual reproductive white family from the perceived threat of racial ‘impurity’.

It is, as we have seen, a common claim in South Africa, and indeed elsewhere in Africa, to argue that same-sex sexual relations are taboo in Africa, un-African and hence a Western import. However, paradoxically legislation that regulated sexuality during apartheid and before this, colonial administration policies and missionary education in particular were hardly prone to adopting a liberal approach to same-sex sexuality (Dunton & Palmberg 1996; Amory 1997; Epprecht 2004; Gunkel 2010). Patriarchal dominance, puritanical approaches to the repression of desire and the racial policing of sex were reinforced by colonialism and then apartheid (see for example Horn 2006; Brown 2012).

After years of apartheid rule the assertion on the part of black South Africans of a need to restore values, customs and mores eroded by apartheid and colonialism in order to reassert an indigenous cultural identity has occasioned a harkening back to an imagined pre-colonial way of life. Because such a harkening back has a certain legitimacy it is used to discredit a range of contemporary practices including the greater empowerment of women, gay rights, and abortion which are seen as threatening to the prevailing patriarchal gender order. As Morgan & Wierenga (2005) note heterosexuality has been “identified as a natural South African characteristic” and hence the only way to reclaim this form of identity is through punishing those that deviate from this norm. As I discuss in a later chapter, one of the mechanisms for doing so has been ‘corrective’ rape. Hence lesbians who portray attributes of masculinity and ‘butchness’ through the manner in which they dress and their appearance are often punished for this deviance with corrective rape as a means of drawing them back to the traditionally accepted heterosexual gender roles of being a woman i.e. of motherhood and submissive femininity. In this way the reassertion of patriarchal relations of dominance can be cast as merely the reassertion of ‘normality’.

For this reason the imperative of a restoration of a new identity that is free from former colonial legislation that regulated sexuality and governed the manner in which black South Africans should decide how to control their behaviour has therefore to a certain extent contributed to why such a phenomenon of intolerance towards homosexuality continues to exist and has been reasserted in the contemporary period.

Actor Frequencies

A total of 65 articles were identified that reported on statements/utterances that mention the claim that homosexuality is unAfrican or is contrary to African traditional norms.

Individual Actors

The most prominent individual actor in the body of material collected on the theme of the unAfricanness of homosexuality is a self-confessed relentless homophobe and Ambassador to Uganda, Jon Qwelane. Other individuals that appear prominently as actors in the corpus include King Goodwill Zwelithini, President Jacob Zuma and members of various political and traditional groups and these will be analysed and discussed in greater detail as the chapter

proceeds. As a prominent speaker Jon Qwelane appears in 19 articles particularly because of his controversial article titled “CALL ME NAMES BUT GAY IS NOT OKAY” that appeared in the *Sunday Sun* of July 20 2008. The newspaper articles on or about Qwelane also report on the public’s reaction to and retaliation by human rights activists and members



Call me names, but gay is NOT okay...



of the homosexual community that considered his article as hate speech.

The article and its accompanying cartoon were found by the courts to “propagate hatred and harm”. The cartoon depicts a man and a goat kneeling down before a priest and being pronounced ‘man and goat’. Juxtaposed with the prominent reference to ‘gay’ in the headline, the inference is obvious: gay sex is tantamount to bestiality and by implication; gay rights are ‘animal rights’.

In the article Qwelane speaks about the on-going Anglican Church’s division over the ordination of homosexual priests. But for Qwelane, ‘The real problem, as I see it, is the rapid degradation of values and traditions by the so-called liberal influences of nowadays’ (cited in *Sunday Sun* July 2008). For Qwelane then, liberalism is not just liberalism but ‘so-called’ and ‘liberal influences’ are not about rights or tolerance but about the degradation of values and traditions. Qwelane therefore argues from two standpoints. The first justification relies on a construction of [our] culture. This assertion rests on a set of unstated assumptions which Qwelane assumes will be shared by the reader about firstly what indigenous African values are, and secondly about these purported values having been eroded. Qwelane therefore joins together the undermining of African values with the values of human rights and liberal tolerance that the post-apartheid Constitution rests on. When human rights incorporate gay rights this is tantamount to the elevation of animals and animalistic practices to the realm of constitutional protection. In this way what are presented

as ‘African values’ are elevated to what ‘everyone’ would agree with and the alternative, gay rights, is made to seem ridiculous. The liberal values of the constitution are a western import and they have no place in African life.

Secondly, Qwelane blames ‘the so-called liberal influences of nowadays’ that have resulted in the rise of same sex relationships. This construction rests on the assumption that the post-apartheid order of constitutional rights and liberal tolerance represent a breach not merely with apartheid itself but with indigenous African traditional norms that western influences have disrupted. He goes on to say that ‘There could be a few things I could take issue with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, but his unflinching and unapologetic stance over homosexuals is definitely not among those.’ Paul Gee (2011) notes that when we speak, we often quote pieces of text or allude to what others have said. For the purpose of discourse analysis this implied allusion to other texts is an important analytic tool – what Gee refers to as the ‘intertextuality tool’ (Gee 2011:165). Gee advises that the discourse analyst should ask what the writer or speaker wants to achieve when alluding to other texts in this way. In this case Mugabe’s pronouncements on British imperialism in particular and his anti-Western liberal proclamations in general are invoked implicitly by referring to him in this way. Mugabe’s many vitriolic anti-gay statements are recalled for the reader without Qwelane having to explicitly repeat those utterances himself. In particular, Mugabe’s well-known allegations that same sex relationships are a result of western influences that have infiltrated into traditional African heterosexual cultures (Murray and Roscoe 1998) is implicitly invoked.

Group actors

Since homophobic utterances are regarded as an infringement of homosexual rights and a blatant disrespect for the constitution by human rights organisations and activists, it follows that such organisations follow closely in terms of prominence as news actors in the corpus because of their involvement in advocating for action not only against Jon Qwelane but others as well that have done the same for example President Jacob Zuma, King Goodwill Zwelithini and former Arts Minister Lulu Xingwana. Included in the list of prominent group actors in the corpus are the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) which appears 24 times; Human Rights Watch (17); Durban Lesbian and Gay community and Durban Gay and Lesbian Alliance (14), Lesbian and Gay Equality Project (6); Johannesburg

Gay and Lesbian Alliance (3); Lawyers for Human Rights (2); 17 human rights organisations; National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (5) which was instrumental in the Parliamentary debate that eventually led to the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000. In total, human rights organisations and gay and lesbian activists appear 74 times giving them the position of the most prominent actors in the corpus in terms of frequency.

Human rights groups in the newspaper articles collected appear as positive actors that are sympathetic to the plight of lesbians and other members of the homosexual community in South Africa. They advocate against discrimination, prejudice and homophobia and also seek recourse on matters that they deem to be of a homophobic nature. They also advocate for tolerance and understanding and are occasionally vocal in support of same sex rights. For example, it was reported that acting in terms of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, the SAHRC initiated court proceedings against Qwelane's homophobic article in which he refused to withdraw his remarks and apologise to anyone including the South African Human Rights Commission explaining why he had decided to write the article. While those who are cited in the corpus advocating anti-gay sentiments are often individuals like Zuma, Zwelethini or Qwelane and while these individuals speak on behalf of others, frequently invoking a 'we' that suggests wide support for their views whether rooted in their representation of a particular ethnic group, 'culture', religion or political constituency, the representation of pro-gay views is often associated with a particular organisation or group. In this way gay rights are represented as something supported by small interest groups in contrast to the legitimising effect of invocations of 'us', 'we', 'our culture', 'Africa', 'our tradition', and so on.

Headlines

Very few headlines in the corpus explicitly make mention of the claim that ‘Homosexuality is unAfrican’. As such, this claim is evident in quotations and opinions provided by speakers in the newspaper articles themselves rather than in the headlines. However several headlines do frame opposition to gay rights as ‘cultural’. For example: GAY MARRIAGE RIGHTS HITS TRADITIONAL SNAG (*IOL*, 21 February 2005); ZULU KING SLAMS GAYS (*IOL*, 12 September 2005); SAME-SEX MARRIAGES ‘WILL DESTROY ZULUS’ (*IOL*, 27 February 2007). In this way gay rights are framed not just as something that particular people may or may not agree with, but as a threat to a whole way of life and the worldview of an entire group of people – in this instance, ‘Zulus’. The implication is that same sex marriage is alien to the Zulu way of life and the headlines make the assumption that it is possible to generalise about what Zulus are like and that one of these taken-for-granted generalities is that Zulus are heterosexual. Moreover, the decision to marry a partner of the same sex is constructed here as having public ramifications rather than being a private matter between two individuals. The private decision to marry someone of the same sex threatens to destroy an entire ethnic group and its way of life. Interestingly, the Zulu king is presented not as slamming gay marriage but as slamming ‘gays’. Here the slippage between being opposed to a particular law – in this case the law legalising gay marriage – and being opposed to particular people is well illustrated. To be anti-gay marriage is to be anti-gay and is to want, not just to disagree with gay people or their way of life, but to ‘slam’ them.

In a small number of cases the dominant framing of homosexuality as unAfrican is contested. For example: ‘AFRICANS CHEER, CONDEMN SA GAY MARRIAGE BILL’ (*IOL*, 15 November 2006); ‘HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITIES ARE AFRICAN’ (*IOL*, 27 October 2006) and ‘SANGOMA STANDS UP FOR GAY RIGHTS’ (*IOL*, 30 April 2009). However, this choice of headline suggests that these stances are controversial. Headlines are meant to draw the reader into reading the story and they either do so by inviting the reader to share the view that is being expressed or by expressing a view that is regarded as so controversial that readers will be motivated to want to learn who could have adopted such a strange position on a matter that is widely seen quite differently. The intertextual reference of ‘Homosexual activities are African’ is clearly all those prevalent reports, letters and articles that present the dominant view that homosexuality is unAfrican. If it were not assumed that the reader was

aware of these other texts then the headline would make no sense. This can be illustrated through the use of the discourse analytical tool that Gee (2011:11) refers to as the ‘making strange’ tool. To make this headline ‘strange’ and therefore to identify how it is working, we could imagine substituting ‘Heterosexual activities are African’. This headline would make no sense since there are no texts suggesting otherwise. It is taken for granted as obvious that heterosexuality is African and therefore there would be no way of understanding what this was referring to. It is only because of the prior existence of texts suggesting that homosexuality is unAfrican that the headline saying it *is* African can be understood by the reader. Therefore by framing the headline in this way a whole world of understanding and prior (shared) knowledge is being invoked.

Quotations and Sources

A body of work has shown that South African society has been described as predominantly heterosexist with patriarchy occupying a hegemonic position (Epprecht 2004; Reid & Dirsuweit 2002; Thorenson 2008). Lesbianism in black communities is still taboo and to the extent that it does become more visible than it was in the past, it is associated with the Constitutional rights and (imported) liberal values of a new South African identity (Morgan & Wieringa 2005) that is for many just as alienating as colonial rule. Black lesbians thus fall foul of being black subjects in a context in which there is an attempt to reclaim an essentialised black cultural identity from the perceived incursions of white colonial rule. This identity is deployed as a justification for the repudiation of unpopular or unwanted forms of identity. The latter are easily dismissed if they can be cast as being ‘white’, ‘colonial’ or ‘unAfrican’ – and these three constructions are deployed as if interchangeable.

The National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) was very influential in attempting to make sure the Civil Union Bill would not come to pass. After the Constitutional Court had passed judgement in favour of allowing same sex unions to take place in 2005, the NHTL made a vow to make sure that in following five years it would ‘campaign against this wicked, decadent and immoral Western practice’ of same sex marriage. In support of the NHTL’s stance against allowing same sex marriages its spokesperson further said that ‘this kind of marriage does not fulfil the notion of marriage in African culture, as only a man can

pay lobola for a woman' (Quintal 2006). In the news reporting on the subject, credence to the NHTL's view was given by 'rural villagers' and 'elders' whose understanding of what marriage must necessarily be, was cited as the reason for their opposition to gay marriage.

Msawenkosi Mnguni, a participant in one of the hearings was cited as saying that:

Traditional customs regarding *ilobolo* are that a man pays *ilobolo* to a woman's family, it was never from a man to another man or from a woman for another woman. (Mhlongo 2005).

According to the elders from the rural villages who were part of the public consultations, the purpose of a man paying *ilobolo* to the woman's family is a way of strengthening relations between the two families. Therefore a deviation from the prescribed set of norms society is supposed to follow, in this case *ilobolo* – serves as the justification of denying same-sex unions as it also threatens the survival or continuity of social norms (see for example Plummer 2005). Mnguni's point of view is cited as representative of 'rural villagers' who are portrayed in this context as authoritative custodians of culture. It is filled with assumptions about what the past was like, the unbreakable connection of *lobolo* to marriage and the necessity of keeping things the way they have always been. No attempt is made to cite alternative views on the relevance of practices such as *lobolo* to contemporary life or their legitimacy in the context of gender equality, or the constantly changing nature of cultural practices. To cite someone as a 'rural villager' is to invoke the idea of a view that is 'authentically African', rooted in a rural cultural idyll and invoking assumptions about a past way of life calcified rather than subject to constant shifts.

After a two day annual conference in Mpumalanga, the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) issued a statement regarding the Constitutional Court's judgement saying that

... the practice of same sex marriages is against most of African beliefs, cultures, customs and traditions and this in turn goes against the mandate of traditional leaders which is to promote and protect the customs of communities observing a system of customary law... it does not fulfil the notion of marriage in African culture as only a man can pay *ilobolo* for a woman (cited in Daniels 2005).

Paul Gee (2011) reminds us that when we communicate, we often draw from assumptions and generally accepted knowledge to make statements that will make sense to others and by so doing; we further reinforce those statements or challenge them. In the above statement, the NHTL's stance is influenced by a cultural context that informs its argument evidenced by words such as "most of African beliefs, cultures, customs and traditions" – further reinforcing the assumption that heterosexuality defines the institution of marriage. The definition of gender roles suggested by "only a man can pay *ilobolo*" further present African norms as static and therefore not susceptible to change and thus same-sex marriage falls short of the generally held beliefs and assumptions of what constitutes a marriage in the African context and therefore should not be allowed. What James Paul Gee (2011:153) refers to as the 'situated meaning' tool is used in discourse analysis to pay attention to the use of specific words and the context in which recipients of discourse have to attribute meaning to these words and phrases given the context and how the context is construed. So for example in this context had the author not made use of the cultural practice of paying *lobolo* and rather just mentioned the word marriage over *lobolo* – this would not have invited the reader to make assumptions of what this means and its significance in the African cultural context as this choice of wording is quite specific to the speaker's worldview or values or to the special qualities of the context the speaker is assuming and helping to construe or create. Therefore it can be noted here that the choice of wording over other words serves a function of giving justification to intolerance based on the imputation of a contradiction with indigenous cultural norms that serve to demarcate the boundary between the insider 'African' group and intruding 'outsider' ideas.

The NHTL further stated that

We are of the belief that based on viewpoints of rural communities, this will cause same sex married couples to be ostracised which is something that is not promoted by the institution and might lead to victimisation and violence (cited in Daniels 2005).

In the above quote, the NHTL makes a causal connection between same-sex marriages and violence and victimisation. The suggestion is that it is the legality of gay rights rather than criminal perpetrators of violence that is to be blamed when violence occurs. Hence violence is legitimised as the expected outcome of tolerance towards homosexuality.

The invocation of the authority of rurality echoes through the claims that are made about homosexuality being ‘unAfrican’ as in for example:

I was born and brought up in the rural areas. I don’t want rural women to be bound with homosexuality. Homosexuality doesn’t exist in rural areas. – IFP MP Jeanette Vilakazi (*IOL*, November 1999)

To mean anything to someone else a speaker has to communicate from what socially situated identity he or she is taking. Hence this can be noted in the above excerpt by making reference to ‘rural areas’ not only as a member of parliament but also as a person brought up in that area who because of her insider status can claim to have a clearer and objective understanding of the subject at hand. Here ‘rural women’ are presented as a particularly pure incarnation of African womanhood that is threatened with contamination. Similarly, CONTRALESA’s President simply declares that ‘rural people’ are against homosexuality.

I think homosexuality should be ignored. Rural people would be against it. People are concerned about what result such relationships have on children – CONTRALESA president and ANC member, (*IOL*, November 1999)

A major feature of the excerpts above is that there is a presupposition that ‘rural people’ are against homosexuality. Because the assertion is made in the form of a quote from a source styled as an authoritative interpreter of ‘culture’ there is no need for evidence for the claim. It can merely be asserted as fact. Moreover the weight of the claim is never questioned – ‘rural people’ might be against all sorts of things including women’s equality. Merely stating this does not mean that their view is to be accepted. A second presupposition in the excerpt is that homosexual relations have a certain effect on children. Unnamed ‘people’ are said to be worried about this. Again, the device of the quotation is used to portray a view that has wide social currency but for which there is no actual evidence --- namely that same sex relationships have a supposedly negative effect on children (see for example Herek 1991). Standards of news reporting require that the newspaper itself cannot venture an opinion (except in those pages specially designated for this purpose such as the editorial) but that opinions of others can be cited. Here though, opinions which are clearly not based in evidence of any kind are allowed to stand and are not juxtaposed with alternatives. This has the effect of creating a sense of a shared social reality. The idea that homosexuality is

unAfrican and bad for children is thereby constructed as obviously true, such a common sense taken-for-granted truth that the idea of offering an alternative never even arises.

As Van Dijk points out, the device of quotation is important in the newspaper genre. By quoting an authoritative source such as the leader of CONTRALESA or a member of parliament, controversial views that would require argumentation and evidence if they were merely stated, can be presented through the use of the legitimising device of quotation marks. Because someone authoritative has said it, there is no further need to provide evidence for the claim. This is one of the most important devices used to legitimise claims that same sex relationships and homosexuals were once unheard of in Africa. For example:

‘Traditionally, there were no people who engaged in same sex-relationships. There was nothing like that and if you do it, you must know that you are rotten’ – King Goodwill Zwelithini (*IOL*, January 2012)

The device of citing an authoritative source is used here to insert a view into a news report which has been widely discredited in the academic research literature. That literature is never cited although it could easily be. What Gee (2011:106) calls the ‘identities building’ discourse analysis tool requires us to ask what socially recognisable identity the speaker is trying to enact in any given text or speech act and how the speaker’s language treats other people’s identities. Here the authority of Zwelithini is invoked -- not only is he the king but he is also put forward as an authority on custom which places him in a powerful position to pronounce homosexuals as ‘rotten’ not only on his own behalf but on behalf of an entire ethnic group.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) stands out as one of the only exceptions amongst political associations that overtly decries homophobia. The DA has called for the resignation of Jon Qwelane (*IOL*, July 2008); on Western Cape Premier Marais to apologise to the homosexual community (*IOL*, May 2002); and on Durban Mayor Obed Mlaba to apologise and resign (*IOL*, April 2001) – in each case as a result of their publically expressed homophobic views. But since the party is already branded a ‘white’ party this has little impact on the idea that homosexuality is ‘unAfrican’, serving instead to reinforce the notion that it is a Western import.

One major strategy in homosexual discourse is positive self-presentation. The major aim of this strategy is the management of the possible impressions readers or listeners may have about the speaker or newspaper: if a positive impression of the speaker is created while at the same time prejudiced views are expressed then the latter are more likely to find acceptance on the part of the reader. Devices for positive self-presentation have the effect of giving an impression of tolerance and acceptance of gay rights yet at the same time portraying homophobic views. For example, during a parliamentary debate about the contentious Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Bill in November 1999, the ANC MP and President of CONTRALESA, Patekile Holomisa in support of IFP MP (Jeanette Vilakazi) argued that:

As an ANC member I would advise people about what the constitution says – that people should not be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. They are human beings but homosexuality is not something that should be encouraged. As a traditional leader, homosexuality is not part of my culture. (*IOL*, November 1999)

Holomisa' portrays himself as a faithful servant of the ANC and someone who upholds the constitution, on the one hand. However he then goes on to portray his anti-gay rights stance. The justification for the latter is that he is not only an ANC member but also a 'traditional leader' who knows that homosexuality is alien to his culture. The typical 'us'/ 'them' device is yet again deployed here to create the impression that he speaks on behalf of like-minded people. Gay citizens on the other hand are constructed as 'they' while he speaks from the standpoint of 'my' culture. Since it is clearly obvious that gay people are human to state this obvious fact does the opposite of what it purports to do: it calls into question 'their' humanity.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the various discursive devices that are employed to perpetuate negative views, assumptions and stereotypes about homosexuals in the news media even when the overt impression is one of balanced news reporting. Same-sex relationships are portrayed as alien to indigenous African norms. Closely tied to the presentation of homosexuality as 'unAfrican' is the idea that same sex relations are in contravention of

religious mores which is also a claim that has been used to justify intolerance for homosexuality as I now go on to discuss in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: Ungodly

The results of a 2012 poll by the Win-Gallup International Religiosity and Atheism Index, which measures global self-perceptions on belief, revealed that 64% of South Africans consider themselves religious (News 24 2012). The figures show that over half the population subscribes to some form of religious belief. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that for almost two thirds of South Africans religion is part of their identity. Those who are against homosexuality in South Africa have often used religion as their justification for their intolerance towards same sex relations (Adamczyk & Pitt 2009; SASAS 2008). Views among the general public that are intolerant of homosexuality often reflect public statements made by religious leaders from both Christian churches like the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian churches and other religious groupings including Muslim leaders and African traditional church leaders. This chapter will make an attempt to reveal some of the discursive strategies that have been drawn upon by religious groups and individuals to justify the claim that homosexuality is ‘ungodly’.

Englund (2011) and Gifford (2009) assert that religious beliefs have a huge impact on public debates and politics in Africa and that leading figures in these religious organizations play a crucial role in shaping these debates and politics. A body of work has shown that societal attitudes, in particular, homophobia and stereotypes against same sex relationships have been influenced by religion (Gray, Kramer, Minick, McGehee, Thomas & Greiner 1996). Research has linked prejudice and homophobia with religious beliefs, arguing that these views are often fuelled by religious leaders and religious individuals carry with them conservative beliefs. A study by Waldo (1998) on attitudes towards lesbian and gay men in a university setting for instance revealed that heterosexual students with a religious background and beliefs were generally unaccepting and intolerant towards same sex relationships. A body of research shows that those that are actively involved in Christianity appear to be more homophobic than those that are not affiliated to any religious beliefs (Kunkel & Temple, 1992; Herek & Glunt 1993; Gray et al, 1996; Greene & Rademan, 1997; Human rights watch 2011).

Religious leaders of different churches across Africa have often taken very public positions against homosexuality and it is reasonable to assume that these pronouncements both reflect the anti-gay sentiments of their followers and help to shape and perpetuate those sentiments (Gunda 2010). For example, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church have repeatedly made it clear that they do not accept homosexuality. The Anglican Church for example has refused to acknowledge and accept homosexual priests arguing that homosexuality is a sin and therefore against God's law (Van Klinken & Gunda 2012). Biblical verses have been used to support the Christian Church's dominant stance on same-sex relations. The most common verses that have been used include Leviticus 20:13 which states that "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them." Another often cited biblical reference is Leviticus 18:22-23 that states that homosexuality is a disgusting sin, akin to bestiality (see Gwamna 2006 & Igboin 2006).

In a special issue on homosexuality, the editor of the Catholic Church's theological journal *African Ecclesial Review* (AFER) reiterated the church's stance by saying that "[I]n Africa, homosexuality is a taboo discussed in hushed tones. It is a distortion and a betrayal of the institution of marriage worldwide. Homosexual unions do not in any way contribute to the common good of humanity, as they are anti-life, anti-social and anti-Scriptural" (cited in Nabushawo 2004:293). Here the purported unAfricanness of homosexuality is used by the Church itself to justify its intolerance. In this device the Church appeals to the legitimising trope of homosexuality being unAfrican in order to present its own stance as legitimately in keeping with the views of 'the people' for whom the concept is a taboo, discussed in 'hushed tones'. What is illustrated here is the way in which the three dominant frames identified in the corpus: of homosexuality as 'unAfrican', 'ungodly' and 'unnatural' serve to reinforce one another, each acting as the justificatory logic for the other.

As described earlier, in the analysis of news reporting it is important to take notice of the choice of headlines that are employed in the course of reporting on a particular issue. In my examination of 145 headlines in a corpus of South African news reporting on same sex marriages I was interested to see to what extent religious justifications, metaphors and allusions were foregrounded to frame the story that followed. Headlines are a significant news reporting device in that they represent how the newspaper is choosing to frame a story,

what is being chosen as particularly important or definitive about the story and what meaning the reader is meant primarily to derive from the story.

Analysis of headlines therefore provides a good indication of the dominant tone of the reporting, and what perspective is being employed to frame meaning making with respect to same-sex unions. The choice of certain words over others as Van Dijk reminds us, is never neutral or coincidental but may instead signal the personal opinions, emotions and ideologies of the writer (Van Dijk 1991). Headlines not only define a news event but are also important for signalling the socio-political opinions of the newspaper about the news event and through their choice of words they give an evaluation of the situation which is often the first thing a reader sees when starting to read an article.

An analysis of the headlines in the corpus reveals that words such as ‘ungodly’, ‘unholy’, and ‘sinful’ are often used to frame reporting on same sex marriage. Halo (1985) notes that the common law definition of marriage in apartheid South Africa considered marriage as a ‘legally recognised voluntary union for life in common of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others while it lasts’. This was contained in the Marriage Act, number 25 of 1961 that only made provision for the inclusion of the terms ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ and this therefore had the effect of excluding same-sex marriage as the partners to such a union did not qualify under the two categories suitable for marriage (Halo 1985). This law has now been changed firstly in 1998 to recognise African customary marriages and later in 2006 to cater for same sex unions. However legal change is not necessarily the same thing as a change in public perception for example towards same sex marriages. In the same way as we saw those who style themselves as spokespeople for African ‘tradition’ portraying marriage as necessarily heterosexual confirmed by the practice of *lobolo* paid by a man for a women, in Christianity marriage is defined biblically as a union between a man and a woman.

Rather than themselves taking responsibility for their views, those who articulate heteronormative assumptions under the guise of tradition or religion typically package their views as immutable requirements of ‘culture’ or ‘the law of God’ for which they then are not personally accountable. To cite but one example, Reverend Brian Wood of the Cape Town Baptist church in justifying intolerance for same-sex marriages states that ‘God has sanctioned marriage as a heterosexual relationship between a natural man and a natural woman’ and therefore these unions are ‘against scripture’ (cited in Samodien 2007). News

reporting on the legalisation of gay marriage often chose to highlight the fact that it was a challenge to this particular view of marriage – the secularity of the South African state confirmed in the Constitution notwithstanding.

Common headline words in the corpus include ‘church’, ‘same-sex marriage’, ‘religion’, ‘civil unions’, ‘bar’, ‘urge ban’, ‘vile’, ‘outrage’, and ‘unholy’. Foregrounded in the coverage are views which see same sex marriage as ‘sinful’, ‘unholy’, and ‘immoral’. Thus the basic proposition that is being put forward at least by the headlines in the corpus is that ‘homosexuality is ‘ungodly’ which is in turn the basis upon which a set of negative and prejudiced responses is framed as appropriate for example: **HOMOSEXUALITY AGAINST THE BIBLE** (*IOL*, 17 May 2005); **WE CANNOT BLESS CIVIL UNIONS** (*IOL*, 18 May 2007); **SAME SEX MARRIAGES ‘NOT HOLY’** (*IOL*, 24 September 2008); **RELIGIOUS OUTRAGE OVER PINK TOURISM** (*IOL*, 17 February 2001); **CHRISTIANS PUT OUT BY KNYSNA’S GAY PRIDE** (*IOL*, 28 May 2001). Significant here is the choice of words that makes general what is in reality a specific and contested position within the Christian Church in for instance ‘Christians’ rather than referring to the specific Christians that take this view. Similarly with ‘we’ and the indeterminate ‘religious outrage’. By deploying a typical and accepted device in the construction of headlines – namely brevity and truncated speech – an impression is created that these are ‘our’ views because ‘we’ cannot bless civil unions. By implication if the reader would like to include themselves in the circle of who is holy, who is religious and who is Christian – as a very large sector of South African society does – then similarly the reader is expected to be ‘outraged’ and ‘put out’.

Not only the words used in the headlines but also the actors that speak the headlines or speak in the headlines are significant (Van Dijk 1991:58). Who is and is not given agency to express a view on same sex marriage? Religious organisations and their various representatives are agents in 47 of the 145 articles in the corpus that were coded as relevant to the ‘ungodly’ theme. For the most part they are cited calling for the Civil Union Bill not to be passed into law. For example: **ANGLICANS URGE BAN ON GAY MARRIAGES, BISHOPS** (*IOL*, 18 October 2004); **CHURCHES BAR GAY MARRIAGES** (*IOL*, 17 May 2007); **CHURCH COUNCIL DIVIDED ABOUT SAME SEX UNIONS** (*IOL*, 17 October 2006); **CHURCHES SPEAK OUT AGAINST NEW MARRIAGE BILL** (*IOL*, 25 August 2006). Again, the device is that of generalisation: ‘churches’ and ‘Anglicans’ rather than the more nuanced representation of who precisely is taking this view. In these headlines the

religious leaders and their organisations ('churches') are always placed in the dominant position in the sentence – as agents – with gay people or their activities (same sex marriages) represented in the subordinate position in the sentence. Gee (2011:54) refers to the 'why this way not that way' tool for doing discourse analysis as one which allows us to wonder what the effect would be of structuring a particular piece of text or speech differently in order to provide insight into its effects. So here for instance the point is elucidated if one were to imagine the effects of conveying the same information but changing the order of the headline to reflect agency on the part of gay people. For instance, 'Gay couples outraged by Anglican church ban' or 'Married gay people react to church ban' or 'Married gay people speak out against Church stance on Marriage Bill'. What this reversal shows is that by doing it 'this way' rather than 'that way' to invoke Gee's terminology, the dominant/subordinate relationship of prominent religious leaders to gay citizens and the perceived minority, at best special interest, status of the latter is confirmed.

In a much fewer number of cases more neutral church stances were suggested in the content of some headlines in the corpus as in for example, 'ARCHBISHOP PLAYS SAFE' (*Times Live*, 27 August 2006), 'WE ARE DIFFERENT NOW ON GAYS' -- NDUNGANE. (*IOL*, 22 September 2006). But the subject positioning in these putatively more neutral headlines remains the same: the Archbishop and 'we' (that is to say, the church) are in the dominant position to pronounce on the question.

Gay and lesbian citizens themselves, whom one would have thought would have views worth citing since they are the most significantly affected sector of the citizenry regarding this particular issue, are rarely mentioned let alone placed in a dominant position in the way in which headlines in the corpus are syntactically constructed. In the entire corpus gay and lesbian actors appear in just 15 headlines where they express their view of civil unions, their frustration surrounding the delay of the Bill being passed into law and eventually when they celebrate the passing of the Bill into law. In a very few cases the active subject is the gay person or people. Three such exceptions are 'LESBIAN LOVERS TO CONTINUE LEGAL BATTLE' (*IOL*, 18 October 2002); 'GAY COUPLES "BEAMING" AT COURT VICTORY' (*IOL*, 28 September 2001); and 'SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BRINGS HOPE AND JOY' (*IOL*, 2 December 2005). In others featuring gay actors speaking their subordinate position in the

ordering of the sentence is maintained as in A YEAR'S TOO LONG TO WAIT, SAY GAY GROUPS (*IOL*, 1 December 2005); BILL HEARING WAS CHAOTIC, SAY GAYS (*IOL*, 2 October 2006); A WHOLE NEW WORLD FOR GAY COUPLES (*IOL*, 1 December 2006).

Human rights organisations and the Constitutional Court do appear in a total of 34 headlines in the corpus, offering among other things, positive framings of the new law. In some instances, activists and human rights organisations offer their view on what they think about the Civil Unions Bill. Headlines such as JUDGE RULES THAT GAY COUPLE ARE FAMILY (*IOL*, 2 November 1999); CONCOURT RULES IN FAVOUR OF GAY MARRIAGE (*IOL*, 1 December 2005); 'GAY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS' (*IOL*, 7 October 2010). These headlines confirm rather than question taken for granted assumptions about homosexuality since it takes a 'judge' to rule that gay couples are a family. The use of the word 'rule' in this headline is also a significant choice. Using Gee's (2011:54) 'why this way, not that way' tool for discourse analysis one might ask why this word not some alternative such as 'confirms'. Moreover the distancing device of 'the judge' who portrays this view is a distinct contrast with the portrayal of views that homosexuality is unAfrican or ungodly which use terms such as 'us' and 'our culture' thus having the effect of including the reader whereas the 'judge' is a distant figure that does not include 'us'. To proclaim that gay rights are 'human rights' suggests the possibility that someone might dispute this. If it were obviously the case then it would be odd to state it. This can be illustrated using Gee's tool of making the obvious strange in discourse analysis: 'Heterosexual rights are human rights' would be a headline that would be difficult for a reader to decode. What this tells us is that there is a prior set of reference points and knowledge on the part of the reader that is being assumed and confirmed rather than interrupted through the construction of the headline in this particular way.

In headlines such as ACTIVISTS SUBMIT GAY EDUCATION PROPOSALS (*IOL*, 1 February 2007); ACTIVISTS SLAM HEARINGS ON CIVIL UNIONS (*IOL*, 11 October 2006); HRC WELCOMES CHALLENGE ON GAY MARRIAGES (*IOL*, 27 December 2004) the portrayal of agency is significant. 'Activists' are unnamed and are doing things – slamming, submitting proposals, calling. Gay people are still denied agency here because the term 'activists' is chosen instead of allowing an active, agential role for gay citizens. One can contrast this choice with the very great prominence given to terms such as 'lesbian' and 'lesbian lover' placed in the subject position so as to denote agency in the November 2006

case in which Engelina de Nysschen was sentenced in South Africa's Vereeniging Regional Court to 20 years in prison for the murder of four-year old Jandré Botha. She was the partner of Jandré's mother Hannelie Botha. Headlines included for instance: 'Lesbian lover imprisoned for boy's death' (Ndaba 2006) and 'Lesbian couple found guilty' (see Vincent & Howell, 2014). These headlines reference other sets of assumptions about gay families not being proper families and children in these families being at risk of harm. The prominent and active subject position given to a 'lesbian' when positive acts are being referred to is rare in the corpus in contrast to the prominent subject position chosen to frame headlines when the act being referred to is the murder of a child.

Actor frequencies

Instances in the corpus where the voices of gay and lesbian citizens feature in the headlines at all are a minority and these voices are almost entirely silenced in the articles themselves. Instead, the headlines that are chosen to represent to the public the meaning of stories about same sex marriage for the most part are presented from the perspective of religious organisations and their spokespeople and for the most part these actors represent same sex marriage as antithetical to the will of God.

Van Dijk (1991) reminds us that an important feature of discourse meaning-making and interpretation is perspective. An analysis of perspective enables us to know from which angle news events are being described or reported. It is because of the perspective from which an issue is viewed that a stance on the issue is suggested to the reader. Perspective can be expressed by different textual signals (Van Dijk 1991). For example, actor frequencies help to point to from whose perspective the events are being reported.

In the corpus, it was noted that the presence and actions of religious leaders and various church denominations as main actors in the news reports added to the impression of these actors' views as important and influential while gay and lesbian people themselves, because they are seldom cited as legitimate knowers, are by implication treated as marginal minority actors whose views are less important to consider. Subjects and topics in the news reports are closely related to the news actors involved in them. Of the dozens of articles collected, churches, in particular the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches are by

far the most prominent news actors. These appear as group actors that are not in support of the passing of the civil unions bill based on teachings from the Bible that label such unions as a sin. The Anglican Church in particular appears in nearly half of the articles. Various individuals belonging to, or associated with, the religious organisations mentioned above also appear as actors that air their views which are presented as based on immutable religious grounds.

Prominently attributed to Christians of various denominations was the labelling of same sex relations as 'sin', and in some cases as a form of 'demonic possession' and as a 'sickness'. The assumption is that the audience will understand the full import of the meaning of these words in religious circles. Using the device of citing prominent sources the claim that homosexuality contradicts the fundamental teachings of the Christian church which allows only for heterosexual marriage is made without the need to argue the point or cite alternative views.

For example, during public consultations on the Civil Unions Bill, Cardinal Wilfrid Napier (President of the South African Catholic Bishop's Conference) expressed how members of his church would be disappointed if the Bill came. He states his view of the Church's position on same sex relationships:

The Catholic Church does not make provision for anything other than a marriage between a man and a woman even then, only under strict conditions. Civil unions do not fall under the law of the church (cited in Quintal et al 2006).

Gee (2011:45) argues that the discourse analyst should ask not just what a particular choice of word or sentence construction is 'saying' but what it is 'doing' In other words, what is the strategic goal that a speaker is trying to achieve. While gay rights are often portrayed as a minority interest group issue, here Napier elevates the position of a particular group in society to the authority of 'law'. The impact of the word can be fully appreciated if one replaces it with say, 'belief'. Beliefs are chosen, are mutable and are particular to specific people or groups. 'Laws' are much less malleable. The term suggests that these beliefs have the status of legality and must be obeyed.

Other devices are present here too. Napier portrays his view not as his own personal view but as the ‘law’ of the Catholic Church. In the same way as ‘traditional leaders’ and ‘rural people’ act as the authoritative and incontrovertible interpreters of ‘culture’, as a Cardinal the reader is expected to accept Napier’s interpretation of Catholic ‘law’.

The strategic deployment of the authority of ‘the Church’ to justify the personal views of Church leaders is by no means a device restricted to spokespeople of the Catholic Church. It is common throughout the items in the corpus coded within the theme of ‘ungodly’.

For example, Brian Wood of the Cape Town Baptist Church:

The church does not recognise same sex marriages as they are contrary to scripture. Everyone is welcome at the church irrespective of their background or creed. However on the topic of gay marriages, we cannot condone it, as God has sanctioned marriage as a heterosexual relationship between a natural man and natural woman (cited in Samodien 2007).

In the same way as Napier invoked the ‘law’ of the church here the authority of ‘scripture’ is invoked. Heterosexual marriage is the only kind of marriage that ‘God has sanctioned’. In this way Wood is able to portray his own personal view as emanating not from a choice on his part for which he must take responsibility, but rather as emanating from the incontrovertible authority of ‘scripture’ and ‘God’. Using the strategy of positive self-presentation which, as Van Dijk (1991) reminds us, is a common device used to conceal prejudice, Wood claims that the church welcomes ‘everyone’ but then immediately goes on to say that it ‘cannot’ condone homosexuality. In other words ‘everyone’ includes only those who are willing to accept compulsory heterosexuality.

Commenting on a pink pride parade in Cape Town, national leader of His People Church Errol Naidoo expressed the church’s opposition to pink tourism in Cape Town, and stated that ‘men of God’ had washed their hands after handling a brochure promoting the parade (*IOL*, 2001), invoking once again the power of ‘disgust’ to justify intolerance. Even to have contact with a brochure sanctioning homosexuality is to result in the need for purification and cleansing. Other outraged religious leaders who were against the pink parade demanded that Cape Town be rid of these ‘vile’, ‘disgusting’ and ‘pornographic’ brochures promoting homosexuality in their town (*IOL*, 2001). In the figured worlds of these speakers then,

heterosexual sex is self-evidently good, appropriate sex, while homosexual sex is ‘pornographic’ by nature regardless of its context, portrayal or content. The language of disgust was invoked also by those who participated in online commentary on these news stories.

Just hearing “same sex partners” disgusts me. They should not be entitled to anything. They must go read the Bible. – Jojo. (See Mbatha 2006).

Once again the authority of the Bible is put forward as sufficiently influential grounds for winning the argument against gay rights. Its authority cannot be questioned in rational debate. It is enough simply to ‘read the Bible’.

A typical feature of homophobic discourse is that of positive self-presentation following a contrasting reference to the vilified ‘other’. This is achieved by focusing on the negative aspects of ‘them’ in comparison to the good or positive aspects of the speaker - ‘us’ (Van Dijk 1991). Disclaimers work in conjunction with positive self-presentation to present homophobic intolerance as the legitimate views of good, reasonable people.

His People Church’s Errol Naidoo deploys these discursive strategies in his remarks on Cape Town’s 2001 pink parade:

Although we support the right of every citizen to freely exist in the city without fear of discrimination, we do not believe that a special-interest minority group, such as the homosexual movement, has the right to hijack the city for their own agenda (cited in Williams 2001).

In the above passage, the use of a disclaimer denies intolerance for same sex relations while then going on to express intolerance. Naidoo acknowledges that homosexuals have rights and ought not to be discriminated against, but then goes on to suggest that when gay and lesbian citizens express their right to freedom of movement and association they are ‘hijacking the city’. In this way, Christians are portrayed as tolerant people who recognise homosexuals as citizens that should not be discriminated against while at the same time Naidoo can then, having made the disclaimer, go on to express a view that is intolerant of homosexuals who are to be regarded as a ‘special interest group’ that should not be allowed to ‘hijack’ the city through the gay pride.

This comment from a representative of the Baptist Church of Cape Town makes use of the same devices:

Everybody is welcome at the church irrespective of their background or creed. However on the topic of gay marriages, we cannot condone it as God has sanctioned marriage as a heterosexual relationship between a natural man and a natural woman (cited in Samodien 2007).

In the above passage again, a disclaimer portrays the speaker as tolerant -- ‘all are welcome’ but same sex marriages are ungodly and unnatural. Once again it is not the speaker that must take responsibility for their view – they are merely the mouthpiece of ‘God’.

At a press conference held by the Marriage Alliance of South Africa in Durban, Kwazulu Natal, religious leaders from different denominations called on the government to protect the ‘sanctity’ of marriage by not including same sex unions as part of the definition of a marriage.

To call same-sex unions’ marriage is to make a mockery of what marriage really is...marriage is the exclusive and permanent union of one man with one woman - Cardinal Wilfred Napier of the Catholic Church (cited in Quintal 2006).

Homosexual unions, like homosexual acts, are contrary to natural law and undermine the nature of marriage and family as created by God - Cardinal Wilfred Napier of the Catholic Church (cited in Da Costa and Witbooi 2006).

As Gee (2011) reminds us, figured worlds deal with what is considered by the speaker to be typical or normal and hence in some instances, they becomes the means by which to discriminate against those that are considered untypical or abnormal. In the above excerpts, marriage according to the church is normal when it occurs between a man and a woman. The Church’s position here is equated to what is ‘natural’ and ‘natural law’.

While delivering a public lecture at a medical school at the University of Natal in Durban, Bishop Ryan of the Catholic Church said that:

Same-sex relationships were not what true marriage was all about and children involved in such unions could develop social and psychological problems later in life. God created us to be born of a father and a mother (cited in Leeman 2003).

This sense of what is typical or normal that Paul Gee (2011) reminds us of in the concept of figured worlds therefore serves as the basis upon which individuals declare or consider what is inappropriate or bad. A distinction is drawn between 'true' marriage and homosexual marriage implying that the latter can never qualify as real or authentic marriage. Since the authority for such views rests with God and the Bible there is no need to cite evidence for the claim that children will be damaged by being raised by gay parents.

The sentiment that same sex unions have a negative effect on the family and the traditional marriage structure has not been limited to Christian beliefs only. Mufti Zubair Bayat, Secretary General of the Jamiatul- Ulama (Council of Muslim Theologians) in KwaZulu Natal, highlighted his religion's stance by arguing that Islam defines marriage as a union between a man and woman and argued that same-sex unions lead to 'the disintegration of family life and spawns abnormal sexual behaviour which corrupts society' (cited in Kuppan et al 2006). In this figured world homosexuality is abnormal and leads to social disintegration.

The framing of the debate as one between the desire for abnormal and disgusting forms of sex on the part of a minority group on the margins of society people versus children's rights is prevalent throughout the corpus. For example, using a human rights discourse to argue why the government should not pass the Civil Unions Bill into law, the African Christian Democratic Party's (ACDP)

Reverend Kenneth Meshoe urged the government to protect children's rights by placing them above the... narrow interests of groups that want to legally perpetuate a sinful lifestyle that is not only unhealthy and unnatural but that is frowned upon by all traditional, cultural, religious and tribal groups (cited in Da Costa 2006).

In Meshoe's world 'all' groups are opposed to homosexuality which is a 'lifestyle' that must be condemned because it is 'unhealthy and unnatural'. While 'we' are 'all tribal, cultural and religious groups', 'they' are a narrow interest group.

The views of religious leaders are often echoed in the way in which individuals and ordinary members of society voice their thoughts and opinions in the corpus of material collected for the study. The *Independent Online* ran a poll in which 816 ordinary South Africans were asked about what they think about homosexuality and same sex unions (see Featherstone 2006). 47% of the readers were against same sex unions.

The ANC government is so arrogant, they have disappointed the Christian and those who believe in God. I doubt so much if they even believe that there is God (Mongezi Mabungane).

It's ridiculous! It's against every religion. To quote parliament (it was on the news last night) "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve". The passing of this bill is an insult to democracy (Izabelle).

Religion is used as the fundamental basis upon which to discriminate against same-sex relationships but the discursive device that is employed to justify this stance is the presentation of homosexual relations as abnormal so that ungodliness and unnaturalness or abnormality comes to be equated as one and the same thing.

The devil attacked our parliament yesterday & He won (shocked). This defies every religion, every culture, everything moral. They should be on another planet and not into the daily lives of normal people....Just keep them FAR away from children.. It will be sinful to raise children in that environment (Sasha).

Through the repetition of the word 'every' the speaker is able to present their own view as the view of 'everyone'.

Heterosexuality is naturalised as normal and not sinful while homosexuality is abnormal and sinful, and frequently equated with bestiality.

Soon humans will be able to marry with cats, dogs and ponies... and then evolve into a super species and marry with whales, dolphins and sharks - we are one... after all (Ollie).

Ollie's remarks are steeped in inter textual allusions that resonate particularly with South African publics that are dissatisfied with democratisation. Ollie here references a wider post-apartheid human rights and non-racial discourse which proposes one South African nation in contrast to the idea of different kinds of people being kept 'apart' which was the founding

idea of apartheid. In this way dissatisfaction with the post-apartheid order is expressed by way of scapegoating homosexuals. What Ollie is effectively arguing is that the founding ideology of equality (we are one) that animates the post-apartheid state is illegitimate because it purports to create a false equality between those who are not in reality equal or 'one'.

Curiously, in a country facing an epidemic of gender based violence the 'total destruction' of the nation is attributed to the constitution in general and gay marriage in particular. Anti-gay views thus serve as a way of undermining the legitimacy of the post-apartheid constitutional order as such. Juxtaposed are 'demons', the new constitution and gay marriage.

The present constitution is full of demons. We have a crisis on our hands. The nation is heading for total destruction, with men being allowed to marry men and women to marry women - Anonymous participant (cited in Khumalo 2007)

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that representations of same sex marriage as ungodly are an influential trope in the portrayal of homosexuality in the South African English-language print media. While gay and lesbian citizens are rarely cited regarding their views on an issue which affects them more directly than anyone else, the anti-homosexuality views of religious leaders are foregrounded, repeatedly cited and given prominence in the way in which these stories are framed by the newspapers.

Foregrounded in this coverage is a framing of homosexuality as not simply one among many possible ways of life but as 'ungodly' which, in a country evincing high levels of religiosity, has powerful implications for the legitimising of intolerant views.

Drawing on religious justifications for intolerance towards same sex relationships means that there is little room for democratic debate or argument since the legitimising discourse that is being tapped into is one of fundamental belief rather than there being room for the expression of alternative views and ways of being. Homosexuality, rather than being constructed as the private choice of individuals to exercise consensual sexual preference, is cast as a 'sin', 'contrary to scripture', a form of 'demonic possession', a danger to children and a threat to social order.

CHAPTER FIVE: Unnatural

Going hand in hand with religious and cultural justifications for homophobia are taken for granted assumptions about what is and is not 'natural'. Cultural myths and stereotypes portraying homosexuals as immoral, sick, unnatural and different from what society regards as 'normal' have often led members of society to ask questions as to whether those that engage in same-sex relationships are mentally ill; are capable of being good parents; the implications of these relationships on children; and if 'they' can sustain healthy relationships (Herek 1991).

Biological Determinism

Biological determinism is a term used to describe the belief that human behaviour is influenced by one's genes (Robertson 2005). Biological determinism has played a significant role in influencing opinion about issues such as gender, race and sexuality (Lederman 2001). Causal inferences from functional biology are made to explain human social behaviour, gender roles and what is considered 'normal' or 'unnatural'. There is a vast array of theories and postulations concerning the origins and causes of homosexual behaviour. Members of the homosexual community have used the concept of biological determinism to justify their sexual orientation by arguing that they are born with homosexual traits whilst some scientists on the other hand have seen both biological determinism and social influences as contributing factors to homosexuality (see for example Abramson 1995).

Functionalist biological claims are used to justify claims about what is and is not 'normal'. Functionalist analysis proceeds from claims about the (biological) functions of organs of the body to suggest that what is natural is for human social behaviour and interaction to be congruent with bodily functions (Leiser 2010). As such, using those instruments/organs in accordance with their function is regarded as 'natural' or 'normal' but any other use that differs from the primary function is therefore 'unnatural' and improper. According to those that subscribe to this line of thought, human sexual organs are designed to enable men and

women to reproduce and thus any other use different from this is therefore ‘unnatural’, ‘wrong’, and ‘potentially harmful’ (Leiser 2010).

Ratele (2009) suggests that in Africa, sex is seen in this biologically determinist ways. One of the major themes that define dominant masculinities in men and as such ‘real sex’ in Africa, Ratele argues, is the penetrative function of the penis. The penis in the African context as Ratele (2009) suggests is used to signify a more powerful meaning than the organ itself at face value. Some African cultures as Ratele notes, such as the Zulu and Sesotho signify a penis as a ‘stick’ and a vagina as a ‘hole’. For example, in the Zulu culture – a man who appears not to be using his ‘stick’ to fill ‘holes’ is labelled with a derogatory term (*isishumane*) which implies that the man is not using his natural organ for its intended purpose. Thus males who subscribe to this narrative of manhood must also learn the other meaning of what it is to be a woman thus entrenching fixed stereotypical conceptions of ‘male’, ‘female’ and sex (see also Connell 1995, Plummer 2005). Since members of society are expected to conform to their various gender roles, it follows that women who enter into relationships with other women and those that portray characteristics stereotypically regarded as the preserve of men are therefore seen as a challenge to the dominant shape of masculinity in the African context (Plummer 2005).

Procreation

The failure to fulfil the ‘natural’ childbearing role associated with women has often been used to vilify lesbians. In some instances opposition to South Africa’s civil union’s bill allowing same sex couples to marry, was expressed in these terms. Resting on a biological determinist definition of gender which subscribes to the idea of a ‘natural’ congruence between the biological sex of the body and the gender of a person expressed in various behaviours including sexual desire and orientation, the traditional definition of marriage is that it is a union between a man and a woman. Procreation has always been central to how marriage is traditionally understood. A ‘family’ is understood to incorporate a married heterosexual couple who produce children within the marriage, and never outside of it. Hence the labelling of children born outside of marriage as ‘illegitimate’. Children moreover are thought to be ideally served by having a father and a mother. The latter claim once again rests on biological determinist assumptions about the sex of a person determining their characteristics as parents. In this worldview male and female/mother and father are biologically determined

complementary opposites and therefore a father is deemed to offer a child different sorts of input to what a mother offers. The biological determinist assumption is that as a result in a (natural) heterosexual family with a father and a mother there is a kind of 'balance' that is achieved which rests in turn on the assumption that men and women are naturally 'opposite sexes' with different personality traits based on their biology which they bring to marriage and parenting.

These assumptions pervade the definition of marriage and have been used as the basis upon which to deny 'same sex' couples the right to marry since such unions do not provide the possibility of biological procreation (Gunda 2012) and are purportedly an 'unnatural' environment in which to raise children because children are assumed to be best served by having a 'father' and a 'mother' rather than two mothers or two fathers. It is an argument which religious leaders used to oppose the passing of the civil union bill into law. For example, in its argument against the legalisation of the Civil Unions Bill, the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) leader reverend Kenneth Meshoe referred to the unnaturalness of same sex unions arguing that the Bill would essentially give adults the right to make children "motherless" or "fatherless" by replacing a "natural parent with a legal parent of another gender" (Da Costa 2006).

While addressing several thousand Christians who had marched through the city of Cape Town in protest against the Civil Unions Bill, African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) MP Steve Swart described his favoured understanding of marriage as 'traditional marriage' which he believes is the 'cornerstone of civilization'.

The institution of marriage has been the cornerstone of civilised society for thousands of years. Traditional marriages in which one man and one woman create a lasting community, pass on time-honoured family values to secure the future, and therefore are worthy of protection (cited in Maclellan 2006).

It is unclear why gay couples are incapable of passing on family values. Nor do high levels of divorce and extra marital sex trouble Swart's grounds for defending heterosexual marriage as being 'lasting' contributions to securing the future. The presupposition is that only a heterosexual marriage is able to ensure the continuity of traditional family values and as such

same-sex unions are a threat to social cohesion and therefore should not be tolerated. Swart's argument in the above passage also appears to rest on a biological determinist argument with the taken for granted assumption that 'family' and 'family values' are inherently comprised and safeguarded by a union of a 'natural' man and woman. Hence in the speaker's figured world – homosexual relationships disrupt the 'normal' order of life that has been secured since time immemorial through heterosexual marriages. As such, this serves as the basis upon which his intolerance for same-sex unions is justified.

In the same vein, during discussions about the church's position on same-sex unions, Catholic Cardinal Wilfred Napier pointed out that

homosexual unions, like homosexual acts, were contrary to natural law and undermined the nature of marriage and family as created by God.' And that his church taught that homosexual acts were 'intrinsically disordered' (cited in Da Costa 2006).

Napier uses both religion and an appeal to 'nature' to define what marriage is. In his worldview, marriage can only be defined as that between two people who are biologically male and female and he finds support for this view in the Bible. As such, same-sex unions go against the teachings of the church which therefore makes them 'disordered' as they defy natural law and thus they should not be allowed.

While describing the constitution as 'anti-life' Napier expressed his discontent at the decision to include same sex unions within the definition of marriage because

It's against nature. It is against what marriage was intended for – to have children. That kind of activity cannot bring life. There is no way we can give a person the right to do something that is morally wrong. (cited in Cembali 2006)

Similarly, Pan Africanist Congress President Motsoko Pheko was quoted saying his party 'did not care if it failed to get votes from gays and lesbians because they faced extinction and could not bear children.' (*IOL*, 2006). Drawing on a functionalist account of human sexuality as the only possible justification for sex, he suggests that he is justified in not supporting same-sex relationships as they do go against the purpose of engaging in sex.

The biological function of human reproduction is elevated above other possible purposes of sex despite the fact that most sex that takes place most of the time does not lead to procreation but is in fact for pleasure. Missing from this discourse of nature and the unbreakable link between heterosexual marriage and procreation are the other functions of sex in a marriage including the fostering of intimacy, and the fulfilment of desire. The intertextual reference in the very particular choice of the term ‘anti life’ is highly resonant. Alongside criticism for the constitution’s protections for gay citizens, abortion is the other major target of the religious right’s disaffection with the post-apartheid dispensation of rights – the latter position familiarly described as ‘pro-life’.

Homosexuality is a choice that can be changed

To argue that homosexuality is against ‘nature’ requires in a sense arguing that it is a choice which people are making and that they could therefore choose differently. If homosexuality can be shown to be genetically determined then it would be difficult to sustain an argument that it is against ‘nature’ (see Herek 1991). Likewise, some who advocate for acceptance and tolerance of gay rights argue that homosexuality is inborn and therefore one has no choice over one’s sexual orientation (Griffin et al 1986). For example a study by Schneider and Lewis (1984) found that levels of acceptance and tolerance towards homosexuality was generally higher amongst Americans who held the belief that homosexuals are naturally born that way than those that believed that homosexuality is an acquired behaviour. In the same vein, similar sentiments that argue that homosexuality is a choice and therefore is not natural have been reflected in the South African context.

Speaking on behalf of the National Party which believes that homosexual behaviour is women affairs leader Elize Sprague claimed that

The party is open to all. We don't approve (of homosexuality), but there is nothing we can do about people's lifestyle. We won't exclude them, we will rather rehabilitate them. We regard them as South Africans and we will still serve them. (cited in Dentlinger 2009)

In the first two sentences, Sprague makes use of the familiar strategy of positive self-presentation that Van Dijk (1991) reminds us of its importance in concealing prejudice. She does this by claiming that the party is 'open' to all but even though the party does not condone homosexuality they can still accommodate homosexuals in their party as it is the party's mandate to serve 'them' as fellow South Africans. However by deciding to 'rehabilitate' homosexuals portrays an underlying ideology that assumes that homosexuality is a condition that can (and should) be changed through rehabilitation. To 'rehabilitate' also means to 'naturalise' – the implication is that homosexuality is a condition that contradicts 'nature' requiring a restoration or 'naturalisation'. While on the one hand paying lip service to the idea of gay citizens as 'fellow South Africans' the choice of the words 'we' and the repeated use of 'them' to reference gay people makes it clear that the speaker is drawing a clear boundary between accepted insiders and decried outsiders.

Children's rights

The likely negative effects same-sex relationships might have on children has often been used as a reason to justify intolerance for same sex unions. Another often cited reason is that such relationships might influence a heterosexual child to become a homosexual or that such relationships might cause confusion and create sexual conflict for the child through exposure to homosexuality (Herek 1991:157). The data (see for example Falk 1989) dismisses the idea that homosexuality has a detrimental effect on children in the family. For example, research by Green (1986) in which he compared children raised by fifty lesbian mothers against forty children raised by heterosexual mothers concluded that there were no differences between both groups in terms of intelligence, social adjustment and sexual orientation or gender identity.

However in the South African context, the sentiment that same-sex relationships have a negative effect on children in families where the parents are gay is often heard in public discourse. There is a fear that exposure to homosexual couples could affect the child negatively. A case in point for example is the story of Jandré Botha. The press reported that the motivation for his gruesome killing was because 4 year old Jandré 'refused to call his mother's lesbian partner "daddy"' (Ndaba 2006). Engelina de Nysschen, the partner of Jandré's mother was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the murder while the mother was also given the same sentence for being an accomplice to the crime as she tried to cover it up.

Jandré Botha's murder aroused controversy and public commentary linking the sexuality of the couple to the murder.

An analysis of the headlines in the corpus revealed the following. Many of the headlines of the English language newspapers reporting on Jandré Botha's murder name the sexuality of the people accused of Jandré's murder.

LESBIAN COUPLE ACCUSED OF MURDER (*IOL*, 18 November 2005)

LESBIAN COUPLE FOUND GUILTY (*Mambaonline*, 23 March 2006)

LESBIAN COUPLE GUILTY OF GRUESOME MURDER (*IOL*, 23 March 2006)

LESBIAN COUPLE FOUND GUILTY OF BOY'S MURDER (*Mail & Guardian*, 23 March 2006)

4-YEAR-OLD KILLED FOR REFUSING TO CALL HIS MOTHER'S LESBIAN LOVER "DADDY" (Ndaba 2006)

4 YEAR OLD JANDRÉ BOTHA MURDERED FOR REFUSING TO CALL LESBIAN DADDY (Westen 2011)

LESBIAN MOM AND PARTNER CONVICTED OF MURDERING SON (*ZeroBoss*, 28 November 2006)

4 YEAR OLD JANDRÉ BOTHA MURDERED FOR REFUSING TO CALL LESBIAN DADDY (22 February 2011)

LESBIAN 'DADDY' KILLS FOUR YEAR OLD (*Magic City Morning Star*, 16 March 2010)

What these headlines suggest is that when a child is murdered there is some explanatory or interpretive value in naming the fact that those charged with parenting or caring for the child are homosexual. The underlying assumption is that there is a connection to be made between the non-heterosexual (unnatural) form that this family takes and the crime of killing a child. These headlines have the impact that they do precisely because 'lesbians' are placed in the active subject position as agents of murder. Moreover, their impact relies on our presuppositions about 'natural' motherhood and womanhood in which 'proper' mothers and

women protect and nurture children. The fact that a child would be killed by a woman and that the child's mother would be an accomplice to the murder demonstrates the unnaturalness of 'lesbians'.

Responding to the news of Jandr 's murder, the South African public interpreted the crime in just this way. In an anonymous opinion letter titled 'Lesbian 'Daddy' Kills Four Year Old' (16 March 2010) that featured in the *Magic City Morning Star* the author of the letter identifies the sexuality of the couple as the major cause of the murder of Jandr  Botha: 'this story proves that gay marriage is in all cases a ruse which even a young child can see through, and a deception, which when exposed, is sometimes answered with brutality and horror' (*Magic City Morning Star* 2010). For the author, the innocence of the child is proof enough that same-sex unions are disordered. As such when such 'deceptions' (the suggestion is that there is something fake about same-sex relationships – only heterosexual relationships can be genuine) are exposed – the end result is child murder.

Moreover the story is framed in a way that continually re-inscribes the mother/father binary, by foregrounding the failure of the child to call his mother's partner 'daddy' as the motive for murder. To exemplify from one online comment: 'Young Jandr  refused to go along with the lie that a woman can fulfil the role of a father in the family' (*Magic City Morning Star* 2010). Embedded here is an understanding of a natural family as having a biologically male father and a biologically female mother with predetermined 'roles' in a family and that any disruption of this natural order leads to disaster.

Part of the discourse of unnaturalness is the idea that homosexuality is a 'mental illness' (Herek 1991).

Many are even now objecting that such child abuse also happens in traditional families. Yet the sole cause of this horrific murder was the mental illness of a lesbian who believed she was a man. Sexual confusion is an element present in every homosexual and Lesbian adoption, and will be manifested again and again, as psychological harm to the adopted child, and occasionally as the terror which befell little Jandr  Botha (cited in *Magic City Morning Star* 2010)

Again the fear that homosexual relationships have a negative effect on the psychological well-being of the child is echoed in the above quotation. The author also presupposes that if such unions are allowed to continue, brutality will continue to exist therefore suggesting that these forms of unions will continue to have a negative effect on children and thus they should be put to an end. For the speaker, lesbianism is framed as problematic which is suggested by ‘the mental illness’ and ‘sexual confusion’ that entails her to ‘believe’ she is a man. It is noted in this statement alone that the speaker bases his claim on constructions of gender roles that prescribe a clear distinction of roles between a man and a woman. As such, the speaker assumes that such deranged unions have the effect of disrupting a ‘normal’ child’s social and psychological development.

CONTRALESA general secretary Kgosi Setlamorago Thobejane while calling for the government to vote down the Civil Unions Bill and certain parts of the Constitution that protect gay rights in an interview argued that it was the mandate of traditional leaders to safeguard traditional values as they were accountable to the ancestors and the future generations. He argued that

...while gays have got the right to live in SA, it was wrong to have a law which “regulates or legitimises a situation which is unnatural”. We cannot say these people should be wished away out of SA. But we should not go to the extent of putting that particular clause in the constitution (cited in Lange 2012).

The speaker begins by acknowledging the rights of homosexual South Africans and their right to exercise their sexuality in the country. However an underlying ideology of the ‘unnaturalness’ of homosexuality is used as a justification as to why the government should not go to the extent of legitimising same-sex unions. Using the device of positive self-presentation the speaker generously allows that homosexuals can live in South Africa but because he considers homosexual relationships as unnatural, gay citizens should not be afforded the right to legally marry or to be constitutionally protected.

Thobejane further argued that laws that

“legitimise” homosexuality would influence future generations and “in the long run when 70 percent of the population is following that trend that we have set – when the majority of South Africans (belong

to) same-sex communities, how then do we account to the future generations?”. He further complained that same-sex couples were adopting children to have a “normal family”. The question is, how you make sure that the children you are adopting have got the right to articulate whether they are for or are not for (same-sex parents).” (cited in Lange 2012).

Again the unnaturalness of homosexuality is used as a reason to justify intolerance. The speaker presupposes that if homosexuality is to be allowed to continue – there is a possibility that ‘normal’ people would eventually become a minority group. Therefore for the speaker, this is a threat to the future of his (normal) group’s existence. He feels there is a need to protect human kind from extinction – gay marriage threatens the species because it is non-procreational. The speaker does not address the question of whether childless heterosexual marriages should also not enjoy constitutional protection. Using the identities building tool for discourse analysis, Gee (2011:106) requires us to question what identity and authority a speaker has and its possible effect on the claims that are being made. As a leading figure in CONTRALESA, Thobajane emphasises the identity position that he speaks from which is as a custodian of African culture. He uses this claimed authority to argue that he has a duty and a mandate to ensure the continuity of tradition. But he takes this further to argue that he does so not just in the interests of narrow ethnic identity but in the interests of humanity. Heterosexuality safeguards not only custom and tradition but also the future of the human species.

Speaking on behalf of (defenceless) children is another common device used to portray homophobic speech in a positive, protective way. Bigotry can in this way be portrayed as advocacy of children’s rights – the right of children for instance to live a ‘normal’ family life which, it is presupposed, is impossible when the parents are engaging in unnatural sex. Thobajane deploys another common strategy which is to draw off the prominence in post-apartheid South Africa of a discourse of ‘rights’. He thus is able to portray his anti-gay rights prejudice as a pro-children’s rights position. This is an important strategy because pro-rights discourse has great legitimacy in the post-apartheid context so that a speaker who is disavowing rights for one section of the citizenry can legitimise this position by presenting themselves as affirming rights for another sector. And if the latter are children while the former are an unnatural, diseased minority then there is no contest. Thobajane portrays himself in a positive light by suggesting that children should have a right to make a decision for themselves – which is whether they are in support of same-sex relationships or not. While

children born into heterosexual families have no such choice that is beside the point since these families are natural and normal.

Siyabonga Ngxaki, 22, argued homosexuals are ‘not a good example’ for children.

This community does not accept it and they are not a good example to the kids. They should hide what they are doing because the kids will emulate them. I don't want my baby girl to see them (cited in *Mail & Guardian* 14 June 2011).

A typical feature of discriminatory discourse as Van Dijk (1991) reminds us is the distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ which is again evident in the above quotation which has the effect of reproducing exclusion. For the speaker, there is an assumption of a set of norms that are considered acceptable by his community and a pre-set way of living that is expected to be followed – which is why his community is against homosexuality. There appears to be a juxtaposition of the innocence of children and the negative examples homosexuals might set for the children which serves as the sole purpose why the community is against raising children in homosexual environments. Hence this comparison further amplifies the negative distinction of ‘them’ and (normal) ‘us’ in justifying homophobic attitudes on the grounds of their abnormality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been noted that the idea that homosexuality is ‘unnatural’ is a common theme in the discursive representation of homosexuality in South African media coverage of gay and lesbian issues and the commentary of the public on that coverage. Common reasons that have been used to back the claim that homosexuality is ‘unnatural’ include the definition of marriage; failure to procreate and gender roles present in society. Hence it has been noted that those that subscribe to this line of thought have called for the preservation of heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexuality. This has been supported by arguments that homosexual relations have the potential of having a negative effect on the conventional family, children’s upbringing and on procreation – which is the main reason why people should enter into a marriage.

Therefore if we are to employ Paul Gee’s (2011) concept of ‘figured worlds’ we can learn that more often than not, when norms considered appropriate are threatened or there is a

deviation from the standard – members of society make efforts to safeguard their beliefs as these have been entrenched in their lived worlds. As such, the argument of ‘natural law’ has in this chapter been shown to be the main justification that has been used by those that are against same-sex unions.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion -- Implications of discursive constructions of homosexuality as unnatural, ungodly and unAfrican.

It's a practice called "corrective rape", where men try to "turn you into a real African woman". I was raped because I was a butch child. I was 13 years old the first time it happened. My mother walked into the room soon afterwards and said to me 'this is what happens to girls like you' (cited in Mufweba 2003)

South Africa guarantees the right to same sex relations in its constitution. The constitution provides for gender equity and non-discrimination based on race, gender or sexual orientation. However it has been noted that there is a wide gulf between what the constitution guarantees and what is happening on the ground (Human rights watch 2011, Triangle Project 2012). A growing body of work has shown that South Africa has among the highest rates of rape of women and children in the world for a country that is not at war (see for instance Brown 2012; Human rights watch 2011; Moffet 2006; Wells & Polders 2006)

An element of this epidemic of violence is the rape of lesbians whereby there is an attempt to 'correct' sexuality regarded as 'unnatural' through rape of a lesbian woman by a man or men. While corrective rape and assault of lesbians is often constructed as the aberrant behaviour of a few operating on the margins of society, I conclude that the discursive construction of homosexuality as 'unnatural', 'ungodly' and 'unAfrican' which I have shown to be prevalent in mainstream public discourse, including the media, and mainstream religious and political discourse widely cited by the media, forms part of a continuity of practices that allow for the possibility of such attacks to be styled as 'corrective'.

Wells & Polders (2006) note that lesbian women in South Africa are regarded as a threat to the heterosexual construct of femininity and as such corrective rape is used to cure them of their nonconforming sexual orientation (see also Silvio 2011). Corrective rape in South Africa is deeply steeped in culture, gender relations, social norms, historical oppression, and the belief that homosexuality is an imported behaviour from the West (see for example Action Aid 2004; Brown 2012; Gunkel 2010; Nel & Judge 2008).

The portrayal of homosexuality as 'unAfrican', 'unnatural', and 'ungodly' allows for the cultivation of intolerance which takes many forms of which rape and assault are but the sharp

end of a continuum along which threats to male dominance and the heterosexual ordering of society are met with a variety of efforts ranging from the apparently benign to the overtly violent to re-establish relations of male dominance and the heterosexual ordering of society (see also Gunkel 2010; Nel 2005; Nel & Judge 2008; Geen 2009). It is also important to take note that corrective rape is not only restricted to lesbians alone because the purpose of it is to cure and correct 'deviant' sexual orientations of all types (see Nel & Judge 2008).

In the corpus of texts that formed the basis for the analysis conducted in this thesis, I identified 60 headlines reporting on rape or 'corrective rape'. These 60 articles deal generally with the issue of 'corrective rape' of lesbians, the campaign by women's soccer teams to stop 'corrective rape', and various commentaries from activists, human rights organisations, the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL), and the government.

My argument is that while the news reporting on corrective rape at one level disapproves of the actions of those who assault and rape lesbians, on the other hand there is a continuity between these (disapproved of) practices of violence and assault and the prominence that exists in public discourse of views that represent homosexuality as unnatural, ungodly and unAfrican as the thesis has shown.

Following Van Dijk (1991) the thesis paid particular attention to the role of headlines in the construction of orthodoxies and taken-for-granted truths about homosexuality in the South African English language print media. The incompleteness of newspaper headlines, the thesis has argued, may serve an important ideological function in situations where the intention is to obscure the responsibility for an action. The particular choice of words chosen to be used in a headline, moreover, given the economy of expression which the form demands, is of great significance, framing as it does the meaning of the story – how the reader is meant to interpret what is most important and what the roles of the various actors are

The most common words that appeared in the headlines in the articles on lesbian rape in the corpus were lesbian/s (21), rape/d (11), rapist, corrective rape (9), activists/rights groups (8). The other frequent words in the headlines refer to the other major actors and locations where corrective rape happens such as schools and the respective communities such as Soweto and Pretoria where the events took place. Violence and brutality are significantly represented in the headlines through the use of words such as assault, fear, rape/d, abused, fight, ostracised,

heartless, murder, killers, punished, persecution, hate crime and homophobia. Two prominent stories in the corpus concern firstly the rape of Eudy Similane a South African footballer who was gang raped and murdered because she was openly lesbian and an activist for the rights of lesbians; and secondly that the rape of Noxolo Nogwaza who was raped, stoned and stabbed to death in 2011 because of her sexual orientation. Human Rights Watch (2011) reports that since 1998, 31 lesbians have been murdered and amongst these cases, there has only been one conviction: in the case of Eudy Similane.

In stark contrast to headlines discussed in the thesis that relate to stories about gay rights such as the Civil Unions Bill, the headlines dealing with rape of lesbians portray a very sympathetic stance towards the victims of rape and violence. For instance, in the use of the personal pronoun 'we' as in 'We are Forced to Live in Fear' (*IOL*, 6 October 2007) rather than the more typical use of subject-free headlines the reader is invited to empathise with the plight of those who are being victimised. The language that is used is also openly emotive and openly takes sides with the victims of homophobic attacks as the use of words such as 'persecution' and 'abuse'. For example: PAPER DOCUMENTS PERSECUTION OF BLACK LESBIANS (*IOL*, 25 June 2003); SA LESBIANS ABUSED: RIGHTS GROUP (*IOL*, 5 December 2011); SOUTH AFRICAN LESBIANS FACE ABUSE: RIGHTS GROUP-*Times Live*, 5 December 2011). While, as the thesis showed, in coverage of gay rights more generally and the Civil Unions Bill in particular, gay people are given a secondary role as acted upon rather than agential actors, the contrast here is stark. Lesbians are placed in the active subject position.

While the headlines often do not directly mention 'race' often race is a sub text in the reporting with a variety of terms used that stand in for explicitly naming the race of the victims. For example, to name the location in which an assault has taken place is to all intents and purposes the same thing as naming the 'race' of the victim as in for example, 'SOWETO'S GAYS LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR' (*IOL*, 30 June 2008). A body of work also shows that violence against women in South Africa mainly affects poor black township women with statistics showing that a black woman is 4.7 times more likely to be raped than a white woman (see for example Hewat & Arndt 2002). However there is a racial distancing being deployed here in which violence against lesbians is something that is happening in 'black' society rather than portraying the problem as a South African problem.

Other ways in which the headlines evoke the sympathy of readers and invite outrage is by creating context for, and personalising the victims so that they are not simply nameless but are for instance, ‘soccer players’ or ‘school pupils’. Thus, in these headlines the victims are usually not only lesbians but are also some other, more humanising identity as well as in for example ‘LESBIAN PUPIL’S FACE HIGH RAPE RISK’ (*IOL*, 6 May 2008); ‘LESBIAN SOCCER PLAYERS FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS’ (*IOL*, 5 May 2010); ‘CORRECTIVE RAPE HAPPENS AT SCHOOLS’ (*IOL*, 12 March 2008). This is in stark contrast with other reporting on gay and lesbian issues in which the blanket category of ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ is frequently used which has the effect of reducing gay subjects to their gayness rather than portraying being gay as one aspect of a richer human life which is connoted by ‘soccer players’ and ‘pupils’.

Van Dijk (1991) notes that it is important to look closely at the relationship between words used in the headlines as these serve an essential function of describing the roles of and the relationships amongst news actors. Therefore as the thesis has shown there is a need to examine whether the roles of the news actors in the corpus are connected to positive, negative or neutral actions. For example the human rights activists in the headlines are portrayed as agents responsible for positive actions as seen by their involvement in calling and campaigning for a stop to corrective rape. Examples include ‘CAMPAIGN TO STOP CORRECTIVE RAPE’ (*IOL*, 1 August 2011); ‘RAPE OF LESBIAN: ACTIVISTS CALL FOR NO BAIL’ (*IOL*, 7 April 2010) whereas in some instances South African men are represented as the responsible agents for negative actions such as corrective rape e.g. ‘SA MEN ARE WIFE BEATERS AND RAPISTS: SURVEY’ (*IOL*, 15 November 2004); ‘LESBIAN RAPE EXPOSES SA AS GRIMLY MACHO’ (*IOL*, 2 September 2009).

However, lesbians themselves are seldom given any active agency in these headlines. Lesbians remain the helpless victims of crime and when agency is present it is ‘activists’ and ‘human rights groups’ that act to try to remedy the situation. While lesbians themselves lie dead or battered it is some other body or agency that speaks out against the crimes as in for example: ‘AGENCY SEEKS ACTION ON RAPE’ (*IOL*, 12 May 2011) and ‘LESBIAN MURDER HATE CRIME: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH’ (*Times Live*, 3 May 2011)

Since headlines are basic summaries of news events the ordering of words in a headline will reveal which actors or actions are intended to be given priority as Van Dijk (1991) suggests.

In most cases, placing an actor in the first position of a sentence or headline phrase is usually related to the role of active agents and usually associated with a positive evaluation of actions. While government seldom appears as an agent in the elements of the corpus examined in the thesis, when it comes to corrective rape, in the eight times government/cabinet is mentioned in the headlines, six of the headlines have government in first position. Headlines such as ‘CABINET CONDEMNS CORRECTIVE RAPE’ (*Times Live*, 10 November 2011); ‘MEC ASKS FOR REPORT ON CORRECTIVE RAPE’ (*IOL*, 13 April 2010), give prominence to a positive framing of the government and its approach to stopping corrective rape. Government emerges in a positive light as opposed to responsible in any sense for the attacks or at least for not preventing the attacks.

While on the surface, the elements of the corpus dealing with ‘corrective rape’ mark a break with coverage analysed in the thesis to do with gay rights more generally, the point is that this is only superficial. Where the headline includes the term ‘lesbian’ it often does so in way that reduces peoples’ identity to their sexuality in a taken-for-granted way, marking a continuity between coverage that is on the surface ‘outraged’ at the treatment of lesbians yet continues to operate according to the same set of presuppositions and assumptions that legitimises precisely that treatment. So for example in the headline, ‘LESBIANS TO ATTEND TALKS AT PARLIAMENT’ (*IOL*, 13 March 2011) there is an assumption that to say that those attending the talks are ‘lesbians’ is to say enough. The point can be best understood if one adopts the discourse analysis tool described by Gee (2010) as ‘making normal strange’. In this case if one were to change the headline to read ‘Heterosexual women attend talks at Parliament’ it is clear that while at one level purporting to be siding with the victims of attacks the reporting takes a form which in fact reinforces the dominance of assumptions about there being something specific, peculiar and not the norm about being ‘lesbian’ such that to name the form of sex that a person chooses to engage in is worthy of appearing in the headline. It would be very strange to talk of heterosexual women doing anything – that is simply not what a headline would ever do. Yet the headlines constantly name the sexuality of people as if it stands in for them as people.

As Gee (2011) reminds us, when a piece of discourse takes for granted what is ‘normal’, it is inviting the reader or listener into a ‘figured world’ – a world in which these assumptions about what is and is not normal are shared. In this case the reader is invited to share the reductive assumption about what ‘lesbian’ is – and that this is not the norm as can be seen

from the effect of replacing 'lesbian' with heterosexual. Gee (2011) points out that assumptions about what is the 'norm' slide very quickly into assumptions about what is good or appropriate. For the headline to be understood in the ready way that is required if a headline is to do the work that a newspaper needs it to do then its assumptions must be shared by readers rather than causing a jarring disjuncture. Clearly those framing these headlines are expecting that this will be perfectly understandable to a reader who shares these assumptions.

While the headlines reiterate a chorus of disapproval for corrective rape by human rights organisations, activists, politicians and the like, often the structure of the headlines does not suggest a responsible agent towards whom our collective condemnation and disapproval should be targeted. So for instance in 'PAPER DOCUMENTS PERSECUTION OF BLACK LESBIANS' (*IOL*, 25 June 2003) what is absent from this sentence is a sense of whom is doing the persecuting. The subject is the paper because the verb is to do with documenting but the persecution itself lacks an active subject. Similarly with 'RAPE OF LESBIAN: ACTIVISTS CALL FOR NO BAIL' (*IOL*, 7 April 2010) here the activists are active in the sentence – they are doing something, namely calling for no bail but the rape itself is presented passively and as if it has no subject – no active responsible agent for the perpetration of the act. Lesbians are just raped thus obscuring that there are discernible, identifiable agents doing the raping. In headline after headline there is no raping subject, only lesbians as the object of rape or various social actors as the anti-rape campaigners or condemners for example 'CABINET CONDEMNS CORRECTIVE RAPE' (*Times Live*, 10 November 2011); 'CAMPAIGN TO STOP CORRECTIVE RAPE' (*IOL*, 1 August 2011); 'CORRECTIVE RAPE HEARTLESS: ANCWL' (*Times Live*, 10 May 2011); 'ACTIVISTS TO OPPOSE BAIL OF RAPE SUSPECT' (*IOL*, 6 April 2010).

The thesis has argued that news reporting both reflects and perpetuates deeply entrenched beliefs among South Africans that homosexuals are 'unnatural'. It is only in the light of this substratum of social and cultural beliefs that we can understand the idea of rape as a 'cure' for an illness (Brown 2012). A report by Human Rights Watch (2011) titled "We'll Show You You're a Woman" reveals the extent to which black South African lesbians in particular have been stereotyped as 'immoral' and 'deviant'. It also revealed that not only the perpetrators of lesbian rape believed that raping lesbians would cure them of their deviant sexuality but interviews with other men not involved in the rape also revealed that they understood and supported those that raped lesbians.

While in other contexts, as we have seen, media reports present themselves as simply reporting what prominent social actors are saying about homosexuality, here a variety of distancing strategies are used in which, in the context of widespread condemnation of attacks on lesbians, the reporting can present these as something that is involved with the way ‘Africans’ are as in for example, ‘CORRECTIVE RAPE MAKES YOU AN AFRICAN WOMAN’ (*IOL*, 7 November 2003). Here again the reader is invited into a world of shared assumptions about what ‘Africans’ are like and the relegation of homophobia to a phenomenon of a (backward) African way of looking at things.

In the same way as was shown in the thesis, homophobic views are justified by way of reference to homosexuality being foreign to Africa, in news reporting on the rape of Kekeletso Khena ‘African ways’ once again emerge as the way in which the reports choose to interpret sexual assault of a thirteen year old child. Kekeletso is cited as saying that the assault and rape had to do with gender roles in her society:

It's the most disturbing. It boils down to the fact that you as a woman have a role to be a wife, mother and subordinate to your husband. If you are lesbian you are not fulfilling those roles (cited in Mufweba 2003)

Since lesbians themselves are seldom cited as sources in news reporting on the rape of lesbians it is significant then to take note of the few occasions in which their voices are heard. Here Kekeletso’s story and the interpretation which she offers echoes the stance that the reporting takes as can be seen in its headlines – which is to, as I have argued earlier, frame lesbian rape as something that happens in black communities and has something to do with ‘African ways’.

Moreover, Kekeletso’s description echoes a dominant strand in the reporting on society’s views about homosexuality which is that it is ‘unAfrican’:

I was raped by my ex-boyfriend because I refused him sex. The last time I was raped, I was 18 years old; it was a family friend who said to me that I had to be taught how to be a black woman (cited in Mufweba 2003)

Actionaid (2009) conducted research on ‘corrective rape’ titled...Hate crimes: The rise of ‘corrective’ rape in South Africa. Their research found that it was a commonly held

perception that homosexuality is framed as ‘unnatural’ and therefore measures should be taken to rectify this problem for example through corrective rape.

If there is someone who is trying to rape a lesbian, I can appreciate their thing. It’s just to let them know that they must be straight. For me, I have no time to rape them but if another guy wants to teach them the way, they must rape them, they must rock them. Once she gets raped, I think she’ll know which way is nice (cited in Actionaid 2009)

Reid & Dirisuweit (2002) also note that rape and violence against women has become a common characteristic of South African black communities to such an extent that it is considered normal which is also shown in the above excerpt.

Lesbians themselves as victims of ‘corrective rape’ are rarely quoted in the corpus of material but on the few occasions when they are it is to echo the interpretation that corrective rape has to do with African men wanting to set straight African women who are behaving in a way that is unnatural and therefore in need of ‘correction’, for example:

We need to get rid of the belief that it is unnatural and that it is a white thing, or un-African (anonymous)

He did not understand, so he raped me. (anonymous)

They are going to show you that there is nothing wrong with a prick. (anonymous)

The men want to fix us. (cited in Mufwebwa 2003)

Lesbians who are considered as butch, who show elements of masculinity or those that represent or portray elements of the ‘effeminate male’ through for example dress and action are therefore a threat to male dominance and as such they are punished through corrective rape (see also Mufwebwa 2003; IRIN [Integrated Regional Information Networks] 2006; Reid & Dirisuweit 2002).

To the extent that perpetrators themselves are mentioned, they appear under the guise of ‘men’ rather than individual perpetrators – or as members of a ‘macho culture’. As in ‘SA MEN ARE WIFE BEATERS AND RAPISTS’ (*IOL*, 15 November 2004), “LESBIAN

RAPE EXPOSES SA AS GRIMLY MACHO” (*IOL*, 2 September 2009); “MEN OF STEEL MUST CHANGE” (*Times Live*, 18 July 2010). Hence it was noted that, in general the identity of the perpetrators in the corpus of corrective rape is obscured and generalised as ‘men’.

The analysis of devices deployed in news coverage of homosexuality in South Africa has shown that there exists however a wide gulf between the aspirations of the Constitution and the reality of discriminatory attitudes towards homosexuality in mainstream South African public discourse. Devices that promote the normative acceptance of intolerance support a certain legitimisation of violence which for example takes the form of corrective rape. Homophobia rather than tolerance is perpetuated by political, religious and civic leaders, and often justified by way of reference to religion, culture and tradition. The construction of homosexuality as unnatural, unAfrican and ungodly has the effect of alienating gay citizens as members of an equal society and furthermore it has the effect of maintaining and legitimising a gender order which condones violence and discrimination directed at gay people. Language is a powerful social tool for the maintenance of systems of violence and inequality.

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