

**Church and homosexuality: the relationship between individual  
religious beliefs, attitudes and the quality of contact**

by

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## CONTENTS

List of figures.	i
List of tables.	ii
Summary.	iii
Opsomming	vi
<b>Chapter 1 : Introduction.</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Motivation for the study.	1
1.3 Aim.	5
1.4 Brief overview of the chapters of dissertation.	6
<b>Chapter 2 : Literature review.</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Introduction.	8
2.2 Homosexuality.	9
2.3 Attitudes and how they are formed with application to homosexuality.	10
2.4 Attitudes towards homosexuality in the past and now.	14
2.5 Religious beliefs towards homosexuality.	17
2.6 Biblical evidence.	18
2.7 The Church's manner of dealing with homosexuality.	21
2.8 Contact with homosexuals.	24
2.9 Gender differences in attitudes towards homosexuals.	26

2.10 The relationship age and attitudes, religious beliefs and the experience of contact.	27
2.11 Conclusion	28
<b>Chapter 3 : Method.</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 Research design.	29
3.2.1 Type of design.	29
3.3 Sample	30
3.3.1 Population	30
3.3.2 Sampling procedure	32
3.3.3 Description of the sample	30
3.3.4 Procedure	34
3.4 Measuring Instrument	35
3.4.1 Biographical information	35
3.4.2 The three scales	35
3.4.3 Reliability of scales	38
3.5 Statistical analysis.	39
3.6 Conclusion	40
<b>Chapter 4 : Results</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1 Introduction	41

4.2	Factor analysis	41
4.2.1	Religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale	41
4.2.2	Attitudes towards homosexuals scale.	44
4.2.3	Quality of contact scale.	46
4.2.4	Classification of relation with homosexuals scale.	48
4.3	The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact in the sample	50
4.4	Is there a relationship between religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals?	52
4.5	Is there a relationship between the quality of contact and the attitudes towards homosexuals?	53
4.6	Is there a relationship between the quality of contact with homosexuals and religious beliefs?	53
4.7	Gender differences:	53
4.7.1	Religious beliefs.	53
4.7.2	Quality of contact with homosexuals.	54
4.7.3	Attitudes towards homosexuals.	54
4.8	Is there a relationship between age and religious beliefs, quality of contact and attitudes?	55
4.9	Is there a relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact with homosexuals?	55
4.10	Conclusions	56

<b>Chapter 5 : Discussion of results.</b>	<b>57</b>
5.1 Introduction	57
5.2 Psychometric properties of the scales	57
5.2.1 Religious beliefs towards homosexuality	57
5.2.2 Attitudes towards homosexuals.	58
5.2.3 Quality of contact scale	59
5.2.4 Classification of relations with homosexuals scale.	60
5.3 The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and contact in the sample group	60
5.3.1 Religious beliefs	60
5.3.2 Attitudes	61
5.3.3 Quality of contact	62
5.4 Is there a relationship between religious beliefs towards homosexuality influence attitudes towards homosexuals?	63
5.5 Is there a relationship between the quality of contact and the attitude towards homosexuals?	64
5.6 Is there a relationship between the quality of contact with homosexuals and religious beliefs?	66
5.7 Gender differences	67
5.7.1 Attitudes towards homosexuals.	67
5.7.2 Religious beliefs.	67
5.7.3 Quality of contact with homosexuals.	68

5.8 Is there a relationship between age and religious beliefs, experience of contact and attitudes?	69
5.9 Is there a relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact with homosexuals?	69
5.10 Conclusion	70
<b>Chapter 6 : Conclusions and Recommendations.</b>	<b>71</b>
6.1 Introduction	71
6.2 Conclusions drawn from this study.	71
6.3 Recommendations.	72
6.4 Conclusion	74
<b>References</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix A : Cover letter and questionnaire</b>	<b>83</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 : The distribution of males and females in the sample.	31
Figure 3.2 : The distribution of ages in the sample.	32
Figure 3.3 : Distribution of marital status in the sample.	32
Figure 3.4 : The distribution of the church attendance of the sample.	33
Figure 3.5 : The distribution of the classification of relation	33
Figure 4.1 : Scree plot for the religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale.	42
Figure 4.2 : Scree plot for attitudes towards homosexuality scale.	44
Figure 4.3 : Scree plot for quality of contact scale	46
Figure 4.4 : Scree plot for the contact with whom scale	49
Figure 4.5 : The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact.	52
Figure 4.6 : Gender differences in religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact.	54



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 : Reliability coefficients for the scales	38
Table 4.1 Factor loadings for the religious beliefs towards homosexuality	43
Table 4.2 : Factor loadings for attitudes towards homosexuals scale.	45
Table 4.3 : Factor loadings for quality of contact scale.	47
Table 4.4 : Factor loadings for the contact with whom scale.	50
Table 4.5 : Correlations of religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact.	53
Table 4.6 : Correlations with age.	55
Table 4.7 : Correlations with church attendance	56

## SUMMARY

Society is changing its attitude towards homosexuals, allowing them to become more open about their sexual orientation in the community. The attitude has changed from viewing the homosexual individual as someone who is ill and can be cured to the liberation of homosexuals out of the “closet” and becoming actively involved in the community. There is still a strong negative stereotype associated with homosexuals.

The church in the past has been the cultural legitimizer of “antigay oppression”. The changes in society have caused it to take a new look at its role with regard to homosexuality. It holds mixed attitudes towards homosexuals and religious beliefs about homosexuality. There was a lack of consensus among biblical scholars on the issue of homosexuality with regard to biblical evidence.

This study investigated the nature of, and the relationship between the following factors : religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals and the quality of the contact with homosexuals.

A postal survey was conducted in a Methodist church in Pretoria. A questionnaire was posted to 200 respondents chosen by a random selection process. Eighty questionnaires were returned. Due to the manner in which five were filled in, only 75 questionnaires were processed.

The nature of the attitudes towards homosexuals, religious beliefs about homosexuality and the quality of contact with homosexuals was shown to be negative in the congregation in which the study took place. The congregation predominately holds the traditional belief that homosexuality is sinful and immoral.

The nature of the relationship between the three above mentioned factors was shown to be a positive correlation between all the factors. It is important not to view the factors in isolation, but to look at the relationship that they have with each other.

The gender difference of these factors was also investigated. Males within the congregation were shown to have a more negative attitude towards homosexuals, religious beliefs towards homosexuality, and experience of contact with homosexuals, than do females. This can be explained by that heterosexual males feel that their gender expectations are threatened by homosexuality.

The study investigated how religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals and the experience of contact with homosexuals correlated with the age of the respondents.

Key words:

- Homosexuals
- Homosexuality



- Religious beliefs
- Church
- Bible
- Sin
- Attitudes
- Stereotypes
- Cognitions
- Contact

## OPSOMMING

Die samelewing se houding teenoor homoseksuele persone is besig om te verander, wat hulle toelaat om meer openlik te wees omtrent hulle seksuele oriëntering in die gemeenskap. Die siening dat die homoseksuele individu 'n siek persoon is wat genees moet word, het verander en lei daartoe dat hy sogenaamd "uit die kas" kom en aktiewe lede van die gemeenskap word. Daar is nog steeds 'n sterk negatiewe stereotipering van homoseksuele.

Die kerk was in die verlede die kulturele toepasser van "Anti-gay verdrukking". Die veranderinge in die samelewing lei tot 'n nuwe uitkyk oor die kerk se rol ten opsigte van homoseksualiteit. Dit handhaaf gemengde standpunte teenoor homoseksuele en godsdienstige oortuigings rakende homoseksualiteit. Daar is 'n gebrek aan konsensus oor die vertolking van homoseksualiteit na aanleiding van Bybelse gronde.

'n Studie is gedoen oor die aard van, en die verwantskap tussen die volgende faktore: godsdienstige oortuigings jeens homoseksualiteit, houdings teenoor homoseksuele en die belewenis van die kwaliteit van kontak met homoseksuele.

'n Vraelys is gepos aan 200 respondente wat eweliansig gekies is uit lede van 'n Metodiste gemeente in Pretoria. Daar is 80 terug ontvang waarvan 75 verwerk kon word omdat die ander vyf verkeerd ingevul is.

Dit is bevind dat die aard van die houdings teenoor, en godsdienstige oortuigings rakende homoseksualiteit en die kwaliteit van die kontak met homoseksuele negatief is in die gemeente waarin die navorsing gedoen is. Die gemeente huldig oorwegend die tradisionele godsdienstige oortuiging dat homoseksualiteit 'n sonde is en onsedelik is.

Daar is bevind dat daar 'n positiewe korrelasie is tussen die drie bogenoemde faktore. Dit is belangrik om nie die faktore in isolasie te sien nie, maar om te kyk na hulle onderlinge verwantskap.

Geslagverskille tussen die faktore is ook ondersoek. Die mans in die gemeente het 'n meer negatiewe houding teenoor homoseksuele, 'n meer negatiewe geloofsoortuiging oor homoseksualiteit en 'n meer negatiewe kwaliteit van kontak met homoseksuele ervarings as die vrouens. 'n Moontlike verklaring is dat mans se geslagsverwagtings bedreig word deur homoseksualiteit.

Sleutelwoorde:

- Homoseksuele
- Homoseksualiteit
- Godsdienstige oortuigings
- Kerk
- Bybel
- Sonde
- Houdings



- Stereotipe
- Kognisies
- Kontak

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### ***1.1 Introduction***

The aim of this introductory chapter is to discuss the motivation for the study, the aims of the study and to outline the manner in which this study will be presented.

#### ***1.2 Motivation for the study***

In South Africa, and the world, there is a new acceptance of homosexuality and homosexuals in society. In contrast, homosexuality is very much still a taboo subject in the church, and homosexuals are often only welcome in the church if they keep quiet about their homosexuality, or if they change. Now more than ever, members of all churches are faced with dealing with the new acceptance of homosexuality in the world around them and the past (and present) rejection of homosexuals in the church.

The members of the homosexual community are beginning to ask for more and more rights. They are becoming more active in public, getting involved in seeking rights for the homosexual community. This can also be seen happening in South African society (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

The South African constitution states: “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy,



marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth” (South Africa, 1996, p. 1247 ).

The constitution adopted on the 8th May 1996 says that one may not discriminate against anyone because of their sexual orientation. South Africa is the first country in the world to adopt such a clause in its constitution. It is interesting to note that only one political party objected to the anti-discriminatory clause in the constitution, this being the African Christian Democratic Party (Dunton & Palmberg, 1996).

This clause in the constitution has brought about a change in legalization, which has allowed the homosexual minority in South Africa a chance to change from the past secrecy about their homosexuality to being open about it. In the past they were subjected to being labeled and treated as criminals if their sexual orientation became known. Homosexuals can now take the legal and social freedom that they want, obtaining rights for the homosexual community and being openly homosexual in society (this was not possible under the apartheid system, which can be described as a politically oppressive society) (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

Homosexuals are still struggling for acceptance as citizens in good standing from society. Changes in the legislation have brought about the freedom to express one’s homosexuality, yet the attitudes towards homosexuals and homosexuality are not so easy to change. The old attitudes of disapproval, distaste and the rejection of the homosexual

still exists in society. This rejection of the homosexuals has led to the evolution of a homosexual sub-culture (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

Homosexuals in South Africa can be seen to be taking a stand in society. The “Gay Pride March” on the 28th September 1996 shows that this minority is proud to be part of the New South Africa. They promoted their counseling services not just for the homosexuals but for other people who have questions regarding homosexuality and how to deal with the issue. Within the context of this, it is interesting to note that one church (denomination unknown) was also there protesting that homosexuality is sinful (SABC News, 1996).

Another example of their stand within South African society is that the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (CGLE) applied to the High Court for the common law crimes of sodomy and unnatural sexual offenses to be declared unconstitutional. It was declared unconstitutional, and on the 8 May 1998 gay and lesbian sex was legalized (Pretoria News, 1998b).

More and more church dignitaries are being seen, speaking out about the manner in which homosexuals are treated. Catholic Bishop Reginald Cawcutt spoke out about the discrimination that both state and the church heap on homosexuals. He said homosexuals

are regarded as a low form of humanity (Pretoria News, 1998a) The Most Reverend Desmond Tutu (1997) questioned the Church of the Province of Southern Africa's teachings about sexuality and homosexuality. He said that although sexuality is regarded being neutral, homosexuals are required by the church to remain celibate in order to be accepted.

Looking at the changes in society, the church is going to be challenged about its attitudes towards and its treatment of homosexual individuals. Just as the church was challenged in the past about racism, it is now being challenged by the question of human sexuality, especially the issue of homosexuality. The church is being challenged to accept homosexuals in its congregations as full members who have the same standing as heterosexuals in the church. The church is becoming uncomfortable because of this challenge as the taken-for-granted beliefs about homosexuality are being questioned (Ellison, 1987).

This challenge has not been well received in the church nor in society. The issue causing the problem is not homosexuality per se, but the moral qualities and characteristic of homosexuality. There needs to be a yardstick for the setting of moral standards and holding people accountable (Ellison, 1987).

In America in the 1970's the church was challenged to sanction the lifestyle of the homosexual individual, and to ordain homosexuals as clergy in the church (Williams, 1971). This is now starting to happen in South Africa. The Church of the Province of



South Africa says it will not bless same sex relationships and marriages. The Archbishop of Cape Town Njongonkulu Ndungane said that this was the position of the church, unless the church reaches a different decision on the issue. A commission has been established to discern the mind of God on the subject. All members of the church are encouraged to participate in the commission in a spirit of tolerance and generosity (Pretoria News, 1998d).

The church's answer to this challenge has significance not only for the church, but also for society in general. The implications of the church's answer will be seen in the areas of violence towards homosexuals and the acceptance of homosexuals within the community at large (Ellison, 1987).

### **1.3 Aim**

This study tries to address the following :

- What is the nature of the religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuality and the quality of contact with homosexuals among the members of the congregation?
- Is there a relationship between the quality of contact with homosexuals and the church member's religious beliefs towards homosexuality?
- What is the correlation between church member's religious beliefs towards homosexuality and their attitudes towards homosexuals?
- What is the correlation between the church member's quality of contact with homosexuals and their attitudes towards homosexuals?

- What are the gender differences in:
  1. their religious beliefs regarding homosexuality?
  2. their quality of contact with homosexuals? and
  3. their attitudes towards homosexuals?
  
- Is there a relationship between the age of the respondents and :
  1. their religious beliefs about homosexuality?
  2. their attitudes towards homosexuals?
  3. their quality of contact with homosexuals?
  
- Is there a relationship between the member's church attendance and:
  1. their religious beliefs about homosexuality?
  2. their attitudes towards homosexuals?
  3. their quality of contact with homosexuals?

#### ***1.4 Brief overview of the Chapters of Dissertation:***

##### **Chapter 2 :Literature review**

In this chapter there is a discussion of key concepts, these being :

- What is homosexuality?
- Attitudes and how they are formed with application to homosexuality.
- Attitudes towards homosexuality in the past and now.
- Religious beliefs toward homosexuality.
- A discussion of biblical evidence about homosexuality.
- The church's manner of dealing with homosexuality.



- Contact with homosexuals.
- Gender differences in attitudes towards homosexuals.
- The relationship between age and attitudes, religious beliefs and experiences of contact.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

In this chapter there is a description of the method used to conduct the study. This includes a description of the research design, the measuring instruments used and the analysis of data.

### **Chapter 4 : Results**

This chapter is a presentation of the results obtained.

### **Chapter 5 : Interpretation of results**

This chapter contains a discussion of the results and an integration of the theory and the results.

### **Chapter 6 : Conclusions**

This chapter includes a discussion of the conclusions from the study, shortcomings and strong points of the study, as well as recommendations for further study and how to apply the information obtained in this study.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ***2.1 Introduction***

This chapter describes the context of the present study. It deals with intergroup attitudes, the church's attitude towards homosexuals and how the church's religious beliefs influence these attitudes. The chapter examines what homosexuality is, looking at the various definitions of homosexuality. This is followed by an examination of what attitudes are and how they are formed with application to homosexuality. This also includes a discussion of past and present attitudes towards homosexuality and the influences that have caused changes in attitudes towards homosexuality. This will be followed by an overview of religious beliefs about homosexuality, the biblical evidence for these beliefs, and the manner in which the church has dealt with homosexuality in the past and the present. This will be followed by a discussion of how an individual's contact with homosexuals influences his or her attitudes towards homosexuality. This is followed by a discussion of gender and age differences with regards to attitudes towards homosexuality.

## **2.2 Homosexuality**

Many definitions have been given for the term homosexuality. These will be discussed in this section in order to obtain a definition for this dissertation.

Homosexuality can be seen as a “sexual orientation towards members of one’s own sex” (Dunton & Palmberg, 1996, p. 6). Moss (1977, p. 7) says that to be homosexual means “to find people of the same sex more sexually attractive than those of the other sex.” Another is that homosexuality “is defined as having a physical, emotional and intellectual orientation for relationships with persons of the same sex” (Brooke, 1993, p. 78). But these definitions of homosexuality do not give a full picture of what homosexuality is, as they only focus on the sexual orientation of the individual.

A more complete definition is given by Isaacs and McKendrick (1992, p. XIII) who say that “Homosexuality is a broad spectrum of psychological, emotional, and sexual variables in a state of interplay between people of the same sex. Homosexuality is not only sexual attraction between people of the same sex, but also includes an emotional as well as physical bond; a fantasy system; and elements of symbolism, eroticism, and sexuality.”

This study takes another dimension into account in the definition of homosexuality. The definition was further narrowed down to include only the attitudes toward homosexual individuals who are in a monogamous relationship. This is someone that is committed to having one sexual partner. It can be compared to a marriage relationship or a steady heterosexual relationship. This was done in order to obtain permission for the study to be conducted in a specific church. However, when interpreting the results of this study, one



must also take into account that people have very fixed ideas or stereotypes of homosexuals. The respondents may have included their feeling to homosexuals in general, and not just in monogamous relationships as asked.

Questions often arise about where and how homosexuality originates in an individual. It is seldom consciously chosen, it is a need that the person experiences within himself. Many aspects play a part in an individual being homosexual, such as hereditary, the environment, upbringing and “push” factors (such as the fear of pregnancy, disgust for the sexual organs of the opposite sex, etc.) (Greene, 1994; Moss, 1977). Literature includes many theories about why an individual has a homosexual orientation, but it is unknown exactly why and how an individual becomes a homosexual. This study will not go into detail as to the origin of homosexuality within the individual.

It is estimated that ten percent of the population of the world is homosexual. This is also the estimated amount of homosexuals in South Africa (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992; Spong, 1990).

### ***2.3 Attitudes and how they are formed with application to homosexuality***

The theoretical framework that has been chosen to define attitudes towards homosexuals is based on contemporary theorizing about attitudes. Baron and Byrne (1994, p. 129), say that attitudes are “evaluations of various objects (*people*) that are stored in memory.” Petty (1995) says that attitudes are very general evaluations of the attitude object. Attitudes include an evaluation of the object, and this shapes the individual’s social

perception and social behaviour. The attitude, which is shared by a group, dictates the group's actions and perceptions of attitudes within the social environment (Foster & Nel, 1991). The attitudes that a church holds about homosexuality influences the manner in which homosexuals are treated and perceived by individual members of the congregation.

Attitudes can therefore be defined as the cognitive association that one has with a certain object or person. Attitudes never exist in isolation, they are connected to various memories and beliefs in one's life. There is an inter-attitudinal structure between various attitudes. This means that attitudes are linked to other attitudes on the basis of similarity. Activating one attitude can lead to the activation of other attitudes because of this inter-attitudinal structure (Baron & Byrne, 1994; Petty, 1995). This study focuses on attitudes towards homosexuality and whether these are influenced by the individual's religious beliefs about homosexuality and his or her contact with homosexuals.

There are three sources of information that are the basis of attitudes, these are cognitive information (e.g. religious beliefs about homosexuality), emotional information (e.g. feelings or emotions towards homosexuals) and information concerning past behaviours or behavioural intentions towards the attitude objects (Haddock, Zanna & Esses, 1993). Attitudes towards homosexuality can be connected to the individual's experience of the contact that they have with homosexuals and by their beliefs about homosexuals, including the religious beliefs about homosexuality. This study focuses on the contact with homosexuals and religious beliefs about homosexuality, and their relationship with people's attitudes.

Attitudes can be learnt through instrumental conditioning. Behaviours that are followed by positive outcomes are strengthened and those followed by negative outcomes are weakened or repressed (Baron & Byrne, 1994). The church in general has in the past supported people in their negative attitudes towards homosexuals, saying that it is right to reject homosexuals. This acceptance by the church has strengthened people's negative attitudes towards homosexuals.

Manners in which attitudes are learnt are explained by the social learning theory. People acquire their attitudes from other people through a process of social learning. Social learning occurs in many diverse ways. These ways include interaction with others or merely observing the behaviour of others (Baron & Byrne, 1994).

Attitudes may be learnt by modeling, learning by example from others. People acquire a new attitude by observing people around them having a specific attitude (Baron & Byrne, 1994). Individuals within the church may acquire the same attitude towards homosexuals as other members and leaders in the church through modeling their behaviour. Past behaviour has been to refuse any homosexuals membership of the congregation. This behaviour has been modeled by newer members in the church, thus keeping alive within members of the church a negative attitude towards homosexuals.

Attitudes are also learnt through direct personal experience. Direct experience results in stronger and longer lasting attitudes than other types of formation of attitudes. These

attitudes are more resistant to change than an anticipated attitude or an attitude learned through observation (Baron & Byrne, 1994). This is because individuals are the source of attitudes. When one comes into contact with the attitudinal object it enables the individual to come into contact with reality and not just to imagine what one's attitude will be (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991). People's attitudes towards homosexuals are stronger when the person has had direct contact with homosexual people.

An inter-group attitude can be defined as a favorable or unfavorable overall evaluation of a social group. This attitude is based on affective (emotions) and cognitive (beliefs) sources of information. A cognitive source of attitudes is stereotypes (Haddock et al., 1993). The inter-group attitude maintains and regulates the group behaviour, and it also establishes group adherence among its members (Foster & Nel, 1991). When looking at attitudes towards homosexuals the negative stereotypes held by groups play a role in the formation of the negative attitude, along with other facts such as beliefs about homosexuality and past behavioural experiences with homosexuals. It establishes the manner in which groups such as churches treat homosexuals.

Symbolic beliefs (beliefs that a social group violates or promotes the attainment of cherished values, customs or traditions) also play a role in the formulation of attitudes. Homosexuals may be perceived as violating traditional family values and God's will. This perception may cause individuals to express extremely negative attitudes (Haddock et al., 1993). Attitudes towards homosexuals may be formed by religious symbolic beliefs. The

religious belief that homosexuality is a sin links the negative attitudes towards sin with the feelings that people experience towards homosexuals.

#### ***2.4 Attitudes towards homosexuality in the past and now***

In the past people viewed homosexuals as individuals who were ill. This was partially due to Freud's view of homosexuality. He saw homosexuality as a damaged or blocked heterosexuality. This called for a hunt into the individual's childhood so that he or she could function properly as a heterosexual. It was considered that this damage or block occurred somewhere between the ages of four and nine. According to Freud all individuals go through this developmental phase, "homoerotic", which is a process of achieving heterosexuality. This view is no longer accepted in medical circles, and is now becoming less popular amongst the general population (Marmor, 1980; Sprong, 1990; Williams, 1971). Research trying to support that homosexuality is an illness and to find a cure for the condition, was unable to support this theory (Spong, 1990).

The change in attitude and beliefs in medical circles can be seen in that homosexuality was deleted from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III (DSM III) by the American Psychiatric Association in 1974. This was done because of political activism in 1973 by various groups in the United States (Brooke, 1993; Greene, 1994; Spong, 1990). The history of the development of the definition of what abnormal behaviour is, shows that it has been influenced by many factors including the interpersonal and social contexts of what is considered to be normal in society. Homosexuality differed from the heterosexual

norm that society had set for sexual behaviour and was therefore classified as abnormal behaviour (Barlow & Durand, 1995).

This change in the way in which people view homosexual individuals has led to changes in the way in which homosexual people are involved in the community. In the USA the civil rights movement has brought many homosexuals out of the “closet”. The conditions preceding this change in viewpoint were the women’s and Black liberation movements. These conditions possibly created the right social atmosphere to bring about change. The civil rights movement sought to stop police harassment and to gain full civil rights for homosexuals (Williams, 1971).

The conditions for the liberation of the homosexual community in South Africa have been set by the changes in the political environment. This new political environment allowed for the writing of the new constitution, which protects people from discrimination due to various characteristics, including people’s sexual orientation. This amounts to the laws against homosexuality (sodomy and what was termed unnatural offenses) becoming nullified (Pretoria News, 1998b).

Many studies (e.g. Herek, 1988; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Nelson & Krieger, 1997) have concluded that the attitudes towards homosexuals were negative. For many people the beliefs and opinions about homosexuality were simply unchallenged parts of their socialization experiences. People often do not think about an issue unless they are asked to. Pratte (1993) found that the attitudes towards homosexuals have become less negative, but are still negative (Haddock et al., 1993; Pratte, 1993).

People often hold negative stereotypes about homosexuals (Eagle & Bedford, 1992). Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that individuals hold about specific social groups. They are frameworks of knowledge and beliefs. Stereotypes involve generalizations about the group characteristics. The individual uses stereotypes to process social information about the group involved (Baron & Byrne, 1994). The stereotypes of homosexuals includes images of effeminate men, macho women, freaks, mentally ill, sexually abnormal, perverted, maladjusted, male homosexuals acting like women, and that male homosexuals are less masculine than heterosexual males, are dangerous to young boys, and have a dramatic manner. The research studying homosexual stereotypes was started using this type of negative stereotyping, which strengthened the negative attitudes towards homosexuality in the samples used in these studies (Kite, 1994; Moss, 1977).

Stereotypes create negative perceptions and attitudes towards homosexuals. Homosexuals feel that the rejection they receive from the public is one of their largest problems. Together with struggling with the normal problems of life, they also need to deal with the social isolation, prejudice and rejection by society (Moss, 1977).

These negative attitudes are in contrast to the American Psychological Association's official policy that states that homosexuality per se implies that there is no impairment in stability, judgment, reliability, and general social and vocational capabilities. They urge all mental health professionals to help remove the stigma of mental illness attached to homosexual sexual orientations (Greene, 1994).

## ***2.5 Religious beliefs towards homosexuality***

The moral standards that the church has instilled into western culture have remained largely intact and unquestioned up until recently. These have become embedded into culture shaping beliefs and attitudes (Williams, 1971). This includes the beliefs and attitudes about homosexuality.

Even though there has been a change in the attitudes towards homosexuality in the medical and the general population, the church is still debating the morality of homosexuality (Brooke, 1993).

Traditionally homosexuality has been seen as sinful as it is contrary to the will of God. This is because it is believed to be contrary to the procreative purpose of sexual intercourse, that it attacks the basic unit of society (the family), and that it is a deliberate pursuit of sexual pleasure in the absence of a stable framework for mutual growth and understanding (marriage) (Brooke, 1993).

The church in the past has been the cultural legitimizer of “antigay oppression”. Homosexuals have been subjected to religious condemnation now and in the past. This injustice has taken place ironically in the name of the gospel of love, mercy and peace (Ellison, 1993; Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

It is believed by many Christians that the Bible condemns homosexuality and that the desires of homosexuality must be renounced and not be given overt expression (Moss, 1977). McFarland (1989) says that consistent fundamentalists follow the Bible’s



condemnation of homosexuality without questioning the scriptures and teachings of the church. Fundamentalism is basically a closed-minded, ethnocentric mindset. This simplistic religious attitude induces intolerance towards those that differ, and the tendency to discriminate.

## **2.6 Biblical evidence**

There is a lack of consensus amongst biblical scholars on the issue of homosexuality. This has led to people feeling uncomfortable about the issue of “the Bible and homosexuality” as they feel that not having a definite answer from the Bible indicates that the issue is “up for grabs” (Hawkins, 1991, p. 34). The following is a discussion of what the Bible says about homosexuality and the different ways in which it is interpreted.

Whenever homosexuality is mentioned in the Bible the context is negative, such as adultery, promiscuity, violence or idolatrous worship. The fact that the context is often ignored may explain why Christians traditionally treat homosexuals harshly (Scanzoni & Mollenkott, 1978).

Biblically there is not much said about homosexuality, but there are three references directly relevant to the issue. These are the story of Sodom, the law in Leviticus and Paul’s directions in Romans that homosexuality is an abuse against God’s purpose in creation. There are also other scriptures in the new testament that refer to homosexuality such as 1 Timothy 1:8-11 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Nowhere in the Bible, in the original languages, is the term homosexuality used (Church of England, 1978; Paley, 1988; Scanzoni & Mollenkott, 1978).

The story of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-11) is used as proof that homosexuality is a sin and contrary to God's will. It is believed that it was because of the sin of homosexuality that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed (Brooke, 1993). Bailey (in Ellison, 1993) and Williams (1971) say that the sin of Sodom was not the sin of homosexuality, but rather the sin of inhospitality. Hanigan (1988) says that the men of Sodom were there to gang rape the angels, and that Sodom was destroyed for an unknown sin.

Another explanation given is that the men of Sodom were trying to humiliate the visitors because they did not show the entire city their credentials. The intention was to demonstrate their power over the visitors as they were perceived as weak and vulnerable (Scanzoni & Mollenkott, 1978).

Moss (1977) quotes Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 as scriptures that talk about homosexuality. These scriptures say that homosexuality is disgusting, that God hates it, and that the punishment for homosexuality is death. Some say that these references are isolated, yet they appear in the passages dealing with forbidden sexual practices. Scholars have many interpretations for these scriptures, ranging from condemnation to justification that homosexuality is not a sin.

These scriptures need to be seen in context of the social environment. They are placed in the legal collection which has to do with the family as known in ancient Israel. The aim of these scriptures is to strengthen and preserve the family, by the forbidding of anything that would disturb its harmony or prevent growth and harmony. Homosexual behaviour can be seen as a threat to the family and its social purpose (Church of England, 1978).

One of the reasons that homosexuality was prohibited, along with other practices, was that it was characteristic of the Canaanite population of Palestine. Homosexuality was part of the Canaanite's worship. Israel needed to stay separate from other nations (Church of England, 1978).

In the New testament the key passage referring to homosexuality is Romans 1:18-32. These scriptures need to be seen within the background of the creation of humanity. The doctrine of creation implies that humans were created as male and female. This means that there is a dual sexual structure, implying that the creation of sexuality is heterosexual. Homosexual behaviour is seen as diverging from God's creation scheme in this context (Church of England, 1978; Williams 1971).

When biblical scholars study the issue of homosexuality there is a resistance to study completely what the Bible does and does not say about the issue (Ellison, 1993). There are other scriptures that can be drawn into the debate of whether homosexuality is a sin or not, even if they do not directly refer to homosexuality. All of these scriptures need to be studied in detail to come to a complete understanding of the biblical attitude to homosexuality. In studying these scriptures one also needs to go back to the original language of the text (Hebrew and Greek), and the context in which it was written (both the historical and cultural contexts) and how they can be applied to contemporary issues. Also in the studying of the scriptures one needs to study the modern translations to see if they are being correctly translated and applied. This study will not go into such depth (Church of England, 1978; Ellison, 1993; Mader, 1993; Moss, 1977; Williams 1971).

## ***2.7 The Church's manner of dealing with homosexuality***

Most religious denominations consider homosexuality to be immoral. This has caused many homosexuals to either deny their homosexuality in order to be accepted into the church or to reject the church because their religion and their sexuality are incompatible (Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien & Williams, 1994).

The fact that many scholars question that the Bible teaches that homosexuality is wrong has brought a divergence in the way in which churches have dealt with the issue. Churches cannot agree among themselves if homosexuality is right or wrong. Some churches have ordained homosexual people, while others will not allow homosexuals to worship in their church. Sometimes even within a denomination there is no clarity on the topic. This has allowed the members in the churches to question whether or not homosexuality is sinful (Church of England, 1978; Williams, 1971).

Society today is different from that of biblical times. Biblical writing reflects the social structure and needs of those times. Today the text is still the same but the church's understanding and use of it differs. Thus also the attitudes and behaviours that come from the new understanding of these texts are not the same (Church of England, 1978).

In the first part of the twentieth century, the church dealt with homosexuality according to the medical model. This was that homosexuals are people with a particular illness. The people concerned were not blamed for the origin of this illness. Yet they were advised to seek counseling from professionals in order to change the situation or at least learn to deal with the impulses. There was little spiritual advice given to the homosexual person as the

focus was on more fundamental therapies. Before this the individual was seen to be responsible for this sin and his or her homosexuality was seen as a personal failure for which the homosexual individual should be held accountable (Nugent & Gramick, 1989).

The new world view that homosexuality is not an illness, and that it is a sexual orientation that cannot be changed has brought new challenges to the church. These being : how to deal with the issue of homosexuality, and how to bring the new understanding of homosexuality together with the biblical statements. Many denominations have spent large amounts of time exploring the topic of homosexuality and how it relates to biblical teachings (Nugent & Gramick, 1989).

The church often appears hostile to homosexuals (Moss, 1977). In South Africa, the Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) has an official policy towards homosexuals, which states that it is an almost pathological fear of the opposite sex (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992).

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is still busy preparing its' official policy on the issue of homosexuality. The United Methodist Church (United States) says that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teachings" (United Methodist Church, 1988, p. 6). Yet within the United Methodist Church there is a debate about homosexuality. Does the church condone or reject homosexuality? (United Methodist Church, 1988).

The Church of England (1978) says that the church in general has dealt more harshly with the issue of homosexuality than the other sins that are listed in Romans 1 :29-31. Many homosexuals feel hurt and shut out by the church's treatment of them (Hawkins, 1991).

The Church of England, during the Lambeth Conference at Canterbury, declared homosexuality as incompatible with the Bible but that homosexuals are loved by God and are full members of the church. This is the first official policy that the Church of England has issued, but it is not considered the final word. The issue of homosexuality was said to be able to split the church if not dealt with effectively (Pretoria News, 1998c).

The homosexual's experience of attitudes from organized religion has promoted feelings of guilt and unworthiness within individuals. Many homosexuals have experienced rejection and abandonment because of it (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992). Some churches accept homosexuals in the church so that the church can attempt to change and cure them (Brooke, 1993). This attitude has also strengthened the feelings of hurt and isolation experienced by homosexuals.

Other churches do not condemn homosexuality and accept homosexuals into the church. They consider that a homosexual act between two people is not sinful if it is intended as a genuine union of love. These people consider that the condemnation of homosexuality stems from fear of homosexuals (Brooke 1993).

Supporters of homosexuality say that the foundation of the New Testament is love. The mandate of the New Testament is to love one another. The fear and hatred of homosexuals is regarded as incompatible with the Gospel mandate people within the

church are encouraged to refrain from inflicting more harm on homosexuals (Brooke, 1993; Ellison, 1987).

Attitudes towards homosexuality are changing within the church in general. Even though the different churches do not all accept homosexuality, members within the various churches are seeking to change the negative attitude (Brooke, 1993).

### ***2.8 Contact with homosexuals***

Contact with homosexuals in this dissertation is defined as the quality of the contact that the individual has had with homosexual individuals. This contact may either be experienced as positive or negative. A positive experience would include feeling that the contact was pleasant and comfortable, and the person experiences respect and acceptance of the homosexuals. Whereas negative contact would include feeling that the contact with the homosexual is unpleasant and uncomfortable, and the person experiences disgust, revulsion and wants to reject the homosexual.

The way in which people experience their contact with homosexuals affects their attitudes towards homosexuals. This can be explained as a learning experience : attitudes are being learnt through a direct experience of contact with homosexuals. A positive experience of their contact with homosexuals enables the individual to develop a more positive attitude towards homosexuals. This attitude is strengthened through each positive experience that the individual has in his or her contact with homosexuals. Positive experiences occur in situations where norms of tolerance apply (so that the negative behaviour is not reinforced), in pleasant voluntary social conditions where the individuals each have equal

status, where the situation allows for sufficient opportunity to form friendships, where shared coping is needed to achieve common goals, where the homosexual does not confirm the negative stereotypes, where the contact offers proximity and intimacy, where individuals have free choice regarding decision-making and behaviour, and where the immediate authorities support the contact (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991). Negative contact that the individual has with homosexuals reinforces the negative attitudes that the individual experiences. The conditions for the strengthening of negative attitudes occur when the homosexual reinforces the negative stereotype and where the criteria discussed above are not met.

Literature supports that positive attitudes towards homosexuals are associated with an individual having positive interpersonal contact with homosexuals. The positive attitude is also positively related to the number of homosexual acquaintances and/or friends an individual has (Simon, 1995). This shows how the attitude is strengthened by various positive experiences.

Heterosexual people who have reported knowing homosexual people have a more positive attitude towards homosexuals. These individuals generally become more tolerant and display a more positive attitude towards homosexuals in general (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Nelson & Krieger, 1997).

Negative attitudes toward homosexuals are intensified by negative experiences with homosexuals (Herek, 1988). When individuals experience the contact as a threat it leads



to stronger negative stereotypes, a stronger belief system and more resistance to change (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991). An extreme negative attitude is homophobia, which is either defined as a persistent and irrational fear of homosexuality or others define it as a prejudicial attitude towards homosexuals (Nelson & Krieger, 1997).

Homophobic individuals feel that homosexuals are disgusting. Often homosexuals are victimized (verbally and physically) because of such attitudes by people who are concerned about their safety. Surveys done in the United States show that homosexuals are more likely to be victims of hate crimes than any other minority group (Nelson & Krieger, 1997). Victimization enables the individual to put his or her negative attitude into action.

Negative attitudes towards homosexuals have also been associated with the fear of AIDS. Homosexuals have been blamed for the AIDS epidemic. Yet it is important to note that homophobic attitudes are multifaceted and that the reasons why they develop may differ from individual to individual (Nelson & Krieger, 1997). This study will not go into detailed discussion and examination of this negative attitude formulation.

### ***2.9 Gender differences in attitudes towards homosexuals***

It has been well documented that males manifest a significantly more negative attitude towards homosexuals on average than do females (Herek, 1988, 1994; Kite 1992, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997; Pratte, 1993).

This difference is especially true for males' attitudes towards male homosexuals. Males have less negative attitudes towards female homosexuals. Females' attitudes do not significantly differ according to the gender of a homosexual person, they evaluate male and female homosexuals the same (Herek, 1988, 1994; Kite, 1992, 1994; Nelson & Krieger, 1997).

An explanation for this difference in gender attitudes may be that society places an emphasis on the importance of heterosexuality to masculinity. Many men need to show/affirm their masculinity by rejecting men who violate this norm by being homosexuals. It is part of their male gender-identity (Herek, 1988).

### ***2.10 The relationship between age and attitudes, religious beliefs and the experience of contact***

In the literature the relationship between age and attitudes, religious beliefs and experience of the quality of contact with homosexuals has not been explored. It is suspected that the older individual will have more negative attitudes towards homosexuals, more negative religious beliefs and experience the quality of contact with homosexuals more negatively than the younger individual. The negative religious beliefs can be expected because these older people were brought up with the traditional beliefs towards homosexuals. The negative attitudes will be linked to the negative religious beliefs.

In South Africa there were laws in place that kept homosexuals from allowing their sexual orientation to be known in the community. This would have kept the older people from realizing they were in contact with homosexuals, thus preventing them from experiencing positive contact with homosexuals knowingly. This in turn could have led to the persistence of negative attitudes learnt through modeling from society and the church.

### **2.11 Conclusion**

Homosexuality is an emotional and physical bond between individuals of the same sex. The manner in which attitudes towards homosexuality are learnt is influenced by many factors such as social learning, instrumental conditioning, modeling and direct personal experience.

Attitudes shape the social perceptions and social behaviours of individuals and groups. Previously homosexuals were viewed as mentally ill. The church has a history of rejecting homosexual individuals in their community. Society's attitude and view is slowly changing, but can the church deal with its moral standards being questioned? It is still debating the issue. Controversy still surrounds biblical evidence about homosexuality.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### ***3.1 Introduction***

The method that was used in carrying out this study is discussed in this chapter. This includes the type of design, the sampling method, the sample, the research instrument and the method of data analysis.

#### ***3.2 Research design***

##### ***3.2.1 Type of design***

A postal survey design was employed in this study. This allows for the self-administration of the survey instrument, providing the respondent with privacy in which to answer it without any interference from the researcher. Unfortunately, this type of survey allows for misunderstandings, incomplete responses and a low response rate (Dane, 1990). A postal survey design was used because of the sensitive nature of the topic. Homosexuality, as discussed in the previous chapter, has been a taboo subject in the church. The real feelings about the issue may be avoided due to fear of rejection of individuals who disagree with the church's viewpoint, or uncertainty about the changes in the church's viewpoint.

### **3.3 Sample**

#### **3.3.1 Population**

Permission was obtained to do the study in a Methodist Church in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria. The church serves a predominately white population. Its membership on 20 May 1996 was 1512 individuals. This information was obtained from the membership roll of the church.

#### **3.3.2 Sampling procedure**

Sampling is “the process of selecting participants for a research project” (Dane, 1990, p. 289). Random selection ensures that each member of the population has an equal probability of being included in the sample.

A systematic random sampling method was used to select the participants for this study. A complete list of members of the congregation was obtained as a sampling frame. Every eighth name on the list was selected for the research. The starting point was determined by finger pointing of numbers (numbers one to eight) written on a piece of paper (Dane, 1990). A sample of 200 individuals was selected. This is approximately 13,2% of the total congregation of the church.

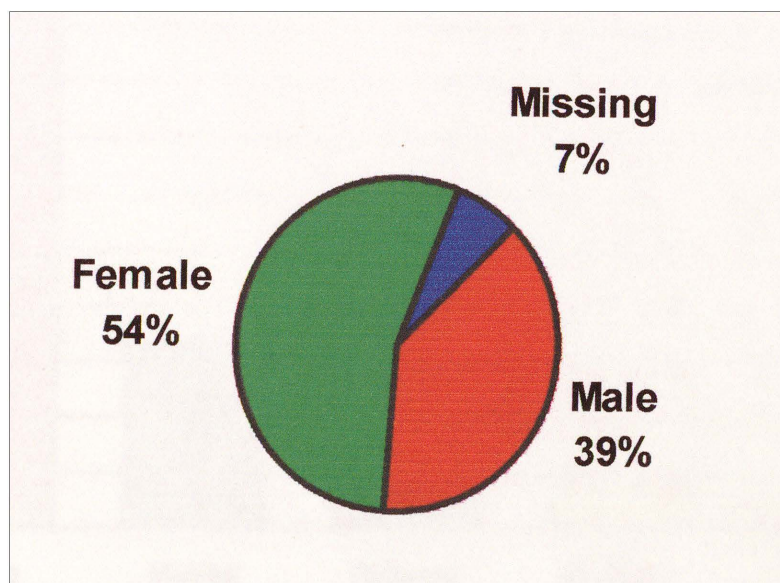
#### **3.3.3 Description of the sample**

Eighty respondents returned questionnaires, this is 5.29% of the total population and is 40% of the sample. This number included two questionnaires that were returned totally

blank, and three that were filled in incorrectly. There were 75 questionnaires that could be used for analysis, this is approximately 4,96% of the population.

The sample size places restrictions on making generalizations about the results to the whole population. The information gained from the results will accordingly be applied to the sample group only (Huysamen, 1994; Neuman, 1994).

The following is a description of the sample : the distributions of the respondents' gender (Figure 3.1), their age (Figure 3.2), their marital status (Figure 3.3), their church attendance (Figure 3.4.) and the frequency of classification of relation with homosexuals (Figure 3.5).



**Figure 3.1 : The distribution of males and females in the sample**

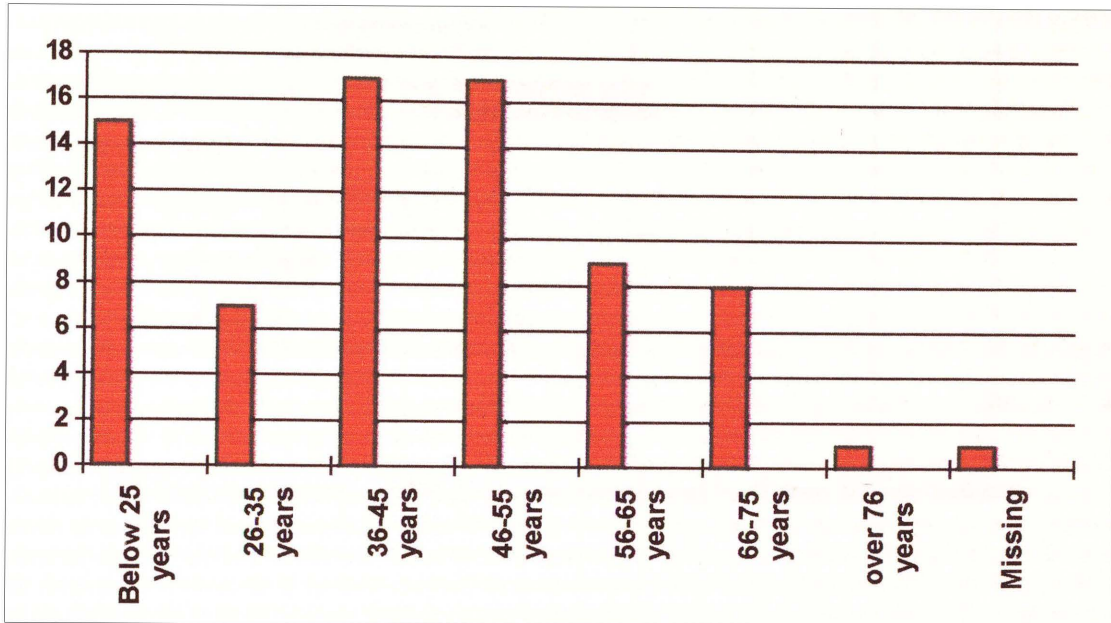


Figure 3.2 : The distribution of age in the sample

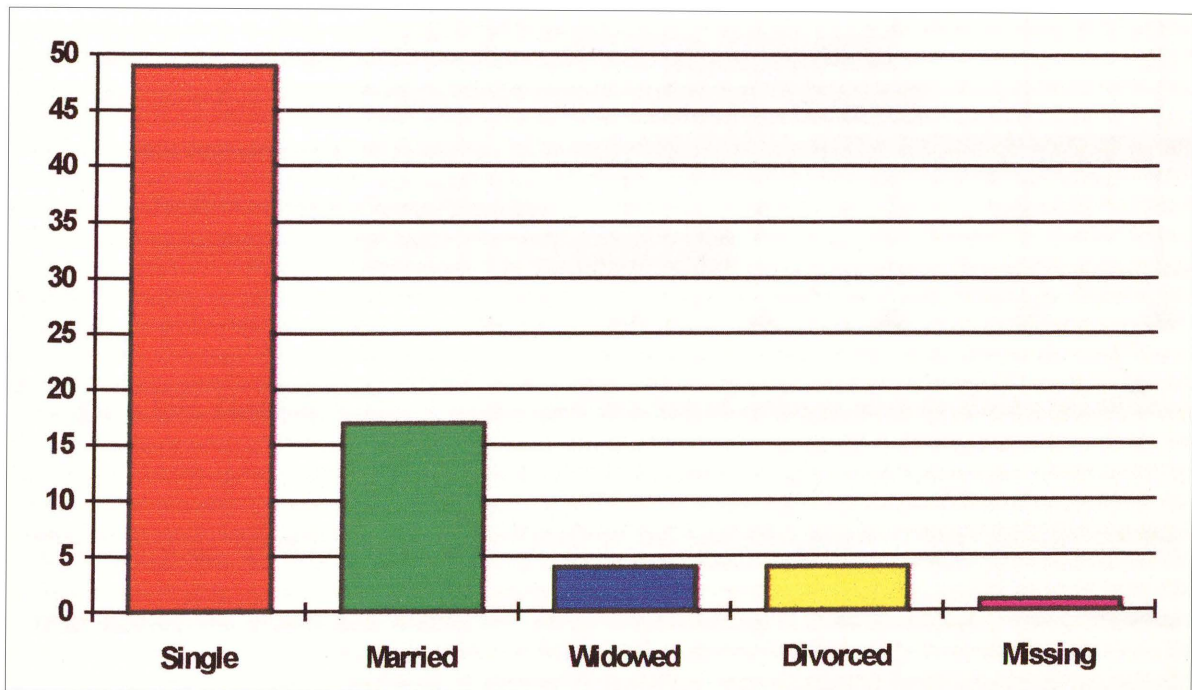
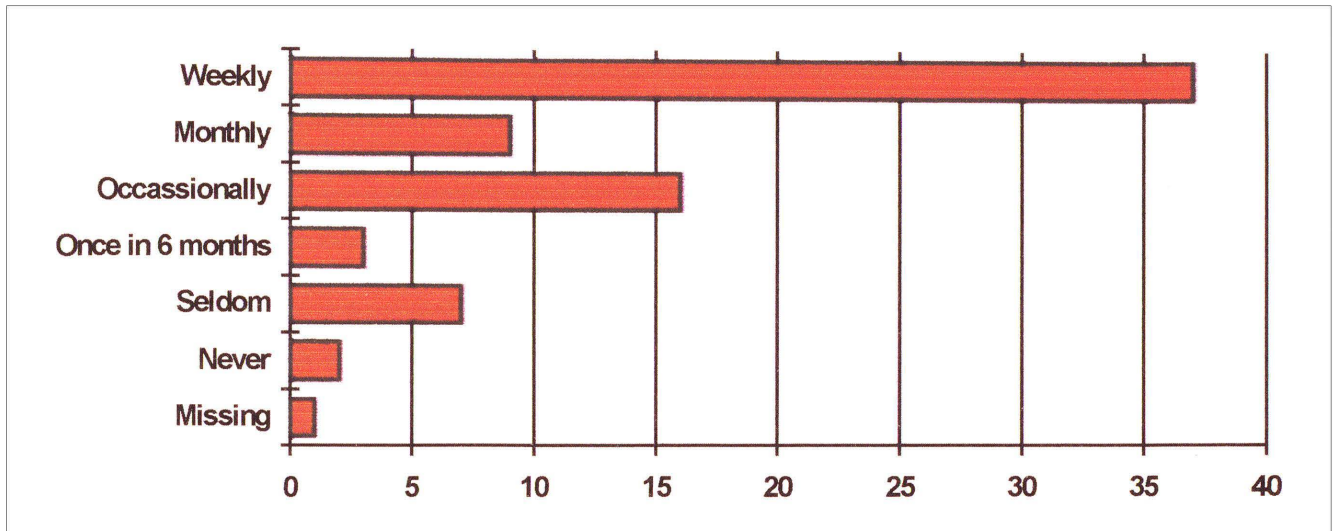
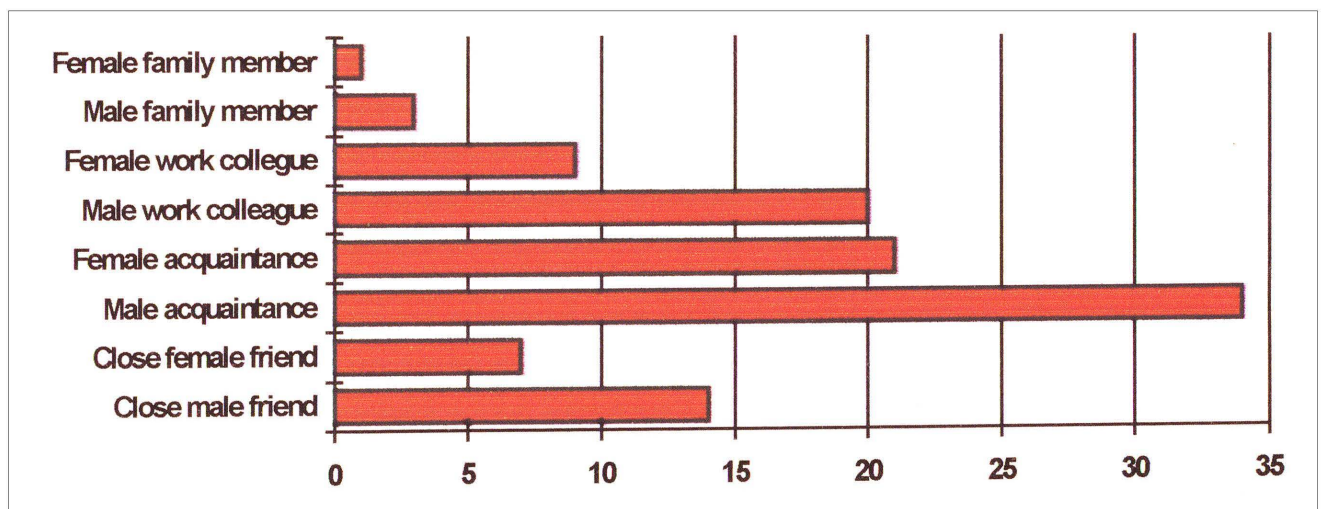


Figure 3.3 : Distribution of marital status in the sample





**Figure 3.4 : The distribution of the church attendance of the sample**



**Figure 3.5: The distribution of the classification of relation with homosexuals of the sample**

The following trends can be gathered from the figures above. The majority of the respondents are single and attend the church services on a weekly basis. More females responded than males. The high response rate from single respondents could be because these individuals have stronger attitudes and religious beliefs about homosexuality. The modal age of the respondents is the following two categories : 36-45 years and 46-55



years (each having 17 respondents in the category). The mode is the most frequent response in a set of responses (Dane, 1990). The contact that respondents had with homosexuals is low, especially in certain categories (e.g. female family member and male family member).

### **3.3.4 Procedure**

The measuring instrument appears in Appendix A. The measuring instrument was compiled consisting of the following :

- Biographical particulars
- Religious Beliefs towards Homosexuality
- Attitudes towards Homosexuals
- Contact with Homosexuals (including with the classification of relation and the quality of the contact).

This questionnaire was sent via the post to the respondents. It was accompanied by a cover letter (see Appendix A) informing the respondents of the reasons for the research and a stamped envelope for the return of the questionnaire.

### **3.4 Measuring instrument (See appendix A)**

#### **3.4.1 Biographical information**

This part of the scale was designed to obtain identifying information about the respondents. The categories of information obtained were gender, age, marital status and church attendance.

#### **3.4.2 The three scales**

The three scales in the questionnaire in the current study were based on items obtained from scales designed by other researchers and some designed specifically for this study. Some of the items were adapted to make them easier to understand and more applicable to this study and others were used as is. The scales Religious Beliefs towards Homosexuality and Attitudes towards Homosexuality are both five-point scales. All items that were used from other research were adapted so that they fitted the scale used in this questionnaire.

##### *a) Adaptation of items from other studies*

Items were taken from Herek's (1988) questionnaire during the formulation of the questionnaire used in this study. The following items taken from Herek (1988) were used in the religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale: 4 (Herek : 5, text unchanged), 5 (Herek : 14, text unchanged) and 8 (Herek : 18, text adapted for study). The following items taken from Herek (1988) were used in the attitudes towards homosexuals scale: 1 (Herek : 12, text unchanged), 3 (Herek : 15, text unchanged), 4 (Herek : 16, text unchanged), 6 (Herek : 9, text adapted for study), 7 (Herek : 3, text adapted for study), 8 (Herek : 7, text adapted for study) and 10 (Herek : 20, text adapted for study).

Items were also taken from Brooke's (1993) questionnaire for the formulation of the questionnaire. The following items taken from Brooke (1993) used in the religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale were : 1 (Brooke : 1, text adapted for study), 2 (Brooke : 2, text adapted for study), 6 (Brooke : 5, text unchanged), 7 (Brooke : 17, text unchanged), 9 (Brooke : 9, text unchanged), 10 (Brooke : 14, text adapted for study), 11 (Brooke : 10, text adapted for study), 13 (Brooke : 16, text unchanged) and 14 (Brooke : 3, text adapted for study). The following items taken from Brooke (1993) were used in the attitudes towards homosexuals scale: 2 (Brooke : 13, text adapted for study) and 9 (Brooke : 30, text adapted for study).

Item 5 from a questionnaire by Wagner et al. (1994) was used unchanged as item 5 of the attitudes towards homosexuals scale.

The first part of the contact with homosexuals' scale was based on Herek and Glunt's (1993) questionnaire.

Items that were designed specifically for this study are : Religious beliefs toward homosexuality - 3, 12 and the quality of contact with homosexuals scale.

#### *b) Dimensions of scales*

Attitudes have an evaluation dimension such as favorable - unfavorable (Haddock et al., 1993). The attitude dimension used in this study is negative and positive attitudes.

Attitudes toward homosexuality will be defined as : Feelings, emotions or cognitions that are related to the homosexual (Haddock et al., 1993). A negative attitude towards homosexuals was indicated by a high score on the attitudes towards homosexual scale, and a low score indicated a positive attitude.

A negative religious belief about homosexuality indicated that the church saw homosexuality as a sin, homosexuality was viewed as morally wrong, a perversion and is not supported by the Bible. A negative belief was indicated by a high score on the religious beliefs towards homosexuals scale. A positive religious belief towards homosexuality indicated that homosexuality was not a sin, that it was viewed as not being morally wrong or a perversion. This was indicated by a low score on the religious beliefs towards homosexuals scale.

*c) Reversed scoring of scales*

Scoring was reversed on the following items :

- Religious beliefs towards homosexuality : 2 and 3.
- Attitudes towards homosexuals : 3, 8, 9 and 10.
- Quality of contact with homosexuals : 2, 4, 5 and 7.

### 3.4.3 Reliability of scales

The reliability for the three scales was examined by calculating the alpha Cronbach coefficient. This information is reflected in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 : Reliability coefficients for the scales.**

Scale	Reliability coefficient
Religious beliefs towards homosexuality	0.89
Attitudes towards homosexuals	0.89
Quality of contact with homosexuals	0.77
Classification of relation with homosexuals -- Male	0.66
-- Female	0.39

The reliability coefficients presented in Table 3.1 are sufficiently high to conclude that the scales are reliable instruments of measurement, with the exception of the classification of relation with homosexuals scales. A likely reason for the low alpha coefficients is that the respondents had relatively little contact with homosexuals (see Figure 3.5). There was thus little variability in the data, and this could have reduced the reliability coefficient. This scale will not be used for further analysis.

### **3.5 Statistical analysis**

The data-processing was done with the help of the SAS Software package (SAS Institute Inc., 1989). The following analyses were done :

- Basic descriptive statistics were calculated, these include frequencies, and averages. Descriptive statistics provide the researcher with graphical and numerical techniques for describing the characteristics of the sample, as well as the nature of variables measured. It allows the researcher to compare groups using the same characteristics. It plays an important role in the preparation for further statistics (Ott, Larson & Mendenhall, 1987).
- The Cronbach coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to determine the reliability of the different scales (SAS Institute Inc., 1989). It is a measurement based on the ratio of variability of item scores to the overall variability, and assesses the internal consistency of a series of items measuring a single construct (Peers, 1996).
- Factor analyses of the following scales were done : Attitudes towards homosexuality, religious beliefs towards homosexuality, the quality of contact with homosexuals and the classification of relation with homosexuals scales. Factor analysis is a technique used to separate continuous variables into groups that measure single dimensions of a multidimensional concept (Dane, 1990). It enables the researcher to explain the correlations between a set of observed variables in terms of a smaller number of underlying latent variables that cannot be directly measured (Everitt & Hay, 1992; Howitt & Cramer, 1997). This was done in this study to test the dimensionality of the scales used (Neuman, 1994).

- Spearman's correlation coefficients ( $\rho$ ) were used to determine the relationship of two ordinal variables. It is used to measure the ranks of items of two variables (Howell, 1987; Ott et al., 1987). The relationships between the following variables were examined : Religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals, contact with homosexuals, church attendance and age. Spearman's coefficient varies between -1.0 and +1.0 indicating a strong negative and positive relationship respectively, with 0 indicating an absence of a relationship (Martin & Pierce, 1994).
- t-Tests were used to determine the difference between males and females in their religious beliefs towards homosexuals, attitudes towards homosexuals and their experience of their contact with homosexuals. t-Tests involve the testing of the difference between the means of two independent groups, such as males and females (Howell, 1987). t-Tests are frequently used in survey designs to determine whether there is a significant difference between two independent group means. The larger the t-test value the greater the significance between the two groups (Peers, 1996).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The research method was described in this chapter. The results of this study will be reported in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### ***4.1 Introduction***

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis conducted. It starts with factor analysis, then looks at the relationship between the variables.

#### ***4.2 Factor analysis***

##### **4.2.1 Religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale**

The scale was used to measure an individual's religious beliefs about homosexuality. This scale looks at what the individual believes that the church and the Bible say about homosexuality. The scree test indicated only one factor solution (see Figure 4.1).

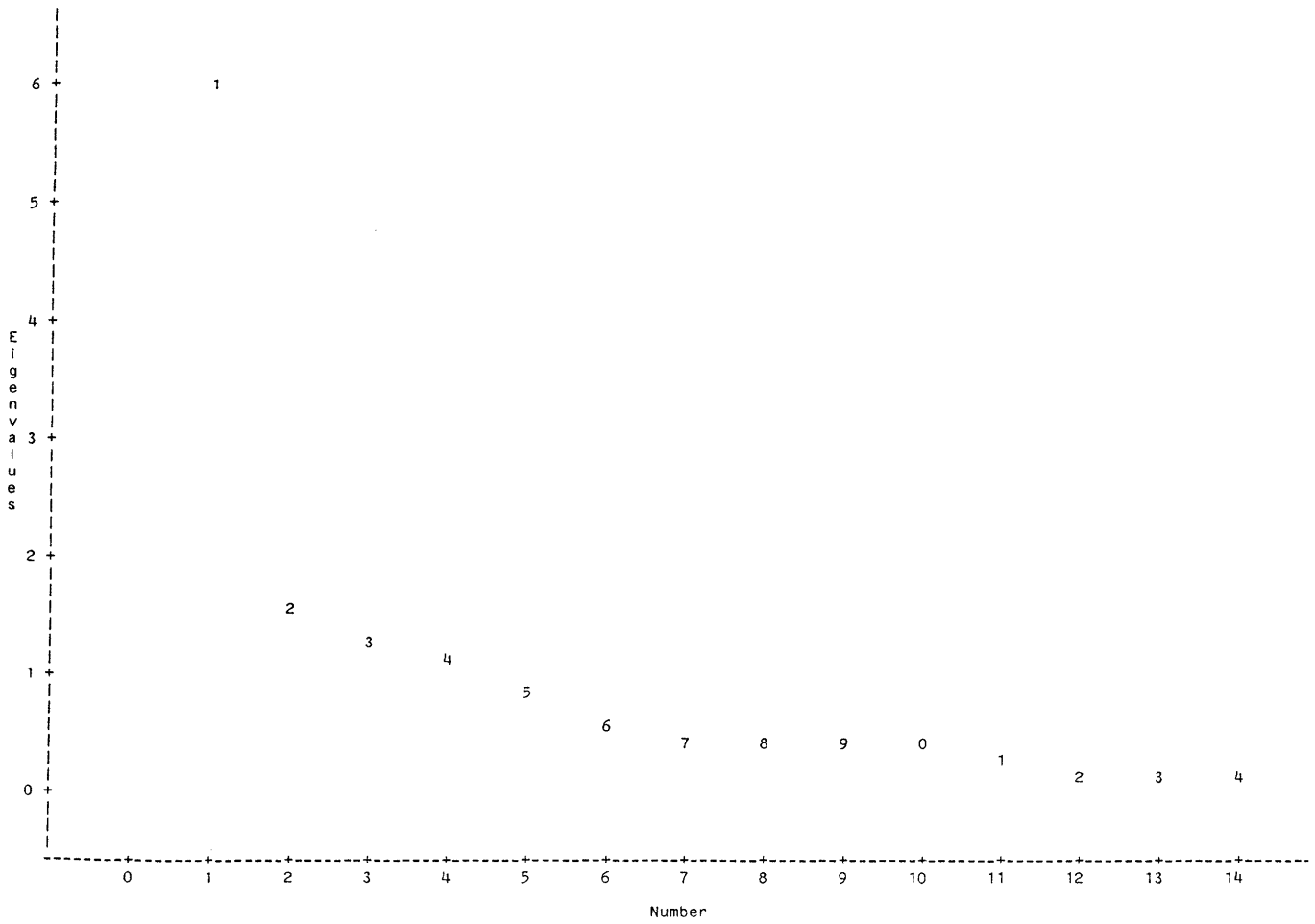
Table 4.1 contains the factor loadings on the one-factor solution for the religious beliefs towards homosexuality. Thirteen of the fourteen items had a factor loading  $>0.4$ .

Examples of items that reflect the theme of the scale are as follows:

RB12 "Homosexuality is a sin."

RB13 "I do not support homosexuality because it is a direct violation of God's will."





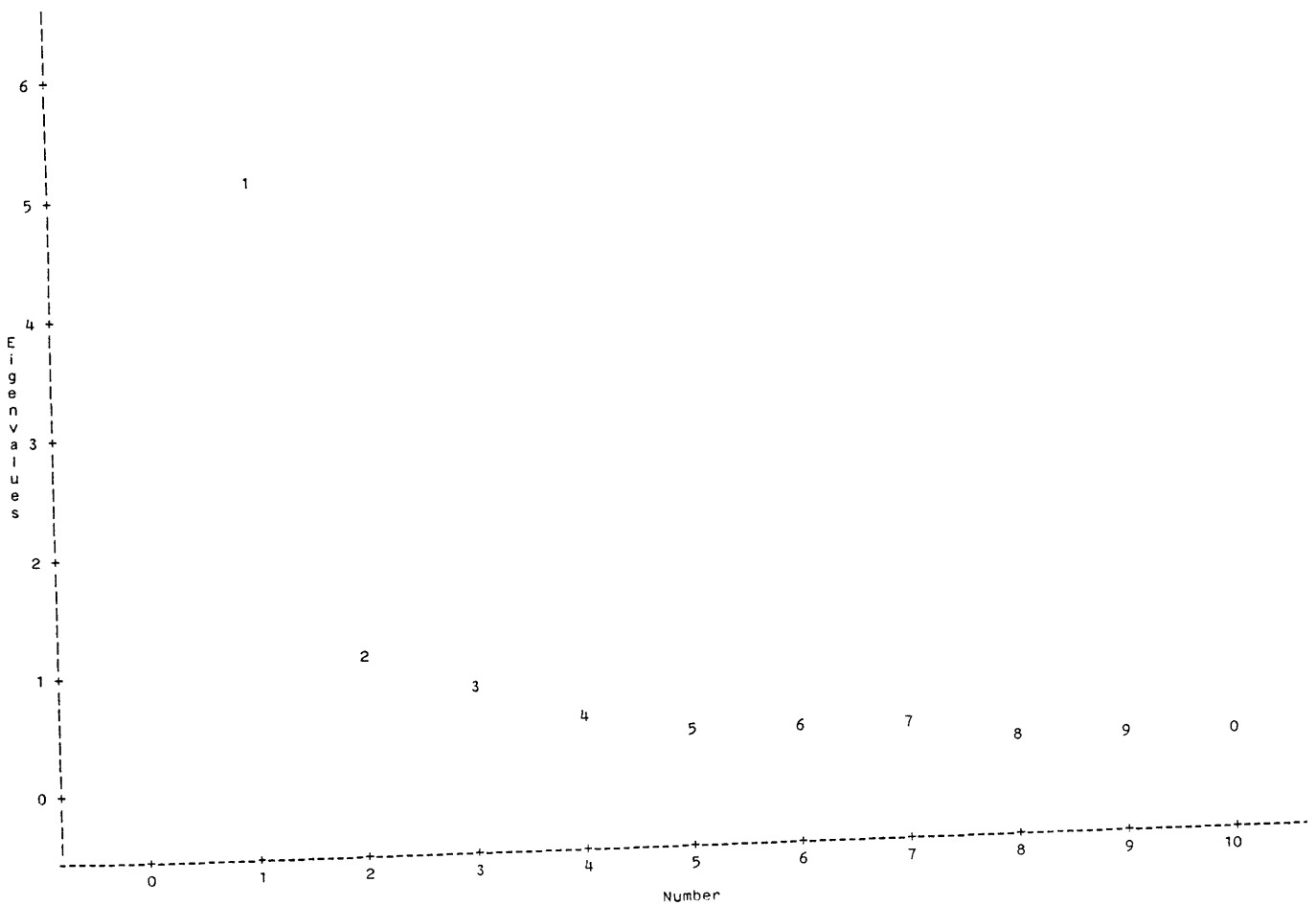
**Figure 4.1 Scree plot for the religious beliefs about homosexuality scale**

**Table 4.1 Factor loading for the religious beliefs about homosexuality scale**

ITEM	FACTOR 1
RB12 Homosexuality is a sin.	0.90
RB13 I do not support homosexuality because it is a direct violation of God's will.	0.89
RB8 Homosexual behavior is just plain wrong.	0.83
RB9 Homosexuality is contrary to being a good Christian.	0.78
RB10 In order to avoid God's punishment, I do not support homosexuality.	0.70
RB14 A commitment to God involves being heterosexual.	0.65
RB4 Female homosexuality is a sin.	0.62
RB11 I question the morality and goodness of the church if homosexuals are accepted.	0.59
RB5 Male homosexuality is a perversion.	0.57
RB1 The act of homosexuality violates God's will; therefore, the church does not condone homosexuality.	0.55
RB6 As long as homosexuals commit to abstinence and change they are welcome in the church.	0.42
RB7 Having non-practicing homosexuals as part of the church serves as an example that through faith, one can abstain from sin.	0.40
RB3 The Bible does support homosexuality.	-0.10
RB2 Homosexuality is not morally wrong.	-0.74
Variance explained by each factor	43.25%

### 4.2.2 Attitudes towards homosexuals scale

This scale was used to measure the individual's attitudes towards homosexuals. This scale looked at the individual's personal attitude toward homosexuals. The scree test indicates only one factor solution (see Figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2 Scree Plot for the attitudes towards homosexuals scale**

**Table 4.2 Factor loading for the attitudes towards homosexuals scale**

Item	Factor 1
A4 If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything to overcome them.	0.83
A2 Homosexuality violates traditional relationships. (Such as a marriage relationship).	0.78
A1 I think male homosexuals are disgusting.	0.75
A6 Homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.	0.68
A5 Life as a homosexual is not as fulfilling as life as a heterosexual.	0.68
A7 Homosexuality breaks down the usual gender role expectations.	0.41
A9 Regardless of majority opinion, the rights of homosexuals must be up held.	-0.66
A3 Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.	-0.71
A8 Homosexuality in itself is not a problem, but what society makes of it can be the problem.	-0.77
A10 Homosexuality is merely a different kind of life style that should not be condemned.	-0.89
Variance explained by each factor	52.06%

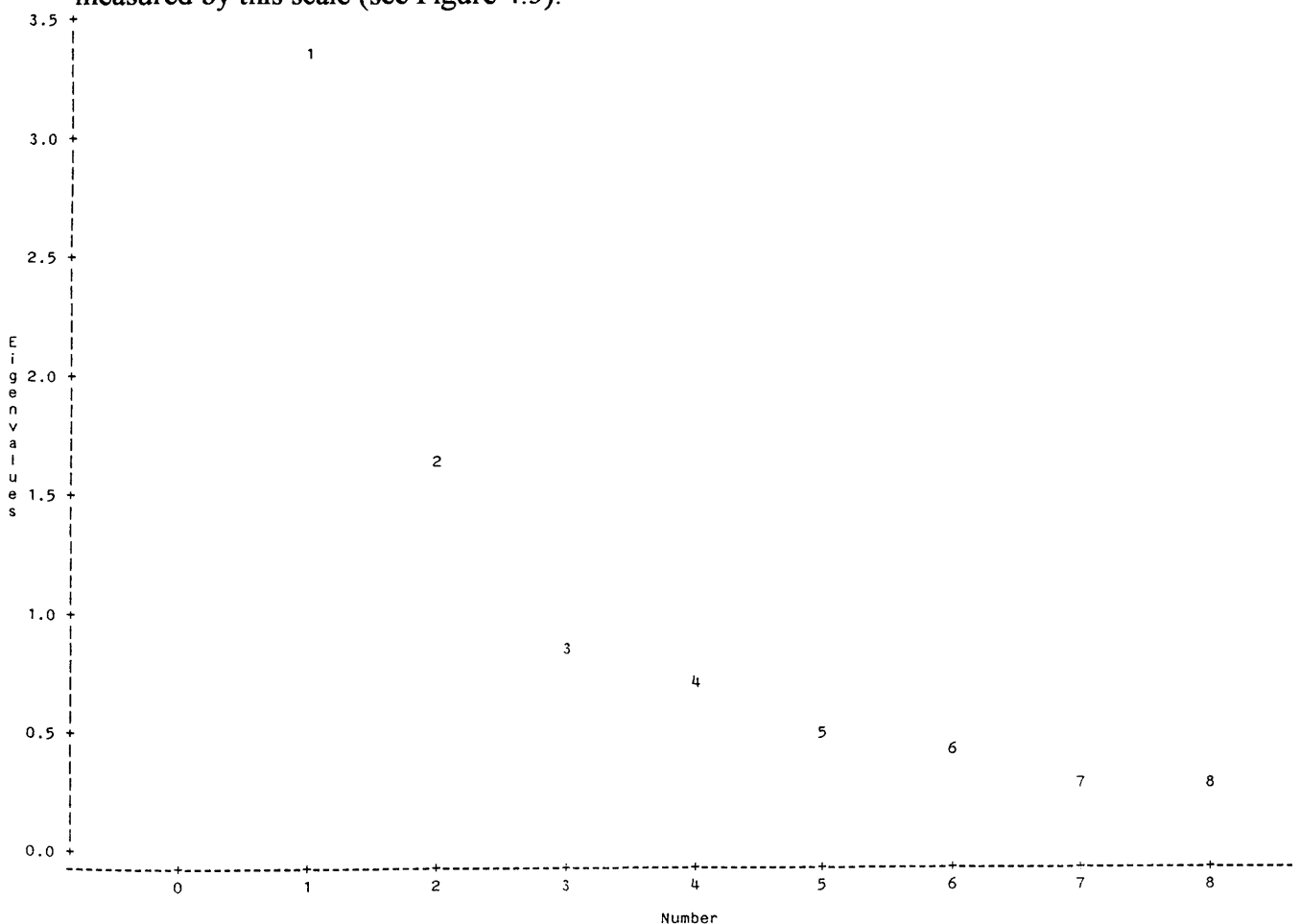
Table 4.2 contains the factor loadings on the one-factor solution for the attitudes towards homosexuals scale. All the factors had factor loadings  $>0.40$ . Examples of the items which reflect the theme of scale are as follows:

A4 “If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything to overcome them.”

A2 “Homosexuality violates traditional relationships (such as a marriage relationship).”

### 4.2.3 Quality of contact scale

The quality of contact scale measures how the individual experiences the contact that he or she had with homosexuals. The scree plot shows that there are two factors that are measured by this scale (see Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3 Scree plot for quality of contact**

**Table 4.3 Factor loadings for quality of contact**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>
TC1 Pleasant – Unpleasant	0.86	0.05
TC3 Friendly – Unfriendly	0.83	0.28
TC6 Accepting – Condemning	0.75	0.32
TC8 Curious – Disinterested	0.70	0.30
TC2 Disgusted – Respecting	-0.68	0.38
TC5 Shocked – Amused	0.04	0.76
TC4 Uncomfortable – Comfortable	-0.52	0.65
TC7 Frightened -- Safe	-0.34	0.46
Variance explained by each factor	41.83%	20.44%

Factor 1 dealt with the expression of complex emotion (Chodorow, 1995 in Venter, 1998) and it accounted for 41.83% of the total variance of the scale. The following examples reflect the theme of this factor:

TC1 Pleasant – Unpleasant.

TC2 Friendly – Unfriendly.

Factor 2 dealt with the primary emotions (Chodorow, 1995 in Venter, 1998) and it accounted for 20.44% of the total variance of the scale. The following examples reflected the theme of this factor:

TC5 Shocked – Amused.

TC4 Uncomfortable -- Comfortable

#### **4.2.4 Classification of relation with homosexuals scale**

This scale measures the respondent's relationship with homosexuals with whom he or she comes into contact. Since the scale is on a nominal level of measurement, phi-coefficients were used as input matrix for the factor analysis. The scree plot indicated a two factor solution for the scale (see Figure 4.4).

With the exception of one item, factor 1 dealt with males with whom the respondent came into contact with. It is possible that the respondents came more into contact with male homosexuals than female homosexuals, represented by factor 2. The following are examples that reflect the theme of this factor:

CON3 Male acquaintances.

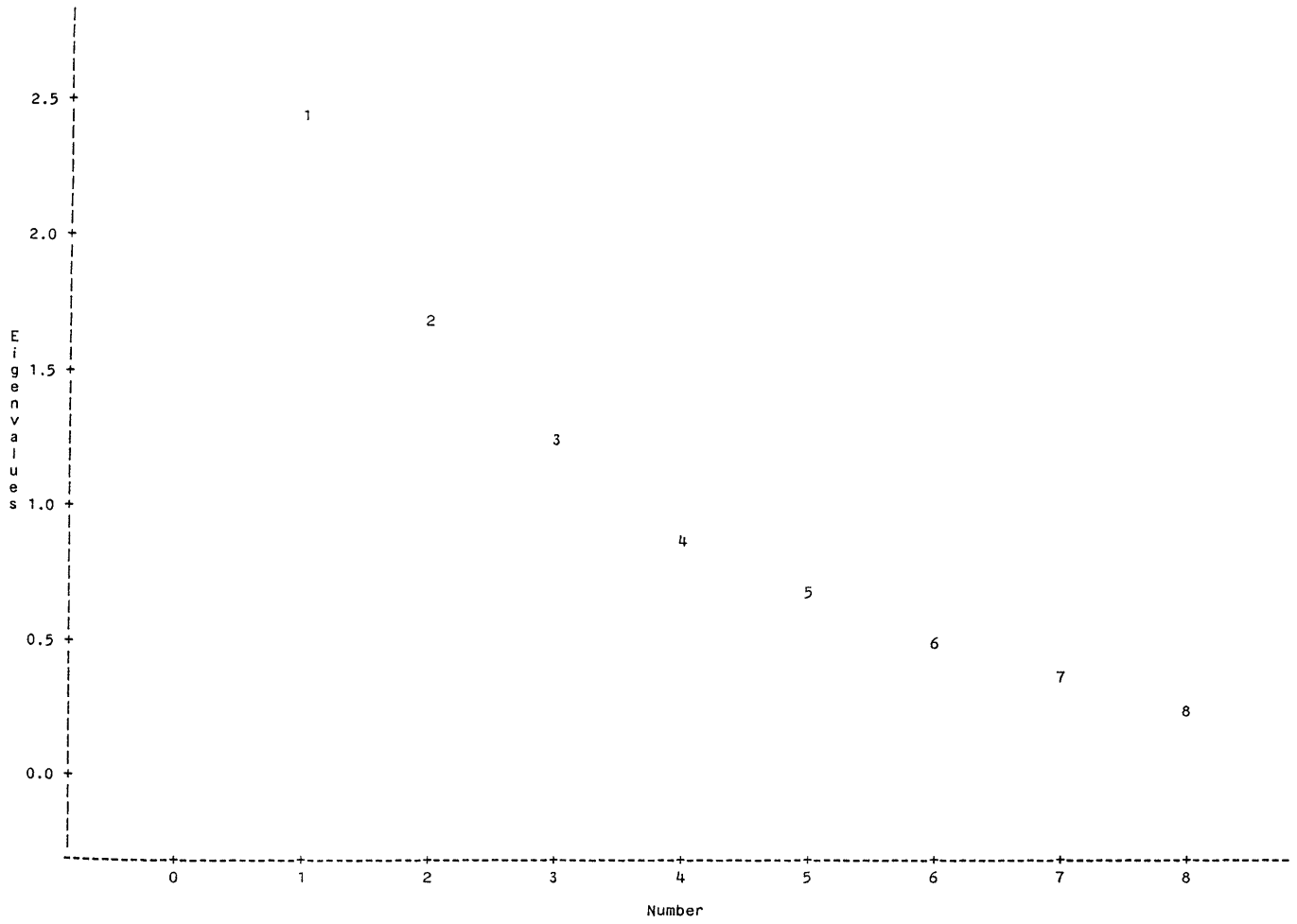
CON5 Male work colleagues.

Factor 2 dealt with the females that the respondent came into contact with. The following are examples of the theme of this factor:

CON2 Close female friend.

CON8 Female family member.

Due to the low reliabilities of the scales and the little contact the respondents had with certain categories of homosexuals (see Figure 3.5), this scale was excluded from further analysis.



**Figure 4.4** Scree plot the classification of relation with homosexuals scale



**Table 4.4 Factor loading for classification of relations with homosexuals scale**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
CON3 Male acquaintance	0.81	-0.25
CON5 Male work Colleague	0.62	-0.52
CON1 Close male friend	0.61	0.27
CON4 Female acquaintance	0.53	-0.20
CON7 Male family member	0.46	0.15
CON2 Close female friend	0.52	0.63
CON8 Female family member	0.43	0.62
CON6 Female work colleague	0.29	-0.63
Variance explained by each factor	30.50%	20.87%

### ***4.3 The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact in the sample***

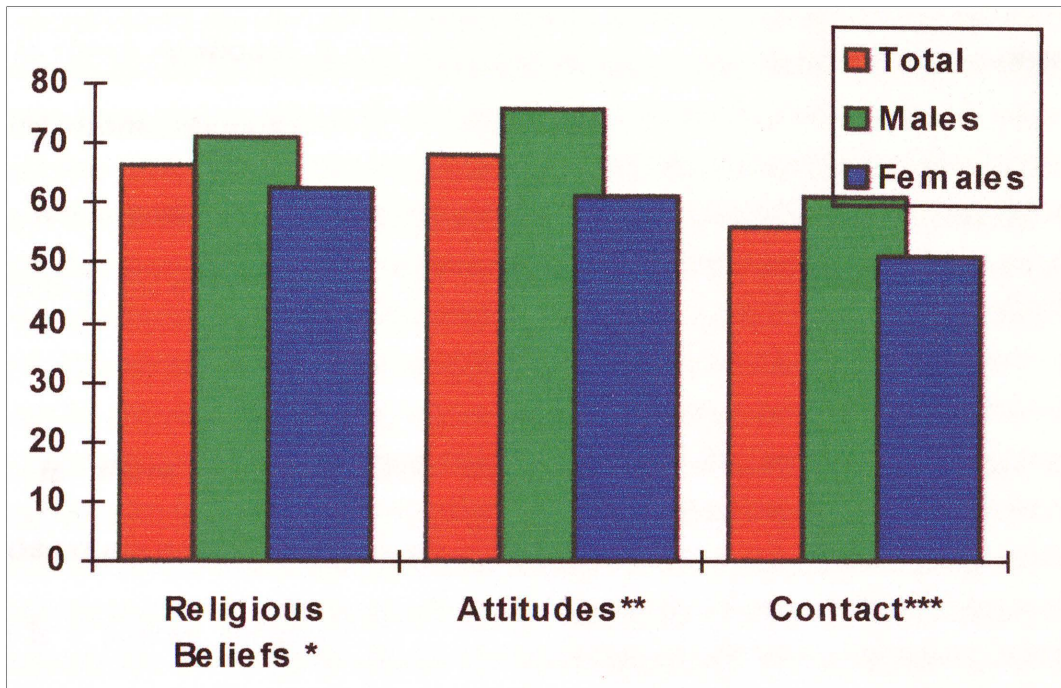
The scores on all scales have been converted to percentages so that they can be compared with each other. A high score indicates that the nature of the score was negative and a low score indicated that the nature was positive on the scale.

The nature of religious beliefs of the sample was shown to be negative. The nature of the males' religious beliefs in the sample was shown to be more negative than the nature of the females' religious beliefs in the sample. The nature of the gender difference in religious

beliefs is discussed later in the chapter. The mean scores as percentages can be seen in Figure 4.5.

The nature of the attitudes towards homosexuality of the sample was shown to be negative. The nature of the males' attitude towards homosexuals was more negative than the females' attitude towards homosexuals in the sample. The nature of the gender difference in attitudes towards homosexuals is discussed later in the chapter. The mean scores as percentages can be seen in Figure 4.5.

The nature of the quality of contact with homosexuals of the sample was shown to be negative. The males in the sample experienced their contact more negatively than did the females. The nature of the gender difference in quality of contact with homosexuals is discussed later in this chapter. The mean score as percentages can be seen in Figure 4.5.



\* Total s = 11.06; Male s = 8.72; Female s = 12.11

\*\* Total s = 8.69; Male s = 5.53; Female s = 4.55

\*\*\* Total s = 12.11; Male s = 9.14; Female s = 3.85

**Figure 4.5 : The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and contact.**

***4.4 Is there a relationship between religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals?***

There was a positive correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes toward homosexuals. This correlation can be seen in Table 4.5.

**4.5 Is there relationship between the quality of contact and the attitude towards homosexuals?**

There was a positive correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between the quality of the contact with homosexuals and the attitude towards homosexuals. This correlation can be seen in Table 4.5.

**4.6 Is there a relationship between the quality of contact with homosexuals and the religious beliefs?**

There is a positive correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between the quality of the contact with homosexuals and the religious beliefs towards homosexuality. This correlation can be seen in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 : Correlations of Religious Beliefs, Attitudes and Contact**

	<b>Religious Belief</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>Religious Beliefs*</b>	1.00		
<b>Attitudes*</b>	0.83	1.00	
<b>Contact*</b>	0.78	0.80	1.00

\*  $p < 0.01$  for all correlations

**4.7 Gender differences**

**4.7.1 Religious beliefs**

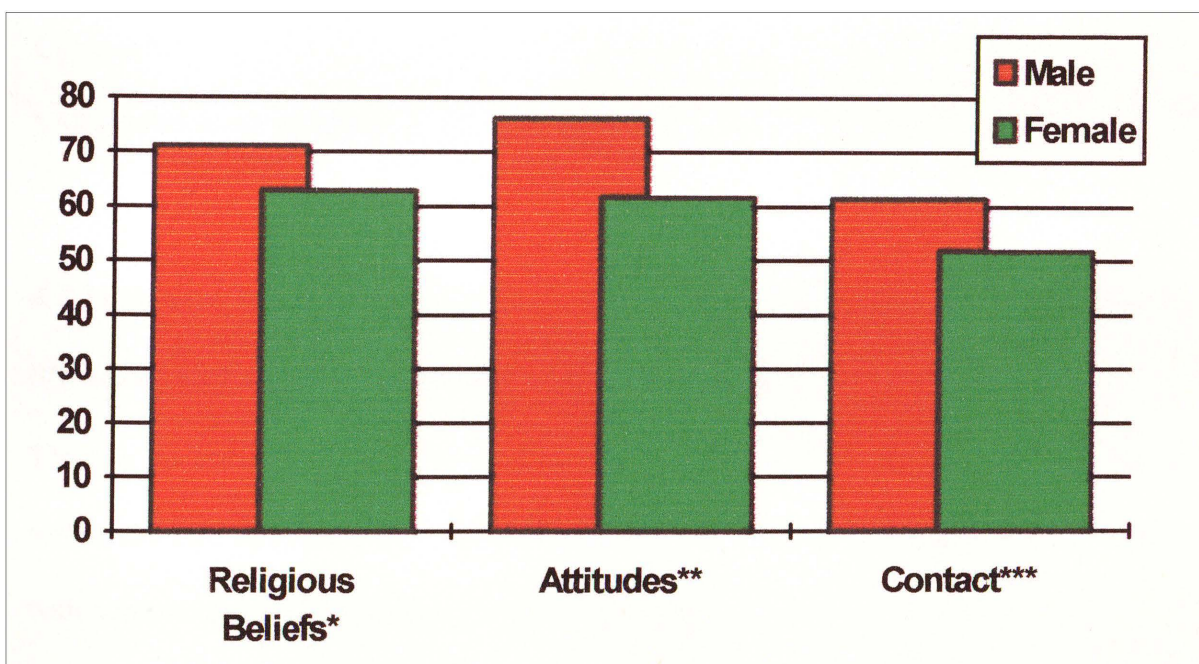
There was a significant difference between the religious beliefs of males and females. Males have a significantly more negative religious belief towards homosexuality than did the females in the sample. This difference can be seen in Figure 4.6.

### 4.7.2 Experience of contact with homosexuals

There was a significant difference between males and females in their quality of their contact with homosexuals. Females experience their contact with homosexuals significantly more positively than did males in the sample. This difference can be seen in figure 4.6.

### 4.7.3 Attitudes towards homosexuals

There was a significant difference between males and females in their attitudes towards homosexuals. Males were significantly more negative in their attitudes towards homosexuals than were the females. This difference can be seen in figure 4.6.



\*  $t = 1.97$ ;  $df = 55$ ;  $p < 0.10$

\*\*  $t = 60.5$ ;  $df = 60.5$ ;  $p < 0.001$

\*\*\*  $t = 3.47$ ;  $df = 55$ ;  $p < 0.01$

**Figure 4.6 : Gender differences of males and females.**

**4.8 Is there a relationship between age and religious beliefs, quality of contact and attitudes?**

There was no statistically significant relationship between age and religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals and the quality of the contact with homosexuals. The correlations can be seen in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6 : Correlations with age**

	<b>Age</b>
<b>Religious Beliefs*</b>	-0.07
<b>Attitudes*</b>	0.05
<b>Contact*</b>	0.10

\* All correlations not significant

**4.9 Is there a relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact with homosexuals?**

There is no statistically significant relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals and the quality of contact with homosexuals. The correlation can be seen in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7 Correlations with church attendance**

	Church Attendance
Religious beliefs*	-0.33
Attitudes*	-0.22
Contact*	-0.08

\* All correlations not significant

#### **4.10 Conclusions**

The statistical analyses of this study were reported in this chapter. The results presented in this chapter will be discussed together with the literature presented in chapter two in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### ***5.1 Introduction***

The results from the previous chapter will be interpreted and discussed in this chapter. The psychometric properties of the measuring instrument will be discussed, followed by a look at the relationships between the different scales.

#### ***5.2 Psychometric properties of the scales***

Factor analyses were done on all the scales. The religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals were shown to each contain one factor, whereas the quality of contact with homosexuals and the classification of relations with homosexuals scales each contained two factors.

##### **5.2.1 Religious beliefs towards homosexuality**

The religious beliefs towards homosexuality scale was used to measure the nature of an individual's religious beliefs about homosexuality. This scale looks at what the individual believes that the church and the Bible say about homosexuality. Traditionally homosexuality has been seen by the church as sinful as it is contrary to the will of God and immoral (Brooke, 1993; Wagner et al., 1994). Moss (1977) states that most Christians believe that God, the Bible and the church condemn homosexuality. This was considered to be a negative religious belief towards homosexuality in this study. Whereas the belief that homosexuality is not considered to be sinful and that homosexuals should be accepted



into the church (Brooke, 1993; Ellison, 1987) was considered to be a positive religious belief in this study. The factor analysis showed that the items in the scale measured one factor. This factor was the religious beliefs about homosexuality in terms of what respondent believes the Bible and the church say about homosexuality.

The reliability of the scale was measured using the alpha Cronbach coefficient ( $\alpha = 0,89$ ), and it was shown to be sufficiently high to conclude that the scale is a reliable instrument of measurement.

### **5.2.2 Attitudes towards homosexuals**

The attitudes towards homosexuals scale was used to measure the nature of the respondent's attitudes towards homosexuals. The scree test indicated a one factor solution.

Negative attitudes towards homosexuals included the attitudes that homosexuality is not as fulfilling as heterosexuality, homosexuality is disgusting and that it was an inferior form of sexuality (Herek, 1993; Wagner et al., 1994). The positive attitudes towards homosexuality included that homosexuality is merely a different kind of life style and that it should not be condemned and what society makes of homosexuality is the problem, not homosexuality itself (Herek, 1993).

The reliability of the scale was measured using the alpha Cronbach coefficient ( $\alpha = 0,89$ ), and it was shown to be sufficiently high to conclude that the scale is a reliable instrument of measurement.

### **5.2.3 Quality of contact scale**

The quality of contact scale measured how the individual experiences the contact that he or she had with homosexuals. The scree plot showed that there were two factors that were measured by this scale. This means that there were two dimensions in the quality of contact scale. The scale was divided up into the expression of complex emotions and primary emotions evoked by the contact with homosexuals. The primary emotions evoked by the contact includes : uncomfortable - comfortable; shocked - amused; and frightened - safe. The primary emotions according to Chodorow (in Venter, 1998) are happiness, interest, pain, surprise, fear, anger and loathing. Each emotion appears on a continuum of intensity. The primary emotions included in the scale were happiness, surprise and fear. The expression of complex emotions includes the following: pleasant - unpleasant; disgusted - respecting; friendly - unfriendly; accepting - condemning; and curious - disinterested. Complex emotions are mixtures and modifications of the primary emotions (Venter, 1998).

The reliability of the scale was measured using the alpha Cronbach coefficient ( $\alpha = 0,77$ ), and it was shown to be sufficiently high to conclude that the scale is a reliable instrument of measurement.

#### **5.2.4 Classification of relation with homosexuals scale**

The classification of relation scale measured what the relationship was that the respondent had with the homosexual individual that he or she came into contact with. The scree plot indicated a two factor solution for this scale. This means that there was two dimensions in the relationship that the respondents had with homosexuals.

Factor 1 dealt with males with whom the respondent came into contact with. There was one exception, i.e. contact with a female acquaintance, that also fell into this factor. It is possible that the respondents came into more contact with this group of homosexuals than the other group represented by factor 2. Factor 2 dealt with the females that the respondents come into contact with.

Due to the low reliabilities of the scales (contact with males:  $\alpha = 0.66$  and contact with females  $\alpha = 0.39$ ) and the little contact that the respondents had with certain categories of homosexuals (see figure 3.5), this scale was excluded from further analyses.

### ***5.3 The nature of the religious beliefs, attitudes and contact in the sample***

#### **5.3.1 Religious beliefs**

The nature of the sample group's religious beliefs towards homosexuality was negative ( $M = 66.53\%$ ). The congregation in which the study was conducted was still very conservative in their beliefs. They predominantly held the traditional view that homosexuality is sinful and is morally wrong. The church still influences moral issues in

society, in the sense that homosexuality is seen as sinful and against God's will (Brooke, 1993). The nature of the religious beliefs towards homosexuality of the sample group could have been negative because of the kind of person who responded to the survey. The majority of the respondents were single and attended church on a weekly basis. It could be possible that these factors influenced the results obtained in the survey.

The church has condemned homosexuals in the past. This condemnation and rejection of homosexuals is still accepted by the members of the church (Wagner et al., 1994). Although the sample's religious beliefs toward homosexuality were negative, their score was found near the midpoint between neutral and extremely negative. This may mean that the sample was questioning the traditional view that the church holds or that within the church the religious beliefs are changing. The world's view on homosexuality is changing. This new view is challenging the church and its members to debate the issue of homosexuality. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa does not have an official policy to deal with the issue of homosexuality, this allows for individuals within the church to debate about whether homosexuality is sinful or not (Brooke, 1993; Nugent & Gramick, 1989; United Methodist Church, 1988; Wagner et al., 1994).

### **5.3.2 Attitudes**

There was a negative attitude towards homosexuals ( $M = 68.43$ ) amongst members of the church. This says that the members of the church in the sample accepted the negative stereotypes that are present in society.

The attitude was also, like the religious beliefs, not totally negative. This means that either the members of the church have always had this degree of negative attitude, or that their attitude is changing and becoming more positive or negative. It is more likely to be becoming more positive as the change in society is towards more positive attitudes towards homosexuals. This explanation would be supported by Pratte's (1993) findings that the attitudes towards homosexuals were negative, but that over a five-year period the attitudes were becoming more positive.

Attitudes towards homosexuals are in general negative. The stereotype of homosexuals includes images of effeminate men, macho woman, freaks, mentally ill and sexually abnormal (Kite, 1994; Moss, 1977). Symbolic beliefs about homosexuality play an important part in the inter-group attitude towards homosexuals. The symbolic beliefs about homosexuals are that they are perceived as violating God's will and violating many traditional family values (Haddock et al., 1993). This seems to be the attitude expressed by the sample towards homosexuals.

### **5.3.3 Quality of contact**

The members of this church tended to experience (or thought that they would experience) contact with homosexuals as negative ( $M = 56,60\%$ ). This supports previous findings that people experience contact as negative (Herek, 1988), but it must be borne in mind that in the present study the mean score did not indicate a very strong negative experience.

#### ***5.4 Is there a relationship between religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals?***

One of the purposes of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals. There was a positive correlation between these two factors ( $\rho = 0.84, p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the religious beliefs towards homosexuality become more positive, so did the attitudes towards homosexuals, and vice versa.

This can be explained by the fact that attitudes cannot be seen in isolation. Symbolic beliefs play an important part in influencing the nature of attitudes. The negative religious beliefs such as that homosexuality violates God's will and the traditional family, influences the attitudes and makes them more negative (Haddock et al., 1993). Attitudes play an important role in the preservation of a sense of identity and preservation of the group due to fear. Church members adapt to the religious beliefs set by the church and adopt an inter-group attitude that does not create dissonance in their beliefs (Foster & Nel, 1991).

Instrumental learning can be used to explain this relationship. If a church has a traditional view of homosexuality, it will support people who also exhibit the traditional beliefs about homosexuality, i.e. strengthening what the church considers a positive outcome. The church will frown upon acceptance of homosexuality, thereby weakening the positive attitude towards homosexuality. If a church has a more liberal view of homosexuality, it will support the members who also have this view, thus strengthening the attitude. It will

frown upon members who stay with the older beliefs, thus weakening the attitude (Baron & Byrne, 1994).

It would seem from the results above that a change in religious beliefs, even the questioning of traditional negative beliefs (Church of England, 1987; Williams, 1978), will lead to an effect on the individual's attitude towards homosexuals, as there is a strong relationship between attitudes towards homosexuals and beliefs towards homosexuality. But it is important not to view these factors in isolation as many other factors will have an effect on these two factors.

### ***5.5 Is there a relationship between the quality of contact and the attitude towards homosexuals?***

There was a positive correlation between the quality of contact with homosexuals and the attitudes towards homosexuals ( $\rho = 0.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as attitudes become more positive, so did the quality of contact, and vice versa.

Once again it is important to note that attitudes do not exist in isolation. Memories play an important part in the formulation of attitudes. Direct personal experience results in a strong formulations of attitudes (Baron & Byrne, 1994). The experience of the contact that one has with homosexuals plays a role in determining one's attitude towards other homosexuals.

A positive experience in the contact with homosexuals will lead to a more positive attitude towards homosexuals in general under certain conditions (Simon, 1995). The same is true for a negative experience, where the outcome will be a negative attitude towards homosexuals (Herek, 1988).

If contact with an attitudinal object is experienced as positive, then a strong positive attitude is likely to be formed. If the contact is experienced as negative then a strong negative attitude is likely to be formed. This is supported by previous research (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Nelson & Krieger, 1997; Simon, 1995). It is important that the individual experiences the contact within certain conditions for a positive change to occur. One of these conditions is that the contact must occur under pleasant social conditions. This implies that the individual's mood is congruent with positive change. Unpleasant conditions are congruent for negative attitude change (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991).

People exhibiting a negative attitude towards homosexuality may have acquired this attitude through modeling the attitude from others in their family, their friends or the church. Attitudes learnt in this manner are often easily changed through direct experience with the attitude object (the homosexual). This is because attitudes learnt through direct experience are more resistant to change and stronger than attitudes learnt through modeling (Baron & Byrne, 1994). Often people have not thought about their attitudes and only do so when they come into direct contact with the homosexual person.



### ***5.6 Is there a relationship between the quality of contact with homosexuals and religious beliefs?***

There was a positive correlation between the quality of the contact with homosexuals and the religious beliefs toward homosexuality ( $\rho = 0.74, p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the quality of contact became more positive, so did the religious beliefs towards homosexuality, and vice versa.

This may be possible because when members encounter homosexuals they may start to review their religious beliefs that they have held without question in the past. If the experience is positive, they may question why the church sees homosexuality as sinful and morally wrong. This has to do with cognitive dissonance. If two elements in the cognitive system are dissonant (one belief implies the opposite of the other) the individual tries to reduce dissonance as it creates discomfort in the individual. This may encourage an individual to change his or her attitude in order to fit with his or her new experience of homosexuals (Petty, 1995). If the experience is negative, they may strengthen their negative views on homosexuality. This would be an example of learning of attitudes through direct experience (Baron & Byrne, 1994). It is possible, as mentioned above, that the reverse may happen, that is that change in religious beliefs may change the individual's experience of contact. Once again it is important not to view these factors in isolation, but to take the influence of other factors into account.

## **5.7 Gender differences**

### **5.7.1 Attitudes towards homosexuals**

There was a significant difference in the attitudes towards homosexuals between males and females ( $t = 1.97$ ,  $df = 55$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ). This means that the males in the sample had a more negative attitude towards homosexuals than did the females. This finding supports the research in the past that says that males exhibit a more negative attitude towards homosexuals than do females (Herek, 1988, 1994; Kite, 1992, 1994).

This can be explained in that homosexuality threatens male's gender expectations. They feel threatened especially by male homosexuals as society has placed an emphasis on the importance of masculinity. The males need to affirm their masculinity through the rejection of homosexuals (Herek, 1988).

However, this finding must be interpreted with caution as the difference between males and females was only significant at the 10% level of significance.

### **5.7.2 Religious beliefs**

There was a significant difference in the religious beliefs towards homosexuals ( $t = 3.91$ ,  $df = 60.5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that men held a significantly more negative religious belief towards homosexuality than did the females within the sample.

Negative religious beliefs towards homosexuality in this study are based on the traditional view of homosexuality. Within the sample it seems that men held more traditional

religious beliefs than did the females. Herek (1988) stated that males hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuals than females because of feelings of threatened gender expectations. In this present study there was a relationship between religious beliefs and attitudes, so it possible that the gender difference with regard to religious beliefs may be explained by the same reason.

### **5.7.3 Quality of contact with homosexuals**

There was a significant difference in the experience of contact with homosexuals between males and females ( $t = 3.47$ ,  $df = 55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that men experienced their quality of contact more negatively than did the females in the sample.

This could once again be explained by that males could have felt that their gender expectations were being threatened (Herek, 1988). The contact is experienced by males as threatening and unpleasant, this may be because they do not know what to expect from the contact, and that their masculinity will be threatened by the homosexual. The contact did not meet the criteria for ideal contact situations listed in Mynhardt and du Toit (1991). The ideal contact situations are : application of the norms of tolerance (so that negative behaviour is not reinforced), pleasant social conditions, equal status between individuals, negative stereotypes not being confirmed, shared coping in order to achieve common goals, and relatively free choice regarding decision-making and behaviour.

***5.8 Is there a relationship between age and religious beliefs, quality of contact and attitudes?***

There was no statistically significant relationship in this study between age and attitudes, religious beliefs and quality of contact with homosexuals. It was suspected that there would be positive correlations, but this was not found.

This would indicate that age-wise the members of this church do not differ in these respects, that the different age groups influence each other in the formulation of attitudes through modeling of attitudes.

***5.9 Is there a relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs, attitudes and quality of contact with homosexuals?***

There was no statistically significant relationship between church attendance and religious beliefs towards homosexuality, attitudes towards homosexuals and contact with homosexuals. This could be due the composition of the sample. The majority of the respondents attended church on a weekly basis and this sample in this respect was homogenous. This could have led to an attenuation of range, which has the effect of reducing the size of the correlation coefficient.

## **5.10 Conclusion**

The results gained in this study were discussed. Conclusions drawn from this chapter and recommendations will be discussed with application to this study and further studies in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***6.1 Introduction***

This chapter looks at the conclusions that may be drawn from the research done, recommendations for further studies and the role that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa can take with regard to the issue of homosexuality.

#### ***6.2 Conclusions drawn from the study***

This study showed that the sample of the members of the church involved had negative religious beliefs towards homosexuality, negative attitudes towards homosexuals and experienced their contact with homosexuals as negative. This supports previous findings that showed that people have negative attitudes towards homosexuals and experience the contact that they do have as negative (Haddock et al., 1993; Pratte, 1993).

In this study positive correlations were found between the following factors: religious beliefs towards homosexuality and attitudes towards homosexuals, the quality of contact with homosexuals and the attitudes towards them, and the quality of contact with homosexuals and the religious beliefs towards homosexuality. The correlations between these factors were explained by looking at the nature of attitudes and the cognitive link that attitudes have with beliefs and memories.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The generalization of this research is limited because of the sample size and because the study was conducted in only one denomination. To make the research applicable to the Methodist denomination one could take a stratified sample from various churches in South Africa, making comparisons between them. Another way of approaching the research would be to do surveys in different denominations.

The field of “gay and lesbian psychology” is a field in which studies are bringing new understanding of the experience of homosexuals as well as the nature and formulation of attitudes towards them. The field is relatively new and there is still a lot of work to be done. The majority of the research in this field has been done in the United States (Brooke, 1993; Greene, 1994; Haddock et al., 1993; Herek, 1988, 1994; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Kite, 1994; McFarland, 1988; Pratte, 1993; Simon, 1995; Wagner et al, 1994). Within the South African context the majority of the research is on the history of the homosexuality community and the rights that they are seeking. This is the first research that links attitudes towards homosexuals and religious beliefs about homosexuality in South Africa as far as could be determined. Research in South Africa into the area of attitudes toward homosexuality may have different results to that found in the United States as the cultural environment and the history of the homosexual community is very different.

The issue of religious belief towards homosexuality and their influence on the attitudes towards homosexuals needs further refinement. Within the Methodist church there is no stated policy of religious beliefs towards homosexuality. This creates difficulty in designing an instrument to measure religious beliefs towards homosexuality and understanding the nature of beliefs.

Research into attitudes towards homosexuals should rather distinguish between male homosexuals and female homosexuals as opposed to the term homosexuals as an umbrella term. This should be done as there is a difference in the attitudes that heterosexuals exhibit towards homosexual people of their own gender, especially males. Another reason for distinguishing between the different genders is that the word homosexual has a negative connotation which provokes negative attitudes (Herek, 1988).

Religious beliefs towards homosexuality is only one of many factors that influence individual's attitudes towards homosexuals. Others include experience of contact, attitudes towards traditional gender- and family-roles, the perceptions that people have that their friends have the same opinion and self-reports of homosexual experiences (Haddock et al., 1993; Herek, 1988).

Further studies could include:

- How religious beliefs change because of contact with homosexuals.
- How does society influence the church on the issue of homosexuality?
- How do homosexuals experience the church's rejection of them?
- How do the attitudes towards homosexuality change over a period of time?
- Do the church member's religious beliefs change over a period of time?

The issue of homosexuality is receiving attention in the New South Africa. The church plays an important role in influencing the society's attitude in the area of moral issues. It influences attitudes and the behaviour that is linked to these issues.



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa would be advised to make a stand on the issue of homosexuality. The church needs to give its members guidelines for making their own decisions about this moral issue. The church could use this study as a starting point to find out more about the members' attitudes towards homosexuals, and religious beliefs towards homosexuality, using this information and information from other sources as a starting point to formulate an official policy on homosexuality.

There are still many issues linked to homosexuality other than just attitudes that need to be addressed in the Methodist Church, these include:

- Are homosexual people accepted in the church?
- How does the church respond to the changes in society's acceptance of homosexuality?
- What is the influence on the church's religious beliefs about homosexuality on congregational members?
- Is the church able to meet the needs of the homosexual person?
- How does the congregation feel towards the homosexual person?
- How can the members be helped to deal with their feelings and attitudes with regard to homosexuality?

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown the conclusions made through the research. Recommendations were given for further studies and how the Methodist Church can apply the results of the study.

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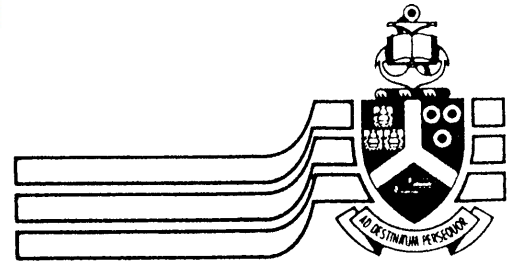
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## **APPENDIX A : COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

1181 Church Street  
Hatfield  
Pretoria  
0083  
June 1996



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid-Afrika Tel (012) 4209111  
Faks (012) 437431 / 3422712 / 432185

Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte

Dear Respondent

My name is Jean Cameron-Ellis. I am a member of the Brooklyn Methodist Church. I am also busy with my Honors in Psychology at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Prof. J. Schoeman..

Society is changing drastically around us. Attitudes towards homosexuality are changing. The world is becoming more accepting towards "gay communities". I am interested in the relationship between our religious beliefs about homosexuality and our attitudes towards homosexuality. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between these variables, as well as the influence of contact with homosexuals on these attitudes.

The term "homosexual" should be seen in the light of an individual who is a practicing homosexual in a monogamous relationship. This would be a person who is committed to his/her partner. This person is not a person who is busy living a promiscuous life style.

The reason that you have received a questionnaire is because you are part of the Brooklyn Methodist Church. I guarantee your anonymity in the study. If you could please complete and return the questionnaire to me before 25 June 1996, I would greatly appreciate it. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions regarding this research I can be contacted at : (012) 43-6902.

I would like to thank you for your willingness to complete this survey.

Your Faithfully

JEAN A. CAMERON-ELLIS



## QUESTIONNAIRE : ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALITY

Office use only

CARD NUMBER 1 | Q1 /1  
Respondent number | Q2 /2-4

Gender

Male	1	Female	2
------	---	--------	---

Q3 /5

Age

25 and below	1
26-35	2
36-45	3
46-55	4
56-65	5
66-75	6
76 and over	7

Q4 /6

Marital Status

Single	1
Married	2
Widowed	3
Divorced	4
Other	5

Specify :

Q5 /7

Church Attendance

Weekly	1
Once a month	2
Occasionally	3
Once in 6 Months	4
Seldom	5
Never	6

Q6 /8

## Religious Beliefs Towards Homosexuality

Below are 14 statements about religious beliefs towards homosexuality. Indicate your opinion by writing the number which corresponds with the way you feel about the statement in the box provided :

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

- |   |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|
| 1. The act of homosexuality violates God's will; therefore, the church does not condone homosexuality.                        | _____ | Q7 /9   |
| 2. Homosexuality is not morally wrong.  | _____ | Q8 /10  |
| 3. The Bible does support homosexuality.  | _____ | Q9 /11  |
| 4. Female homosexuality is a sin.   | _____ | Q10 /12 |
| 5. Male homosexuality is a perversion.  | _____ | Q11 /13 |
| 6. As long as homosexuals commit to abstinence and change they are welcome in the church.                                     | _____ | Q12 /14 |
| 7. Having non-practicing homosexuals as part of the church serves as an example that through faith, one can abstain from sin. | _____ | Q13 /15 |
| 8. Homosexual behaviour is just plain wrong.  | _____ | Q14 /16 |
| 9. Homosexuality is contrary to being a good Christian.   | _____ | Q15 /17 |
| 10. In order to avoid God's punishment, I do not support homosexuality.   | _____ | Q16 /18 |
| 11. I question the morality and goodness of the church if homosexuals are accepted.   | _____ | Q17 /19 |
| 12. Homosexuality is a sin.   | _____ | Q18 /20 |
| 13. I do not support homosexuality because it is a direct violation of God's will.  | _____ | Q19 /21 |
| 14. A commitment to God involves being heterosexual.  | _____ | Q20 /22 |

## Attitudes towards Homosexuals

Below are 10 statements which indicate ones attitude towards homosexuality. Indicate your opinion by writing the number which corresponds with the way you feel about the statement in the box provided :

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I think male homosexuals are disgusting		Q21 /23
2. Homosexuality violates traditional relationships. (Such as a marriage relationship.)		Q22 /24
3. Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men.		Q23 /25
4. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything to overcome them.		Q24 /26
5. Life as a homosexual is not as fulfilling as life as a heterosexual.		Q25 /27
6. Homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality.		Q26 /28
7. Homosexuality breaks down the usual gender role expectations.		Q27 /29
8. Homosexuality in itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem		Q28 /30
9. Regardless of majority opinion, the rights of homosexuals must be upheld .		Q29 /31
10. Homosexuality is merely a different kind of life style that should not be condemned.		Q30 /32

## Contact with Homosexuals

Have any of the following people let you know that they are homosexual ?

Close male friend

Close female friend

Male acquaintance

Female acquaintance

Male work colleague

Female work colleague

Male family member

Female family member

No contact

Other , specify :

Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2
Yes	1	No	2

Q31 /33

Q32 /34

Q33 /35

Q34 /36

Q35 /37

Q36 /38

Q37 /39

Q38 /40

Q39 /41

Q40 /42

How do you feel when you come in contact with a homosexual person? If you haven't got any contact with any homosexual people, how do you think you would feel?

1	Extremely pleasant	1	Pleasant	2	Unsure	3	Unpleasant	4	Extremely unpleasant	5	Q41 /43
2	Totally disgusted	1	Disgusted	2	Neutral	3	Respecting	4	Totally respecting	5	Q42 /44
3	Overly friendly	1	Friendly	2	Neutral	3	Unfriendly	4	Extremely unfriendly	5	Q43 /45
4	Extremely uncomfortable	1	Uncomfortable	2	Neutral	3	Comfortable	4	Extremely comfortable	5	Q44 /46
5	Extremely shocked	1	Shocked	2	Indifferent	3	Amused	4	Very amused	5	Q45 /47
6	Totally accepting	1	Accepting	2	Neutral	3	Condemning	4	Totally condemning	5	Q46 /48
7	Extremely frightened	1	Nervous	2	Unsure	3	Relatively safe	4	Totally safe	5	Q47 /49
8	Very curious	1	Curious	2	Indifferent	3	Disinterested	4	Extremely disinterested	5	Q48 /50